

HUNTING IN PENNSYLVANIA



A COLLECTION OF SHORT CHAPTERS BASED
ON HUNTING STORIES AND OUTDOOR
EXPERIENCES IN THE STATE

DAVID R. LONGSDERFF

This book is a collection of successful, and unsuccessful, hunting experiences pulled from the author's 55 plus years of hunting in the state of Pennsylvania. From whitetail deer, to turkey, to black bear stories, all in Pennsylvania.

Hunting in Pennsylvania

By David R. Longsderff

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XXXII.

11/1/2025 – 7-point

Andrew had Friday off, and winds were strong with up to 50 mph gusts. Not a good day to be in a tree stand. We decided to leave about 5:30 Friday morning for Mifflin County, hauling a trailer with one of his IH tractors on it back up to the pole barn. But it was still windy – I only went out around lunchtime and decided to go to the outhouse stand on the Indian Burial Ground (IBG). At least I'd be protected from some of the wind, which was mostly from the northwest, hard. I left the right-side panel of the outhouse stand shut, opened the front right door top panel, and the left side panel. I got four or five big sticks that had broken out of trees and placed them across the open left side panel, to help with camouflage while still giving me three or so pockets to shoot the crossbow through. Sitting down and getting out my range finder, I confirmed distances to multiple trees, typically 20, 25, 30, and out to 50 yards. Putting away the range finder, I looked up and realized there was a buck walking rapidly across the front of the outhouse, no more than 20 yards away.

He was already past the front door panel opening when I saw him. Grabbing the grunt tube, I wailed on it heavily. That stopped him in some thick stuff about 30 yards away, for about 2 seconds. Then he started walking again, to the south, with the wind at his back. I wailed on the grunt tube again – but he didn't stop till he was at least 60 or 70 yards away. Too far for a bow shot, at least for me with my dad's old crossbow, so I got out my camera and took his picture between two big oaks. Looking at the picture, he has a "gun rack" style rack; you could rest a rifle across the first points with no problem. He was perfectly symmetrical, at

least 6 points, possibly 8, a good size deer. And he took off again into the thick stuff and down the ridge. Talk about timing. Who would have thought that there'd be a good size buck out in a windstorm at noon?! But the rut is starting a bit early this year, and he was no doubt looking, smelling, and trailing does.

Josh came up to the cabin Friday evening, and he went to his stand on Saturday morning. I decided to go to my stand, as winds, though still in the 7 – 10 mph range, were from the northwest. Anything coming from that direction wouldn't smell me till it was either to my east or south, up the ridge. As it started to lighten up, the normal squirrel brigade were active, chasing each other around the trees surrounding my stand. But I didn't see a deer, or turkey for that matter, for over two hours. In fact, I texted Josh that I was going to get down at 10 am and move to another stand if I didn't see a deer by then. He replied that he'd missed an 8-point buck at 7:30 am; his arrow hit a twig in a tree and deflected into a dead tree nowhere near the buck. And of course, 5 minutes later after threatening to move, a doe appeared below my dried-up spring, fed for a little, then walked directly north away from me down the logging trail at the intersection. I immediately thought and questioned myself, one doe by herself at the start of the rut? Where's the buck that should be following her?

15 minutes later I detected movement to my left and realized it was a big deer walking down the logging trail towards the intersection below me. With the naked eye I could see he had horns, but he suddenly veered to his left to go towards the spring. He wasn't running, but he wasn't walking slow either; there was purpose to his speed. When he got below the spring in the thick stuff, I got the crossbow up slowly and started trying to find him in the scope. But I couldn't find him; he moved once, I could see the outline of his back, but not his head. He was down in there for several

minutes; at one point I thought he'd left, to the north through the thick stuff in the same direction the doe went. But eventually he stepped out onto the logging trail and walked up towards the intersection towards me. By this time, I could see he was an 8 point, very legal buck, big deer – but that was a 45-yard shot head on. Not a shot I was interested in taking. So, I waited, and he turned to his right, taking a few steps back in the direction he came from, and blocking my view from the ladder stand again. In my mind I was hoping he'd come right up to the stand. Worst case go on the northeast logging trail (a 45-yard shot also, but at least broadside), or better case the southeast logging trail split, uphill and slightly across the front right of my stand. That's a 35-yard shot maximum.

Suddenly he spun and took the southeast trail, I decided to shoot, found the 30-yard line in the scope, moved the crossbow with his speed left to right, and squeezed the trigger. I expected to see the knock on the arrow flying so I could see where it hit. The illuminated knock didn't work; it must have been burned out. But I heard the distinct "thump-ump", of a hit, the bolt impacting him solidly. All this paragraph took approximately 3 seconds to happen!

The buck jumped, spun 360 degrees, put his tail up and took off back down below the spring, into the thick stuff to the northwest. I could see his white tail for the first 60 or 70 yards but then he disappeared in thick undergrowth. Listening, and not sure how solid my shot was, I heard what sounded like leaves and sticks being thrashed by a deer falling or already on the ground. But sometimes I think I imagine that sound, wanting to hear it, hope it into reality. The doubts creep in. I sent Josh a text, stating I'd shot at an 8 point and that I was going to give him some time. Josh of course responded "and you were gonna move"; I said yes, but I have to find him first. I wasn't yet convinced this was a done deal. Giving him 20 minutes, I was impatient and decided to get down. Dad always said wait

30 minutes, but I justified it in my mind by telling myself it would take me 10 minutes to pack up, climb down, walk to where he was standing at the shot, look for blood, and then walk down to the spring below me.

