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"The where to and how to magazine for the outdoor enthusiast."

Issue 225

Winter 2012



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**Bear
TIPS**

**B.A.S.S.
NEWS**

**DNR
Updates**

Outdoor Photos



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Cover Photo

This giant buck was taken with a bow in one of the bow only counties. I have not been able to trace down his name yet. Someone email me if they know.

There are numerous great buck photos this month. If you have harvested a large buck or other game animal, mail or email in your picture. Form is on page 13. It will take a while to use all the photos I have received.

Photo courtesy of Uncle Tom's in Oceana.

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Ritchie County Bear War

Aaaoooooh.....aaaaoooooh.....aaoooooh...
aaaaoooooh.....summoning one last
adrenalin rush, the big bear raised
his head towards the darkening
sky. **AAAoooooohh.....**
was he making one last roar for the
animals in the forest? His body

By Mark Goudy
Publisher W. Va. Sportsman

went to the ground. The woods
were now silent.

My life as a hunter was somehow
changed now. I had been on the
most thrilling hunt ever. Yes.....
I AM A BEAR HUNTER.

Over the years, the WV DNR has
relocated numerous bears around
the state. Their population num-
bers have grown to over 12,000 at
least. Around the state, bears are
seen on a regular basis. There is
now a bear/gun late season in 55
counties. Since some have restric-
tions, check on the hunting regula-
tions booklet.

The season dates are Dec. 3 to
Dec. 31. Bear populations will
vary by county. Many counties al-
low dog hunting in all or parts of
their respective counties. Baiting
is illegal; however a DNR spokes-
person in Charleston did say that
scents were legal.

I have talked with numerous bear
continue to the next page



This hunter shot a large buck. Photo
courtesy of Mr. Clean in Glenville.

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Aarron Plumley used a bow for this
great buck. Photo courtesy of Uncle
Tom's in Oceanna.

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hunters and have researched on the internet. I knew that there was at least one bear on my 37 acres in Ritchie County. My great grandfather raised his family there dating back to the early 1900's. I saw a paw print in the second week of deer season and had one on my trail camera. The odds of running into one in the forest was still slim.

Muzzleloader season also started on Dec. 3rd. I had called the DNR in Charleston to see if you could carry a muzzleloader for deer and a rifle for bear hunting at the same time. I was concerned that if I did see a bear, that I would feel more confident with the opportunity to have multiple shots available. I was told that it was permissible.

I found out by frequenting the numerous stores in my magazine that many of the sport shops were unaware that there was a bear gun



Jeff Lacorte shot a 9 point buck
Photo courtesy of Old&New Sports in Ravenswood.

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season. I guess they don't read the regulations thoroughly. I asked if the DNR agents passed along verbal information on seasons. Apparently, they do not. I'm sure many hunters had not been aware of the new season as well.

I went out on the 1st day of the combined season and drove the 2 miles out the gravel road in Ritchie County to hunt on Monday morning. Strangely, I did not see any other vehicles. Either there was little interest in muzzleloader and bear hunting, or the hunters still thought it was doe season that week like it had been in the past few years. I did not see either species that day.

On Wednesday I did not get to the woods until 2p.m.. I hunted nearer to the gravel road where I had seen more deer and the bear on my cameras in that area. Around 4 p.m. I decided to go to the back of my

property to move my other ground blind closer to the road. I left my backpack and muzzleloader at the 1st ground blind.

The ground was still wet from a rain and it was fairly windy. It was
continue to the next page



Mike Leach used a bow for this 9 point buck
Photo courtesy of Crooked Creek Archery in Williamstown.

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easy to stalk through the woods without making much sound. I had my Browning A Bolt Medalion with me. It was loaded with 30-06 180 grain shells. I arrived at the ground blind at the back of my property.

I happened to look to my left and I noticed a big black object. It looked like a big black circle. I raised my scoped rifle up still at 3 power. I saw that it was a black bear! I had pretty much of a broad size angle. Wasting no time, I placed the cross hairs behind the left front shoulder and shot off-hand. The bear flinched and briefly went down, only to disappear over the ridge. I chambered another round just in case. Then I was a bit uneasy.

Waiting for a good bit of time, I went to the location around 60 or 70 yards away where I had seen the bear. The ground was torn up and leaves were scattered about. I couldn't find any blood trail. I had read that they often don't leave much. Looking over the ridge, there was not a bear down in the immediate area. Now I noticed

that my hands were trembling. I rechecked my rifle to make sure that I had a round in the chamber and 3 more in the magazine. Game on!

I remembered a line from a movie "Little Big Man". It was an Indian/western with Dustin Hoffman. An Indian chief in a battle told Dutin's character that "today is a good day to die". Kind of a melodramatic thought at the time.

continue to the next page

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Mark Goudy's nice black bear weighed 270 pounds (Full).

