

A Wet One for the Books

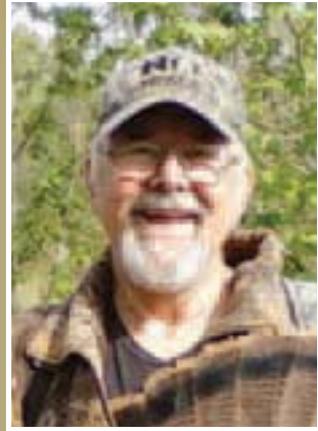
STORY & PHOTOS BY ZAC WHALEY

It had been a rather routine bow season so far. You know black gnats, mosquitoes, snakes, heat, and poison oak. Not to mention the boredom of hours in a deer stand with nothing to show for it. (You bow hunters know exactly what I mean).

Like I said "routine." Today would be different.

I was up about 23 feet in a lock-on stand that has been productive for many years. The stand is located about 200 yards from my front door in Holmes County, and overlooks a food plot planted with turnip greens, clover, and wheat. About 50 yards south of the stand is a 1 acre pond. I bought the place when I worked at Delta Electric Power, 20 years ago, and have lived here ever since.

There was a slight wind from the



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west, but mostly it was dead calm. It was mid-October and warm and dry. Nothing had been seen thus far but I had pictures of several deer on various cameras, which I had positioned around the place on other food plots.

Then suddenly, a deer seemed to appear out of thin air. I guess it had been there for some time but had not made a sound, or if it did I didn't hear it. I still get around ok for somebody 76 years old, but it's like I told the nice highway patrol officer, "I can't see, and I can't hear, but thank God I can still drive!"

It was a large doe all by herself, no fawn and therefore fair game. She was about 15 yards away and facing in my direction, head down and munching grass. Soon she turned

broadside to me, still at about 15 yards, and lowered her head. I saw my opportunity and drew my bow. I shoot an old Hoyt bow that I bought 12 years ago when I retired. I have the draw weight set on the lowest poundage possible. For what it's worth, it shoots about 250 fps and with 100 gr Spitfire heads I still get consistent pass-throughs.

The arrow sailed down through the sparse leaf cover and to my horror caught the animal near the last rib angling somewhat foreword. A killing shot but certainly not textbook!

It was still somewhat early in the day so I lowered my bow and climbed down the 20 foot ladder determined to wait at least an hour. About 15 minutes later I was on the trail.

The deer had wheeled with the shot and headed for cover. She went down a steep bank and headed for some rough country west of the food plot. I walked the short grassy road

at least 3 times looking for any sign of a hit. I found only two small drops of blood which I marked with toilet paper. I was still kicking myself for the somewhat errant shot when I decided it was time to bring in backup!

I walked the relatively short way back to my house and got Jessie, my 5 year old tracking dog. A feist, that has found several deer in the past. I loaded her up on my four wheeler and we returned to the crime scene.

Jessie would have nothing to do with the scent trail, and like that old gobbler that discovers it's a decoy.... My feathers fell! I must have walked that levy at least 3 times with nothing to show for it, no crushed grass, no tracks, and certainly no blood, all the while Jessie was running around, having fun, and ignoring me trying to put her on the trail.

About that time two significant, though non-related events occurred. One - my wife came home and two - world war three erupted. Jessie found the deer!

I have had Jessie from the time she was weaned, and trained her to trail deer. With the aid of some Tinks deer lure and a drag rag she has become a fair trailer, but for all the deer she has found this would be the first one that fought back! I think she was in shock.

I looked to the far end of the pond and standing under the pier was the deer. (Water was low) Directly in front of her stood Jessie, bristled up like a pit bull, all 25 pounds of her, full of fight and not letting that deer get to solid dirt. My phone rang.

Sandra, hearing the dog going ballistic and me yelling, must have thought the worst. I told her to get my truck, pick up my bow (still at the crime scene) and bring it to the pond. Things immediately went from bad to worse.



I thought I was going to put another arrow in the deer, and that would be the end of it. NOPE.

Those dang things can swim. The doe wheeled around and hit the water like some creature from Sea World. She then started swimming across the pond to the far side. For those of you interested, you cannot shoot a deer with only her ears, and nose above water. On this subject you will just have to trust me. Now here is the situation, Jessie won't let her out of the water; there is some old geezer with a bow trying to circle for a shot, and a woman on the levy standing next to a truck giving directions. All in all things went from boredom to

bedlam in one errant shot. I decided on a different strategy. I would go back to the levy get my small boat, and rope the doe. (I never said I was bright!)

By the time I got back to the boat and rounded up some rope from the four wheeler, she had gone under. I paddled out to where she was last seen and a rounded rump was slowly rising in the water. I pulled her to the boat, tied the rope around her head and paddled out. Next stop would be the skinning rack.

I've killed a few deer with my bow over the years, but that's the first one I ever drowned! And hopefully the last!