

# Deer season preview

## South Alabama hunters anticipate good season

BY JOHN N. FELSHER

The state created two new deer hunting zones, but that shouldn't affect anyone who hunts exclusively in southern Alabama.

Most of southern Alabama sits in Zone B where archery season opens Oct. 15 and runs through Feb. 10, 2021. Gun season in Zone B runs from Nov. 21 through Feb. 10, 2021. Dates for specialized seasons and on public hunting areas could differ so always check the regulations before hunting.

The state also made a change to deer possession confirmation. Anyone who bags a deer or a turkey must report that kill through Game Check within 48 hours. Frequently, a hunter bags a deer and drops it off at a processor. When that animal changes hands, it must include written documentation.

### Must report

"When a hunter kills a deer or turkey, that hunter must report the animal to Game Check and receive a confirmation number," explained Chris Cook, the Alabama Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division Deer Program Coordinator. "When a processor takes possession of that deer, that person has to record the hunter's name and the confirmation number to prove it had been reported in Game Check. For people to take possession of deer or turkeys that they didn't kill, they must have information from the person who killed it, but the person in possession doesn't have to report anything."

Hopefully, sportsmen throughout Alabama will



Photo by John N. Felsher

**Ethan Arch** shows off the whitetail buck he killed.

record many deer kills this season. Deer hunters should find good habitat conditions, a robust mast crop and abundant deer in their favorite swamps, forests and food plots.

### 'Good shape'

"The deer herd and habitat are in good shape," Cook commented. "The quality of the deer depends on what they're eating and they've had plenty of rain to grow groceries this year. Some wildlife management areas with high harvests each year include Oakmulgee and Barbour. Sam Murphy is another

place that produces a lot of deer and some good ones. In the southern half of the state, Geneva State Forest and Lowndes WMA are good areas to hunt."

Both the Upper Delta and W. L. Holland WMAs remain popular for both deer and pig hunting. With vast tracts of hardwood bottomlands, the Upper Delta typically offers better hunting for both species. Severe flooding in the Mobile-Tensaw Delta during the previous two seasons helped the habitat. Flood waters deposit layers of rich, fertile soil in the swamp, which encourages

new plant growth. After a flood, vegetation always comes back stronger.

"The deer population is doing well in the delta," reported Thomas Harms, a state biologist in Spanish Fort. "Last year, some large deer were taken out of the Upper Delta and tons of pigs. The mast crop was good last year. With the rain, I think we should have a good mast crop this year also."

### Cut pressure

The flooding probably severely cut down on hunting pressure during the past two seasons. That could mean more deer in the forest. A strong deer population coupled with a good mast crop could spell success for delta hunters this season.

"Last year, deer hunters who did go fared very well," Harms recalled. "In the Upper Delta, there really isn't a bad place to hunt deer. If someone walks 10 feet in the Upper Delta without seeing a deer or pig track, that person isn't looking too hard. In the lower delta, most of the rivers have high banks. Some people like to hunt those high banks."

Sportsmen could also hunt the 17,337-acre Perdido River WMA in Baldwin County near Gateswood. Higher than in the delta, Perdido contains mostly pine savannas with some small hardwood-lined creeks. In the past few years, the state did extensive habitat enhancement and controlled burning in the Perdido area.

For complete deer season dates and zone boundaries, see [www.outdooralabama.com/seasons-and-bag-limits/deer-season](http://www.outdooralabama.com/seasons-and-bag-limits/deer-season).