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Join avid hunter and noted author Glenn Sapir as he takes you inside his deer stand as he hunts for a Callicoon whitetail. The story is one which every hunter will appreciate.

Winter in Catskill-Delaware Country can get long – unless you get an outdoor hobby. If you like to fish and spend time with friends then ice fishing is a perfect hobby to pursue. Enjoy!

Brothers in Arms a budding new business22 By Anthony Morgano

One of Roscoe's newest businesses caters to sportsmen – especially gun lovers. This sports shop is full of great gear for the avid hunter or sportsman who is just getting started.

Here are two quick yet delicous venison recipes that will certainly fill the bill at hunting camp or at home. And believe it or not, one of the recipes is for breakfast!

Firearm safety is key for Monticello Trap Team 30 By Anthony Morgano

Monticello is home to the only Sullivan County scholastic trap team and smart, safe shooting - and good grades - are all part of the mix. Learn how this team got started.

El Sombrero is a unique Sullivan County restaurant which has made a name for itself with delicious Tex-Mex meals, great drinks and a friendly atmosphere. Buen provecho!

Did you know there were four covered bridges in Sullivan County? Well, now you do and there is no excuse to not visit them. Take a trip around the county to find out where they are.

Catskill-Delaware Wildlife: The Cardinal48 By Kathy Daley

Learn all about those beautiful red birds that look so gorgeous in the snow - the Cardinals.

Shooting bigger bucks takes patience and know-how. Let this expert tell you his tips.

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The \$540 Buck

Noted author and outdoor enthusiast Glenn Sapir loves to hunt whitetails in Catskill-Delaware Country. Tagging this 8-pointer was especially rewarding.

BY GLENN SAPIR

illside, with land in Callicoon in Sullivan County, is the name of the hunting club. Its few-dozen members vary in age, background and profession – firemen, craftsmen, construction tradesmen, landscapers and others.

Hillside Hunting Club has been led for decades by a twice-retired member of the criminal justice world, first as an NYPD detective, then later as a justice of the peace.

There's even a professional outdoor writer in the group, and sitting around the clubhouse that writer – yours truly – finds a lot about which to write. The swapping of personal hunting experiences not only goes long into the night, but it also provides this journalist with lots of story material.

How the story started

Little did I know one opening day of the deer season I would become part of one of my articles.

You see, every year the members present for the opening weekend would each throw \$10 into a pool for the largest buck taken that weekend.

In deer-rich Callicoon, a member, seemingly a different one every year, would take home the winnings, which would typically amount to around \$150.

That's a tidy sum, but pales in comparison to the satisfaction of having bagged the deer that earned the prize.

Hunting on opening weekend went dry for a few years, however, when the state's three-pointson-one-side minimum went into effect for that wildlife management unit.

Even though in previous years, the winning buck always would have met those requirements, for some reason legal bucks did not show themselves on opening weekend once that new regulation went into effect.

Smaller bucks became more brazen, as if they knew they were protected by the new regulation, but the bigger bucks seemingly disappeared. Since then, the regulation has certainly achieved its goal, for several members harvest trophy bucks each season.

I came to hunting camp every year with simple expectations: an enjoyable weekend with friends; the chance to share in the excitement of opening weekend; the opportunity to hunt with my rifle (I live and do most of my hunting in Putnam County, which allows shotguns, but not rifles, for deer); the hope of going home with venison; and, of course, the dream of tagging a big-racked buck.

In reality, that dream had never come true. Through the years I had gotten a basket six-pointer and several spikes, along with a few does, but I hadn't gotten a shot at a wall-hanger.

So, in the fall of 2012 I came to camp with the same goals and expectations. The day before the season opener I chose a place for a ground stand and set up a blind made up of blowdowns and smaller fallen branches. I placed an inexpensive green plastic lawn chair in the blind and hoped I'd chosen my spot wisely.

From my uphill vantage point, I could look down on a run that led to a field in which both deer and turkey often fed. I could also see a weed field, on my level, and could see through the open hardwoods that led uphill to that field. In other words, I could cover a lot of territory, all within rifle range. I was eager for the next morning to arrive.

Of course, the arrival of the next morning, even though the alarm was set for 4 a.m., took forever. No matter how many years I hunt, the anticipation of opening morning makes sleep difficult, yet I'm thankful those butterflies are still flying around my innards. I hope that excitement of a new deer hunting season



never fades.

After getting dressed, downing a breakfast and fixing a snack for later, I drove to the parking area at the base of the mountain. It would be uphill on foot from the car, but an old rocky farm road made the way up the mountainside relatively easy, and when I reached the field that marked the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 13

The author was happy to have bagged this nice eightpointer and even happier to have bagged the \$540 prize – a story he can retell for years to come.







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Member FDIC first ledge up the mountain, I left the roadway and waded through high weeds in a wet field before reaching the open woods where I had set up my blind.

I'd arrived early and had to wait out the waning darkness.

I heard turkeys awakening, but the woods were relatively quiet after that; little shooting in the valley, few songbird calls and no deer rustling through the dry leaves.

The sounds of nature were primarily the chattering of gray squirrels and the jackhammering of a big, red-combed pileated woodpecker. Whitetails were absent from this opening-morning scene.

Then, at about 8:45, I saw through the trees what looked like two or three deer more than 125 yards away, coming up the same roadway I had followed on my way up the hillside. I lost track of them momentarily, but a few minutes later I spotted a doe maybe 80 yards away. I lifted my rifle, with its 3x9 power scope set on 4, and watched this whitetail through the glass, even though I didn't have an antlerless deer permit.

I followed its progress, which wend its way in my direction. This went on for several seconds as she continued on her course, bringing her closer and closer to me.

Suddenly, not one, but two deer filled my view, and the second was a racked buck. I tried to count the points; I was sure of three on each side. Now the pair were perhaps 60 yards away, and they hadn't seemed to see or scent me.

