

2009 BIG GAME



THIS YEAR'S BIG GAME REPORT BRINGS NEWS OF EXPANDED OPPORTUNITIES FOR ELK, ANTELOPE AND BLACK BEAR HUNTING AS WELL AS TWO NEW HARVEST RECORDS THAT WERE SET IN THE 2008 DEER SEASON.

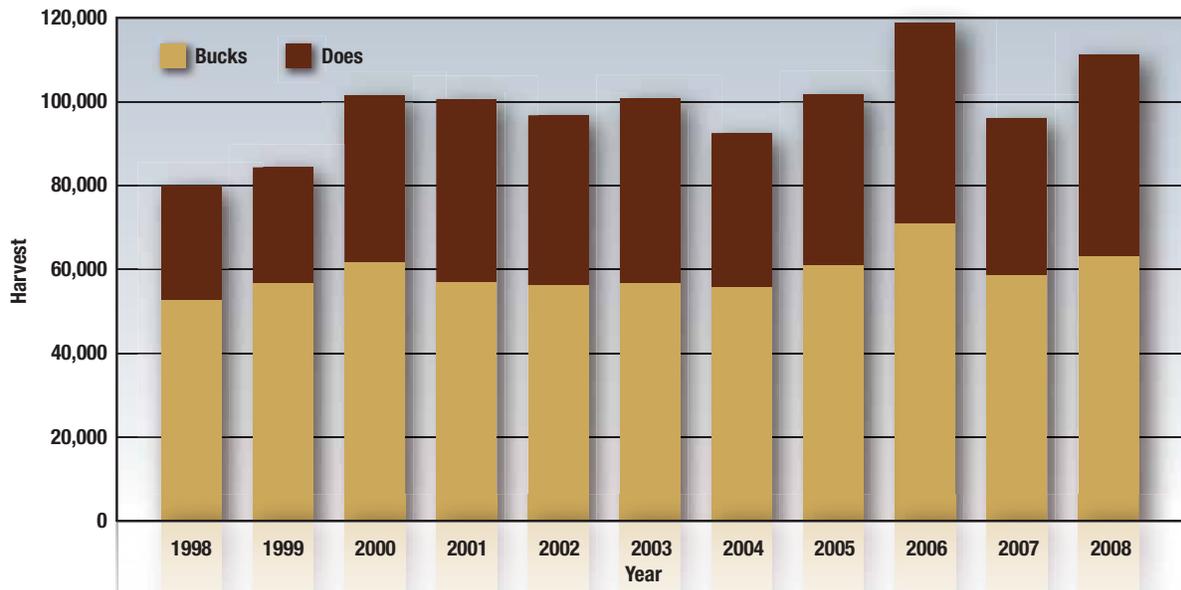
GAME REPORT

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TONY BYNUM/IMAGES ON THE WILDSIDE

FIGURE 1: HARVEST BY SEX 1998-2008



If antlerless harvest is any indication of the success of the slogan “Hunters in the know take a doe!” then it is clear that hunters are paying attention, as doe harvest reached an all time high with 48,358 does logged by deer check stations. Record No. 1 for the season!

In addition to the record doe harvest, Oklahoma archers set a new season harvest record this past year, taking 17,784 deer, helping greatly to push the annual deer take to the second highest level in state history.

Sportsmen and women brought home a total of 111,427 deer in 2008 (Table 1.). This was a 16 percent increase over last year’s take of 95,891 and was only 7,922 deer shy of our all-time total harvest record of 119,349 set in 2006. Figure 1. plots the annual deer harvest by sex for the past 10 years while Figure 2. shows the 2008 harvest broken down by individual season.

Hunters remembering the 2007 season will recall the heavy spring and summer rains that broke a long drought that had plagued much of the state. While deer hunters trying to hunt that year might not have appreciated the ample vegetation and wide-spread forage made available by the wet weather, the deer used it to their benefit and entered into the hunting season well fed and

well hidden. The result was an abundance of well-nourished deer surviving through the 2007 hunting season. It was these deer and their offspring that hunters were able to capitalize on in 2008.

Check station data continues to show that antlered bucks make up the largest portion of the harvest with 63,069 passing through the stations. This is an increase of 5,010 bucks over the 2007 harvest, but remains over 9,000 shy of the record buck harvest set in 2006. As mentioned previously, an additional 48,358 antlerless deer were recorded, an astonishing 10,526 more does than were taken in 2007.

Gun season continues to be the most popular of the deer seasons. Combining the regular gun season harvest with the youth-only and special holiday antlerless seasons, hunters using centerfire firearms were able to tag 71,889 deer in 2008. Hunters choosing to participate in the popular muzzleloading season added another 21,744 deer to the tally. Oklahoma archers continue to enjoy the longest of all our deer seasons, taking a record 17,784 deer in 2008.

FIGURE 2: 2008 DEER HARVEST BY SEASON TYPE

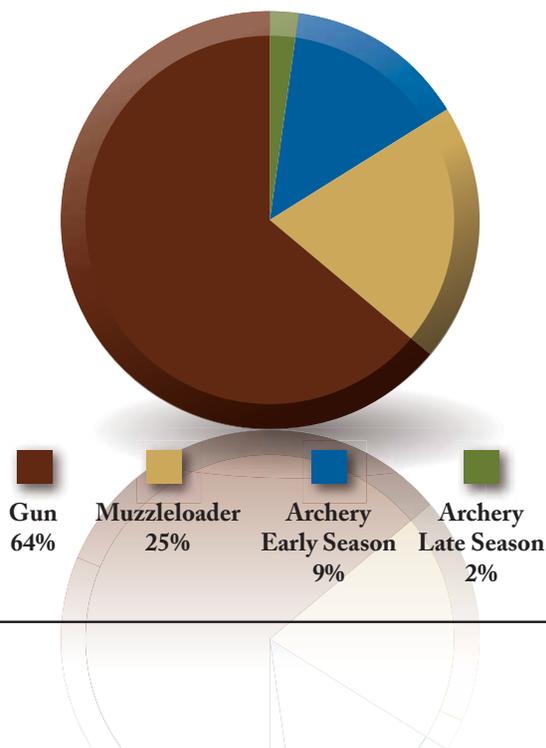


TABLE 1. 2008 DEER HARVEST SUMMARIZED BY SEASON

Season	Harvest	Percent
Archery, 1st split	15,127	13.5
Archery, 2nd split	2,657	2.4
Primitive	21,744	19.5
Gun	71,889	64.5
Total	111,427	99.9%

TABLE 2: 2008 COUNTY SUMMARY OF DEER KILLS BY HUNT TYPE

County	Archery Bucks	Archery Does	Gun Bucks	Gun Does	Muzzleloader Bucks	Muzzleloader Does	Total Bucks	Total Does	Grand Total
Adair	152	100	567	526	343	123	1,062	749	1,811
Alfalfa	110	132	524	600	148	131	782	863	1,645
Atoka	221	342	992	713	499	295	1,712	1,350	3,062
Beaver	42	15	365	158	54	30	461	203	664
Beckham	59	71	533	273	88	57	680	401	1,081
Blaine	49	52	363	309	58	50	470	411	881
Bryan	89	136	392	348	96	87	577	571	1,148
Caddo	108	106	707	508	196	101	1,011	715	1,726
Canadian	49	69	251	226	87	53	387	348	735
Carter	87	79	507	358	112	59	706	496	1,202
Cherokee	306	369	861	989	564	313	1,731	1,671	3,402
Choctaw	138	209	556	379	233	140	927	728	1,655
Cimarron	8	8	147	8	15	0	170	16	186
Cleveland	126	123	280	225	112	58	518	406	924
Coal	119	118	535	447	180	117	834	682	1,516
Comanche	36	31	200	142	57	35	293	208	501
Cotton	29	30	173	135	36	30	238	195	433
Craig	115	127	611	569	190	137	916	833	1,749
Creek	188	231	894	740	211	240	1,293	1,211	2,504
Custer	30	46	340	204	45	39	415	289	704
Delaware	236	211	749	697	298	163	1,283	1,071	2,354
Dewey	41	61	584	392	74	79	699	532	1,231
Ellis	60	60	668	416	73	59	801	535	1,336
Garfield	68	79	322	356	75	51	465	486	951
Garvin	64	60	350	233	94	60	508	353	861
Grady	62	74	379	343	119	77	560	494	1,054
Grant	107	142	663	737	183	158	953	1,037	1,990
Greer	44	50	333	209	66	44	443	303	746
Harmon	38	50	323	227	51	35	412	312	724
Harper	46	63	453	258	71	49	570	370	940
Haskell	198	200	616	560	329	143	1,143	903	2,046
Hughes	107	93	778	462	188	126	1,073	681	1,754
Jackson	76	86	355	249	55	41	486	376	862
Jefferson	47	35	245	136	57	16	349	187	536
Johnston	93	107	568	406	133	77	794	590	1,384
Kay	79	73	443	474	147	97	669	644	1,313
Kingfisher	60	63	312	315	113	62	485	440	925
Kiowa	44	65	289	176	40	41	373	282	655
Latimer	104	87	525	267	290	137	919	491	1,410
LeFlore	171	114	502	341	451	159	1,124	614	1,738
Lincoln	107	145	639	544	148	152	894	841	1,735
Logan	105	102	385	375	146	103	636	580	1,216
Love	53	80	279	191	54	48	386	319	705
Major	94	97	711	624	142	134	947	855	1,802
Marshall	59	91	216	172	50	52	325	315	640
Mayer	173	187	584	540	323	189	1,080	916	1,996
McClain	27	37	222	169	61	48	310	254	564
McCurtain	194	114	772	312	467	130	1,433	556	1,989
McIntosh	116	72	415	266	155	76	686	414	1,100
Murray	40	57	261	159	51	30	352	246	598
Muskogee	174	157	469	399	259	142	902	698	1,600
Noble	51	78	389	461	112	75	552	614	1,166
Nowata	72	61	536	448	107	109	715	618	1,333
Okfuskee	95	90	491	309	110	90	696	489	1,185
Oklahoma	123	114	178	141	39	44	340	299	639
Okmulgee	109	102	408	292	115	96	632	490	1,122
Osage	245	262	1,900	1,321	338	343	2,483	1,926	4,409
Ottawa	98	117	367	392	145	91	610	600	1,210
Pawnee	69	85	473	403	122	106	664	594	1,258
Payne	110	92	447	502	112	106	669	700	1,369
Pittsburg	364	386	1,463	729	638	254	2,465	1,369	3,834
Pontotoc	132	98	567	341	149	98	848	537	1,385
Pottawatomie	109	96	538	415	109	110	756	621	1,377
Pushmataha	199	265	915	525	593	234	1,707	1,024	2,731
Roger Mills	68	58	863	510	105	94	1,036	662	1,698
Rogers	190	245	571	500	137	131	898	876	1,774
Seminole	66	64	453	304	82	93	601	461	1,062
Sequoyah	243	241	735	695	567	232	1,545	1,168	2,713
Stephens	104	97	368	233	95	48	567	378	945
Texas	19	11	181	34	36	1	236	46	282
Tillman	34	52	271	199	28	26	333	277	610
Tulsa	63	76	169	99	23	35	255	210	465
Wagoner	111	119	308	288	160	101	579	508	1,087
Washington	78	65	443	255	76	50	597	370	967
Washita	19	31	252	196	43	29	314	256	570
Woods	109	104	788	649	163	125	1,060	878	1,938
Woodward	108	109	799	574	141	125	1,048	808	1,856
SUBTOTAL	7,936	8,424	39,081	29,677	12,432	7,719	59,449	45,820	105,269

