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November 2022

NRA Official Journal of the National Rifle Association

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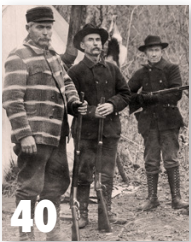


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**COVER STORY****THE APPLE OF OUR EYE**

It is often the first installation in a deer camp. It is usually a timber cut from nearby woods but it could be a salvaged scrap pipe. Regardless, it is always a place for hunters to gather, assess and admire deer. It is the buck pole, a symbol of success to American hunters.

BY PATRICK DURKIN**40****HE FINDS BUCKS IN UNUSUAL PLACES**

Across a lifetime of hunting whitetails, the author has learned that some of the best places to find big bucks tend to be scrubby country or old farmsteads many hunters overlook. His attention has paid dividends more than once, including last year in Nebraska's Platte River country.

BY RON SPOMER**48****HAUNTED BY THE ONES THAT GOT AWAY**

Do you toss and turn late at night over memories of bucks that got away? Our man does, too. Here are a handful of sleep-robbing tales of bucks that never even gave him a shot.

BY BRYCE M. TOWSLEY**54****SPECIAL REPORT****THE FUTURE OF OUR RIGHTS DEPENDS
ON YOUR VOTE**

NRA members shouldn't lack for motivation to vote Nov. 8. In fact, President Joe Biden and his full-spectrum war on Second Amendment rights should have gun owners racing to the polls.

BY JASON QUIMET**18**

The NRA, the foremost guardian of the traditional American right to "Keep and Bear Arms," believes every law-abiding citizen is entitled to the ownership and legal use of firearms, and that every reputable gun owner should be a member of the NRA.

Wayne R. LaPierre, Executive Vice President



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FIRST LIGHT

THE BEST OR MOST DIVISIVE WAY TO MANAGE DEER?

Love 'em or hate 'em, they are a feature of deer seasons across many states. Here's the background—and the pros and cons—of earn-a-buck tags.

BY PATRICK DURKIN

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JOIN THE HUNT

HOW TO CONFRONT SOCIAL MEDIA SENSATIONALISM

The best way to address the bullying nature of sensationalism in social media is to dismantle anti-hunters' truth-twisting by sharing the science behind why we hunt.

BY BRENDA WEATHERBY

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KNOW-HOW

THE LONG HAUL

Sometimes success during deer season demands staying in the woods from dawn till dusk. Here's how to survive the all-day sit without freezing, starving or drowning yourself with boredom.

BY BRAD FITZPATRICK

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SNIPER TRAINING TO TAKE TO THE FIELD

Most hunters will never attend the U.S. Army Sniper School in Ft. Benning, Ga., or similar courses conducted by other branches of our military, but the basic elements of this type of training should be recognized as worthy techniques for any hunter to take to the field. Here are a few elements from their playbooks we can pocket for future success.

BY MARK KAYSER

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The items and information offered or detailed in this publication are intended for, and directed and offered to, only those at least 18 years of age or older and who are in compliance with all applicable federal, state, and local laws.



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VETERAN FRIENDLY EMPLOYER

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Skull Cleaning in a CWD World

I read with interest Mark Kayser's article on DIY skull cleaning ("Know-How," September). His method is sound, but you'll do much less scraping by bringing the water to a boil and adding 2-3 cups of 20 Mule Team Borax to the water, then reducing the heat to a simmer. Borax dissolves almost everything. You can actually just cut your cape and place the whole thing in the boil. The Borax will get rid of everything—hide, jaws, ears, eyes, brains, etc. Try it, you'll like it.

Gary Evenson, Basin, Ariz.

Mark Kayser had a good article on skull cleaning. In Nebraska, we do have chronic wasting disease to some extent. I have in the past brought my skulls home and then fastened them to a pole about 8 feet above the ground. Making sure to wrap the pole with some aluminum or something slick so mice cannot crawl up, I leave them there for a year and let the bugs crawl in and the bugs crawl out to clean up the skull. Very little power washing is needed after this. This only works if you live in a semi-rural area like I do. In a typical subdivision this is probably not acceptable.

Flip McEvoy, Bellevue, Neb.



The U.S. Supreme Court ruled as unconstitutional New York's "good-cause" requirement to exercise the right to bear arms in its landmark, 6-3 decision in *New York State Rifle & Pistol Association v. Bruen* on June 23, 2022. Justice Clarence Thomas, writing for the majority, ruled that the Second Amendment protects the right to carry a handgun for self-defense outside the home. Every law-abiding citizen is now eligible for a carry permit. Six states must now consider their "good-cause" requirement invalidated. Such is the gravity inherent in a national ruling.

I mention this because Election Day is nigh. On Nov. 8, I urge every reader who is able to vote—and when you vote to stick to your guns. No, you don't have to carry concealed simply because the Supreme Court says you can. But you should vote your guns.

It's true the NRA was formed to educate and train a citizenry in the proper use of small arms. But it's also true the NRA for decades has been forced to fight for the Second Amendment on behalf of all gun owners. Look no further than anti-gun legislation passed in 1934, 1968 and 1994 to see why. Listen only to the rhetoric coming from anti-gun politicians in this election cycle to hear why.

Read "What This U.S. Supreme Court Decision Will Mean for America" (A1F.com/HalbrookBruen) in our sister publication *America's 1st Freedom*. It is excellent scholarship by Stephen P. Halbrook, and a must-read for all who believe in the Second Amendment.

J. Scott Olmsted
Editor in Chief



THE ARMED CITIZEN

When I receive my copy of *AH* each month, I read it front to back. I especially read "The Armed Citizen." I understand the police have to do an investigation, but instead of the report saying "no charges expected to be brought against the homeowner" it should say "the victim will be given an award for protecting their family."

Mike Kahl, Delta Pa.

Mr. Kahl, "The Armed Citizen" is an extremely popular monthly department in NRA official journals. Given recent upticks in crime, I don't expect that to change anytime soon.—JSO

TODAY'S ELK COUNTRY?

I enjoyed reading Mark Kayser's article about the shifting habits of elk in the Rocky Mountain Range ("How to Unlock Overlooked Elk Country," September). Unfortunately, my hunting buddies and I are experiencing everything Mark wrote about.

Twenty years ago we hunted private and public land in Colorado and enjoyed many a successful hunt. Then the big ranch in the valley was bought by a Wall Street billionaire who eventually shut down hunting so he could fly out from NYC to see lots of elk on his ranch. That one act caused all the elk in the mountains to run down to the ranch and stay there. We eventually had to find other places to hunt. We have tried to adapt, but over the last three years of guided elk hunting on public and private land we have seen only six sets of elk tracks. That's it—six.

Sure the wildlife agencies have meetings with landowners to discuss it but nothing really changes for the hunting public. Everyone knows the reason for the decline in quality elk hunting, and there are no solutions. The other thing is the range management on national forest and BLM lands. One has to search long and hard to find areas on public land, including wilderness areas, where the grass hasn't been chewed down to nothing by cattle by September. The environmental and conservation organizations that are supposed to be our watchdogs are silent on this issue.

Gene F. Odat, Landisburg, Pa.



The editors welcome your letters. Mail them to:

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Or email us at americanhunter@nrahq.org. Letters may be edited for the sake of brevity.

NRA HUNTER'S CODE OF ETHICS **1.** I will consider myself an invited guest of the landowner, seeking his permission, and so conducting myself that I may be welcome in the future. **2.** I will obey the rules of safe gun handling, and will courteously but firmly insist that others who hunt with me do the same. **3.** I will obey all game laws and regulations and will insist that my companions do likewise. **4.** I will do my best to acquire those marksmanship skills which ensure clean, sportsmanlike kills. **5.** I will support conservation efforts which can ensure good hunting for future generations of Americans. **6.** I will pass along to younger hunters the attitudes and skills essential to a true outdoor sportsman.

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When an uninvited neighbor joined an Independence Day party in Surprise, Ariz., on July 3, the homeowners allowed him to mingle. However, as several people were gathered in the kitchen, the neighbor suddenly pulled out a gun and began firing, first striking the male homeowner in the head. The man's 7-month-pregnant wife, believing him to be dead, grabbed their two daughters and barricaded them and other children in a room deeper in the house, telling them to hide in the closet and "not make a peep if you hear loud noises." Two other women attempted to fight the crazed neighbor and also screamed for the male homeowner, knowing he was a concealed carrier but apparently not knowing the extent of his wounds. The homeowner heard their cries and was able to get up, draw his firearm and shoot the suspect four times in the chest, killing him. The male homeowner suffered a fractured jaw and torn eardrum, plus lost his sense of smell and his entire left eye. Two other partygoers died and three others were injured in the unprovoked attack. "If I didn't have my gun with me, everyone in the house would have died," the homeowner said. "The news vans would've been front and center. But because I did, you never even heard about it," he added. (NRA YouTube video, 9/7/2022; foxnews.com, New York, N.Y., 9/7/2022)

In Lincoln County, Miss., during the early-morning hours of Tuesday, July 19, police received a call about a man threatening people at one residence, but the man had left before officers arrived. However, as they investigated that incident, they received another call about a man breaking into a home and assaulting two men there. When they arrived at that scene, they found that a neighbor there had also been attacked. Again, as they investigated, they received another disturbance call—this time, that a man had attempted to hit someone with his car and had been shot. The man, who was later found to be connected to each of these disturbances, died of his injuries at the hospital. The armed citizen was not charged. (wlb.com, Jackson, Miss., 7/19/2022)

A 52-year-old man was at home visiting with a friend just before 8 a.m. on Aug. 13 when he discovered a male trespasser on his property in Emerald Township, Ohio, and called police. Before deputies could arrive, the trespasser assaulted the homeowner's friend. The homeowner attempted to stop the assault, telling the unknown man multiple times to stop or he would shoot him. The assailant, however, then directed his attack at the homeowner, who shot him in the hip, stopping the attack. The investigation was still ongoing, but the sheriff noted that officers believed the 28-year-old trespasser to have been under the influence of illegal drugs. "The property owner and his friend were presented with a stranger acting erratically and the man eventually became violent by physically assaulting someone," the sheriff noted. "I don't want to see

people being shot, but I wholeheartedly believe people have a right to protect themselves ... and in this case, it appears to be a justified self-defense situation." (hometownstations.com, Lima, Ohio, 8/13/2022)

A mother in Milwaukee, Wis., was showering the morning of Aug. 15 when she heard her children—a 12-year-old and a 14-year-old—start screaming. She raced to her bedroom for her gun and ran, dripping wet, into the hallway to find a male intruder there. Her two dogs had attacked the man, but "he wouldn't stop coming," she told reporters, so she shot him multiple times, killing him. The woman was arrested but released a few hours later, though the investigation is still ongoing. Neighbors lauded her as a hero, with one neighbor noting that "she did what any mother would do: defend her children." (tmj4.com, Milwaukee, Wis., 8/17/2022)

A man in San Antonio, Texas, was arriving home at his apartment complex in the early-morning hours of Friday, Aug. 19, when he noted a silver Toyota Prius circling the parking lot. Before he was able to get into his apartment, three men allegedly got out of the car, demanding he hand over valuables and pointing guns at the man. The resident drew his own firearm and shot one of the men in the neck, causing the others to flee. The robber who'd been shot later died of his injuries; police are still seeking the other two. The armed citizen was not charged with a crime. (foxsanantonio.com, San Antonio, Texas, 8/19/2022) **ah**



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One Election To Save Freedom



By Wayne LaPierre
Executive Vice President

Just weeks from now, after Americans head to the polls and the last votes are counted, you and I will be facing one of two scenarios: A venomous anti-gun president in the White House with rabid gun-hating majorities in Congress. Or, that same president with pro-Second Amendment majorities in Congress keeping him in check.

Just a few months ago, the Nancy Pelosi-led U.S. House of Representatives passed what would be the biggest and most crushing gun ban in American history. H.R. 1808 would ban millions of lawfully owned semi-automatic rifles, shotguns, pistols and standard-capacity magazines. Nearly every caliber of rifle and pistol would be impacted by this ban—even .22 rifles designed to hold what anti-gun politicians deem to be “too many rounds.”

Just hours after the bill passed, President Joe Biden praised it as a “common-sense action” and vowed to “not stop fighting” until H.R. 1808 was on his desk to be signed into law.

Because you’re an NRA member, I know I can count on you to get out and vote.

But more than ever, in this election, we need to multiply our votes with the votes of our like-minded family members, friends and colleagues. No one can sit out this election, and if you need any help convincing freedom-minded friends to vote, I can’t think of better motivation than the very real and devastating scenario I’ve laid out above.

Biden’s administration is stacked with gun-ban extremists from top to bottom. He has a Congress where every committee, subcommittee and leadership post is run by his anti-gun allies. And, of course, every single day he can rely on a multi-trillion dollar, anti-gun propaganda machine—that amazingly, some folks still refer to as “journalists”—who regurgitate his lies and bend over backward to cover for his many disastrous policy failures.

Despite all of it, NRA members like you continue to hold the line for our freedom. I’m proud beyond words because of what you and your fellow NRA members have accomplished since Biden was sworn into office.

That said, the only way we can guarantee Biden never gets the chance to sign H.R. 1808 into law, along with so many other disastrous anti-gun bills that are just waiting in the wings, is to win this election.

That’s it. This single election is our best and only insurance policy against losing our freedom.

I know you’ve heard me say this before, but it always bears repeating: This election is the most important election in our lifetimes. I tell you this now, just as I have in the past, because every election is the most important in our lifetimes. Because, unfortunately, you and I are always just one lost election away from losing our freedom.

Just imagine if Hillary Clinton had won in 2016 and had the opportunity to put three justices on the U.S. Supreme Court. We not only would’ve lost the recent *Bruen* decision, which safeguards our right to self-defense outside our homes, but the *Heller* and *McDonald* decisions would be well on their way to being overturned by now.

**IN THIS ELECTION, WE
NEED TO MULTIPLY OUR
VOTES WITH THE VOTES OF
OUR LIKE-MINDED FAMILY
MEMBERS, FRIENDS AND
COLLEAGUES. NO ONE CAN
SIT OUT THIS ELECTION.**

When we win elections, we get good men and women who safeguard our Second Amendment freedom. We get honest judges who uphold our constitutional rights. We get laws that restore lost freedoms and protect our right to purchase, own and carry firearms. We get the votes we need in Congress to make sure gun-ban bills never see the light of day.

But when we lose elections? Then we get judges who work to gut the Second Amendment. We lose our lawful right to self-defense. We get legislation banning guns, magazines and ammo. And a loss in this election would mean that very specific legislation makes its way to Joe Biden’s desk.

Every election is a historic, precious opportunity for the heritage of freedom that you and I work so hard to reclaim, safeguard and defend.

This one is the most precious opportunity of all. Let’s win it!



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"A Good Guy With A Gun" — A Fact, Not A Sound Bite!

A good guy with a gun stopping a bad guy with a gun is not a rare event, regardless of what anti-Second Amendment types would have you believe. We rarely hear of these good guys because legacy-media-outlets-turned-propaganda-mills simply don't report such events; it doesn't fit their agenda. This is changing, albeit at glacial speed, with formal and informal journalists using social media like YouTube, email lists, etc., to report the truth. Even when legacy-media outlets feel forced to report on a good guy saving their own and perhaps others' innocent lives, their reports rarely give much detail. If possible, they point to prior military or law enforcement experience, even if it is decades old, to minimize the impact of an "ordinary citizen" using a firearm to save lives.

A recent example of a good guy saving countless innocent lives occurred at the Greenwood Park Mall in Greenwood, Ind., on July 17, 2022. Twenty-two-year-old Elisjshta Dicken was a good guy with a gun, and he had a lot more than a gun. He had courage, a love for others and a willingness to put his life on the line for perfect strangers. When a 20-year-old would-be mass murderer opened fire on dozens of innocent people in the mall food court, our hero stopped him in a mere 15 seconds! I'm hardly the only person to call Mr. Dicken a hero for his actions. In fact, Greenwood Police Chief Jim Ison said this about Mr. Dicken: "His actions were nothing short of heroic. He engaged the gunman from quite a distance with a handgun, was very proficient in that, very tactically sound, and as he moved to close in on the suspect, he was also motioning for people to exit behind him."

Mr. Dicken was at the mall with his girlfriend when he heard shots being fired quite some distance away. He directed his girlfriend to safety and then started closing the distance between himself and the murderer. As Chief Ison described, Mr. Dicken directed others to exit behind him as he closed on the threat. As he neared the assailant who was armed with a rifle, Dicken was trying to get others to safety. He could have left with his girlfriend, but he chose to put his life in danger to save others. Apparently, he did so instinctively, because only 15 seconds after the murderer started shooting, he was dead. Mr. Dicken fired 10 rounds, striking the murderer eight times from 40 yards away, under unimaginable stress.

Now let's talk about Mr. Dicken's specialized training and combat experience. It won't take long because he didn't have any!

That's right, he was just like countless other American gun owners who have no military or law enforcement experience, but who carry self-defense firearms. (Perhaps this is why the legacy media works so hard not to report on this incident.) When asked about his skill with a handgun, Mr. Dicken said that his grandfather taught him to shoot. That's right: grandpa taught his grandson to shoot and it saved countless lives on July 17, 2022. Remember that, all you moms, dads and grandparents.

So, how did the anti-Second Amendment community respond to Mr. Dicken's heroic acts? The predominant response was no response—and I mean church-mouse quiet. Fortunately, some did respond, and in so doing, unintentionally revealed the level of violence they are willing to accept to promote gun control. It is as shocking as it is enlightening, folks, so you better pay attention.

Some anti-Second Amendment types have criticized Mr. Dicken for having his life-saving handgun with him in the mall. They would have preferred that he had not been armed. This necessarily means they would rather have dozens of innocent people murdered than have a "good guy with a gun" save the day! Sure, they might claim otherwise, but there were only two ways that incident was going to end. Either the murderer was killed early on, or dozens of innocent people were going to die. People who prefer the latter scenario exist, folks, and they desperately want to control not only the narrative, but Congress, state legislatures, judicial offices and the media.

What can we learn? First, carry a self-defense handgun everywhere you can legally do so. I know a Baptist minister who has a great tag line on an internet forum. It reads, "24/7 or guess right." That really sums it up. Secondly, obtain all the firearm self-defense training you can afford. There are more than 100,000 NRA certified instructors, so you can find one in your area. Third, train your kids and grandkids in the safe and responsible use of firearms. On July 17, 2022, dozens of innocent people walked out of the Greenwood Mall and went home to their families because Elisjshta Dicken's grandfather did exactly that. We must all be ready for that day we pray never comes.