The two were so close together that I couldn't get a clear shot at the buck. After what seemed like minutes but were actually seconds, the doe stepped forward, leaving the buck exposed.

What happened next

The big buck did not react to my first shot, at least not that I could tell. He took a few steps forward, and I fired my bolt-action .30-06 a second time. Again, no visible reaction. Then the two deer ambled forward to a screen of white pines that shielded them from me and led uphill to the open mountainside.

I couldn't believe I had missed – twice – but I was in control of my emotions enough to focus my attention on the end of that row of pine trees, figuring that the pair would emerge eventually, heading for escape to higher ground and offering yet another shot.

A couple of minutes later, my suspicion played out as the doe fled from the field on the other side of the pines and headed uphill. I continued to wait for the buck – but he didn't show himself.

After a tense five-minute wait, I realized I had to make the next move.

I quietly left my ground blind and sneaked

'Suddenly, not one but two deer filled my view, and the second was a racked buck.' to the top of the pines.

Rounding its uphill end, I hoped for another shot at the buck. As I came into the field I realized I

wouldn't get another shot – nor would I need one.

A handsome 8-pointer, sporting two brow tines I hadn't seen through the scope, lay in the field. Two lethal entry holes showed that my aim had been true.

I was thrilled with the experience. The gravy came at the end of the weekend, when I was given a \$540 check that reflected the accumulated \$10 contributions of the participating hunters over that and the previous three years.

The money was spent long ago. The memory of actually downing that buck, however, will stay with me forever.

To read more articles by Glenn Sapir, you can order his book, A Sapir Sampler: Favorites by an Outdoor Writer, for \$29.50, plus \$5 for shipping and handling, by sending a check or money order to Ashmark Communications, Inc., 21 Shamrock Dr., Putnam Valley, NY 10579. Note if you would like it signed.

Ice fishing basics my way

BY J.W. HALCHAK

The author with a nice perch and crappie.

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ce fishing (or hard water fishing as some call it) is a passion for me and many others in the winter months.

To get started after the ice is safe (2 to 3 inches for you and a partner) you need to cut a hole in it. Today you can get gas-powered augers, propane-fueled augers, batterypowered augers, attachments for a battery powered drill to convert it to an ice auger or use a hand auger. Hole sizes can range from four to twelve inches.

After you drill the hole, you want to remove the ice chips and any snow in the hole. There are spoons that are used. They have various length handles and scoop sizes made of metal or plastic.

You need some bait. Baitfish called shiners are the most commonly used bait with some fishermen using sawbellies as their bait. They come in varied sizes, and you pick the size for your intended targeted fish. They can range in size from one inch up six plus inches. A five-gallon bucket works well to carry the bait on to the ice and a one-gallon plastic jug with the side cut out to carry bait to the tip-up.

Now you need what is called a tipup. There are many assorted styles on the market today. They are usually made of wood, metal, or plastic. Some type of reel is attached to the tip-up, and they are usually made of metal or plastic and wound with a fishing line of dacron, fluorocarbon, monofilament, or a braided line. An ice fishing line is designed to have less of a memory than your summer fishing lines.

Many tip-ups have a piece of spring steel that has a flag attached to it. The flag end is bent to a release device that is controlled by the reel. When a fish bites and pulls on the line it releases the flag and it pops up and all your buddies yell, "FLAG." Now it is up to you to set the hook and pull the fish in using a hand-over-hand technique to pull the line in. There are some tip-ups that may hold the flag in place with a magnet and the flag may pop straight up.

You need a way to find the bottom of the pond or lake that you are fishing when you first set up and to do that you use some type of weight called a sounder. To start you may want to fish a few feet from the bottom, and you want to be able to

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Halchak's gear ready to go.

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find the depth that you are fishing at every time you reset your line, especially if you are catching fish. Once the bottom is found you want to pull your line up a few feet and you can mark the line with a small bobber, or have your line run through a button and side the button to where you need it and place it on top of the reel so you see it.

Your reel is in the water so that it does not freeze, and you can put the button or bobber on top of the reel. This way you can tell if a fish is taken out line or the wind tripped your flag (wind flag).

Jigging is also part of ice fishing. A small spinning reel is used with a short (three feet or so) rod. There is monofilament line made for ice fishing jigging reels. The softer the tip the more sensitive the rod will be and allow you to feel the slightest bit. A jig is tied on the end of the line and baited with some kind of bug larva (meal worms, mousies, spikes, wax worm). You can also use artificial baits looking like bugs.



Line through the button set on top of the reel and the release mechanism.

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How do you carry all the equipment? A fivegallon bucket works fine as does a trapper's basket, and they also make zippered bags to carry your gear.

So, what do I use?

I use a gas-powered auger that cuts a seveninch hole. My spoon has a one foot handle and a five-inch scoop all made of metal.

I have hand-me-down wooden tip-ups that are fifty years old plus. I have repaired them as needed and replaced the flags numerous times. The reels are spooled with ice fishing dacron line and on the end, I have a swivel to help eliminate twists and to that is attached about two feet of fifteen-pound test ice fishing monofilament line to function as a shock absorber and a number eight hook.

I use five tip-ups and use some small one-inch minnows, a few two-inch ones and occasionally three-inch ones. I will start by setting my lines around two feet from the bottom. I like using a button to mark my depth. Throughout the day I may change depths. I have caught monster fish

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on small bait and little fish on big bait. Your choice on bait size may depend on what you are fishing for and where you are fishing, big lake, or small farm pond.

As for my jig pole I have four of them ready to go. Two of them are spooled with two-pound test ice fishing monofilament line and a very soft tip. Another with a stiffer tip and the last with six-pound ice fishing monofilament line with a very still tip. Each has a different color jig and some are set up to present the jig horizon-



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Permissible Load

tally and some vertically, then tipped with a mousie or wax worm.