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I was more than a bit concerned that I may not have placed the bullet in a kill zone.

I slowly traveled down the hillside back and forth. I saw a black object and scoped it. Tree trunk! Oh well - back further down to where another ridge line dropped down, I saw the bear. He was sitting down and started moving. I quickly braced my rifle against a small tree and shot. It got up and made a move to drop down the next ridge. I chambered another round and shot again. It was roughly 120 yards from the initial shot.

It had settled at the bottom of the hill in a creek bed. The bear was still moving. One last shot and finally the death wail.

I probably broke some etiquette and field rules during the hunt. Hunting alone and on foot was probably a tad risky. I am giving an honest assessment of the hunt-

ing story. Bear hunting is more for experienced hunters used to their hunting rifles and equipment.

I could not get the bear out of the woods that evening. I knew that the temperature was to drop down to 27 degrees that night. There was no way I could get that bear out by myself.

I drove back towards my home and stopped at Crossroads General Store near Newark. Two young guys were working that evening. I told them about the bear and it turned out that they lived near that area. I explained that I needed an ATV, wench and a chain saw to cut a passage through any downed trees. I offered them some money to cover any expenses. Dillon Goodnight and Tyler Turner told me to call them the next morning.

I met them and they had another friend, Luke Hall, with them. They followed me back to my property.

The bear had ended up at the bottom of a steep hill. We managed to get the ATV to within 160 feet of the creek bed.

I found out that the wench on an
continue to the next page



Tyler Turner, Luke Hall & Dillon Goodnight helped Mark Goudy get his bear out of the woods.

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ATV does not function well. The battery would go dead after about a 10 feet drag up the hill. It would have to be run for a while each time to charge the battery. Plus, the wench cable was not long enough. Tyler and Luke would retie to the longer rope every 25 feet or so. Dillon held onto the rope to anchor the bear so it would not slip down the hill. It eventually took over 2 hours to get up to the easier ledges above. Tyler was quite an ATV rider. The ATV would spin sometimes and Luke and Dillon would hold down on the back frame to get more bite.

After 3 hours, the bear was loaded to go to the check station, Crossroads General Store. I got the tag and proceeded to Pioneer Meat Packaging in Wood County. The bear was weighed and the full body weight was estimated at 270 pounds. Yummy!

They skinned it professionally and I took the hide to Clark's Taxidermy in Parkersburg. He is going



Kasandra Salser shot her 1st buck in Jackson County.

to do a soft tan - semi rug. Also, he will do a European mount of the skull. Sounds like a just reward for an active hunt.

The bottom line is: Be careful when bear hunting. Make sure that you have a rifle and bullet capable of handling a big game animal. Be aware that getting one out of the woods is not easy.

The hunting thrill of a lifetime can be yours in West Virginia. I know that I will definitely try bear hunting again. Good luck and hunt safely.

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Paul Clark trapped a 50 pound beaver recently. He will undoubtedly mount this. Photo courtesy of Clark's Taxidermy in Parkersburg.

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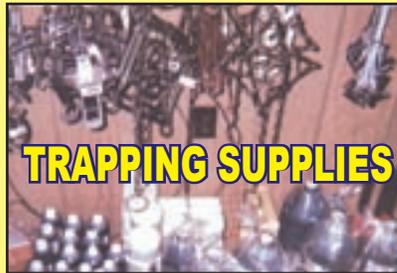
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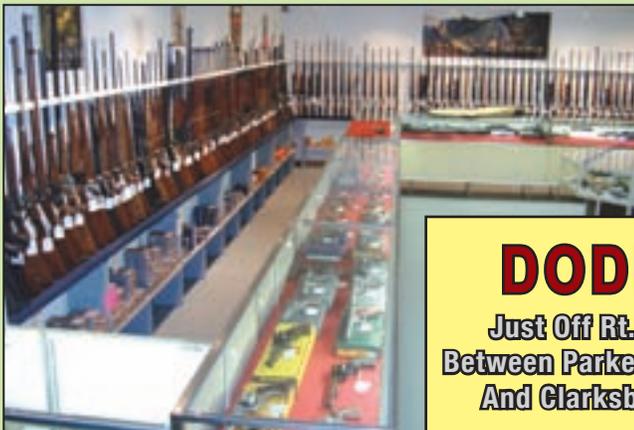


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Jake Evans shot a real nice 8 point buck. Photo courtesy of Mr. Clean in Glenville.

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 Details On Page 3



John Kirby brought in a 23 pound bobcat. Photo courtesy of Crossroads General Store near Newark.



