



THE UNITED Winter 2025 BOWHUNTER

Official Publication of The United Bowhunters of Missouri



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The United Bowhunters of Missouri
 Winter 2025

Calendar of Events

January

15th: Missouri archery season closes
 24th-25th: Traditional Archery Expo, Kalamazoo, MI

February

7th-9th: UBM Festival, Springfield, MO
 15th: Missouri rabbit and squirrel seasons close

March

7th-9th: CMF Convention, Lodge of the 4 Seasons, Lake Ozark, MO

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⅓ page	\$110.00	Less than ¼ page	\$30.00

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Submission Guidelines

Newsletter submissions must be done using a word processing program like Microsoft Word and must be submitted in an electronic format. Typed and handwritten hard copies will no longer be accepted. All effort will be made to use any submission sent but preference will be given to submissions that have photos accompanying them.

Submit all photos and stories to: Darren Haverstick, Editor
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It is the purpose of The United Bowhunters of Missouri to support and upgrade the sport of bowhunting and foster a spirit of sportsmanship.

The United Bowhunter is published quarterly by The United Bowhunters of Missouri for the membership. This publication is a public forum available to the members to voice their ideas, concerns and to share their experiences.

Written materials, photos and artwork for publication are welcome. Send a self-addressed, stamped envelope with the materials you would like returned. The editors can assume no responsibility for any submitted materials.

The editors reserve the right to edit or reject any material and the right to crop any submitted photographs.

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— On the Cover —

A nice rub by a dandy buck.

deadlines for submitting copy and pictures to The United Bowhunter
Mar. 10th, June 10th, Sept. 10th, Dec. 10th



WE ARE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE HOLIDAY SEASON!

Thanksgiving has just passed us, and Christmas is on the horizon. It truly is the most wonderful time of year! We are also in the middle of hunting experiences. Since it is December, many of us are finished with

our deer seasons, and settling in for winter hunting projects. Others of us are trying to fill more tags with our traditional bows by the middle of January. Some of us are already thinking about warmer weather with morels, crappie, and turkeys. It is a wonderful time of year for outdoors people like us!

As we wrap up 2024, I am thankful for so many things this year. UBM continues to thrive, and it is because of each of you. Thank you! Our 2024 Festival in Springfield was spectacular, and so was our 2024 Rendezvous in Marshall. We are bringing people

together, promoting adventure, challenge, and fair-chase ethics. Good job everyone!

I am also thankful for our families. Our families support us in so many ways, so that we can continue our addiction to spend time outdoors. May each of us reciprocate this support of money and time to those we love.

Finally, I am thankful for hunting friends. Thank you to the individuals in our lives that listen to us through the phone when we have an encounter with a big buck or a hair-raising experience. Thank you to the individuals that help us follow a blood trail that seems hopeless, yet they are putting out a great effort. Thank you to our hunting friends that share their deer jerky even if we don't get a deer ourselves. Thank you to all our hunting friends that make our outdoor adventures more meaningful.

We have much to be thankful for. May 2025 be even better than 2024! Hope to see all of you in February at our Festival in Springfield! ■

William R. Brown

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BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA

Arrow of Light

It's shaft is **STRAIGHT & NARROW**; the path you should follow.
 It's tip points the **WAY**; the way to success in all you do.
 It's pointing to the **RIGHT**; a symbol that nothing should be left undone.

The **SEVEN RAYS**; the symbol of the sun, one for each day of the week.

1. Wisdom	4. Justice	7. Love
2. Courage	5. Faith	
3. Self-control	6. Hope	

I HAD BEEN STANDING FOR THE BETTER PART OF AN HOUR and just sat down when I saw him slipping through the buckbrush and knee-high fescue. Coyote! He came from behind and just to my right. As he glided along, I was able to stand but he was putting distance between us rather quickly. He stopped! Standing and staring into the pasture in front of him. I thought, it's a longer shot than I want but since the landowner I hunt on has told me to kill every one of them that I can, I started processing the shot in my mind. Too late, he was on the move again and now definitely out of range, he stopped again! He was behind the walnut tree right on the edge of the field, his vision was blocked, so pressing my teeth against my bottom lip I began sucking to imitate a squealing mouse. Almost immediately he turned and headed straight at me. Again, he was covering the ground quickly; if he didn't change his course, he was gonna hit my tree head on! My bow was up, I was leaning forward and down as he came, my intent was to drive the arrow right down between the shoulder blades, but I hit right next to the spine and at the back of the rib cage. He exploded! Growling and biting at the arrow as he tore through the underbrush. The broadhead, extending out his underside, caught in the fescue and pulled through, he was on a death run to the nearest dozer pile, which was maybe 60 yards away. I could see him faltering as he dove into the decaying pile of tree brush. All was quiet.

Wow, another coyote with my recurve and I called him in! I sat back down to reflect for a moment; that's five I've taken with my bow!