Everything is carried in a trapper's basket including spare hooks, jigs, a knife, scale, tape measure and other equipment I may need. The basket with the auger, a seat, thermos, food, a table are carried in a sled that I pull by hand. I also have a large wooden sled on skies with a stove, firewood, paper plates, knives, spoons,

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etc., pulled by a four-wheeler. (Tailgating on the ice).

Perch fishing is my passion. They are easy to fillet and are very good eating. Pickerel and crappie are also fun to catch. And some days anything that bites is exciting.

So, this is my setup for a day on the ice.

Fish on, Flag Up.

See Jack at the 32nd Annual Hurleyville Fire Department/Town of Fallsburg Youth Commission Ice Fishing Contest on Saturday, February 12, 2022 7 AM - 3 PM at Morningside Lake in Hurleyville. For more info, contact Halchak at (845) 796-8598.





GUIDE

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Brothers in Arms



Brothers in Arms is located right in the middle of Roscoe, on Stewart Avenue.

pening their doors for the first time in the midst of the pandemic, Brothers in Arms has become a stopping point for locals and travelers alike over the past year. They put down their roots on Stewart Avenue in Roscoe, in the building that used to be the home of Big Dog Arms.

This is the owners' first time owning a business, but they have fostered a friendly environment full of guns, ammunition, as well as other hunting and sportsman related items. The shop also displays and sells items from other local businesses emphasizing the idea of community.

Sitting down with Milica Ivkov, the owner of the store, she shared what the business was like.

"It was a difficult year, and it has been hard to find stock to keep in the shop, but we've been doing our best to find things that people would want."

A big part of the business is educating poten-



tial gun owners on laws that they might not be familiar with and making sure that everything is compliant with New York State regulations. Due to their diligence in sales, they have had returning customers, including people that go out of their way to stop in Roscoe just to visit the store.

Although there is opportunity to expand into



online sales, Ivkov does not seem interested in the prospect.

"One of the best parts about owning a business is the one-on-one relationships you get to make with your customers, and I feel like that is sometimes lost with online transactions. We try to be more of an old-school store, and welcome people in to see what we have and find something that fits for them.

"Sometimes, people come in and they want a specific gun, but then they pick it up and they

see that it is not for them. If they were to order something online then it would be a whole process to return it," she continued.

Brothers in Arms also issues hunting and fishing licenses to customers, helping people to get out and enjoy the various outdoor activities that Roscoe and the Catskills have to offer.

On top of selling new items and issuing licenses, the store also has a gunsmith that repairs and restores the guns that are brought in.

Nick Fasano, who moved to the area almost a

decade ago, loves it up here and gets to meet new people all the time at the shop. He said, "We try to go above and beyond when we can. We want to help people with what they need as well as giving local craftsmen a space to sell their products."

Brothers in Arms is located at 48 Stewart Avenue in Roscoe, and they can be reached at (607)-290-4227. Their hours are Wednesday-Friday 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Saturday from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The shop is decorated for fall, with Halloween decorations throughout, including this skeleton that hangs out by some hunting supplies.





Custom clocks, including the one below created for Brothers in Arms, are on display. The clocks are created by Joseph Failla, a local craftsman that has a shop called Gifts From Nature. Brothers in Arms sells some of these custom pieces, but more are available online at ifrogers drums.wixsite.com/mysite.



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Quick-Fix Venison Recipes

BY KATE FIDUCCIA

Quick-Fix Venison Chili

hen time is short this is a great meal to prepare. While it simmers, heat up some refrigerated biscuits (like Pillsbury) in the oven, read the day's mail, set the table, and sip a nice brew.

Chili

- Serves: 8 Prep time: 20 minutes Cooking time: 45 minutes.
- One large onion, chopped One tablespoon canola oil
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 1/2 pounds lean ground venison
- One can, 15 ounces, kidney beans, drained
- One can, 11 ounces, corn, drained
- One can, 28 oz, whole tomatoes with juice
- 2 tablespoons chili powder
- 2 teaspoons cumin
- One teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper

In a large stock pot or Dutch oven, sauté the onion in the canola oil over medium heat. When the onions are translucent, add in the garlic.



Continue sauteeing until the garlic begins to turn slightly golden.

Add in the ground venison and continue to cook. Stir to break up the venison and cook until all the meat is browned. Add in the remaining ingredients.

As you add in the tomatoes, break up the whole ones with your

fingers (or with a knife if you prefer). Stir the mixture to blend the ingredients well. Heat to a gentle simmer, stirring occasionally. Cover and simmer 45 minutes.

Serve with grated cheddar cheese.

Venison Vegetable Frittata

F or most hunters, dinner is the meal that includes venison. Some get adventurous and plan a lunch or two with the delectable meat.

However, over the years, I have discovered that venison also lends itself to many recipes for delicious breakfast meals.





I first discovered this while whitetail hunting with Peter from a remote campsite in Montana. The guide woke us in preparation for the morning's hunt and suggested we come to breakfast in clothes other than our hunting garments – a tactic we had long adhered to anyway.

But when we got to the cook tent, we soon discovered why the guide was so emphatic about his suggestion.

As we entered the tent, our noses were pleasantly assaulted with the pungent aroma of patty and link sausages cooking on the grill. Next to the frying sausages was a mound of cooked ground venison mixed with minced onions, hash brown potatoes and diced green peppers.

The cook gave this aromatic venison concoction a generous sprinkle of cayenne pepper and welcomed us to breakfast. I never forgot how wonderful that cooking venison smelled and how delicious breakfast was that morning.

From that point on, I have enjoyed including venison as part of our breakfast meals. Over the

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO Cook and author Kate Fiduccia enjoys spending time in her kitchen.

years, I have gotten creative with ways to incorporate all types of venison including moose, Caribou, deer and antelope.

For truly aromatic, delicious, and easy-tomake meals, try adding venison to your breakfast schedule.

