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# A journey with DEER

Text by Al Cornell; Photos by Al and Jon Nelson

**A**n article in a 1988 *Wisconsin Sportsman* magazine describes a young dairy farmer's pursuit of trophy whitetails with a bow and arrows. At one point, he had gotten up at 3:30 a.m. for 35 consecutive days to milk cows and get to a bowhunting stand before daylight.

Since that time, Jon and Nancy Nelson's lives have taken as many turns as the REC lines threaded up the hollow to their hill country home. Jon still prefers to hunt deer with what he refers to as "stick and string." He says, "I enjoy the natural deer activity while bowhunting over the pressured movements that occur during gun season."

He reminds many of us aging deer hunters of times just a few decades ago when he says, "We didn't have enough guns for all of us boys to start hunting when we reached the age of 12." But, as he waited for the opportunity to gun hunt, he put together the funds to acquire a Shakespeare longbow and found his preferred hunting niche in a calmer autumn woods.

Jon grew up in that bygone rural setting that instilled the desire to hunt into the depths of one's being. The hands-on familiarity with butchering chickens and an occasional beef led to an understanding of where our meat comes from and to acceptance of that process. Harvesting that first game animal did not present the blood-shock that



By late summer, antlers are reaching their full dimensions and attract attention of hunters and other viewers.

discourages some youthful hunters today.

In fact, his bowhunting did not result in any blood for several years. Many beginning hunters have given up and turned to other recreation before investing the years that it took Jon to acquire his first bow kill. Steve Welte, who owned an archery shop, encouraged him to accomplish his first bow kill by taking any legal deer. After that first kill, Jon was better prepared to shoot a mature buck when the opportunity presented itself.

The culture in which deer hunting occurs has evolved since those early years. In those days, Jon could hunt on several neighbors' properties and exchange a wave-greeting with those landowners as they were cutting wood or picking corn. In that culture, Jon participated in gun deer season drives that involved several people and intensely hunted the deer herd until nearly 90 percent of the yearling bucks were harvested each year. That made it very difficult to locate older bucks that he dreamed of taking during the archery season.

To become successful in the pursuit of bucks carrying Pope and Young class antlers, Jon had to put a lot of work into his bowhunting. He looks back to a time in which he describes himself as "just a kid who didn't know how to hunt." From that beginning, there were days spent in the woods, hours exploring literature on deer behavior, time shooting the bow,

and advice from experienced hunters. That began to pay off in occasional opportunities to harvest a trophy buck.

A couple years ago, Jon was suddenly faced with the decision of whether or not to shoot a beautiful piebald buck. Piebald deer support a white blotched pattern on a normally brown pelt. They are rare. They are rare for a reason. The genetics that produces piebald deer carries with it survival disadvantages. Besides internal problems, as fawns, they are more apt to be located by predators. Piebald deer receive a recessive gene

from both parents for that trait.

Jon at first saw what he thought was a large dog or a heifer. He soon realized that it was a deer moving toward his shooting lane. He decided to shoot that unique trophy and have it mounted. It graces a wall in their home as an attractive deer mount and an interesting talking point.

However, bowhunting is a lot more than just shooting deer. Trophies that have accumulated in the memory hall include an eagle, a mink, and dozens of other special moments. Last year's hunts

**"My time spent bowhunting has been rewarded."**

**– Jon Nelson**

provided the opportunity to watch a bobcat hunting in the hinterland and to see it jump onto a low limb in the failed pursuit of a squirrel. Jon concludes, "My time spent bowhunting has been rewarded."

He goes to the woods to relax, to enjoy solitary time, and to occasionally launch an arrow toward a white-tailed deer. His hunting is now less oriented toward a mature buck. He says, "Trophy is



The autumn woods beckons to those who have learned to love it.



Clockwise, starting left: Harvesting a piebald buck was a special moment from among thousands of deer hunts. This beautiful mount of the piebald buck is a talking point for anyone who visits the Nelsons. A room full of a hunter's décor. Jon has spent hundreds of hours waiting for record-book bucks.



whatever one envisions it to be.” Maybe a delicious venison roast qualifies.

