

# Bow Hunter

MISSISSIPPI

The Official Publication of the Mississippi Bowhunters Association

Volume 2

Spring 2018

*inside this issue...*

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*Cover photo by Steve Brown*

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# ON **6** POINT

*with MBA President, Brian Montgomery*

As I write this issue's edition of OnPoint, deer season has just closed and I'm reminded of how my attitude of hunting has changed as I've gotten older. As a younger man the day deer season closed was akin to a death in the family or the passing of your favorite hunting dog! It's definitely not a day I look forward to now, but I welcome the change more now than then. As deer season closes, I'm already planning and strategizing next year hunts and adventures. I've become almost as excited about the planning stages of my hunting season as the season itself. I've learned to be content right where I am in the seasons of life. Maybe it's the fact that the years seem to be passing quicker than they did back then or maybe I'm just less anxious than in those old days. Either way, I hope you are dreaming big this spring in anticipation of the 2018 hunting season, maybe even listening to a big 'ole gobbler sound off!



# SHED *Hunting*

STORY AND PHOTOS BY STEVEN FARMER

**O**n a cold late season January hunt, I found myself still pursuing the buck I'd been chasing all year. Despite everything I tried I was still coming up empty handed. As I eased my way to the stand I noticed something out of the ordinary on the ridge I frequented often to get to this particular stand. As I raised my binoculars I was immediately astounded at the long main beam curving several inches above the ground. Then the tines came into focus and I couldn't run to it fast enough. The closer I got, the larger the antler got! I immediately recognized it as the buck I had been chasing all year.



The massive antler had me in awe. I was amazed at how large and heavy it was. I was overwhelmed with mixed emotions. I was happy that I found it but honestly kind of down because I knew my chase for him was over for the year. It was bittersweet. Of course, my next notion was to find the other half. I spent nearly three hours and was unsuccessful.

When I arrived at home, I started researching when and where to find sheds and basically everything there is to do with shed hunting. I found just a handful of small bleached out sheds over the years, mostly by practically stepping on them during deer season. None came close to the giant antler that lay on my bed. It lit a fire in me. As February approached, I was chomping at the bit to go shed hunting. I read article after article pertaining to shed hunting. I knew

what areas to target and where I was going to begin my search for antlers, primarily the match to my giant drop.

February 1st came and I struck out laying tread from my boots. On that particular hunt, I think I yielded 2-3 small antlers. The positive to that is that they weren't bleached out or mauled over by squirrels. That shed season I ended up with 13 sheds. There were many lessons learned over the course of those 2-3 months. Several years have passed now, but my fire remains the same. The only thing that has changed is my shed collection, it has grown to quite an impressive size. Although I'm eager to pick them up, I always try to make myself wait until after Valentine's Day to begin searching for antlers.

On average, going by my own observations in the field, only 5-10% of antlers are down in north

Mississippi at the beginning of February. Many things can make bucks drop early though including: harsh winters, stress levels due to lack of food and proper nutrition, and injuries. By mid-February, normally 50-60% of antlers are down in my area. The farther south you are, the later shedding will occur. Ironically at the beginning of March, I normally have some deer with new velvet starting to grow and others still toting both sides from the season before on my Covert trail cameras. The majority of antlers are always down by March 1st.

I hammer my areas shed hunting from mid-February until mid-March. Late season available food sources are where I begin my search, followed by trails leading to the food sources. I leave my bedding areas and trails leading from it for last. You can learn a lot about what the deer have been doing all season. All the rubs and old scrapes should still be visible. Most trails are worn down to bare dirt and mud. All those things you couldn't see in early bow season due to heavy foliage are now out in the open. You can always gain from shed hunting/post season scouting trips whether you find antlers or not. New knowledge of your woods and healthy exercise are the very least you'll go home with. You always have that chance of stumbling across an antler even going in blind and just walking carelessly. It takes time to acquire an eye for what you're really looking for to stand out while shed hunting. I mainly look for irregular shapes, the curve of the main beam and slanted tines pointed to the air really stand out to me. Most antlers







aren't bright white and don't just shine among grass and dead foliage. Most have a dull off white appearance and can blend in quite well with dead weeds and such. I prefer cloudy over sunny days. Drizzling rain days are my favorite days to shed hunt. They almost glisten when they are wet. Don't get discouraged if you don't find any right away, some days are hot and some days are not. On a yearly average, I normally log one mile of walking per one antler found.

Recently I've gotten into training my Labrador retriever for shed hunting. I'm hoping this will improve my yearly averages. Training her has been quite an easy task. I had already started her on fetching and replaced the bumper dummies with small deer antlers. She quickly adjusted to retrieving antlers and I started using the command, "Find the bone." After I had the command instilled in her, I began hiding antlers and using the command and she'd search, find them and bring them to me. As we made progress I started hiding them in harder spots, using rubber gloves and boots to control my scent, and



started using Dog Bone brand antler scent on the pedicles. Her progress has been quite impressive to say the least. If you're anything like me, when deer and duck season has ended and you have 40 odd something days until turkey season you find yourself in quite a lull. Shed hunting is a great remedy for that stir craziness you



begin experiencing while sitting at home with nothing to do, not to mention its family and kid friendly. It'll even give you a reason to get your dogs out and stretch their legs. It's one of my favorite pastimes and I look forward to it each year. Good luck to you all this upcoming spring and may the odds forever be in your favor.



Steven Farmer





# TARGET PANIC

## PART DEUX

STORY BY RANDY ULMER

### TREATMENT PROTOCOL

**Step One:** Learn to shoot a hinge style release aid (See Sidebar). The hinge release has a 'functionality' that will most likely be unfamiliar to you and will help 'reprogram' your brain in regards to the release process. To eliminate the distraction of the bow (and the shot), we will use a length of release rope (or similar-diameter string) to learn the basics of this release aid. Tie a length of string so that it ends up as a loop about as long as your draw length. Hook one end of the loop over your bow hand and hold it as if it were the bow's handle. Hook your release aid to the other end of the loop so that you are shooting a 'pretend' bow. Adjust the loop's length until it simulates your draw length. (Too short is better than too long.) As you begin to practice, be smooth and consistent. Concentrate on relaxation and follow through. The release should be



a surprise every time you execute and there should be absolutely no anxiety surrounding the release process. Don't begin shooting your bow with this release aid until its function becomes second nature to you.

**Step Two:** Shoot your bow with your eyes closed. Someone a lot smarter than me once said "the best way to screw up a perfectly good shot is to aim." People tend to try to exert too much control over the aiming process. They want to hold the pin perfectly still and they can't. Remember this: It is impossible for anyone to hold the pin perfectly still- especially you!! Accept and embrace the motion!

To eliminate the process of aiming, you must shoot with your eyes closed. This also makes it easier to fully feel a perfect shot. The key to a perfectly executed shot is relaxation. So the perfect shot is a paradox - relaxation is absolutely necessary, yet it takes tension to hold the bow back. You have to learn to fully relax all parts of the body not necessary to hold the bow up and hold it back. The best way to learn to establish this balance is to shoot with your eyes closed and your 'sense of feel' wide open.

Before you begin this exercise, lower the poundage of your bow, so it is very easy to pull and to hold. As with step one, this phase is about reconditioning your mind. Stand about three feet in front of an archery backstop (I use a hanging bag). While learning to execute the perfect shot, use a single arrow and slow the process way down. Take time to reflect and analyze each aspect of every shot. You should develop a

process that you can repeat exactly the same way for each shot. (As a side note, myself and many other top competitive archers begin each practice session by shooting with our eyes closed. I call it 'finding my shot'.) At some point you will begin to feel completely relaxed and immersed in the shot process. You will experience no fear or discomfort. The release will come as a complete surprise, with no reaction from you either mentally or physically. It can lead to a 'Zen' like state of mind. Once you can summon this perfect shot repeatedly and on command, you are ready for the next step.

**Step Three:** Shooting with your eyes open without a sight attached to your bow. This step merely introduces one more external stimulus-vision. However, there is no aiming apparatus to distract you from the feel of the shot. Remain close to the backstop and continue to shoot just one arrow. Concentrate on complete relaxation and the feel of the perfect shot. You may want to close your eyes occasionally when you lose 'the feel'. Again, once you can summon the perfect shot at will, with your eyes open, you are ready to move to step four.

**Step Four:** Shooting with a sight and a target. This step introduces two additional stimuli-a sight and a target. Logic would tell us that we should add just one additional stimulus during each step. However, if you do not add a target face during this step you will end up aiming at small holes or defects in the backstop-and I don't want you aiming that finely yet. You must use a brand new target face, one

without a tiny x or any other defects inside the 10 ring. The target should be large enough so that no matter how badly you shake your pin will never leave the inside of the 10 ring. Stay close to the backstop (3 feet) and adjust your sight to make sure your arrow hits nowhere close to the center of the target. I want you to have no visual indication as to where your arrow is hitting. Allow your pin to float in the yellow while you execute the same relaxed shot you learned in the previous steps. As before, you may need to close your eyes occasionally when you lose 'the feel.' When you can summon 'the feeling' at will, while aiming, you are ready to move to step five.

**Step Five:** Move back to 5 yards and aim only. Use a very large target face. Pull the bow back and aim. Aim for 15 seconds but do not shoot. Let down. Rest 30 seconds and repeat. Focus on reducing the movement in your pin by relaxing. Experiment to determine what makes the bow's movement slow down. (You will want to try to copy this particular form when you begin to shoot again.) Always have an arrow on the string for this phase-just in case the bow goes off. I want you to become very comfortable with your pin in the middle of the target. I want to teach your subconscious that it is OK to have the pin in the center of the target and also to break any automatic reflex you may have to fire the shot when the pin is in the middle. Once you can do this repeatedly, with no anxiety, you may move to step six.

**Step Six:** Shoot at 5 yards. Keep your sight adjusted so that your



arrows will hit far from the target's center. (Move your sight way up or way down). I do not want you to see where your arrows are hitting as you shoot. (We do not want to introduce the pressure of grouping yet.) Continue to shoot just one arrow and then retrieve it. This may seem like a waste of time-walking back and forth to get that single arrow. It is not. This process will help you slow down and analyze each shot. Focus on every aspect of the shot process and relax, relax, relax. Again, when you can summon the perfect 'feel'

repeatedly and on command, you are ready to move further back. When you are ready, move back to 10 yards and repeat step six. When you are comfortable there, move back to 15 yards and then to 20. Continue using the same large target face. If you are still comfortable, move to step 7.

**Step Seven:** Shoot for score. Move back up to five yards and adjust your sight so that your arrow hits the center of the target. Continue to shoot just one arrow. Use the same large target face as in step six. You may begin to keep score now. Your

pin should never leave the large ten ring, so theoretically you should shoot a perfect score. The point of this exercise is to introduce one more key, anxiety-producing, stressor: Visible and quantifiable results of the shooting process. Once you are comfortable at 5 yards you may move back to 10 yards, then 15 and then 20. When you are comfortable at 20 yards you may introduce ever smaller targets. As in all the previous steps you are trying to hold on to the same form, rhythm, relaxation and feel you developed in step one. As you

# HINGE-STYLE

If I were given a mandate to prevent any bowhunter from ever getting target panic, but I was only allowed to make one change to their form or their equipment, I would take away their trigger release aids and replace them with 'hinge' style release aids. Back-tension, hinge, pull-through or trigger-less release aids (these names can be used interchangeably) will not prevent or 'cure' target panic all on their own. However, they will help when used in restructuring the shot process and retraining the subconscious and conscious mind. These release aids expedite the 'healing' process for those who have target panic. They also work as a preventative tool for those who have never had target panic but want to avoid it.

The primary reason to shoot a hinge-style release aid is to make the shot a complete surprise. They're intended to make it nearly impossible to precisely time the

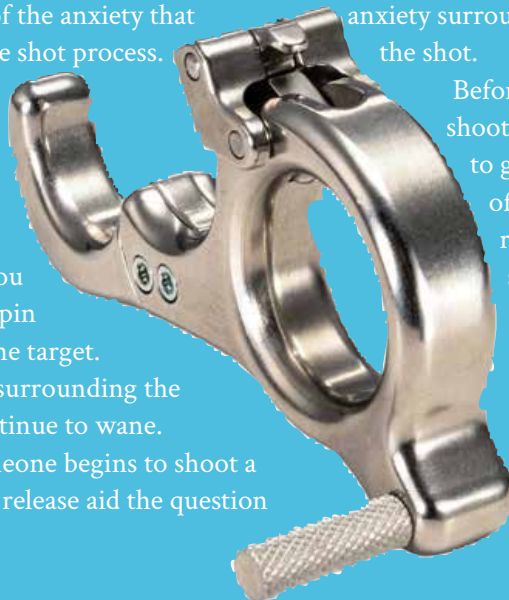
shot. Basically, these release aids are designed to be shot without the use of a trigger. They go off as you rotate the handle around a pivot point. Most shooting problems originate from anxiety associated with the timing of the shot. Because hinge-style release aids don't have a trigger, it's nearly impossible to anticipate exactly when the shot will go. You are forced to maintain focus and stick with the shot. Eventually this technique eliminates a great deal of the anxiety that surrounds the shot process.

As you use one of these release aids, you'll eventually notice that you can hold the pin steadier on the target. The anxiety surrounding the shot will continue to wane.

Once someone begins to shoot a back tension release aid the question

that always comes up is: what is the best way to shoot this thing? The answer to this question is simple: use the method that works best for you! There are many ways to execute the shot using one of these releases. Your job is to try the different methods and see which method gives you the most consistency with the least anxiety. The latter is important because the primary reason for you to shoot a hinge release is to minimize the anxiety surrounding the execution of the shot.

