

On Wisconsin Outdoors

With the Dick Ellis Experts

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A Final Journey

Wisconsin gun and bow deer hunters seek to fill tags

By Dick Ellis



Recent hunter education graduates Cristianne, 15, and Andrew Derwinski, 12 each had opportunities within 40 yards to pull the trigger on standing deer in Waukesha County during the Wisconsin Youth Deer Hunt October 13. They let the deer pass.

Each year around mid-October, I finally see that my arrows which had a mind of their own in September are cooperating and hitting the target in tight groups simulating a dead deer. The practice is done first from the ground and then from elevated stands like the one I will hunt from in the field.

Until I'm proficient and confident that my shot will mean a dead animal, my "hunting" is done with a camera or as an observer, mostly from the portable climber that goes into the field on my back and allows me to go virtually wherever I want. It's the stand that will carry me through the bow and gun seasons. With limited time as an outdoor reporter to hunt

only deer, my eyes are focused on the whitetail rut which annually peaks where I hunt in northern Wisconsin around mid-November. The rut represents my personal paradise, and I will be in my tree for many hours each day during a four day bow hunt.

For thousands of hunters with bow and gun

though, Wisconsin deer hunting has been in full swing. Bowhunters have been in the field since mid-September, with many archers also focused on the rut, or whitetail mating season which offers the very best opportunity for a hunter to tag a special whitetail. The rut, or nature's "equalizer", disarms trophy bucks, which lose their normal precaution as they obey nature's command to sustain the species and seek out does.

They become vulnerable to the archer and gun hunter. Some hunters, like Jason Hart, 26, of West Allis, are fortunate enough to score "big" before rutting activity. Hunting near Wisconsin Dells, Hart, of West Allis sent a photo of his 11-point buck taken Octo-

ber 3rd and recovered 40 yards from his stand.

The seventh annual Wisconsin Youth Deer hunt was held 11 and 12. The hunt was established to introduce youth ages 12 to 15 who have successfully completed a hunter education program to hunting under conditions with low hunting pressure. Youths must be accompanied by an adult 18 years of age or older. Adult mentors may not gun hunt for deer and cannot accompany more than two youth hunters.

I was invited as an observer to join my friend Andy Derwinski during the youth hunt in Waukesha County with his daughter Cristianne, 15 and son Andrew, 12. Both hunters had completed the mandatory hunter's safety course at the Oconomowoc Sportsman's Club under the direction of instructor Jon Larson, who also served as a mentor on the youth hunt. Extremely unseasonable weather in the 70s chased this group from the field after Sunday's morning hunt; but not before both young hunters had virtually point blank opportunities on deer that each elected to pass on. Both also wished

they had the opportunity back by the end of the weekend.

"Really, they just couldn't do it," said their father, who was on stand with both Cristianne and Andrew respectively in the morning and evening Saturday and watched as each youth passed on perfect shot opportunities. "In retrospect, they both did things right. The guns were handled safely. They were careful on the stands. When we saw deer, they waited and didn't move until the deer looked away."

"In the end no shots were fired but the most important rule is don't pull that trigger unless you are absolutely sure. They were taught long ago that you can't bring the bullet back once you squeeze the trigger and you will be taking a life. Neither was ready to take that life yet. I'm proud of both of them. Their first hunt was a huge



Not yet proficient enough with a bow to take the shot, the writer instead takes a stand with his camera and shot this doe in late September cutting a marsh in northern Wisconsin.

success and we will be back for more.”

Wisconsin's October antlerless deer only gun hunt returns this week (October 16 through 19), giving hunters an opportunity to harvest extra deer under mild season conditions, donate deer to a statewide venison donation program and prequalify for Earn-a-Buck (EAB) authorization prior to the traditional November 9-day gun deer hunt.

According to the DNR website, only antlerless deer may be harvested in most deer management units statewide. The only exceptions are deer management units with limited antlerless deer quotas (those units without any shading or striping on the map) and the Central Forest deer management region (white with black dots) where hunters met a benchmark two-to-one antlerless deer to antlered deer harvest ratio in herd control units over the 2006-2007 seasons. If the antlerless-to-buck ratio between the archery and gun seasons does not meet two-to-one ratio during the 2008 season in the Central Forest deer management region (units 53, 54A, 55, 56, and 58), the October hunt will return in those units in 2009.

“October is a great time to hunt for folks who have trouble with cold conditions,” said Keith Warnke, big game ecologist with the Department of Natural Resources. “It’s also a great way to pre-qualify for Earn-a-Buck (EAB) for those hunters who hunt in EAB units and want to have a buck sticker in their pocket on opening day during the November 9-day hunt.”

Biologists estimate the 2008 prehunt deer population at between 1.5 and 1.7 million animals. Annually, deer managers seek to drastically cut that population through hunting. In 2008, the early bow season concludes November 20, and resumes December 1 through January 4. The statewide gun season will be held November 22 through November 30. The Muzzleloader season will be held December 1 through December 10. And the statewide antlerless deer season will be held December 11 through December 14.

