

## **An Illinois Beauty**

By Ken Kocon - Appalachian Whitetails Field Team

1:30, 2:00, 2:45....It was one of those days where the afternoon just would not move. I kept peaking out the window at work to see clear skies and low wind. I knew that as soon as 3:00 rolled around I was going to hit the woods for the last couple hours of daylight. The Illinois season up until this particular day, October 20th 2009 has been unseasonably cold with record amounts of rain. This has left crops standing in the fields and deer activity fairly slow.

The day was sunny and warm with temps in the low 60's and winds out of the south at 5mph. If you hunt the Midwest you know this is about as mild of a wind as you will get. I knew just the stand I was going to hunt given the amount of daylight I had left and having the wind in my face. I set up on a river bottom field edge. There are three disc passes, two with winter wheat and Wintergreens and the middle in dried beans. The remainder of the 18 acre field is CRP. I sprayed down with Phantom Hunter and Autumn Oak and hit the stand.

Almost from the time I pulled my bow into the tree I started seeing deer in the field feeding. At about 5:15pm I caught movement to my right out in the CRP field and immediately knew it was a good buck. At first I didn't think it was a shooter and was waiting for a shot at one of the doe. This buck walked into the middle of the group of five doe I was watching at about 60 yards. He looked each direction and began running the doe out of the field. This was not a rut chasing but more of a get out of my field I'm eating here bump.

For the next hour or so I watched this deer feed but could not tell just how big he was. Darkness was setting in fast and I had become content that I was not going to get a better look at this deer let alone a shot. Then with only minutes of shooting light left, he starts walking my direction and fast. My heart starts beating hard as that feeling of possibly getting a shot sets in. The deer stops on the field edge at about 10 yards. I still don't know if he's a shooter. Now, I know what you're thinking, is this guy serious that this may not be a shooter. Well the rule on this property is if it's not a deer for the wall let it walk.

Just then the deer stops and looks directly in my direction. It is at this point that I see the spread and the mass he is carrying. I make the split second decision that I am going to shoot. The deer steps behind a tree and I draw. I have about a 5 yard window to shoot. I give the deer one of the famous mouth grunts but to no avail. He just won't stop. At last I gave one more very loud grunt and he stops in the last possible shooting window I have. I put the pin on his chest and let my Mathews DXT do its job. I heard the thwack and knew I hit him, he gave the back leg kick and took off. I thought I heard him fall but checked my arrow for blood and backed out.



Forty-five minutes later with flashlights in hand a friend and I picked up the trail. There was great blood and an easy track for 40 yards to where the deer piled up in the CRP. This was my first year shooting the Grim Reaper 100gr head or a mechanical for that matter, and I must say I am very impressed. It was only then that I saw just how nice he was. The deer has 12 scoreable points and measures 18 ? inch inside spread and will probably gross score in the 140's. While this is very much the buck of a lifetime I know that there are much larger than this roaming the woods of Illinois and it is for that reason that you will find me on the side of a tree for many years to come.