Before we go over how to shoot these releases, I want to give you a few words of wisdom: Most hinge releases can be set up so that they 'click' right before they fire. The idea is to allow you to rotate the release until you hear the click. Then it takes only a slight rotation of





move back and shoot at smaller and smaller targets, it will become more and more difficult to maintain 'the feel.' The aiming process will become more difficult, more important and more integral to the outcome of the shot. Try to focus on the shot process and the feel. Let the results (where the arrow hits) be of secondary importance. (This is much more difficult than it sounds).

**Step Eight:** Transition to your old release aid and draw weight. Start with your eyes closed and close to the target until you can get the

same feeling with your old release aid as you do with the back tension release aid. (Keep the draw weight low for now.) Shoot this release aid as similarly as you can to the way you shoot the hinge release. Do not shoot it by pulling the trigger with your index finger. Instead lay your finger on the trigger deeply and tighten your back muscles until it fires as a surprise. Once comfortable with this release you may gradually increase your draw weight. I would encourage you to continue to do most of your practicing and shooting with the

hinge release. Use your trigger release only for hunting. This is what I do every season.

During each of these steps, you must be the judge of your progress. You must decide when you are ready to go to the next phase. Do not hurry the process. If you do, your anxiety will return. It is your job to recognize anxiety creeping back in. (It will, repeatedly!) If you feel it, you must move backward through the steps to the point where you can consistently shoot a perfectly relaxed shot. Then move forward through the steps

# RELEASE AIDS

the handle to execute the shot. In my opinion, this click defeats the purpose of using the hinge release entirely. The purpose of the hinge release is to make the release a surprise. Shooting with the click transforms the release from an absolute surprise-style release aid into a trigger release. After you've reached the click, you know that it only takes a very small movement of the handle to fire the release. At that point the handle becomes a trigger that you can punch! The release aid is no longer serving the purpose for which it was intended. Please-if you are using the hinge release to break bad habits- don't use the click! You can remove the click from most of these releases by removing the half-moon then rotating it 180 degrees and replacing it (See the instructions that came with the release).

As I mentioned earlier, start the learning process by using a length of string as a 'pretend' bow. Pull the bow back by placing your thumb

over your index finger to prevent the handle from rotating and firing the release. Maintain a little extra tension on your index finger as you pull the bow back. Your other fingers can be engaged on the handle, but do most of the pulling with the index finger and thumb. Once the bow is at full draw, find a comfortable anchor and begin aiming. Remove your thumb from over your index finger. Begin to relax your index finger while at the same time contracting the muscles in the middle of your back, between your shoulder blades. At the same time, engage the ring and pinky finger more snugly on the handle of the release. These motions in combination act to rotate the release handle gradually and nearly imperceptibly until it fires. Keep your release hand as relaxed as possible.

Most bowhunters don't like the thought of using a hinge-style release aid for hunting because they want to be able to time the shot precisely. A

hinge-style release precludes them from doing this. I understand this sentiment completely-I only hunt with a hinge when I think I'll have plenty of time for the shot, as I usually do when hunting mule deer using the spot and stalk method. For elk or whitetail hunting, I always use a trigger release - because the shots often need to be executed quickly.

I would encourage any bowhunter who is serious about their long term archery abilities to continue to do most of their practicing and shooting with the hinge release. They can always use their trigger release aid for hunting. If you are shooting both release aids the right way their impact points should be very close to the same. You should be able to re-sight in for the trigger release aid with a very minor 'gang' adjustment of your pins. I go through this procedure at the beginning of every hunting season.



again. Once you have been through all of the steps once, you will be able to go through them the next time much more quickly. As I said before, I go all the way back to the first step before every serious practice session. If you are fully honest with yourself, you will have to move backward and forward through these steps many times.

## CONCLUSION

Anxiety will always be an integral part of any shot whose outcome matters to us. Anxiety is a psychological and physiological condition that is impossible to completely eliminate. We must learn to live with it and perform well in spite of it. One of the best ways I've found to reduce anxiety is to be fully prepared and confident. Practice

diligently and intelligently, maintain and tune your equipment, stay in good physical and mental condition, eat right and get quality rest.

Many people believe that once you 'cure' a case of Target Panic it is gone. They think you would have to 'catch the virus' again to contract the disease a second time - like the flu. I disagree with them. I believe Target Panic is more like alcoholism. If you are an alcoholic you will always be an alcoholic. You must work every day to insure that you will not have a relapse. The good news is the preventative measures we use to avoid a relapse will make you a better archer, even if Target Panic was not an issue.

Alcoholics have a mantra called the serenity prayer. I think it is

appropriate for Target Panic sufferers: 'Lord grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can change and the wisdom to know the difference'. There are certain things you can control in any given shooting situation. Do your best to control them. There are other things you cannot control, such as how well someone else is shooting in a tournament, or when a buck is going to move. Accept these things as they are and do not let them affect your performance. In reality, the only thing you can completely control is yourself, so learn to exercise complete self-control.



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# SHOOT RIGHT



# SHOOT STRAIGHT

STORY AND PHOTOS BY PHIL FANCHER

The big bull elk was feeding all alone on the side of a lonesome Colorado mountain. I checked the wind and prepared to call him. But wait, this was a perfect stalking opportunity. There was a slight swell in the ground between us. I thought I could stay hidden from him if I used it to crawl to shooting distance. It worked! As I eased to my knees and drew my bow, there was no doubt in my mind his days were over. The shot was perfect. How did that happen? It is because of correct practice. That is our goal for this series, to help you become a better archer whether it is for hunting, shooting in tournaments or shooting just for fun.

Ever since man built the first bow with stick and string, accuracy has been the single most important thing. Sixty years ago, my aunt bought me my first bow. I made arrows out of

swamp cane and starting shooting. I had one major problem though. I seldom hit my target. Since those days long ago, being able to hit what I was shooting at has long fascinated me, as I am sure it does you.

Let's start with hand placement on the bow. After shooting with and watching hundreds of people shoot, I believe that faulty hand placement is the number one reason for inaccurate shooting. After much study I've learned that if our hand doesn't place the same pressure on the handle of the bow time after time, there is no way for the bow to shoot arrows to the same place time after time.

Turn your palm toward and find your lifeline. It is the long line that runs up and down from your index finger to the base of your thumb. Simply put, no part of your hand should touch the handle of your bow except that area ever. Will this



be a difficult lesson to learn? Yes, probably because it feels so unnatural. But again, adverse pressure on the handle of your bow effects how the arrow leaves the bow. Pressure from the top, bottom, left or right side applied to the handle causes torque



and that pushes the arrow in the same direction. To construct better form, we must consider this statement.

Many of you reading this aren't that interested in shooting five arrows into a pint jar top at 40-50 yards. You just want to kill the deer on which you draw your bow. I can't tell you how many times I've heard, "I don't know why I missed that deer!" I can tell you for sure there are two major reasons. One is not picking the exact spot of the deer at which to shoot and the other is we get caught up in the excitement of the moment. That excitement causes us to squeeze the handle of the bow in some "unnatural" way, therefore pushing the arrow away from your target.

Now that we've uncovered the problems, let's see how to correct them. Let's talk about the grip. I really don't like to use the word grip because that is exactly what we are trying to avoid. A much better word for what the handle area should do is "sit." The area should sit in a relaxed place in the thumb area. It is as simple as one, two, three...

1. Place your hand and do not move it during the draw. If you do, let down and start over.

2. Allow the grip area to just sit between your index finger and thumb.
3. Relax your hand. Think about the hand of a sleeping person. The fingers naturally fall into place and position. Hint: Touch the front of the bow with the very tip of your index finger. This will automatically align the other fingers.

During my archery career I have watched hundreds of men and women shoot at the national shoots. The number one problem they all have in common is hand pressure on the



handle area of the bow. I would venture to say that nine out of ten bowhunters do the same. If you've never practiced the proper bow hold, I would say it is faulty.

Years and years ago when I first started practicing this form, I had just climbed up in my stand. As usual, I pulled my practice arrow from my quiver, selected a leaf on the ground to do a practice shot. I kept reminding myself relax...relax...relax. Well, it worked! As the arrow stuck into the leaf on the ground, I realized my bow was on the way down to the ground as well! I performed a great relaxed hand shot. LOL! So, as I climbed down to inspect my bow, I thought I really should get a sling.

Relaxation is the key to all great shooting whether it is with a rifle, pistol or bow. Some of the greatest archers are those who are able to relax throughout the entire process and know where to place their hand on the bow. The key is to practice it correctly over and over again until it becomes second nature.

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A full-page background image showing a sunset over a body of water. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright orange glow that reflects on the water. The sky is filled with soft, purple and orange clouds. In the foreground, a small wooden boat is partially visible, resting on a grassy bank. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

*Thank God I have seen an orange sky with purple clouds.  
How easy it is to forget that we have the privilege  
of living in God's art gallery. ...Erica Goros*



# SETTING OUR *on the*

STORY BY DEBI MARTIN  
PHOTOS BY BRAD MARTIN

Women have come a long way over the years. More often than not, women play an equal roll as contributors to the household income as well as putting meat on the table...literally. Women are exposed to the outdoors now more than ever. As a woman, I plan on doing my part to pass on my love of the sport of archery for many generations to come.

As a child my dad was an avid hunter. I grew up hunting and have been a lover of the outdoors for as long as I can remember. I grew up in a very small town in Louisiana and we did not have an archery in schools programs like a lot of schools offer now. I can't help but think of how great it would have been to have had that exposure as a child. In 2010 my husband, Brad Martin, bought me

my first bow. From the first moment I shot it, I was hooked. I started out hunting and eventually, with a good bit of persuasion from him, starting shooting competitively. We both compete on state and national levels. We follow the Archers Shooters Association circuit and plan to start

shooting indoor as well.

Since I got into the sport of archery, I have been very fortunate to be a part of several great organizations that support and encourage the sport. These organizations are very near and dear to my heart and they are doing their part on state and national levels.



*Karen Butler, Shoot Like a Girl Founder*



# R SIGHTS *Future*

Mississippi Bowhunters Association (MBA) has lobbied for the rights of bowhunters in the state of Mississippi since 1972. I have had the privilege of helping with several events hosted by MBA, teaching children basic archery instruction and safety. I have also been the membership coordinator for MBA for over a year now. This allows me to meet so many new archers throughout the state that share the same passion as I.

Shoot Like A Girl was founded by Karen Butler of Alabama. Karen started Shoot Like A Girl to empower women in shooting sports. Karen has had a wonderful career as an employee of the United States Department of the Army Civilian and was able to retire in 2017. She has participated and been very successful in archery and rifle competitions. Karen is a hunting advocate, and continues to promote

safe and ethical hunting.

Since 2012 I have been traveling with Shoot Like A Girl in their semi-truck and trailer all over the United States. We teach archery instruction as well as rifle and handgun, in a safe and controlled environment. Here is a quick synopsis from Karen Butler:

*Shoot Like A Girl is the industry leader in growing the number of women in shooting sports. Since being established in 2008, over 16,000 women have experienced shooting a bow, and over 80% of them were new to archery. Surveys show that historically 41% of them commit to buying a bow. That's over 6,500 bows sold as a result of Shoot Like A Girl. Since 2013, when Shoot Like A Girl added firearms introduction, over 12,000 women have experienced shooting*



# COMMITMENT TO *Community*

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*Shoot Like a Girl trailer.*

a firearm, with 72% of them committing to buy firearms.

Some accomplishments as of November 2107:

- 3,003 Shooters – Since the launch of Shoot Like A Girl Trailer Two in December 2016
- 1,099 Committed Bow Sales – as a result of the Shoot Like A Girl introductory process
- 15,000+ Miles of Truck Ad – Since the launch of Shoot Like A Girl Trailer Two in December 2016
- 140,550+ Facebook Likes with 93% being women
- 3,000+ Visitors per month on Web Page, Blog and You Tube – Web Site [www.shootlikeagirl.com](http://www.shootlikeagirl.com) being updated/refreshed

\*The data quoted is as of November 12, 2017, based off survey results and is reliable within a .005 margin.

In 2016 Cara Kelly and Kaitlyn Price founded the organization, archER. Together, it was their goal to give back the tools they had developed throughout their

archery careers to help other women achieve the same level of success and happiness which they had gained. Cara and Kaitlyn's hope is to empower women with passion and dedication to the sport of archery. These ladies each have full time jobs, are professional archERs and avid hunters.

archER has its own website as well as a host of social media sites. The archER website features the bios of professional archERs who give

insight into their everyday lives and about being a professional archER. archER's social media frequently features tournament highlights as well as tech tips provided by pros and archER Ambassadors. These archERs are always open to any questions one may have and do their very best to give the most informative answers and encourage others.

In 2017 the archER Ambassador program was created in an effort to motivate and encourage all archERs, no matter their level of expertise. A few archERs are selected each year to serve as liaisons to help promote women in the sport of archery. 2018 will be my second year as an archER Ambassador and I look forward to the privilege of sharing my passion for archery and empowering other archERs to reach for their goals both on and off the archery range.

I challenge everyone reading this article to share their passion for archery with just one person. Help preserve our rights as bowhunters in the state of Mississippi.



*Kaitlyn Price, Co-Founder of archER*



# FEEDING? BAITING? *What's the* DIFFERENCE?



STORY BY LANN M. WILF

While the Mississippi Bowhunters Association (MBA) solicited this article for publication, it does not serve to represent MBA's stance on this topic.



Since I have been old enough to hunt in Mississippi, harvest of any game animal using the aid of bait has been prohibited. This practice has historically consisted of the conscious use of a high preference food source, depending on conditions, to lure a game animal into harvestable range. This practice has brought the ethics of hunting into the spotlight of non-hunters and anti-hunters alike. Among non-hunters, hunting without bait has a high rate of approval. However, when hunting with the aid of bait is included, non-hunter approval plummets.

Another chilling fact is that several studies exist providing strong scientific evidence that baiting and feeding can make hunting quality worse. How is this possible? How can a practice that makes the harvest of a deer easier actually make hunting worse? The answer can be found by looking at a natural occurrence that doesn't involve bait.