Venison Vegetable Frittata

Serves 6 Prep time 15 minutes Cooking time 30 minutes

1/2 pound ground venison
Salt, black pepper and cayenne pepper
1/4 cup unsalted butter, divided
3 tablespoons minced shallots
One tablespoon minced garlic
One pound fresh button mushrooms, sliced
1/2 cup diced fresh zucchini
8 eggs, room temperature
One half pound fresh spinach leaves, torn or

finely chopped

One cup small curd cottage cheese

¹/₄ cup grated Parmesan cheese

1 tablespoon olive oil

Cook venison in large skillet over medium heat until no longer pink, stirring to break up. Season to taste with salt, black pepper and cayenne pepper; Set aside.

In large omelet pan at least 12 inches, melt 2 tablespoons of the butter over medium heat. Add shallots and garlic and cook for about 3 minutes. Add mushrooms and zucchini. Saute until liquid from the mushrooms has evaporated. Remove from heat and set aside to cool.

Heat broiler. Beat eggs in large bowl. Mix in spinach, cottage cheese and cooled venison mixture. Add the cooled mushroom mixture and stir until well combined.

Set omelet pan over medium high heat. Melt remaining two tablespoons butter. Add egg mixture. As it begins to set, shake the pan to ensure it does not stick.

Turn heat to low. Without stirring, continue cooking for about 10 minutes, checking to make sure the eggs do not stick to the pan. When egg mixture is almost completely set, sprinkle parmesan cheese and drizzle oil on top of the frittata. Place pan under the broiler to melt the cheese. Be careful not to overcook. Slide frittata onto serving platter and cut into six portions.



Coach Jay Mendels goes over the safety briefing before Thursday's trap shooting match.

Firearm safety is key for Monticello Trap Team

STORY AND PHOTOS BY ANTHONY MORGANO

onticello is home to the only High School Trap Team in Sullivan County. The Sullivan County Conservation Club, located in Ferndale, sponsored the team and lets them use their home range for their matches.

Students between 6th and 12th grade, over the age of 12, are eligible to join the Clay Target shooting club. The emphasis on safety and responsibility makes this team a perfect fit within the young adult landscape, offering an additional route to maturing and

growing outside of the classroom, which would explain why Monticello recognized the trap team as a "Scholar Athlete Team," a designation that is given to teams that collectively achieve a 90 or better average for the school year.

The Sullivan County Conservation Club, who sponsors the team, is a community-minded, private club. They teach a number of classes and host/sponsor events to get the youth involved with outdoor activities, and it was the club that approached the Monticello School Board with the idea of starting the team.

"Having run many youth programs at the Conservation Club over the years, I have seen how important it is to teach firearm safety skills to new students," Coach Jay Mendels said. "What they learn now will last a lifetime, and hopefully be passed along to their kids one day."

The team has a strong turnout of students that get to safely learn the sport of trap shooting. Scoring is done online, with teams submitting their scores to the New York State High School Clay Target League, who adjusts scores and matches up opponents based off of school size.

There are two seasons for the trap shooting team, an expedited fall season that allows the team the chance to get out on the range and practice for the spring season, which has the potential to go to a state match. From the state match, the best shooters are invited to a national meet, where students compete on a much bigger stage.

Before each match, the coaches and players go over a safety briefing, highlighting topics that have no doubt been brought up multiple times throughout the season, but are important enough to repeat before each match. Students recite the MATTE acronym, which stands for:

- M Muzzle
- A Action
- T Trigger
- T Target
- E Eye and ear protection

During the safety briefing, coach Jay Mendels and the team recited, in unison, "Accidents happen when people are careless," a very important point of emphasis when handling firearms. Due to their diligent safety briefings and protocols during matches, there have not been any accidents in the sport. As a matter of fact, since the league's creation in 2001, there has not

CONTINUED ON PAGE 34



There are five positions at each of two different trap fields. Athletes take turns taking five shots at each position before moving to the next one. In a match, students will shoot at 50 targets, five at each position.



Michael Feltman blasts a target during their October 7 match. Feltman shot 40/50 on the day.



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been a single reported accident nationwide.

Due to the individual scoring nature of the sport, students are given the choice of whether or not they want to participate on any given day. Mental and physical health is a huge focus on the team, because if the athletes are having a bad day or are not feeling great, the last thing they should have to do is handle a firearm, and the coaches are very supportive of the decision.

One of the purposes of the club is to introduce students to a sport that they can participate in for the rest of their lives. Much like golf, once you understand the fundamentals and practice, it is a skill that will stay with you forever.

For the match, 10 students take position on two separate trap fields in groups of five. Once they have the all-clear, they go one at a time trying to hit their target, before rotating to the next position after five shots. There are a total of five positions at each field, and the students rotate to the second trap field and shoot from all five positions as well, for a total of 50 shots.

Following the match, the students receive an

email from Mendels that recaps the match and shows the individual scoring for each participant, as well as their previous match scores for comparison. While the top focus of the team seems to be safety, there is a lot of emphasis on individual improvement and personal goals, and staying positive as you improve and try to reach the goals.

Although Monticello is the only school in the county with a trap shooting team, the sport has continued to expand tremendously over the last five years, and maybe in a few more years other schools in the county will decide to sponsor teams as well.

"Whether it was for hunting or for target practice, the shooting sports were important to me growing up, and were important to my son as he was growing up," Mendels added. "To be able to continue this with other kids who either don't have the familiarity or access is what's important to me now. Thankfully, we have organizations such as the NRA Foundation and Sullivan County Friends of the NRA who help us in these goals."







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Bringing Tex-Mex to Rock Hill

Luis loves interacting with his customers, and serves most of the El Sombrero samplers with a sombrero hat, a huge smile and a bell to announce its arrival.
Right top: Tres Leches cake is a fan favorite at El Sombrero. The cake derives its name from the three different types of milk the base cake is soaked in.

Right bottom: Luis focuses on fresh ingredients for his menu, and leans on his 22 years experience as a butcher to source fantastic cuts of beef like these twin t-bones.