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Your Vote Matters: A Pro-Gun Congress Can Stop Biden's Anti-gun Executive Overreach



By Jason Ouimet
Executive Director,
NRA-ILA

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In August, a sprawling regulation took effect that fundamentally changes what counts as a regulated "firearm" under federal law. Certain firearm parts, parts kits and even unfinished receiver blanks will now be treated by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) as if they were operable guns, with all the bureaucracy and restrictions that implies.

The rule is as audacious as it is indecipherable in its details. ATF is vastly expanding its own law enforcement jurisdiction, simply by unilaterally redefining the main commodity it regulates.

The White House and its collaborators in the media tried to sell the rule to the public as a crackdown on so-called "ghost guns." These guns do not function differently than "normal" guns, and federal law requires that they be just as detectable by X-ray machines or magnetometers as other firearms. But because they are made by unlicensed individuals for personal use, they do not bear the markings and serial numbers of guns produced or imported by federal firearm licensees (FFLs).

The administration claims "ghost guns" are a public safety threat, because they are more difficult for law enforcement officers to trace to an original owner if they are recovered at a crime scene and because their parts can sometimes be obtained without a background check. Those claims are dubious, at best.

Firearm traces can only help police identify a gun's original retail purchaser. The typical firearm recovered at a crime scene, however, was bought years earlier and has changed hands multiple times. Interrogating the original buyer is therefore likely to be a time-consuming dead end.

Meanwhile, criminals easily obtain finished firearms outside channels of regulated commerce. That won't change just because law-abiding people will now have to go through background checks to get receiver blanks or firearms parts kits. Like most gun control, the rule is more about burdening the law-abiding than stopping violent criminals. And the rule gives Biden's ATF unprecedented authority over the U.S. firearm industry, which Biden himself has publicly referred to as "[o]ur enemy."

There is one sure way to counter the runaway Biden administration's executive overreach, however—elect pro-gun majorities to Congress.

Currently, the White House and both chambers of Congress are all held by the same party, which has openly embraced sweeping gun control. The current anti-gun majority in the U.S. House of Representatives has gone further

than ever before to restrict Second Amendment rights, including passing the most-extensive gun ban in the nation's history in July by a margin of only four votes.

And, that's not all. The Nancy Pelosi-led House has passed private transfer bans, waiting periods for lawful firearm purchasers and the most-extensive federal red-flag law we've ever seen. This emboldens Joe Biden to push the envelope on executive actions, because he knows he can act with impunity.

The midterm elections this November offer an opportunity to change that and to restore the Constitution's checks on the Biden White House until Biden himself faces accountability in 2024.

A pro-gun House of Representatives does more than simply ensure any legislative proposal to restrict Second Amendment rights is DOA. It serves as a bulwark against the executive himself.

The U.S. House's unique role in America's constitutional framework is to give the people direct representation in the government that is accountable not just to the needs of a state but to individual districts within that state. Each member of the House has to face voters every two years, meaning they must be very attentive and responsive to the needs of their constituents. Members of the Senate, by contrast, serve six-year terms and are more immune to the politics of the moment. Flipping the House after its recent anti-gun actions would send a strong message to the government to keep its hands off our firearms.

Members of the House also wield the power of the purse and can defund specific agency actions or cut entire agency budgets. The huge spending bills that Congress is required to pass to keep the government running originate in the House and have been used to block various firearm-registration schemes and to prevent ATF overreach. Indeed, the Obama administration's brazen attempt to ban M855 ammunition ended in part because the pro-gun chairman of a key House appropriations subcommittee threatened to "step on [ATF's] air hose."

House committees can also hold hearings to expose executive abuse, something that would be extremely helpful to curb ATF's current "zero tolerance" revocation policy for firearms dealers.

There is no doubt a pro-gun House is a firewall against executive actions like ATF's self-serving attempt to redefine the very meaning of a "firearm." So, be sure to visit nrpvf.org to know where the candidates in your district stand, and vote freedom first this November!



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Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) and other like-minded members of Congress need only a few seats this election to usher in draconian restrictions on the right to keep and bear arms.

AP Images photo by Bill Clark/CG. Roll Call

By Jason Ouimet
Executive Director,
NRA-ILA



THE FUTURE OF OUR RIGHTS DEPENDS ON YOUR VOTE

NRA members shouldn't lack for motivation to vote Nov. 8. In fact, President Joe Biden and his full-spectrum war on Second Amendment rights should have gun owners racing to the polls.

The foremost threat is extreme gun-control legislation. On July 29, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a ban on commonly owned semi-automatic firearms and standard-capacity magazines. Thanks in part to the filibuster, the legislation hasn't passed the U.S. Senate. However, Biden has made clear that if things go his way in November, banning guns is one of his top priorities. On Aug. 25, the president told a crowd in Maryland, "If we elect two more senators, we keep the House—and Democrats, we're going to get a lot of unfinished business we're going to get done ... we'll ban assault weapons."

Obviously, this extreme gun ban is a far cry from the claims that many of these lawmakers made when running for office. The bills passed by the House should put to rest any claim that the current House majority is seeking any type of "reasonable" gun-law reform. (Of course, to those who want to completely eliminate our right to keep and bear arms, any additional burdens on lawful gun owners will be "reasonable.")

In addition to the gun and magazine bans, the House also passed bans on private transfers of firearms, legislation to delay lawful firearm sales, and a bill to create a procedure for

the federal government to seize firearms without due process of law. When it came to gun control, no bill was too extreme for the current anti-gun House majority.

But, without a Senate willing to change its rules to enact the Biden-Harris gun-control agenda, the president and Attorney General Merrick Garland spent the first half of his term undermining the Second Amendment by executive fiat. These dubious exercises in executive power came after President Barack Obama's White House correctly acknowledged that they had done everything in the executive branch's authority to target firearms.

In May 2021, Biden's ATF (overseen by Garland's Department of Justice) published a notice of proposed rulemaking 2021R-05F, concerning the "Definition of 'Frame or Receiver' and Identification of Firearms." The rule altered the Code of Federal Regulations to effectively prohibit the sale of unfinished frames or receivers, sometimes called "80%" frames or receivers, that law-abiding gun owners use to make their own firearms. A final version of the rule was published on April 26 and the new regulation went into effect on Aug. 24.

As discussed in more detail in my column this month, this executive measure seeks to make it harder for law-abiding shooters and hobbyists to make their own firearms for personal use, a right Americans have enjoyed that predates the republic. Violent criminals aren't typically known for a strong work ethic, which

is why the idea of lawbreakers tinkering away in a workshop when firearms can be accessed by criminal means will strike sensible people as farcical. This is borne out by the data. A Department of Justice survey of state and federal inmates published in 2019 found that among those inmates who possessed a firearm at the time of their offense, 75% obtained the gun “Off the street/underground market,” “from a family member or friend, or as a gift,” or by theft.

In addition to targeting a time-honored American tradition, the rule contained some lesser-discussed changes to federal regulation. Chief among these involved the ATF’s firearm-tracing regime. When purchasing a firearm from a Federal Firearm Licensee (gun dealer or FFL) the buyer must fill out an ATF Form 4473 with personally identifying information. Prior to the rule, FFLs were required to maintain a record of these Form 4473s for 20 years or until they went out of business, at which point the records must be sent to ATF’s National Tracing Center (NTC). According to proponents of this scheme, if a gun is recovered at a crime scene, then manufacturer records and the Form 4473 would help track the firearm to the initial retail purchaser, which, in theory, could assist in identifying the perpetrator.

The 20-year limit on required retention of Form 4473s ensured that the ATF could not compile a complete record of retail firearm sales—which would amount to a firearm registry. With the new rule, ATF now requires FFLs to retain Form 4473s indefinitely and to send them to ATF upon ceasing operation. The change dovetails with anti-gun efforts to “modernize” the NTC in a manner that would make it easier for the agency to track retail gun purchases.

This has significant consequences for law-abiding gun owners. While the NTC and its records can be used to trace firearms from a crime scene to a retail purchase, the system can also be used in the reverse—to trace firearms from a manufacturer to a retail purchaser.

Called a forward trace, in 1994, ATF changed the legal classification of certain models of shotguns and used this method to track down the purchasers in an attempt to get them to register their lawfully purchased firearms as “destructive devices” under the National Firearms Act (NFA). With David Chipman calling for the AR-15s to be registered under the NFA, and President Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris calling for gun confiscation, it is easy to see how a more-comprehensive tracing regime could

be employed to harass gun owners and facilitate confiscation.

Less than a month after announcing the frame or receiver rule, the Biden ATF took aim a popular subset of handguns. In June 2021, Biden’s ATF announced rule 2021R-08, “Factoring Criteria for Firearms with Attached ‘Stabilizing Braces.’”

Federal law defines a handgun as a firearm designed to be capable of being fired by one hand. When equipped to an AR-15 platform, or other large format, handgun, a stabilizing brace assists a person’s ability to accurately fire the firearm with a single hand. These devices were initially designed to help disabled veterans regain the ability to use these firearms.

Under the proposed rule, nearly all configurations of firearms equipped with a stabilizing brace would be reclassified as short-barreled rifles subject to the NFA taxation and registration requirement. Those seeking to maintain possession of these firearms, that they lawfully built or purchased, would be required to register their property with the federal government or alter their firearm’s configuration.

Later in June 2021, the Biden-Harris administration targeted FFLs through a new “zero tolerance” policy. At the time, the White House explained, “ATF will seek to revoke the licenses of dealers the first time that they violate federal law” in relation to certain violations. Some of these violations could include simple paperwork errors, such as minor mistakes on a Form 4473. The new policy has led to speculation that the effort is aimed at reducing the number of gun dealers, thus making it harder for Americans to exercise their Second Amendment rights.

Electing a pro-gun Congress will help to protect gun owners in four distinct ways. First, a pro-gun Congress will put an end to Biden’s dreams of gun-ban legislation.

Second, Congress maintains the power of the purse. Power over federal agency funding is an important tool to ensure federal bureaucrats act in accordance with the law. Congress can defund enforcement of improper agency rulemakings and ensure that the ATF’s focus is where it belongs—on violent criminals.

Third, a pro-gun Congress can exercise proper oversight of the government agencies tasked with enforcing gun laws. Opposition party-led House and Senate Oversight Committees might even be able to get to the bottom of federal law enforcement’s bizarre treatment of the allegations of illegal gun possession surrounding Hunter Biden.

Fourth, as important as it is to empower our allies to play defense, voting

isn’t all about protecting the status quo against a lawless presidential administration and a malicious Congress. Just as important in recent years has been how pro-gun senators have helped to create a pro-Second Amendment judiciary.

Think back to February 2016, when U.S. Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia unexpectedly passed away. President Obama nominated Garland to replace the author of the landmark *District of Columbia v. Heller* decision, which affirmed the Second Amendment protects the individual right to keep and bear arms. Given Garland’s recent conduct, there can be little doubt that the partisan hack would have used his seat on the bench to undermine constitutional rights.

Thankfully, American voters had granted the opposition party control of the U.S. Senate in 2014. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) and Judiciary Chairman Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) ruled out confirming an Obama nominee prior to the 2016 election. With the Supreme Court on the ballot, the American people voted Donald Trump into the White House.

In the following four years, a pro-gun Senate majority helped President Trump to confirm three worthy Supreme Court justices and remake the lower federal courts with a raft of pro-Second Amendment judges.

Voting to elect that pro-gun Senate has paid real dividends for gun owners. On June 23, the Supreme Court issued its decision in *New York State Rifle & Pistol Association v. Bruen*. In reaffirming that the Second Amendment protects an individual right to keep and bears arms, the decision threw out New York’s 111-year-old discretionary carry-licensing regime—making Right-to-Carry the law of the land.

Moreover, Trump-appointed lower court judges have worked to interpret the Second Amendment and Supreme Court precedent faithfully. On Aug. 23, a Trump-appointed federal district court judge in Texas ruled that the right to bear arms outside the home for self-defense extends to young adults ages 18-20.

Given the dire stakes of this election, NRA members must make their voices heard on Nov. 8. Moreover, NRA members must work to ensure that like-minded family, friends and neighbors understand the threat an unchecked Biden administration poses to Second Amendment rights. A sufficient group of informed, motivated and voting gun owners can keep Biden and Garland in check for the next two years and lay the groundwork for a brighter future in 2024. **ah**



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Our Aussie friend would approve of our rendition of his "knife." Forged of high grade 420 surgical stainless steel, this knife is an impressive 16" from pommel to point. And, the blade is full tang, meaning it runs the entirety of the knife, even though part of it is under wraps in the natural bone and wood handle.

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Earn-A-Buck: An Effective, Divisive Way to Manage Deer

By Patrick Durkin

If wildlife-agency biologists know a better, faster, more efficient way to reduce overpopulated deer herds than “earn-a-buck” (EAB) regulations, they’re keeping it to themselves.

Likewise, if wildlife agencies know a faster, surer way to enrage certain deer hunters than EAB, they’re keeping that secret, too.

The fact is no herd-reduction tool is more effective—and divisive—than EAB, which requires hunters to shoot a doe or fawn before “earning” their chance

to shoot an antlered buck. Many EAB rules focus on suburbs with large populations of deer and people, or larger rural regions dealing with extensive crop damage and/or chronic wasting disease. EAB is seldom, if ever, applied statewide.

Many states try “softer” alternatives—longer seasons, extra antlerless seasons, antler-point restrictions and pocketfuls of free antlerless tags—but the results never rival EAB. When asked how other methods rank, Kip Adams, conservation director for the National Deer Association, said: “Earn-a-buck is alone in first place. If there’s a second place, it’s a far-distant second.”

Adams isn’t exaggerating. A 2010 study led by Tim Van Deelen, a University of Wisconsin-Madison wildlife professor, found that EAB regulations boost antlerless kills an average of 5.28 deer per square mile. In contrast, four- and eight-day antlerless-only seasons boost kills only 2.85 and 3.42 deer per square mile on average, respectively. And when coupling EAB with extra antlerless seasons, those seasons’ kill increases 56 percent and 88 percent, respectively.

No Viable Alternatives?

Possibly the only system that could



Possibly the only system that could challenge EAB's effectiveness is antlerless-only hunting throughout autumn's archery, muzzleloader and general-firearm deer seasons.

three Canadian provinces (Quebec, Saskatchewan and Newfoundland) with the EAB option, according to NDA surveys. In 2021, however, no provinces and only seven states still had EAB options, and only four of those (Connecticut, Nebraska, New Jersey and Virginia) were holdovers from 2010. The 2021 newcomers were Indiana, Tennessee and West Virginia.

How can a system so effective be so widely hated? Hunters' main fear is that if they see a huge buck before earning a buck tag, they must pass up a possible once-in-a-lifetime shot. Other hunters just don't want "the government" telling them what to do, even if the system consistently produces older bucks with bigger antlers.

"One sure way to grow big antlers is to increase nutrition by improving their food base, and shooting more does makes that happen," said Keith Warnke, a retired wildlife biologist who oversaw Wisconsin's deer program in the 2000s. "When it's a hunter's choice to make, they'll shoot the doe first to ensure there's 'fewer mouths in the pasture.' But when an agency makes the same people shoot a doe first, they get mad; even hostile."

The Virginia System

To avoid that backlash, Virginia modified its EAB rules. Its hunters don't have to shoot an antlerless deer first. But before shooting a second buck, which is allowed statewide, they must first shoot an antlerless deer. And if they hunt east of the Blue Ridge Mountains in areas with a three-buck limit, they must first shoot a second antlerless deer before killing a third buck.

"We knew we couldn't send deer hunters out to hunt deer, and then tell them they can't shoot a buck that comes by," said Matt Knox, deer project leader for Virginia's Department of Wildlife Resources. "With our system, the worst thing hunters can do is shoot a fork-horn first. They'd paint themselves into

a corner. Then they must pass up a big buck if it comes by. It still makes sense to shoot an antlerless deer first. That gives you options for the next deer."

Is this EAB version working in Virginia? Yes and maybe. "It usually boosts our doe kill about 8 percent, so we're gaining ground in some areas, but staying stable in other areas," Knox said. "Before, though, we just kept losing ground, no matter how many 'doe days' we held, or how many antlerless tags we gave out."

Warnke said the biggest obstacle to reducing herd size is getting successful hunters to shoot more than one deer each year. EAB forces the issue, which Wisconsin data prove. When Wisconsin imposed EAB for roughly half the state from 2006 to 2008, successful hunters shot an average of 1.55 deer each statewide. In the years since without EAB (2009 through 2021), successful hunters shot an average of 1.38 deer each statewide; or 11 percent fewer deer. That might sound insignificant, but it would add about 35,000 kills in a state averaging 318,550 kills the past five seasons.

Likewise, during the 2006-2008 EAB years, the percentage of successful Wisconsin hunters shooting one deer was 64 percent; two deer, 24 percent; and three deer, 7.5 percent. But since 2009, those percentages slipped. Successful hunters who shot only one deer rose to 73 percent, while those shooting two deer fell to 20 percent and three deer to 5 percent.

Conclusion

Adams thinks states could convince hunters to shoot more than one deer by explaining how it benefits the herd. Even then, more hunters need convenient places to donate or share their deer.

"We could use a big national boost to help with that," Adams said. "Some states do a better job communicating nutritional, disease and habitat needs to hunters. Other states could learn a lot from following their examples." **ah**

challenge EAB's effectiveness is antlerless-only hunting throughout autumn's archery, muzzleloader and general-firearm deer seasons. But few, if any, wildlife agencies have tested this "nuclear option" and survived the shock wave.

In fact, when Wisconsin's Natural Resources Board tried imposing antlerless-only hunting for all 1996 deer seasons, hunters and hunting lawmakers opposed it so viciously that Assemblyman John Gard invented the EAB alternative. Wisconsin hunters accepted EAB initially, but fought it so fiercely in subsequent years that the DNR quit using it after 2008. Wisconsin lawmakers then abolished EAB for good in 2011.

The previous year, Wisconsin was one of only eight states (along with Connecticut, Georgia, Illinois, Maryland, Nebraska, New Jersey and Virginia) and



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The annual Waterfowl Breeding Population and Habitat Survey conducted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Canadian Wildlife Service last spring estimates 34.2 million ducks flying across North America this year, which is 4 percent below the long-term average (LTA). However, the pond count was 4 percent above the long-term average, a number that indicates good duck production.

This was the first time in two years the survey was conducted due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to a report from Delta Waterfowl, a leading conservation group that works for ducks and duck hunters, drought conditions across much of the continent last year contributed to a lower breeding population of ducks than that seen a decade ago. But, according to the Delta report: “Duck production is typically high the first year following a drought.” Perhaps best of all, Delta points out that drought conditions also contributed to lowering predator populations.