When I was a deer biologist with a state agency, I regularly fielded questions about decreased deer visibility and limited food plot use. In my memory, two years stand out, 2007 and 2011. In 2007, I was living in Yazoo County, and mast crops along the Big Black, in the Loess Hills, and in parts of the Delta were absolutely record breaking. One property along the Big Black had total deer harvest reduced by half and most hunters threw in the towel in early January. That was the wrong answer. A good friend of mine hunted this property on the last day of the season in January 2008. He wrote down over 170 deer in his observation book that day. In 2011, the great Mississippi River flood occurred. In other portions of Mississippi, conditions were optimal and produced one of the greatest mast crops in history. That year it seemed like even the sweetgum trees made acorns and the season proceeded similarly to 2007. Hunter discouragement abounded,



and it was a miserable year to be a deer biologist. At my small acreage home place in Monroe County, I had only two opportunities to harvest a doe that season. Most of the deer I harvested came from hardwood stands close to bedding areas. Not in food plots. Since I keep cameras on food plots until spring green up, I was able to get a picture of over 15 deer in one food plot during daylight, during February. Obviously, this was a small plot because it was on a small property. Deer visibility was less than stellar most of the season on both years. Also, the rut was over, so what happened? In short, the deer got hungry.

Those of us that are experienced hunters understand that two factors make a deer move. First is the rut. Second is their stomach. If high preference food is abundant, like on heavy mast years, deer will not move much in daylight. On years like this, deer can forage over less than a

half acre, get full, and go back to the bedding area. Years like this teach a valuable lesson. When deer don't have to hustle for food, hunters are waiting on the rut for decent deer visibility.

Since 2008, feeding opportunities have been liberalized. Feeders can now be in plain sight at 100 yards. This liberalization of feeding has exponentially increased the number of feeders across the landscape. This abundance of food adds up to deer not needing to go far to fill their rumen. Therefore hunters see less. Simultaneously, one property making a choice not to feed will likely be met with a neighbor or two that feeds heavily. This can drastically reduce deer presence and use of the property that does not feed, especially if it is a small property. This scenario results in hunters being forced to combatively feed, even when they'd rather not.

Biologists are often asked, "What is the difference between baiting and





feeding?” In my opinion, the answer is based on the intent of the practitioner. Supplemental feeding of deer, for the sake of this exercise, could be defined as feeding a high protein ration at a high enough rate and distribution to have a positive impact on the overall herd’s physical condition. This would also be done with no intentional hunting or harvest benefit in mind. This practice would mean feed is provided during peak stress periods, which include late winter and late summer, and ad libitum. Therefore the deer would have access to as much high protein forage as they desire, and the feed would be spread across a property at a high enough density to benefit bucks, does, and fawns.

Supplemental feeding will not benefit all soil regions and properties equally. Properties in high fertility soil, with a low deer density and good habitat, will not benefit as much as properties in low fertility soils, like extreme southeast and northeast Mississippi. Properties along the Coldwater River, Big Black River, and in the Delta may not see the significant impacts of a feeding program like a property under intense management in Pearl River County. Feeding and intense habitat management can make

a huge difference in lower fertility soils, whereas, in the Delta, the impacts may literally be as small as one to two inches of B&C score on a stress year.

Conversely, baiting can be defined by different forages, which are fed with different intentions. Baiting could be classified by the feeding of lower protein and higher energy feeds, such as corn and sweet potatoes. Also, baiting is considered, by wildlife management professionals, as a feeding program that is designed to almost entirely benefit the hunter in the harvest of a game animal. Baiting has its place and is commonly used to control wild swine populations of trap game animals for research purposes.

Another commonly asked question is, “What’s the difference between planting a food plot and feeding corn from a feeder?” The answer is complex and almost always involves opinions about ethics, integrity, and can include personal attacks. However, once again I’ll try to objectively answer this from a standpoint of practicality. Most of us that have children remember taking them to daycare and had them promptly get sick. In addition,

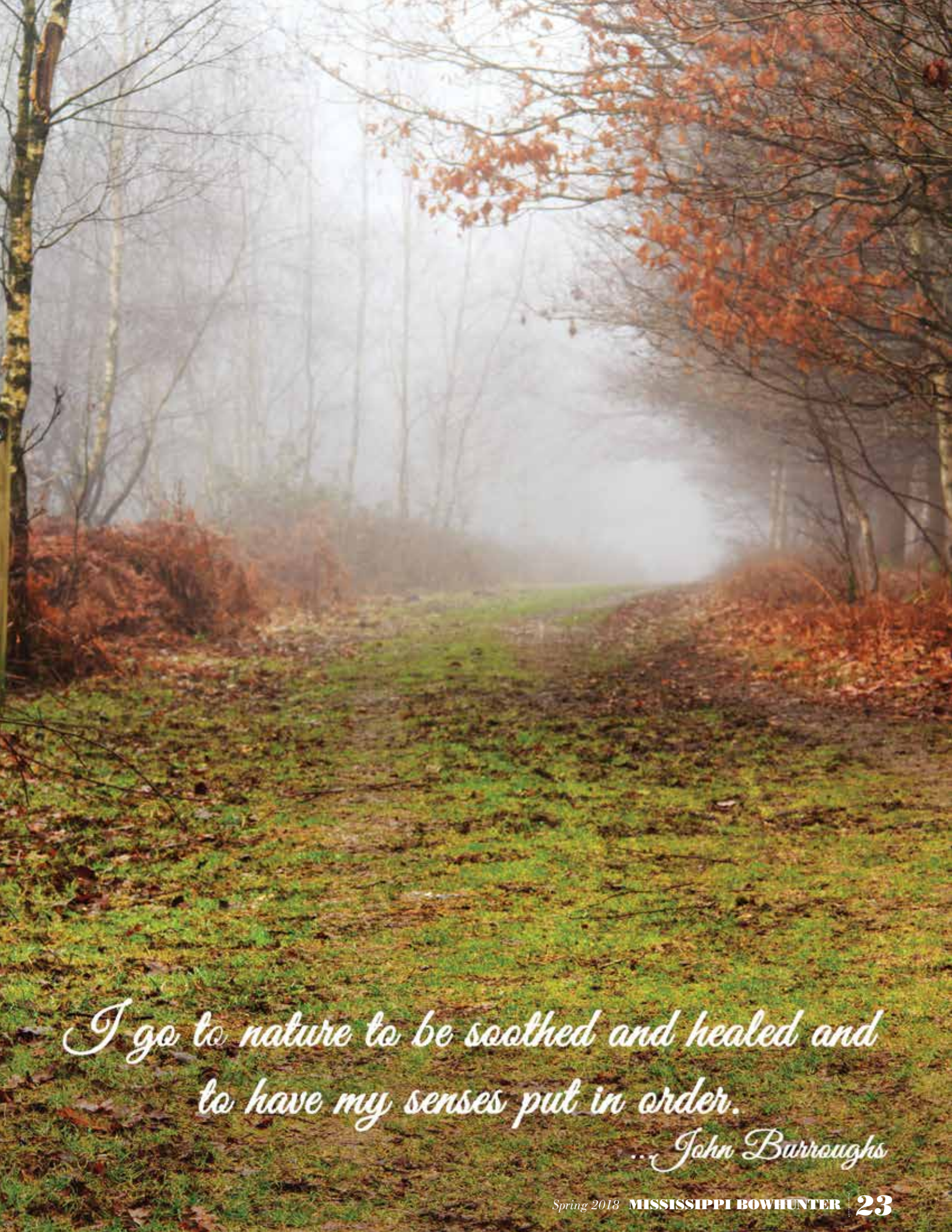
most of us have flown on an airliner and soon woke up ill. These two situations stem from the abnormal concentrations of people in a confined space. Obviously, a feeder is out in the woods and the overall space is not limited, but deer are eating off the same “plate” and nose to nose contact is encouraged. Also, hoof to feces contact is encouraged as deer stand around the feeder or approach it. This can accelerate or facilitate disease spread. Furthermore, bait is available for wildlife only during a limited amount of time. This makes it easier to pinpoint when the animals are coming and facilitates harvest. On the other hand, a food plot or acorn flat is available to wildlife for months and is not dependent on a human to “fill the feeder.” This makes the food plot and acorn flat more beneficial, from a long-term perspective, than the corn feeder.

This topic is confusing and can become convoluted with ethics, but with Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) now a reality in Mississippi, hunters and managers should really consider the consequences of a feeding and baiting program. Supplemental feeding and baiting have not caused or brought CWD to Mississippi, but these practices have and will facilitate the spread of the disease through increased contact between animals. Therefore, feeding and baiting should be approached cautiously throughout the State to protect our valuable natural resource. Our deer herd cannot be replaced after CWD.

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**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** An avid sportsman, **LANN M. WILF** of Monroe County holds an Associate’s degree in Forestry Technology from Itawamba Community College and a Bachelor’s degree in Wildlife Management from Arkansas State University. He has 16 years work experience as a Wildlife Biologist in State and Federal agencies, as well as the private sector.





*I go to nature to be soothed and healed and  
to have my senses put in order.*  
... John Burroughs





**W**hen he first told me the story in 2005, I got a sick feeling in the pit of my stomach. I hate losing any animal after the shot, but the loss of a turkey hits hard. I could tell he was upset, his quest over, but unfinished on the last day of the hunt. The two birds that would have completed his slam had each sailed off the side of a

mountain in the Sierra Madre range, along with his hope of completing a single season double world slam with bow and arrow. However, for Mississippi native Steve Brown, the quest is never over, it continues year round, and the dream for a single season double world slam with a bow never died, it was only delayed. As an outfitter, Brown's work does not end

after the hunt or even after the season. The owner of Brown and Company Outfitters works tirelessly throughout the year planning trips, applying for tags, communicating with clients, booking flights, and acquiring new land and hunting rights. When it comes to hunting and outfitting, he does it all, but talk to him briefly and you will quickly realize that his true





*Brad Dye, story author, and Steve Brown*

brought a range of emotion to his face, and as the interview progressed, I knew I was sitting across the table from the man that a friend in North Carolina, Dudley Bell, had labeled “the best turkey hunter you have never heard of,” and now, a man with a new world record. At the time of this writing, Brown was in the process of registering his single season archery double world slam with the National Wild Turkey Federation. In my search, I have been unable to find a single season archery world slam in the NWTF records, let alone a double archery world slam in a single season.

To complete a grand slam is an amazing accomplishment. Completing a Royal or World Slam takes this accomplishment to a higher level, and to do any of the three in a single season or with a bow and arrow is another dimension. To complete the coveted World Slam of turkey hunting in a single season with a bow and take two of each subspecies is the stuff of legend. The accomplishment puts Brown in a different category—world record holder. As with any quest, there are always obstacles to overcome. If you have ever been blessed to hunt the wild turkey, you know that no extra obstacles are necessary. Each subspecies has its own set of challenges and the hunter need not look to add any additional in order to make this quest a challenge. However, Brown began the season with a handicap. In the fall of 2016, he had blown out his knee on an elk hunt in Wyoming. The injury kept him out of the trees throughout bow season back home in Mississippi and in Illinois (as a side note, Brown was still

passions are turkey hunting and bow hunting. In all my years, I have yet to meet anyone who has a passion for either of these that matches Brown’s.

When he set out once again in 2017 to make the dream of a single season double world slam a reality, I asked if he would give me the chance to tell his story. I was thrilled when he agreed. I have hunted with Steve

as both a friend and an outfitter and for either, I would put him at the top of the list. When we finally sat down for our interview on a Sunday morning in June of last year, I could tell that Brown was tired. The effort required to pull off the feat he had just finished in May still showed on his face. He was tired, but he was happy. Reliving each memory, each bird,



able to take one of his best deer ever with a bow from a ground blind in Illinois during the 2016 season, a Pope and Young deer that scored 163"). He endured intensive rehab in order to be able to maintain his rigorous pace during the 2017 turkey season and opening day found him walking, with a limp and a little slower, but walking. I did not have the opportunity to hunt with him this past spring and I regret that as I know, for once, perhaps I could have kept pace with him in the woods as we narrowed the distance between ourselves and a gobbling turkey. From my experience, Brown often becomes a world class sprinter in the turkey woods and is a strict adherent to the maxim that the shortest distance between two points

is a straight line — briar thickets, creeks, swamps, sheer cliffs, it matters not, for en route to a hot bird, Brown is a machine.

Over the course of our interview, I could tell that for Brown, each turkey was special. I understand that sentiment, as I know any that have hunted the wild turkey do as well. However, Brown is at a different level than most. At the end of the 2017 turkey season Brown's lifetime turkey tally stood at 376 total. Of these 252 were taken with a shotgun or muzzleloader and 124 with a bow. Brown rarely hunts with a gun anymore, after making the full transition to archery in 2003. According to Brown, "I played around with bowhunting turkeys starting in

the 80's and actually killed my first with a bow in the late 90's." Brown gave me these numbers reluctantly, and he made it clear that turkey hunting, or any hunting for that matter, is not about the number taken, but about the experience of the hunt. Still, I am awed by these numbers as I still cherish my handful of Grand Slams and celebrate any time I am able to harvest my limit in Mississippi.

Brown's first turkey of 2017 came on March 22, an Osceola in the Central Florida Zone. At the time, he did not have plans to attempt a single season double world slam, but the second bird in Florida set everything in motion. The fact that Brown made his plans as the season progressed



Scott Brown and Steve Brown





*Jake Beck and Steve Brown*

made the quest much harder. His season had actually begun on March 4, the opening day of turkey season in the United States, while outfitting and hunting with Jake Beck in Florida. Brown's second Osceola came on March 23, and in between guiding hunts in Florida and Mississippi, Steve was able to help young hunter Walker Hilbun of Starkville, MS, harvest his first turkey on March 9 in Mississippi. Then on March 10 Hilbun took his second turkey (his first with a crossbow) on a guided hunt with Brown. Brown had promised the lad he would call in his first turkey several years before and, after fulfilling that commitment, he could not turn down Hilbun's request to try to get another with his crossbow the next morning.