TABLE 2 (CONTINUED): 2008 WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA SUMMARY OF DEER KILLS BY HUNT TYPE

WMA	Archery Bucks	Archery Does	Gun Bucks	Gun Does	Muzzleloader Bucks	Muzzleloader Does	Total Bucks	Total Does	Grand Total
Aitua-Lugert WMA	1	1	9	4	1	0	11	5	16
Atoka WMA	5	5	32	18	2	2	39	25	64
Beaver River WMA	4	1	39	7	11	0	54	8	62
Black Kettle WMA	18	22	230	133	49	52	297	207	504
Blue River WMA	5	1	1	0	0	0	6	1	7
Canton WMA	23	55	58	23	20	14	101	92	193
Cherokee GMA	4	11	32	34	27	10	63	55	118
Cherokee PHA	40	52	76	13	93	34	209	99	308
Chickasaw NRA	3	7	21	16	4	4	28	27	55
Cookson Hills WMA	6	5	19	26	7	11	32	42	74
Cooper WMA	3	2	19	3	2	0	24	5	29
Copan WMA	4	17	29	8	6	16	39	41	80
Deep Fork NWR	9	8	0	0	4	7	13	15	28
Deep Fork WMA	1	2	2	1	1	2	4	5	9
Ellis County WMA	3	5	25	2	5	4	33	11	44
Eufaula WMA	2	2	7	12	4	4	13	18	31
Fort Cobb SP	0	0	0	0	1	14	1	14	15
Fort Cobb WMA	11	16	4	4	0	0	15	20	35
Fort Gibson WMA	30	31	17	13	28	24	75	68	143
Fort Gibson WR	1	3	0	0	16	33	17	36	53
Fort Sill MR	39	26	70	42	56	33	165	101	266
Fort Supply WMA	15	17	41	13	7	0	63	30	93
Gruber WMA	6	13	33	5	36	25	75	43	118
Heyburn WMA	3	3	2	1	4	4	9	8	17
Hickory Creek WMA	1	1	7	13	4	5	12	19	31
Honobia Creek WMA	11	19	123	47	95	45	229	111	340
Hugo WMA	21	15	60	38	44	20	125	73	198
Hulah WMA	8	9	59	10	25	28	92	47	139
James Collins WMA	62	54	20	7	0	0	82	61	143
Kaw WMA	38	47	180	156	40	63	258	266	524
Keystone WMA	20	23	27	15	8	9	55	47	102
Lexington WMA	16	25	49	39	12	4	77	68	145
Little River NWR	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	2
Little River SP	4	0	0	1	0	0	4	1	5
Love Valley WMA	0	2	10	11	1	1	11	14	25
McAlester AAP	99	118	2	17	0	0	101	135	236
McCurtain Co. WA	0	1	1	0	3	0	4	1	5
McGee Creek WMA	7	4	12	2	9	5	28	11	39
Okmulgee GMA	2	4	14	7	0	0	16	11	27
Okmulgee PHA	4	1	3	1	1	0	8	2	10
Oologah WMA	1	1	3	3	0	1	4	5	9
Optima NWR	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
Optima WMA	10	2	17	1	9	0	36	3	39
Osage—Rock Creek WMA	1	0	6	1	3	3	10	4	14
Osage—W. Wall WMA	2	1	11	4	2	1	15	6	21
Ouachita WMA	14	15	79	43	93	17	186	75	261
Ouachita WMA McCurtain unit	5	1	9	4	4	0	18	5	23
Packsaddle WMA	4	4	45	19	8	0	57	23	80
Pine Creek WMA	1	1	6	4	1	0	8	5	13
Pushmataha WMA	11	5	11	7	32	15	54	27	81
Rita Blanca WMA	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	2
Robbers Cave WMA	1	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	2
Salt Plains NWR	0	2	94	99	20	20	114	121	235
Sandy Sanders WMA	3	4	8	3	4	0	15	7	22
Sequoyah NWR	0	0	0	0	5	8	5	8	13
Skiatook WMA	2	1	10	4	0	1	12	6	18
Spavinaw GMA	21	30	40	18	6	0	67	48	115
Spavinaw PHA	0	1	2	0	3	3	5	4	9
Stringtown WMA	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	3	3
Tenkiller WMA	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1
Three Rivers WMA	45	33	235	118	143	59	423	210	633
Tishomingo NWR	0	6	9	19	0	0	9	25	34
Tishomingo WMA	2	1	2	0	0	0	4	1	5
Washita Arm WMA	2	2	6	5	2	1	10	8	18
Washita NWR	0	0	3	40	0	0	3	40	43
Waurika WMA	5	7	0	0	0	0	5	7	12
Wichita Mts NWR	0	0	22	24	0	0	22	24	46
Wister WMA	7	7	18	11	17	11	42	29	71
WMA SUBTOTAL	669	755	1,972	1,169	979	614	3,620	2,538	6,158
COUNTY SUBTOTAL	7,936	8,424	39,081	29,677	12,432	7,719	59,449	45,820	105,269
GRAND TOTAL	8,605	9,179	41,053	30,846	13,411	8,333	63,069	48,358	111,427

Looking at county deer harvest, it is clear that some counties have an advantage when it comes to a tally of the deer taken within their borders. These counties are typically large in size, contain an abundance of deer habitat, and see high hunter participation. These factors help to keep these counties near the top of the harvest tally each year. In fairness to those counties that do not have a Wildlife Management Area within their borders, all WMA harvest data have been removed from these tallies.

The data presented in Table 2 provides a detailed summary of the entire 2008 harvest organized by county, season, and sex. From that table we can see that Osage County remained the top producing county with 4,409 deer when all seasons are combined. Pittsburg and Cherokee County once again switched their spots on the ranking list, with Pittsburg taking 3,834 deer to Cherokee County's 3,402. Atoka County jumped up the list to 4th place with 3,062 deer while its neighbor to the east, Pushmataha County, appears 5th on the list with 2,731. Other counties in the top ten list are Sequoyah (2,713), Creek (2,504), Delaware (2,354), Haskell (2,046), and Mayes (1,996). In total, 49 counties recorded deer kill numbers over 1,000.

The whitetail deer is far and away the most sought after big game in Oklahoma. However, hunters in the short-grass areas of the western edge of the state and into the Panhandle have the opportunity to take one of our state's "other" deer, a mule deer. This past season saw the harvest of 228 of these animals most commonly found in states west of Oklahoma. Cimarron County remains the top mule deer producer, with 118. Beaver County held on to second place with a harvest of 53 "mulies." Texas County added an additional 29 deer. Other counties recording mule deer in their check station books included Ellis (7), Woodward (6), Harper (5), Roger Mills (3), Major (3), and one each for Alfalfa, Beckham, Dewey, and Harmon.

Oklahoma topography is a study in contrasts. Depending on where you are standing, you can be looking over vast expanses of short-grass prairie, closed canopy pine forest, cross-timber oak savannah, tall-grass prairie, or a variety of other habitat types. Land use patterns are just as varied as the terrain. Even our weather patterns are different from one end of the state to the other. While that diversity makes Oklahoma very unique, it also cre-