STORY AND PHOTOS BY KAITLIN CARNEY

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DISFAM BIC SUM TORBUCTS LOVE LIFE SEFK JOY HAVE HOPE HAVE HOPE FOLLOW PASSION APPRECIATE IMAGINE STAY CALM ACHIEVE BELLIEVE IN YOURSEE

uis Cerna and his wife Sonia "Annie" Perez have lived in the Rock Hill area for twenty two years with their son, Brandon. That means countless trips passed the restaurant that would one day become El Sombrero Tex-Mex.

Luis had an established career as a butcher, commuting to New York City daily, but felt that a place like El Sombrero was exactly what the area needed. Three years ago they purchased the building most famously known as the Dodge Inn and opened El Sombrero Tex Mex.

Having been shuttered for eight years, the space needed work and updates, and Luis had a vision.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 38

El Sombrero has the capacity for 240 guests. Featuring two spacious dining rooms and a bar area, they are a bustling destination from all around the area.



Luis participates in every part of ensuring a great dining experience at El t Sombrero, from bussing tables to jumping in with the chefs in the kitchen. t

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 37

He updated the interior and modernized the design adding murals and stone accents, added a divider between the bar and the restaurant area, and installed a completely stainless steel kitchen. They developed a menu based on Luis' recipes including fresh sauces, pico de gallo, and guacamole made daily, homemade sangria, margaritas, and mojitos, and fare based on the tex mex tradition.



Luis and his family pride themselves on offering a top notch dining experience that starts with a friendly greeting at the door inviting you into the immaculate dining area.

"The best part is the connection to the customers...since I was little, I've always wanted to help others. I was born to do this, and I am proud to do it," Cerna beamed.

Cleanliness is the foundation of their focus on quality, starting every day with a clean canvas that their crew of dedicated people manages daily and



by not ending the night until the kitchen is clean and sorted.

"I'm the inspector," he joked. Luis hires front of house staff with potential, but not necessarily experience providing training but urging them to focus on providing the dining experience they would want when going out to eat.

Attention is also shown in the food produced out of the kitchen, with Luis sourcing quality meats

CONTINUED ON PAGE 40





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and ingredients and ensuring consistency of each item served through extensive training in his recipes and preparations.

"Today, three days from now or three weeks from now, you will get the same quality, the same flavors. We welcome people as if it's their first time, all the time. We want to impress them," Luis explained.

The reception has been amazing, with over 20,000 of their top seller, the Sombrero Grill

Sampler, sold since opening. The sampler features two types of ribs, skirt steak, grilled chicken, hot sausage, and jumbo shrimp, all served with rice and beans. It's joined on the menu with Tex Mex standards like Tostadas: crispy fried tortilla with refried beans, meat, salsa, cheese; enchiladas with your choice of meat and sauce (red, green, or variety of mole), fajitas, а quesadillas, chimichangas, burritos, tacos, and flautas: crispy tortillas filled with chicken or steak and topped with shredded lettuce, cheese, and Mexican cream



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Bill Fleck (I) and Kim Simons (c) enjoy Eİ Sombrero so much, they have visited over 280 times since Luis and Annie opened their doors. They enjoy the family owned and operated establishment, ability to adapt menu items to food intolerances, and attention to detail found in everything from the consistency of the food items to the cleanliness of the kitchen.



Grilled steaks, burgers, and seafood and an array of appetizers round out the menu, with a special section for kids. The bar offers options from local craft brews to margaritas, beer, wine, and homemade sangria. "We are a family-owned, family-oriented business, and we love to support other local businesses," said Luis.

The focus on quality, consistency, and cleanliness, has worked with word of mouth accounting

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for the entirety of the buzz that packs the dining rooms daily, starting at 3 p.m. Luis and Annie are always looking for ways to not only improve El Sombrero, but to teach others how to be successful as well.

"We focus on customer service, atmosphere, food and price. We cook like it's for our own fami-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 42



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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 41

ily." That familial mindset was challenged in the beginning of the pandemic. With El Sombrero shuttered for a week, Luis and Annie realized that they had an opportunity to support their community.

They crafted hundreds of grab and go meals for healthcare workers at the hospital, feeding them and creating new fans at the same time. When they could scale up to take out, they reorganized the restaurant to support the burgeoning side of the business, getting to see the familiar faces of their customers regularly again.

And now, they are happy to be reopened fully with their regular customers and new friends filling the dining room. They were even honored with the "People who Love Us on Yelp" sticker for consistently high ratings on the app for the period of time that included the pandemic.

You can visit El Sombrero Tex-Mex Bar and Grill at 227 Lake Louise Marie Road in Rock Hill. For reservations or takeout, call (845)513-4219. Luis, Annie and the entire El Sombrero team are excited to serve you!





Traditional tex-mex fare like a burrito can be found on El Sombrero's menu.

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The Covered Bridges of Sullivan County

STORY AND PHOTOS BY CAROL MONTANA

hat is it about covered bridges that people find so fascinating? Is it the mystique of a bygone era? Thoughts of a simpler time? Romanticism? Curiosity?

Kim Hoedeman, proprietor of the Secret Vegan Café of Kingston, has made seeking out and visiting covered bridges a hobby. Along with her husband Jeff Semones, Kim recently paid a visit to the nearby Halls Mills Covered Bridge.

"We love the history," Kim said. "I'm originally from the Netherlands – I'm Dutch. There's a lot of Dutch history in New York State. And my husband is American, so we have a lot of Dutch / American history to pursue. Every time we see a covered bridge, we feel we are transported in time."

Kim believes that "for one moment, you can imagine what it was like back in the 18th and 19th centuries and how people lived."

She finds the covered bridges to be romantic and a treasure of the region. "For me personally and for me and my husband it feels like a time portal. The moment that you walk up to a bridge, you feel like you're in that time again, in that history. And history is right there with you."



An impressive 130 feet long, the Halls Mills Covered Bridge is the longest covered bridge in Sullivan County.