Brown continued guiding in Florida from March 23-27 and then returned to Mississippi to focus on the next leg of his World Slam, the highly pressured Eastern subspecies. His first Eastern fell in Mississippi on April 1 with the second coming on April 7. At this point in the game, Steve began to consider a single season double world slam as a real possibility as he already had plans to outfit hunts for the Ocellated turkey on the Yucatan Peninsula and the Gould's turkey in the Sierra Madre Mountains of Mexico. The trip to the Yucatan proved successful not only for his hunters but also for Brown who took his first Ocellated turkey on April 20 and the second on April 23; now, he began to feel the pressure of

the challenge that lay in front of him. His trip to Mexico for the Gould's was scheduled for May 14-21 which would leave him only ten days to kill two Rio Grande gobblers and two Merriam's. Brown made the decision to hunt one of the subspecies before outfitting an upcoming group to Mexico. The "when" was clear, but the "where" was still in question.

After returning with his clients from the jungle, Brown headed to Wyoming. Flying into Rapid City, South Dakota, he then drove the six hours to his destination in the Equality State and harvested his first Merriam's on private land in Wyoming on May 10. Since he could only kill one turkey in Wyoming, he then made the drive to Montana to



hunt a tract of public land he knew well, and on May 12, he harvested his second Merriam's. Brown returned home on May 12 to prepare to leave for Mexico on May 14. Making it safely with his group of hunters to base camp in the Sierra Madre Mountain range, Brown began to contemplate the reality of what he could accomplish. Sleep deprived and dealing with the pressures of work (Brown worked in marketing for a national hospice company at the time) and outfitting, he was somehow able to muster the energy and strength to harvest the first Gould's turkey of his quest on May 16. On May 18, I

texted Brown's wife Kristi to see if she had any progress updates from Steve. In her message she told me she had not heard a word from Steve. This was not strange as cell service is basically non-existent where the group was hunting. However, the remainder of her text is what really got my attention. She said, "I had this overwhelming feeling yesterday to pray for him. Not sure what or why I needed to pray. My first thought was Lord, if it's your will, let him get those turkeys." I put my phone down and said a prayer as well. Brown's second Gould's turkey came on May 18 in the last hour of daylight on the last day of

the trip. Brown said he felt the prayers as he worried on that last day that the Gould's might be the stumbling block to his quest again as it had been in 2005.

Brown returned to the states on the 19th of May, was home on the 20th, and spent the 21st catching up on work, paying bills, booking hunts, and spending time with his family. He left Starkville on May 22 driving to hunt Rio's in Kansas. Along the way he stopped to visit good friend Jim Lederbrand in Illinois. Jim had recently lost his father, and Steve spent time there consoling his friend before leaving for Kansas. On the



*Steve Brown with his Ocellated turkey from the Yucatan Peninsula in Mexico.*





Steve Brown

24th, Steve rendezvoused in Kansas with longtime friends Jerry and Jake Beck. Brown had begun his quest with Jake in Florida, and now Beck was trying to finish a single season Royal Slam by getting his Rio in Kansas and then heading off to find a Merriam's. Beck was able to get his Rio on May 26, but Brown was still empty-handed. He left the Becks with time running out to fulfill his goal. Because it was so late in the season, Brown was having difficulty finding a Rio on the property he was hunting in central Kansas and began working his network of friends and fellow outfitters in an effort to locate some willing birds. Finally, with time running out, Brown was able to

harvest his Rios on May 27 and 28 on private land in Southwest Kansas.

As my wife will attest, at the end of each Mississippi turkey season I am worn out. Hunting every day possible wears on you as the season progresses and being lucky enough to chase long beards in another state only takes the sleep deprivation to another level. As I sat across the table from Brown, listening to how his double world slam quest had unfolded, I was in awe. I have never seen anything like him in the turkey woods and I suspect I never will—his talent is special. However, Brown is much more than a gifted turkey hunter and bowhunter. The skill set required to accomplish what he accomplished last

year shows why Brown is also such an effective outfitter. World records are not participation trophies. The level of stamina, networking, planning, woodsmanship, determination, and sheer will required to accomplish such a feat is, to say the least, impressive. As a turkey hunter, bowhunter, and outfitter, Steve's skills and talents have always put him at another level, a level reached by few and, in my estimation, unsurpassed by any. Now he can add to his accomplishments the title of world record holder.





# MAKING OF HUNTRESS

STORY BY SUMMER STARNES  
PHOTOS BY MELANIE STARNES

When I first moved to Mississippi I was not what some people would call a “huntress.” No way. My father and two younger brothers often went hunting, so I thought hunting was a man-thing. I could not see what was so fun about getting up very early, loading up a bunch of gear, and then sitting in the cold woods trying to shoot an animal. I was obviously

missing something.

Fast forward five years. I was smitten with a young man and he began trying to change my view of hunting. He hunted all the time! His whole family would load up and go to “deer camp.” He convinced me to come to their deer camp because he knew I would love the sport of hunting if I only gave it a try. I just wanted to spend time with him and if

that meant going to deer camp, well a girl has to do what a girl has to do. I mean, how bad could this be? Let’s just say that first experience did not radically change my mind. Let me describe his beloved deer camp.

It was an old yellow school bus converted into an odd little living space, complete with bunk beds, a little sink, a small table, and a TV. I drew the line in the sand when I





asked about a bathroom and I was pointed in the direction of the woods. I followed a small little trail behind the bus to find an old lawn chair with a toilet seat attached to the top of it. This was the ladies room. So in this age of modern utilities, I did not have a shower, a place to blow-dry my hair, or a proper toilet. This was deer camp.

Don't get me wrong, I enjoyed

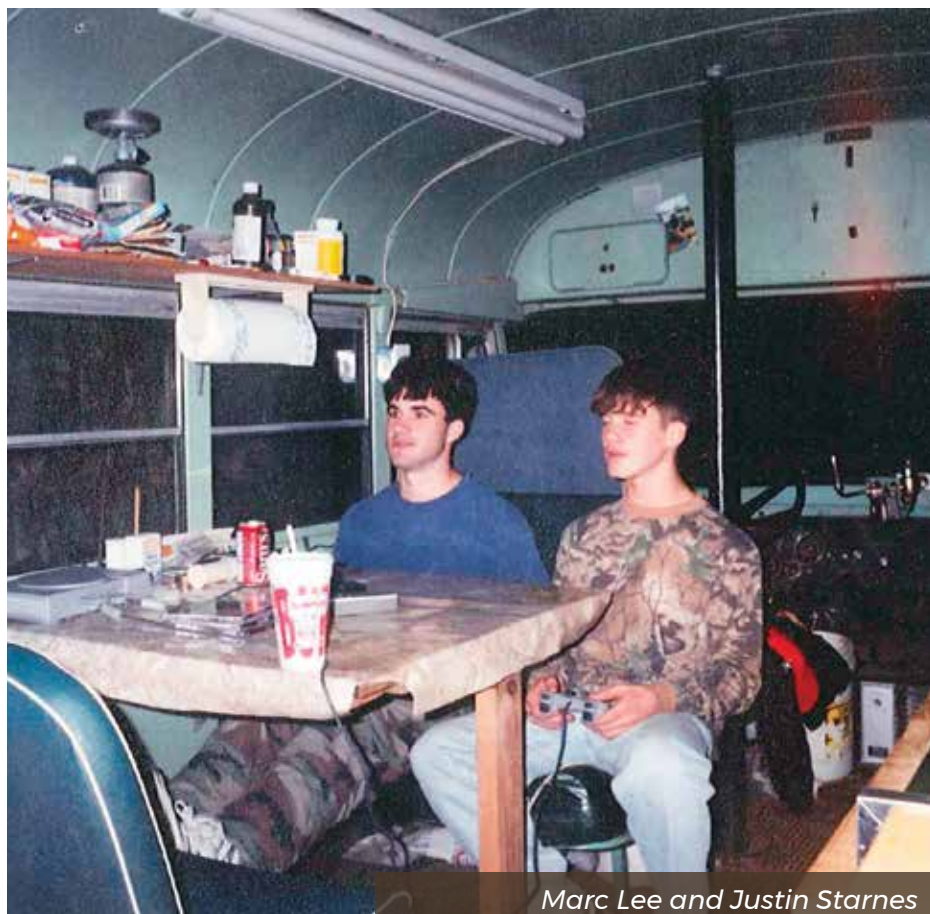
the woods. They were beautiful on that cold crisp fall day. On the other hand, sitting there trying to be quiet and still for a very long time was not so beautiful. I left deer camp still not understanding the passion this guy had for hunting and what kept him going back. After dating this guy for a while and eventually marrying him, I realized I had no choice but to try this hunting thing again if I ever wanted to see him during hunting season.

By then, the deer camp had been upgraded a bit. They had built a "bathroom" right behind the bus, complete with a shower and a real toilet. Thank goodness no lawn chair.

And this time I saw deer. I still wasn't ready to be the one with the gun, but I loved sitting in the woods.

I continued to follow my husband into the woods for several years, enjoying the beauty and peace of the

woods, not to mention some of the best naps of my life. His excitement and passion for hunting was becoming contagious. He taught me how to look for deer tracks, scrapes, rubs, bedding areas, and travel patterns. He taught me about shooting a gun, how to be safe with a gun, and safety in a tree stand. I started to get excited about going hunting. I took my hunter's safety course and got a hunting license. That deer season I was ready to carry a gun and shoot a deer. Wes, my husband, had us set up on the ground by a fallen tree. I remember hearing those deer coming through the woods and my heart began racing so fast I thought it would explode. I kept thinking, am I going to remember how to shoot this gun? He told me to get ready, so I checked to make sure I was set and ready to shoot. I propped up and when the doe



Marc Lee and Justin Starnes





*Wes, Summer, Kenzie, Austin, and Caden Starnes*

got close I aimed and shot. My first deer! I was shaking and so excited. I think Wes was even more excited. That did it. I was hooked.

Then Wes began teaching me how to shoot a bow. It was hard for me

to even try to pull the string back at first. I would sit in the living room and watch TV while holding my arms straight out with 8 lb weights just to build my arm strength. I practiced shooting my bow all summer in the

backyard.

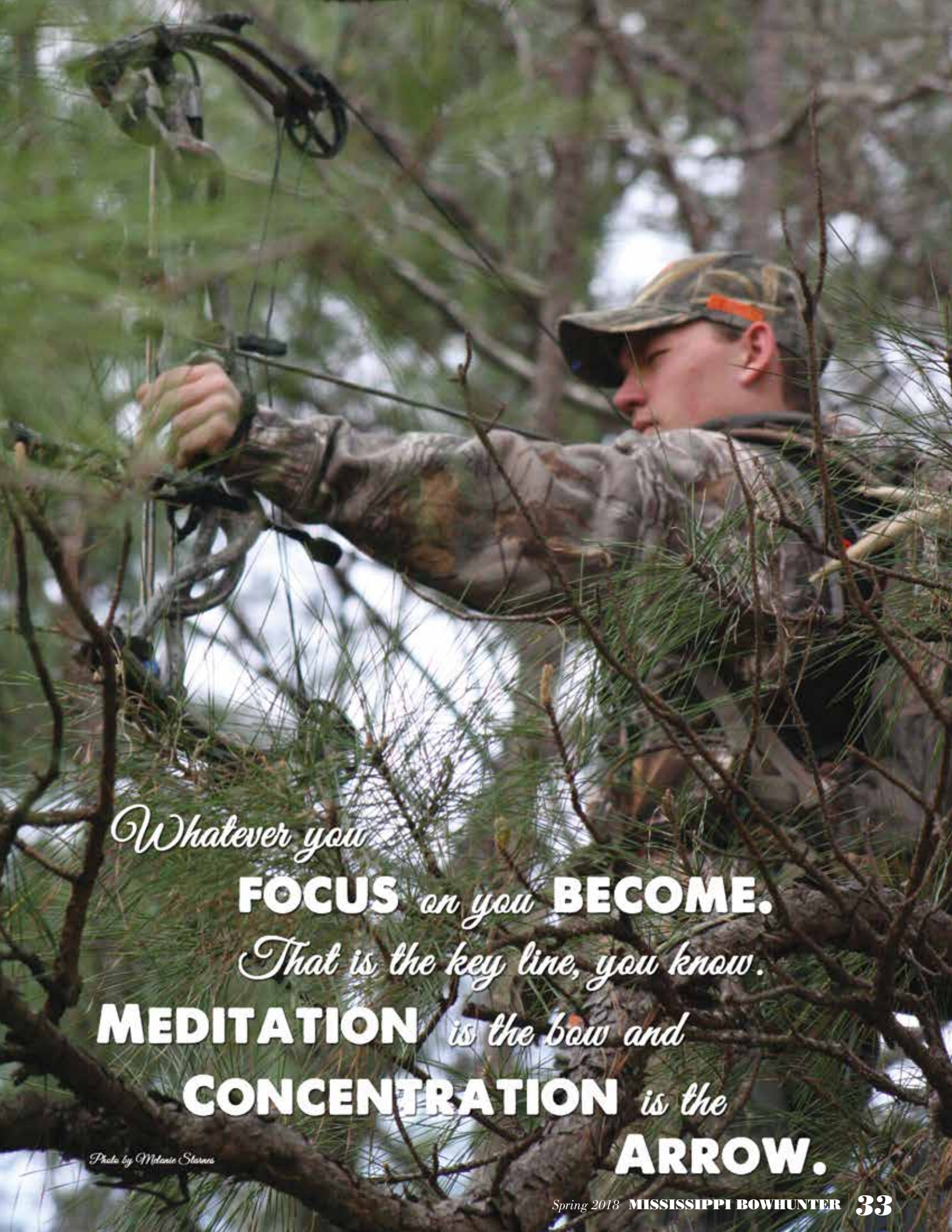
Then in early fall, on my birthday, Wes took me to a spot where he thought I would have a great chance of seeing some does. It was late afternoon and we had set up two stands in one tree so he could video me with my bow. In no time, a doe came in and was headed straight for me. I had to wait for an opportunity to stand up and get my bow ready. I remember it all happened so fast. Then I had to wait patiently for a good shot and when she gave it to me I released an arrow. I got her and Wes got it on video. I was so excited and Wes was about to jump out of the tree with excitement.