“Given the widespread dry conditions last year across most of the prairies where ducks breed,” said Chris Nicolai, waterfowl scientist for Delta, “it’s not surprising that the breeding population is lower than it has been throughout most of the 2010s.” But, he said, “Predators have a hard time in drought years just like ducks do, so ducks tend to get a break when the water comes back on the prairies.”

Highlights of the survey include blue-winged teal numbers 27 percent above their LTA; gadwall numbers 30 percent above their LTA; and redhead numbers 36 percent above their LTA. “Teal numbers are the surprise of the survey,” said Frank Rohwer, Delta Waterfowl president and chief scientist. “It’s the opposite of what we might expect, with bluewings being so high and greenwings being down.”

Overall, prairie-nesting species should benefit this year from wet conditions in the eastern Dakotas and Manitoba. “Hunters should see a lot more young ducks compared to last year,” said Nicolai.

The best news across the prairie is the uptick in pond counts—as ponds are a key driver of duck production. Heavy

snow and rain earlier this year recharged critical wetlands. The precipitation, along with a colder-than-normal spring, delayed nesting in the Dakotas and Manitoba, but the water that fell on the prairie has provided excellent habitat. “Duck production should be good this year, and appears to be phenomenal in parts of North Dakota this year,” said Mike Buxton, Delta’s senior waterfowl programs manager.

Western states continue to suffer drought. In the Pacific Flyway, duck production is expected to be poor.

The Atlantic Flyway stands to benefit greatly from good-to-excellent habitat conditions this year, according to Delta. There, mallards were up 15 percent; black ducks up 9 percent; green-winged teal up 7 percent; goldeneyes up 23 percent; and mergansers up 13 percent from 2019. Ring-necked ducks were down 11 percent.

For more information about ducks and duck hunters, visit deltawaterfowl.org.

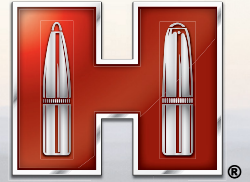
2022 DUCK COUNT

Species	2022	2019	% Change from 2019	% Change from LTA
Mallard	7.22	9.42	-23	-9
Gadwall	2.67	3.26	-18	+30
American Wigeon	2.13	2.83	-25	-19
Green-Winged Teal	2.17	3.18	-32	0
Blue-Winged Teal	6.49	5.43	+19	+27
Northern Pintail	1.78	2.27	-21	-54
Northern Shoveler	3.04	3.65	-17	+15
Redhead	0.99	0.73	+35	+36
Canvasback	0.59	0.65	-10	-1
Scaup	3.60	3.59	0	-28
Total	34.21	38.90	-12	-4

Numbers in millions; LTA = long-term average

Photo: Linda Freshwaters Amdt

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Henry Repeating Arms Donates \$50,000 for Veteran Support to The American Legion

In support of America's military veterans, in memory of those who sacrificed their lives in service to the country and as a portion of the company's \$1 million Silver Anniversary pledge, president of Henry Repeating Arms Andy Wickstrom presented a \$50,000 check to The American Legion at its national convention in Milwaukee, Wis.

American Legion National Commander Paul E. Dillard, who joined Wickstrom onstage, then received an engraved Henry Military Services Tribute Edition rifle in appreciation for his more than 50 years of membership and leadership with the organization.

Chartered by Congress in 1919, The American Legion is America's largest wartime veterans service organization, with more than 2 million Legionnaires serving the motto "Veterans Strengthening America." By extending their service beyond their military enlistment, Legionnaires seek to improve the well-being of their fellow veterans, their families, their communities and the country through various services



and programs including youth mentorship, homeless veteran assistance and quality-of-life improvements for wounded veterans.

"Henry Repeating Arms believes in The American Legion's principles and mission of strengthening America by upholding American values, fostering patriotism, giving back, and we respect their many extraordinary accomplishments," said Wickstrom. "Thank you to all who have served, to those who are currently serving. We are forever indebted to you and the sacrifices you have made."

Celebrating its 25th anniversary this year, Henry Repeating Arms' CEO and Founder Anthony Imperato made a milestone \$1 million pledge to highlight the company's charitable branch Guns For Great Causes. The philanthropic program benefits individual families of sick children going through treatments, children's hospitals, and nonprofit organizations supporting military veterans, first responders, law enforcement, wildlife conservation, hunting and shooting sports education, and Second Amendment advocacy.

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by Sneaky Pete

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Hunting season is upon us—surely *American Hunter* readers have not been idle. This is a good time to remind everyone we are calling for entries in our annual “Members’ Best” feature collection, published each June. Be it bucks or ducks, bulls or boars—if you bagged a trophy this year, we want to hear about it.

To enter, send us a 200-word description of when, where and how you filled your tag by March 1, 2023, and we’ll consider it for the annual celebration of our members’ best moments. Remember, your photo could land on the June cover, so send us your best. High-resolution trophy shots with clean backgrounds and good lighting are ideal.

Email entries and accompanying high-resolution photos (1MB or larger) to americanhunter@nrahq.org. Mail entries to: *American Hunter*; Members’ Best, 11250 Waples Mill Road, Fairfax, VA, 22030. Please include your name, address, phone number and NRA membership number. Photos will not be returned.

American Hunters, Remember Election Day is Nov. 8

The U.S. Supreme Court invalidated New York’s “good-cause” requirement to exercise the right to bear arms in *New York State Rifle & Pistol Association v. Bruen* in a 6-3 decision on June 23, 2022. Justice Clarence Thomas, writing the opinion for the Court, ruled that the Second Amendment protects the right to carry a handgun for self-defense outside the home. Every law-abiding citizen is now eligible for a carry permit.

—Stephen P. Halbrook, “What This U.S. Supreme Court Decision Will Mean for America”; read this thoroughly comprehensive review of the Court’s recent decision at A1F.com/HalbrookBruen



Photo: Jose Luis Magana / AP

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"The feel of this knife is unbelievable... this is an incredibly fine instrument." — H., Arvada, CO



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It was a perfect late autumn day in the northern Rockies. Not a cloud in the sky, and just enough cool in the air to stir up nostalgic memories of my trip into the backwoods. This year, though, was different. I was going it solo. My two buddies, pleading work responsibilities, backed out at the last minute. So, armed with my trusty knife, I set out for adventure.

Well, what I found was a whole lot of trouble. As in 8 feet and 800-pounds of trouble in the form of a grizzly bear. Seems this grumpy fella was out looking for some adventure too. Mr. Grizzly saw me, stood up to his entire 8 feet of ferocity and let out a roar that made my blood turn to ice and my hair stand up. Unsnapping my leather sheath, I felt for my hefty, trusty knife and felt emboldened. I then showed the massive grizzly over 6 inches of 420 surgical grade stainless steel, raised my hands and yelled, "Whoa bear! Whoa bear!" I must have made my point, as he gave me an almost admiring grunt before turning tail and heading back into the woods.

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I was pretty shaken, but otherwise fine. Once the adrenaline high subsided, I decided I had some work to do back home too. That was more than enough adventure for one day.

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Voice of Leadership: Addressing Social Media Sensationalism

Dismantle anti-hunters' truth-twisting by sharing the science behind why we hunt.

By **Brenda Weatherby**, Director of People and Culture, Weatherby Inc.

The landscape of our current knowledge sharing through media channels in American society can be alarming to most people. Sensationalism is common, throwing out emotional pictures and distorted information without offering the proper context to make a reasonable conclusion. We have seen this to be true across multiple controversies. Shifting popular opinion through this tactic is nothing new, but its consequences impact our shooting and hunting heritage. The solution is to train leaders to promote a nuanced approach that supports empirical research and meaningful conversations and then allows people to

decide what to believe and support. This encouragement will produce real ambassadors for hunting, providing more strength than by feeding our peers a few simplified arguments.

Sensationalism is easy to recognize. It is all around us and uses solid words or pictures to grab the attention of others. As explained in the 2021 article "Sensationalism in Media," written by Rylan Vanacore, "Media outlets resort to shocking words, exaggeration

and sometimes blatant lies." We see this regularly in the media when it comes to coverage of hunting and shooting, which Vanacore refers to as "anti-hunting propaganda." But when the opposition is screaming loudly, that doesn't mean hunters should scream louder. I think we should whisper something wise.

It is interesting to see this sensationalism in all aspects of our society, not just when addressing controversy surrounding hunting. Medical science has had its

Editor's Note: The focus of the Voice of Leadership (VOL) panel is to help educate, inform and inspire leadership within the hunting community. Essays by the VOL are regularly published by the NRA Hunters' Leadership Forum (NRAHLF.org) and The Hunting Wire (huntingwire.com).

fair share of sensationalism as well. As far back as 2001, the article “Sensationalism in the Media: When Scientists and Journalists May Be Complicit Collaborators,” by David and Richard Ransohoff, claims that “sensationalism may prevent the public from being knowledgeable participants in policy discussions about scientific issues.” Offering some insight into sensationalism in the hunting context, the article notes that “because democracies rely on an informed citizenry to debate and decide among policy choices, sensationalism may threaten effective involvement by desensitizing the public to information about medical science through repetitive cycles of excitement and disappointment.” A similar cynicism was called out in the reporting of political news as it is sometimes easier for journalists to report superficial controversies than to conduct deeper analyses of complicated problems.

The article calls out the trend toward tabloidization, trivialization, sensationalism and dumbing down in science writing and how it may drive away readers and viewers. “In politics and biomedicine, the complexity of a problem may be sacrificed to the expediency of a simple and gripping story,” it notes. “Without recognizing these tactics, we may not be prepared to respond appropriately.”

If recognizing sensationalism is the first step in combating it, then understanding why it is used is also helpful. In a general sense, it seems to increase viewing time, which is especially true for news with harmful content. According to Vanacore, “with the right wording, the most mundane thing can be blown out of proportion.” He continues to say that once you get someone’s attention, then you know you can weave your way through a very convoluted and implausible argument and make it appear more reasonable, twisting the facts along the way. We find this practice in anti-hunting messages all the time. However, we see a similar injustice when hunters assume people know the value of hunting, including as a wildlife management tool. Images of blood, death or anything of that nature require many explanations to be accepted by people unfamiliar with hunting. Hunters need to see this necessity as reasonable and welcome the opportunity to explain

instead of justifying their practice with simple explanations that don’t address the concerns that arise when people see such content.

Also keep in mind that, as the Ransohoffs noted, it can be argued that issues requiring considerable scientific data analysis may be a little dull. To be fair, the average citizen may not follow all the science of wildlife conservation with passion or be able to talk intelligently about the whys behind their beliefs. Because of this, conclusions drawn can be less than objective. Hunters may not be knowledgeable in ways that would really help their cause, and conversations with nonhunters can be poorly communicated. Similarly, when it comes to medial reporting, the Ransohoffs note, “Journalists may create a human-interest angle in a personal story that may distort research that has meaning only in a broader statistical context.” The perspective that sees the similarities between these controversies and how public opinion is affected can be beneficial.

The answer to the ever-present sensationalism in media and the negative impact on our hunting heritage lies with us—the hunting industry leaders—to encourage empirical research, a fuller understanding of the science, and passionate communication to hunters and nonhunters alike. The question-and-answer website Quora defines nuance as “giving deep explanations with a variety of things to consider for a complex subject instead of just making an opinion with no room for disagreement. It is a suggestion versus a declaration.” As explained in the article “The 3 Anti-Hunting Arguments We Should Actually Worry About,” by Brian Lynn, sensationalism makes a conclusion no matter what the science says, arguing that hunters can be just as guilty of this as nonhunters. Lynn calls the mainstream media “unquestioning” and shares that if hunters took the time and energy to explain hunting, then the argument with anti-hunters might be more straightforward. The bottom line is that science supports wildlife conservation. We merely must highlight this fact and speak about it readily and with compassion, not anger.

I have personally found some great resources for hunters, most specifically the NRA Hunters’ Leadership Forum (HLF) book, *How to Talk about Hunting:*

Research-Based Communication Strategies. The NRA HLF provided this resource in 2020 to educate hunters in how to share effective communication with hunters and nonhunters and to effectively and persuasively tell the story of hunting.

In addressing sensationalism, the article “Is Sensationalist Disinformation More Effective? Three Facilitating Factors at the National, Individual, and Situational Level,” written by media researchers in Switzerland and Belgium, encourages people to take advantage of the good parts of sensationalism. They write, “Delivery has a sort of gymnastics to it—an amplification or fancy embroidery. The key is to make sure it has logical and solid data backing it up and then provide neutralness so intelligent people see the logic and decide for themselves.” Importantly, the article defines nuance as a subtle suggestion while sensationalism makes a conclusion.

I conclude this discussion with a warning to be aware of sensationalism that seeks to simplify complex arguments. Focus on encouraging inquisitiveness regarding the objective facts of wildlife conservation, and the willingness to engage in meaningful conversations with friends, not enemies. Those screaming in the social media arena aren’t reasonable, and everyone can spot it a mile away. Our real audience is those unaware of the conservation value. Most are up for a respectful conversation if we are prepared to communicate effectively, which takes us back to the NRA HLF book. This allows others to decide for themselves with the new information you give them.

I call on you to appeal to people’s legitimate reasoning and use the acquired knowledge of conservation to strengthen your love for your hobby, not merely justify it. This is in the context of our hunting heritage and so many other controversial subjects of our time. We hunters must lead in this way and be examples of encouraging objectivity before forcing a conclusion on others. I believe reasonable people will see our reasonableness and will respect our view more easily. As stated in Philippians 4:5 in the Bible, “Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand.” I believe that when others view this type of thoughtfulness, they will be inspired to do the same. **ah**



The Long Haul: Preparing for an All-Day Sit

Sometimes, successful hunting demands staying in the woods from dawn until dusk. Here's how to survive stand hunting's biggest challenge.

By Brad Fitzpatrick

While hunting whitetails in Saskatchewan four years ago, I decided the best option to fill my tag was to spend the entire day in a blind positioned alongside a deer trail. I rose before dawn and checked the metal thermometer on the door of the outfitter's barn, which registered minus 12 degrees Fahrenheit. Thirty minutes later my guide dropped me off in a pop-up blind, and I crawled inside for what would be the longest and most challenging hunt of my life.

It wasn't the cold that bothered me. A body suit kept me warm and comfortable; of course any exposed skin suffered in the frigid air. When I reached for my sandwich, which I had left in my pack

outside the body suit, I found it frozen solid along with my apple and water bottles. Thankfully, my potato chips were still edible.

That was a difficult day because I had trouble staying focused. I didn't feel confident that I'd see a deer, and my mind kept wandering. It was one of the few times I didn't want to be in the woods. My mental state had less to do with my hunting conditions and more to do with my failure to properly prepare for an all-day sit. It's quite possible (probable, even, given the level of deer activity at the time) that a deer passed through the trees and I failed to notice it. I swore that if I ever invested another full day of my life sitting in the woods waiting to tag a deer, I'd be better prepared.

I believe there are three primary reasons why all-day sits fail. Here's a list of those reasons as well as ways to combat each of them.

Step One: Beat Discomfort

This is the primary reason hunters pull the cord on all-day sits. It's tough to sit in a tree or ground blind all day, but it's almost impossible to do so if you're too cold, too warm or soaking wet. That's why high-quality clothing is worth the price.

Hunters have learned that layering is the key to regulating temperature. The widely accepted three-layer system, which consists of a base layer, mid layer and outer layer, works well, but you must understand why this system works—and what may cause it to fail.

The base layer should be made of thin, wicking fabric. Cotton is out because it holds moisture, which robs the body of heat. The mid layer is an insulating layer that is designed to hold heat while still wicking away moisture. The outer layer is your protection against wind and rain, and it provides an additional insulating layer. Moisture is your enemy, so don't pile on all your layers then hike a mile to your stand. Instead, shed your top layer and allow the perspiration to evaporate. Any exposed skin will lose heat, so a face mask, beanie and gloves that extend above the cuff of your jacket will help retain heat. Mittens are warmer than gloves, but in recent years I've come to prefer a hand-warmer muff with heat packs inside, and I always carry extra hand and foot warmers. In extreme cold, a sleeping bag or body suit will help keep you warm.

Make your stand or blind as comfortable as possible. Take cushions on which to sit and make certain that you have a comfortable backrest. Early-season deer hunts can be quite hot, so position your stand or blind under a canopy of vegetation that provides some relief from the sun.

Step Two: Proper Nutrition and Hydration

What you eat and drink prior to and during your hunt can impact success or failure. Water is a key component to thermoregulation, and your body temperature stabilizes when you are properly hydrated. This means you need to drink fluids, even on cold days. But water plays another important role: it reduces fatigue. Drinking water will help you stay focused on the hunt.

Food is also an important consideration for an all-day sit. Remaining perched in a tree or ground blind may not feel like exercise, but your body is working to keep you warm on cold days. This requires more calories, and that means you must keep eating. Snack periodically, about every hour or so, because small, frequent calorie intakes offer several advantages for hunters. You won't take in a lot of calories at once, which can lead to fatigue. Regular eating also normalizes blood sugar levels, so you won't be as sleepy or jittery. Be sure to keep food like trail mix, energy bars, jerky and dehydrated fruit somewhere that is easy to access to minimize movement. Digging for the sandwich and cookies that have fallen to the bottom of your pack is a sure way to spook the buck that's finally decided to move.

Step Three: Be Mentally Prepared

Sitting on stand all day is a mental chore. There's a good chance that there won't be a lot of movement during the day, and these



Photos: Author

lulls in the action are what prompt hunters to bail out of the blind and head for home. Be prepared to fight that urge.

Beating mental failure begins before you ever set foot in the stand. Choose your hunting site wisely and have faith you'll see deer, ignoring the impulse to switch locations throughout the day. Plan your approach in the morning so you're heading into the wind and try to move into position with minimal disturbance. This increases the odds you'll see deer during the day, and seeing deer is oftentimes enough to maintain a positive frame of mind. You're sitting in the woods all day in the hopes of tagging a deer, and you've done the work required to make that happen.

Some hunters like to read a book or browse the web, but I prefer to fight those impulses. Instead, begin seeing the woods as a deer does. Learn the location of every broken branch, every downed log, every creek drainage and cluster of grass. Start identifying tree species around your stand site, identify bird songs, or any other task that keeps you engaged and focused on the surrounding habitat. What you'll find is that when you're paying close attention to your surroundings you're more in-tune with the woods and more likely to catch a glimpse of a brown form moving between the trees, or the nervous flick of an ear.