Here in Sullivan County, we are fortunate to have five covered bridges. Exploring them will make a fine daytrip during any season.

Chestnut Creek Covered Bridge

The Chestnut Creek Covered Bridge (a.k.a. The Grahamsville Covered Bridge) is the newest covered bridge in Sullivan County. It's located at the entrance to the Grahamsville Fairgrounds on Route 55. Built in 1976 as a Bicentennial project by volunteers who were supervised by resident Robert Grey, the 40-foot bridge is described as "stringer, town lattice in appearance."

It's open to both pedestrian and vehicle traffic, although pedestrians are asked to use the walkway on either side of the span.

Halls Mills Covered Bridge

Spanning the Neversink River in the Town of Neversink is the Halls Mills Covered Bridge, located on Hunter Spur, just off Hunter Road, west of County Route 19. Halls Mills was built between 1906 and 1912 by David Benton and James Knight. At 130 feet it is the longest cov-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 46



The Halls Mills Covered Bridge spans the Neversink River.

Below: Also known as the **Mott Flats** Covered Bridge and Van Tran Flat Covered Bridge, the Livingston Manor Covered Bridge was closed for more than 40 years before a major renova-tion by the Sullivan County Department of Public Works.



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 44

ered bridge in Sullivan County, and is a single span of town lattice truss design. Closed to vehicles in 1963, the bridge has also been closed to pedestrians, most likely because of damage to the stone abutments caused by hurricanes.

Livingston Manor Covered Bridge

The Livingston Manor Covered Bridge goes by two other names: Mott Flats Covered Bridge and Van Tran Flat Covered Bridge. It's located in Livingston Manor in the Town of Rockland in the Livingston Manor Bridge County Park.

Built in 1860 by John Davidson, the 103-foot bridge, a town truss with added laminated arch, spans the Willowemoc Creek, which is a tributary of the Beaver Kill (or Beaverkill) River. The bridge was closed for more than 40 years, but underwent a major renovation in 1984 by the Sullivan County Department of Public Works. It's open to vehicle traffic, and can be accessed from County Route 179 (a.k.a. Old Route 17), turning off on Town Road 39 (appropriately named Covered Bridge Road). It is the oldest covered bridge in Sullivan County.

Beaverkill Covered Bridge

The Beaverkill Covered Bridge is also known as the Conklin Bridge. Located north of Roscoe in the Town of Rockland, it was built by John Davidson in 1865 as a town lattice truss. It crosses the Beaverkill River and spans 98 feet. The bridge is open to vehicle traffic, and is listed on the State and National Register of Historic Places. The bridge can be found on Beaverkill Camp Road, which is off County Route 179 (Beaverkill Road), accessed from Old Route 17.

Willowemoc Covered Bridge

Also known as the Bendo Covered Bridge, this structure is located in the hamlet of DeBruce in the Town of Rockland, outside of Livingston Manor. John Davidson built this bridge in the year 1860. Originally built in Livingston Manor, then cut in half, the bridge was moved to its current location in 1913. At a length of 48 feet, the Willowemoc Covered Bridge was built as a town truss design, but since that no longer supports the bridge, it is now classified as a stringer. Aptly named since it spans the Willowemoc Creek, the bridge is accessible from the Livingston Manor exit of Route 17, then 6 miles east on County Route 82, two miles on Willowemoc Road, and a right to Conklin Hill Road. The bridge is closed to vehicle traffic, but is a big attraction to visitors of the nearby campground.

To learn more about any of the covered bridges of Sullivan County, visit nycoveredbridges.org.

Now spanning its namesake creek, the Willowemoc Covered Bridge was originally located in Livingston Manor before being moved in 1913.





Above: The Chestnut Creek Covered Bridge is the only Sullivan County covered bridge to have separate pedestrian walkways.

Beaverkill Campground and Day Use Area is the home of the Beaverkill Covered Bridge.





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A flash of ed and a burst of song, even in winter

CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

The brilliant scarlet plumage of the cardinal and the bird's virtues has encouraged Indiana, Kentucky, North Carolina, Ohio, Virginia, and West Virginia to name the cardinal as their state bird.

BY KATHY DALEY

the bright red cardinal offers a dash of beauty against winter's gray and white landscape. Good thing that hideous molting time is over with.

I've loved cardinals all my life for their ravishing beauty and happy singing on the part of both males and females. Then late this summer, a friend of mine called me frantically that he had a sick looking cardinal at the bird feeder. Sure enough, the disheveled bird was practically bald, no longer red, and looked like he was on his last spindly leg.

We googled something along the line of "sorrylooking cardinal" and came up with the fact that the bird had no disease. He was simply replacing his plumage. All birds do it.

Feathers don't last forever, say the experts, and birds have to grow new ones so that they can fly, camouflage, communicate and regulate body temperature. Made of the protein keratin that also creates human's hair and fingernails, keratin in birds is responsible for their talons, beaks and feathers.

CARDINALS' CHARACTER

Now as the cold days deepen, our winter birds eat more and store fat under their skin to keep warm. Cardinals, along with black-capped chickadees, tufted titmice, juncos, downy woodpeckers – to name just a few – fluff up their feathers to trap heat and slow down metabolism. They roost in tree cavities or thickets, evergreens or shrubs, and they manage to find food in the cold.

In winter, cardinals eat grass seed and weed seeds along with berries and the occasional insects under leaves. For those of us with bird feeders, black-oil sunflower seeds are favorites with cardinals, as are hulled peanuts and suet cakes.

Our jaunty Northern Cardinal clocks in at about 8 to 9 inches long, a bit smaller than a robin. Male and females both have the orangered bill and uplifted head-crest that makes them so notable. Males own the telltale bright red plumage and females are yellowish brown with red tints on crest, wings and tail.