I must be really good at hunting coyotes or there must be a whole lot of them around, probably the latter, I chuckled to myself. It's only 4:30 p.m., maybe I didn't mess up the evening deer hunt with all the commotion. I stood back up and resumed my vigil.

The sun had almost succumbed to the west tree line when I saw a good buck off to my right, marching due north and out of my life. I could see the light-colored antlers immediately. Ten-point, sleek body, straight back, probably a 3-year-old, not more than 4. Mature enough that I thought he might respond to a challenge. I swallowed, wetting my mouth and throat and let go with a snort-wheeze! He kept walking. Again, another snort-wheeze! This time he stopped, never looked my way, but lowered his head and raked the ground, once with his right front hoof and then twice with his left. Ahh! He heard me but raised his head and continued walking north. He stopped under a lone white oak tree, 120 yards east of me. That oak must have been dropping the sweetest acorns around, because he was the fourth deer I had seen partaking of the buffet under that



tree in the last twenty-four hours.

I know he heard the snort-wheeze, so why would he continue to munch on acorns? My fanny pack was hanging on a branch next to my shoulder. I retrieved my "can call" from it and proceeded to give him two long, come hither, bleats. Nothing! At this point I am starting to think I am just educating this buck, and I should stop. But my instincts said don't quit on him yet. The wind is soft and steady from him to me. Maybe he couldn't hear the bleats. As with the coyote, I swallowed, wet my throat and mouth, turned my head slightly away and gave him the best low, mature grunt that I have. No reaction! I repeated the grunt. His head came up and looked my way. Back down to the acorns he went. Okay, that's it! I'm done with him. I'll just booger him

if I keep it up. That thought had just cleared my brain border when his head came up and he was on his way. His gait was steady and purposeful, the direction he was taking though would keep him out of range. Should I grunt again to turn him? Nope, he did it on his own. Now he was quartering to me on a path that would take him right in front of me. When it seems, a shot is inevitable I stare at my target, shoulder, shoulder, shoulder he needs to turn a little to open the rib cage to me. He did! He was close, I didn't try to stop him, just moved with him as I brought the string back. My yellow fletching disappeared into his chest! His death run was immediate. Seventy or eighty yards he ran, spun around and looked back at me, as if he was trying to figure out where the buck was that had just stuck him! I could hear him exhaling as if trying to catch his breath and in the cool evening air each time he did, I could see steam shooting out of the hole in his chest. I knew it was over. His back end listed off to the south and pivoted around his front legs as he fell to the ground. He was down in less than 15 or 20 seconds.

I looked at the ground to find my arrow. There it was, stuck in the ground, my now red stained yellow fletching and yellow nock were pointing directly back at me. The 625-grain shaft out of my 47-pound bow had again excelled. I grabbed my phone and texted my son, Jamie. He texted back asking if I needed help. I replied "no", there would be no tracking necessary, just go get the Ranger when you get down and meet me at my tree. No need to hurry now.

I lowered my bow to the ground, strapped on my fanny pack and descended the tree. Walking to the buck I admired his sleek and

powerful body. What a wonderful animal the whitetail deer is. We are truly blessed to have such numbers that we can hunt them four months of the year. Whether you agree with the Missouri Department of Conservation or not, you can't deny their restoration of our deer and turkey. When I was a teenager, (and I'm now 70 yrs old) it was an experience to remember if you even saw a deer and there were NO turkeys to see! I will step down off my soapbox and get back to the task at hand.

2-

Jamie had arrived with the Ranger. We completed the necessary work, loaded and headed to the barn to hang him. Sharing time in the woods with my son creates memories for both of us. I don't go at it quite the way I used to. I still supply all the tree stands but Jamie puts them up. I'm the ground support, so to speak. The cold weather is also a challenge to me. One that I used to accept, now it's a deterrent, which I also accept. My mind says go but my body says no!

As the saying goes "it can't get much better than that". A quick clean harvest of a nice buck and culling a coyote from the herd as well. Calling both in with my own vocal cords adds to the satisfaction. This is the sixth decade that I have been in the woods with a bow, chasing all kinds of critters and learning from the experiences.

For those of you that are from my generation, you know there weren't any manufactured calls back in the day, so we learned by trial and error how to communicate with the animals. For those of you that aren't from my generation, there is nothing wrong with manufactured calls, I'm just saying don't be afraid to try something new. It is how you learn and if you can make it work there is just a little more satisfaction in doing so.

NOTES: On this hunt I used my favorite 47-pound Black Widow bow, 150-grain 3-blade Grizzly broadheads mounted on 100-grain steel adapters for a total broadhead weight of 250 grains. My arrows were 32-inch Traditional Only 300 carbon arrows from Three Rivers Archery....Calls were from Donnelly Custom calls. (LOL)

The ten-point buck's P&Y green score was 142 gross and 136 net points.

The coyote is still in the dozer pile! ■



THEY TELL YOU, “IT’S NOT ABOUT THE DESTINATION, ENJOY THE JOURNEY.”

