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# Contents

## Failproof antler rattling .....6

*By Peter Fiduccia*

It's every hunter's dream to have that big trophy buck walk into their tree stand on opening day. Instead of just sitting there and hoping you see the monster, now you can do something about it – like rattling. Learn how from the expert.

## Cooking in the Kitchen with Kate Fiduccia ....13

*By Kate Fiduccia*

These venison recipes are sure to please. Kate Fiduccia is not only an avid and successful deer hunter in her own right, but she knows what to do with her venison in the kitchen. Enjoy!

## Catskill Claws want you to start biking .....16

*By Crystal Tweed*

Join Sullivan County Democrat Sports Editor Crystal Tweed as she explores the world of Mountain Bike Riding and learn how you can sign your kid up for the team.

## Do hunters just happen? .....24

*By BobLowe*

Hunting was once a necessity that man had to hand down to the next generation for survival. Now it's an outdoor activity that the older generation are hoping to pass down to the younger generation. Find out how it can done.

## Living life fast and furious: the Shrew .....30

*By Kathy Daley*

Catskill Wildlife author Kathy Daley looks into the amazing life of one of the world's smallest mammals, the shrew. Find out fun facts about this amazing creature.

## Spotlight on a gymnast .....36

*By Crystal Tweed*

Hailie Walzer began training as a competitive gymnast at age 7, and now, 7 years later, she has her sights set on making the state tournament. Find out what makes a good gymnast become great.

## The Last Word: Are antler restrictions good? ..42

*By Bill Tangen*

A look back at an NBA legend and what brought him to Callicoon.

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# Sections

Arts/Entertainment . . . . .39  
ATV . . . . .23  
Auto . . . . .22  
Callicoon . . . . .9  
Delaware County . . . . . 18-19  
Dining . . . . .38  
Fallsburg . . . . .21  
Health . . . . . 44-45

Honesdale/Wayne Cty . . . 10-11  
Jeffersonville . . . . .40  
Liberty . . . . .41  
Lodging . . . . .38  
Monticello . . . . . 32-35  
Real Estate . . . . .37  
Rock Hill . . . . .46  
Roscoe . . . . .29

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# Failproof Antler Rattling

By Peter Fiduccia

**I**t is often said, and believed, that antler rattling only works in Texas. This is a serious misnomer. Over the last five decades, I have had considerable rattling success throughout the Northeast and in other states and provinces. I guarantee you that antler rattling works anywhere whitetails roam, including New York. Like all deer calls (grunt, blat, snort, etc.), antler rattling works best when you know how and when to use the tactic.

## Sounds Matter

There are two main types of antler contact bucks engage in. They are the pushing and shoving phase, and the more intense fighting hierarchy stage. The sounds of antler contact

become considerably more amplified between the different phases. So, to be most successful, hunters need to duplicate the increasing antler contact noises during each specific stage.

## Pushing and Shoving Phase

Generally speaking, throughout the country, hunters can use antler rattling from late September through January. In New York (and the entire Northeast) however, the best time to rattle is from late September to mid-December.

It is in October that bucks begin to earnestly scrap with one another. Their antlers click and clack as they push and shove against each other as part of the annual ritual to establish a male pecking order. The noise created during this

The pushing and shoving phase is a stage where antler contact is light and generally quick. The sounds of antler contact during this time of the year carry well and attract other curious bucks.







DEPOSIT PHOTOS

It doesn't take long for a mature buck with a heavier body and larger antlers to demonstrate his position within the hierarchy. The buck on the left shows his strength and antler superiority.

first antler contact is light, and generally quick. The sounds will attract bucks that are intrigued about the goings on. The pushing and shoving matches can last from 30 seconds to a few minutes. Rattling during this pre-rut time can be a phenomenally successful tactic as long as hunters duplicate the type of contact noise bucks engage in during these early sparring matches.

Deer hunters commonly witness this behavior each fall—whether in person while on deer stand or when reviewing deer cam photos.

Start by clicking the tips of antlers together lightly and then mesh the tines back and forth for up to a minute or so. The sequence can be repeated every half hour. Because the sounds of bucks sparring is one of the first signs of the forthcoming rut, the noise of two sparring bucks often generates some of the best early responses.

### **Brooklyn Street Fights**

By the end of October, though, a buck's testos-

terone is quickly gaining momentum and each day he becomes more belligerent toward other bucks. All bucks, especially mature bucks, begin to create rubs and scrapes and engage in more aggressive combat as they vie for a place on the ladder of hierarchy.

During this time-frame, antler contact is much more pronounced than during the pushing and shoving phase. This time, start by jarring the antlers together to create the illusion of two bucks hitting their antlers against each other. Then mesh and grind the antlers together somewhat more aggressively for a minute or so. To imitate this correctly, the rattling has to be louder and more pronounced than earlier in the fall. When separating the antlers, twist them as you break them apart in order to have the ends of the tines make a sharp snapping sound. This phase often attracts older bucks than those who typically respond to the pushing and shoving matches.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8



Even adult bucks often throw caution to the wind and come in on the run to this type of rattling! It is the best time to rattle in a mature buck.

### Post Rut Rattling

One other time-frame that I have considerable success with when rattling, is during the post rut. The post rut is generally the 10th through the 15th of December. Most female deer were successfully bred during the main rut of November (10th through 15th—give or take a couple of days on either side). However, the mature does that were not bred and yearlings that undergo their first estrus cycle are magnets to attract bucks by rattling. Consequently, any buck that comes across a doe's estrus scent will quickly take off – nose held firmly to the ground – to locate her.

Rattling at this time will set up the perfect scenario for the illusion of two bucks fighting over an estrus doe. Even during the late season period of the rut, NY hunters can “paper” tag out



Deposit Photos

It is not unusual to see a buck seeking out the scent of an estrus doe. During the post rut, hunters may get more than one opportunity to rattle in a buck as an estrus doe can attract several bucks.

on a dandy rattled-up, late-season buck. (UGH – paper licenses . . . really!?)