When I got down and walked to where he stood when I shot, my arrow was stuck in the ground no more than 3 feet behind where his hooves had torn away the leaves in his 360-degree spin. It was coated in frothy pink blood from one end to the other – that means a lung shot. But there was no blood or deer hair there. As I started walking down towards the spring in the direction he'd run, I didn't see any blood either. Now it could be with the yellow, orange, green, and red leaves on the ground I just didn't see it. But I tried to stick to more open areas where I thought a buck would and could run at about 30 mph – he was moving when he ran back down through. At this point I was about 40 yards below the spring, with small trees, bushes and briars everywhere. I was also seeing scrapes that had been made in the area by a buck. Trying to decide whether to take an opening to the left or stay to my current trail, I glanced down a slight rise in front of me to the left and saw the brownish-gray coat of a deer laying. Walking in that direction, I realized I had in fact heard him kicking his legs as he was falling over or dying. He had 3-inch diameter, 8-foot-long sticks laying across his body. He had 3 points on his left antler, 4 on his right. A 7-point buck. I removed the sticks and said "Thank you Lord" many times. I filled out my buck tag and tied it to his right ear. This was a very large deer, looked like a fat steer. His hooves were at least 4" long. His nose had started to widen out, getting that mule look. Taking two pictures before I started the gutting process, I sent them via text to the family group. I thought I could make the gutting process easier if I got his front hooves up into his rack and tied my drag rope around them all. That failed quickly; he was too big. I ended up standing on top of him with his front legs on the outside of my legs so I could get to enough of his

stomach with my knife. Quickly, I realized this was not going to be pretty, as I could barely move him. I got most of his entrails out, removed his hardware, and then took a break. I called Andrew and asked him to come out with the Mule; told him I had a big deer down that I could use some help with. He was cutting trees down with the tractor at the property entrance, and said he'd be out in about half an hour.

My shot had hit him about 4 inches high and 4 inches to the left of his front right shoulder. As I was shooting down from a ladder stand, and he was below me, it exited right behind his front left shoulder. The arrow destroyed both lungs and clipped the top of his heart. When I cut through his chest cavity to where the lungs and heart were, it was like tomato soup in there. How that deer managed to run downhill for almost 80 yards is amazing. Sure, gravity helps as well, but it's not easy to quickly kill a big whitetail buck. And of course, when I was reaching into his chest cavity to cut off his heart, I cut myself above my left thumb. I had a Band-Aid with me in my small first aid kit; I'd learned that from the bear entrail removal process (see above). At this point I tied the drag rope around his antlers, intending to get him away from the gut pile. I spun him 180 degrees, and it took all I had to pull him 4 feet or so. Time for another break; I grabbed my backpack, the cross bow, and coat and decided to try and find an open area Andrew could get to with the Kawasaki Mule. I walked east, back toward the intersection trail that goes north below the spring. But I realized after about 30 yards that there was an open trail below me, another 30 yards further down the ridge to my left and headed there. My original intent was to drag him out along the ridge to the trail; but I realized that just going straight down, using gravity to my advantage, would get me to that trail as well. So, I cleared a path, removing broken logs and sticks out of the way as I headed back up to my buck. It was much easier to move him downhill than across it; all I'd taken back with me were

my gloves, so I could wrap the drag parachute rope around my hands. When I got him down to the logging trail, I then attempted to pull him slightly across and up towards the pile of gear. Again, I believe I moved him perhaps 10 yards when I gave up and realized Andrew could back up to where he was. I also was thankful Andrew was in the mountains on this trip, as there was no way I would have been able to get this buck up into the Mule by myself. Would have had to have brought the Kubota tractor out and slid him into the front-end loader.

Andrew eventually found me, and I pointed out a way to get through the woods to that open trail area. We lifted the bucks head up above the tailgate of the Mule. I held it there while he climbed up into the bed of the ATV. I got Andrew a front leg to pull on, grabbed the other and a back leg myself, and we horsed this buck up into the bed. Back at the pole barn, I hooked the hanging scale to the drag rope around his antlers, and Andrew lifted him up with a chain on the front end of the Kubota. He weighed 174.5 pounds, dressed. This was a 200 pound plus deer, live weight. There are several websites that say if you multiply the dressed weight of a whitetail deer by 1.26 you get a good estimate of what its live weight was. That would be 220 pounds. The PA Game Commission website says it's between 210- and 228-pounds live weight, dependent on chest circumference of the deer. He's at the butcher now, loin steaks sealed and frozen, and everything else becoming bologna. Josh had sent me a video from his cell game camera of this buck, said he's a bully who's thick like a steer. He'd been pushing other bucks around in videos up on the ridge. Yep, I can understand that.

We ended up with 102 pounds of venison, cost me \$3.68 / pound for the loin steaks and a lot of bolognas. As this was a mature deer, I wasn't sure how great the meat would be. The butcher recommended sweet and

jalapeno / cheddar cheese bolognas. The freezer is full, and I've already given a lot of bolognas away to friends and family.

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