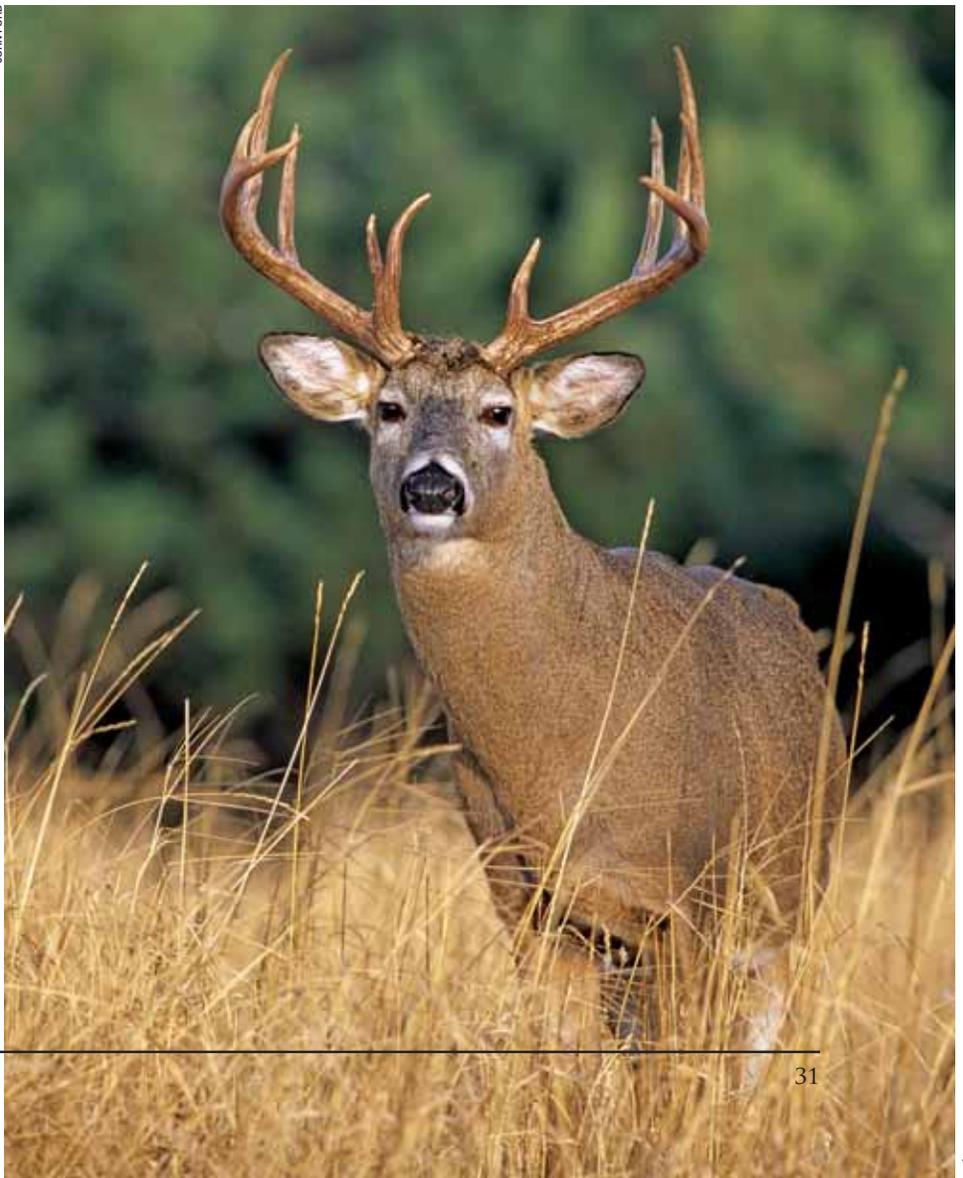
ates challenges in how to best manage our population of deer. Management practices that work well in one area might be detrimental to another. For these reasons the Wildlife Department utilizes a framework of 10 separate "Management Zones." These areas of similar herd and habitat characteristics allow for greater flexibility in setting regulations. For example, the low deer densities found in Zone 1 in the Panhandle require a conservative approach to doe harvest. In strong contrast is Zone 2 with its deep, fertile soils and expanses of agricultural ground and the associated high deer density requiring a much more aggressive antlerless harvest plan. Using the Management Zone framework allows the flexibility to shape regulations to best serve both the resource and the hunters who utilize the resource.

Within the Management Zone framework, two of the tools used to shape herd size and composition are the number of

antlerless days made available to hunters and the antlerless bag limit. These tools are used in conjunction with each other and in a balance with the herd and habitat characteristics found within an individual management zone to help manage population levels and buck:doe ratios to maintain healthy deer herds across the state.

The first tool is the antlerless deer bag limit. For the majority of the state, hunters during the muzzleloader and gun seasons were limited to one antlerless deer for each of those seasons. However, in Zone 2, with high deer densities and sex ratios greatly skewed in favor of female deer, the antlerless bag limit for muzzleloader and gun seasons were set at two. By increasing the individual hunter's bag limit, it is anticipated that greater numbers of antlerless deer will be removed, better balancing herd composition and reducing herd densities to a healthier level.

JOHN FORD



The second tool for managing antlerless harvest is the establishment and timing of antlerless hunting days. Across all of Oklahoma, hunters had various opportunities to harvest antlerless deer. Some areas had very liberal “doe days” while others offered more conservative opportunities. Depending upon the Management Zone hunted, sportsmen and women were given antlerless hunting opportunities in archery, muzzleloader, and rifle seasons. Additionally, antlerless hunting opportunities were again offered in December as well as the October youth-only season for hunters under 18 accompanied by a non-hunting adult.

Hunters took ample advantage of the antlerless opportunities available to them in 2008 taking over 10,000 more antlerless deer than were taken in 2007. While that increase might seem alarming, it is important to recall that the 2007 antlerless harvest was below average. This new record is only slightly above the average doe harvest from the past eight years. Taken as a percentage of the total deer harvest, antlerless deer comprised 43.4 percent of the deer taken this past year. This is an increase over the 39.5 percent average that had been recorded for the previous three years. Oklahoma hunters should be commended for their dedication to doe harvest efforts. Each time a hunter bags a deer he/she has made a management decision that will affect population growth, herd health, buck:doe ratios, and habitat quality and quantity. Adequate

doe harvest is a positive step in ensuring that quality deer hunting will continue to be enjoyed by our hunters.

The combined season limit for all deer archery, primitive, gun, and youth-only seasons was no more than six deer per individual. Of the six deer allowed, no more than two of them could be antlered bucks. Any deer taken by hunters participating in the holiday antlerless seasons or deer taken through the ODWC controlled hunts process are considered “bonus deer” and would not count towards the hunter’s limit of six deer.

ARCHERY SEASON

As was mentioned in the introductory remarks of this report, Oklahoma archers set a new bow season harvest record. A total of 17,784 deer fell to “stick and string” hunters. Assisting archers in the establishment of this record was the bag limit increase implemented for the 2008 season. For the first time, archers wishing to take their full combined season limit of six deer could accomplish that feat with the addition of two deer to the archery bag limit. Within that bag limit, no more than two antlered deer could be taken.

As rifle season hunters continue to have great success connecting with their quarry, there seems to be more and more hunters looking to the extra challenge of hunting with archery equipment. While a quick glance at the archery section of any hunting supply catalog in no way brings to mind the term “primitive,” when it boils

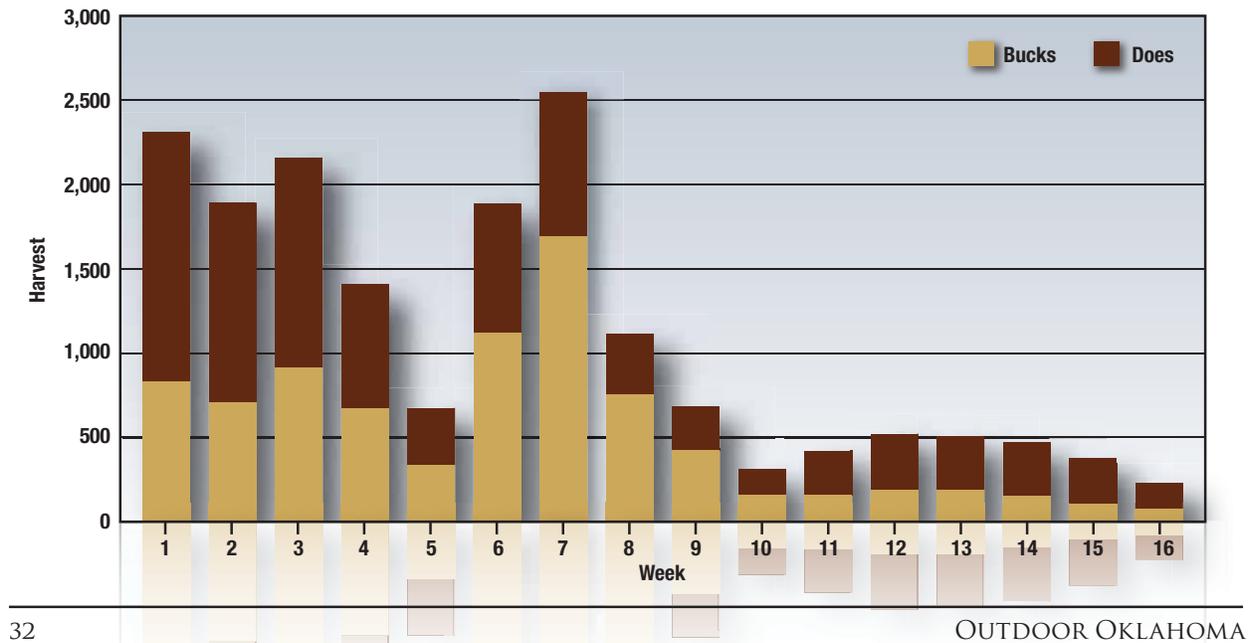
down to fooling the senses of an alert deer, raising and drawing a bow, and releasing an arrow to find its mark, archery hunting retains a close kinship with those native hunters who first roamed Oklahoma’s woods and prairies. The close proximity of the hunter to the prey can add the extra excitement that many hunters thrive on. Combined with the added challenge, many archery hunters take up the sport to enjoy greater opportunity to be in the woods, as archery season is the longest of our deer seasons. The Department’s annual Game Harvest Survey indicated that an estimated 83,335 hunters participated in archery deer hunting in 2008.

The bow season opener remained the traditional Oct. 1 date marked on many calendars going back for decades. The season continued, uninterrupted, until it closed on Jan. 15. For the first time, the period from Jan. 1-15 was open for buck hunting in addition to antlerless deer.

To allow comparison to historical data from the time when archery season was split into two separate seasons, current archery data is divided into two portions. The “early season” took place from Oct. 1 and continued through youth rifle and primitive seasons, coming to an end with the start of rifle season on Nov. 22. This period saw the harvest of 15,127 deer, or 85 percent of the total archery kill for 2008.

The second portion of the archery season began on Nov. 23 and continued to the close of the season on Jan. 15. This “late season” accounted for an additional

FIGURE 3: 2008 ARCHERY HARVEST BY WEEK (INCLUDES CONTROLLED HUNTS)



2,657 deer, 15 percent of the total for the entire season.

Combining both data collection period and comparing it to the number of archery hunters indicated that Oklahoma archers enjoyed a fantastic 21 percent success ratio.

The previous archery season record of 17,567 was set in 2006.

A breakdown of the harvest by season, sex, county and wildlife management area is shown in Table 2. Figure 3 shows the number of bucks and does harvested during each week of the archery season.

MUZZLELOADER SEASON

For many Oklahoma hunters, muzzleloader season is the one season they look forward to above all others. Time spent in the woods during this time of year often rewards hunters with brilliant fall foliage displays, pleasant days and cold nights, and the beginnings of rutting activity that has deer on the move. It is estimated that 100,531 hunters took to the woods to participate in this season that opened on Oct. 25 and continued for nine days, closing on Nov. 2.