Cindy Gill had success with this 8 point buck. Photo courtesy of PC Bait & Tackle in Hinton.

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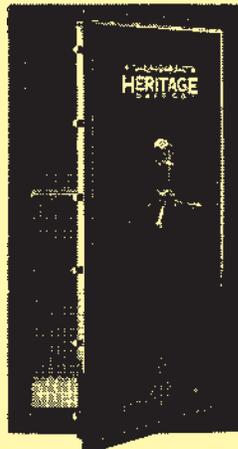
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What Do Black Bears Eat?

Black bears may be the least carnivorous of the “carnivores” of North America. They consume a wide variety of seasonally abundant herbs, forbs, fruits, berries, nuts, and other plant parts and products. The specific plants may differ among the a number of ecoregions of North America. However, certain trends are evident. Spring foods are predominantly grasses, sedges, shoots and other high-protein lush green vegetation. Deer and other carcasses may be scavenged, as well as leftover nuts. Skunk cab-

bage is important in Massachusetts and squaw root in the southern Appalachians. During summer, bears shift to energy-rich “soft mast” foods such as huckleberries, blackberries, raspberries, grapes, and cherries. Protein-rich insects such as ants, wasps, and beetle larvae are usually taken.

Crayfish, frogs, birds’ eggs, mice, red squirrels, woodchucks, snowshoe hare, and other animal food are occasionally eaten. Then, in autumn (where available), “hard
continue to the next page



9 year old, Taylor Moore, shot a 143 class 10 point. *Photo courtesy of Clark’s Taxidermy in Parkersburg.*

~ WANTED ~ Game Photos From 2012



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BE RETURNED**

mast" items including acorns, hickory nuts, beechnuts, hazelnuts, pine nuts, and similar foods are taken. Corn is also eaten where available. Bears can make tremendous weight gains in fall, as much as 3 to 4 lbs. per day. However, in northern areas, where hard mast is lacking, bears must rely only on berry crops for weight gain and den after those are exhausted. Bears, especially adult males, and especially when foods are scarce, may travel up to 125 miles outside their home range in late summer and early fall to a concentrated food source before returning home to den. A number of historical accounts from Louisiana, Minnesota, New England, Ontario, Wisconsin, and elsewhere mention these "migrations" or "forays", which often followed well-defined trails beaten down over time.

In spring and early summer, popular catkins, leaves, and lush grasses are common foods. Bears lack a caecum and do not have any known ability to digest cellulose so the nutritional value of such foods is not apparent. However, researcher-habituated bears have been seen to relish deer scat and feed on the intestines of winter-killed deer. Perhaps by this means bears may acquire cellulose-digesting organisms which allow the bears to digest foods they could not otherwise utilize.

Several workers have suggested

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that the period between den emergence and the availability of summer-ripening fruits and berries is a "negative foraging period" during which bears gather enough food to sustain life, but not to gain weight. However, recent studies in Minnesota challenge this assumption. Young bears can and do gain weight from spring foods. However, lactating females may indeed lose weight due to the high energy demands of milk production. Breeding-age males may also lose weight due to changes in physiology and behavior.

Bears which feed in garbage dumps, campgrounds, or at bait sta-

tions may grow faster, attain greater weights, and have greater fertility than their wild counterparts.



Adam Comp used a bow for this nice 10 point. *Photo courtesy of Boone's Bow Shop in Parkersburg.*



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Lake Russell Fishing Tournament

The 16th annual Lake Russell fishing tournament was hosted by Wright's Riverside Marine in St. Marys. 17 teams from WV and Ohio traveled to Elberton, Georgia. Fishing in November is always lots of fun for anglers looking for a big bite.

The tournament consists of 3 practice days with a 4 day tournament following. The combined weight of the 4 days determines the winners and the places paid out.

Taking the first place money and team name on the trophy were Paul Isner and Henry Chisolm from the Fairmont area. Their weight of 51.75 blew out the field.

Second place went to Brad and Dave Woodby with 37.90 pounds. Following in third were Walker & Thomas with 35.23 pounds.

Contact Wright's Riverside Marine for details on next years event. Their ad is on the right.

The teams participating in the event are pictured above right.



Paul Isner and Henry Chisolm won the Lake Russell 4 day event.



Lake Russell Fishing Teams 2012

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Lavalette Boat Dealer Earns National Award

The Great Outdoors Marine in Lavalette, WV, was awarded first place in Marine Industry Best Practices among North American boat dealers from the organization behind Marine Five Star Dealer Certification (MFSDC).

Owned by Phil and Diane Daniel, The Great Outdoors Marine was announced as the winner at the Marine Dealer Conference and Expo in Orlando earlier this month. The award recognizes outstanding boat dealers based on results from MFSDC's certification business audit review.