### Fake It or Not?

Natural or plastic? I have rattled-in bucks using plastic antlers. However, natural antlers better complete the illusion of a buck skirmish. Believe it or not, real bone has an odor. When you rattle with natural antlers it creates an aroma from the rubbing of the two bone antlers together. Any hunter who has rattled with fresh natural antlers, may be familiar with the scent.

Even though plastic and natural antlers both work to attract bucks, I like to create the entire illusion. Therefore, I opt for using natural antlers. If you do, be absolutely sure the antlers are no more than a couple of years old.

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Fresher is better. Old antlers definitely have a hollow clacking sound, fresh antlers do not. A wise ol' buck can detect the difference and become wary of that.

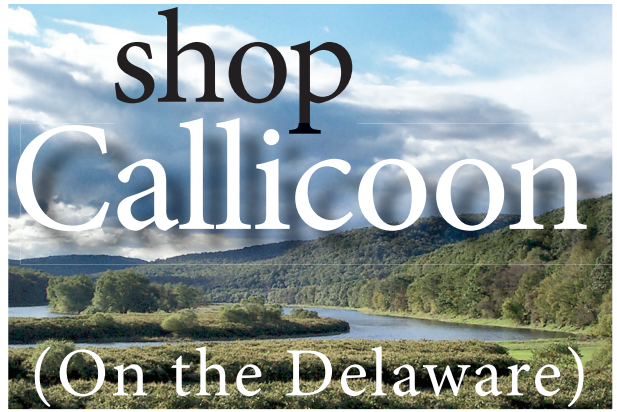
### The Long and The Short of It

In reality, most buck fights do not last long because most times two bucks can quickly establish which one is higher in the pecking order. Therefore, your rattling sequences after a pushing and shoving segment will be heard by other bucks as being natural, but only if you keep it less than 90 seconds.

### Cover Is King!

Many years ago, on November 14th to be precise, I was deer hunting outside of Tupper Lake, on a multi-thousand-acre tract of woods owned by International Paper Company. It was during the peak phase of "the big chase" when bucks pursue does intensely. I was rattling from under the branches of an old hem-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12



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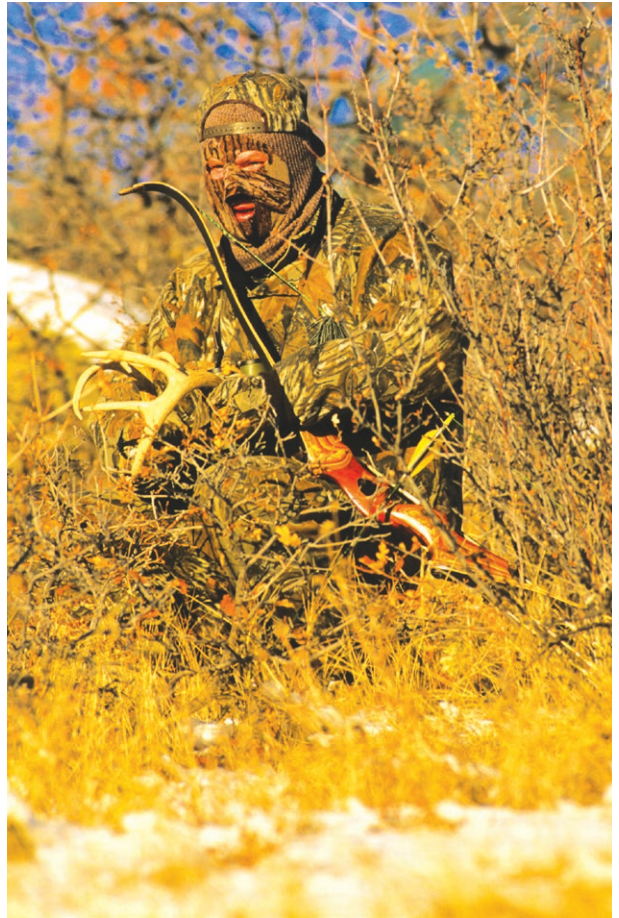
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lock tree. My lack of cover caused some problems. Within 60 seconds of rattling, I heard the unmistakable sounds of a deer's hooves crunching leaves as it quickly approached. Before I could put the antlers down and pick up my rifle, I was staring at a well-antlered buck running toward me. Then he suddenly spotted me. The buck skidded on the leaves, turned sharply and disappeared into thick cover. All before I could get my composure to put the crosshairs on his shoulder.

The moral of this anecdote? When rattling from the ground, always do so from adequate cover. It will decrease your chances of a buck detecting you tenfold! However, be aware that when rattling from the ground, be prepared that at times you may end up calling a buck in at point-blank range. So keep your firearm close and be ready to shoot.

### High or Low?

The long and the short of this query is stay low. Over the 55 years I have been rattling deer, I have unquestionably had more success when I rattle from the ground from a concealed location, rather than from a treestand. However, I have had my share of success when rattling from treestands as well. In both scenarios make sure you are as concealed as possible in all directions, as rattled-in bucks often come in from unexpected places.

### Playing Hard to Get

There are times when a buck will respond to your rattling efforts but stop short of coming within shooting range (bow or firearm). That situation is referred to as a buck that “hangs

up,” usually in thick cover. The answer to this dilemma is to be prepared to add irresistible enticement the buck simply cannot refuse.

A good ruse is to use buck urine. A buck expects to smell the urine of two bucks fighting, so it seems natural to it. Another way to encourage a buck from breaking cover is to make a couple low burp-like grunt calls. One or two usually works. Making more than two grunts can even spook off an adult buck. Another excellent way to draw in a hung-up buck into range is to use an estrus doe blat call. Make it loud and whiny but keep the call brief—less than 15 seconds. Any of these tactics will raise the odds considerably to lure a buck from cover more often than not.