Let’s face it, if we really wanted to put the maximum amount of meat in the freezer or take a monster buck, we’d probably choose a longer-range weapon, say “a combination AK-57 Uzi radar laser triple barrel double scoped heat-seakin’ shotgun” from Da Turdy Point Buck by Bananas at Large. The allure of traditional equipment got us all at some point, but occasionally I’d like to enjoy the bounty of the pursuit, and the last deer I took with stick and string was six years ago. I started hunting with a traditional bow in 1995 and dropped the compound all together about 15 years ago. I’ve managed to take a couple does, a few javelina, and some small game. But I’ll admit among friends that I’ve never taken an archery buck. Persistent, stubborn, just a lousy shot, or I just don’t hunt enough? It depends on who you ask.

After retiring in the fall of 2023, I figured I would really get after it, but I developed something called “frozen shoulder.” It hurt like the devil to draw a bow, and even worse to drop the string. During the last week of the 2023 season, I went anyway – just to say I did. I couldn’t have taken a point-blank shot, but it was still good to get out. I was just out enjoying the journey – again.

Vowing to never be completely out the game again, I ordered a lighter weight bow and started shooting it this past spring. Over the summer I worked back into my stable of bows, but as a sidebar, that light bow really helped my shooting.

By mid-October 2024, the temperatures had cooled enough to make for pleasant hunting. My first evening found me surrounded on three sides by basket rack 8-pointers, the closest being at about 12 yards. I don’t know why I didn’t shoot. Maybe I’ve been listening to too much talk about quality deer management and “letting them walk.” Plus, I’ve taken a few similar deer, just never with a traditional bow. Perhaps I was foolish to just sit and enjoy the show, but there I was.

As suddenly as a songbird whipping by, I caught movement over my right shoulder and shifted my eyes to see the main beam of a nice 9-pointer. While there was no immediate shot, it seemed he would circle around in front of me. Being right-handed, I managed to get into shooting position but had to grunt to stop him. That’s when lesson number 1,000 is learned. The grunt put him on high alert and upon my release, he ducked 18 inches, and I watched in disbelief as



the arrow that flew perfectly for 80% of the distance went harmlessly over his back. No way I could have missed, I thought. He had to have ducked it based on where the arrow was stuck in the dirt. At least that is the story I’m sticking with. It’s not like this is the first disappointment I’ve faced. I can’t tell you how many times I didn’t shoot and should have, couldn’t shoot, chose not to shoot, or uh - missed.

As the evening unfolded, the remaining small bucks hung around until well after dark. Given the promising events of the evening, I decided to camp out in the barn and see what the next morning had in store. While I didn’t see that 9-pointer, I saw most of the smaller bucks, and a decent 8-pointer which stood cluelessly in perfect position for a shot. However, my confidence was still shaken, so I settled for a cell phone picture of him. I took some guff after not taking that shot, but I was still rattled to the point that it didn’t feel right.

Two weeks later I was in the same stand, but now there were fewer leaves and a cold wind in my face. I was under-dressed and decided to give myself a little mid-morning break, so I hung the bow on its hook and put my frozen fingers in my pockets. As if on cue, the 9-pointer I missed before was 40 yards and closing

fast. With the sun on me like a spotlight I couldn't risk a move and had to let him pass, hoping for yet another chance. He didn't seem to have any notion of my presence, so I felt like I got away with one and the journey would have to continue.

The evening of November 10th, I was watching the same group of small bucks. Some were chasing does, and I watched "my" 9-pointer breed a doe. This is the most rut action I had ever seen and was having a blast, but it sure would be rewarding to close the deal just once. It had been an amazing season so far with a lot of encounters. I added a couple more mistakes to my repertoire but had learned from them. I assume I can't possibly have too many more to go before I finally figure this traditional bowhunting thing out.

I intended to hunt a different stand on the morning of Veterans Day but two steps up the ladder, I realized it was uncomfortably loose and unsafe. The sky was turning gray, and I needed to hustle to get to my other stand; the one I've been hunting all along. Given the activity of the night before, I put some scent out on the left side of the stand, if only to stop a buck for a moment. I drew my bow in the direction of previous opportunities and settled in with a new and weird kind of confidence that provided unfamiliar calmness. I knew that if I decided to shoot, there was going to be a deer in real trouble.

Previous hunts resulted in several deer behind me. The stand's platform size allowed it, so at about 7:15 I turned to face the tree and backed up a bit to be able to shoot if an opportunity arose. I no sooner turned around than I saw the 9-pointer I had missed a month prior. I had the wind and the sun in my favor, but he remained 25 yards behind my shoulder-width tree for what seemed like forever. During that time, I could only get glimpses of him. That was fine by me because I already knew I would take the shot if presented and I didn't want to risk eye contact with him. That's another of those 1,000 mistakes previously made. Now that I was facing the tree, if he went to my left, I'd

have a shot but if he were to go the other way, I'd have to completely turn around in the stand to be able to shoot out the other side. I stood there trying to guess which way he'd go and figured it was 50/50 when I remembered putting out that scent. All other things being equal I guessed he'd go that way, so I started oozing myself 180 degrees around to face out the front of the stand again. Doing so meant I would lose sight of him, and while trying to be silent, smooth and slow, I worried that I wouldn't get around in time.