"Best practices and employee satisfaction are key elements in the MFSDC program – designed to enhance the boat-buying and owning experience," Matt Gruhn, president of the Marine Retailers Association of the Americas, said in a press release. "We honor these Marine Five Star Certified Dealers for their efforts to improve the recreational boating industry and to lead the way for others."

MFSDC "Best Practices" are a part of the dealer certification process that recognizes thoughtful and cost-effective ways to do business while maintaining quality and eliminating variability.

The Great Outdoors Marine has been in business since 1991, and has 16 employees. It is the largest marine dealer in West Virginia, and specializes in pontoon and fishing boat sales, and service on boats and motors. They serve the entire state of West Virginia, southern Ohio, and eastern Kentucky.

You can view their website at: thegreatoutdoorsmarine.com

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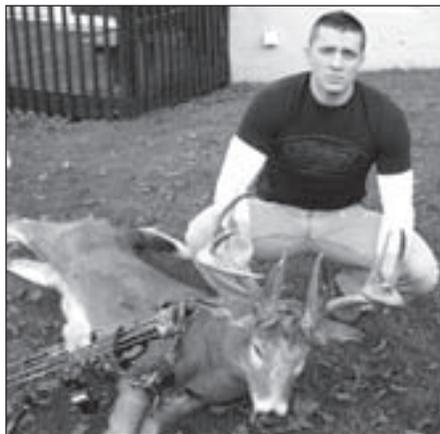
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Instructors For Archery

SOUTH CHARLESTON, W.Va. – The West Virginia Division of Natural Resources Wildlife Resources Section (DNR) will hold its next instructor training for the Archery in the Schools (AIS) Program January 29 and 30 at Charleston First Church of the Nazarene, according to Krista Snodgrass, program coordinator.

The AIS Program has become DNR's largest growing educational program. Since its inception in 2004, more than 72,000 students have been introduced to archery as part of their physical education (PE) classes in nearly 300 West Virginia schools. The program teaches Olympic-style, target archery in both public and private schools

Grades 4 through 12.

“Our youth ministry has been involved in archery for some time and we’re looking forward to providing our facility,” said Randy Lanham, pastor. “Though our program may be a little different, I can verify that archery, especially among youth, has definitely grown in popularity and, unlike most activities, kids of all ages and backgrounds can participate.”

“In order for schools to have the AIS Program, they must first have a certified instructor – preferably a PE instructor or coach who will introduce as many kids as possible to the joys of target archery,” said Snodgrass. “DNR only has about

continue to the next page

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Keiling Fife arrowed a great 9 point. Photo courtesy of Clark's Taxidermy in Parkersburg.

Winter 2012 ~ Page 17

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Info On Page 3

four trainings a year and, because class size is limited to 25, training slots are highly sought. As an added incentive, teachers taking this training may be eligible to receive Continuing Education Hours (CEH) – provided they submit their paperwork to their principal before the end of the school year.”

To ensure a training slot, any-



Mitchael Smith used a bow for this 10 point. *Photo courtesy of Boone's Bow Shop in Parkersburg.*



Shaun Stidham, from Red House, shot a 7 point buck.

one interested in getting a school involved in the program is encouraged to apply as soon as possible, before the January 2 deadline. The training costs \$25 for all school employees and \$50 for non-school employees. This fee will be paid to WVDNR – Archery in the Schools Program (via check, money order, or exact currency only) during the first morning of the training.

To register for the AIS training at Charleston First Church of the Nazarene, please call Krista Snodgrass at 304-558-2771; email Krista.R.Snodgrass@wv.gov for information on the AIS Program, or visit the DNR's AIS website at www.wvdnr.gov/archery.

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Bert Lane hooked a fall 44 1/4 inch musky. *Photo courtesy of PC Bait & Tackle in Hinton.*

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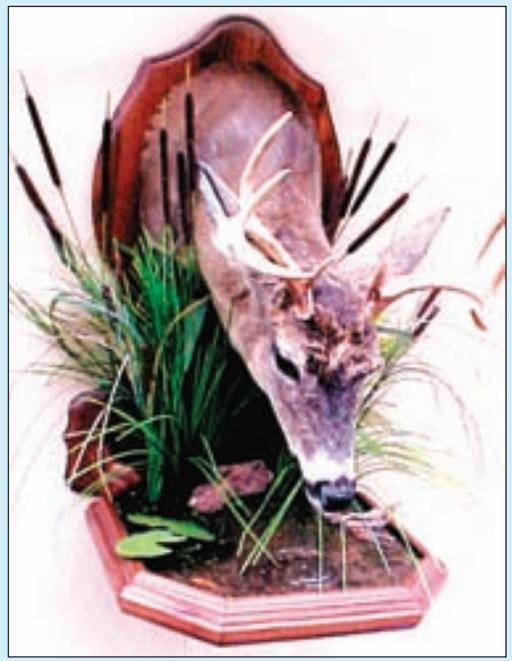
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Kyle Upton used a bow for this typical 10 point buck. Photo courtesy of JBC Archery in Shady Spring.