### Calling All Bucks

If it is possible, and safe to do, you can use a deer decoy to aid in attracting a buck to your rattling efforts. However, I strongly advise doing this tactic ONLY on private land. The best decoy will be a doe that appears to be peeing. That is all the buck needs to see to forget the two other bucks that are fighting. Use any doe-peeing decoy you want. The decoy I have had a lot of success with is called Estrus Betty, made by Montana Decoy Company.

### The Wrap Up

Like any whitetail tactic hunters use, rattling is not a sure-fire bet. Nothing about hunting whitetails is. But I assure you each and every time you rattle in a buck, the hair on your arms will stand erect, you will be short of breath, and your heart will feel like it is about to explode. If that doesn't hook you on rattling, check your pulse!

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# In the Kitchen with Kate Fiduccia

BY KATE FIDUCCIA



Svenska  
Venison  
Meatballs

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**A**vid outdoorsman and expert chef Kate Fiduccia has been offering up great meals for the hunter's table for decades. Her dishes are filled with incredible flavor and offer a variety of ways to serve the fall harvest. Enjoy.

## Svenska (Swedish) Venison Meatballs Picks *(Adapted for Cooking in an Instant Pot) (The Venison Cookbook)*

Serves: 4-6  
Prep Time: 15 minutes  
Cooking Time: 20 minutes (includes controlled release time)

Meatballs:  
1 lb. ground venison  
1 egg beaten  
3 tbsp minced onion

½ cup panko bread crumbs  
¼ tsp. allspice  
¼ tsp. nutmeg  
1 tsp. garlic powder  
¼ tsp. salt  
¼ tsp. pepper  
2 tbsp. fresh minced parsley

Sauce:  
6 tbsp. unsalted butter, Divided  
2 tbsp. olive oil  
3 tbsp. flour  
2 ½ cups low-sodium beef broth  
1 tsp. Dijon mustard  
1 tsp. Worcestershire sauce  
½ tsp. smoky paprika  
¼ tsp. salt  
¼ tsp. white pepper

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

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2 cups heavy cream, room temp

**Directions:**

In large bowl, combine all meatball ingredients and mix gently but thoroughly. Measure out the venison mixture by the tablespoon and shape into tiny meatballs. Place the meatballs on a sheet pan or parchment paper. Turn on the Instant Pot's sauté setting and add the olive oil and 2 tbsp. butter. When bubbling, add enough meatballs to not overcrowd the bottom. Brown them lightly on the outside, turning, do not cook them through. Remove to a plate and repeat with the remaining meatballs.

When the meatballs are done, add the beef broth and stir with a wood spoon to scrape up any brown bits on the bottom of the pot. Add the remaining butter, Dijon, Worcestershire and 1 cup of the heavy cream. To be safe, temper the cream before adding it into the pot. Stir to combine. Turn off the sauté setting.

Add the meatballs back into the pot. Close the lid and set the steam release knob to the Sealing position. Set the Pressure Cooker on High for 4 minutes. When the cooking time is done, let it sit for 6 minutes of a natural release (i.e. don't touch the release valve).

While the meatballs are cooking add the flour to the remaining 1 cup of heavy cream. Whisk it well so there are no lumps. Set aside. Once 6 minutes have passed, do a controlled release of the Instant Pot's lid by letting out steam in short bursts. When the pin on the lid drops down, open up the pot and remove the meatballs and cover to keep warm.

Set the pot to Sauté and add in the flour/cream mixture, whisking well until thickened. Then turn off the sauté setting. Taste the sauce and season as necessary. Pour the mixture over the meatballs, garnish with parsley and serve with toothpicks or serve over a bed of noodles or piping hot garlic mashed potatoes.

**Popcorn Venison**

Venison popcorn is a tasty way to prepare this delectable tablefare that appeals to young and old. This type of quick cooking requires cuts of venison that have little to no connective tissue/sinew/fat. So, the best choice will be a tenderloin or backstrap. But a sirloin cut will work as well. In so doing, the cook time is quick. The venison will be medium-rare or pink. If you cook the pieces too long, they will be chewy. Have fun and enjoy them with your favorite dipping sauce!

Serves: 4

Marinating time: 10 – 30 minutes

Prep Time: 15 minutes

Cooking Time: 20 minutes (in batches)

**Ingredients:**

1 lb. venison loin (or other cut with little to no connective tissue/fat), cut into 1-inch chunks

¾ cup buttermilk

Salt and pepper to taste

½ cup flour

¼ cup cornflour or corn meal

1 tbsp. smoke paprika

1 tbsp. dried oregano

2 tsp. garlic powder

1 tbsp. dried mustard powder

Peanut or Canola oil for frying

**Directions:**

In a large bowl, combine the venison cubes, buttermilk, and salt. Let it sit for at least 10 minutes or up to 30 minutes.

In a separate bowl, whisk together the flour, cornflour, smoked paprika, oregano, garlic powder and mustard powder.

Drain the venison cubes from the buttermilk and begin coating the cubes in the flour mixture. Toss the buttermilk in the garbage.

Add oil to a Dutch oven or deep frying pan until about 2-3 inches deep and place over medium-high heat. When the oil is hot (350 to 375 F degrees) carefully add the venison cubes to the hot oil and fry for about 30 seconds or until golden and crispy. Do not overcrowd the vessel with too many cubes at once. Drain on a paper towel. Continue with the next batch. Serve with toothpicks and your favorite dipping sauces or any of the sauces to follow. Enjoy.