I understood at that moment what it was that kept him going back year after year. It is exciting to scout an area, get up early, load up all of your gear, set up in the right spot, and have all of the things you had worked, hoped, and wished for fall into place in that perfect moment. My husband's passion and love for hunting and the outdoors changed my view of the sport of hunting.

We are passing on this passion and love for the outdoors to our three children by taking them in the woods time and time again. For me, it took many trips and many years before I began to understand and appreciate hunting, so don't be afraid to share your passion of the outdoors with others and be patient.

Go ahead, call me a huntress, I will admit it proudly. I am the girl who did not understand why my father and brothers went hunting, but I was the first one of them to take a deer with a bow!



A man in camouflage clothing and a cap is shown from the chest up, aiming a compound bow. He is positioned within the branches of a pine tree, with his body angled towards the left. The background is a soft-focus view of more pine trees and a bright sky. The text is overlaid on the lower half of the image.

*Whatever you*  
**FOCUS** *on you* **BECOME.**  
*That is the key line, you know.*  
**MEDITATION** *is the bow and*  
**CONCENTRATION** *is the*  
**ARROW.**

*Photo by Melanie Starnes*





# The Unlucky IN THE W

STORY BY JOEY BUCHANAN

Choosing to hunt with a bow and arrow can produce a wide range of emotions both rewarding and devastating for those of us that choose this hunting approach. Sometimes these emotions can occur within minutes or seconds of each other. Taking the field for the last 25 plus years with my homemade recurve, well let's just say the deer or turkey win most of the time! But sometimes you may find an unlucky one!

Longtime bowhunter and Past Mississippi Bowhunters Association (MBA) President, Bobby Barr, lit my homemade archery candle years ago around 1976 when he instructed me on how to fletch my own arrows. A bright eyed and bushy tail lad from Indianola, I was a sponge for any and all knowledge pertaining to archery, bowhunting and especially making my own equipment. Roll the years forward a decade and some years later, I would be laying up my own recurves in my Atlanta bachelor apartment, thus providing my neighbors with smells and annoying sounds!. The late



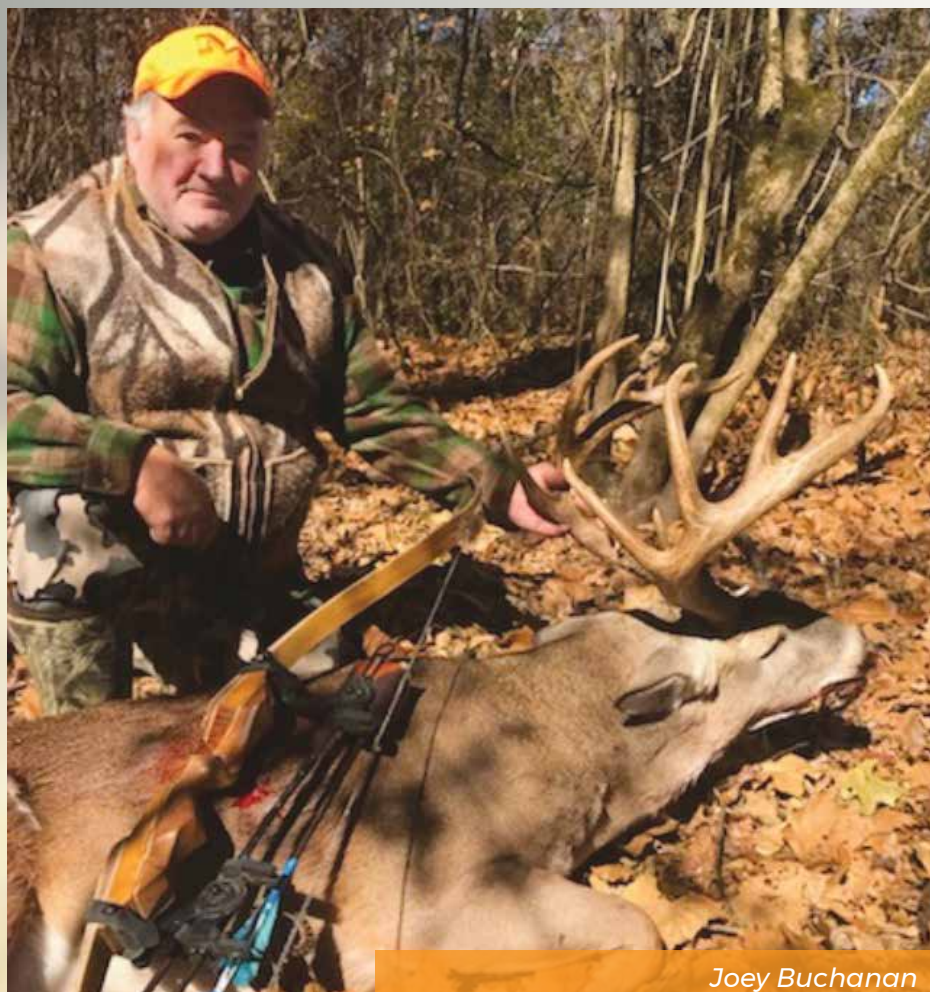
# Best Buck WOODS

80's and early 90's was a magical time for the resurgence of traditional archery. Lucky for me I was practically sitting on the "X" there in GA for rubbing elbows with the traditional sport's hunting elite, bowyers and larger traditional tournaments being held state to state and regionally frequently. Being a single man and not marrying until I was 38, my weekends were filled with traveling to shoots, rendezvous and hunting with my new fraternal traditional friends. All the while my thirst for making all my hunting equipment heightened and then spilling over to call making, especially turkey calls.

Now back to why this buck was so unlucky. I guess you would have to go back in time with me and revisit some of my unlucky moments....

"You can't kill a moose with a rock!" I whispered to myself, although I almost had too. On my first Alaska do-it-yourself float hunt for moose, half way into the hunt, I lost my bow. Most precisely, on a float approach to a fertile moose rutting spot, our raft hit a sweeper and my bow was thrown into the water never to be seen or recovered. If anyone is ever up by the Aniak River approximately 23.3 miles downstream, look for my take down recurve with a Shedua riser. If you find it, it's yours!. Lesson learned....tie your bow to something that floats.

My first Merriam hunt on the Apache reservation around 1996 in Arizona will always rank as one of my biggest mistakes. Opening morning at sunrise found me a mere 100 yards away from a gobbling Merriam just wanting to be shish-ka-bobbed by my arrow. All that stood in the



Joey Buchanan



way was for me to unshoulder my NEW Double Bull Blind, set it up for my very FIRST time and place my decoy out. Simple you'd think, but it never happened! I bounced around inside that canvas tent pushing rods, breaking rods and cussing all the while that bird continued to gobble. Soon a native hunter slipped up and smoked him off the limb. I was still swallowed by the camo tent. I never got the blind up. Lesson learned... practice putting up your new blind and preferably not the day of the hunt.

There was still more to learn. After a 30 minute bike ride into my brother-in-laws public land honey hole, we hid our bikes to race through the woods to close the gap on a gobbling bird. Set-up was simple since we had done this before at the same spot a year ago on a mature tom. Decoys were put out and our blind neatly draped between a trio of sweet gums bordering an open spot in the woods proven to be a strutting zone. With everything in place, bird gobbling and getting closer, now all I had to do is knock an arrow and remain still. I have done this 1,000 times over last 20 years...but never have I gone hunting without...my arrows!. Yes, I left them in my hip

quiver in the truck miles away. Lesson learned...never again use a detached quiver. My quiver stays on my bow. Did we kill the turkey? Naw, I couldn't stay still intentionally so my brother-in-law would not get a shot!

"Drop Shot"...No, this is not a fishing technique but an archery snafu! One particular cold morning on the Mississippi River when the wind was still and the red oaks were raining, I was positioned over a scrape that couldn't be fresher or wider. It was just one of those spots you find and you hunt. I found it that morning and returned within in an hour, my climber in tow intending to hunt all day. It was that good and I was right. Just minutes before noon after a 2 hour sit, here comes the "Rocking Chair" cross wind to the scrape. A 10-yard drop shot was offered. I drew back and released the string. It was then I heard a familiar noise. The noise of a dry fire resounded through the woods with my arrow dropping to my feet. Somehow with a trophy buck mere yards away with his nose in a scrape, I managed to overdraw by arrow and the nock had slid down my string and slipped off precisely at the moment I let the string go, a drop shot! Lesson learned...sandwich your

arrow nock between an upper and lower tied nock!

I have always viewed my bowhunting experiences in the field as a way to provide peaceful exercise. I can leave whatever worries I have at the base of the tree and climb up 10 feet to a peaceful utopia. But, as I explained earlier, I do have my disappointments in the field, however it is relaxing to me no matter the outcome. On the morning of November 25, 2017, I was sitting peacefully in a familiar stand. The pre-rut was on and sounds of horns clashing and grunting were heard only minutes after I settled in my tree stand. Probably an hour after sunrise, I heard the snapping of leaves and twigs and saw a doe with her head down running towards me on a trail I knew too well. Without hesitation I stood up as she ducked under the honeysuckle thicket to continue down the trail. I was only 5 yards away. Immediately afterwards, I saw a grunting buck walking fast step for step, exactly as she had just a few minutes earlier. I grinned internally, if that is such a thing, because he was set to walk right in front of me at 5 yards just as she had. I don't remember raising my bow, but remember aiming



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down my arrow as he walked by at 5 yards. This sight was picture perfect! I was at full draw, anchor solid and still! I released the arrow. Then... "TWANG"...damn it! What was that? Arguably one of the largest bucks I have seen at my club was merely 5 yards away and he just trotted off with no arrow wound! I missed. What was the twang, the noise? And then I saw my arrow buried in the ground sideways with a Muscadine vine cut halfway between me and the deer. I hit a vine. All the mishaps in my bowhunting lifetime immediately began to haunt me again. But then the unexpected happened...he stopped! The ole rascal stopped at about 17-18 steps right in front of me gazing out and away into the sweetgum thicket. I guess he was looking for that twang noise. That pause bought me about 3 seconds to pull another arrow out of my quiver. He took a step or two and the only thing I remember is seeing my blue fletching pass through his rib cage. He bolted off into the river jungle and I collapsed back into the seat of my stand.

I prayed a lot those next 30 minutes before I climbed down. I prayed mostly for a clean kill, easy recovery and thanked Him for all the wonderful experiences and people to which bowhunting has exposed me. Archery can make a man humble and thankful! After climbing down and inspecting the shot site, I found a blood trail of three parallel paths produced from the entrance and exit wounds. I knew this was a good shot and according to my GAIA GPS app on my phone and a 5 minute soft walk/stalk, I had my hands around my 165" trophy 990 feet away from my



stand. Not having the time to admire his horns at the first encounter, I took a knee in the woods and absorbed this moment respectfully. Again I lowered my head in prayer and thanked God for allowing me to be so fortunate to harvest an animal of this caliber and with my homemade bow. How did this happen? Upon reaching camp, I sent texts and pictures to my various

hunting friends. Within an hour one of them called me on the phone and earnestly asked, "Did you really kill that deer with your recurve?" I humbly replied, "I did not! I believe that was the unluckiest deer in the woods today. I didn't shoot him; he must have walked into my arrow after he successfully dodged the first! These things never happen to me!"

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** Mississippi Bowhunters Association Lifetime member, **JOEY BUCHANAN**, lives in Oxford, MS with his wife, two teenage sons and his two yellow labs.





**BOW**  
**HUNTING** *the*  
*Sierra Madre*  
**MOUNTAINS OF MEXICO**

STORY AND PHOTOS BY BRAD CHILES

Brad Chiles



When I started turkey hunting back in the mid 80's, I never imagined where my love for the sport would take me or the awesome places I have been able to visit chasing these beautiful birds, not to mention, the great friends I would meet along the way. Some 25 years later, a friend and colleague, Brian Boatner, walked into my cubicle at work one afternoon and told me he had just paid a deposit on a turkey hunt with Steve Brown of Brown & Company Outfitters. Steve and I have been friends for many years, and I knew, if he was involved, it would be a great hunt.

"Where are we going this year?" I asked, and when Brian replied, "Old Mexico for the Gould's," I almost fell out of my chair! I could not believe I was going to have the opportunity to bow hunt the Gould's. I have taken a few Easterns and Rio Grandes with my bow and had taken an Osceola gobbler in Florida the previous year with my bow, so my hopes of taking all the North American sub-species with archery tackle, were suddenly looking up. This was going to be an adventure and hunting trip that previously, I had only dreamed of.

The months leading up to the hunt were full of questions for Steve since neither Brian nor I had been to Mexico. Hearing all of the horror stories of the dangers of crossing the border and dealing with the Mexican law enforcement agencies, we could not help but be concerned about our safety. Steve has personally hunted and guided hunts in Mexico for many years and assured us that he had not had any problems.

Two weeks prior to our hunt, Brian accepted a meeting with a potential client that he had been working with for several years. Unfortunately, the timing of the meeting prevented him from making our trip; however, he did secure his client's business. Steve informed me that another friend, Ken Phillips, was booked to go on the hunt also and would be in our group. Although Brian could not join us, I was excited to have another familiar face on the trip. Ken and I have hunted together for many years. In fact, I killed my first turkey with a bow in Texas while hunting with Ken and his dad.