This horse of a deer was taken with a bow by Gary Acord. Photo courtesy of Uncle Tom's in Oceana.



11 year old, Justin Wheeler, shot a big 10 point. Photo courtesy of Old & New Sports in Ravenswood.



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Sam Fisher is leading the big buck contest with this 134 5/8 scored buck. Photo courtesy of J&R Sporting Goods in Shinnston.



Brian Wilkinson shot a big 11 point buck.



Phil Seckman landed this big largemouth at Mountwood Lake.

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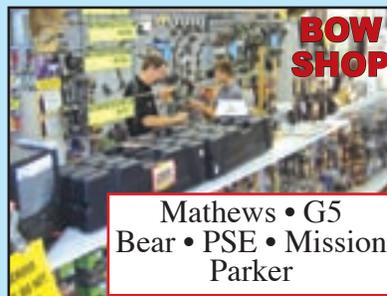
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Forest White with an 8 point buck.



Jarrold Shinn with his 8 point buck.



Kenzie Piggott arrowed her buck.



Matthew Duskey with his 8 point.



Megan Hammond with a 9 point.



Tessie Wells with her 1st squirrel.

Cold Water Jerkbait

There may not be a more effective lure than a jerkbait for catching bass in cold water.

"You'll find one tied on my rod just about any time the water temperature is in the 50s or lower," said Arkansas Elite pro Kevin Short.

Jerkbait can be effective in any manner you wish to fish them, but cold-water tactics require a more refined approach, he added.

Here are Short's tips to being a more efficient jerkbait angler when the water gets cold:

Lighten up your tackle

Many anglers try fishing jerkbaits with tackle that's too heavy. Short prefers a 6 1/2-foot or 6-foot, 8-inch rod (St. Croix Legend Supreme) with medium power and an extra fast action. Because he works his rod pointed downward, the shorter rod prevents the tip from hitting the water. The softer action keeps him from losing fish.

"Oftentimes in really cold water,

the fish don't eat the bait; they slap at it and get hooked alongside the head," Short explained. "With a softer rod that has some flex, the hooks are less likely to pull out when you get a fish next to the boat."

He pairs the rod with 8- to 12-pound Vicious Pro Elite Fluorocarbon and a Lew's Tournament Pro
continue to the next page



Mike Mullins shot a big buck.
Photo courtesy of Anderson Outdoors in Buckhannon.

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Walker Snardis, from Given, shot an 8 point for his 1st buck.

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"I use a lot of monofilament in the spring when the water temperature is in the 50s and I don't want the bait to sink," he added. "But when it's colder than that, I use fluoro-carbon because I want the bait to suspend or sink a little."

Experiment with lures

Most anglers stay with the same bait all day when the fish are biting it. Short, who fishes a lot of local winter tournaments around his Arkansas home, will start with a smaller bait then switch to a larger one.

"I fish a lot of Megabass 110 jerk-baits that are about 5 1/4 inches long," he described. "I'll catch a limit on that then switch to the same color in the 110 Magnum size that is about inch longer and thicker, giving a bigger profile."

The Magnum jerks to the same depth, and while it doesn't draw as many bites, it does attract bigger fish.

"I've seen it work the other way, too, especially in clear water," Short adds. "Downsizing may get you more bites when they aren't



Young Corey Martin gunned a large buck. *Photo courtesy of PC Bait & Tackle in Hinton.*

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Play with retrieve

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Only 9, Emma Starett, brought in an 8 pont buck.

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continue to the next page



Mike Talbott harvested a buck. *Photo courtesy of Anderson Outdoors in Buckhannon.*

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“I’ve seen a long pause or the amount of time between jerks do as much to trigger a fish as how you’re twitching it,” Short offered. “That’s something easy to play with; cast it out and let it sit, twitch it real soft a couple of times then let it sit momentarily. The next time, let it sit longer and then twitch it real hard



Eddie Goodnight used a bow for this huge 10 pointer *Photo courtesy of Holbert’s Store in Big Bend.*

and let it sit again. Just remember exactly what you were doing when you caught the first fish.”

Short is convinced that the angle the bait sits in the water — which can be affected by the hooks — can be a factor, too.

“If you want the nose to dive steeper, put a heavier hook on the front hanger, wrap lead wire around the hook shaft or put a lighter hook on the back of the bait,” he described.

