



GEAUGA BOWMEN  
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# SHORT SHOTS / BIG NEWS!

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## -----Spring is here at last! -----

It's that time of year again, before I depress you with the long list of things we need to do to prepare for this year's schedule. Let me take this time to thank everyone for their efforts up to this point. I'm not just talking about our last season; I'm talking from the beginning. You know who you are. I don't have space to mention everyone and it would not be fair to single anyone out so let me say, "Thank you Geauga Bowmen!" because of our efforts, attendance has gone up at our events. Membership was the highest since I joined and the overall appearance of our club has improved greatly.

None of this would be possible without the work that is done voluntarily each year! I look forward to spring every year and the promise it brings. Usually old man winter has left us a few surprises to deal with other than our usual spring cleaning. Our Traditional Turkey Shoot is April 4-5 and will be here before you know it. We will be forming work parties on the two Saturdays leading up to the shoot March 21<sup>st</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup> from 10:00 am till? We will have lots of light duty jobs for anyone who may need to take it easy for one reason or another. It's nice to see everyone volunteer doing what they can. Work is not mandatory just appreciated!

## )))))) -----Winter Recap----->

Our club meetings were well attended over the winter months. We met each month at the Archers Club in Middlefield which is operated by our friends at Great Lakes Outdoors. In between pulling the bow strings we snacked on goodies supplied by our members and I was actually complimented on my coffee making skills or lack thereof. We are lucky to have such a place where we can meet during the winter months. Our granted permission for use of the range, for the most part, is because of the reputation of our clubs volunteer work and commitment to the sport. They are also aware and grateful of our patronage and support. Remember this next time you are making an outdoors related purchase.

## Annual Game tasting Dinner

This year's dinner will be on Saturday, March 14<sup>th</sup> at 4:00. Once again we will be meeting inside the rustic Great Blue Heron Lodge, located at the Rookery. What is the Rookery, you ask? It is a Geauga county park located just 2 miles from our club grounds near Munson Township. It has been the perfect spot due to its location and being part of the park district it is cost effective. Everyone is invited. Just bring a covered dish or dessert. Wild game or not! Coffee, pop and water will be provided. Directions from Chesterland: Take route 322 E. to Rockheaven road and turn right. The road will then make a right turn. Follow it to Cedar road. Turn right on Cedar and you're there. For more information, call Mike at (440)-227-6756

# Big Game

Now that rabbit season is over my thoughts shift back to big game shed hunting; a fun pastime in its own right, it can also lead to success next season. Shortly after dawn, I was on my way packing my favorite walking stick and a fanny pack with a Thermos of coffee. I picked up a trail along the side of a ridge and followed it for 15 minutes before spotting something white nestled in the thick fallen leaves a few scant yards away. The freshly shed antler was nearly covered in debris but in perfect condition. It wasn't a trophy antler, but it was the first shed of the season. As the morning progressed, I continued searching trails along nearby ridges. Two hours later, when I finally ended the hunt, I had nothing more to show for my efforts but that's the way antler hunting often works. While shed hunting doesn't compare with putting a buck on the ground, there's no season opener to look forward to and the stories may not be as exciting. Shed hunting is a challenge loaded with rewards. Searching for antlers gives you a good reason to get back into the field after the hunting season ends, and it will help you discover which bucks survived the season and how big they are--and how big they might become. If possible, confine your searches to periods when there's no snow on the ground as snow makes the antlers more difficult to spot. But don't let snow cover stop you; if you wait too long, calcium-loving animals may devour the sheds before you can get to them. Antler Pursuit Some avid whitetail shed hunters prefer open fields and other primary feeding areas, some like bedding areas, and others concentrate their efforts along trails. I look at each area with an open mind. I have certainly found my share of antlers in fields that attract winter deer, such as winter wheat. I'm not so sure that more antlers are dropped in fields, though. However, I do believe they are easier to spot because of the open terrain. On the downside, you could find yourself walking countless hours in an open field without success because there's a lot of ground to cover and a buck might be anywhere in the field when he drops an antler. Bedding areas are probably my favorite, particularly along the edges of dense bedding areas and woods where trails meet. A buck spends much of his time there--making it more likely for him to shed in and near bedding areas. In areas where thick honeysuckle and bramble bushes are present, the chance increases that a mature buck will shed nearby, since these locations provide both winter food and cover.

## UNRAVELING TRAVEL ROUTES

Most hunters enjoy searching for and locating scrapes and rubs during the hunting season, but I find much more of this telltale buck sign when searching for sheds than at any other time of the year. The sign you find while shed hunting provides vitally important information as they might well indicate a travel route that bucks prefer to use when moving through the area. Not all scrapes and rubs mean anything for the future. Sporadic rubs, for instance, don't provide much proof that a buck or bucks like an area, but rubs that connect to form a rub line show you a travel route that was used with some consistency. Examine the area surrounding a rub closely when searching for sheds. The open nature of the woods at this time of year makes it easy to determine if one rub connects to another and then another, etc. The distance between rubs may vary--from a few yards up to 50 or 100 yards--but it's a route you'll want to pay attention to in the upcoming season. Some bucks make hundreds of scrapes during the pre, peak, and post-rut period. However, since not all of these scrapes offer promise, it's up to the hunter to determine if it's worth further investigation. When you locate a scrape, pay close attention to the overhanging limbs. Not every active scrape is large, but those with several broken overhanging limbs often mean that it was visited by several bucks, particularly those scrapes in cover away from the fringes. Scrape lines are also easier to locate when shed hunting, and they can be as meaningful as rub lines since they also point out preferred Travel routes.