It's not easy to sit in a ground blind or stand all day, but that's part of the game plan if you're going to consistently tag big bucks. Busy schedules leave us with limited time to hunt. It makes sense to take the steps necessary to capitalize on the time you have in the woods, and being able to sit all day helps accomplish that. **ah**

THINK 'SNIPER' FOR HUNTING SUCCESS

By Mark Kayser, Field Editor

The location was ideal, but my timing was off by a sliver in time. I had crawled onto a knob overlooking two small canyons that led from a hayfield below that was bordered by winter wheat fields above. Any whitetail traveling between the food sources would have a tough time avoiding either canyon regardless of its morning destination. I propped up my Bergara .300 Winchester Magnum on a bipod and was just preparing to range when I spotted a blur of whitetail below me. As I peered through my binocular, my mind exploded at the sight of a non-typical frame, and I immediately latched onto my rifle to adjust for a shot.

MILITARY INFLUENCE

The position in the previous hunt replay has all the makings of a sniper perch. Although I do not have a military background, my self-taught style of hunting reflects many of the elements military marksmen look for in a successful position while on target. Reading *Marine*

Sniper, a novel detailing Carlos Hathcock's Vietnam sniper exploits, then later *American Sniper*, the Chris Kyle story, not only stirred my appreciation for these overlooked patriots but added to my confidence that I was on the right track to hunting success at an early age.

You may not be able to attend the U.S. Army Sniper School in Fort Benning, Ga., or sniper training courses for other military branches, but the basic elements of their training are worthy of a read. By analyzing the techniques of marksmen, your hunting skills and ambush hides will advance beyond basics.

SNIPER RULES

Your personal rig should match the areas you intend to hunt. Optics, caliber and rifle action should fit you and your intended hunting style. Make sure the bullet will smack with at least 1,000 ft.-lbs. of energy at the longest distance you expect to encounter and you are set. If you read Chris Kyle's accounts, you learned that most of his shots were

between 200 and 400 yards, common in many hunting scenarios. But to get those shots, an ideal position needs to be acquired.

Scouting becomes crucial for snipers and you. You are looking for location with a high density of opportunity, a position giving you a viewpoint of these places, the ability to stay out of sight and, finally, a veiled avenue for ingress and egress. Popular hunting apps give you handheld assistance to scout terrain, add in topography overlays and even update weather conditions onsite. Even so, a scouting visit or hunting trip tells you the real story whether the site has merit.

In some locales the location may be height-challenged. Most suitable hides for an ambush overlook require you to be above the area of opportunity. This allows you to see activity whether on a field, coulee or even a valley with criss-crossing trails. If a rise or hilltop vantage point is not on hand, consider barn lofts, abandoned farm equipment, hay bale stacks, treestands or even the window

Photo: Paolo Bovo / U.S. Army

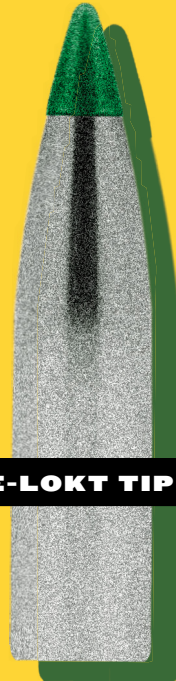


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of an abandoned homestead. Make sure any impromptu hide is safe and allowed by a landowner. Be diligent in finding a position that provides as many observation and shooting opportunities as possible from the position. More than once I have crawled atop the cab of a forgotten tractor to gain elevation.

Next, examine all means to access and exit your overlook without spooking game. Hilltops and rises may give you the cover required to hide behind as you slip into position. Trees, brush and crops could also provide the cloaking to slip into a location without being seen. Too many inadvertent encounters with your target—a whitetail or other big game—gives it an advantage in patterning you over you patterning it. A read on wind, predominant and current, also helps you mask your presence while at your ambush setting.

Terrain, vegetation and even camouflage netting can help you disappear once you do settle into position. Remember to follow all blaze-orange requirements, though. Before getting too comfortable, assess all places from where you expect an encounter to occur. Examine whether a locality will experience morning or afternoon traffic, the distance of encounters and probable wind at distance, if drift could be a factor. I refer to my SIG BDX Ballistic Data Xchange app ([sigsauer.com](https://www.sigsauer.com)) while reviewing all overlooks to ensure changing climatic conditions are matched to my riflescope.

Military snipers sketch out these scenarios for quick reference and refer to the

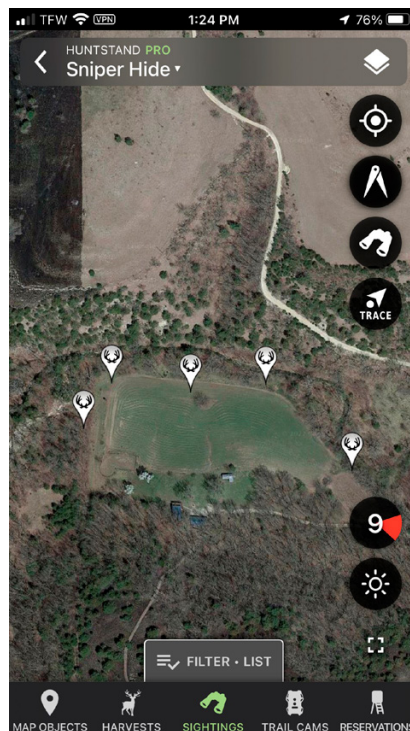
sketches as a range card. You can easily do the same on your hunting app. That information, combined with a DOPE card (data on previous engagement), provides a speedy reference to execute a shot when an animal appears in a shooting location. Keeping up to speed on wind changes instead of watching YouTube videos all day ensures your estimation will be fresh for spot-on projectile placement.

Watching an area for your chance at a buck from a sniper hide has its challenges, and YouTube is not a horribly bad way to break the monotony. The challenge lies in not getting too involved in the entertainment, giving your quarry ample time to slip through as you engage in the latest meme. Over the years, my solution has been to slip in one ear bud to listen to local radio or a podcast. The other ear is still picking up sound from the surrounding environment. In a combat situation, that might not be advisable, but the subdued banter in one ear keeps me awake and allows both of my eyes to continue scanning without being focused on a screen. Whatever your answer is to remain awake, have a plan—or a partner—for constant observation.

Hunting whitetails and other big game has no comparison to what our service members face in a true sniper situation. Nevertheless, the tactics they employ can boost your success when up against a worthy opponent in the world of hunting.

SNIPER SUCCESS

As for my encounter, the buck raced up



Photos: Author

Hunting apps ([huntstand.com](https://www.huntstand.com)) let users log known shot distances, wind direction and other factors. Combine this with a DOPE card for quick execution.

an adjacent hillside along an open ridge as I tracked his flight. Not sure of what spooked him, he paused for an instant to assess his next move, and I knew it would be into the dense cedars of the slope's north face. Luckily, I had ranged the hill just before the encounter and I had the ballistics memorized. The Hornady ELD-X ([hornady.com](https://www.hornady.com)) crumpled him on the spot, and after watching the lifeless body for a few moments, I knew my sniper strategy had again succeeded in a great trophy ending. *ah*

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THE BUCK POLE: A Symbol of

By Patrick Durkin

The camp buck pole is deer hunting's enduring symbol of success and camaraderie.

The buck pole's crosspiece, whether chopped from spruce or salvaged from scrap pipe, is often the first thing hunters install in camp. It's also

the first thing repaired or replaced when the camp boss declares it weak or inadequate. Its purpose is vital, after all. When called on, it must stand strong and ready to serve; supporting all weight, individual or combined.

If the camp simply wanted a place to hang deer to cool, members would lash them to any stout branch or tree trunk.

That's fine for some camps, of course, but most prefer the permanence of buck poles. Length and strength matter, too. A proper buck pole holds several deer without bunching up, or pressing them into the supports. A little air between backs and briskets helps display the deer, individually and as a group.

Well-arranged buck poles achieve



Success

a certain beauty and symmetry, with some camps arranging deer by size and sex, all facing one way. After all, a good buck pole isn't all about utility. It's where visitors linger to puff on pipes or cigars while assessing, admiring, even envying the deer, and comparing another camp's success to their own.

What's deer hunting and camp

camaraderie without stories, questions and wisecracks shared at buck poles? In *The Sacred Art of Hunting*, author James Swan wrote: "Hunters these days ultimately hunt memories as much as meat to put on the table. Memories feed dreams, and hunters must have dreams to stay motivated."

Professor Thomas Heberlein, a

These Wisconsin hunters look like a hardy lot, but we're not sure what era they represent. One thing is sure: At far right, that's a nice buck for any era.

longtime hunter and rural sociologist at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, notes that a big buck or first deer on the buck pole typically boosts efforts to celebrate a hunter's success. A North Woods deer shot in November might hang several days, signaling your feat to every passerby, and requiring repeated storytelling.

Photo Courtesy Wisconsin Historical Society



All-American Feat?

Some hunters might ask, “Yeah, so what else is new?” Well, buck pole boasting isn’t necessarily a universal trait, even though it’s commonly American. After joining a “team” to hunt moose in Sweden in 1999, Heberlein wrote a research paper comparing those experiences with Wisconsin customs instilled at his family’s North Woods deer shack.

Heberlein’s paper, “The Gun, the Dog and the Thermos: Culture and Hunting in Sweden and the United States,” noted that his Swedish friends find it inappropriate to show personal pride in a big moose. Heberlein also noticed he was the only one photographing the hunts, even after one member bagged a trophy moose.

The Swedes took pride in well-placed shots and questioned the purpose of each follow-up shot, but successful hunters didn’t pose with their moose or ask friends to take pictures for “the wife and kids.” Such omissions stood out to Heberlein, who grew up thinking it was routine, even expected, to photograph each other with “their buck,” either kneeling behind it on the ground or standing alongside it beneath the buck pole.

Heberlein’s new Swedish friends, however, quickly hung and butchered



Photos: Author

their moose. “Ownership of the animal and the ultimate success goes to the team,” Heberlein wrote. “The collective nature of the Swedish moose hunt focuses on the meat, not the trophy. After each hunt, dead moose were taken from the woods to a building with equipment to lift the animal, and the moose were quickly skinned, and the lower legs and head removed. Within two hours of

falling, the moose was a hanging carcass.”

In contrast, the American buck pole prolongs the satisfaction of successful hunts. Some North Woods motels and lodges across the Great Lakes region maintain a buck pole near their parking lot, and encourage deer-hunting guests to use it. Likewise, once the snow and snowmobilers arrive, the same places invite guests to park their snowmachines there.



Photo Courtesy Wisconsin Historical Society

Yes, motel managers could tell hunters their deer will be fine in the back of their pickups overnight, but they see benefit in unique perks like a buck pole. Good businesses make customers feel welcome by reinforcing shared values.

After all, what's more fitting in the North Woods than two field-dressed 4-pointers hanging from a motel's buck pole? (Plus it's less trouble for motels than accommodating guests' dogs and cats.) Deer hunting's public displays of accomplishment weave through the culture. During November's deer seasons around Lake Superior, local radio stations read the "buck rolls" during morning, midday and evening news programs, along with details of each successful hunter's deer, including its antler points and body weight.

Function Matters

Buck poles also serve practical functions, of course. It's not all about show, pride and shared experiences. Doug Duren grew up in Cazenovia, Wisc., where he spent much of his youth working on the family's dairy farm. He moved away after high school in the late 1970s, but kept returning each fall to hunt. He moved back to town with his wife in 2017 after buying a house on Cazenovia's main drag, a mile north of the 400-acre family farm he now manages.

There Duren built a thinking man's buck pole outside the farm's milkhouse in summer 2019, as if conceding the end of dairy farming on the land and in his bloodline. The Durens gave up dairy

farming in 1988, but the farm's milkhouse remains, as does its iconic red barn and two silos by its side. One silo, symbolically enough, has lost much of its domed top; now torn aluminum sheets flap and rattle in winds gusting down from the oak ridges.

Duren is slowly converting the milkhouse into a butcher shop for himself and friends. Lest anyone forget the milkhouse's roots, the final readings from its bulk milk-tank remain legible on the wall. Today, though, the milkhouse features two large stainless-steel tables he bought off Craigslist. Duren and his friends also installed a heavy-duty rail system on the ceiling above the west wall. The rails hold sliding meathooks for

The opening photo and this one from the Wisconsin Historical Society are windows into the past. Can you peg the era of each photo? Write and tell us.

hanging entire deer or just their quarters.

Most hunters, though, use the buck pole three steps from the milkhouse door. Yes, Duren's buck pole is durable and practical, but it's also rustic art. He sank two salvaged utility poles into the ground for its uprights, and mounted a long 6-by-8 treated timber for its cross-beam. Next, he installed five heavy-duty screw eyes for hanging deer.

For added convenience, he mounted a hand-cranked boat winch to the buck pole's left upright. The winch lets you





Doug Duren’s “thinking man’s” buck pole in Cazenovia, Wisc., allows hunters to prep their deer before hanging them in a milkhouse-turned-butcher shop.

hang your deer by yourself, a task made even easier with pulleys Duren attached to three of the big screw eyes. The winch can also help skin a deer, whether it hangs from the buck pole or from the milkhouse’s ceiling rail. If your deer is cooling there on a meathook, simply slide the hook down the rail toward the door, where it stops within reach of the winch’s cable.

To skin your deer, just leave it on the buck pole or meathook, sever the legs at the knees, make your preparatory cuts to the hide and latch the cable to a chunk of hide. Next, crank the winch to peel off the hide. Whether you hang the deer by its head or from a gambrel between its hind legs, the winch makes for easy skinning.

As we said, this is a thinking man’s buck pole. Some folks see a buck pole as a tool for butchering, much as a carpenter views a sawhorse as a tool for sawing. Duren prefers a buck pole that charms whether empty or full, with hunters or without, in autumn or into winter.

Documenting Success

Most buck poles, however, aren’t integral parts of a personal butcher shop. They’re more a temporary holding area and deer-viewing site for deer camps. When the season ends or the hunters must return to work, the group pauses to record who’s present and what they accomplished. They gather again at the buck pole, take their photos and reluctantly strip the buck pole of its burden.

The tasks of unhooking and lowering deer typically go faster and less excitedly than the raising and hanging. Transferring and securing deer to a pickup box or trailer bed requires few unique talents, but hauling them home atop an SUV’s roof, trunk or carrier involves some care and coaching.

Once the prized cargo is secured, most hunters drive their deer home in public view. This act is more about convenience than motive. Besides, these drive-home displays—when done en masse—demonstrate deer hunting’s popularity, and remind the greater citizenry that a state’s woods, forests and countryside hold ample deer to sustain such abundant harvests every autumn.

Once home, few hunters back up to a waiting buck pole. Hunting and its rituals fade quickly among sidewalks and manicured lawns. Most hunters simply throw a rope over the driveway’s basketball post, or the stoutest branch of the nearest tree. And if a neighbor complained after last year’s outdoor display, perhaps the hunter just backs into the garage and tosses the rope over a rafter. Choose your battles, and all that.

Many deer don’t make it home in one piece, of course. Their trips often end at a processor’s loading dock, or a taxidermist’s garage or storage shed. If the head and antlers are destined for a wall mount, they’ll inspire tangible memories long after their time on a buck pole. Their presence inside the home sparks more storytelling, and some explaining to certain friends, family and other guests.

After all, shoulder mounts and European mounts strike some folks as odd curiosities. In *Old Glory: An American Voyage*, the English author Jonathan



Raban wrote about traveling down the Mississippi River in a basic 16-foot boat in the late 1970s. During his journey and visits, Raban was struck by the role taxidermists play in rural America. He noted that folks not only speak of “my doctor,” “my dentist” and “my lawyer,” but also “my taxidermist,” as if life requires this particular lineup.

Deer hunters see no shame or judgment in Raban’s observation. We value taxidermists who can preserve a white-tail’s nobility and beauty. We pay them to preserve our memories, which awaken whenever we admire their rich coats and brawny antlers.

Lawrence R. Koller captured such thoughts in his classic 1948 book *Shots at Whitetails*, writing: “There hangs on the wall near me, looking out over my left shoulder, the head and huge antlers of the biggest buck it has ever been my good luck to bring to earth. Almost every time I glance that way, I can see again the flashing gleam of his 2-foot spread bobbing through the pines and over scrub oak in his last desperate dash for safety.”

Memories Burned

Perhaps that mount also took Koller back to his deer camp on the Neversink River in New York’s Catskill Mountains. Given his love for the Eden Falls Hunting and Fishing Club, Koller probably recalled the teamwork of deer drives, and the many deer dragged back to camp and hoisted to cool beneath the buck pole.

A buck’s last leap—and its final resting spot—are sights mostly seen alone by successful hunters. But a buck’s time on the buck pole burns memories into every hunter in camp. **ah**

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Whitetail Bucks In Odd Places

Nebraska's Platte River flows through mule deer country among a smatter of crop fields—exactly the kind of landscape patient hunters can exploit to find big-racked bucks.

By Ron Spomer, Field Editor

You can sing this to the melody of Garth's "Friends in Low Places": "I find deer in odd places where the habitat sucks but the buck chases the does all day."

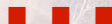
Most recently this odd place was deep in the sandhills of northwest Nebraska some 25 miles from that state's famous ribbon of whitetail paradise called the Platte River. Water, brush, trees, lowland cornfields. Prairie Rock Outfitters humored me when I begged to hunt away from this classic cover.

"Pastures, man," I explained. "Mule deer country with a few crop fields. Isolated shelterbelts or old farmsteads. That's where I find most of my biggest whitetail bucks. Got any of those I can hunt?"

Whether Prairie Rock figured the customer is always right or I was a harmless old man, they agreed to send a guide to show me some fringe whitetail country and get me out of their hair. So it was that my guide, Justin, and I found the camp's biggest buck of the week.

The method to our madness (turned

out Justin was onto these iconoclastic bucks as much as I) was to pinpoint a cluster of irrigated crop fields near a few old tree plantings and dense stands of sage. Sage is typically seen as habitat for sage grouse, mule deer, pronghorns and coyotes, but whitetails welcome it as just more shrub cover. A miniature forest. Throw in dense stands of 4- to 5-foot-tall prairie grasses, a few spiny yuccas and plenty of convoluted, rolling sand hills and you have more than enough cover to hide a small army of whitetails. Not that you're ever likely to find armies of them there. The whitetails using such habitat are more like scouts. Pioneers taking a risk where their more sedentary compatriots fear to tread.