My flight landed in El Paso, TX around 9 pm – plenty of time for me to get some rest before departing the next day. However, sleep did not come easily for me because the anticipation of this hunt was similar to those nights before opening day of dove season when I was a kid. Our hunting group met in the hotel lobby for breakfast around 6 am the next morning. Our Mexican outfitters arrived at 7 am, so we loaded up with Jorge and Horacio with Apache Refuge Outfitters and began the first leg of our day's trip.

We drove from El Paso about an hour west to the border crossing in Columbus, NM. Although several of us had not traveled across the border and we were fairly nervous about leaving the United States, crossing went very smoothly. I was grateful that Jorge personally knew the Mexican Border Patrol personnel and had dealt with them on many occasions with other hunters.

We headed south about two hours

to Casas Grandes, Chihuahua and swapped into the trucks we would take into the mountains. We made one last stop in Colonial Juarez to meet another man by the name of Jorge and his son, Jorge, who went by "Coco" – thank goodness (I'm not kidding!). Finally, we headed for their ranch in the Sierra Madres mountains. When the pavement ended Horacio told us that we had about three and a half hours of mountain roads remaining to reach the camp. The roads were very rough but the scenery was absolutely beautiful.

We arrived at camp at 4 pm, and we quickly unloaded, grabbed our turkey hunting gear and hit the mountains to chase the beautiful Gould's turkeys. "Coco" took Ken and me up to a natural seep in a meadow that wasn't very far from our camp in hopes we would catch some birds coming in for a late afternoon drink of water. Ken and I settled into a blind that I had brought with me, and it wasn't long before the action began.

Gobbling on the ridge out in front of us, the first bird we spotted had several hens with him, and we eagerly watched as they began making their way down toward the water. Another bird gobbled from behind and to our left. When the gobbler in front of us got to about 25 yards, I told Ken to go ahead and let him have the opportunity with the shotgun.

In my mind, I had it all figured out. I surmised that when Ken's bird went down, the second gobbler that had been behind us and was now only 10 yards to our left would jump on the flopping gobbler and I could put an arrow in him. It was going to be epic!



However, as we all know when it comes to hunting, that what happens in our minds can often turn out the complete opposite. And this time was no exception. When Ken pulled the trigger, he sent a load of #6s over the turkey's head, and the gig was up. It was an exciting hunt, and I always enjoy ribbing Ken about ruining my chances on my first Gould's gobbler.

The next morning I went out with Horacio to a spot called, "Cuchillo," which is Spanish for knife. It was a finger ridge with large ponderosa pines where, I was told, gobblers

like to strut. It was a cool morning, probably 45 or 50 degrees, and it was going to be a beautiful day. We set up the blind and put out a jake and 2 hen decoys. When the sun started to come up, we could hear several birds gobbling on the next ridge. After they flew down they gobbled for a while and we could hear several hens with them. We stayed in the blind because Horacio assured me that they would come to this place to strut at some point. We had not heard a gobble for quite some time, so about 9 am, I picked up my Cody slate call. I let out

a series of yelps, and a gobbler cut me off about 150 yards down the ridge. I gave him about 5 minutes and called again, and he cut me off again, this time just out of sight down the ridge.

I was breathing heavier now, and I will never forget seeing his blood red head coming up the ridge about 50 yards out. Not long after I saw him, he saw our decoys and focused his attention on them. He did not like the fact that the jake decoy was hanging out with his hens. When he got to the decoys, I drew my bow, the turkey turned broadside, and I squeezed my release. The arrow hit him just above the thighs and he went about 15 yards and piled up in a downed tree limb. I was beyond excited that I had killed my first Gould's turkey, which turned out to be a beautiful double bearded gobbler with the snow white band across the ends of his tail feathers. When we got back to camp, several of the other hunters had taken nice Toms as well. It was a great first morning, to say the least.

Two days of intensive travel and an early rise will wear a hunter out, so after lunch, we took a short nap. Later that afternoon, I was told I would go out with Horacio again for the afternoon hunt, and we were going to a partially dried up lake where the turkeys like to water. It was getting late in the afternoon, and I was beginning to think it was probably over for the day, so I was teaching Horacio how to run my Cody slate call to pass time. He caught on to it very quickly and on his third or fourth series of yelps, a turkey gobbled about as far away as I can hear one. I waited two or three minutes and told him



Brad Chiles



to yelp again, and this time a hen answered in the same direction of the gobble. I told Horacio to just mimic what she was doing, and each time he did, she called back every time.

After about five minutes of calling, seven or eight hens came walking in with a big gobbler in tow. When they came into our decoys, the Tom acted as if he didn't like my jake decoy and started skirting around him. I drew my bow and took a 10 yard quartering-away shot. The arrow went in half way between the top of his tail and the wing butt putting him down in less than 10 yards.

He was a really nice bird, the tips of his tail feathers were even whiter than the one I took on the morning hunt. As I got set to take some pictures of my bird, Horacio went

to look at his beard, and we realized this bird also had multiple beards – 4 of them! I had been turkey hunting for over 25 years and never killed a multiple-bearded turkey before and I had just gotten two on the same day in Mexico. I was beyond thrilled and excited!

Each hunter in our group had a two bird limit on this hunt, so the next three days I went out with some of the others to hunt with and watch them get their birds. I was able to hunt with Steve one morning and was with him when he shot a beautiful Gould's gobble with his bow. The mid-day and late evenings I spent hanging out camp, eating authentic Mexican food, and sharing tales of hunts on the porch. At the end of the trip, everyone was successful

at filling their two-bird limit, and I was grateful for the opportunity to experience something I had never done before. A little older and wiser than I was back in the 80's when I first started turkey hunting and only lacking the Merriam's now to complete an Archery Royal Slam, I will never forget my first successful Gould's hunt in the Sierra Madre mountains of Mexico. The high mountain ridges, beautiful scenery, and the new friendships formed and existing friendships strengthened on this adventure are all part of this sport that I will never take for granted.



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# SPRING PREPARATION FOR BIG **WHITETAIL** SUCCESS



STORY BY BRIAN MONTGOMERY  
PHOTO BY DEB ATWOOD LOGAN



January 6, 2001 found me sitting in a shovel dug pit blind in the middle of a tree farm on Yazoo National Wildlife Refuge. The wind was exactly what I'd been waiting for in the January archery hunt on Yazoo and the anticipation was extremely high going into the hunt. One of my hunting buddies was in position to the north about ½ a mile away in a tree stand overlooking an overgrown grass field. We knew a good buck was using the area through sign and intel from other hunters, but I hadn't seen him yet. The buck was supposed to be a 22" wide 8 point that would make your eyes pop out and the source was reliable! I was in "the hole" an hour before daylight at the tree farm. Anyone who's walked through one of these oak tree farms knows that in a tree you can only see straight down but at ground level you can see and shoot a long way, and that should answer at least some of your questions so far.

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Anyway, the morning was cool and crisp with a light breeze from the NW, exactly what I'd set it up for and I hadn't seen the spot since the spring of 2000. I could hear deer walking all though the darkness as I set in the hole, my anticipation was running wild envisioning the giant 8 point in my dreams. As daylight broke, my nerves were just about on end, I've never hunted from a hole in the ground before and I had no idea if it would work or not, this was the maiden voyage!

I spotted my first deer coming down the trail. It was a nice young 8 point buck. I sunk low in the hole with only the brim of my hat above ground level. The buck breezed right by inside of 15 yards and never even checked up! It was on now, I had confidence my trap that had been set for almost a year was solid. Over the course of the morning I had no less than 15 deer come within bow range and not a one of them caught me! This was awesome! At 11:05 my buddy radioed me, (before cell phones

kids) and his voice was broken but I understood enough to gather "the big 8 is headed your way!" I was beside myself with excitement and even though there were a hundred trails he could take, I just knew he would come my way. About 20 minutes later I hear something to my right and look, there he is making a rub on a sumac bush on the small ditch where the trail crossed. The buck was only about 30 yards away but had lots of brush between me and him. I told myself to just be patient, the wind was right and



he was on the trail that would put him either at 20 yards or 8. I hoped for the 20 yard crossing but to be truthful, I just wanted a shot. It seemed like an eternity but he slowly made his way down the ditch on the trail and as he approached I can remember as clear as if it was yesterday hoping he would just keep walking and give me the 20 yard shot. But, here he comes. He crossed the small ditch and just like that he's at 10 yards and closing. I just needed him to look the other way. My bow had been laying on the ground prior to seeing the buck and when I saw him I picked up my bow and put it in the hole with me to be ready. Do you remember the old TM Hunter style rests? Well, the buck walked a couple more steps to 6 yards, stopped broadside and looks the other way as if he knew he was as safe as the President surrounded by The Secret Service! I rose slowly from the hole and drew smooth and quiet, but almost through the draw cycle I heard a loud "clank" and there I was, 150" 8-point on public land in a hole with my arrow off my string. In all the focus on the buck, I'd let my arrow lay between the rest and the riser of the bow and forgot to re-set it. The

buck didn't even blow out, he just swung his head around and looked to see what he had heard. It was the most humiliating moment in my bowhunting career to date. I let down to attempt to make the correction but that was all he could stand from 6 yards and he was gone! The buck and hunt of my dreams were over. Sick doesn't describe the emotions I felt and it causes serious depression to this day. It's a true story, but the point is not to discuss all the coulda shoulda's of the hunt but to focus on what led to a successful encounter, PREPARATION. The April prior to that hunt found my buddy and me physically carrying a 4x8 sheet of plywood almost 3 miles with shovels to dig that hole.

This spring can be the key to your success next fall if you will stay focused on what you have learned this year about your hunting area. That hunt for me transpired based on information I had acquired in the January hunt of 2000 when I found a giant set of tracks crossing a road. I followed the trail to the very ditch crossing the big 8 stood on when I had the encounter. The information you have learned this season is your best

advantage going into next year. It's easy to get focused on turkey season, crappie season, or 3D tournament season, but if you're a serious whitetail archer, now is the time to make those investments in time for next year. In the spring and late winter deer sign is extremely visible. Buck rubs and tracks will help you identify where that mature buck will be next fall. Another key project is to set up that stand site you wanted to be in this season but didn't because of the disturbance you would cause during the season. Go ahead and cut out the tree and shooting lanes and pull the stand. The most impactful part of setting up a new stand is cutting limbs and small trees for shooting lanes. Also go ahead and plan the approach to the stand. Entry and exit are very important for a stand to be effective. Use creeks to access stands to keep the disturbance at a minimum. I often use ropes to get in and out of creeks. With a good rope in a creek you can climb a pretty steep creek bank even when it's wet. Be creative, make good observations and use this spring to be ready for next fall.







The

*Wilderness*

holds

*Answers* to

*Questions*

we have not yet

learned to

*Ask*

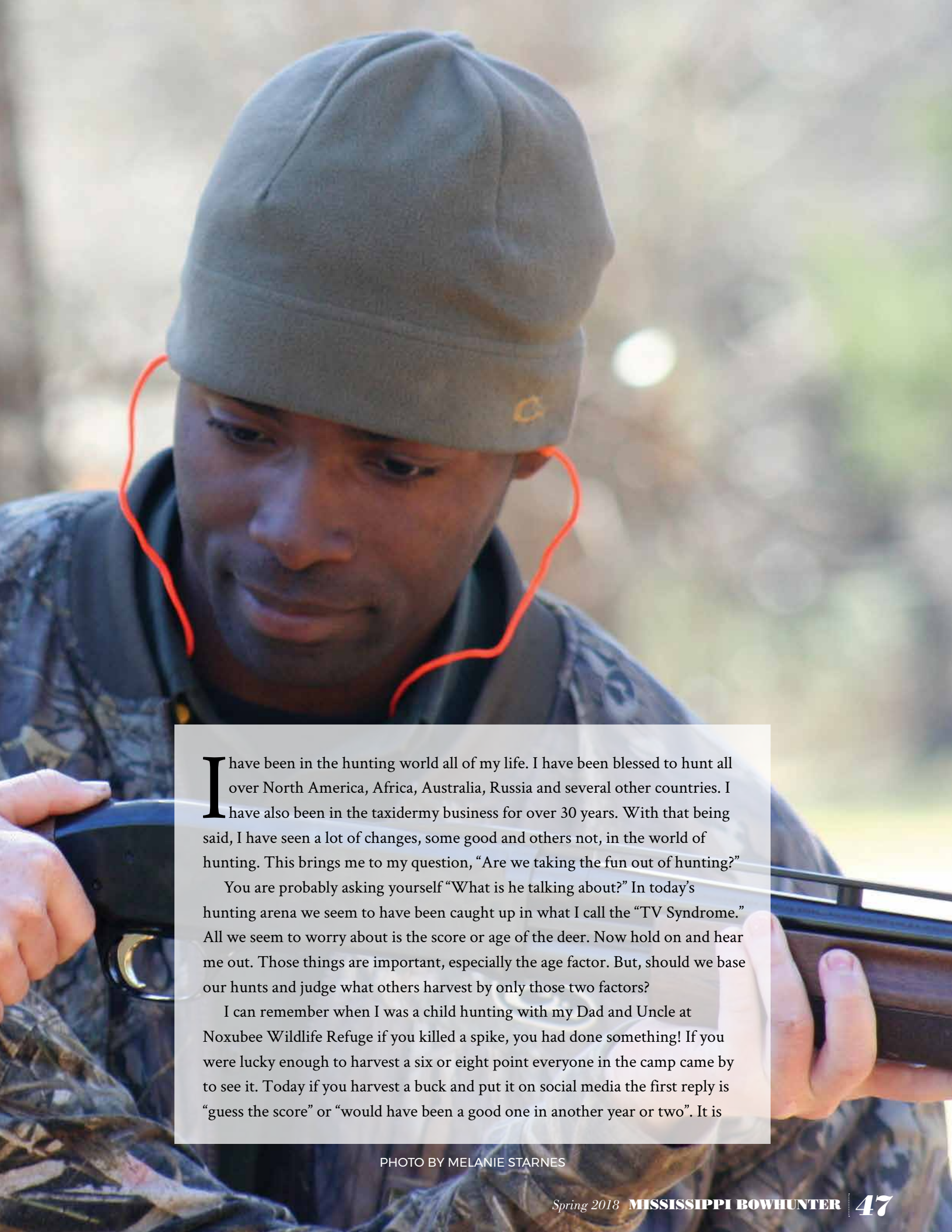


A close-up, side-profile shot of a person with dark hair, wearing yellow safety glasses and a camouflage jacket. They are holding a bow, with their hand visible on the right side of the frame. The background is a blurred natural setting with trees and foliage.