If you want the bait to sit with the nose higher, change to the same size of monofilament that you were using with fluorocarbon.

“The fluorocarbon can pull the bait down,” Short adds. “That can be good when shad die and fall to

the bottom. However, before they die they may swim with their heads up. Pay attention to what’s going on around you.”



These young fellows from Shady Spring hooked a 38 pound blue.



Kevin Treadway went to Fayette County for this 8 point buck.



Young Hunter Starett brought in his 1st squirrel.

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WV Gun Season Facts

The West Virginia firearm buck gun season opened on Nov. 19 – Dec. 1. It is open in all counties except Logan, Mingo, McDowell and Wyoming.

Approximately 330,000 licensed hunters will be in West Virginia's woods during this season. Hunters should review the 2012 - 2013 Hunting and Trapping Regulations Summary for detailed instructions concerning bag limits and season dates. The regulations are available at license agents, DNR district offices, or online at



Seth Thompson used a bow for this massive buck. *Photo courtesy of Cardinal Pawnbrokers in Beckley.*

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A list of wildlife checking stations in West Virginia can be found online at www.wvdnr.gov/hunting/check_stations.asp

The firearm antlered deer bag limit during the two-week buck season is two (one on the base license and one on an RG [resident] or RRG [nonresident] stamp). A hunter may take no more than three antlered deer per calendar year in all archery and firearms seasons combined.

The last day to purchase an additional buck deer gun tag (Class RG/RRG Stamp) is Nov. 18, 2012. Class RG and Class RRG additional buck stamps can only be used to take an additional antlered deer in firearm buck season. Unused Class RG and Class RRG stamps may not be used in antlerless or muzzle-loader seasons.

There are 10 counties or portions thereof (see the 2012 – 2013 Hunting and Trapping Regulations continue to the next page

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Dylan Brady shot a quality buck. *Photo courtesy of Old&New Sports in Ravenswood.*

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Summary) that require buck firearms hunters to take an antlerless deer during the antlerless firearms deer season (with Class N permit for residents or Class NN permit for nonresidents) prior to harvesting a second antlered deer during the buck firearms season.

All private and public lands in counties having a firearms antlerless deer gun season (Class N for residents and Class NN for nonresidents) will be open Nov. 19 – Dec. 1 (concurrent with the buck gun season), Dec. 13 - 15, and Dec. 28 – 31. Bag limits vary among counties but will be either one or three antlerless deer. See regulations for details.

All deer must be field tagged and checked in within 72 hours of the time of kill or within 24 hours of the close of the season, whichever comes first. Additional deer may not be taken until all previously



Robert Weikle shot a 9 point. Photo courtesy of PC Bait & Tackle in Hinton.

taken deer have been checked. Only one deer may be taken per day during the buck season.

Concurrent with the buck gun season will be a bear gun season in eight counties: Kanawha, Boone, Fayette, Raleigh, Monongalia, Preston, Hampshire and Morgan.

Deer hunters spend an estimated \$230 million in West Virginia, much of it in the rural areas of the state that depend upon the deer seasons for a large portion of their annual income.

In 2011, deer hunters in West Virginia harvested 60,157 bucks during the two-week buck season, an increase of 38 percent from the 2010 harvest. This is two percent less than the five-year average

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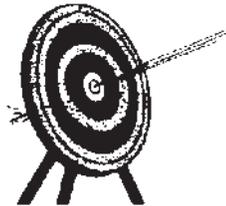


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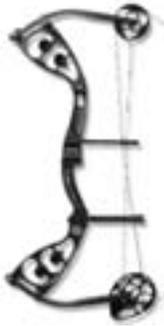
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Jonathan Kimble, 24 from Franklin, was on a family bear hunt when he downed this treed black bear. He got in a bit of trouble with the WVU Athletic Dept. for using his Mountaineer Mascot muzzleloader. Shucks! I saw the video online and Jonathan yelled "Let's Go Mountaineers" when it hit the ground. Congratulations on a fine family hunt.



Earl Bennett, from Williamstown, brought in a great 10 point buck.



Chuck Everson, from Belington, shot a long tined 10 point buck.

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Travis Hanshaw went to Nicholas County for this 10 point - 162 5/8.



Joe Pisone shot a nice 10 point.

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Trevor Smith bagged a big black bear. Photo courtesy of Middle Mountain Sporting Goods in Elkins.



