

“Deer Hunting Trends are Changing”

When sitting in my tree stand on September 15th, on one of the properties of the newly formed Carroll County Co-op, although I've been managing the deer for many years on this property, I found myself thinking of the past hunting seasons and how I have evolved. I harvested my first deer with a 20 gauge shotgun in 1969, it was the first deer I saw that morning and a nice 3 point. I was hunting with my father and my uncle that day, and was the only one to harvest a deer. I made the mark, I was a deer hunter. My parents would not allow me to go hunting with a gun by myself and I was spending as much time as I could in the deer's woods year round. That Christmas I was surprised with my first bow and the great news was I was allowed go hunting by myself with my bow. At the ripe old age of 12 I harvested my first deer with a bow and arrow; at that point I was hooked for life. The mount of that 4 pt is used on the Instructional 15" rule DVD we just released.

Those were the good old days! Or were they? I remember talk of doe permits and that if you shot a doe you would kill future bucks. At the same time if you were lucky enough to see an antlered deer you'd better shoot it. If you could harvest a buck every year you was a very good deer hunter even if it was a button or yearling buck and if a 2 year or older buck was harvested it made the local papers. I also remember days on a stand and even weeks of not seeing a deer. The years went by and deer sightings increased. Doe groups went from 2 or 3 to 10 and 20 and daily counts of deer went up as well but you were still lucky if you saw a buck.

My desire to be a better hunter and to be able to harvest a better buck, led me to look for deer year round and to understand what deer do and when. Spending more time in the deer's woods on private and public lands (mostly Liberty Watershed), and by passing up yearling bucks, I increased my odds of harvesting an older buck. But it seemed that the older bucks and even the yearlings were showing odd antler growth. Why? Well the talk was inbreeding and poor genetics with the need to import new deer in to improve blood line. At the same time the state was increasing doe harvest bag limits and even having antler-less seasons. What did they know that the hunters did not?

If you harvest does then there are going to be less deer in the deer woods to hunt and less will decrease the quality of the whole herd including the bucks.

What are they thinking!!! Or maybe it was the thought of changing the management plan that was not setting well.

The evolution of deer hunting which now includes the management of the deer herd has come along way. There is a change in the air with the management direction.

Voluntary Quality Deer Management is a concept worth considering. I'm certain that it does work and will as it did in the areas I hunted and managed years ago. Will it work state wide or is it needed? Science tells us that it does and will work. You be the judge! Last season, state wide (annual deer report) 32,221 Antlered Deer as checked in as harvested, 61.5% of this harvest was yearling bucks = 19,816 yearlings **that did not make it to the older age classes.** The Maryland State Chapter QDMA has a seminar "**QDM Working in Maryland**" of this data broken down by counties. In the October issue of Quality Whitetails "**Mature Bucks: Who Needs 'Em?**" By Kip Adams has several awesome facts and science on this subject and other articles as well including QDM Cooperative on Forest Industry Land. If you're not a member of QDMA you are missing out. **JOIN TODAY.**

It's hard to believe how fast the years have gone by with the 20th Anniversary of Quality Deer Management Association. The QDMA is dedicated to promoting sustainable high-quality, white-tail deer populations, wildlife habitats and **ethical** hunting experience through education, research and management in **partnership** with hunters, landowners, natural resource professionals and the **public.**

The modern hunter as many educational tools that will not only improve their hunting skills but will be improve the quality of the deer herd in Maryland. The Maryland Deer Projects last ten year plan shows the improvements in the annual deer report (my July 2008 article). I'm sure the next ten years will stay with good science and continue to improve the deer herd. This will only work with the help of you hunters and managers and the public support.

In closing, getting back to my hunt on the 15th I passed this buck (trail camera picture at left) and there are older bucks in the area (other two pictures below), I'll harvest a couple does, in part of the Co-op plan.





Take Home Message:
Voluntary QDM and QDM only work if you practice this management strategy!

As always Hunt Safe and Manage for the Future of Deer Hunting.

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