"I've seen some good bucks along this strip of trees quite often," Justin said as we pulled to a stop near an abandoned ranch. His use of the word "trees" was as much historic as accurate. Yeah, they were trees, but half were dead and the

remainder broken, tangled, low and interlaced with dry, objectionable weeds common to previously disturbed soils in this notoriously erosive landscape. In other words, whitetail hidey holes.

"Glass those irrigated cornfields to the east and north," the native Cornhusker continued. "They should be coming off the feed at first light. If they head this way, we'll try to cut them off."

Justin was singing from my old songbook. I'd spent 30 years hunting similar prairie country with the same techniques. Get high, preferably near some bedding cover, and glass distant foraging sites, usually wheat, milo, alfalfa or cornfields. Spot a buck, break out the spotting scope and study antlers at 40- to 60-power, determine a stalking route and hit the ground running.

"Big-bodied buck a mile east. Heading north. There's another field over that sand ridge. He's probably going to check it for does," Justin said.

"I've got three, no four, no six coming over the yucca ridge south of us," I



Photo: Erick Ruff



Optics are one leg of the triad needed for hunting open-country whitetails. The other two are boots and rifle.

announced. “There’s antlers bobbing behind them. Look pretty fair ... tall, fairly heavy ... aww, narrow. No spread.”

“I’ve seen him before,” replied Justin. “This one in the corn probably isn’t what we’re after either, but we might want to get out in the sage and work our way to that north field. Could be all kinds of deer out there.”

Once the dawn rush hour was over we packed up and began the mid-morning walkabout. Call this Eastern still-hunting in the open. You cover more ground and cover it faster than you ever should when still-hunting woodlands because you can see so well. Glass every inch of

cover, then move into it quickly until new ground is exposed. Just be sure to slow with rifle ready when breaking over ridge crests, even small ones. Like the little rise under which a young buck exploded from slingshot range.

“Eleven yards!” I stage whispered after the buck had fled and I’d paced off the distance to its sandy bed. It had been lying beside a large, many branched yucca just under the lip of the sand hill. “If he’d been the big one I could have shot him, but I’d rather see him before he runs!”

“How about this one?” Justin asked a few minutes later when he spotted another buck wandering in from

the north. It, too, wore less than heart attack antlers, but demonstrated how our famous woodland deer operate in mule deer country. Cruising for the ladies, never mind the wide-open sky. And he found a trio halfway between us. The doe and two antlerless yearlings rose from behind yet another sharp cut in the sand to prance away from the young buck, not quite ready for his advances.



So the morning went, much like scores of other mornings I’ve spent searching atypical whitetail range. Most netted more information than venison, but that’s an important part of successful hunting, too.

A hunter who wants to hunt for big bucks in unusual places should be ready to glass long and shoot long.





In Nebraska, the author carried a Browning X-Bolt rifle in 6.8 Western that fired a Long Range Pro load packed with 175-grain Sierra GameKings.

We just had to find him. So we hiked. And glassed. And spotted deer. Mostly mule deer, good sized harem bucks with their clusters of does, six to 10. We maneuvered and eased around to minimize disturbance, but inevitably a few bounced across the hills, often stirring up other bands in view.

“Hope we don’t spook the whitetails outta here,” I said late in the morning.

“We could,” admitted Justin. “We’ve pretty much scoured these hills anyway. Rather than push our luck to check those on the other side of the corn circle we should head back to the truck and check another area like this north of here. We’ll come back this evening and watch those hills to the east. He’s probably out there.”

This is usually the smart move. While I’ve walked up and stalked many a buck from dawn through lunchtime, I’ve seldom gotten better than white flags flashing when trying to still-hunt brush cover midday. The deer are usually bedded, hidden and tuned in to crunching gravel and grass. They have the advantage when they’re watching the landscape and you’re guessing which of two dozen patches of cover they might be in. Sometimes you can spot antler tines

One must scour the grounds, eyes peeled for trails, rubs, scrapes, tracks, droppings. Then this information must be put into context with the greater surrounding landscape. Is this a travel route or bedding site? How far from the preferred forage? Where would deer run if spooked by coyotes or other hunters coming in from the south, west, east? Where can you glass this cover from a safe distance?

Compiling such information over days, weeks and years increases one’s success exponentially, but one must always modify based on changing habitat conditions. Floods and fires can mess things up, but usually changing crops do it. The alfalfa field that lured surrounding deer the previous year might this fall be plowed for the next season’s milo crop. Keep moving.

Commonly your best chances come while watching previous hot spots, but sometimes serendipity hits where you least expect it. My wife and I were once walking back from a morning watch over a previous year’s hot spot, wondering why we hadn’t seen a single deer. “They filed through here in lines last year,” I explained as we shuffled through the dry prairie grasses. “Came from the east. I wonder if they plowed that old wheat field up there.” Having arrived in camp in the dark, we hadn’t had time to check field status. But that wouldn’t matter in a few more seconds because I spotted a thicket on the move ...

There was a line of willows in a dry wash to our left and flickering through the thin willow wands were more and

fatter antler tines than I’ve seen on 10,000 other deer. This was mass on the move, antlers the likes of which elk would be proud to carry. I grabbed Betsy’s arm, pointed. We stood transfixed, dumfounded as one of the heaviest antlered whitetails either of us will ever see trudged out of that ditch, climbed into the clear on the grassy side slope, saw us and stopped, broadside, at most 75 yards away, and spun that miraculous rack our way. “Is he a really big one?” Betsy asked.

“Bigger than 99.9 percent of what hunters will ever see on the hoof!” I whispered as I brought my .257 Wby. Mag. to bear. The crosshair settled tight behind his massive shoulder. Then shifted to his incredible neck, then centered on that rack. Six clean points per side, tips wider than most mature buck tines at their junction with the main beam. Main beams protruding 3 or 4 inches past ear tips. And to set up this once-in-a-lifetime shot, all we did was wait along the previous year’s travel route, then walk nonchalantly back to the truck well after the morning’s deer activity should have been over.

I can’t tell you what that buck scored because we never shot it. The only tags we held said “Antlerless Whitetail Only.”



That wasn’t going to be an issue on my Nebraska hunt. I had the buck tag. I had the knowledgeable local guide. He knew the area and its unusual potential. He’d even heard solid reports of a bigger-than-usual buck haunting the area.

This 160-class buck Spomer shot previously in the Sandhills region thought it could avoid detection, but roaming and glassing uncovered it.





above the thicket, and then it's quite possible, sometimes even easy to stalk close. The trick is clearing a shot. You can wait hours for a buck to stand. Or you can maneuver close to clear a shot, but chances are it will be at a running deer. I've pulled this off several times, screwed

it up several more. The smart move is to wait, but the excitement of youth rarely allowed that! I'd push the envelope and take my chances, one of which led to one of the top three bucks I've ever eaten.

This was a prairie deer that chased a doe into a thicket just before sundown.

I didn't have time to wait them out, so I walked right toward that thicket, hoping they were too preoccupied to notice me. When they finally did the doe broke out the backside, buck on her tail, but when she stopped, turned to me, stomped and snorted, the buck got the message and abandoned the romance. He dropped his tail and hammered due south, never even looking my way. A 140-grain Partition handload from my Ultra Light Arms M20 in .284 Win. rolled him in mid-stride.



That was a quarter-century ago and I didn't feel as if the intervening years had improved my offhand shooting much, so we wanted to catch this odd country Nebraska buck unawares. I was packing a Browning X-Bolt in 6.8 Western. It was throwing 175-grain Sierra GameKings 2832 fps right where the Leupold scope pointed, every shot, and as far as I cared to dial the CDS turret. Confidence building performance and practice.

Justin showed me some lovely sandhills country to the north, complete

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with pheasants, turkey, mule deer, a few pronghorn, but no whitetails. Rather than await their late-afternoon awakening, we decided to drive back to the morning's search area and watch the hills we hadn't walked. Chances were good that undisturbed bucks were hiding out there.

We parked just off a county road and watched a flurry of chasing in a line of trees a mile west. Young bucks were working the does hard. Or the does were teasing the bucks hard. But no antlers appeared looking wide or heavy.

"There's a fair buck coming onto the east side of the corn," Justin said. "What do you think of him?"

"Average. Nothing to get excited about on the second day." I rolled out to set up some photos of crawling, glassing and aiming the rifle. The afternoon wind was still gusting. I'd replaced the spotting scope with the camera atop the tripod. And of course that's when Justin spotted our buck.

"Big deer coming out of the hills!" My guide's head was halfway out of the truck window. I crawled back, unscrewing the

camera as I went. But the tripod wasn't needed. The 8x binocular was more than enough to show us this was a buck worth trying. Heavy. Blocky. Slow. "He isn't paying any attention to that smaller buck," Justin said. "Must be old."

"If we can get into this valley we can knock off 400 to 500 yards," I said. Our buck was about a half-mile away. Our stalking cover was distance and distance alone, although a fence line offered a slice of camouflage. "Let's crawl down that fence. The posts will break up our outline a bit."

This is a wonderful thing about open country whitetails. They don't pay much attention to anything more than 400 yards away. Time after time I've walked toward them in plain view, stopping only when they snapped up to look around. Rarely, if ever, have they spooked. It's as if they're hard wired to expect trouble at cougar charging distance rather than wolf pack attack distance. So, literally on hands and knees, Justin and I crawled. And crawled. Until low enough on the slope that the next sand ridge covered

our quarry, still sauntering nonchalantly through that corn stubble. The wind had died. Noise might be an issue. But so was time. The rising western horizon was not our friend. We stood. We ran.

"Better chamber a round," Justin advised when we stood just beneath the fence enclosing the corn on the far side of this ridge. "In case he's come this way." I snicked a silvery round into the chamber and clicked on the safety. "I'll range him. You be ready to shoot." We stepped up, both of us glassing the field. There was the smaller buck. There at the far end were the smaller bucks chasing the does. "Where is he?"

"Got him!" exclaimed Justin. "Just moseying along the far edge. Where the corn joins the pasture grass."

"Oh yeah. Long way. Let me see what this sight picture looks like." I sat, pressed my back against a wooden fence post, propped my portable shooting sticks under the fore-end, my arms against my knees, and leveled the rifle at the buck. Just standing there, looking

continued on p. 79 >>

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THE BUCKS THAT HAUNT MY DREAMS

By Bryce M. Towsley, Field Editor

I was lucky to start my writing career just as the whitetail boom took off. Since then, I have had some great hunts and shot some good bucks, but the ones that got away are what I see in my dreams; oddly enough, it's not deer I shot at and missed but bucks that never really gave me a chance. Here are a handful that come to visit me late at night to mock me endlessly.

'I never saw him again'

Some decades back the whitetail boom was in full force and western Canada was getting a lot of attention for its giant bucks. The rest of the country was trying to cash in and as I was writing for one of the biggest whitetail magazines at the time, the government of Nova Scotia invited me for a deer hunt.

I had a wonderful time. The lodge was focused on Atlantic salmon fishing and with the high rollers who chase those

fish—well, the folks at the lodge knew how to treat a customer.

My guide was a Micmac Indian who lived on the reservation, and he was my best friend by noon the first day. Tom knew deer hunting and worked hard, but there just were not that many deer. We also got beat up by the weather as high winds and biblical rains were followed by a wicked snowstorm. We were beat before we even started.

Late morning of the last day I was

sitting in a treestand deep in a huge hardwood expanse. I turned my head to look at a patch of snow I had seen a few thousand times already, and a huge buck walked through the opening and was gone. I never saw him again, but even in that brief look I knew this buck would have put Nova Scotia on the whitetail map and me on the magazine's cover.

'I was so sure ...'

The Vermont deer season was growing

Illustrations: Brad Walker





“He was huge and looked like a Hereford bull with his square build and bulging shoulders.”

old and decaying fast. The deer knew they were being hunted and were spooky and very nocturnal.

As the sun rose at my back, I was sitting on top of a mountain, watching down the steep western slope on my left. To my right was a hardwood flat, interspersed with boulders and ledges. I looked there and saw a couple of does running about 100 yards off in the hardwoods. Chasing them was one of the best bucks I have seen in 50-plus years of hunting Vermont.

I slowly turned and stood, resting my rifle against a tree. I was so sure I had this buck, I was already thinking about how to get him back to my truck. I had a custom .35 Whelen bolt action that was made for this kind of hunting and there was no way

he could escape. His best option was to just walk over to me and surrender.

He passed through one small opening and I had him in the crosshairs, but hesitated a fraction of a second and the opportunity disappeared. I saw the does go through the next opening in the trees and moved the crosshairs to that spot.

The buck never showed.

I was sure he couldn't leave without me seeing him, but he just evaporated.

Maybe he sprouted wings? I just don't know.

What I do know is that he was damn big.

Huge as a Hereford Bull

This was in the late '80s when Alberta was

Mecca for big deer. Everybody had seen the video “The Monarchs of Alberta”; the province was the hip and happening place for serious whitetail hunters.

Yet here I was with the sun setting on my last day and nothing to show for my efforts. I had hunted hard, but never saw a deer even approaching the legendary status promised by Alberta.

I was watching a long meadow between two big patches of woods when a buck stepped into the far end of the clearing. He was huge and looked like a Hereford bull with his square build and bulging shoulders. The antlers on top were so big they looked out of place. It was too far to shoot and dark was just minutes away. I knew I could not get

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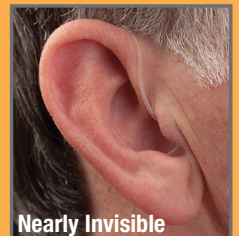
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**“I should have just told her to shoot him,
but I had to play the fool.”**



this buck, but I tried. He was gone long before I could move close enough to shoot. It was black dark when I reached that end of the field. I checked his tracks with a flashlight and knew I was not imagining him.

I returned to Alberta the next year and shot a buck that was my best for many years. Still, he paled in comparison to the buck in the meadow.

That last-minute buck has always haunted my dreams.

I Never Should Have Listened to Them

We were hunting near Eldorado, Texas, in the late '90s with Steve Elmore at his Live Oak Hunting Lodge. I was in a metal box blind with my daughter, Erin, who was about 12 at the time. We watched a remarkable parade of bucks walk by, each one bigger than the last. My little voice kept saying, "Don't shoot yet." So we held off.

Then he stepped out. My God, he was magnificent. I should have just told her to shoot him, but I had to play the fool. The whitetail magazine I wrote for at the time had a couple of guys in camp and they had asked me to take a camera and film to the stand. For some reason I can't remember, I decided Erin and I needed to swap places. Of course the camera bumped the metal blind and the deer tore out of there. When he did, the others left, too.

One by one they all came back, except him. We waited as long as we could before Erin shot the next-biggest. It was a great deer and it hangs on a wall in my house today. But the memory of what should have been haunts me still.

Coyote Dinner?

Our family deer camp backs up to national forest land and some of the most remote country to be found in Vermont. As a young man in the '70s I loved

to ramble deep into the big woods. I had been hunting this buck for several seasons and knew his track well. I believe he was 5½ years old at this point and carried antlers that would pass for big anyplace deer are hunted.

This was back in the days when I used a fixed-power Weaver κ-4 scope that was guaranteed to fog up every deer season. It didn't fog this day, but snow was coming down so hard even that low magnification was too much.

I had left his track far too late in the day and was climbing a hardwood ridge in a direction I hoped would take me to camp. The snow and sleet that was falling was blown by the wind so hard I could not open my eyes more than a slit. Dark was less than an hour away and I didn't have a clue where I was.

Squinting through my ice-coated lashes I pounded up the hill, legs pumping, arms swinging, my gun on my shoulder. As I topped the ridge I could

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“The snow and sleet that was falling was blown by the wind so hard I could not open my eyes more than a slit.”

see two bucks quartering to me and running for cover. The smaller buck had a rack that would have looked good on any wall, but it seemed tiny compared to the big guy. I raised my gun and through the scope the blinding snow formed a white

wall, I dropped the gun and they were still out there. I raised it again and once more was blind, I dropped it and they were gone.

I saw that buck again the next year, on the last day of the season. He got away

again, too, same as the year before.

The following year he would be 7½, almost unheard of amid our harsh winters. I hunted for a week without any sign of him. I don't think a hunter ever shot him—I would have heard. I suppose one cold February night the coyotes caught him hungry and weak, and completed the cycle.

That Ain't Legal

I knew Manitoba would be cold, but nothing like this. A storm blew in the day I arrived, dumping snow, and it was followed by brutal cold. We lost the first hunting day to the storm and had been fighting the elements every day since.

I don't think it had risen above minus 25 all week. The snow was deep enough to fill the pockets on my pants when we tried to walk through it, and it was exhausting to walk more than a few yards at a time. Even getting to the stands was a lot of work and at times we had to shovel a path.

I tried every trick I knew and a few I had just read about. I remember using a burner under a pan of doe-in-heat urine

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Leading the way from nature’s pharmacy is the new “King of Oils” that pioneering Florida MD and anti-aging specialist Dr. Al Sears calls “the most significant breakthrough I’ve ever found for easing joint discomfort.”

Biblical scholars treasured this “holy oil.” Ancient healers valued it more than gold for its medicinal properties. Marco Polo prized it as he blazed the Silk Road. And Ayurvedic practitioners, to this day, rely on it for healing and detoxification.

Yet what really caught Dr. Sears’ attention is how modern medical findings now prove this “King of Oils” can powerfully...

Deactivate 400 Agony-Causing Genes

If you want genuine, long-lasting relief for joint discomfort, you must address inflammation. Too much inflammation will wreak havoc on joints, break down cartilage and cause unending discomfort. This is why so many natural joint relief solutions try to stop one of the main inflammatory genes called COX-2.

But the truth is, there are hundreds of agony-causing genes like COX-2, 5-LOX, iNOS, TNK, Interleukin 1,6,8 and many more—and stopping just one of them won’t give you all the relief you need.

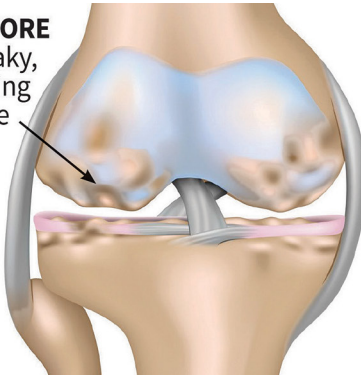
Doctors and scientists now confirm the “King of Oils”—Indian Frankincense—deactivates not one but 400 agony-causing genes. It does so by shutting down the inflammation command center called Nuclear Factor Kappa Beta.