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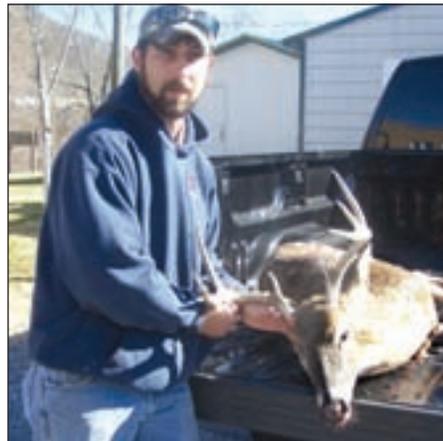
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David Fketcher used a bow for this buck - his 1st. *Photo courtesy of Cardinal Pawnbrokers in Beckley.*



Brian Dickenson shot a nice 8 point. *Photo courtesy of PC Bait & Tackle in Hinton.*



Stephan Halstead used a bow for this 7 point buck. *Photo courtesy of Cardinal Pawnbrokers in Beckley.*



This young lady arrowed a fine buck. *Photo courtesy of Jason's Country Corner in Saulsville.*



Becky Stalnaker shot a 7 point buck. *Photo courtesy of Crossroads General Store near Newark.*

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Ricky Conner arrowed a 7 point.

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Deer Guns Are Not Bear Guns

I do not know that I have had many interesting experiences, unless you include bear hunting on the list." --Theodore Roosevelt

It looked like a big black basketball gliding along the tops of the high goldenrod that grew in this abandoned log landing. But as it emerged into the edge of the woods, there formed like an apparition a large black body under the giant head. There was no clue to alert the bear that I was there and aiming a rifle at him, but when he turned to look at me, his eyes said he knew. I saw the muscles in his shoulder bunch to flee just as I pulled the trigger. Then, faster than I thought possible, he was gone.

I waited a few minutes for my eyes to adjust to the dim light before starting to track him. The trail soon led to a sharp drop-off, and as I crept up to that bank, intent on the land beyond, I almost stepped on him. He was just over the lip, facing back, watching for me.

I have shot many bears since then, but none larger, and I often wonder if he was lying in ambush and simply died before I got there. There is no way to know, of course, but regardless, I was glad I was using

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GAME CHECKING

enough gun that night. The shot was far from perfect, hitting his liver. I question, might he still have been alive when I found him if I had been using a lesser cartridge than that 7mm Mag.?

Deer Guns Are Not Bear Guns

It is often said that any gun that works for deer is fine for bears. Don't you believe it. It takes a lot more gun to reliably kill black

bears than it does to kill white-tailed deer. Bears are a lot different from deer, with thicker hides, bigger bones, bulkier muscles and an inherent toughness that deer sim-

continue to the next page



Wanda Bartlett shot her 1st black bear - 175. *Photo courtesy of Middle Mountain Sporting Goods in Elkins.*



Randy Yonkins got his 1st buck. *Photo courtesy of Jarrett's Bait in Elizabeth.*

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ply don't possess. When a deer is hurt, it's a sure bet that he will lie down before too long. A bear takes off with a destination in mind; he will either get to that place or die trying. I have tracked dozens of wounded bears, and those I have found have either been dead or in a damn good hiding place. I have never found one still alive that was bedded in the open.

Certainly, many calibers will kill bears, but that doesn't necessarily make them good bear guns. A bear gun should remove any doubt; it should not simply be adequate but



Roscoe Hyre has a nice buck. *Photo courtesy of Anderson OUtdoors in Buckhannon.*

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should be as suited for the worst - case scenario as it is for the best. With bears, that can involve a lot of factors, not the least of which is the bear himself. I have weighed a lot of black bears, and most are a lot smaller than people think. The majority of the 500 - pound bears you hear about never get near a scale. If there is a critter that is harder to drag than a black bear, it has escaped my notice. They pull like they are extracting one last revenge, and a bear will make you earn every foot

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Dave Pierson arrowed a good buck. *Photo courtesy of Uncle Tom's in Oceana.*

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you gain toward the truck. At the end, they all are 500 pounds to the guys that pulled them out.

Sure, some places consistently produce larger averages, but the truth is that the majority of the black bears shot are less than 250 pounds after field dressing. Most are under 200 pounds. The wild card is the bear that can show up no matter where you are hunting that does weigh an honest 350 or even 500 pounds. Those are a completely different critter, and if you plan your cartridge choice around the mythical "average" bear, you might be in for a sad surprise if you run into one of these big bruins.

Consider How You'll Be Hunting

Another big factor is hunting style. Hunting over bait or with hounds will give you much closer shots than spot - and - stalk or hunting crop fields. This is a consider-

ation in cartridge selection. For example, I favor a handloaded .45 - 70 Gov. for bait hunting. Its big, heavy bullet is a bear thumper that puts them down with authority. But it would be a poor choice for a spot - and - stalk hunt where the shots may be 200 yards or more; a .300 or .338 Win. Mag. might be a better choice.

