

Bagging bucks with a bow

Small properties can provide big action

BY JOHN N. FELSHER

Many hunters take up bow hunting because they want a bigger challenge, more days afield or because they can hunt more places with archery equipment than with a high-powered rifle.

“Archers get the jump on everybody else,” said Chris Cook, the Alabama Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division Deer Program Coordinator. “In early bow season, deer haven’t been hunted and they don’t know any better. All wildlife management areas offer a lot more days for bow hunting than gun hunting. Those areas receive much less pressure during archery season than gun season.”

Archers can frequently take game on tiny properties where one would never fire a .30-06. Small suburban wood lots, farm plots and other tiny wilderness patches might hold huge bucks destined to die of old age without ever seeing a hunter.

Check with owners

“If people do a little footwork and check with some property owners, they might gain access to areas that aren’t being hunted by anybody else,” Cook advised. “They can go in there with a bow and do pretty well. Deer can cause damage by browsing on landscaping. We get a lot of calls from people wanting to know how to get rid of the deer. There’s not much we can do in heavily populated areas.”

In addition, some public lands only allow archery or very limited gun hunting. Several Special Opportunity Areas, including the 5,320-acre Fred T. Stimpson tract and the 1,920-acre Upper State Sanctuary in Clarke County can offer excellent archery hunting opportunities for people selected to hunt. The Jacinto Port Tract, part of the Mobile-Tensaw Delta-W. L. Holland WMA near Saraland,



Photo by John N. Felsher

Joella Bates, a world champion archer, stalks a deer with her compound bow in hand. With archery equipment, hunters can get into smaller places where they could never fire a rifle and hunt deer for longer seasons.

does not allow gun hunting for deer. It also limits small game hunting days, so archers typically find little pressure. Besides deer, archers might arrow pigs or coyotes there.

“In early season, if people can find oak trees just starting to drop their acorns, that’s where people need to

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