# TAKING THE **FUN** OUT OF HUNTING

STORY BY ANDY STANFORD





I have been in the hunting world all of my life. I have been blessed to hunt all over North America, Africa, Australia, Russia and several other countries. I have also been in the taxidermy business for over 30 years. With that being said, I have seen a lot of changes, some good and others not, in the world of hunting. This brings me to my question, “Are we taking the fun out of hunting?”

You are probably asking yourself “What is he talking about?” In today’s hunting arena we seem to have been caught up in what I call the “TV Syndrome.” All we seem to worry about is the score or age of the deer. Now hold on and hear me out. Those things are important, especially the age factor. But, should we base our hunts and judge what others harvest by only those two factors?

I can remember when I was a child hunting with my Dad and Uncle at Noxubee Wildlife Refuge if you killed a spike, you had done something! If you were lucky enough to harvest a six or eight point everyone in the camp came by to see it. Today if you harvest a buck and put it on social media the first reply is “guess the score” or “would have been a good one in another year or two”. It is

PHOTO BY MELANIE STARNES



such a common thing we've come to expect it, but are we selling ourselves short? Here are a few things to consider.

**Example 1:**

Consider the region in which you are hunting and the potential of bucks in the herd. If you hunt in north Mississippi and you set the bar at 120" and five years old, you might be in for a long haul. However, if you are hunting in south Mississippi, this is a very attainable goal.

**Example 2:**

Never judge another person's harvest by the size of the antlers or age of the deer. A lot of times it isn't the deer that makes it a trophy; it is the story behind the harvest. I

have taken many a doe with my bow on heavily hunted public land that provided a greater adrenaline rush than a giant buck or a three-year old 110" buck.

**Example 3:**

Not all of us are trophy hunters. Most just enjoy the great outdoors when they find time and are probably more proud of their harvest than most. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

**Example 4:**

Our youth are the future of hunting and fishing in Mississippi. It is our responsibility to teach them everything we know about our natural world and encourage their hunting interests whether they prefer

archery, a rifle, a crossbow, or some other weapon of choice. Experiment with them and let them make the decision. The bottom line is keeping it fun for the kids!

I'm not saying we shouldn't have guidelines, I am just saying be realistic. Know the property on which you hunt and what a true "shooter" is for this location. Get the kids involved. Teach them about hunting regulations and what is expected of them as hunters. Ask them to consider what they are hunting before they enter the woods. Do they want to take a doe or do they want to wait on the big one? By encouraging them to plan for the hunt, it is less likely they will be disappointed if they come back



PHOTO BY JAN ALLINDER





empty handed. After all, that is why it is called hunting.

Most importantly, please consider joining organizations such as the Mississippi Bowhunters Association, Pope and Young, National Rifle Association, Safari Club International,

Mississippi Wildlife Federation, National Wild Turkey Federation and the list goes on and on. These organizations fight our fights and help protect our rights. By standing together we are a mighty voice which cannot be quietened. Remember, it

is the squeaky wheel that gets the grease. Together we can accomplish anything. Now get out there, sling some arrows, shoot guns and have fun! God bless you all.



# Ramblings on a Scourge



STORY BY LANN M. WILF

While the Mississippi Bowhunters Association (MBA) solicited this article for publication, it does not serve to represent MBA's stance on this topic.

*If the clouds are full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth; and if a tree falls to the south or the north, in the place where the tree falls, there it shall lie.*  
- Ecclesiastes 11:3

My friend, William “W” McKinley, is very fond of this scripture. William is the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks (MDWFP) Statewide Deer Program Coordinator. W and I spent many happy, yet challenging, years together in the Deer Program and learned the full meaning of this scripture together. W has been and continues to be much better at putting this scripture into practice than I am. We canceled each other out in dark times. If I was in a rage, W was finding humor in horrible circumstances. If

I was shaking my fist at the sky, W was calming me down and channeling my passion. If W was too easy going, I was hurrying him up. We made a good team.

In our time working together, what we both feared most was Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) infecting the deer herd in any part of our home state. As we matured, we both came to realize that this dreaded disease was inevitable. One day it was going to come home, and we knew that day would wound us deeply. That day has come and our grieving has passed. Now is the time for all Mississippi sportsmen to accept what has happened and do what we can to save our precious natural resource.

The following thoughts are not intended to scare anyone. They are

simply the truth. Accept them or reject them.

1) Do not panic. Simultaneously, do not be complacent. This may not be the end of deer hunting, but this will change deer hunting as we know it. While we begin to learn more about the spread of CWD and other Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (TSEs), we also must critically evaluate the impacts of this disease on meat consumption and transportation of animal parts and tissues. As I write this, we do not know the extent of the damage, but we do know that CWD is in Issaquena County and will be there indefinitely. Our only hope is that MDWFP and their partners can minimize the impacts or slow down the spread of this disease. In reality,



if MDWFP can keep the hunting public abreast of where the disease is located, this will be a huge win for the agency. Therefore the public should have realistic expectations about what the agency can provide. In this disaster, the MDWFP's goals should be to protect the natural resource and protect the hunting public through testing and determining the extent of the damage.

2) Sportsmen should encourage MDWFP to provide an avenue to test deer from the CWD containment zone. Based on sound science and the most recent research, hunters should have deer from the containment zone tested prior to meat consumption. This is unfortunate but has become necessary. If readers want more details, they can research this topic on their own. However, recent press releases from the Mississippi Department of Health should clarify this concern. Ideally, testing opportunities would be provided statewide, however we live in a world with limitations.

3) Sportsmen and wildlife professionals should encourage MDWFP to ban supplemental feeding of wildlife statewide. The ban in proximate counties is laudable, but no one saw this CWD positive in Issaquena County coming. Therefore, the next positive may also be in an unexpected portion of the state. As wildlife stewards, we should proactively take measures to slow the spread of the disease and not provide accelerants like feed and bait. Therefore, a responsible move, in drastic times would be remove supplemental feed from the list of



contributors. This may even have some side benefits, such as improved deer movement and perhaps a few more turkeys, since the aphlatoxin threat would be reduced.

4) Landowners and managers in the CWD containment zone should take efforts to work closely with the biologists and officers on site. The biologists and officers in the field are paying a significant price while working on this project. All will likely be emotionally invested and likely working long, grueling hours. The hunting public will not know or fully understand what the MDWFP personnel on the ground are dealing with. Please remember that people like W are your greatest allies in this war. Dealing with CWD is a war. It is long, bloody, and painful. It will be painful for everyone involved, but, in order to protect the state's resource, a price will have to be paid. Please allow

these great people to do what they have been trained to do. Please make a conscious decision to keep criticism of field personnel to an absolute minimum.

In closing, please allow me to reinforce the fact that I have the highest confidence in William McKinley and the field personnel of the MDWFP to handle this horrible disease with the prudence, urgency, and diligence that it requires. The state has lost some biologists in the last couple of years, but the best were retained. Those are what is needed now, and they are out there, fighting for the resource and sportsmen. God bless them.

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**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** An avid sportsman, **LANN M. WILF** of Monroe County holds an Associate's degree in Forestry Technology from Itawamba Community College and a Bachelor's degree in Wildlife Management from Arkansas State University. He has 16 years work experience as a Wildlife Biologist in State and Federal agencies, as well as the private sector.





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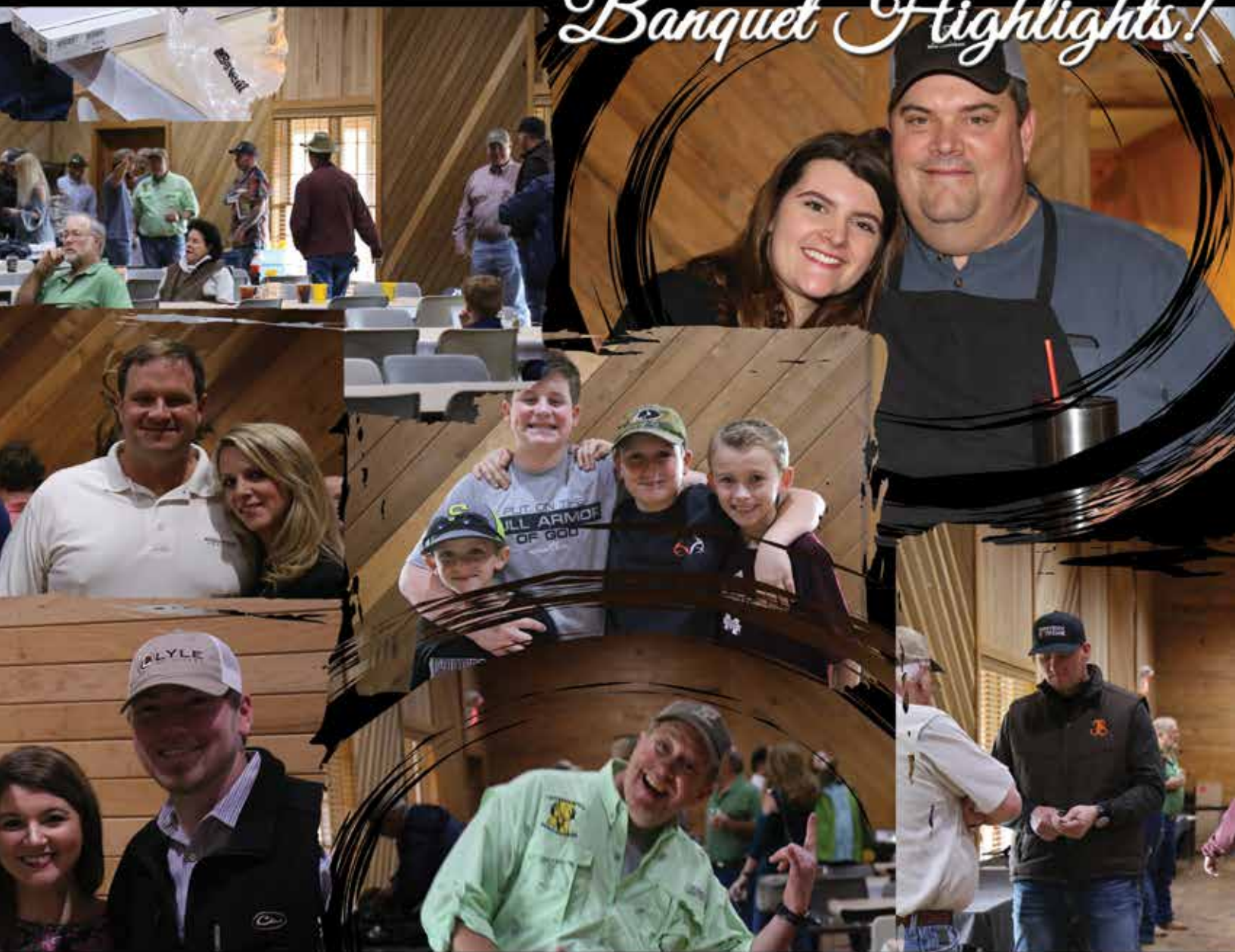
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# Perspective of a Low Tech Man in a High Tech World

STORY AND PHOTOS BY ROBERT DALEY

It was October, 1971. I was eleven years old. My dad and I had gone to the deer camp, a place called Buck Snort in Claiborne County, to enjoy a weekend of squirrel hunting. As we were walking through the clubhouse I looked down at a bunk bed and noticed something that instantly grabbed my attention. To the adventurous mind of this eleven year old boy it was something of beauty I would later learn was called a recurve bow. Now, I have a twenty pound yellow Ben Pearson fiberglass Jet Bow and wood arrows with crimped metal tips that came from the hardware store, and I had shot kid bows with play arrows since I was old enough to pull one back. Yes, even as far back as the arrows with the rubber suction cups on them. But never had I seen anything like the amazing instrument of archery I was looking at on that bunk, a real hunting bow with real hunting arrows tipped with

razor sharp broadheads. I asked my dad, "What's that?" He said, "That belongs to one of the bowhunters." This was a term I had never heard before. I said, "One of the what?" "Bowhunters," he said. "They hunt deer with those." I just stood there in amazement, staring at it and wanting so much to pick it up and hold it, but, as my dad has taught me well, I didn't dare mess with anyone else's "stuff." And this was grown-up stuff, the real deal. I was drawn to it like a teenage boy to his first love. As I watched and listened to the bowhunters that weekend I became more intrigued and was so fascinated by the concept of hunting deer with a bow and arrow that I told my dad I wanted to do that. And one year later in October of 1972 at the age of twelve, a new passion manifested and I became a bowhunter. I didn't have anyone to teach me about shooting a bow at that time. I was pretty much on my own with it

except for learning what I could by listening to the other bowhunters of the deer camp. So it wouldn't be until four years later on November 13, 1976 with a fifty-two pound Damon Howatt Super Diablo that I killed my first deer, a spike buck. There would be no stopping me now.

A few years prior to this a new invention came into the arena and took the archery industry by storm. Enter the compound bow. With its cables and pulleys it was designed to shoot farther, flatter and with thirty percent let off being a big deal back then, a person shooting a sixty-five pound bow would only be holding about forty-five pounds at full draw. Nowadays, seventy-five to eighty percent let off is the norm with a person shooting a seventy pound bow holding about twenty pounds at full draw.