NK-Kappa B is like a switch that can turn 400 inflammatory genes “on” or “off.” A study in *Journal of Food Lipids* reports that Indian Frankincense powerfully deactivates NF-Kappa B. This journal adds that Indian Frankincense is “so powerful it shuts down the pathway triggering aching joints.”

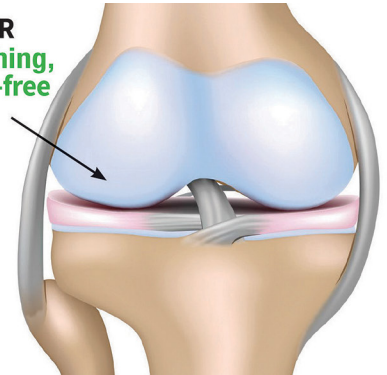
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*The active ingredient in **Mobilify** soothes aching joints in as little as 5 days*

the National Institutes of Health reports that glucosamine takes as long as eight weeks to work.

Yet in a study published in the *International Journal of Medical Sciences*, 60 patients with stiff knees took 100 mg of Indian Frankincense or a placebo daily for 30 days. Remarkably, Indian Frankincense “significantly improved joint function and relieved discomfort in as early as five days.” That’s relief that is 10 times faster than glucosamine.

78% Better Relief Than the Most Popular Joint Solution

In another study, people suffering from discomfort took a formula containing Indian Frankincense and another natural substance or a popular man-made joint solution every day for 12 weeks.

The results? Stunning! At the end of the study, 64% of those taking the Indian Frankincense formula saw their joint discomfort go from moderate or severe to mild or no discomfort. Only 28% of those taking the placebo got the relief they wanted. So Indian Frankincense delivered relief at a 78% better clip than the popular man-made formula.

In addition, in a randomized, double blind, placebo controlled study, patients suffering from knee discomfort took Indian Frankincense or a placebo daily for eight weeks. Then the groups switched and got the opposite intervention. Every one of the patients taking Indian Frankincense got relief. That’s a 100% success rate—numbers unseen by typical solutions.

In addition, BMJ (formerly the *British Medical Journal*) reports that Indian Frankincense is safe for joint relief — so safe and

natural you can take it every day.

Because of clinically proven results like this, Dr. Sears has made Indian Frankincense the centerpiece of a new natural joint relief formula called **Mobilify**.

Great Results for Knees, Hips, Shoulders and Joints

Joni D. says, “**Mobilify** really helps with soreness, stiffness and mild temporary pain. The day after taking it, I was completely back to normal—so fast.” Shirley M. adds, “Two weeks after taking **Mobilify**, I had no knee discomfort and could go up and down the staircase.” Larry M. says, “After a week and a half of taking **Mobilify**, the discomfort, stiffness and minor aches went away... it’s almost like being reborn.” And avid golfer Dennis H. says, “I can attest to **Mobilify** easing discomfort to enable me to pursue my golfing days. Definitely one pill that works for me out of the many I have tried.”

How to Get Mobilify

To secure the hot, new **Mobilify** formula, buyers should contact the Sears Health Hotline at **1-800-333-6172** TODAY. “It’s not available in retail stores yet,” says Dr. Sears. “The Hotline allows us to ship directly to the customer.” Dr. Sears feels so strongly about **Mobilify**, all orders are backed by a 100% money-back guarantee. “Just send me back the bottle and any unused product within 90 days from purchase date, and I’ll send you all your money back.”

Use Promo Code **AMHUMB1122** when you call to secure your supply of **Mobilify**. Lines are frequently busy and due to heightened demand, supplies are limited. To secure your supply today, call **1-800-333-6172**.

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to keep it from freezing and, according to to something I read, “spread that earthy scent for miles.” It didn’t work; it was so cold the propane burner froze and would not stay lit. The urine would freeze almost instantly when the flame went out about nine seconds after I climbed back into the treestand. I made multiple attempts, but it never worked. You would think that all that climbing up and down would have kept me warm, but it did not.

I tried rattling, but it was so cold the antlers would chip every time I whacked them together. My hands were numb, and when an antler beam hit my thumb and something flew off, I seriously thought for a moment that my thumb had broken loose from its moorings.

A heated blind would have been great, but it was not a concept the outfitter embraced. Instead I sat in open treestands hour after hour, enduring the cold and hoping I would die soon. We tried tracking but the snow was too deep, even if we could have found a track. The storm had shut down all deer movement. They were huddled someplace trying to keep warm and refusing to burn the calories it would take to move in this snow.

My guide had worked his heart out—nobody could have tried harder. We just couldn’t beat the weather.

I climbed out of the treestand as dusk approached on the final afternoon, defeated, worn out and depressed. A full moon lit up the cold Canadian landscape with an eerie blue light as I walked out the path. The guide was waiting at the truck and we didn’t talk as he turned around and started driving one of the endless, narrow roads.

I glanced to the left and there, in a small field, stood a huge buck. Big bodied with monstrous antlers. He was every inch of the Canadian whitetail buck I had been seeking.

We stopped and glassed him for some time. I suppose I could have shot him and nobody would have ever known that it was past legal shooting time. Except me, and I could not live with that shame.

So, instead, I live with that buck haunting my dreams.

Full-Blown Panic

Hunting deer in Maine is always a tough undertaking. If there is snow—the right kind of snow—you can track. Tracking is

Adam Greathouse

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effective, but the days when you can hunt that way are usually scarce. Deer hunting on bare ground in Maine can try a man's soul. You might get lucky, but most hunters do not. Many hunters never even see a deer.

There was snow on the ground when we arrived at our camp near Rangeley, Maine, but a warm front was due. I had never hunted this area before and decided to use the first day scouting. With the snow melting fast, I wanted to try to locate the tracks of a big buck or two. That would at the very least give me a place to start. The best way to cover ground and find tracks is always to drive the backroads and trails.

I had a newly leased truck and we were pretty rough on it that day. Some of its parts ended up riding in the bed after I tore them off the truck. Somewhere there is a photo of me driving through a deep puddle, pushing 2-inch-thick chunks of ice as it piled up high enough to slide onto my hood. The truck suffered, but we found some deer. I would worry about the cost later.

By mid-afternoon the snow was history. We were driving down an old logging road that had passed its prime in the 1800s. Snowmobiles now used it in the winter, but nobody sane would have driven a truck on it, much less a brand new truck.

My son, Nathan, was maybe 13 or 14, but he was an experienced deer hunter with several good bucks to his credit. He spoke from the back seat: "Dad, there's a deer! It's a big buck. No, it's a huge buck."

My friend Matt Thomas was riding shotgun and he and I started looking at the steep ridge beside us.

"He's in the brook," Nathan said.

He was. The buck was lying in a deep pool in the brook about 30 yards from us, with just his neck and head showing over the rocks. Nathan was right: He was huge.

I stopped the truck and told Nathan to get out, load his gun and shoot the deer. It was quite legal at the time, and while not my preferred way to take a buck you have to take them as they are presented.

Meanwhile I stepped out on my side, and loaded my rifle. I had the crosshairs on the deer's neck, but I wanted Nathan to shoot him. I looked at him to see what

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was taking so long and witnessed full-blown buck fever.

Even back then Nathan was a gun guy who liked to experiment with different guns, and he was hunting with a rifle I was sent to test. This was during the frenzied short magnum craze and the rifle was chambered for the latest wiz-bang cartridge. It also had a very long barrel. Nathan had already taken a nice buck with it in Vermont's youth season, and insisted on using the rifle in Maine.

He had somehow managed to get the barrel stuck in the roof liner and the butt jammed up on the gear that all but filled his space in the back seat. Rather than stop to untangle it, he pushed his boots against the front seat and yanked repeatedly on the rifle in a full-blown panic. He was a strong kid, and each yank wedged the rifle a little tighter. I swear the barrel was raising a welt in the metal roof. Nathan was so focused he didn't hear a word I said.

"Matt," I said, "Maybe you had better shoot that buck." A bit panicked himself, Matt dropped his magazine as he exited the truck.

The buck had enough of this foolishness. He stood up, with water cascading off him like a breaching whale. He was huge-bodied, and he was wearing big antlers—"a horse with antlers," Nathan later called him. I have no doubt he was one of the biggest whitetails in the state of Maine, a place famous for big bucks. It took that deer two jumps to get over the steep bank and get gone.

I knew he would be back late some night to visit.



There's one more ... I was hunting in South Carolina at Kenny Jarrett's Cowden Plantation. Kenny invented the Beanfield rifle, which launched the long-range deer hunting revolution. He tested and perfected the design here on this plantation.

I was using Kenny's personal rifle, the one he had hunted all over the world with, and I had shot it out to 1,000 yards the day I arrived.

I was high in a box blind when the dawn started the new day. On my right were endless agricultural fields; to the left was a thick, impenetrable swamp. In front was a long, narrow greenfield, perhaps 30 or 40 yards wide. A thick

hedgerow separated the greenfield from the open crop field, so that the greenfield had thick brush on three sides and my blind on the fourth.

I was working the shadows of this opening with my binocular when I spotted a huge buck just on the edge at the far end. I had already ranged it at 440 yards—a tough shot, but one this rifle and .300 Jarrett cartridge was born for. The buck was facing at me, which is a low-percentage shot. I had all the time in the world, so I stayed on him with the crosshairs as he walked toward me, on a slight diagonal.

I had little doubt he would present a broadside shot soon. Several times I was tempted to simply take this head-on shot, but then I told myself to just wait, be patient. I had seen bad results from that shot angle in the past, and the deer was a long way off.

I was so focused on the buck that I didn't notice he was working his way to the other side of the small opening as he walked. He had closed the distance to about 350 yards without ever giving more than a frontal shot. But, every second was bringing him closer and boosting the odds that he would stop and turn. I had him; he just needed to give me that one chance. Then almost before I noticed where he was, the buck melted into the brush along the hedgerow and disappeared.

It was a thin strip of woods, so he had to either enter the peanut field or come by me. I don't know what he did, but it was neither of those options. He also did not come back to the greenfield. He just disappeared, as if a black hole had sucked him away.

That night at dinner Kenny's son Jay showed me a trail-camera shot of the buck, and the deer looked even bigger. "We know this buck," he said. "Everybody has been after him."

I have always advocated for taking the first shot presented. I could argue also that this buck never presented a shot, but would I believe my own argument? In retrospect I tell myself now that I could have shot him anytime. But could I have lived with myself if it went to hell after I tried? I guess not, as the buck walked away healthy and happy.

He comes back though—often—and always late at night. **ah**

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Benelli BE.S.T. Lupo

By Brad Fitzpatrick

Benelli's Inertia Driven semi-autos revolutionized the shotgun market, and in 2020 Benelli decided to do the same to the bolt-action rifle market when it launched the Lupo rifle. This year, Benelli added more members to the Lupo (Italian for wolf) family tree with the introduction of the BE.S.T. (Benelli Surface Treatment) Lupo models, which offer the same quality construction and impressive accuracy as earlier models with upgraded aesthetics

BE.S.T. first appeared on Benelli shotguns in 2020, but by then the company had already spent over a decade perfecting its proprietary surface treatment. Benelli's engineers realized using physical vapor deposition (PVD) and plasma enhanced chemical vapor deposition (PECVD) nanotechnology could create the ultimate surface coating for firearms by applying a layer of scratch- and corrosion-resistant diamond-like carbon particles to its firearms, but traditional PVD and PECVD applications require tremendous heat. The team in Urbino cracked the code to apply these surface treatments at low heat, and they're not sharing the recipe. That same BE.S.T. armor is now available on Benelli hunting rifles.

The Lupo's three-piece stock design enhances accuracy. As with its shotguns,

Benelli Lupo rifles feature independent buttstocks, and this allows for the use of stock shims and over 30 different drop and cast adjustments. The buttstock attaches to an aluminum alloy lower receiver that mates with the tubular steel upper receiver. A hardened steel barrel extension is bedded into a steel block within the receiver, and there's a separate polymer forearm. Essentially, the Lupo is a chassis rifle dressed as a sporter, and that's one reason these guns are extremely accurate. Other features include a Crio-treated, free-floated threaded barrel and a 2.2- to 4.4-pound trigger that is clean and crisp. There are three sets of holes drilled atop the tubular upper receiver for mounting optics. Benelli offers rail and base options, but the drilled and tapped holes will also work with two rear Model 700 bases should you elect to use them. Lupo rifles come with front and rear sling studs molded into the polymer stocks, but there's also an attachment point for a standard sling stud on the forearm.

Benelli's Progressive Comfort recoil reduction system, which uses a series of interlocking, finger-like polymer baffles that absorb recoil, first appeared on its shotguns but has found its way to Lupo rifles. Combtech soft-touch, interchangeable polymer combs allow you to adjust comb height and replace the hard comb surfaces found on most rifles that

jab the shooter's face during recoil.

The Lupo's three-lug bolt sports a signature wasp-waisted profile. This narrowing reduces friction and allows for smooth cycling, but it also provides space for one more round in the detachable box magazine, which holds five .300 Win. Mag. cartridges. Benelli rifles are equipped with a two-position tang-mounted safety, and the action can be operated with the safety engaged.

The BE.S.T. Lupo I tested in .300 Win. Mag. weighed just over 7 pounds without a scope. With its 24-inch barrel, the test rifle measured 46.6 inches long. MSRP is \$1,899, which competes with other premium guns like Springfield's steel-barreled Waypoint 2020 (\$1,923 with adjustable stock) and Seekins Precision's Havak PH2 (\$1,895).

Accuracy

Benelli promises MOA accuracy from the Lupo and, as stated, all three rifles I've tested would place five shots under an inch at 100 yards with at least one factory load. The .300 Win. Mag. test gun came with a GORE Open Country camo stock and produced sub-MOA five-shot groups with Hornady's 200-grain ELD-X Precision Hunter ammo (.79 inch) and Remington's 200-grain Swift A-Frame load (.91 inch). A .300 Win. Mag. rifle that shoots those two loads well is suited for hunting just about any game



BENELLI BE.S.T. LUPO

benelliusa.com

- **Type:** bolt-action centerfire rifle
- **Caliber:** .300 Win. Mag. (tested), 6.5 Creedmoor, .308 Win.
- **Barrel:** 24" (tested); Crio treated; sporter profile; 1:11" RH twist; 5/8x24 threaded muzzle w/ thread protector
- **Magazine:** 5-rnd.; detachable polymer box
- **Trigger:** single-stage; adjustable pull weight 2.2-4.4 lbs.
- **Sights:** none; Picatinny bases included
- **Safety:** tang-mounted, two-position
- **Stock:** three-piece (aluminum lower receiver and polymer forearm and buttstock); GORE Open Country camo finish; Progressive Comfort recoil reduction; Combttech cheek pad; adjustable LOP
- **Metal Finish:** Benelli Surface Treatment (BE.S.T.), matte black
- **Overall length:** 46.6"
- **Weight:** 7 lbs., 1 oz.
- **Accessories:** stock shims, thread protector, gun lock
- **MSRP:** \$1,899

under any circumstances the world over. Reliability was excellent, and the detachable box magazine works as advertised and doesn't require a lot of maneuvering to secure into place. For range and field testing I used a Zeiss Conquest V4 4-16x44mm scope with ZBI ballistic reticle and mounted a Silencer Central Banish 30 suppressor to the rifle's 5/8x24 threads.

Field Testing

American Hunter's Jon Draper and I headed to Alaska in the spring of 2022 to test the Lupo BE.S.T. on black bears on Alaska's Kenai Peninsula. The greatest test for the rifles likely wouldn't be performance on the animals themselves but rather how well the guns withstood the abuse they would receive in the remote wilderness, since the Kenai's southern tip is a landscape of steep mountains, heavy alders and mazes of deadfall. The rifles would likely be exposed to salt spray and precipitation. If the guns performed under those conditions, they would perform anywhere.

Draper killed an old bruin with a blocky head on Kenai's coastal grass flats early on the first day. It took me a bit longer to find an opportunity. I spotted bears, hiked through jungles of deadfall and alders to find them, and missed out on several opportunities. During these adventures the Lupo BE.S.T. was dragged

overtop and underneath fallen hemlocks and was thumped against granite rocks along steep trails without any damage to the metal surface.

There were 10 minutes left on the last day of the trip and Jon and I were on the 67-foot liveaboard boat Sea Shed, which had been our home for the hunt. We spotted a bear on a beach that, ironically, was only about 100 yards from where we'd zeroed the rifles on the first day. Jon and I took a quick ride in the skiff to another nearby beach, and I worked my way down the rock pile toward the ocean. To my surprise, I found the bear standing in the open grass very near the water. I took a knee as the bear lifted its head, and at the shot the animal piled up.

The BE.S.T. Lupo is Benelli's bid to reinvent the hunting rifle, and there's no doubt the Italian brand is taking that task seriously. An accurate rifle that's

overflowing with forward-thinking rifle technology, the Lupo is going to continue to win fans as more hunters learn to love all that these guns offer. *ah*



Accuracy Results* Benelli BE.S.T. Lupo .300 Win. Mag.

Load	Weight (grs.)	Velocity (fps)	Group Size (inches)		
			Smallest	Average	Largest
Federal Fusion	180	3,016	1.32	1.47	1.77
Hornady ELD-X Precision Hunter	200	2,873	0.79	0.95	1.10
Remington Swift A-Frame	200	2,844	0.91	1.00	1.10
Sig Sauer Elite Copper Hunting	165	3,128	1.19	1.30	1.62
Winchester AccuBond LR	190	2,918	1.04	1.17	1.24

* Outdoors | Caldwell bags | 100 yards | 5-Shot Group

Photo: Forrest MacCormack

Trijicon IR-HUNTER Thermal Riflescope

By Brian McCombie, Field Editor

At 200 yards and in the dark, the new Trijicon IR-HUNTER 35mm Thermal Riflescope allowed me to just make out the outline of the wild boar's profile printed on the paper target. Not surprisingly, then, the two HotHands heat packs taped to the target stood out like black-hot beacons in the Wisconsin night, one on either side of the hog's vitals.

I fired twice into the space between the black rectangles. Unfortunately, that was my last two rounds of Federal Premium's .224 Valkyrie loaded with a 60-grain Hornady V-Max bullet. I had another box of Federal .224 Valkyrie, loaded with a bullet of the same weight. Still, it was a different round and I'd zeroed the rifle, a Franchi Momentum Elite Varmint, with the V-Max loads at 100 yards.

So, I fired three rounds of the new .224 Valkyrie to the left of the left heat pack.

Actually, I could've drilled the target's vital zone with the new ammunition all night, thanks in no small part to Trijicon's first-rate thermal.

