



I started the morning sitting in a tree stand. A few weeks ago I had trimmed limbs and opened up some shooting lanes for this new stand placement. I think it is going to be a good one.

The cool morning was expected as well as the lingering fog that hovers over the hills, sometimes through the late morning. That was the case on this particular day.

As I peered toward the sky just before dawn, I wondered if what I was looking at was clouds instead of the fog. But after a few more minutes I recognized the familiar look and feel of this hazy mist. It wasn't long until I could see the sun began to peek over the mountains just in front of me. It would have its work cut out for it today as it began to slowly burn away the veil that was hiding everything from my view.

I was actually surprised how quickly the fog began to surrender to the sun and it was not too many minutes

later until it was all gone and everything around me became crystal clear.

The lines between the objects that were blurred just a few minutes earlier were now distinct, prominent, and flawless.

As I watched this transformation, I was reminded of a quote from C.S. Lewis. He said, "I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen. Not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else." For him, Christianity gave perspective to the things in his world. It shone a light of understanding on otherwise confusing circumstances. By coming to know his God he could appreciate his world. By contrast, however, he was saying that without a proper view of God, life is only one random and undirected action after another. Or as Shakespeare's Macbeth put it, "It is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."

There is no doubt that life is full of head-scratching moments. Some are fleeting; others shake our very foundation and leave us changed forever. The lens that we view these through will either bring a sense of clarity or a deeper sense of confusion and despair.

I am not saying my faith makes me perfectly understand everything, but it does give me the same picture as the sun; that no matter what may seem unclear and indistinguishable, it will burn away the longer I am in His presence.

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*Trojans

(Continued from page.1)

continued their winning streak, winning by a score of 55-18. Scoring for the team were Cameron Martin, 19; and Breann Bell, 15.

The Lady Trojans played hard, but, with three starters missing, came up short against Manchester, losing by a score of 30-40. In this game, Breann Bell scored 19 points; and Taylor Spell scored 11.

The Trojans did not play Manchester for the boys' game. Most of the Manchester players were involved in a football playoff game.

All the Trojan teams will

Conservation Corner

by James Cummins
Executive Director
of Wildlife Mississippi

Estimating the Age of Whitetails in the Field

Deer management is becoming more important to hunters with each passing hunting season. Some clubs have selective harvest strategies that are used to meet certain goals.

The criteria can include gender, minimum antler measurements, and minimum age. In order for these strategies to work, hunters must be able to accurately judge the deer in the field.

First, we will discuss bucks. A 1.5-year-old buck sometimes resembles a doe with antlers. Their muscle characteristics are not as developed as older bucks so their features include a slender neck and long, thin legs with thin hindquarters. Their average weight is 115 pounds. If the buck is closer to 2.5 years old, the hind quarters will be thicker and there will be some neck swelling present during the rut. Their average weight is 150 pounds. The average inside spread of the antlers is 12 inches.

A 3.5-year-old buck weighs approximately 170 pounds and the chest will appear deeper than the hindquarter area. There is noticeable swelling during the rut, but a distinct junction between the neck and shoulders. The average inside spread of the antlers is 14 inches. At 4.5 years of age, a buck will have most of his adult body size and weight. The waist will be as deep as the chest and the neck will be fully developed and blend into the shoulders. The average weight is 180 pounds with an average inside spread of 15 inches on the antlers.

A buck with a sagging belly and neck and shoulder area that appears to form one big mass is usually between 5.5 and 7.5 years of age. His legs will appear shorter, his eyes will look squinty and muscle tone will begin to decrease and he will tend to have a swayed back and a potbelly.

If the management program is focused on fawns and does, there are also ways to identify them. Most hunters will depend on body size to make the distinction between fawns and does.

As the season progresses and the fawns continue to grow, they become more easily mistaken for adult does. While the average weight for a fawn is 65 pounds, the average weight for a mature doe is over 100 pounds. Also, a fawn's forehead and snout are shorter than an adult doe's. The head of a button-buck will appear flattened while the doe's head will be more rounded on top.

Does and fawns usually travel together, however, fawns are more playful and naive than adult does.

If you can, wait until at least two deer are present before taking your harvest. This will allow for comparison of the behavioral and physical characteristics between the animals.

Remember, to accurately estimate the size and age of deer takes years of practice in the field.

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