Hunters were allowed a bag limit of one antlered and two antlerless deer, one of which had to have been taken within Management Zone 2. With the exception of Management Zone 1, all of Oklahoma was open to some amount of antlerless harvest. All muzzleloader season deer were counted towards the hunter's annual combined limit of six deer.

Statewide, primitive hunters managed to bag 21,744 deer, a 10 percent decrease from the 2007 kill. Comparing the number of hunters against the harvest yielded a success rate of 22 percent. Figure 4 charts the muzzleloader harvest by day and sex.

GUN SEASON

Other than bedlam football weekend or perhaps Christmas morning, it is hard to envision any event that would have nearly 154,000 Oklahomans as excited as they were when deer rifle season opened on Nov. 22. The tough season of 2007 was behind them as they took to the woods in earnest, hoping to fill the freezer and maybe connect with the buck of a lifetime. An additional 36,282 hunters participated in the holiday antlerless season. Getting the first opportunity to be in the deer woods with a rifle, an estimated 1,021 youth participated in the early youth-only



season. In total, nearly 190,000 hunters took to the woods of Oklahoma with a firearm in 2008.

Hunters under the age of 18 were the first to put on the blaze orange, with youth season opening Oct. 17 and closing the following Sunday on Oct. 19. The limit for this season was set at two deer — one antlered and one antlerless. These deer did count toward the combined season limit of six deer, but were separate from the regular rifle season limit, allowing youth hunters the opportunity to hunt the regular rifle season as well.

The regular rifle season began on Nov.

22, and for the sixth consecutive year, continued for 16 days, closing Dec.

7. The bag limit was three deer, only one of which could be antlered. Hunters taking more than one doe were required to harvest at least one of them from within Management Zone 2. All deer taken during this season counted toward each hunter's combined season limit of six deer.

Combining all of the 2008 gun seasons (regular gun,

youth-only, and holiday antlerless), Oklahoma hunters tagged 71,899 deer. This is slightly more than 11,000 above what was taken during the same seasons in 2007.

Opening weekend of rifle season traditionally shows the highest number of bucks taken all year. This past season continued that trend when 24 percent of the total rifle season bucks were tagged on opening day. An additional 17 percent of the buck harvest took place on the opening Sunday. In total, 41 percent of the total antlered bucks taken during rifle season were taken opening weekend. Buck harvest slowed during the following week, but,

FIGURE 4: 2008 PRIMITIVE HARVEST BY DAY (INCLUDES CONTROLLED HUNTS)

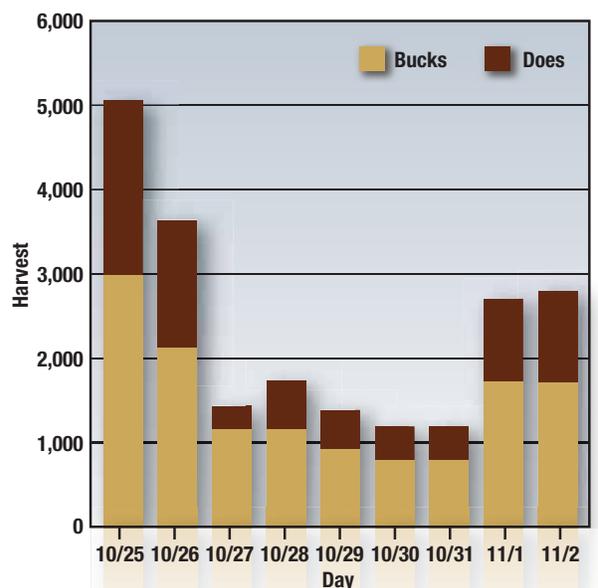


FIGURE 5: 2008 PERCENTAGE OF ANTLERED GUN BUCK HARVEST BY DATE

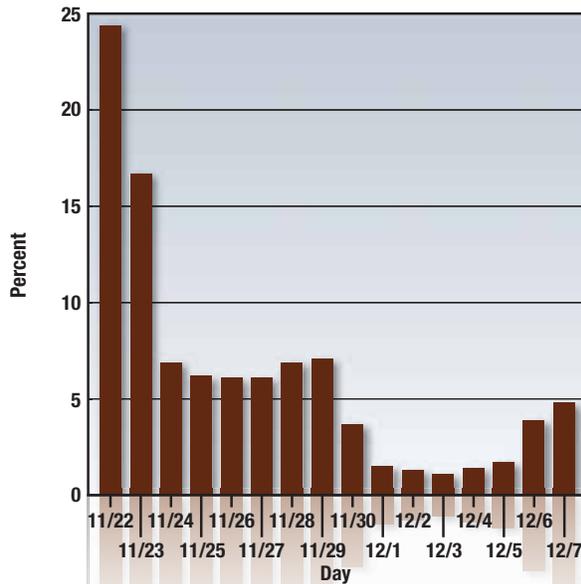


FIGURE 6: 2008 GUN HARVEST BY DAY (INCLUDES CONTROLLED HUNTS)

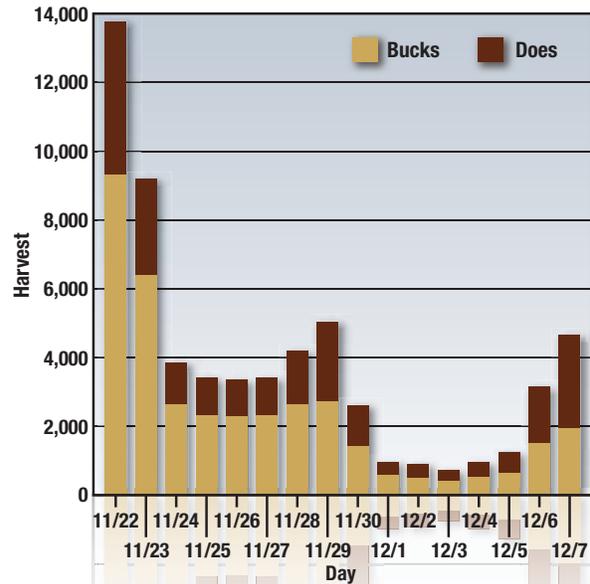
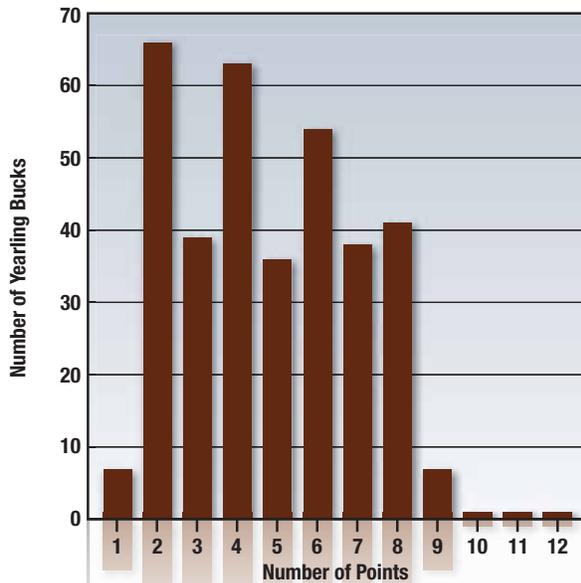


FIGURE 7: 2008 YEARLING BUCK ANTLER POINTS



predictably, picked up with the coming of the second weekend of the season. The final week of the season found 5,861 bucks arriving at deer check stations. Figure 5 details the adult buck harvest by day for the entire 16-day rifle season. A graphical representation of the number of bucks and does harvested during rifle season is shown in Figure 6.

The holiday antlerless seasons, held around the Christmas holiday to allow maximum opportunity for hunter par-

combined. Hunters managed to take home 4,693 deer over these two weekends.

ELK HUNTS

Each year thousands of Oklahomans log on to the Department's website and place their names in contention for one of the coveted elk controlled hunt permits. The popularity of the program is so great that it is maintained as a once-in-lifetime format, so that, once successfully drawn for an elk hunt, hunters cannot be drawn ever again.

participation, was again popular with Oklahoma hunters. Game Harvest Survey data indicated that 36,282 hunters went afield for one last chance at a late season antlerless deer. The Holiday Antlerless Season was available for hunters in all Management Zones with the exception of Zones 1 and 10. The season was open for two weekends, Dec. 19-21 and again Dec. 26-28. The limit remained at one antlerless deer, which did not count against the hunter's overall six deer combination limit for all seasons

This past year, 192 permits were available for the Wichita Mountains National Wildlife Refuge, the Cookson Hills WMA, and the Pushmataha WMA.

One hundred and ninety of the available permits were for the Wichita Mountains NWR located just outside of Lawton in southwest Oklahoma. A total of 150 cow-only permits were drawn, along with an additional 40 bull permits. Of the 150 successful applicants for cow permits, 122 arrived to participate in the hunt. Those hunters were rewarded with a one in two chance of going home with one of the 61 cows taken. Bull hunters typically enjoy a much higher success rate than their cow hunting counterparts. This trend continued in 2008 for the 39 bull hunters arriving at the Refuge. While all of the hunters participating no doubt enjoyed the experience, for 32 (or 82 percent) of the hunters it was especially satisfying, not only providing them a "once in a lifetime" experience of hunting this rugged area, but also filling their freezers with delicious elk steaks and roasts.

While much smaller in scale, the elk hunts offered on the two ODWC Wildlife Management Areas were no less in scale in terms of excitement offered to the two lucky hunters drawing the permits. One either-sex permit was available for the Cookson Hills WMA and another was up for grabs on the Pushmataha WMA. Both areas produced fine bulls for the hunters drawing these coveted permits, continuing the 100 percent success streak for these two areas.