After completing my turn, I realized he was, in fact, over my left shoulder now and I had guessed it right. I don't know how it got there but my bow arm was already up and when he stopped at 11 yards, my last conscious thought was "now." Then suddenly my feathers are buried in his chest. He ran 60 yards, and I heard what sounded like a car crash.

I was trembling. It took 15 minutes to calm down enough to get my fingers to work well enough to text some family. In the meantime, another little buck fiddled around under my stand and that seemed to settle me down. Then my mind started playing games. Did that just happen? Did I hit him as well as I thought or was it a little high, a little back, could it be liver? I interrupted myself several times, "Sheez, would you stop already!" I decided there was no harm in waiting a bit and

45 minutes after the shot I watched a real bruiser make a scrape 50 yards out in front of me. I was so happy that I had one down that it didn't matter a single bit that there was a much bigger buck out there. I was fully satisfied.

I could see a little blood from the stand with my binoculars and I reminded myself of the bright red I saw upon the hit. After an hour, I finally got down and followed the trail right to the buck. There was no cheering or fist pumping, or anything of the sort. I only felt thankful and blessed for the experience and yes, the journey. They say the level of satisfaction is directly related to the effort and I believe it in my soul. That said, these might be the best backstraps ever! ■



IT'S THE MIDDLE OF JULY, and after two weeks of waiting, it is time for the first SD card swap on my game camera. I am eager to see what is on the property after opting to not use cameras last season. I feel the first little tinge of excitement while quietly approaching the camera. It is one thing to think about the approaching whitetail season, but to now be in the woods, proactively scouting and taking inventory of the herd makes any serious bowhunter anxious for opening day. The location I chose for this camera is perfect for catching most of the local traffic, a mineral lick positioned at the corner of a corn field where I can get images of all deer coming from the east and the south. Although I enjoy hunting over cut corn later in the fall, I must be careful while entering and exiting the area as deer are likely bedded within earshot and may also wind me. I change cards, drop back down into the nearby ditch and slip quietly back to the truck. No deer ever knew I was in the area, a small success. The camera has already told me I have several hundred photos to go through and oh how I cannot wait to get back home to my computer. Finally, it is time for me to belly up to the kitchen bar with a cup of coffee and see what deer are around, God willing, some nice bucks. I have only been clicking through images for a few moments and I am relieved to be seeing lots of healthy deer and a good fawn crop from the spring. The only bucks I see are very young, mostly yearlings. Suddenly, there he is. Wide and ten points. A buck that any bowhunter worth their salt would be glad to have a chance at, and if I play my cards right, I may just have that chance.



The Author was all smiles finally setting behind such a buck.

I must clarify something for you, the reader, before I progress with this story. In general, I am not one that gets overly involved with using trail cameras and certainly not with trophy hunting. However, I have arrived at a point in my hunting career where I am looking for new challenges and ways to elevate my overall hunting experience. Other examples of this for myself include taking closer shots, more scouting in the summer and learning new venison recipes to test on my pellet grill. Leading into this season I decided that I would pass young deer and strive to shoot a mature buck, if such a buck was even around to be hunted, as is not always the case. It just so happens that this season, the right buck for me was in the neighborhood.

I must confess, I have never entered a season with the intention of hunting a particular buck and the prospect of doing so was rather daunting. Although the buck was living on our property in the summer, using the standing corn as cover, I knew that he would move

onto the neighboring property when the fields got picked. What then? I may hunt him all season just to find out he had been harvested by someone else. These thoughts plagued my mind as they likely would any hunter that knows of a "biggin" in the area. As a wise man once said, "you don't know if you don't try." So, I committed myself to keeping tabs on this deer to the best of my abilities. The next two months would include many evenings spent glassing over the soybeans next door, looking for buck tracks and beds to indicate where the bachelor groups are living at any given time.

On a very hot evening in August, I told my wife I needed to head out to watch over the soybeans in anticipation of a good moon phase. The moon was supposed to rise at around 6 p.m. and I knew if that buck was bedded near those beans, the rising moon would get him on his feet and out in the open. Thankfully my assumption was correct. At just after 6 p.m. he stood from his bed and started feeding

only two hundred yards away and proceeded to do so until he walked into the woods sometime later. It was great to personally lay eyes on the deer and have an idea of where he was living at that time. Unfortunately, this would be both the first and the last time I would see the buck until bow season.