**Hunter's Sauce**

(p. 82 *The Venison Cookbook*)

Yield: 2 cups

Prep Time: 35 minutes

3 tbsp. butter

1 ½ tsp. vegetable oil

10 oz. fresh mushrooms, cut into quarters

3 shallots, minced

1 tbsp. finely chopped scallion

2 tbsp. brandy

Salt and pepper

½ cup dry white wine

1 c. brown sauce

2 tbsp. tomato sauce

1 tsp. finely chopped fresh parsley

In a small saucepan, melt butter in oil over medium heat. Add mushrooms and shallots and sauté until golden brown. Stir in the flour to absorb the juices. Add scallion, brandy, and salt and pepper to taste. Cook over low heat for 2 minutes. Add wine and simmer until the liquid is reduced by half. Add brown sauce, tomato sauce, and parsley. Heat until sauce starts to bubble, stirring occasionally. Pour into serving dish and serve hot.





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### Hedgerow Rabbit Sauté

#### Spicy Far East Dipping Sauce (*The Venison Cookbook*)

Yield: 1 cup  
Prep Time: 5 minutes

¼ soy sauce  
¼ sesame oil  
2 tbsp. sake  
2 – 3 tbsp. lemon juice  
1 tbsp. sesame seeds  
2 scallions, chopped  
2 closed garlic, crushed

Mix all ingredients in a small glass bowl. Serve.

#### Hedgerow Rabbit Sauté

Whenever we shoot sporting clays, my husband Peter quickly dispatches every rabbit target presented. One time I asked why he was so good at this. He replied, “You’re kidding. I’m Italian. It was standard for my grandfather to slap anyone in the back of the head and mutter a dozen profanities about your shooting ability if you missed a rabbit on a family hunt. He would end each slap with a saying in broken English, “Bada-bing, bada-boom-like-a-that. He’s-a-dead!” So, with rabbit hunting skills drilled in at an early age, Peter never fails to fill our pantry with this sweet-tasting and flavorful small-game staple.

Serves: 3

Cooking time: 30 to 60 minutes

Ingredients:

¼ c. all-purpose flour

Garlic powder  
Salt and pepper, to taste  
1 (or 2) boned cottontail rabbit (about 2.5 lbs.,) cut into 1-inch chunks  
2 tablespoons vegetable oil  
1 medium onion, sliced  
1 medium green bell pepper, cored and sliced  
1 can (6 oz.) tomato paste  
1 cup water  
2 tablespoons red wine, optional  
¼ tsp. crumbled dried marjoram

Directions:

Place flour in a large plastic food-storage bag; add garlic powder, salt and pepper to taste and shake well to mix. Coat rabbit chunks with seasoned flour. Heat oil in large skillet or Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add rabbit chunks and brown on all sides. Transfer browned rabbit chunks to dish; set aside. Add onion and green pepper to skillet; sauté for 3 to 5 minutes, stirring well to loosen any browned bits from the bottom of the skillet. In a jar or other container, combine the tomato paste, water and wine; mix well. Add tomato paste mixture, marjoram and browned rabbit chunks to skillet. Reduce heat and cover. Simmer for 30 to 45 minutes. Serve over hot rice.

Note: This recipe was written for my Cabin Cooking cookbook where simple ingredients and procedures were the key. If at home, feel free to substitute about one cup of your favorite tomato sauce instead of the quick mix of paste, water and wine.

**Kate Fiduccia**, former host of “Cooking Wild in Kate’s Kitchen” and Senior Editor for the Woods N’ Water TV Series, has been sharing her passion for wild game cooking since the mid-1980s. A Cornell University Hotel School grad, she’s hunted everything from deer to African game. Kate has authored numerous cookbooks like *Wild Game Cookbook* and *The Jerky Bible* and written for *Outdoor*

*Life and Deer & Deer Hunting*. She’s also appeared on CBS News and MSNBC and has been featured in *The New York Times* as a notable female hunter. When she’s not cooking or hunting, she manages Human Resources and Marketing for H.W. Naylor Co. in upstate New York, where she lives with her husband, Peter (a.k.a. The Deer Doctor), and their Labrador, Tasha.



# Catskill Claws offers youth great opportunity



Students learn many important skills including how to dismount on friendly terrain before hitting the trails.

STORY BY CRYSTAL TWEED

**C**atskill Claws, based in Rock Hill, is a youth mountain bike team that is open to children in 6th-12th grade. The organization is part of the National Interscholastic Cycling Association (NICA). They aim to build strong minds, strong bodies, and strong character through community. The program is open to beginners in the sport, so no experience is necessary. The mountain bike team races in events all over NY State during the Spring and Summer months, with some events being held locally in Liberty.



Not sure if you're ready to take it on? Schedule a free try-it-out (TIO) session. This is a great opportunity for young beginners and any student new to mountain biking to give it a try or you can attend an event to take an introductory lesson like the one hosted by the Town of Liberty.

The Town of Liberty Parks & Rec hosted a Take-a-kid-Mountain-Biking-Day (TKMBD) recently to offer an introductory lesson for girls & boys 10-15 years of age. TKMBD was created in 2004 and is recognized by the US Congress. The purpose of this event is to introduce the joy of mountain biking to our youth. Coaches from Catskill Claws volunteered their time on this day.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 20



Participants receive instruction on what skills they're going to learn at the event hosted by the Town of Liberty Parks & Rec.



# SHOP *Delaware County*

pages 18 & 19

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CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Hitting their first trail of the day. Guided by Catskill Claws instructors.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17

Keith Stephensen, Director of the Catskill Claws says, “The event was geared towards new riders to inspire their interest in being more active on bikes in the great outdoors. Cycling in the outdoors is not only beneficial for the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 23



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cardiovascular physical health of adolescents and building muscle, it is also very beneficial to their emotional well-being, reducing stress levels, improving confidence and enhancing their balance and coordination too.”

As far as the event goes it was a success. He said “It was a beautiful day to hold the event and provided the kids with an excellent opportunity to be introduced to it before the fall pre-season events begin later this month.”

Registration is now open for pre-season training so sign up now! Fall pre-season activities started on Saturday October 19 and will run every Saturday until the end of November.

To register for a TIO session or to sign up for the team, email [info@cmbt.org](mailto:info@cmbt.org).