Oklahoma again offered a private lands elk season in the area surrounding the Wichita Mountains NWR. This hunt is designed to take advantage of the elk that have managed to escape off the Refuge and have taken up residence in the surrounding counties. As this herd expands, it continues to put pressure on local agricultural producers both with foraging loss and with fence damage caused by these large animals. In an effort to reduce this damage and to allow Oklahoma hunters an additional hunting opportunity, elk hunting was again available to persons obtaining written landowner permission in Caddo, Comanche, and Kiowa counties. To better manage these elk, they were divided into two zones with different season dates and harvest limit restrictions. The Granite Hills/West Zone was located west of State Highway 115. The bag limit for this zone was established at one elk of either sex. On the opposite side of the highway, hunters were allowed

two elk (one of which must have been antlerless) in the Slick Hills/East zone. Season dates were also different for the two zones. A total of 68 elk were taken on these private lands hunts in 2008, 24 bulls and 44 cows. Limited hunting also occurred on the Ft. Sill military base. Hunters there bagged an additional 25 elk, bringing the state-wide total to 188 in 2008.

ANTELOPE HUNTS

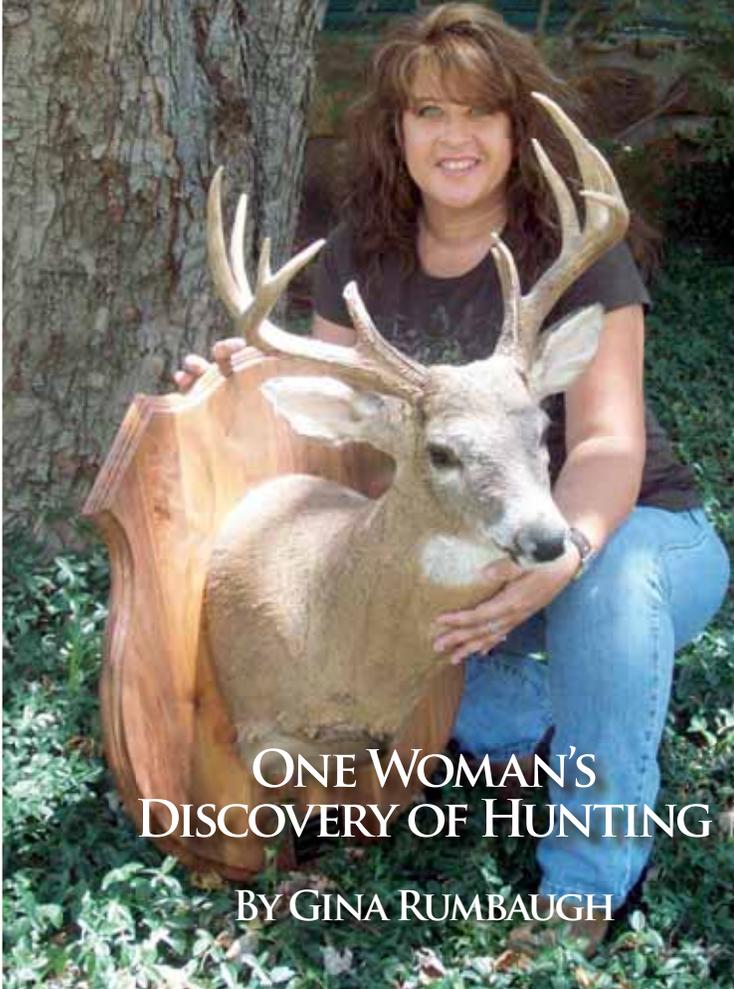
The second “once-in-a-lifetime” opportunity afforded Oklahoma hunters via the

controlled hunts process is the chance to hunt pronghorn antelope in the panhandle. Although very limited by habitat require-
(Continued on page 38)

EXPANDED ELK HUNTING OPPORTUNITIES

An expansion of elk season into northeast Oklahoma will increase opportunities for hunters while addressing agricultural depredation from elk. The Wildlife Department has created a private lands elk season in northeast Oklahoma, specifically in Sequoyah, Muskogee, Adair, Cherokee, Delaware and Mayes counties. For more information, log on to wildlifedepartment.com

A BUCK TO REMEMBER



ONE WOMAN'S DISCOVERY OF HUNTING

BY GINA RUMBAUGH

Gina Rumbaugh pictured with her first deer, an 11-point that she harvested after three years of looking for the right opportunity. After several years of hunting, Rumbaugh just wishes she hadn't waited so long to see what hunting was all about. Today she enjoys the sport and the time it allows her to spend with her family.

It was November 19, 2006, the second day of rifle season. The alarm would be blaring any minute now. I thought to myself how nice it would be to just turn it off and sleep in for change, but a little voice inside my head said, "No, you better go. Today might be the day." I listened to that voice. After all, my husband, Jeff and I had seen several deer the previous day. A little reluctantly, I rolled out of bed and began preparing for another day of whitetail deer hunting.

A half hour later, we emerged from our comfortable suburban home into the early morning darkness. It was cold and there was no wind at all. Jeff commented that these were the perfect conditions

for the deer to be moving. For the second time that morning, I thought to myself, "Yes, today might be the day."

During the drive to our place in the woods, my husband thought aloud about the deer we had seen yesterday. He had 30 years of deer hunting experience, so I listened, but I was glad he let me choose the spot on the hill overlooking a deep ravine. Was it the best place to see a deer? I couldn't be sure, but the view was as pretty as a picture. If I was going to be sitting there for the next four hours in the chilly fall air, I might as well enjoy the scenery.

Just as the sun began to illuminate the horizon, I climbed off the back of our four-wheeler to get situated, and Jeff continued on to the spot he had chosen about a quarter of a mile away. With the help of

IF SOMEONE HAD TOLD ME 10 YEARS AGO THAT I WOULD SOMEDAY BE A DEER AND ELK HUNTER, I WOULD HAVE SAID, "YOU'RE CRAZY!"

I ONLY WISH THAT I HAD CONSIDERED THE PROSPECT EARLIER IN MY LIFE.

my small flashlight, I quickly found a tree to sit under. I would be on the ground and was thankful for the seat cushion which I placed next to the tree. With minimal movement, I was in place and satisfied with my position. The ground was sloped so that with my feet out in front of me, I could

bend my knees for the perfect height to rest my Winchester 270. For comfort's sake, I could not have picked a better place to hunt.

As the sun crept up in the morning sky, I listened to the woods come alive. Two owls called out to one another as they flew from tree to tree above me. A squirrel scampered about in the oak leaves just a few feet away. Various small birds whistled and chirped as they darted in and out of the nearby brush. Brilliant colored leaves crackled as they occasionally fluttered to the ground. Every now and then a shot could be heard in the distance, but not near as many as I had heard the previous day. I was thankful for my surroundings and silently said a prayer of praise for this beautiful fall day and asked the Lord to allow me the opportunity to see a buck.

After about an hour and a half, the cold began to be a hindrance to me. It wasn't a bone chilling, finger freezing, toe numbing cold, but it was enough to make me need to blow my nose. I didn't want to make a move that might be seen, but I finally had no choice. I had to lower my gun and reach into my pocket for the pack of tissues I had brought.

I blew my nose as quietly as possible. Then as I lowered the tissue and returned it to my pocket, I caught a glimpse of a doe approximately 150 yards away as she turned and took flight.

Anxiously I scanned the forest with my eyes, but did not see or hear her again. For a little while, I kept my gaze fixed on the location where I had seen her. I had been told that during the rut, bucks would travel a few minutes behind a doe. After 10 minutes or so without another sighting, I became a little disheartened. Had I literally blown my chances of seeing my first buck?

I sat thinking about how I came to be in this place. Even though I had been married to a hunter for 20 years, I had only been involved in hunting for the last three. When our daughters were small, it never occurred to me that hunting might be something I would enjoy. Then a few years ago, my husband and I became painfully aware that we no longer had anything in common. We had lost the closeness we once shared. But our strained relationship changed for the better when my husband asked me to go on his annual hunting trip to Colorado. I went as an observer, but to the surprise of both of us, I loved it. Riding through the aspen-covered mountains on horseback was like nothing

PHOTO COURTESY OF GINA RUMBAUGH



The author enjoys hunting and shooting as well as other outdoor sports, but she didn't realize it until she went hunting with her husband.

I had ever experienced. In no time at all, I was spotting elk, deer, and turkey in their natural habitats. As a younger woman, I would have never considered hunting, but I did not understand the important role that hunting plays in wildlife management. Going hunting with my husband made me see things in a whole new light.

Upon returning to Oklahoma, I enrolled in one of the Wildlife Department's hunter education courses so that I could get in on the action. I was surprised that there were other women and a young girl in my class with the same desire to hunt.

I sat right beside my husband the first year that I actually carried my own gun to the woods. The second year we hunted a apart but still close by each other. He got a doe, but I didn't see a thing.

Today, though, I was totally on my own. But I had learned enough from watching Jeff and the numerous hunting shows on television that I was comfortable in my surroundings and knew what I should and should not do. I had learned that being still and quiet was essential to being a successful whitetail hunter, so that is what I focused on.

Then I saw him!

At the exact spot where the doe had been half an hour earlier, only about 150 yards away, stood a buck. I thought I was seeing things when I counted at least eight points. When I clicked off my safety, the buck raised his head and looked toward me. Then I began to shake, and for a minute, I thought I would be overcome by buck fever. I took a deep breath, offered up a prayer, and pulled the trigger.

The next few seconds seemed to pass in slow motion. The animal jumped straight up in the air and bolted into the dense brush. No longer being able to see or hear him, I stood up to get a better view and watched the buck go down. Unbelievable! I had killed my first deer.

After dancing for sheer joy, I became overwhelmed with emotion. This was indeed the day I had been waiting for. I wondered if Jeff had heard my shot. Would he ride up momentarily on the four-wheeler? Should I stay here and wait for him?

The anticipation was too great. I slung my rifle across my back and started to make my way across the ravine and through the

FEMALE HUNTING LICENSE SALES SINCE 2000

2000	2005	2008
6,928	6,458	8,227

FEMALE DEER HUNTING LICENSE SALES SINCE 2000

2000	2005	2008
8,617	11,017	16,759

Like Rumbaugh, other women are discovering their interest in hunting. These numbers show the increase in hunting license sales to women in Oklahoma since 2000.

thorny brush. It took me about 30 minutes of searching, but I found the buck. In disbelief, I counted not eight, but 11 points!

At that point, emotions came in a flood. The tears started coming and wouldn't stop. I had to find my husband and tell him what I had done.

I may have been cold all morning, but now I was burning up as I struggled through the waist-high grass in heavy boots and thick coveralls as I made my way to where Jeff was hunting. When I thought I could go no further, I just started calling out his name. After a brief time, I heard the idle of a four-wheeler. Then my husband came into view. He took one look at the tears running down my face and asked what had happened.