But remember too that anything the .300 or .338 Win. Mag. can do at long range it can do even better up close. So there is no real downside from a ballistic standpoint to using these cartridges for any bear hunt; a 250 - grain bullet from a .338 Win. Mag. is even more deadly on close bears over bait than it is on those long shots.

The consideration may be in the rifles chambered. A 9 1/2 - pound magnum with a 26 - inch barrel is a gun you will hate personally after lugging it for a few grueling days

spent chasing hounds. It would be far better to carry a slick little iron - sighted carbine chambered for .356 Win., .444 Marlin or .45 - 70 Gov. and weighing only 6 1/2 pounds.

In places where calling bears is a common hunting tactic it is said that the bears often come in very aggressively. This is a different bear than one that may be placidly feeding, and it sometimes takes a lot of killing with these pumped - up beasts. It's no place to fool with marginal calibers, and the people who hunt this way favor big guns with quality bullets.

continue to the next page



Philip Lantz brought in a buck. Photo courtesy of Anderson OUtdoors in Buckhannon.



Gary Acord's buck has points everywhere. Photo courtesy of Uncle Tom's in Oceanna.

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GAME CHECKING



The Question of Caliber

Any bear you shoot should have a hole on both sides. Forget that nonsense about leaving the bullet in the bear and expending all its energy. You need an exit hole for lots of reasons, but the primary one is because bears are notoriously hard to track. Their feet are wide, flat and soft, so they will leave few followable tracks on most ground. Their hair soaks up a lot of blood, and bullet holes are quick to plug up with fat and tissue. The best

insurance is to use a large enough cartridge with a high - quality bullet that is on the heavy side for the caliber so that it will exit, leaving a large enough hole for a decent blood trail.

While I have killed several bears with handguns, we are talking rifle cartridges here and I see little reason to use a handgun cartridge in a rifle for hunting bears. Certainly, a .44 Rem. Mag. will do the job on a close - range bear, and I have a custom - chambered H&R single - shot in .445 Super Mag. that would be deadly, but it remains that there are far better choices in rifle cartridges. I would say the same about cartridges in the class of the .30 - 30 Win. That it has killed a lot of bears is undeniable, but I would not include it on a list of good bear guns.

The .243 Win. is too light, and in my experience, so is the 7mm - 08 Rem. In theory, these calibers should make decent bear guns, but the bears I have seen shot with them have left me less than impressed. The .260 Rem. is in the same class.

The .308 Win. can do the job, but it's still a shadow of a .30 - 06 if they are loaded to equal pressures.

Long - action cartridges, starting with the .270 Win., using quality 150 - grain bullets, are decent bear guns. Moving up to the .280 Rem., a 160 - grain bullet does the trick, and for the .30 - 06, it's hard to beat the 180 - grainers. If there is one truly great bear cartridge in this family, it's the .35 Whelen.

Springfield rifles will blow up if
continue to the next page



Jennifer Paynter arrowed a nice buck. Photo courtesy of Uncle Tom's in Oceana.



James Ray shot a great buck. Photo courtesy of Holbert's Store in Big Bend.

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diots put ammo in them that they shouldn't. This may be a justifiable fear. In a modern gun, though, a good handload, or one of the semi-custom loads on the market, makes the .45 - 70 Gov. a bad - dude bear gun. My favorite handload uses a Speer 400 - grain flat - nosed bullet at almost 1,800 fps.

Any belted magnum, .270 or larger, will be bad news for bears. The best include the 7mms, Remington or Weatherby, with 160 - to 175 - grain bullets and any of the .300 magnums with 180 - or 200 - grain bullets. The .338 Win. Mag. and .340 Wthby Mag. shine with 225 - or 250 - grain bullets. Some hunters will argue that these are more gun than is really needed, but on the other hand, they are great insurance. That might also be said about the .375 H&H Mag.; it's more gun than needed, but rest assured, you can't kill a bear too dead.

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Chris Hall, from Hico, used an arrow on this nice black bear.



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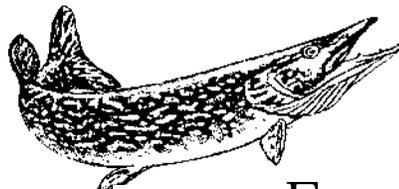
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SIDE-BY-SIDES

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PLUS FREE WINCH!

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**26th
Annual**



West Virginia Hunting and Fishing Show

January 18 - 20

Friday 12 Noon to 9 PM

Saturday 9 AM to 9 PM

Sunday 9 AM to 5 PM

Charleston Civic Center

**West Virginia Whitetail Hall of Fame
Auction - 5 PM Saturday**

Adult Admission \$8.00

Children 6 - 12 \$1.00 Under 6 FREE