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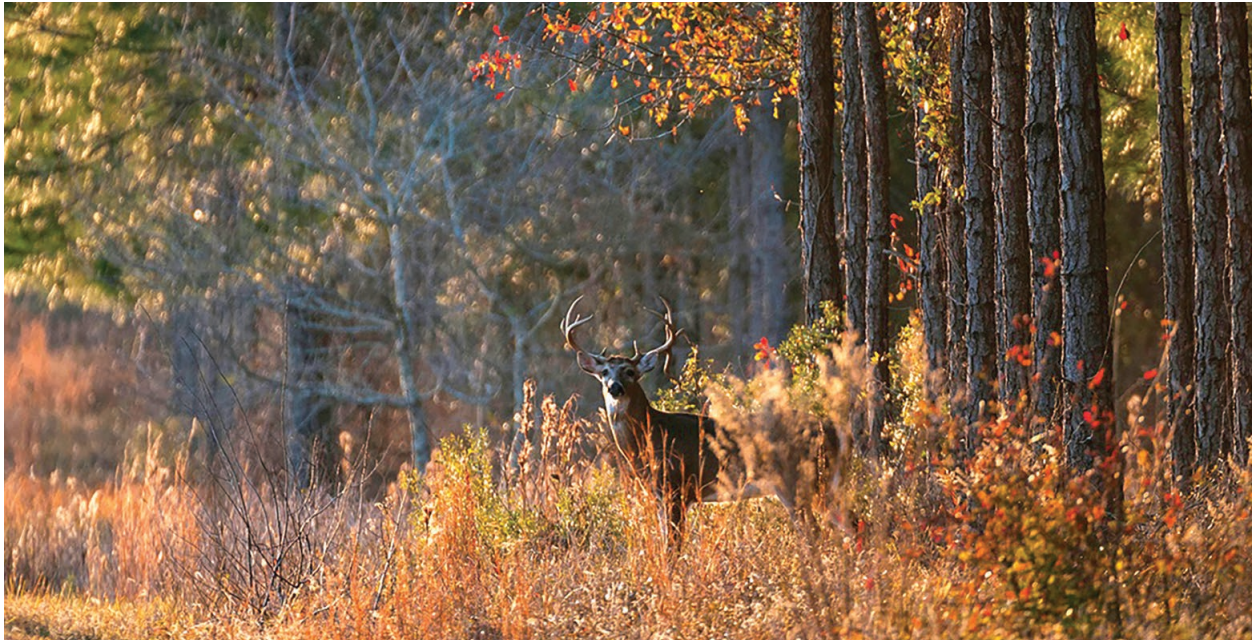
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# Do Hunters just happen?

BY BOB LOWE

Ever since man developed hunting skills the object was to put meat on the table. The table may have started out as a flat rock, or even clean dirt, but everybody gathered around when dinner was ready nonetheless.

As Ooog got on in years and started missing a step, he realized the importance of passing down his lifetime acumen of hunting skills to the younger members of the clan.

He still wanted to eat but what he really wanted was to be able to spend more time in the cave tending the fire.

Before grocery stores were invented it was a cinch to get young members of the tribe to go afield in search of something to eat.

When dinner time rolled around and there was no dinner on the rock, the idea of going forth and bringing something back was unanimous.

## How it all started

Young Tenzin wiped the sleep from his eyes at his grandfather's persistence. He learned long ago that Grandpa had no snooze button, best to get on with it right away.

He joined his Dad, Grandpa and his Uncle Brian at the breakfast table where his Pop Pop had a steaming cup of Tenzin's favorite hot cocoa ready and waiting.

Tenzin sipped his hot cocoa while the flapjacks browned and the bacon sizzled and listened to every word the men said regarding the plan for this morning's hunt... and so it begins.

Tenzin followed his Uncle through the low laurel on a track only his Uncle seemed to be aware of.

His senses took in the smell and feel of the dim wet woods that were engulfed in a cloud that morning on top of the mountain. Twice he was reminded to concentrate on being silent in their approach and that the wet lichen covered rocks were not their friends.

Enticing for a silent foot fall but slippery, treacherous and notoriously out of balance. Tenzin was keenly aware of his breathing as they approached the ladder stand. His Uncle pointed out the final approach to the stand and without a word turned on his heel and disappeared into the mist, leaving Tenzin alone in the dim wood.





Tenzin bagged his first buck late season – and the deer even lost one of its horns on the drag out – look at the ground. He even used his grandfather's rifle on the hunt, another great story for camp.

Tenzin carefully climbed the stand's ladder, situated himself quietly and pulled his rifle up using the rope attached to the stand just for that purpose.

Safety is also something that does not have a snooze button and he knew what was expected of him. The men he followed into the wood that morning were, to a man, uncompromising on the topic of safety.

Peering into the dim mist he could just make out the shape of what must be a deer. His Dad told him that if you stare at the woods long enough your eyes will play games and see antlers on a stump!

With the gaining light all of a sudden his vision materialized into an honest to goodness deer... and it had horns!

Tenzin's eyes were riveted on the deer as his heartrate and breathing quickened. The seconds turned into years but Tenzin felt as focused as he had ever been in his life.

These days there are so many distractions

that young people can barely manage their free time... and the fridge seems to fill itself, thanks to Mom and Dad.

The idea of getting up real early in the morning and putting on drab clothing that no doubt came right off the rack somewhere does not carry the significance of an earlier time.

Our hunting partners, particularly young people of dragging age, need to be groomed into field technicians and hunters.

The trick is to get said young people to put down their phones long enough to learn how to handle the tools and learn the strategies of the hunting trade.

This has been the topic of many outdoor magazine articles but best results are usually attained the old-fashioned way, invite with a whole heart, lead with enthusiasm, share in all things and be patient and consistent.

And if all else fails a box of fresh doughnuts on the truck seat will usually entice them to join you for a morning hunt.