Trijicon launched thermal optics for the civilian market in 2017; I've used the various models on numerous nighttime hog and predator hunts. They worked very well, providing clear images and detecting heat signatures at great distances. But the controls were tough to navigate.

These thermal units employed a small thumbstick control on one side. You pushed the thumbstick to scroll through the various digital menus and pressed in on the thumbstick to enter a particular menu. Then, you moved or pressed the thumbstick to access various menu commands and adjustments. It could be very confusing, especially in the field at 2 a.m. when hogs were moving.

In 2021, Trijicon revamped its line of



thermals, and the first change I noticed was the controls. Now, the IR-HUNTER, available in a 24mm, a 35mm and a 60mm model, employs knobs—one each on the left, top and right side of the tube—and they provide a much more intuitive access into the menus than the thumbsticks.

Once my unit was turned on, the numbered menus, eight of them, appeared to the left of the screen. The left knob moved me up and down on the menu column. The other two knobs allowed movement within a specific menu to make adjustments to the various settings.

For example, Menu No. 1 controlled the heat signature options (White Hot, Black Hot and Edge) located across the top of the screen, with four Zoom magnification possibilities at the right of the screen. When in No. 1, I simply turned the top knob to move through the various heat signatures, stopping on the one I wanted, and then adjusted the Zoom

from 1X, 2X, 4X and 8X with the left knob.

Another big upgrade for Trijicon's thermals is the addition of a USB-C port on the left side of the tube for attaching an external power source. I tried out a pre-production IR-HUNTER with a battery pack last year on a Texas hog hunt, and the exterior pack (zip-tied to my AR-10's handguard) lasted all night. No "low battery" icon popping up, warning that the unit could go dark at any moment.

The new IR-HUNTER features a top-loading battery compartment holding two CR123 batteries, another change from previous models that featured compartments built into the side of the main tube.

The HUNTER came with Trijicon's new Q-LOC quick-detach mount and clicked right to the Picatinny rail atop the Franchi rifle's receiver.

At my range, I zeroed the IR-HUNTER at 50 yards, my target a small HotHands packet. The thermal was set on 4X magnification and the first white hot heat signature setting, with the contrast adjusted low.

My first shots struck a foot to the right and half that distance low. To zero the scope, I turned the left control knob to Menu No. 8, and unlocked the MOA reticle I'd selected, then moved to Menu 5 to adjust my point of impact. Holding the rifle steady, with the reticle centered on the HotHands packet, I turned the top and left knobs to shift the Elevation and Windage to where the first rounds had hit. As the controls were moved, a moveable reticle detached from the center and tracked the adjustments.

With this moveable reticle now over my first group of shots, I locked in the reticle to zero it. My next three shots drilled the heat pack with a .40-inch group.

I moved to the 100-yard lane. My first three shots were centered fine but hit a little high. I readjusted the reticle, and fired a three shot, 1.1-inch group into the pack.

TRIJCON IR-HUNTER 35MM THERMAL RIFLESCOPE

trijcon.com

- **Type:** variable-power, thermal-imaging riflescope
- **Magnification:** 1.75X base magnification; 8X digital zoom
- **Objective Lens Diameter:** 35mm
- **Eye Relief:** 1.063"
- **Field of View @ 100 Yards:** 12 degrees horizontal
- **Sensor:** VOx 640x480
- **Frame Rate:** 30 Hz/60 Hz
- **Reticle:** multiple options
- **Dimensions:** length 9.8", width 3", height 3.2"
- **weight:** 2.2 lbs.
- **Construction:** aluminum housing
- **Battery:** CR123 (2); 4-hour runtime (external USB compatible)
- **Accessories:** shuttered eyeguard, Q-LOC scope mount, scope cover, USB-C to USB-C cable, lens pen, hard case
- **MSRP:** \$7,724



This zeroing was done in the daytime and bright sun, which told me much about the first-rate functionality of the controls and the zeroing process, plus the IR-HUNTER's accuracy potential. But I needed a night shooting test.

That came at a friend's farm and his newly cut ag field with targets set for 150 and 200 yards. That night, I set the IR-HUNTER's zoom to 8x; now, the first black hot heat setting showed up best. I set up a table and chair at the 150 mark, my target a paper coyote profile with three small HotHands placed around the target's vital area. I fired off my three shots, one of which I pulled right and down, but put two right in the boiler room.

I backed up 50 yards and took on the hog target. As mentioned, I only had two rounds left of my original zeroing Federal .224 Valkyrie and shot those between the two larger heat packets. They went right into the target's vitals at just an inch apart.

Then I fired the three rounds of the second ammunition, and they scored a

2.3-inch group—pretty darned good, as I'd aimed at the space to one side of the left heat packet, with no real aim point.

My IR-HUNTER featured six reticle options, including the MOA I used, plus an MRAD option and a simple crosshair.

The IR-HUNTER does take images but does not have onboard video capability. Trijicon includes an Electro Optics Download Cable with the thermal unit, which, once attached to a small, external DVR unit, can take and transfer video. The Cable includes an in-line video adapter.

Frankly, the lack of onboard video is surprising; thermal scopes half the price of the IR-HUNTER 35mm offer fairly impressive onboard video capability.

On the other hand, if you want to make a 300-plus-yard shot on a coyote at 1 a.m.? The IR-HUNTER 35mm and its state-of-the-art 640x480 thermal image sensor and 12-micron sensor pixel pitch will put Wiley E. clearly in the crosshairs, smoke, dust and dark be damned, something many lesser thermal scopes can't do. **dh**





Leupold Mark 5HD 3.6-18X44

By Matt Foster

In recent years, the popularity of long-range shooting competitions and the number of hunters setting up rifles for taking game at extended distances has exploded. Leupold has some great scopes in its line for these disciplines, such as the Mark 6 and Mark 8, but nothing specific catering to these groups at a price a mere mortal can afford.

Enter Leupold's Mark 5HD. This optic was specifically designed for long-range competitors and hunters with features they want, including excellent image clarity, excellent low-light performance, elevation and windage adjustments that track precisely and ergonomic controls, all while weighing less than similar scopes and costing significantly less than the company's Mark 6 and Mark 8 optics. Let's be clear though, the Mark 5HD is not an inexpensive scope. But in the world of long-range rifle optics, to co-opt a word used by bourbon and wine aficionados, the Mark 5HD is "accessible." I wanted to see if the Mark 5HD 3.6-18X44 figuratively hit its target.

The two most defining features of the Mark 5HD are its 35mm main tube and the 5:1 zoom ratio. The Mark 5HD 3.6-18X44 is a sort of chunky looking little scope because it's fairly short at only 12.1 inches combined with a large diameter main tube. It's a robust looking unit. Models are available with either a first focal plane reticle or second focal plane reticle. My test sample was a first focal plane model with the TMR reticle and adjustments calibrated in MILS (because if you're going to do this long-range tactical hunting stuff, then you need to do it right).

So why a 35mm main tube instead

of the common 30mm or 34mm main tube? To increase the amount of elevation adjustment for the shooter. A 35mm tube also allows for larger internal components and lenses. The larger the lens, the larger the optical "sweet spot." This minimizes the distortion at the edges of the sight picture throughout a larger percentage of the field of view. The larger tube is not for better light transmission. The diameter of the main tube has nothing to do with that.

The magnification system is a 5:1 zoom ratio, providing the shooter a good field of view at the lowest power and enough magnification to aim precisely at extended distances.

The elevation and windage adjustment ability of a long-range scope could be considered the heart, if not the soul, of the optic. Adjustments must be precise and repeatable. The Mark 5HD has an exposed elevation knob with a zero stop, as well as a push-button lock preventing it from accidentally getting bumped off zero. Having missed a blacktail because my exposed adjustment knob accidentally got bumped to the aiming solution for a mortar round, I can tell you this is a must. It has a well-thought-out feature in that the lock button is proud for the first revolution of the elevation dial, flush with the knob on the second revolution and recessed into the knob on the third revolution. This way you know how many times you've turned the dial and it tells you which set of numbers on the knob you should be using. It is a nice touch. To make windage adjustments you will have to remove a cap, but that's okay, as most

shooters just hold for wind adjustments rather than dial. The windage indicator mark on the scope body is at an unusual spot so you can see it while behind the rifle. It does work, but it can be a bit difficult to see exactly what windage knob mark you're lined up with. The "clicks" on the Mark 5HD adjustments are extremely positive and crisp. That doesn't necessarily mean the scope is tracking properly, but when making an adjustment, there's no doubt the knob has turned. The knobs are large enough to easily grab and turn without being obnoxious.

While it may not be very important on a hunting-type scope that you basically set and forget, ergonomics are important on a long-range scope because the controls get used a lot. The Mark 5HD has some solid ergonomics. The side parallax adjustment knob and fast-focus eyepiece are easy to adjust as needed, and the magnification power selector ring is large enough to easily grasp and comes with a little knob that acts like a throw lever to provide some leverage.

That's basically the nuts and bolts of the scope in a short stubby little nutshell. To see how it performs, I mounted it on an accurate FN SPR to put it through some tests. Mainly, I wanted to check its ability to hold zero, and the elevation adjustments' ability to track precisely and repeatably, at a few different temperatures, as well as after some time being vibrated, bumped and even smacked like Chris Rock at an award ceremony.

Mounting the scope was straightforward. One thing I noticed is that if mounting this scope on a bolt action with an open-top receiver, you might



have to get a one-piece mount because there's not enough scope tube length to use a two-piece mount and rings. Just something to keep in mind.

Using Hornady Match ammo, zeroing was quick and easy requiring only a few shots, a good precursor indicating the adjustments track well. It was also a good opportunity to check out the image quality around the edges of the field of view by looking at the target grid throughout the scope's magnification range. It looked good with no easily detected aberrations or distortions at the edges.

I shot a box test to check the repeatability and relative precision of the elevation adjustments. It tracked perfectly with only minor variance easily within the range of the group size. But I wanted to see if there would be any tracking shift or error when the temperature changed, so I used ice to cool the scope, as well as a heat gun to heat it up, and shot the test again at each temperature. The scope remained zeroed and the adjustments tracked as they should. Any noticeable shift in the point of impact was again within the margin of error of the accuracy of the rifle and my shooting ability.

My dilapidated compressor provided vibrations by running it with the rifle and scope leaning on it. Again I shot the baseline, adjusted the scope "up," and shot again with no apparent tracking error. So far so good.

We've all dropped our gun on the scope before and internally said not nice things. Given Leupold's factory recoil and forward and backward impact testing, I wasn't worried about that as much as getting bumped sideways. As much as it pained me, I smacked the side with a dead blow hammer a few times—not enough to bend the tube, but enough to ruin the elevation knob cap (whoops). It

shot to the same point of impact within the margin of error.

While not completely "real-world" conditions, I did leave the scope overnight in a tub filled with water, and ran the adjustments like a crazy kid on an Etch A Sketch while it was submerged. Not surprisingly, there were no signs of leaks. You just don't see many failures like that with good quality riflescopes.

It will be nice to give this scope an extended test. Such will probably occur in Oregon during the coastal blacktail hunting season, as this is a great rifle-scope to put on a lightweight bolt-action rifle or even a DMR-type AR-15 setup. The adjustments are positive, precise and easy to see and use. The reticle is clean and precise, and I was pleasantly surprised that it did not completely disappear at the lowest settings like some of the finer grid-type reticles can disappear.

Yes, this scope is expensive when compared to other baseline hunting optics, but it's hitting way above its weight class, legitimately competing with scopes that are sometimes twice the price and considerably heavier. If you want a solid "do-all" scope that will work for hunting, long-range shooting or even tactical applications, the Leupold Mark 5HD is a great choice. *dh*

LEUPOLD MARK 5HD 3.6-18X44

leupold.com

- **Type:** FFP, variable-power riflescope
- **Magnification:** 3.6X-18X
- **Objective Lens Diameter:** 44mm
- **Eye Relief:** 3.5" (3.6X), 3.8" (18X)
- **Field of View @ 100 Yards:** 28.3 ft. (3.6X), 5.8 ft. (18X)
- **Reticle:** FFP, multiple reticles available, TMR (Mk) (tested)
- **Elevation Adjustment:** 29 MIL range; .1 MIL click value
- **Coatings:** fully multi-coated
- **Dimensions:** 35mm tube diameter; length 12.1"
- **Weight:** 26 ozs.
- **Construction:** 1-piece aluminum tube; HD lenses; matte black finish, waterproof, fog-proof, shockproof
- **Accessories:** removable throw lever, lens covers, sun shade
- **MSRP:** \$1,899.99



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[1]

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[1] If you are looking for a pack that can tote multiple days' worth of gear and equipment into the backcountry and get you back out with the addition of a deboned elk, the fully adjustable Gannett is for you. Features include 5,500 cubic inches of storage space, a lightweight, detachable carbon-fiber frame, a large meat shelf, a bow/rifle carrier, a rain fly, and the expandability to "overstuff" the pack, should you dare. \$399.99; browning.com



[2]

ALPS OutdoorZ Elite Frame and Pack System

[2] ALPS started with the Elite Frame, made from a high-performance thermoplastic composite weighing only 3 pounds, 10 ounces, and, alone, it's a meat- and cape-hauling machine. Attach either the Elite 1800 (shown) or Elite 3800 pack, and you've got a serious hunting system with the adjustability, compression straps and load lifters that success demands. \$299.99-\$499.99; alpsoutdoorz.com

Ledlenser MH8 Outdoor Headlamp and Powercase

[3] The MH8 headlamp delivers up to 600 lumens of white light and also sports green, red and blue LEDs. It boasts a focus wheel to change from spotlight to flood. Remove the light from the head strap and clip it to your clothing or use as a handheld. It's rechargeable but will also take an alkaline battery, and it is compatible with the Powercase—a charging system, carry case and portable power bank all in one. Versatile is an understatement. \$89.95 headlamp, \$59.95 case; ledlenserusa.com



[3]



SJK Carbine 2500 Backpack

[4] Not too big and certainly not too small, the Carbine 2500 Backpack from SJK fits right into the "Goldilocks zone" for a multi-use hunting pack. With 2,500 cubic inches of storage space, there's ample room for your hunting gear and snacks, and a stowable carry system holds your rifle or bow. A compression flap provides a way to haul meat or extra gear. Available in Kryptek Highlander camo. \$199.95; sjkgear.com



Mystery Ranch Treehouse Pack

[5] Available in 20- and 38-liter sizes, the Treehouse pack was designed specifically for treestand whitetail hunters. Made with a water-resistant and ultra-quiet nylon-backed fuzzy polyester shell, the Treehouse, in either size, sports a top-load access system with a deep lid that doubles as a gear shelf. Sleeves and pockets keep the interior organized, and an integrated tree strap secures the pack to your tree. \$229-\$299; mysteryranch.com



OKC Rat-3 Caper

[6] Built to hunt and made to last a lifetime of it, the Rat-3 Caper starts with a super-sharp, 3-inch caping blade made from tough, phosphate-coated 1075 carbon steel. To that, OKC added a near-indestructible Rat-3 Micarta handle. At 8.25 inches in total length, this fixed blade is the perfect size for belt carry or to ride in your pack, and it comes with a low-profile, molded leather sheath. \$91.95; ontarioknife.com

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Law And Order Midterms?

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Numerous surveys indicate crime remains one of the top issues for voters as the country approaches the midterm elections. A closely related concern is soft-on-crime policies, with large percentages of respondents agreeing that such policies do nothing to improve public safety.

California County Shows Serious Problem with "\$0 Cash" Bail

Yolo County in California evaluated the impact of a "\$0 cash" bail rule and discovered that more than 70% of offenders released under that program were later rearrested, with a shocking 29% being rearrested for a crime of violence.

In April 2020, the California Judicial Council imposed a "statewide Emergency Bail Schedule" during the state of emergency during the COVID-19 pandemic. This mandatory directive ended cash bail requirements for most offenses, with the default being "bail for all misdemeanor and felony offenses must be set at \$0." Individual counties had the option of continuing to follow the rule after it was rescinded in June 2020.

According to Yolo County District Attorney Jeff Reisig, the county decided to follow the rule

until May 31, 2021, with the district attorney's office "tracking the individuals released ... and rearrested within Yolo County" between April 2020 and May 2021.

Analysis found seven out of 10 individuals benefitting from the \$0 bail rule reoffended after being released: "Of the 595 individuals released, 420 were rearrested (70.6%) and 123 (20% of the overall number or 29% of those rearrested) were arrested for a crime of violence."

Regarding the time between release and subsequent arrest: "five people ... were arrested again on the same day as release, 14 people arrested within one day, 46 people arrested within one week, [and] 104 people [were] arrested within 30 days."

Commenting on the results, DA Reisig concluded, "When over 70% of the people released under mandated \$0 bail policies go on to commit additional crime(s), including violent offenses such as robbery and murder, there is simply no rational public-safety-related basis to continue such a practice post-pandemic, especially in light of the increasing violent crime rates across California."



Chicago Can't Respond to 911 Calls

After violent unrest and looting in 2020 that Chicago mayor Lori Lightfoot admitted had "spread like wildfire" throughout parts of Chicago, the mayor, nonetheless, urged Chicagoans not to "take matters into [their] own hands" in the concealed-carry state. "Do not pick up arms and try to be the police," she continued. "If there's a problem, call 911. We will respond."

Chicago residents, it seems, have little reason to believe her.

Residents who called 911 for police help last year were reportedly left waiting in more than half of "high priority" (Priority Level 1 and 2) calls. Priority Level 1 calls, the most urgent, include incidents where there is "an imminent threat to life, bodily injury, or major property damage/loss," while Priority Level 2 are those where "timely police action...has the potential to affect the outcome of an incident."

Analysts using data obtained from the Chicago Police Department found that "in 2021 there were 406,829 incidents of high-priority emergency service calls for which there were no police available to respond. That was 52% of the 788,000 high-priority 911 service calls dispatched in 2021." The calls involved serious crimes like in-progress assaults or batteries, persons shot or stabbed, robberies, domestic violence, and violations of court protective orders.

According to the source, while the overall number of 911 calls remained roughly the same between 2019 and 2021, the amount of dispatched calls that had to be backlogged for a response—"radio assignments pending" or RAP calls—skyrocketed, "from 5,077 in 2019 to 11,721 in 2021, up more than 130%." Significantly, a RAP is "a range of time in which no dispatchable resources are available in the [police] District/dispatch group" as a whole, rather than a single unresponsive contact after a dispatched call.

Although the researchers were unable to obtain information on the average duration of a RAP backlog, an audio recording the article includes features a dispatcher for the 11th Police District reeling off a list of 36 incidents with apparently hours-long response delays.

