



## ***Selective Memory***

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THIS COLUMN has looked at deer hair and digestion, followed the glamorous life of a biologist, and busted some old wives' tales about our beloved state animal. Now where shall we go? How about a trip down memory lane? History has never been my favorite subject. I would much rather do stuff than read about people who did stuff.

But that doesn't mean I don't appreciate the past and what we can learn from it for the future. History can take many forms—natural history, world history, personal history.

For example, I spent a lovely cool July 4th picking raspberries several years ago. I remember this day in my personal history because it was unseasonably cool, and I got the worst case of chiggers in my life. My history of raspberry picking taught me that chiggers are more active at cooler temperatures and that I should always tuck my shirt in. Lesson learned.

While this experience is burned into my memory, most "history" is not experienced firsthand. And this is the trouble with the past. It happened in the past. Let's face it. Most of us are only concerned with what happens today. Unless it has some life-altering effect (like being covered in chigger bites from the waist to the knees), most of our past is archived and only browsed occasionally at family functions. And some of those memories aren't true to life. Come on, we've all been accused of having selective memories. Recalling only the parts we like or that suit our cause instead of what actually happened.

Well, like it or not, we are going to recount the entire story of deer and deer management in Pennsylvania. Forgetting the common history of the whitetail exposes us to silly mistakes—like forgetting to tuck your shirt in while standing in waist high raspberry brambles in July.

For many, the story of the white-tailed deer spans only a few decades, or as long as one person's memory. But be advised, our story will begin hundreds of years ago. Back when the population estimate of white-tailed deer was 300,000—for the entire United States. That's right—the entire white-tailed population in 1890 was less than last year's statewide harvest.

So hold on. The history of the whitetail deer is sort of like back to the future or nagging déjà vu. Either way, think of this year's journey as a cure for a selective memory.