I could barely speak, but managed to convey my message.

"Eleven point," I said.

He accused me of joking. Then his jaw dropped to the ground when he realized I was serious. His look of awe turned to elation, and he hugged me and bombarded me with a barrage of questions.

"Where did you shoot him?"

"How far away was he?"

"Where were you sitting?"

"Were there other deer with him?"

"Are you sure he is down?"

"Can you find him again?"

I hardly had a chance to answer one question before the next one was out of his mouth. He wanted to know everything, and I was glad to tell him.

When we got back to the impressive buck, Jeff could not stop grinning as he shook his head in disbelief.

"I have been hunting for 30 years and never even seen a buck this big, much less to have a shot at one," he said.

He was truly amazed when he examined the shot placement, which was right where I aimed. I told him that if not for having such a good teacher, I would never have succeeded.

After field-dressing the deer, we transported it to the nearest hunter check station and then to a local meat processor. A couple of Jeff's friends met us there when they heard the news. I don't know who was more proud – me or my husband. He contacted a taxidermist immediately.

For the next few days, my thoughts were consumed with the details of that hunt. I will never forget that moment or the emotions I experienced. I had started that day with some reluctance, but thankfully I listened to that voice that told me, "Today might be the day."

It was indeed! I had not only been blessed with the sight of a big buck, but had actually harvested my first deer.

Three years later, my husband and I are still hunting together. We have also discovered other outdoor activities that we enjoy like boating and fishing. All of these hobbies help us stay connected year-round. In addition, our two teenage daughters regularly join us in our outdoor adventures. The youngest has recently expressed her interest in taking a hunter education course.

If someone had told me 10 years ago that I would someday be a deer and elk hunter, I would have said, "You're crazy!" I only wish that I had considered the prospect earlier in my life. Even when my children were small, it would have provided a welcome respite from the demands of work and running a busy household. I now look forward to every opportunity to get outdoors and enjoy what nature has to offer. To this day, I carry a picture of that mounted deer with me on my cell phone, and I welcome the chance to tell women and men about how hunting has benefited my family. 🦌

—Gina Rumbaugh is a 5th-grade teacher who lives with her husband and two daughters in Broken Arrow.



JOHN FORD

ANTELOPE HUNTERS GET 14-DAY ARCHERY SEASON IN 2009

New for 2009, Oklahoma will hold a 14-day antelope archery season in parts of the Panhandle.

The archery season will run from Sept. 14 through Sept. 27 and will be open in Cimarron Co. and that portion of Texas Co. west of Hwy 136. Licenses can be purchased over-the-counter, and landowner permission is required.

According to Alan Peoples, chief of wildlife for the Wildlife Department, information gathered from biological data, aerial surveys and requests from landowners show that the Panhandle's antelope population can sustain the new archery season.

Until now, antelope hunting in Oklahoma has been limited to hunts offered through the Wildlife Department's Controlled Hunts program, in which hunters had to be drawn for an antelope hunt. Antelope hunts will still be offered through the Controlled Hunts program in addition to the new archery season. 🦌

ments, these unique mammals continue to populate this area of our state in numbers large enough to allow limited hunting opportunities. This past year 200 doe-only and 65 either-sex permits were offered. Of the hunters drawn for the hunt, 144 made the trip to the panhandle to participate in the hunts, taking 57 bucks and 68 does. An additional limited number of permits were made available to landowners in the area.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

It could easily be argued that Oklahoma has more types of deer habitat than any other state in the nation. Perhaps only Texas can challenge our variety and diversity of deer habitat available inside our borders. Within our state, hunters can find deer in mesa/canyon country in the panhandle, dense swamps in the far southeastern coastal plain, mesquite thickets in the southwest, or far reaching Big Bluestem prairies in the northeast. Deer can be hunted in areas where your trip to your hunting site might not ever leave paved roads to places so remote that the thought of packing a deer out on foot might make a hunter think twice before filling a tag. You can harvest a deer that has never seen a tree over 10 ft. tall, or you can harvest one that has never stepped foot in a cultivated field. If you can think of a potential type of whitetail habitat, chances are you can find it somewhere in our diverse state.

Because we are so diverse, our deer management strategy has to be flexible. Just as these different habitat types must be considered when picking a hunting strategy, they must also be evaluated for their enormous influence on the number of deer the area can support, as well as the physical characteristics of individual deer living in that habitat.

Although information collected at the county level is often useful to sportsmen, biologists are more concerned with tabulation and analysis of deer kills in small areas called Deer Kill Location Units or "DKLs" and aggregations of these DKLs known as "Harvest Units" (Figure 8). Harvest Units are regions that, by virtue of similar habitat and herd conditions, lend themselves to being managed as separate units with specific management objectives. Harvest Units with similar habitats have the inherent capability of supporting deer

TABLE 3: 2008 STATEWIDE FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF YEARLING BUCK ANTLER POINTS

Number of Points	Number of Deer Sampled	Percent
1	7	2.0
2	66	18.6
3	39	11.0
4	63	17.8
5	36	10.2
6	54	15.3
7	38	10.7
8	41	11.6
9	7	2.0
10	1	0.3
11	1	0.3
12	1	0.3

populations of similar qualities and densities. Trends in weight and antler characteristics can be examined to determine which units are most likely to produce the density or quality of animals desired.

Yearling bucks (those that are 1.5 years old) are especially good barometers of a herd's physical condition. Their high vulnerability to harvest usually insures a large sample to examine, and these deer have the burden of growing their first set of antlers when body growth is not complete. This makes them especially sensitive to prevailing range conditions. When yearlings have well-developed antlers with many points and large beam diameters, the herd can be considered healthy. Of the 366 yearling bucks examined in

2008, 68 percent had four or more points (Figure 7). Differences in biological potential, range condition, and deer density are reflected in Table 5. Data collected at deer check stations in 2008 continued to show the relationship between habitat conditions and the physical condition of the deer in our state. The Harvest Units in the northwest quadrant of our state (Units 1-5) are typified by deeper, more fertile soils and an abundance of agricultural activity. As a result, we typically see heavier, better nourished deer from this area when compared to other, lower quality habitats around the state. In contrast, Harvest Units 9 and 10 exhibit rocky, shallow soils that support more closed canopy forest than agriculture. With this

TABLE 4: 2008 STATEWIDE DISTRIBUTION OF ADULT DEER AGES

Age in Years	Sex			
	Bucks		Does	
	Number Sampled	Percent	Number Sampled	Percent
1.5	366	26.6	477	21.5
2.5	443	32.2	616	27.8
3.5	363	26.4	527	23.7
4.5	129	9.4	268	12.1
5.5	48	3.5	162	7.3
6.5	15	1.1	56	2.5
7.5	7	0.5	49	2.2
8.5	3	0.2	37	1.7
9.5	0	0	25	1.1
10.5	0	0	2	0.1

reduction in the quality of habitat comes a reduction in deer body size and antler growth, as shown in Table 5.

Each year for the past few decades, natural resources students are hired from selected state universities to collect deer jaws at different check stations across the state. Together with data collected from cooperators enrolled in the Department's Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP) and deer harvested on Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs), the student-pulled jaws provide the herd age structure data that is needed for informed management decisions.

During the 2008 season, 4,269 individual jaws were removed and analyzed using the tooth wear and eruption method to determine the age of the deer at the time it was harvested. This sample size is slightly less than 4 percent of the total number of deer harvested. This valuable data, collected at check stations across the state, is shown in Table 4 and the following figures. The ages given in these figures are divided into half-year increments. While this might seem odd, if you remember that fawns are born in the spring, the first opportunity they have at being harvested is roughly six months, or half a year later. If that fawn survives its first hunting season, at the end of the next hunting season it would be one-and-a-half years old, and so on until the deer is harvested or is removed from the population by natural mortality.

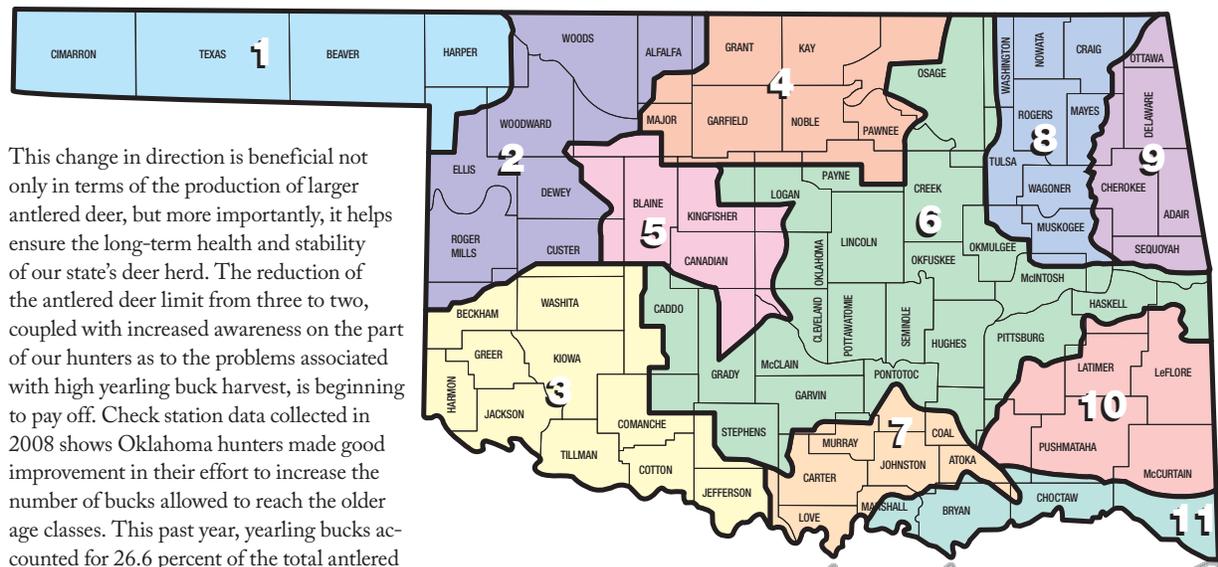
As deer hunters continue to enjoy high success rates, many hunters have changed their goal from simply harvesting a legal buck to taking older, more mature males.