The song of the cardinal can hardly be equaled. Both males and females sing, which is unusual in birds. One bird will offer a phrase and the other counter-sings; the singing unifies and synchronizes the bird couple. There's the single-note whistle that sounds like cheeuw, cheeuw, cheeuw, which is used during courtship and in territory formation. Another call is a short metallic "chip" sound that keeps the mates in touch with one another and also serves as an alarm call.

Cardinals are monogamous and will mate for life unless one mate dies. Now, during fall and early winter, the bond weakens somewhat



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Female cardinals' singing capacity is unusual in the bird world. Scientists describe at least 16 different calls for the cardinal, including the most common tune, which is a loud, metallic 'chip.'



Continued From Page 49

between male and females. Still, they often stay together or will join in with other cardinals to form feeding groups. Then, in February and March, cardinals open up their breeding season.

Their courtship routine invites the male to pick up a bit of food and sidle up to his mate. They touch beaks as she accepts the morsel. Females start building a nest in dense bushes and shrubs, taking three to nine days to craft the loose cup of woven twigs, leaves, rootlets and vines, lined with fine grasses.

The female lays two to five eggs that are whitish in color and somewhat marked with





Cardinals remain mated for life, unless one of them dies. Then the remaining bird seeks another mate. In spring and summer, they eat caterpillars, grasshoppers, beetles, ants, flies and other insects along with seeds.

brown, lavender and gray. She does most of the incubating while the male brings her food. The young hatch after about 12 days, fed by both parents with regurgitated insects at first and then whole bugs. One parent is always guarding the nest.

The young birds can fly after only 20 days, while the pure red feathers in males do not show up for almost a year. Both genders have no awareness, of course, that they are signs of devotion and loyalty in the human world. And that in some Native American folklore, an individual will have good luck within 12 days of seeing a cardinal!



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At two-and-a-half years old, bucks are just coming into their own, and should be passed up on to help put larger deer in the herd.

Strategies for hunting mature Duch

STORY AND PHOTOS BY PETER FIDUCCIA

Today, most whitetail hunters in Catskill-Delaware Country stalk bucks with larger antlers than they have in years past. This is due, in part, to the antler restriction guidelines which were adopted in 2010 whereby bucks had to have three points on one antler to be legal. Today – a decade later – this law has created older, more mature bucks in our deer woods and hunters have seen the benefits not only in antler mass but also the weight of harvested deer.

Consequently, many hunters set pre-determined goals regarding what age bucks they seek to kill. That simple goal can be the genesis of many heated debates among hunters because a buck's maturity can vary widely from one state to another, and even in different areas of a state as well.

Realistic Expectations

A key element for taking a mature buck is to have realistic expectations about at what age a buck in your area becomes mature.

For instance, in heavily hunted areas like Sullivan County – other parts and of the Northeast and New England states – few bucks get to reach $4\frac{1}{2}$ years old.

Therefore, hunters have to be able to identify the different age classes of bucks in the areas they hunt.

How to Avoid **Ground Shrinkage**

A crucial strategy to killing adult bucks is learning how to properly field judge the ageclass of male deer on the hoof. The guidelines below will help you recognize a mature buck quicker and easier.

Thus, it is important to first define what a mature buck is. Biologists classify a mature buck as being between "3 ½ to 4 ¹/₂ years old." For a buck to reach an older age it mostly depends on where it lives, genetics, and the nutrition.

Other factors include habitat, predation, and inclement standards. weather.

Many scientists assert a male

white-tailed deer reaches maturity when "it develops its complete skeletal growth."

Most often, that's around 4 ¹/₂ years of age. Female deer develop their full skeletal growth earlier, generally at 3 ¹/₂ years old because their bodies are smaller. Furthermore, research studies claim a buck grows its largest set of antlers when it's between 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ to 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ years old.

2.5-Year-Old Buck

At this age, a buck's body often appears lanky, and its antlers (regardless of the number of points) are thin and lacking mass.

Its legs appear to be growing quicker than its body. It will have a thin neck, its head will resemble a doe's face, and its stomach area will



tooth wear, accidents, excessive Now we're talking. This three-and-a-half-year-old buck is a trophy by anyone's

appear tight and compact. Its tarsal glands (near the inner surface of the eyelids) will be brown to dark brown, but they will not be as visibly dark as an older buck's tarsal glands. Strategies:

Consequently, hunters who want to shoot adult bucks must pass on taking younger bucks, particularly 2 1/2 year old male deer, in order to let them have a chance to reach maturity.

3.5-Year-Old Buck

At this age, a buck's antlers are getting the attention of most hunters. Its neck becomes conspicuously larger, particularly during the rut, and his chest becomes visibly bulkier. Its

CONTINUED ON PAGE 56



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This four-and-a-half year old buck ambles through a cornfield looking for food. Bucks with heavy mass antlers are becoming more common in Catskill-Delaware Country.

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chest is beginning to appear larger than its rump. Its back and stomach, however, are still straight and tight.

The buck's neck is still five or more inches from its brisket. At this stage its tarsal glands will be dark brown to black.

Usually, it will have a main beam length of 16

to 18 inches. The brow tines can range from 3 to 6 inches in length and the inside spread of its antlers will generally be 15 to 16 inches.

Strategies:

A 3 ¹/₂ year old buck is often easy to rouse into responding to different stimuli. Many times, using deer scents like food and estrous scent will lure a buck of this age class in.

• They are also easy to agitate into quickly responding to doe decoys, particularly a female deer decoy squatting to urinate. One such decoy is called "Estrus Betty." A buck decoy will also work, but the decoy should not have massive antlers.

• A 3 ½ year old buck is also very vocal. For instance, during the rut it will grunt repeatedly while scurrying the woods in search of receptive does. Therefore, it will readily respond to a natural sounding grunt call, an estrus blat, and a few of the sub-cadences of the primary snort vocalization.

• Additionally, controlling human scent becomes a more important strategy when hunting this age class of bucks.

4 ¹/₂ Year-Old Buck

The body of a 4 ½ year old buck becomes hard to confuse with younger bucks at this age.