One factor to consider is a drop in police officer staffing. According to one source, hundreds of sworn police personnel in Chicago have left the force each year since 2019, resulting in personnel levels at "a new low not seen in more than half a century."

With police understaffed and otherwise unable to respond to countless 911 calls, it is not unreasonable for law-abiding Chicagoans to consider exercising their Second Amendment rights as an option to defend themselves against violent criminals.

If America hopes to restore our standing as a nation of law and order—which includes ending the assault on the Second Amendment that stands as a firewall against diminishing our right to self-defense when law and order breaks down—we must do everything we can to ensure pro-freedom candidates are elected to office on Nov. 8! **dh**

IN MEMORY NRA-ILA CONTRIBUTIONS

August 1 - 31, 2022

Jack Ferrell III, Summerville, SC (from: Palmetto Gun Club); **Ernesto Smith**, John Island, SC (from: Palmetto Gun Club); **Philip Stouffer**, Cottageville, SC (from: Palmetto Gun Club); **Michael R. Ludtke**, Carson City, NV (from: anonymous); **Billy R. Plyler**, Lancaster, SC (from: Linda Plyler); **Joy Schrunck**, Brooklyn Park, MN (from: Calvin Schrunck); **Dr. Rick Bennett**, Coolidge, TX (from: Charles & Mae Dale Sigrist); George Alves (from: Warren & Vickie Alves).



Photo by Sabrina Schmidt

Whey Jennings grew up in a family of country-music legends; in fact, his grandparents, Waylon Jennings and Jessi Colter are "outlaw country" icons! The values, patriotism and talent Why inherited from his grandparents inspired him, and he has begun to make his own name in Nashville. Even though Why is part of country music's royalty, he grew up working on the farm, and he loves fishing and the outdoors. His new song titled "Farm Life" reminds us the importance of the forgotten farmer and that "hard work never done no harm." Another song, titled "The Gun," shows the world through the eyes of a gun and the tradition of a gun being handed down from generation to generation. Why shows his love of the Second Amendment and the right to keep and bear arms, and he won't compromise when it comes to the right to protect his family and his loved ones. He always makes time for active military, veterans, law enforcement and first responders to tip his hat and say a quick "Thank y'all" for what they do for our community and the nation. NRA Country's Lisa Supernaugh caught up with him in between working his farm and performing to ask him a few questions.

LS: If there was one person in history that you could go back in time and meet, who would it be?

WJ: Jesus Christ.

LS: How do you share your love for the outdoors with your family?

WJ: We go camping, kayaking, tubing, hunting, on walks, gardening and playing music around a campfire.

LS: Who got you into the outdoors?

WJ: My mom loved camping, and I used to hunt with my uncle and boss years ago.

LS: If you could only have one firearm for the rest of your life, which it would be?

WJ: Colt 1911-A1 .45 ACP.

LS: What does freedom mean to you?

WJ: The Bill of Rights and the Constitution of The United States of America and the ability to raise my family with my wife as we see fit.

LS: Even though you found the love of music early in your life, you remained a farmer for quite some time. Do you still do both or did you have to choose with a busy touring schedule?

WJ: Ultimately, I had to choose music, but I still have a love for farming and always will.

LS: Even though you are part of country-music "royalty," folks still want to ask, who was your greatest influence?

WJ: Musically, I'd definitely have to say my grandfather, Jamey Johnson and Lynyrd Skynyrd.

If you're looking for music that brings you back to your roots, check out Why Jennings at whyjennings.com for music, tour dates, and other info.

NRA Country is a lifestyle and a bond between the country music community and hard-working Americans everywhere. It's powered by pride, freedom, love of country, respect for the military and the responsibilities of protecting the great American life. For more information, visit nracountry.com, follow on Twitter @NRACountry, and NRA_Country on Instagram.

NRA Online Regional Report

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Visit the links below to find gun shows, programs, clubs, events and training in your area.



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le.nra.org

Public and private officers interested in becoming law enforcement firearm instructors should attend one of NRA's Law Enforcement Firearms Instructor Development Schools. NRA Police Pistol Combat competition is intended to be used as an extension of an officer's training.



FRIENDS OF NRA

friendsofnra.org

Friends of NRA events celebrate American values with fun, fellowship and fundraising for The NRA Foundation. To learn more about events in your area, visit friendsofnra.org, contact your local field representative or send an email to friends@nrahq.org.



GUN SHOWS

gunshows.nra.org

Dates and locations of gun shows are subject to change. Please contact the show before traveling. Discounted NRA memberships are sold through NRA recruiters. Some shows may offer free admission to people who sign up for new memberships or renewals.

To become an NRA Recruiter contact NRA Recruiting Programs at recruiter@nrahq.org.



TRAINING

refuse.nra.org | nrainstructors.org

The NRA's Refuse to Be A Victim® program provides information on crime prevention and personal safety. To learn more about the program, visit refuse.nra.org. The most up-to-date seminar and instructor training schedule is available on the Internet by visiting nrainstructors.org, or online training is available at nraonlinetraining.org.

Questions? Email to refuse@nrahq.org or by calling (800) 861-1166.



AREA SHOOTS

ssusa.org/coming-events

For more information, send an email to Shelly Kramer at mkramer@nrahq.org or call (703) 267-1459.



STATE ASSOCIATIONS

stateassociations.nra.org

Joining NRA-affiliated state associations supports NRA's mission in your state. See clubs.nra.org for more information.

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The "NRA Regional Report," a service for NRA members, is an up-to-date listing of NRA conducted and/or sponsored events scheduled in your region for the current month. Call to verify event dates and locations before traveling.

NRA INDY '23
ANNUAL MEETINGS & EXHIBITS

APRIL 14-16, 2023

For hotel accommodations at the NRA Annual Meetings, visit nraam.org.



Support Your NRA State Association

Join your local State Association and help it grow and prosper



By Joseph P. DeBergalis, Jr.
Executive Director,
General Operations



Joining NRA-affiliated state associations supports NRA's mission in your state.

GET INVOLVED TODAY!

GO VISIT

stateassociations.nra.org

This month, I'm encouraging all NRA members to get involved with their local State Associations, which are independent organizations affiliated with and recognized by the National Rifle Association. Most State Associations need your help and support. From the mountains to the coasts, NRA and State Associations work hand-in-hand to provide vital services to shooters, hunters, gun owners and Second Amendment activists across all 50 states and Puerto Rico. With our precious liberties currently under assault by extremists, the National Rifle Association of America considers its partnerships with individual State Associations a solid foundation for the defense of our Second Amendment rights.

Although affiliated with the NRA, State Associations are independent and self-sufficient—each representing the collective voice of the community it serves. Every State Association also serves as a valuable resource of information regarding NRA activities carried on at the state level. NRA provides assistance and support, but outside of a few guidelines, State Associations forge their own paths according to the needs of their members. Additionally, State Associations are encouraged to tap into NRA's vast resources to achieve success.

One of the best ways to get involved is to become a member of your State Association—it's never too early to join. How else can you get

involved? It can be as simple as working as a range officer at a State Association match or volunteering with a Hunter Safety program. Perhaps you have experience dealing with range issues at your local club and your expertise could help other clubs in your state that are encountering problems. Or, you want to share your marksmanship skills by joining a State Team at the NRA National Matches at Camp Atterbury. Many State Associations will have at least one committee or program that could benefit from your assistance.

Support your State Association and make a difference in your local community. Interested in shaping firearm policy? It all starts at the grassroots level with support from NRA-ILA. Consider becoming an officer or joining a committee. You never know where such a path may lead you—State Associations often serve as a training ground for individuals seeking future national leadership responsibilities.

In fact, we are privileged to count a number of State Association leaders among the esteemed members of the NRA Board of Directors: Ted Carter of Florida, Charles Hiltunen of Indiana, Jim Wallace of Massachusetts, Scott Bach of New Jersey, Tom King of New York and Mark Vaughan of Oklahoma.

If you're not a member already, join your State Association today. To find out more about NRA State Associations, go to stateassociations.nra.org.

Indiana State Association Pistol Team at Camp Atterbury.



Photo by John Parker

NRA Online Hunter Education Program Reaches More Than 100,000 Course Completions

More than 100,000 hunters have completed the National Rifle Association of America's free, award-winning NRA Hunter Education online courses since the program's inception in 2017.

Designed and provided by the organization that built the first-ever hunter education program in the United States in 1949, the free NRA Hunter Education online course offers a fresh and fully comprehensive approach to hunter education. The 15-chapter sequence features attention-grabbing videos, eye-catching graphics and diagrams, interactive modules, audio recordings and dozens of action photos presented in appealing, easy-to-access online components that provide the best method for teaching future hunters.

"One of the purposes and objectives of the NRA is to promote and support hunter safety in America," said Joseph P. DeBergalis Jr., executive director of NRA General Operations. "This free, online course was developed to make it easier for new hunters to get into the field. We are thrilled with the partnerships we have fostered with state wildlife agencies across our nation and the more than 100,000 of our fellow hunters who have completed this no-cost program."

This free offering has saved American hunters approximately \$2.5 million when compared to the fees associated with other online hunter-education providers. Additionally, with a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) ruling in 2019, state wildlife agencies now may claim a dollar value of the NRA's

online Hunter Education course as in-kind match dollars to access federal Pittman-Robertson (P-R) grant funds. Had every state that offers the NRA online course utilized that match opportunity, it would have resulted in more than \$7 million going back to the state agencies for other hunter education programs and/or range building/improvement opportunities. This is a giant step forward in bolstering states' hunter recruitment efforts and the national NRA-backed R3 movement: Recruitment, Retention and Reactivation.

To take the NRA Hunter Education online course or learn more, visit NRAHE.org. Not available in your area? Contact your State Department of Fish and Game Agency to request NRA's online Hunter Education be accepted in your state: fws.gov/offices/statelinks.html *dh*

Photo by NRA



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(Name of Board member), NRA Office of the Secretary, 11250 Waples Mill Road, Fairfax, VA 22030; or nrabod@nrahq.org; or (703) 267-1021. Please include your name, contact information and NRA membership I.D. number, as only communications from NRA members will be forwarded.

bored, almost sleepy. I confirmed my laser reading with Justin's. They were within 2 yards of one another and he was behind me so ... I dialed the yardage and twisted the power ring to 18x. The reticle held steady over the buck's right shoulder. Dead calm.

"Watch my shot. If he continues standing calmly I think I'll take it." Seconds later the trigger broke, the rifle recoiled and I lost my sight picture. Couldn't get it back. "Where'd he go? Is he running west?"

"Down! Straight down! You dumped him!"

"By that biggest clump of yucca?"

"Yes. You can see one antler sticking up. That brown spot is not sand. That's him. Stay on him. Let's be ready for another shot."

But another shot wasn't needed. The 175-grain .277 Sierra had flown true, punching through one shoulder and out the other. An accurate rifle spitting an accurate bullet directed toward its target with an accurate scope proved ideal tools for ending yet another hunt for whitetail bucks in odd places. **ah**



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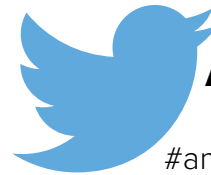
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My First Hunting Trips in My New Life

By Gary Miketa, Pueblo, Colo.

About a year and a half ago, due to a traumatic brain injury, I was blessed to be put in the unique position of being a 56-year-old man that now had the physical and mental capacity of a newborn. After the surgery to repair my brain bleeds, and another two weeks later to replace my skull, I was given no hope of coming out of the coma I was in, and if I did, it was almost certain that I would remain in a vegetative state the rest of my life.

With the help of God, family and the saints of Craig Hospital, I was given a do-over in life, and I began once again to learn the basics, such as my name, recognizing the person in the mirror, walking, talking, swallowing, etc.

Quite some time later, I remembered that I once loved to go hunting and shooting, and I was determined to do it again. Though I had hunting tags in my possession, the doctors would not clear me to hunt yet, so I turned my tags in and signed up for college, of all things, only five months after learning how to read again.

The next big-game drawing was coming up, so I applied even without the doctor's clearance, hoping that I would be cleared to hunt by the upcoming season.

The tags were announced and I drew a cow moose, cow elk, buck antelope and buck deer, but still had no clearance from

the doctor. I decided if they would let me hunt, I wanted to do it only with lever actions and without scopes since my right eye, among other issues, was compromised, making it difficult to see through a scope.

I finally got clearance to drive and hunt, as long as I was with others. I took a Cimarron Model 1886 in .45-70 and got a young bull that qualified as a cow, in Unit 16, near Walden, Colo. I must say it was a bit tougher than past hunts in this area, however.

A few days later, I got a buck antelope in Unit 110 near Calhan, Colo., with a Henry .44 Mag. I was staying in a 100-year-old granary that I had fixed up into a hunting camp, and I had family nearby that checked in on me often. Several weeks later I got a buck deer with my son and daughter and the same Cimarron .45-70 and a single-action .45 Colt, also in Unit 110.

I was not able to take time off from school to go elk hunting because my learning disability is still lingering. I have never been to college before or used a computer, so I am at a small disadvantage. (Typing this story is proving good practice.)

It was a great new year and new life, but they all are. While some are better than others, they are all great.

Life is not about surviving the storm, but learning to dance in the rain. *ah*

Do you have an exciting, unusual or humorous hunting experience to share?

Send your story (800 words or less) to americanhunter@nrahq.org or to *American Hunter*, Dept. MH, 11250 Waples Mill Road, Fairfax, VA 22030-9400. Please include your NRA ID number. Good quality photos are welcome. Make sure you have permission to use the material. Authors will not be paid, and manuscripts and photos will not be returned. All material becomes the property of NRA.

Weird Herb Shocks Doctors With Relief of Leg and Feet Pain, Burning, Tingling, Numbness

6 clinical studies show it is effective. Lost but now re-discovered. Thousands of new users report amazing relief from leg and feet problems in just 30 to 90 days – with no side effects. Available in all 50 states without a prescription.

A re-discovery from the 1600s is causing a frenzy within the medical system. A weird herb has been shown in six clinical studies (and by thousands of users) to be very effective for leg and feet pain, burning and numbness – with no side effects – at low cost – and with no doctor visit or prescription needed.

This weird herb comes from a 12-foot tall tree that grows in Greece and other countries in Europe. In the old days, people noticed that when their horses who had leg and feet problems ate this herb – it was almost like magic how quickly their problems got much better. They called it the “horse herb”. Then somehow with Europe’s ongoing wars, this herbal secret got lost in time.

“It works for people who’ve tried many other treatments before with little or no success. Other doctors and I are shocked at how effective it is. It has created a lot of excitement” says Dr. Ryan Shelton, M.D.

Its active ingredient has been put into pill form and improved. It is being offered in the United States under the brand name Neuroflo.

WHY ALL THIS EXCITEMENT?

Researchers have found an herb originally from Greece that has been shown in six placebo-controlled medical studies (543 participants) to be effective and safe. This natural compound strengthens blood vessel walls and reduces swelling to stop the pain and suffering.

Poor blood flow in the legs and feet is one of the common problems that develops as we age. Millions of Americans suffer from neuropathy and chronic venous insufficiency (CVI), edema, and other leg/feet problems – millions have these but are undiagnosed.

Today’s treatments don’t work for a high percentage of people – and they have side effects that make them hard to tolerate or that people do not want to risk. This includes prescription drugs, over the counter pain pills, surgery and compression.

Already popular in Europe, this natural

herb is taking America by storm since it was announced last week.

HOW IT WORKS

Here’s why you have pain now: Your arteries have weakened. Your arteries can’t carry enough blood, nutrients and oxygen down to your legs and feet. This damages your nerves and causes your burning, tingling and numbness.

The herbs in the pill Neuroflo strengthen your arteries that carry blood, nutrients and oxygen to your feet and legs. It improves your circulation so oxygenated blood goes to the nerves and repairs them. This makes your nerves grow stronger so your pain fades away and your legs and feet feel much younger again.

Until now, scientists could not combine these herbs into one pill without losing their full potency, but finally, they have succeeded.

Katerina King from Murrieta, California says, “I had hands and feet tingling and snapping and burning feeling. It made my life very uncomfortable. I had a hard time walking, my legs felt like they each weighed 50 pounds. Once I got in my car and my feet felt so heavy I couldn’t even drive the car. With Neuroflo I have no more tingling, cold or burning painful legs and feet. It went away.”

WHAT DOCTORS ARE SAYING

“Now I finally have a natural solution I can recommend to my patients who suffer from leg and feet problems and pain. I’m delighted because previous treatments were not effective, but Neuroflo has worked for every one of my patients with no side effects” says Dr. Eric Wood, N.D.



Dr. Ryan Shelton, M.D. says “This is new and different. It works for people who’ve tried many other things before. It is natural with no side effects. Don’t give up hope for your leg and feet pain, burning, tingling and numbing. This pill

is working for countless people after other treatments have failed them. I highly recommend it.”



RE-DISCOVERED LEG AND FEET PROBLEM SOLUTION:

In Greece in the 1600s, this herb was originally called “horse herb” because it was fed to horses with ailing legs. It has now been re-discovered and is giving soothing comfort to Americans who have leg and feet pain, burning, tingling and numbness.

“Neuroflo is a terrific choice for people with leg and feet issues. The clinical trials in support of this herb show it is very effective for safe and fast relief,” said Dr. Wood, a Harvard trained doctor who has appeared on award winning TV shows.

Now you can get a good night’s sleep – peaceful, restful sleep – with no pain, tingling, zinging, itching or zapping. Improve your balance and coordination. No side effects – safe to take with other medications. Enjoy your favorite activities and hobbies again. Be more active, have more fun, enjoy life more. Don’t risk irreversible damage to your feet and hands. Don’t get worse and wind up in the hospital or a nursing home.

Neuroflo is GUARANTEED to work for you – or you will get full refund with a 90-day unconditional money-back guarantee. It is NOT sold in stores or online. No prescription or doctor visit is required.

50% OFF FOR THE NEXT 10 DAYS

This is the official release of Neuroflo for American Hunter readers. Therefore, everyone who calls within the next 10 days will receive 50% OFF their first order. A toll-free hotline number has been set up for local readers to call for this 50% OFF savings. The number will be open starting at 7:00 am today and only for the next 10 days.

All you have to do is CALL TOLL FREE **1-877-214-6380** and provide the operator with the special 50% OFF discount approval code: **NEF158**.

Important: Due to Neuroflo’s popularity and recent media exposure on ABC, CBS and FOX NEWS, phone lines are often busy. If you call and do not get through immediately, please be patient and call back. Those who miss the 10 day deadline for 50% OFF will have to pay more for Neuroflo.



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