TABLE 5: PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF YEARLING AND ADULT DEER BY HARVEST UNIT, 2008 HARVEST (INCLUDES WMA STATISTICS)

Harvest Unit	Yearling Bucks			Adult Bucks		Adult Does	
	Average Weight ¹	Antler Points	Percent Spikes	Average Weight	Average Age	Average Weight	Average Age
1	101 (10)	4.4	20.0	137 (34)	3.4	89 (51)	3.4
2	100 (7)	5.0	14.3	133 (45)	3.5	96 (103)	3.8
3	109 (4)	6.7	25.0	138 (40)	3.4	96 (69)	3.3
4	108 (8)	5.6	25.0	138 (58)	3.3	97 (200)	3.4
5	104 (9)	4.7	0.0	128 (27)	2.6	94 (53)	3.0
6	93 (95)	5.8	12.6	112 (303)	2.7	85 (330)	3.3
7	91 (21)	6.3	4.8	121 (116)	3.2	86 (327)	3.3
8	96 (46)	5.0	10.9	116 (151)	2.5	86 (183)	3.0
9	77 (94)	3.5	42.6	97 (293)	2.6	75 (294)	3.5
10	87 (59)	5.3	11.9	111 (245)	3.1	79 (377)	3.7
11	94 (13)	4.7	15.4	118 (62)	3.0	81 (232)	3.3

¹ all weights hog-dressed, sample size shown in parentheses

FIGURE 8: OKLAHOMA DEER HARVEST UNITS



This change in direction is beneficial not only in terms of the production of larger antlered deer, but more importantly, it helps ensure the long-term health and stability of our state's deer herd. The reduction of the antlered deer limit from three to two, coupled with increased awareness on the part of our hunters as to the problems associated with high yearling buck harvest, is beginning to pay off. Check station data collected in 2008 shows Oklahoma hunters made good improvement in their effort to increase the number of bucks allowed to reach the older age classes. This past year, yearling bucks accounted for 26.6 percent of the total antlered harvest. That figure is 12 percent lower than the number of yearling bucks harvested just one year ago! This trend of emphasizing the harvest of older-aged bucks, along with adequate antlerless harvest, will help bring buck:doe ratios into a more natural and healthy balance and facilitate healthy herds and excellent hunting for the future.

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREAS

The demands placed on the Department's Wildlife's Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) continues to grow as Oklahoma becomes less agrarian and more

urban/suburban. While many states enjoy a wealth of public land, that is not the case in Oklahoma. Ninety-five percent of Oklahoma's land area is under private control. Approximately three percent of the state, or roughly 1.6 million acres, is owned or managed by the Department. With such limited space and the ever growing need for public-access hunting, deer herds on Department WMAs can easily be over-pressured. In addition to concerns over herd health, hunter safety and hunt quality can become an issue as more hunters attempt to utilize the limited public areas.

One obvious solution to these issues is the acquisition of additional public lands. To that end, the Wildlife Department is actively seeking out additional parcels of land to add to our growing list of WMAs. The Department is also active in building partnerships with other state and federal agencies to gain hunter access to properties they control.

In addition to land acquisition and new partnerships, a second method of addressing hunter access issues while still allowing for the proper management of the resource

(Continued on page 42)

FIGURE 9: 2008 ADULT BUCK AGE DISTRIBUTION (IN YEARS)

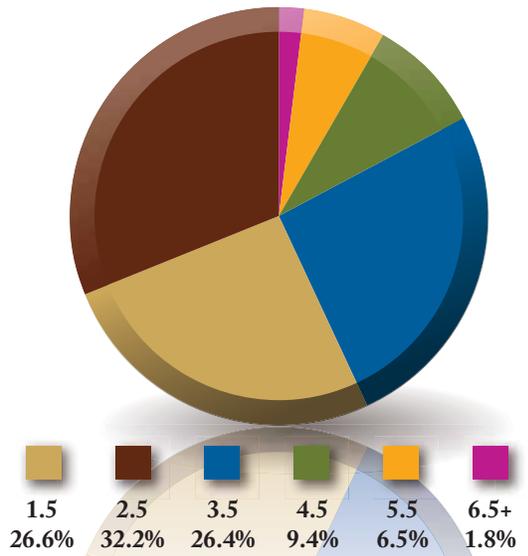
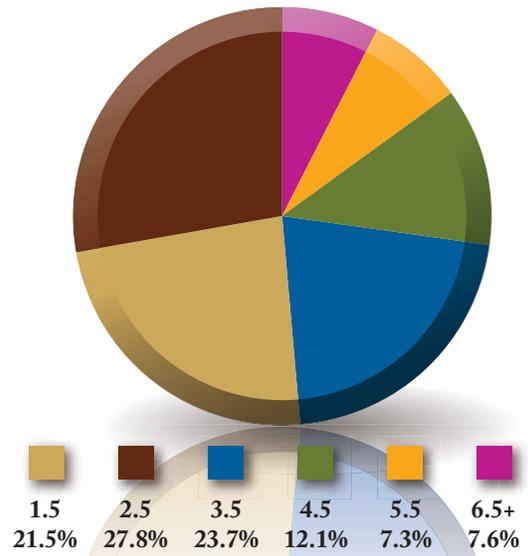


FIGURE 10: 2008 ADULT DOE AGE DISTRIBUTION (IN YEARS)





WARREN WILLIAMS



OKLAHOMA HUNTERS LOOK AHEAD TO FIRST BLACK BEAR SEASON

Black bears are one of Oklahoma's newest big game hunting opportunities. Though black bears have long been a part of Oklahoma's rich natural history, an official hunting season has not been established until now.

Earlier this year, the Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Commission — the governing body for the Wildlife Department — approved a proposal to establish a black bear season in Latimer, LeFlore, McCurtain and Pushmataha counties in the southeast portion of the state, making Oklahoma the 29th state to have a bear season. The bear season will open with deer archery season and, if the season quota of 20 bears is not met by the time deer muzzleloader season opens, it will continue to run through deer muzzleloader season. Hunters are required to report bear harvests, and the season limit is one bear per hunter. The use of dogs is prohibited, and baiting is prohibited on wildlife management areas. Additionally, the harvest of black bear cubs or female bears

with cubs is prohibited, as is the harvest of bears in dens.

The Wildlife Department has collected more than 15 years of biological data and information from responding to nuisance bear calls. Additional research projects were conducted by the Oklahoma Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit with Oklahoma State University, which helped determine Oklahoma is fit for a black bear season.

The last issue of *Outdoor Oklahoma* is your source for information on black bears in Oklahoma. The issue covers the history of black bears in the state as well as much of the research and biological information that helped the Wildlife Department in establishing the black bear season. You can also learn how to travel or enjoy outdoor recreation in bear country as well as learn who to call if you're dealing with a nuisance black bear problem. If you missed it, you can purchase a single issue of *Outdoor Oklahoma* for just \$3 (\$4 if mailed). 🐻

comes in the form of our computerized permit draw process, commonly referred to as our “controlled hunts.” In addition to opening properties that would otherwise remain closed, some additional benefits of the controlled hunts program are protection from over-harvest, control over which sex of deer may be harvested, improved deer quality and herd health, and a safer, higher quality hunt for the participants.

During the 2008 deer seasons, 16 WMAs were managed partially or completely through the drawing process. Lands not managed by the Department but made accessible via cooperative agreements administered under the controlled hunts process were the Corps of Engineers lands at Waurika Lake, Hugo, Oologah, Ft. Gibson, Keystone, Tenkiller, and Texoma. The Wichita Mountains, Deep Fork, Salt Plains, Washita, Little River, Tishomingo, and Sequoyah National Wildlife Refuges as well as the McAlester Army Ammunition Plant and the Ft. Cobb, Sequoyah and Walnut Creek State Parks also allowed

hunter access to successful controlled hunt applicants. Additionally, the USDA Grazing Lands Research Laboratory, Four Canyon Preserve (owned by the Nature Conservancy), and selected private lands in Texas and Cimarron counties allowed hunter access through agreements with the Wildlife Department. There were 244 different big game hunts offered through the controlled hunts program in 2008. Many additional WMAs were open to deer hunters under regulations that were the same as the statewide seasons.

Department managed lands might account for only three percent of the state’s land mass, but they were responsible for producing 5.5 percent of the harvest. A total of 6,158 deer came from WMAs, with 41.2 percent being females. Table 2 presents a harvest summary for each WMA by season and sex.

TROPHY DEER

What one hunter might call a trophy might easily be a deer that another hunter

would decline to take. A buck taken after a memorable hunt with good friends, a doe taken with a home-made bow, a child’s first deer, or a senior hunter’s last — all can be worthy of the “trophy” label. The Oklahoma Department of Wildlife has its own trophy recognition program designed to offer official recognition to hunters fortunate enough to harvest a large-antlered deer from within our borders.

The Cy Curtis Trophy Award Program was established in 1975 in honor of the man most responsible for re-establishing whitetail deer throughout the state. Many Oklahoma hunters are unaware that our deer herd was in a dire state in the not too distant past. In the early 1900s the total statewide whitetail deer population was estimated to be fewer than 500 animals. In contrast, in 2008, only three counties in the state harvested fewer than 500 deer! Cy Curtis was the spearhead for the “trap and transplant” effort that moved deer from populated areas to those with suitable habitat, but lacking deer. His efforts laid the groundwork for the deer hunting that Oklahomans enjoy today.

To qualify for a Cy Curtis Award, a buck must be measured by an Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation employee or an official measurer of the Boone and Crockett or Pope and Young programs. The Boone and Crockett system of measurement is used to judge the antlers. All deer legally harvested within Oklahoma from 1972 to the present are eligible. The minimum score for entry into the typical whitetail deer category is 135 points and non-typical deer must score at least 150 points to be eligible. Minimum entry score for a typical mule deer is 155. Non-typical mule deer must score at least 185 points.

A total of 197 deer were added to the 2008 Cy Curtis book. The top five Cy Curtis deer from each category are listed below. For a complete listing of all the Cy Curtis award recipients, pick up a copy of the current Cy Curtis Awards Record Book, available from the Wildlife Department Information and Education Division.