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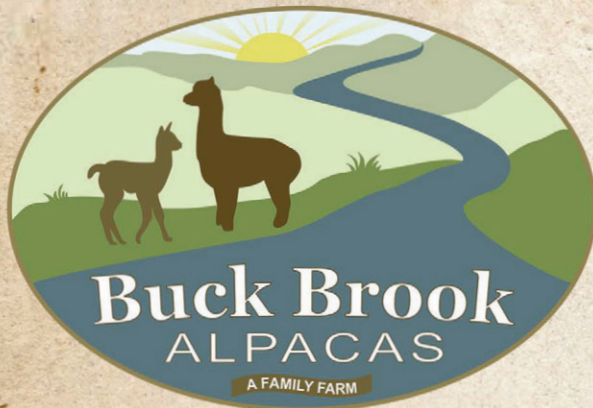
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# CATSKILL-DELAWARE W I L D L I F E

By Kathy Daley



Shrews don't just burrow in the soil. Some climb trees and even a boot every now and then.





The tiny shrew is a cousin to the mole.

# Living Life Fast and Furious: The days and nights of a shrew

**T**he smallest mammal on earth is the amazing shrew, a day-and-nighttime creature and a dweller in our own woods and backyards – without our often witnessing them at all. Shrews are born alive rather than hatched from an egg. They are warm-blooded and have fur. The moms feed their young with milk produced by her mammary glands. As they grow, they eat insects, worms, snails, salamanders, small snakes, songbirds, mice voles, carrion and vegetables.

So who are these teeny, mysterious creatures with hair and who feed their babies with mother's milk?

“Shrews are a very diverse group of mammals that are relatively understudied,” said Tom Giarla, Ph.D. associate professor of biology at Siena College, near Albany. “So there are lots of interesting things to investigate about them.”

First, the animals evolved some 45 million years ago and have remained relatively unchanged.

“Most shrews,” said Giarla, “eat invertebrates

(creatures without spines) including insects, spiders, centipedes, snails, and worms... Some shrew species eat other vertebrate animals, like salamanders and small lizards. Shrews also sometimes eat plant material.”

“Shrews don't just burrow in the soil,” said the professor. “They are often rooting around in the leaf litter in forests. And some climb in trees. There are over 300 species of shrews, so there's a bit of diversity in what they do and what they eat.”

## Shrew Mania

Cousins to moles, shrews are small, secretive, mouse-like mammals that live in moist, shady woodlands. They lead exceedingly busy lives due to their constant need for food.

Munching with their tiny spiked teeth, they live at a frantic pace. Each minute, shrew heartbeats can rise to 800 breaths per minute with 1,200 heartbeats at the same time. Some 30 species of shrews are recognized in the U.S. and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 32

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 31

Canada. The most common in our region is the Northern Short-Tailed Shrew, along with the Masked Shrew, American Water Shrew, Pygmy Shrew, Long-Tailed Shrew, Smoky Shrew and Least Shrew.

The smallest shrew in our area, the Pygmy, clocks in at about two inches from the tip of the nose to the tip of the tail and weighs from two to three grams, the size of 2 or 3 small paper clips. The largest shrew, the Long-Tailed, is about 4.7



Northern water shrews with her young.

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**Pages 32 - 35**



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inches long and can weigh up to eight grams.

Thriving in almost any habitat – forests, grassland or urban areas – the shrews’ frenetic hunger requires them to keep up with their high metabolic rate, the amount of energy they use over time. Tops in consumption is the Pygmy, which eats three times its own weight daily, meaning it must capture prey every 15 to 30 minutes, day and night.

Shrews die if they go an hour without securing a meal. It’s been said that if humans shared the shrews’ metabolism and appetite, we’d have to eat 195 pounds of food per day. Ugh!

### Mamas and Papas

Shrew eyes are generally small and the animals have poor vision for sure. But their excellent senses of smell and hearing do the trick. Then there’s the short-tailed shrew with its terrific “echolocation” -- the shrew’s ability to emit ultrasonic sounds as do bats, whales and dolphins. As the shrew gets closer to its prey, it has the ability to open and close its mouth rapidly in order to emit quick pulses of low intensity sound. The echolocation is beyond the range of

human hearing, but it helps the shrew’s own ultrasonic squeaks to find their way through leaf litter or in the darkness of tunnels under snow.

Then there’s the need for more shrews in Shrewland. Male shrews hunt for females constantly and together they raise several litters each year. Gestation takes about three weeks. The newborn and helpless five to seven babies are bare, but they grow quickly and reach furry adulthood when they are four to six weeks old.

Like other mothers everywhere, shrews are concerned for the safety of her brood. Should the mother sense danger, she will move the little family by attaching one of her offspring to her own rear, and the rest then cling one-by-one to each other like a moving necklace of beads.

### Winter Days & Nights

What happens in the cold? “Shrews don’t hibernate in winter,” notes Dr. Giarla. “They are active year-round, even beneath the snow in tunnels. The snow provides some insulation. Shrews continually have to eat -- if they died off every winter, there would be no shrews

CONTINUED ON PAGE 34



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Shrews are fast reproducers and have been known to have several litters in their short lives.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 33

left in our area.” Still, many shrews are killed by hawks, owls, frogs, fish, snakes, foxes and weasels. Sometimes predators make the kill but leave the shrew uneaten. Often that’s due to the shrew’s last-moment of life – the animal produces a foul, musky odor from scent glands

on its flanks.

Today, the tough little shrew provides insight into climate change, according to Scenic Hudson, the longtime environmental organization in the Hudson River Valley.

“Shrews are fast reproducers,” notes Scenic Hudson on its website, “generating several litters in their short lifetimes (often less than a

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year), so evolutionary changes are noticeable more quickly than in other mammals. And shrews don't migrate, making it easier to see how climate-related changes to their habitats affect populations.

