

Brother Knows Best

Field Teamer Bags WV Bruiser

By Kevin Burgess
Appalachian Whitetails Field Team



How many times have you sat in a treestand and wondered if you had picked the right tree, or once you're there you see a branch you should have trimmed? I was having many thoughts like this as daylight began to unfold on Saturday, the last day of my vacation.

The rut should have been in full swing but I wasn't witnessing any rutting activity. The past three days I had seen nothing but small bucks traveling alone. My brother, Keith, suggested that I try an area where he had taken a small eight-point a few years ago as he had seen a lot of activity while hunting there. So I met him Friday afternoon and he showed me the spot he had hunted.

There was a heavy trail and numerous small rubs within good bow range of "his tree." I thought right away that this was the spot I would hunt tomorrow. Keith said he actually had seen most of the deer activity across a small ditch and in a thick area 70 yards from his tree, and suggested I try to find a stand location near there.

When we got to the thicket I had quite a time deciding where to hang a stand, but I eventually picked a tree that I was satisfied with. After I had climbed up, Keith quietly trimmed a few branches near the ground as I tried to guess where deer might approach. I could see a long distance through the open woods outside the thicket but shots inside would be close. It seemed logical that deer should move along this thick creek bank while traveling from feeding areas in the valley below.

After I climbed down I sprayed the area at the base of my tree with Appalachian Woodlands cover scent, and we slipped out hoping the deer wouldn't know we had been there.

Saturday was a perfect morning for bowhunting. The weather was clear and crisp. I could hear a huge flock of turkeys in the bottom trying to regroup as they all left their roosts. There was a lot of yelping, cackling, and even the broken gobbles of young jakes as they attempted to join with their flock-mates. But the reason I was hear was to hunt my favorite game animal, the whitetail deer.

Before climbing into my stand, I placed a couple scent wicks covered with Nosy Whitetail near my stand and climbed up. After I was settled in, I sprayed down with Phantom Hunter scent eliminator and awaited the day.

Shortly after light, I could hear faint grunting above me on the ridge. I grunted back but no deer responded. I had just hung up my call when I heard rustling in the leaves below me. I focused my attention in that direction and noticed three does headed up the ridge angling to my left. I could begin



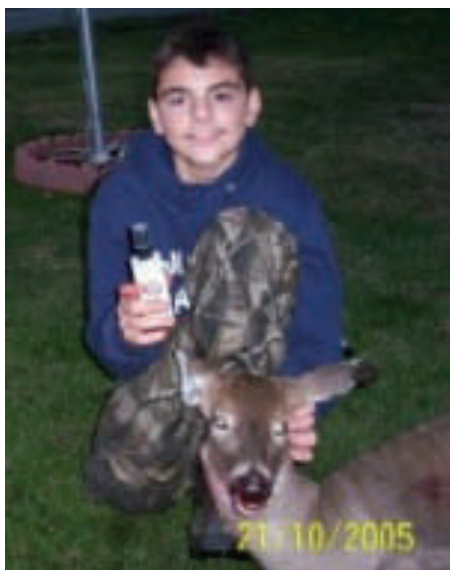
Kevin Burgess is all smiles after bagging this fine West Virginia eight-point.

to hear grunting behind them and soon spotted a huge buck on their tail. I tried to get them to steer my way but they ignored my calls and followed the creek bed 40 yards to my left. This buck was an absolute monster with many non-typical points.

As they got slightly above me, the buck I had heard grunting earlier came down the hill toward the large buck and his does. All of the deer stopped immediately as the smaller eight-point approached. The big buck promptly began to chase his younger rival. It was a short chase and ended quickly as the smaller buck headed down the hill. After the big buck was sure he was gone, he returned to his ladies and they continued out the ridge passing right below the tree in which my brother had hunted. I couldn't believe I had let him talk me into setting up where I did. Knowing that was probably the last big deer I would see on this hunt, I sat down and started having all of the thoughts mentioned earlier.

At 8 a.m., I decided I would try some rattling and grunting, hoping the big non-typical would hear me if he was in the area.

Not long after my calling sequence, I noticed movement down the ridge. It looked like a large doe coming up from the bottom. She began to angle toward the open woods to my right. As she hit the open woods, I saw antlers. This wasn't a doe. It was a nice buck and not far behind him was another buck, equally as large, if not larger.



Kevin's son, Ryan Burgess, used Phantom Hunter scent eliminator to help him bag his first deer.

As they got to within about 60 yards, I tried to use the Primos Can call, but with the dry leaves I don't think they could hear it. I once again turned to my grunt call.

The lead buck stopped on a dime and looked my way but then continued through the open woods. I called again but louder this time, and he stopped again briefly, looked around, and then continued to circle.

Then I realized what he was doing. He was trying to get downwind of me before approaching. I hoped my scent elimination precautions would pay off. As he got to my right, he turned abruptly and headed my way on a small trail entering the thicket. He was directly downwind, but hadn't detected me. It was then that I noticed that he was headed right for one of the scent wicks I had hung prior to entering my stand.

He stopped at 15 yards slightly quartering toward me, looking for the deer he was sure was in the area. Before he could begin to have doubts, I released my arrow and it hit tight behind his right shoulder.

He turned and exited back out the trail, leaving me to see my blood-soaked arrow on the ground where he stood.

I sat down in my stand feeling good that nobody was near to witness me falling apart. I began to shake so bad that I had to hold on to my seat to assure myself I wouldn't fall. After my hands had steadied enough, I used my cell phone to call Keith, and he came to help me with tracking and dragging. His advice had paid off. I had just taken my nicest archery buck to date. Perhaps next year I can return the favor.