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They have attained skeletal maturity. Its rump is full, deep, and rounded, and its neck will be more muscular looking.

Its antlers will generally reach about 85 percent of their maximum potential. Generally, they will weigh about 175 or more pounds. The antlers will have more mass throughout and the bases will be about 5 to 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches.

Usually, it will have a main beam length of about 18 inches. The brow tines can range from 5 to 6 inches or more and the inside spread of its antlers will generally be 17 to 18 inches. This age class and older is regularly referred to as "mature."

Strategies:

When setting your sights on taking a 4 ½ year old remember they have singular personalities that enables them to act totally differently than young bucks, and even bucks of their own age group.

They rarely abide by so-called textbook deer behaviors and have crossed the line to become one of Mother nature's top-notch survivors.

• Hunt off hours – The KEY factor for taking adult bucks is a tactic I began writing about in the late 1980s; hunt them not only during the

traditional dusk and dawn times but rather during the "off-hours" between 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

During this time of day receptive does are often bedded down making it easier for cruising adult bucks to locate them.

Outside of the rut, an adult buck moves during this time frame to stretch its legs, grab a quick snack, or relieve itself. Bucks generally defecate about 36 times over a 24-hour period or about 12 times during daylight hours.

They urinate about the same number of times. It is easy to figure out that between pooping, peeing, eating, stretching, and changing where it is bedding down, an adult buck actually moves around a lot more during daylight hours than some hunters realize or want to believe.

This mid-day movement pattern is particularly true during the rut. In fact, an adult buck considerably widens its midday movement during the breeding season.

• Locate and hunt primary scrapes and signpost rubs. Research has documented adult bucks are much more likely to be the first bucks to create rubs and scrapes, particularly large ones.

All too often hunters concentrate hunting



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227 MAIN STREET | HURLEYVILLE, NY 12747 | (845) 707-8769 | OPEN SATURDAYS – 11:00AM – 4:00PM 58 • CATSKILL-DELAWARE, FALL-WINTER 2021 near well-established deer trails. These types of heavily used trails are generally used by does, fawns, and young bucks.

Adult bucks, from 3 ¹/₂ years and older, use deer trails that are parallel to well-worn deer trails. To discover adult buck trails, look for thin, less used trails surrounded by thicker cover.

• A good indicator of an adult buck track is large hoof prints set deep into the ground. Generally, a buck that is between $3\frac{1}{2}$ to $6\frac{1}{2}$ years old will have a track that is between $5\frac{1}{2}$ to 6 inches long.

• At this age, adult bucks respond more readily only to deer calls that sound realistic. So, a call that is made too loudly, will alert a buck of this age class that something is not right.

• The use of scent must be curtailed much more vigilantly. Too much scent quickly alerts them that the odor is not natural. When using scent, to attract an adult buck of this age class, it should not be placed closer than 40 yards to your location.

5 1/2 Year-Old Buck

At 5 ¹/₂ to 6 ¹/₂ years, most bucks have reached their peak of maturity in their body, muscles, skeleton, and antler development.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 60



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At five-and-a-half years old, bucks like this aren't seen too often as they are usually the smartest, and most wary, of whitetails.

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At these age classes they will sport their largest set of antlers. Their bodies also exhibit obvious changes. Its legs are stumpy looking



compared to its body size. The stomach and back show signs of sagging.

The hair on the forehead and nose has a lot of grey coloring. The neck area is large, muscular,



and firm and considerably swollen during the rut. Their brisket area appears to be extremely muscular and substantial in size.

The tarsal glands will be conspicuously large and very dark black. Many bucks in this age class have jet black urine stains running down the inside of their legs.

Everything about a buck's body, and antlers at this age is visibly larger and more impressive than bucks of a lesser age.

Mature bucks of this age class are hard to come by in many states.

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Killing bucks that are this age demands a hunter use his/her most utmost skills. Remember this: once a buck reaches this age class and older, it crosses the line where it changes into an entirely different animal than all younger bucks.

It has become the ultimate survivor. These bucks are super cautious, extra wary, and become recluses. It's worth mentioning that oddly, at this age and older, a 5 ½-year buck's body can fool a hunter into thinking that it belongs to a buck of a younger age. This is because their bodies now begin to decline in mass.

Strategies

• Some excellent tactics for taking bucks of this age means hunting them at the optimum time, wait until a majority of weather conditions (i.e., wind) are in your favor.

• Mature 5 ½ year old bucks need seclusion. In other words– create a refuge. Like I have repeatedly said in writings, lectures, and books, a sanctuary must be treated exactly like the dictionary describes a refuge. A refuge can be as small as a few acres, but larger is better. If practical, refuges should be located in the middle of a property and consist of the thickest cover in the area.

- Use full-size buck decoys sporting large antlers; they are terrific agitators to adult bucks of this age group.
- It is an absolute must to use extreme scent control.

• It's necessary to take great caution approaching your stand. It also requires placing stands in area where one can enter and exit from different directions to limit detection from wind, noise, or being patterned.

• A key deer call to use is the aggressive snort sub-cadence of the primary snort. You can watch me demonstrate all five cadences of the primary snort on YouTube.

• Highway turnarounds, entrances and exits are a super favorite spot in heavily hunted areas for adult bucks of this age to hide in plain sight. Most often these areas include a small cattail marsh that is ideal for concealment.

• The best strategies to locate adult bucks hell-bent on hiding in plain sight include using



Yes, Sullivan County bucks are getting larger, and this slammer was taken last year by Grahamsville hunter Walter Garigliano. It field dressed at 224 lbs. to set a new Sullivan County Democrat Heavy Deer Contest record.

> trail cameras, drones, satellite images, topo maps and traditional scouting (from a distance) to locate likely areas.

> Once located, remain out of them until you are ready to hunt. When it comes to hunting bucks of this age class, the rule is to leave no stone unturned, or thorn patch overlooked.





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