### Shrews in History

The "voracious" was the ancient Egyptians' name for the shrew, which they revered and afforded a ritual burial. Later on, a second century Roman scribe argued that mere contact with a shrew would render horses and cattle lame. "Every beast of burden dreads the shrew-mouse," said the scribe.

Then came Elizabethan, England, when the word "shrew" was used to refer to a woman or wife who didn't fit her "accepted" social role. Along came Shakespeare and his famous "The Taming of the Shrew" wherein his Kate has a "scolding, shrewish tongue," prompting Petruccio, her lover, to try to tame her.

And so, on it goes for the tiny shrew, who has no ability or interest in history or bad name. Let's just say they do as they are told by nature and God.

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Young Hailee in her first year of competition with Coach Pete.



# Spotlight on a Gymnast

BY CRYSTAL TWEED

**H**ailee Walzer is a freshman student at Delaware Valley Central School in Pike County, PA. At the age of 14, she is the most senior member of her gymnastics team at Tweed's Gymnastics in Monticello. Hailee has been a competitive gymnast since the age of 7. She attended recreational classes for less than a year when her coach recognized her talent and quickly moved her to the Pre-Team. She says her favorite part of being a competitive gymnast is

performing in front of people.

## Overcoming Fears and Challenges

Hailee is a level 8 gymnast, which requires a gymnast to be highly coordinated, strong, and agile in all 4 women's events. The skills are extremely challenging, and at this level, a gymnast can face many fears and struggle with blocks. I asked Hailee if she has a process that she goes

CONTINUED ON PAGE 38



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Hailee posing for a beam shot at a gymnastics photo shoot.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 36

through to manage them. She replied, “I use visualization and deep breathing exercises. It helps calm me down.”

### This Year’s Goals

The first competition of the year is coming up this winter. What are you most looking forward to this season?

“My favorite meet is the Hudson Valley Winter Classic at Columbia-Greene Community College. And I’m also looking forward to competing at the Kartrite Waterpark in February.”

The Kartrite meet will be a brand new competi-

tion for her. We talked about her goals for this season, and like most competitive gymnasts, Hailee wants to qualify for the state meet. She will need a 32 all-around to qualify.

But she also set her sights on another goal this year: Qualifying for Regionals, an honor bestowed on only 119 gymnasts from the entire state. Gymnasts can qualify for Regionals at the State meet competition in March.

### Proud Parents

Hailee’s mom, Dianne, shared, “Hailee dedicates an enormous amount of time to this sport.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 41

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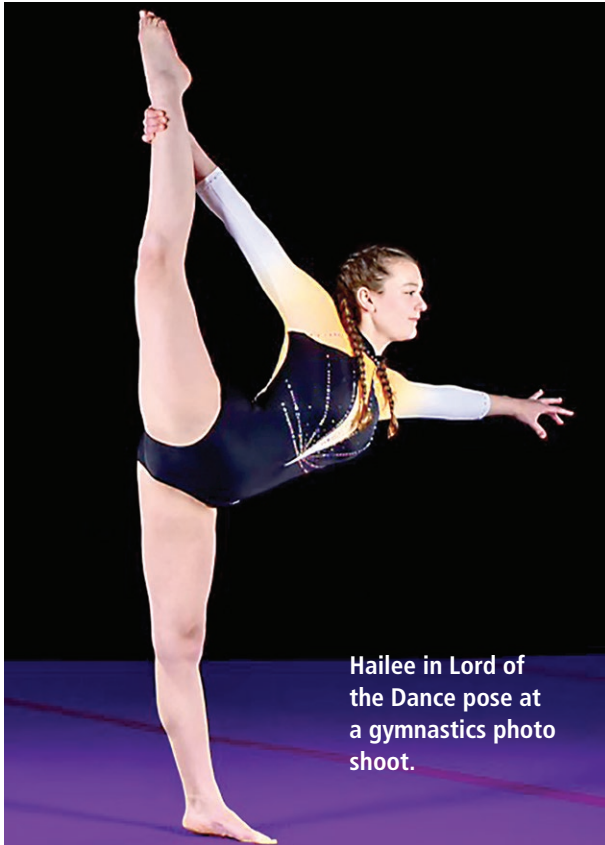



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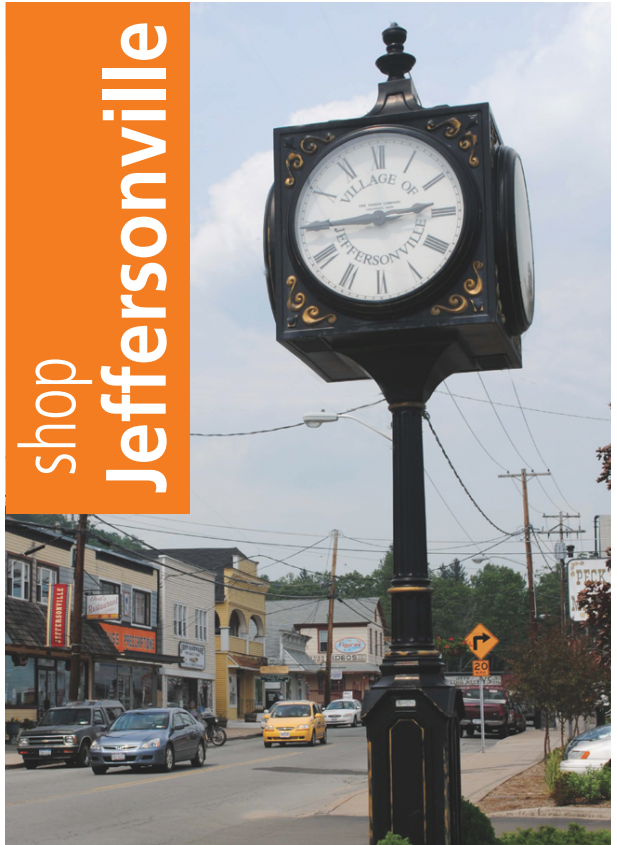
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Hailee in Lord of the Dance pose at a gymnastics photo shoot.