It was the last week of September, and I had been out several times by now trying to get a tag filled and meat in the freezer that looked rather bare. After sitting through a brief, afternoon rainstorm, I opted to still-hunt the area to scout and gather intel for future hunts. As I was picking my way along the field edge, I noticed a deer walking across the large cut bean field and heading in the same general direction as me. I stopped to look at the deer through my binoculars, it was him, the wide ten-point I was after. He was walking at a pretty good pace, so if I was going to cut him off, I needed to move with a purpose. As a seasoned ground hunter and still-hunter, I am always looking for terrain features and cover that allows me to move on deer or set myself up for a shot. The

buck was headed straight for the levy that separates our farm from the neighbor's field, I made for that levy and used it as cover to get in front of him. After running for a couple hundred yards, I got to the crossing point just ahead of him and set up for a close shot. I waited for a short time, but the deer never came over the hump. I walked a few yards forward to see if he had walked further down to cross. To my horror, we walked head on into each other and the buck turned to run out of my life. If I had stayed put only for a moment, I would have had an easy ten-yard shot.

By mid-October I had yet to see the buck again. However, a nice cold front was producing some other nice deer that I would have been happy to harvest, but I was still hoping for the big one. One morning, I was presented with an opportunity on a fine buck that I simply couldn't pass up. Unfortunately, the deer spooked as I released the string, and my shot hit very low and back. The buck was never to be found, and I am certain he lived despite his wound. Needless to say, I was feeling rather

low. However, the moon guide showed a perfect moon phase for November 1st and the days following, so I put in for some vacation at work and planned to sit all day. The conditions were perfect; however, I saw no deer until I moved locations at around 11:30. At the very far end of the field by the river I could see a deer feeding. I took a knee to have a peek through my binoculars and couldn't believe my eyes, it was him. As I

continued to watch him, I noticed something wasn't quite right, he looked thin. Being that this can be common for a buck that is run-down from the rut, I gave it little thought. Without hesitation I began a long stalk at the same location as the September evening mentioned before. Only this time, we were on opposite sides of the levy. After only a few minutes I was within thirty yards of the feeding buck, too far for a shot. I watched him for some time in hopes that he would feed closer, but he never did and fed off toward the river.

Veterans Day, November the 11th. At first, I had no intentions of going as I had been hunting hard through the rut with no luck and gun season was looming. Frankly, I was tired and ready to give up on my archery buck tag. The forecast indicated that the 11th was going to be the last "somewhat" cool morning for the entirety of the week, and I decided to give the valley one more attempt before work that morning. I was hunting on the ground, as I do most of the time these days, and at about 8 a.m. I had yet to see any movement. It was time to think about getting to work so decided to give the field one more good scan through the glass before leaving. My eye was caught by a wide set of antlers in the tree line to the south. There he was, plain as day and coming in my direction. I kept watching him through my 10x50 binoculars until he walked out of the cover and turned to the right, that is when I saw it. He looked even worse than our last encounter ten days prior, showing lots of bones and moving slower than the average deer. At the rate he seemed to be degrading, he would likely not survive the calendar year, and I needed to make



Summer scouting played a critical role in Ethan's season.

Continued on next page

Continued from previous page

this happen. Rather than waiting for him to come to me, I went to him. I made my way down the tree line to within around seventy-five yards, slipping out of my boots, I crept another twenty-five yards in my wool socks to set up for a shot. After a few moments, the buck made his way to me. One problem, he swung out to about thirty yards and passed by with no chance of a shot. Blast! At this time the buck was heading back toward my original hide and I have no choice but to shadow him and hope that I could sneak past him. Keeping the tree line between us, I shadowed him for almost three hundred yards. When he would stop to feed and scan, I stopped too. When he would meander along, I followed suit. He was headed for the wood lot to the north end of our property and I knew that if I could only get there ahead of him, I could use a drainage ditch as cover to move and set up an ambush. I took advantage of him stopping to feed and crawled the last forty yards or so on my hands and knees, I beat him to the woodlot and made my move.



Ethan captured this phone Antlers of the buck during a failed stalk.

Rather than walking straight into the woods, he stopped on the other side of a thick rose bush to eat and rest a moment. I slipped out of my boots a second time and proceeded in socks to only eight yards of the unaware buck. Finally, he stepped into an opening and put his head down to take one last bite of corn, now is my chance. I rose up, drew to anchor and sent a Zwickey broadhead through his rib cage. The buck ran twenty yards before going down.

In that moment I did not know exactly how to feel. This buck is all I had thought about for almost four months, and he was now at my feet. I felt sorry for the poor old warrior. He was in rough shape and what saddened me most was that he simply was not going to be fit to eat.

Although I cannot confirm the cause of his appearance, a brief autopsy revealed an open wound in his hind quarter that upon looking at phone images from the last encounter ten days before, he had the same wound at that time also. Maybe he was infected, sick or both, I don't know. What I do know is that I learned something about myself. I am not a trophy hunter



A buck worth losing some sleep over.

and never will be. Was I pleased to harvest the largest deer I had seen all season? Who wouldn't be? But I felt cheated, almost dirty. I can say in all honesty that a smaller buck covered in lots of tasty venison would have suited me best. However, as hunters that try to conduct themselves in an ethical way, we will inevitably be faced with tough moral decisions. I could have let that buck go and held out for fat, young buck for the freezer. However, in my mind the choice was clear, and I chose to relieve that bucks suffering and tag him all the same.