Additional information on antlerless deer tags and EAB authorizations including a map of Wisconsin deer management units is in the 2008 Wisconsin Deer Hunting Regulations. Also, google the Wisconsin DNR Home page for more information on state deer hunting opportunities than could ever be printed in this column. *W*

Earn A Buck Information

Deer hunters hunting in any of the 57 Deer Management Units under Earn-a-Buck regulations for 2008 must “earn” a buck sticker authorizing them to shoot a buck by first shooting an antlerless deer.

Hunters can meet this requirement in several ways. They can shoot an antlerless deer during the current 2008 hunting season in either the early archery deer hunt, or during the Oct. 16-19 antlerless-only deer gun hunt or they can use an unused buck sticker from the 2007 season. Hunters may also tag an antlerless deer and then harvest a buck, which may accompany the antlerless deer upon registration, as long as they are tagged by the same hunter registering both deer.

2008 Earn-a-Buck pre-qualification

Under a program started in 2006, some hunters may be pre-qualified for a buck harvest sticker by virtue of having killed and registered an antlerless deer last year in a deer management unit that is under EAB rules this year. This includes more than 113,000 registered antlerless deer from 2007 EAB and CWD units, which earned hunters green “2007-2008” Buck Authorization Stickers. These stickers were awarded to hunters upon deer registration and are still valid in 2008 if they were not used to tag a buck during the remainder of the 2007 deer season. An EAB Buck Authorization Sticker is good in any EAB or CWD unit, regardless of where the sticker was earned.

If the unit where the antlerless deer was killed was not EAB in 2007 but is under EAB in 2008, the hunter should be in the EAB Prequalification Database. Hunters in this category will be mailed a buck sticker. Mailing began in August, and more than 16,000 stickers were mailed to hunters who harvested deer from at least one of eight Deer Management Units during the 2007 season that are now under EAB regulations in 2008.

How to check your EAB status

Deer hunters who believe they have pre-qualified for a Buck Authorization Sticker in one of these units can check their status over the Internet. Hunters will need to have their Department of Natural Resources customer identification number handy when they go online to the deer hunting page of the DNR Web site and click on the link

for “EAB Pre-qualification Status” and follow the instructions to check on your authorization.

The on-line check allows hunters to determine if their information is in the database to receive a buck sticker for the 2008 Earn-A-Buck (EAB) season.

Hunters should be included in this database if they registered an antlerless deer in 2007 in any Deer Management Unit that was not EAB 2007 and is EAB in 2008.

“Hunters should not wait until the last minute to check their status,” said Keith Warnke, big game ecologist with the Department of Natural Resources. “No one wants to be scrambling for a sticker the week before the opener, so please check and take action now.”

Hunters who believe they have pre-qualified by registering an antlerless deer in 2007 in units that were not EAB in 2007 and are EAB in 2008 but do not find a buck authorization associated with their customer identification number should contact DNR via email directly from the Web page. Press the ‘enter my info’ button and enter everything you can remember about the deer they killed.

Hunters are encouraged to make sure the address DNR has associated with their customer identification number is correct. This address is where the buck authorizations will be mailed.

People who don’t have access to the Internet either at home or at a local library or through a friend, can contact their local DNR service center who will look up the information. People may also contact the DNR Call Center toll free at 1-888-936-7463.

Repeat EAB Units

Hunters who killed and registered an antlerless deer in an EAB unit in 2007 received a green 2007-2008 buck sticker at the registration station last year and will not be listed in the on-line database.

Units that had earn-a-buck requirements last year and again this fall include: 22A, 54B, 54C, 59B, 59C, 59M, 60M, 61, 61A, 62B, 63A, 64, 64A, 64M, 65B, 66, 67A, 67B, 68A, 68B, 74A, 77C, 77D, 80A, 80B, 80C, 81 and all CWD management units.

The sticker a hunter received last



Jason Hart took arrowed this big 11-point buck on October 3rd hunting on family property near Wisconsin Dells. The buck was recovered 40 yards from the hit

fall is the sticker needed for this hunting season. Hunters who used all their buck stickers last fall or did not kill any antlerless deer in these units last fall will need to register an antlerless deer in an EAB or CWD unit this year to get a buck sticker.

Hunters were advised last fall to keep track of the green buck stickers they earned. The same is true of stickers that will be mailed in August – close to the start of bow hunting. These will be the stickers they need to harvest a buck this year.

The EAB “watch list”

Hunters looking ahead to the 2009 seasons can get an idea of which units might be in Earn-a-Buck by looking at the EAB watch list described below.

Based on population trends, deer management unit history and harvest history, deer managers have created an EAB watch list. These are deer management units that could potentially be designated as EAB in 2009. Hunters harvesting and registering an antlerless deer in these units in 2008 will pre-qualify for a Buck Authorization sticker if the unit is designated as EAB in 2009.

Because harvest information is taken directly off the deer registration stub, hunters are reminded to completely and legibly fill out the registration stub if they want to receive their Buck Authorization sticker in 2009.

The following is the watch list for 2009: all 2008 EAB and CWD units, plus units 1, 1M, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 32, 42, 46, 47, 51A, 51B, 53, 54A, 55, 56, 57, 57A, 57B, 57C, 57D, 58, 59A, 60A, 62A, 63B, 65A, 69, 69C, 77E, 77M and 78. For more information contact Keith Warnke (608) 264-6023. *W*