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She practices 5 days a week for two-and-a-half hours daily. Her days start with school at 7:15 am and then practice right after that. She doesn't get home until 8 pm." The commute is about an hour both ways for the Walzer family. Dianne says that "It's a huge commitment that takes an incredible amount of determination and hard work. My husband and I are very proud of her and look forward to this competition season.

**What do Hailee's Teammates Think?**

Nine-year-old Anna Acevedo shares the same sentiment as Hailee's mother, Dianne. Anna says, "I think Hailee works hard and she's good at doing flips!"

Ten-year-old Jerin says, "I think Hailee is a good gymnast and a really good friend."

**A Coach's Thoughts**

What is an athlete without a good coach? Pete is known all over the County for his 40-plus years of coaching locally. To train a gymnast to this level is not an easy task. He also talked about Hailee's work ethic.

"Hailee is an extremely hard worker. Even when she's tired from a long day, she finds a way to push through. At this level, the skills are very difficult, and gymnasts can struggle with fear and doubt. Hailee is willing to try anything to conquer her fear rather than succumb to it."



Hailee and Coach Pete at the NY Cup Invitational Competition.



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## The Last Word:

# *Are antler restrictions working?*

*Nineteen years ago the New York State Dept. of Environmental Conservation implemented antler restrictions in 11 Deer Management Units in the state, including the two that cover Sullivan County – 3H and 3K.*

*Under this statute, sportsmen can only harvest bucks that have at least three points on one side in these 11 DMUs.*

*Noted author and outdoorsman Peter Fiduccia lives in upstate New York and we asked him to write about his take on how this program – and the voluntary antler restriction program – has affected his hunting.*

By Peter Fiduccia

I would like to discuss New York's Mandatory Antler Restriction (MAR) program. Recently, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) decided to make Yearling Buck Protection (YBP), aka Mandatory Antler Restriction (MAR), voluntary for most of New York State (NYS).

Why?

Because that's what was concluded from data of the Structured Decision Making (SDM) study which sent out 7,000 surveys to hunters about this topic. Forty percent of the surveys were completed, and it was determined that the issue of YBP/MAR is a "social" or "political" issue with in the ranks of the hunting community.

Hence, the issues were "shelved" in zones termed "buck management zones" created by hunters in these areas.

In the end, the NYS DEC concluded, "After all returned information was studied, six different alternatives were in play.

They included:

1. Mandatory Antler Restriction (MAR) throughout all areas, all seasons, excepting youth hunters;
2. Partial MAR through early archery seasons extending through first week of regular season;
3. One Buck per Hunter;
4. Shorten Hunting Seasons by one week in the southern zone and two weeks in the northern zone;

5. Promote voluntary restraint on buck harvest; or

6. No changes. The topmost choice related to buck management was no change, with the second choice being for voluntary restraint.

The NYSDEC believed that regulatory opportunity focused on effectiveness of voluntary restraint. But the recent trends in New York about YBP/MAR demonstrated a significant downside tendency over the past decade, which indicated that voluntary restraint is already being embraced by hunters.

At that point NYSDEC Director Patricia Riexinger, was quoted as saying, "This issue is now behind the Department, and will not be brought up again for at least 5 years."

Consequently, MAR/YBP is dead and partially buried at this point throughout all of NYS (except in existing wildlife management units that already have MAR in NYS and will remain unchanged).

However, with all that said, I was somewhat disappointed about the outcome.

But I want to be perfectly clear about this point, I was not upset about it.

My feelings about YBP/MAR has always been that it should be embraced by hunters – but it should never be a mandatory statute by a state government agency.

Instead, MAR/YBP should always be the choice of each individual hunter.

I totally support voluntary MAR/YBP programs. I have had 23 years of personal experi-



**By allowing yearling bucks (inset) to go, sportsmen are seeing more mature – and larger – bucks in the field (above), which are mature in body as well as horn mass.**

ence following a MAR/YBP program on our 200 acres.

The day we bought the farm in 2001, we created the 8-Point Rule. No buck was to be killed with antlers less than 8 points. The only exception to that rule, then and now, was if a first-time hunter wanted to take a buck with fewer than 8 points, he or she could.

However, from then on, the hunter had to follow the 8-Point Rule.

But those are our rules. They should not have to be every hunter's rules. Should a hunter, who only has time to hunt on opening weekend, be forced to let a dandy 6- or 7-point buck, or smaller antlered buck for that matter, pass by?

I think not.

But I don't claim to be right, only that I follow a different choice.

In the end I do not force my MAR/YBP opinion on other hunters. I simply feel that would not be the right thing to do. I do, however, state my case about MAR/YBP so that hunters are

armed with all the facts. In my mind's eye, the end decision though, is to let each hunter make her or his decision on this subject. I do so without criticism or annoyance.

Deer hunting is supposed to be filled with enjoyment of the hunt, expectations, comrad-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 46

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ery, the pleasure of being successful, and the tablefare. Not about getting on a soapbox to make demands of a hunter about what type of antlered buck to pass up and what type of buck is okay to kill.

In closing, I will make this factual point. When we bought the land in 2001, a hunter on our land would be hard pressed to kill an 8-point buck that scored 100 Boone and Crockett inches.

In a short three years, that score was raised to

about 115 inches. In year five, it was common to take an 8-point buck that scored 120 inches or more. As of this upcoming 2024 season, we will have taken several 8-point bucks with antlers that measure 135 to 145 inches. And a few that scored more than that. So it is hard for me to say MAR/YBP does not work or payoff.

But hey – that’s me. It does not have to be you. If a hunter is happy with taking a 6-point or even a tall spike – have at it! You have my respect and congratulations! In the meantime, we’ll see what the NYSDEC does five years from now.

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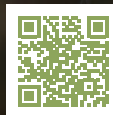
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