I was the last one at Buck Snort to purchase a compound, mainly because



I didn't have the money. But when I did in 1977 my choice was a Damon Howatt Warthog that had a peak draw weight of sixty-five pounds. I would hunt with my Warthog for the next sixteen years, taking many deer with it. The one thing that made me different from the other bowhunters at Buck Snort was the fact that I never used sights or a mechanical release in all the years I hunted with the compound. I did put a pendulum sight on my bow once but found I was more confident and more comfortable shooting instinctively, which, basically is simply looking at my target, focusing on a spot and shooting. I'll discuss this more later.

Around 1992 I made the transition back to traditional archery and was again shooting my Super Diablo. I had been very fortunate in meeting and becoming friends with many others whose preference was traditional archery. I joined a club, got into shooting 3D and was having more fun than I had with my compound. Now, let's fast forward to the present. I still enjoy shooting a recurve and I've learned there is so much more you can do with a traditional bow that you cannot and will not do with a compound. I am a member and co-founder of Southern Traditional Archery Association and for the past twenty-four years the Mississippi Wildlife Federation has been so gracious in allowing us to have our traditional archery booth at the Mississippi Wildlife Extravaganza. While the majority of our shooters are kids, what we are is a traditional archery booth where anyone of any age can come in and shoot a traditional bow. We are equipped for everyone from the tiniest tot to the how-big-a-boy-are-ya. I meet and



*Robert Daley at the Southern Traditional Archery Booth*

talk with a lot of die-hard compound shooters each year at 'Ganza and we have conversations about compound vs. traditional.

In today's archery world there is a friendly rivalry between compound and traditional. There are pros and cons to each one. I want to stress "friendly rivalry," because it should never get more serious than that. We jokingly refer to their training wheels and they likewise refer to our stick and string... no big deal, no problem. We are all out there to have fun and it

is no one's business but the individual shooter as to what he or she prefers, when hunting both are quite capable of taking care of business.

Let's look at the modern compound with its high-tech sights and mechanical release, a very fast shooter with speeds up to 360 plus feet per second using today's carbon arrows, which have also become popular with traditional archers. It's no wonder that a compound shooter with a rock steady bow arm and magnification lenses on their sights





can nail the twelve-ring on a deer target from fifty or sixty yards. That's awesome! Let's just go ahead and say you won't likely see a traditional shooter do that! Nor should you bet your money on someone with a recurve or longbow shooting groups as tightly as that of a compound shooter. So there are some obvious advantages to shooting a modern high-tech compound including that fact that when the bow is sighted in there may not be the need for frequent practice like there is with traditional bows. Some people, due to work schedules, may not have sufficient time to get the practice they need with a traditional bow and so they opt for the compound with sights and release aid. My son, Curt, had to make this choice last year. He called me one day to tell me he was getting a compound because he didn't have

time to practice with his recurve. He said he still wanted to bow hunt but didn't want to take his recurve to the woods and end up gut-shooting or crippling a deer. I was very proud of him for making such a mature and responsible decision.

Let me explain something about the compound that differs from the traditional bow. It has to do with form, which is very important. The shooter must be able to hold the bow vertical because the arrow is sitting a few inches or more above the bow hand and tilting or canting the bow would move the arrow two to four inches to the side and out of the sight picture. If you're a compound shooter, picture in your mind what I am talking about. Got the visual? This is you every time you shoot. No change. No variety. It is the same every time you shoot. I've gone through

this scenario with many compound shooters at the Extravaganza and they have all agreed with me on this. If you're hunting and you see a deer and there's a tree limb in the way of your being able to draw your bow in perfect form for the shot, you depend on that deer moving to give you a more open shot. Of course, if you're hunting in a food plot there likely won't be any tree limbs to get in your way and this scenario won't apply to you. Now all you have to do is get the yardage right and use the correct pin.

Now let's look at the traditional bow, a thing of beauty that actually looks like a bow and not a machine. Okay, that was a little pinch of that friendly rivalry humor. With a traditional bow form it is also important in terms of how you grip the bow, draw, anchor and release. A grip that is too tight can cause you



to torque the bow when you release, which will usually cause the arrow to go left or right, depending on a left- or right-handed shooter. Next is a smooth draw coming to a consistent anchor. Some people pull the string back with three fingers under the arrow nock and two under, which we refer to as the split finger. I like to anchor with my middle finger in the corner of my mouth. Now, to release just let the string slide off the fingers. Never pluck the string. A few years ago a friend shot a two inch group at twenty-five yards with his recurve. Compound shooters are thinking, "So what?" But for a traditional archer shooting instinctive that was pretty darn good. I noticed each time he shot he kept his hand pressed against his face until his arrow hit the target, instead of letting his hand recoil back upon release. The only thing that moved was his fingers, allowing him a much smoother release. After watching him I tried this little variation in my release and couldn't believe the improvement. Sometimes the smallest change can make the biggest difference.

People ask me all the time, "How far can you hit something with one of those bows?" And my answer is simple, as far as you are used to practicing. If you never practice farther than twenty-five yards I would not suggest attempting a forty yard shot on a game animal. I have watched people nail targets in the kill zone from fifty yards because they practice long distance shooting. I don't practice farther than about thirty yards because where I hunt it's fairly thick and a ten to twenty or twenty-five yard shot is much more typical.

What about penetration? Don't underestimate a traditional bow.

I've made pass-through shots on a deer from thirty yards with a fifty-two pound recurve and wood arrows with two-blade broadheads that I sharpened with a file. People who have never known anything but the compound may not realize that you don't have to shoot three hundred feet per second to make a pass-through shot on a deer. A recurve that shoots two hundred or more feet per second is considered a fast shooter. A very good friend of mine has a sixty-two pound recurve that was chronographed at two hundred twenty feet per second. For a traditional bow, that's smokin'! Just a little FYI: a recurve, typically, is going to shoot faster than a longbow because of the difference in design. But the longbow will also get the job done quite well.

In the scenario I talked about earlier with the compound, that tree limb doesn't bother me too much. I can tilt, or cant, my bow as much as I need to, bend at the waist, get down on one knee, both knees or as I have demonstrated many times at the Extravaganza, I can lie on my stomach and shoot if I have to because with a traditional bow it doesn't matter how you contort your body. If you can pull the string back you can shoot that bow.

What is instinctive shooting? How do you aim at that thing? These are two questions I hear often. At 'Ganza, we can't help but get a little tickled when we see someone closing one eye and trying to look down the arrow shaft as if they're looking down a gun barrel or looking through a sight that isn't there. To explain instinctive



*Southern Traditional Archery in action at the Mississippi Wildlife Extravaganza*





shooting, I usually start by asking the boys if they ever played baseball. Most of them say yes. I asked them if they were pretty good and throwing the baseball and putting it in the other guy's glove. Well, of course, they all say yes. Then I ask them, "What kind of sight did you use for that?" and they first look at me as if I am some kind of nut. Maybe I am, but then it begins to make sense to them when I explain about hand/eye coordination and how it applies to instinctive shooting. We all have this ability, although some people do seem to be more gifted at it than others. I met a guy once at one of our shoots at Enid Lake who had such a gift for it that he could split one arrow after another on purpose. I've never seen anyone else do that like he could. He said he didn't like to do it too much because arrows were expensive. I can't

speaking too much for what others do, but when I shoot I pick my spot and don't look at anything else. I raise my bow arm to "instinctively" point to the spot I am looking at. As my bow arm comes up my other arm is pulling the string back, all in one fluid motion. I come to anchor and after a one or two second count, I release, still not taking my eye off the spot until my arrow hits. When I've been practicing a lot, I shoot well. When I haven't shot my bow in a few months, I may not shoot as well. But, if you love to shoot a bow, what is practicing but getting out and doing something you love to do?

I've talked a little about the modern high tech compound and a lot about the traditional archery because traditional is where my heart is. If the compound is where your heart is then you should absolutely stick with

it. And I will enjoy watching you nail the twelve ring from fifty or sixty yards. We are all out there to have fun and that is the way it should be. So whether you are a modern high tech shooter with a training wheel bow or a shorter range stick and stringer shooter, we all have one thing in common. We all love to sling arrows. Shoot straight, have fun and enjoy the wonderful fellowship.

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## *Venison French Onion Salisbury Steak*

Shared by Bill Maily

### INGREDIENTS

- 2 pounds of ground venison
- ¼ cup fresh minced parsley
- 2 tablespoons scallion, minced
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon pepper
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 2 cups sliced onions
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 1 tablespoon minced garlic
- 1 tablespoon tomato paste
- 2 cups beef broth
- 1 teaspoon thyme

### DIRECTIONS

1. Combine the ground venison, parsley, scallion, salt, and pepper. Divide evenly into 4 portions and shape into patties. Place 2 tablespoons flour into dish and dredge each patty in the flour. Save 1 teaspoon of the flour.
2. Heat 1 tablespoon of oil in a saucepan, medium heat. Add the floured patties and sauté about three minutes on each side, or until brown. Remove them from the pan.
3. Add the sliced onions and sugar to the pan and sauté about 5 minutes. Stir in the garlic and tomato paste and cook until the tomato paste begins to brown. Sprinkle in the teaspoon of flour saved earlier and cook for 1 minute. Add broth, salt, and thyme and stir.
4. Return the patties and drippings to the homemade French Onion soup you just made. Turn the heat down to low and cook for two minutes to let the patties soak up the soup flavors.

**SERVING SUGGESTION:** Serve this dish over pasta.

**NUMBER OF SERVINGS:** 4

**SUBMISSIONS:** If you have a wild game recipe that you would like to share, please email [melstarnes9@gmail.com](mailto:melstarnes9@gmail.com).





# BOW STABILIZATION

STORY BY MAC MABRY

**B**ow stabilization can be as simple or as complex and in-depth as one desires it to be. As far as a hunting standpoint most bow hunters buy a stabilizer to add some weight to the front of the bow to slow pin float and to dampen vibration/hand shock from the bow. But in recent years many bow hunters have started using stabilizer setups much like tournament archers do, to increase their accuracy and ability to hold on target longer, which in turn helps out when you are facing a stressful situation. Whether it's shooting a deer or a 12 ring the less

and slower the pin float you have the more confidence you will have, and less stress and anxiety your mind and body has put on it to affect your ability to make the shot.

The first step to stability in your setup is having a bow that properly fits you. Draw length, hand position on the grip, and good form are the foundation for building a stabilizer setup that will be solid and consistent. These things take a little time and tinkering with to figure out, and you have to keep an open mind to trying different things to find out what works the best. One thing I tell

people is just because it's the most comfortable way to do it, or just because you have done it this way for the last 20 years doesn't make it right or the best way. For this article we are going to assume you have most of these issues handled and just talk about some basics of stabilizer setups.

One of the rules of thumb to start with is a 3-to-1 ratio. What this means is for every ounce on the front bar put three ounces on the back bar. This is strictly a starting point to build from its going to take some time and shooting to figure out where your sweet spot is. The first thing I




do is position my rear stabilizer pointed straight out horizontally behind the bow and a couple inches off of the string. Next add some weight to the front and rear stabilizers to get feel for the stabilizer setup. Now I draw with my eyes closed and come to anchor, I then open my eyes to see where the bubble on my scope is located. This is going to tell me which direction I need to move the back bar, in or away from the string to move the bubble to the center of the level. From here I really start adding weight to steady up the sight picture. When adding weight to your bars the direction of your pin float on the target will tell you where you need to add weight. If you have more left and right movement add more to the front, for up and down float add to the back bar. This is the time in the build when your personal preferences start to take over. As things begin to steady up you will start to see how adding weight on one end or the other affects your hold on the target. Also at this time you can begin to play with the up and down angle of the rear stabilizer to find the sweet spot that works best for you. If your pin wants to float up and hang above the dot you need to lower the angle on the rear stabilizer. If you're getting hung up under the dot you will raise the rear stabilizer up. The holding weight on the bow, how aggressive of a shot you shoot are also big factors on how much weight you are going to be running and where it's distributed. More holding weight your bow has at full draw typically means one will run a lot of front weight. Less holding weight is just opposite. But as I mentioned earlier the farther you get into finishing a setup the more personal preference comes into play. I suggest small movements, most stabilizer brackets will have numbers and an indicator line on them to help you reference when making adjustments.

Now that you have gotten to this point in build, you will be able to tell any minute change that is made. I have weights that range from 1/3oz up to 2oz's. When you are really fine tuning your setup you will be able to tell if you add 1/3 oz on the front or back bar. I know that's not much weight but when you're trying to shoot arrow holes in the target at 40 or 50 yards you will be surprised how much difference just that little bit can make, and might give you just another second or two of sitting in the middle to break the shot. Utilizing stabilizers can help whether it's in hunting or target archery. With a little work you can increase your effective range and consistency. Both of which will increase your success rate in the end.



PHOTOS BY MAC MABRY





*Of all the paths you take in life,  
make sure a few of them are dirt.*

*... John Muir*



# 2018 Tournament Schedule

## **March 31, 2018**

**Backwoods 3D Archery**  
**Todd Haygood (601) 657-0176**  
**Liberty, MS 39645**

## **May 26, 2018**

**Mossy Oak West Point, Mississippi**  
**Chris Davis (662) 295-6421**  
**1251 US-45 ALT**  
**West Point, MS**

## **June 16, 2018**

**Central Mississippi Archery**  
**Duke Greene (601) 668-3602**  
**805 Flag Chapel Road**  
**Jackson, MS**

## **August 11-12, 2018**

**MBA State Championship Grenada Bowhunters**  
**Bill Fulton (662) 515-4134**  
**Piney Woods Range Grenada Lake**

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**Mississippi Bowhunters Deep South Safari August 3-5, 2018**  
**Kirk Fordice Equine Center, Jackson, MS**  
**For details contact: Brian Montgomery at (662) 588-4495**



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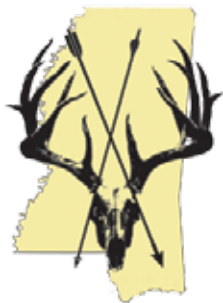
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