BOONE AND CROCKETT AWARDS

In addition to adding nearly 200 bucks to the state’s Cy Curtis program, Oklahoma also increased its presence in the Boone and Crockett Awards Record Book. In total, 11 racks scored high enough to be

TOP CY CURTIS TROPHY AWARDS					
TYPICAL WHITE-TAILED DEER (135 MINIMUM)					
Score	County of Harvest	Antler Points		Inside Spread	Method of Harvest
		Left	Right		
194 0/8	Pushmataha	7	6	18 3/8	Gun
192 5/8	Pushmataha	12	9	20 1/8	Gun
185 6/8	Bryan	8	8	20 7/8	Archery
181 6/8	Jackson	8	7	18 5/8	Gun
179 6/8	Oklahoma	8	8	16 7/8	Archery
NON-TYPICAL WHITE-TAILED DEER (150 MINIMUM)					
Score	County of Harvest	Antler Points		Inside Spread	Method of Harvest
		Left	Right		
248 6/8	Tillman	12	12	22 1/8	Gun
240 3/8	Hughes	19	10	17 4/8	Gun
238 7/8	Wagoner	18	20	16 4/8	Gun
238 2/8	Delaware	16	19	18 0/8	Primitive
232 6/8	Alfalfa	12	11	20 2/8	Gun
TYPICAL MULE DEER (155 MINIMUM)					
Score	County of Harvest	Antler Points		Inside Spread	Method of Harvest
		Left	Right		
180 1/8	Cimarron	5	5	24 1/8	Gun
178 6/8	Texas	5	5	23 6/8	Primitive
178 4/8	Beaver	5	5	24 6/8	Gun
171 4/8	Texas	5	5	23 6/8	Gun
170 5/8	Cimarron	4	5	24 1/8	Gun
NON-TYPICAL MULE DEER (185 MINIMUM)					
Score	County of Harvest	Antler Points		Inside Spread	Method of Harvest
		Left	Right		
215 0/8	Woodward	9	7	24 1/8	Gun
213 4/8	Woods	10	9	22 2/8	Gun
197 7/8	Cimarron	11	10	19 4/8	Gun
189 0/8	Cimarron	8	6	20 1/8	Gun

eligible for entry into this prestigious national program. The tables on page 42 and 43 list details about some of these fantastic deer and the hunters who tagged them.

CONCLUSIONS

When the deer harvest dropped after the 2007 deer season, many hunters were concerned. They feared that perhaps we had over-harvested the resource in 2006 with the setting of a new harvest record of over 119,000. With the 2008 harvest right back up over 100,000, hopefully those concerns are relieved! As was predicted in the conclusions section of the 2007 season's Big Game Report, the tough hunting conditions of 2007 "result(ed) in high deer numbers going into the 2008 hunting season." Those high deer numbers helped push our harvest to the second highest level ever recorded in the state and the largest archery season harvest ever tallied!

In addition to the near-record total harvest, deer hunters have reason to celebrate with a record number of does passing through deer check stations in 2008. The 48,358 does taken will help prevent localized overpopulations, improve buck:doe ratios for a more healthy herd, reduce com-

2007-08 BOONE AND CROCKETT TYPICAL WHITE-TAILED DEER (160 MINIMUM)

Hunter	Hometown	County of Harvest	Antler Points	Inside Spread	Score
K Compton	Broken Bow	McCurtain	7-6	18 5/8	171 1/8
J Lee	Muskogee	Latimer	5-4	20 4/8	170 7/8
A Killian	Arkoma	LeFlore	6-6	17 4/8	167 4/8
L Pearson	Watonga	Blaine	5-5	18 2/8	165 4/8
R Bruehl	Purcell	Pushmataha	6-5	18 3/8	161 1/8
B Veenstra	Durant	Pushmataha	6-7	18 1/8	161 0/8
D Hallum	Ardmore	Love	8-8	17 5/8	1600 5/8
D Hamen Jr.	Fairview	Major	7-6	19 2/8	160 3/8

2007-08 BOONE AND CROCKETT NON-TYPICAL WHITE-TAILED DEER (185 MINIMUM)

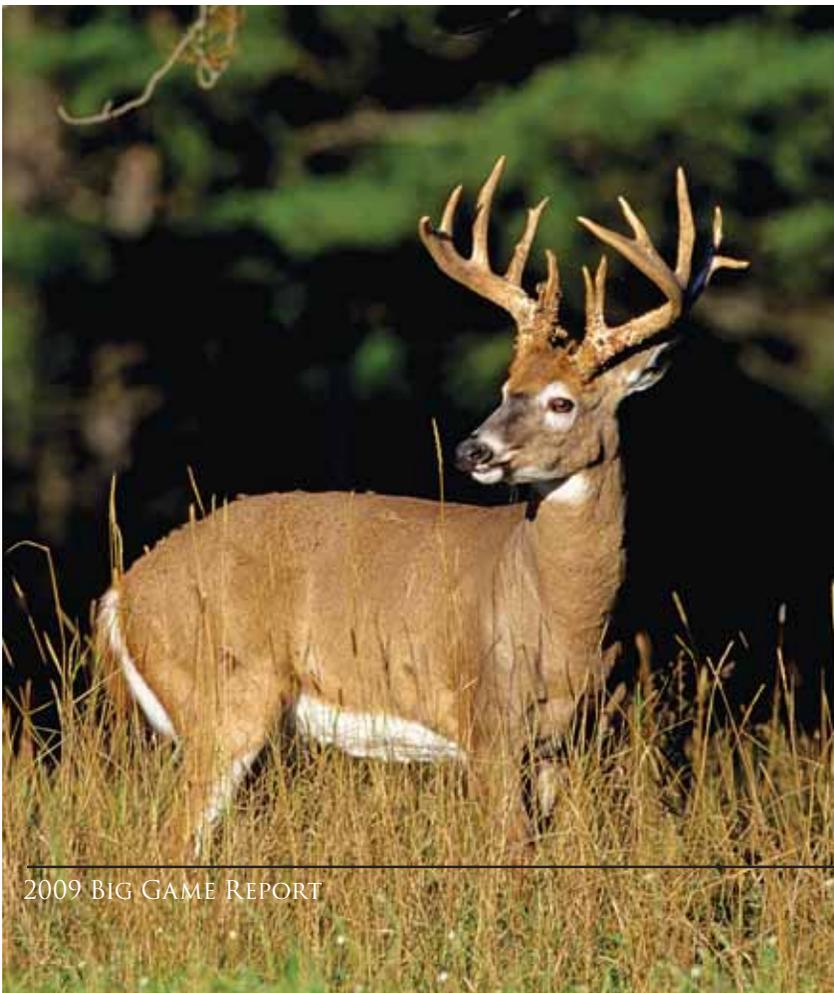
Hunter	Hometown	County of Harvest	Antler Points	Inside Spread	Score
J Watkins III	Noble	McClain	9-7	17 7/8	185 2/8
D Walle	OKC	Oklahoma	7-13	13 5/8	185 0/8

petition for forage promoting greater antler growth in bucks, reduce the potential for deer/vehicle collisions, and lessen the extent of potential crop depredation. This is a positive step forward for the state's deer management goals. Every effort should be made by deer hunters to ensure that this emphasis on doe harvest continues.

Other good news is the percentage of the antlered buck harvest that was made up of yearling bucks. This year saw a reduction in the number of yearling bucks entered into the check station books. The combined effects of reduced buck bag limits and the ever increasing knowledge of hunters understanding the need to allow young bucks to reach maturity are helping to reduce the harvest of these very vulnerable deer. Greater numbers of young bucks reaching maturity before harvest not only benefits the deer herd, it also can offer hunters a greater potential for larger antlered bucks. As with the responsibility of maintaining adequate doe harvest, Oklahoma hunters must remain diligent in future seasons to ensure that this trend continues and our management objectives are realized.

As the opening line of this report announced, we do indeed have a new record! Two of them to be exact — a new archery season record and a new overall antlerless harvest record. Looking at this report, it is easy to see that this is an incredible time to be a deer hunter in our great state. Our bag limits as well as our seasons remain some of the most liberal in the region. Our youth season and apprentice-designated hunting licenses make it easier to introduce young hunters to the sport. New public hunting areas are being purchased and should provide additional opportunity for hunters without access to private land. And perhaps most important, our deer herd is healthy and abundant and should provide an exciting season in 2009! 🍂

JOHN FORD



2009 BIG GAME REPORT

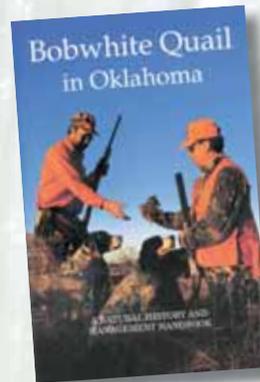
The Outdoor Store

FEATURED PRODUCT

Habitat Donor Patches



Colorful, collectible, embroidered cloth patches feature a new game or fish species each year, from 1986 to the 2009 patch emblazoned with a mule deer. All proceeds are earmarked for the Department's Land Acquisition Fund, which is used to provide public hunting and fishing access. Specify designs when ordering. Item OS-5 — \$10 each



Learn More About Quail Management

This handbook is for quail enthusiasts of all kinds — hunters, landowners and do-it-yourself game managers. This 40-page, full-color booklet contains tips for habitat improvements and everything you should know about the natural history of Oklahoma's most popular upland game bird. Item OS-4 — \$5



Habitat Donor Caps

Top-quality, American-made caps display the Habitat Donor Patch of your choice, which designates you as a contributor to the Department's Land Acquisition Fund. Wearing this hat means you care about future generations and the great hunting and fishing tradition. Specify hat style. Item OS-6 — \$18

Oklahoma Waterfowl Hunting Stamp

Oklahoma "duck stamps" are always popular with collectors and hunters, although for different reasons. While each year's stamp features a different handsome design sure to add appeal to any stamp collection, funds from stamp sales are used for many kinds of waterfowl management projects. Please specify when ordering. (2009 stamp is shown). Item OS-7 — \$10



Outdoor Oklahoma Caps

These sharp, colorful, fabric caps feature the "Outdoor Oklahoma" logo. One size fits all. Three colors available — khaki, forest green, and camo. Item OS-11 — \$18