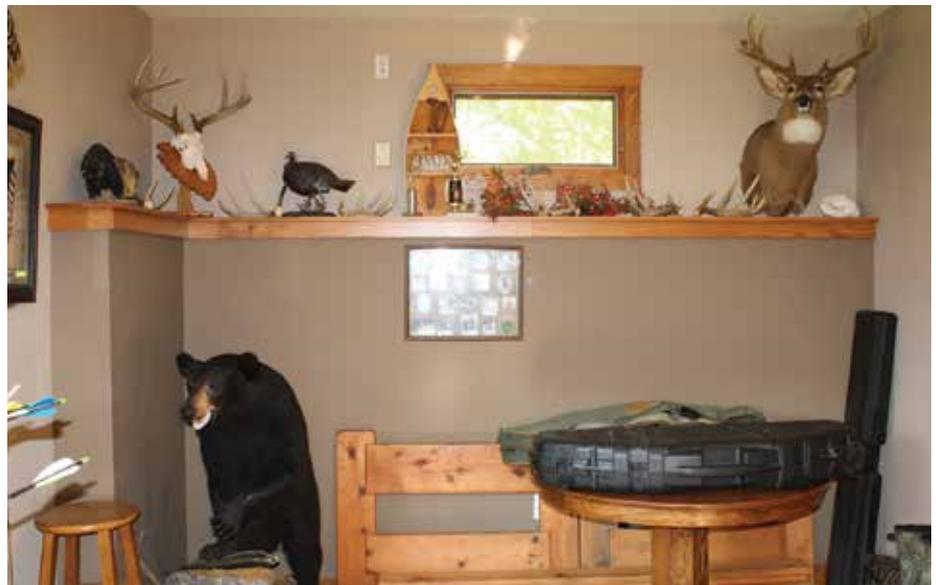
He is now more concerned with safety than he was in those early years of hunting. He has replaced all of his deer stands with ladder stands.

He wonders about how long he will be able to continue the pursuit of deer. He hopes to be able to help his grandchildren get a taste of the grand experience of the outdoors that permeates the being of a bowhunter. Grandson Daxton Kuban is 3 years old and his sister, Everly, is less than a year old.

When asked about the future of deer hunting, Jon sees some significant obstacles. He says for our area of the state, the deer herd is getting out of control. Increasingly, some landowners forbid hunting and thusly establish places of refuge for deer. Many others allow very limited hunting, and the deer herd is increasing.

He says, “If we don’t manage the deer herd, diseases will increase.” He ponders chronic wasting disease, recognizing that it is not a severe problem in northern Richland County but understanding that it is spreading and increasing.

He sees less deer hunting as the biggest obstacle to managing the herd. While most boys and quite a few girls growing up on small farms experienced a natural process of learning to hunt, it



is now difficult to pass that passion on to the next generation. Fewer children are consistently instilled with the love to be out there.

The constant action afforded by electronics contrasts with the long periods of serenity followed by an adrenalin rush during bowhunting. Learning to appreciate time spent in the woods in pursuit of deer and other game seldom happens during one outing. He perceives that there are a few good years ahead but wonders about the problems of passing on our great hunting heritage. 





# SAUERKRAUT

**When I was a kid, we made sauerkraut every fall. Pa was in**

**charge of slicing the cabbage heads into long shreds. He used a special cabbage cutter, which consisted of a wooden framework with several sharp blades, which he would not let my brothers and me use. He said the cutter, if not used correctly, could be a "finger shortener." Ma was in charge of the salting process.**

The sauerkraut crock sat in a corner of our pantry all winter long. In those days, you knew when you entered the kitchen of a German family because you smelled sauerkraut mixed with the smells of wood smoke, fresh-baked bread, and other smells associated with kitchens.

We ate some form of sauerkraut more than once a week: fried, baked, prepared with pork chops, simply heated on the woodstove, sometimes cooked with wieners, often with ring bologna, and occasionally with smoked ham. Here's how to make it:

## Homemade Sauerkraut

Start with about five pounds of white cabbage. This will make about one gallon of sauerkraut.

Use coarse pickling salt, non-iodized.

Have available an earthenware crock from 2½ to 20 gallons, depending on how much sauerkraut you wish to make.

## Procedure:

Remove the coarse outer leaves from the cabbage. Do not wash the heads because the natural yeasts found there are necessary for the fermentation to take place.

Cut the heads into halves and then quarters. Slice cabbage to obtain shreds as long as possible and about the thickness of a nickel (1/16th of an inch). (This can be done with a sharp knife, if no special cabbage cutter is available.)

Place the shredded cabbage in layers in the crock. For

every inch or so layer of cabbage, sprinkle 2½ tablespoons of salt.

After every two or three layers, tamp down the shredded cabbage with a clean piece of wood or a glass jar.

Fill the crock to within four or five inches of the top. Cover the sauerkraut with a cloth and lap it over the edge of the crock. Place a snug-fitting china plate on the cloth. Finally, put a clean stone on the plate. The action of the salt will draw the juice out of the cabbage and make a brine, which will rise to the top. Mold may appear on the top of the brine. Remove it daily.

Store the fermenting kraut in a well-ventilated place with a temperature about 60 to 65 degrees.

In three to five days, remove the cover and check for spoilage. Some discoloration due to spoilage may occur on the top inch or so. Remove it. Also rinse the cloth clean before replacing it.

The kraut should be ready for eating in about a month to six weeks. It will keep indefinitely in the crock as long as the top is not exposed to air.

The fermented sauerkraut may be removed from the crock, placed in freezer bags and stored in the refrigerator for several months. It may also be canned or frozen.



For further information about Jerry's writing and TV work, go to [www.jerryapps.com](http://www.jerryapps.com). To share a story, email him at [jerryappsauthor@gmail.com](mailto:jerryappsauthor@gmail.com).

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