When I think of everything in retrospect, there is quite the cruel irony involved in this story. The sleepless nights and long, hot hours scouting for that buck only to harvest him out of mercy is both unfortunate and comical. All the same, that old moss back did not make it easy on me. He was still quite a crafty stag and had the will to live even until the end. All together the two of us had a good run, and I am proud to call him mine. ■

MOST HUNTING STORIES
BEGIN

with a glamorous narrative of the setting, landscape, sunrise or sunset, and identifying fellow hunters or guides with high status. These stories are accompanied by success photos as proof of their accomplishments.

My stories are a bit different from those described. You'll find me a mile from home, on private property, alone, in a half dead cedar tree, sitting on a hang-on tree strand without a cushion, hoping for a deer to walk by. I am on the south end of a food plot (approximately 50 yards X 100 yards), having woods on three sides

During this hunt is when my Self Conversations became more memorable. As usual, I was lost in thought when a group of does appeared across the plot at the edge of the woods. As they gazed at the food plot, it was obvious the boss was the large dominant doe. They were positioned to walk directly into the food plot. This was when Self said, "Why not take a picture?" As I was capturing the moment, they made a sharp turn heading directly towards me. Self asked, "Are you hunting or photo documenting?" I hurried to put the phone away and reached for my bow while the group of deer walked toward me. I got it done, but the hurry-mode continued. The boss doe stopped broadside at approximately 15- 20 yards with the group mixing around behind her. The group seemed nervous and started to exit, so I hurried my release, sending the Bear broadhead over her back and into the grass. Yep! Self reminded me, "You didn't pick a spot! And you are the one that preaches, pick a spot."

And it continued. I was sitting in a different hang-on stand on that same property, in a strip of woods below the dam of a five-acre lake. While watching two does feed above and away from me. Self asked, "Why are you sitting here at 9:00 am watching does at a distance when the rut has started? Go to the area your trail cameras recorded the bucks." So I got down and headed towards a second stand. As I walked along the lake looking across it at a large field, I watched a buck chasing does. Continuing, I became aware of another buck standing inside the edge of the same woods watching me. I stopped in the creek where I could see my intended stand in a burr oak tree and there were two does feeding underneath it. When my scent reached them, they calmly walked away. After disturbing the entire hunting property, Self said, "Why not go ahead and finish the morning in the burr oak tree."

Shortly after getting situated in the stand, which is directly above a small creek near a crossing, something small walked in the creek bed underneath my stand. I leaned out to see what it was, and it stopped behind a tree. After a few minutes, it walked out and climbed the bank into a group of weeds approximately 10 feet from my stand. It was a bobcat. It lay down on its side it began the grooming process I assume most cats perform. Self asked, "You going to take pictures? Now is the time. Furbearer season doesn't open for two more days." I continued taking photos and videos until I was tired of watching but I could never get a face picture. Thirty minutes of this was long enough so I started making squeaking sounds and finally the cat turned its head to look at me. It must have had as much trouble seeing me as I did it. I wanted to see it get up and walk. After squeaking and waving

Continued on next page





Continued from previous page
 my hand, it got up and walked 10 yards and surveyed the wooded area before trotting away. The morning hunt ended, and it was time for lunch. Self said, "You've

had an outstanding morning! You've seen more wildlife in action than you could possibly hope for." It then added, "Your enthusiasm is appreciated, but your hunting skills need work."

I have asked others if they have quiet or mental conversations with themselves. I usually get a smile or grin humoring me. Most responses are, "Everyone somehow talks to themselves". ■

Seasons of Life

William R. Brown

THERE ARE DIFFERENT SEASONS OF LIFE!

Sometimes everyone in your circle is healthy, while other times sickness dominates. Sometimes the calendar is so busy, you need a bigger calendar. Sometimes work is high stress, while other times free time abounds during October and November. Sometimes you get ten straight days hunting, while other times it is hard to even get out for a morning hunt over an entire month.

We are all living out a different season of life right now. In terms of my experiences, I am living out a time when my youngest child is a junior in high school,

and she has a very full calendar. I am living out a time when work life is so full, I am exhausted mentally and physically when I do get a couple days to hunt. I am living out a time when someone in my family, or myself, seems to be sick or have

a medical situation nearly every week. I am living out a time when I have lost both of my north Missouri private land hunting opportunities, and I am trying out new public land spots. What is your season of life right now?



Public Land elk hunting in Colorado is a challenge



Mule Deer in Colorado

I have heard the phrase “this too shall pass” many times. I know that family dynamics, work schedules, health, and hunting opportunities will have their ebbs and flows each year, but it can be tough. For me personally, I want the world to stop from October 20 to November 20 EVERY YEAR. I want to be in the woods every day. I don’t even want to stop to eat or sleep. I want nothing on the calendar. Late October through mid-November is the most special and holiest time of year for me. I don’t want to miss being in the woods to watch the show.

It’s kind of like watching every Kansas City Chiefs game right now. With Patrick Mahomes as your quarterback, this is the best it will ever be. You don’t want to miss one game because you don’t know what will happen next.

In my life right now, stress is high and the calendar is too full. This too shall pass, right? It has been a challenging fall of health and rest and quality time in the undisturbed woods (so ultimately very few 10-yard broadside shot

opportunities). So, on November 11, when I enjoyed deer moving all day, I thanked God and I realized that this crazy season of life will evolve into something else soon enough. I needed that November 11th so badly. I quietly maneuvered in the dark to my tree stand and was settled way before first light. I enjoyed the sunny day and the multiple deer that surrounded me throughout the day. I loved the noise of crunching leaves with deer running, and the anticipation that came with those noises. I never saw another hunter

for the entire day (can you tell I usually hunt public land?). I never released an arrow, but for that one day, I was fulfilled physically, mentally, and spiritually. Even though this season of life is really crazy for me, the experience and memory of November 11 will help me through many days ahead. This season of life will change soon enough, and there will be many more November 11ths ahead.

May you enjoy the season of life you are in! Good luck with your balance of life and all the stresses that come with it. ■



Long days in a treestand



Public land in north Missouri



Sunset Hickory County Missouri

THE VIEW FROM OUR KITCHEN WINDOW IS SPECTACULAR.

Our back yard bleeds into a crop field, always corn or soybeans, with the crop edge spilling into Wild Horse Creek. The timber climbs the hill out of the creek and levels off at the ridge. The scenery changes with every season and sometimes each day. As an avid bowhunter, my enjoyment of the view is enhanced when a deer is added to the scenery.

During the summer of 2022, I started seeing a particular buck across the field on a regular basis. Fortunately, it was a year for soybeans, so the crop was short enough as to not obscure my view of the buck. Even from 200 yards, I could tell that this guy had some serious antlers in the works. I kept binoculars close at hand in a kitchen cabinet and could see him pretty distinctly through the eight-power lens. However, I needed a better look at him. So, I strategically installed a trail camera at the field edge across from the house and started capturing some good photos. The images showed enough detail to assess the quality of this mature deer. He was a main frame ten-point with a fork in his right G-2 tine making him an 11-point buck.

During the 2022 season, I was hopeful that I would get a crack at this nice buck or at least have an encounter with him. But I didn't even pick up any trail camera photos at my stand locations. Then my opportunity came, and it happened fast.



The author and "Junior".

I was in a stand located at a "T" intersection of a tractor path I maintain through our timber. Appropriately, I call the stand the "T". It was mid-November and the rut was ON. Mid-morning, I heard the crunch of deer steps and looked to the north. It was him and only 20 yards way on the path. In seconds he was going to be at 10 yards broadside. I rose from my seat and took tension on the string. Just as I started to draw my longbow, he changed course and decided to cut the corner of the "T". He was quartering away



Trail camera photo of "Dad" across the soybean field from our house. Our house is seen in the background.



Trail camera photo of "Junior" just seconds before the shot.

at a slow walk. My shot was rushed, and I clearly saw my yellow-and-orange fletching follow the sharp broadhead harmlessly underneath his chest. After a short 20-yard escape run, the buck stopped on the east leg of the "T" and gave me that "game over" look. He then walked out of my life. Maybe. My only redemption was putting a nice doe in the freezer and keeping Susie and me fed through the winter.

Season 2023 was tough for me. I just could not make meat. I thought of that big 11-point buck often and could still picture my last view of his backside as he walked away. The "T" stand is my favorite on our farm. It was mid-November and there I was again. And, so was he. I heard the telltale crunch, looked to the north and here he came. There was no question that this was the same big buck. He was just older and much greyer. His body was on the decline. Like before, I stood and readied myself for the shot. Crap. He did the same thing and took a left turn off the trail. I did the same thing as well with the same results. This time he did truly walk out of my life. I will forever remember those two encounters and missed shots.

Well, the story could just end there, but wait, there's more. Fast forward to the 2024 season. It was Halloween morning, and I was in my wool plaid costume perched in a ladder stand at the "T". Legal shooting light was at 7:15. At 7:35, I caught movement along the trail to the east. The white antlers were first to grab my attention, then the buck's big body came into view. He was on a head-on course toward me. After veering off course slightly from the trail, he turned again and headed in my direction. His path

took him directly in front of my trail camera for a quick pose.

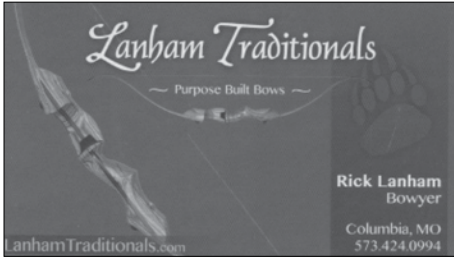
My decision to take a shot was made the moment I saw him. From that point on I ignored the rack and focused my attention on "the spot". When the buck reached the "T" intersection, he took a left turn and stopped slightly quartering away at 12 yards. My Douglas fir arrow disappeared high in his ribcage. The mortally hit buck rocketed south, over my property line fence into our neighbor's property. Long ago I obtained permission to recover deer on our neighbor's property.

This particular morning, I was hunting with my longtime hunting partner, Uncle Paul. He was in a stand north of my location. After waiting about 45 minutes, Paul and I took up the blood trail. The buck only made it about 60 yards. After giving thanks and getting a congratulatory handshake from my partner, I inspected the buck's headgear. It was a mainframe 10-point rack with a fork on the right G-2 tine. Wait a minute. Could it be? Is it possible that my buck was the offspring of the big buck I sparred with in the previous two years? The rack on my buck was not nearly as large as the big guy, but the configuration was exactly the same.

I will never be able to think about one of the bucks without thoughts of the other. To me they will always be thought of as Dad and Junior.

Equipment notes: I was carrying my 50# Wild Horse Creek Destiny longbow and Douglas fir arrows tipped with Magnus 4-blade broadheads. ■

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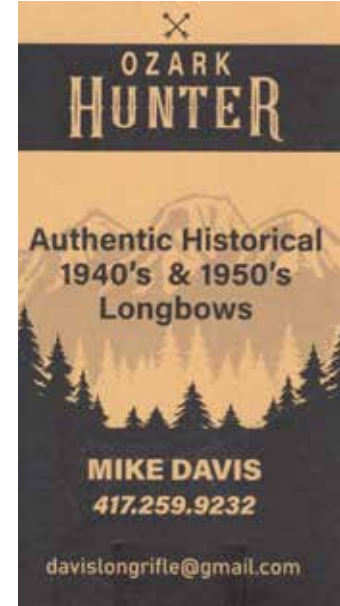


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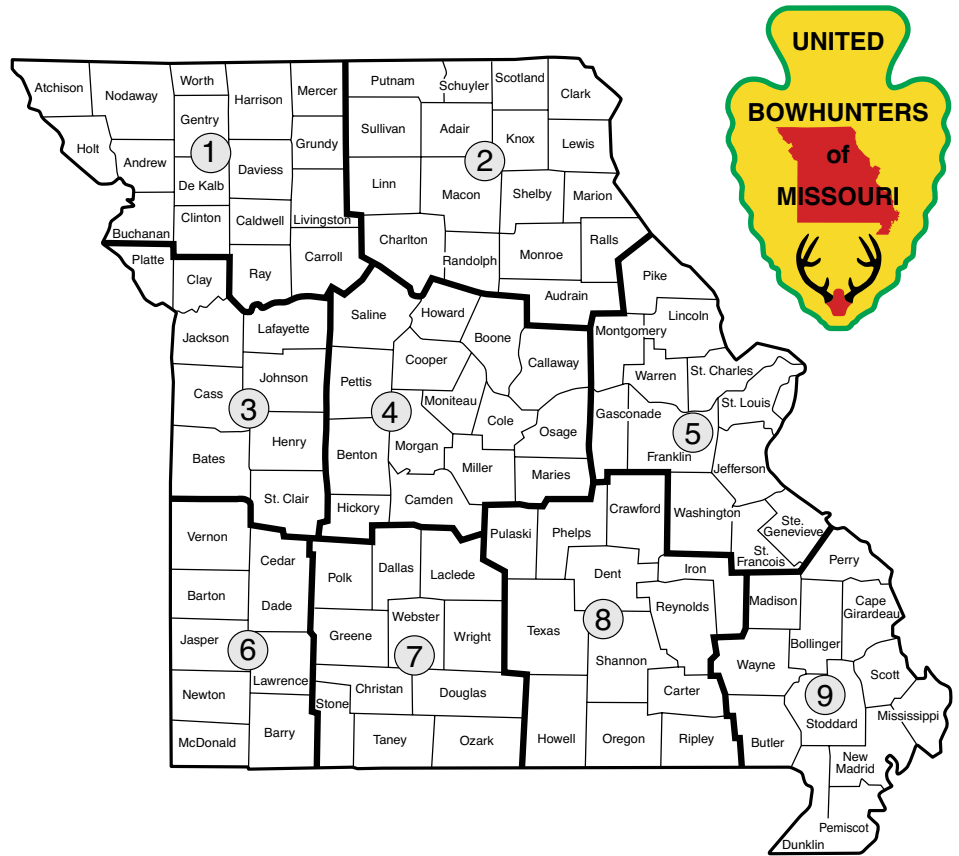
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