



## ***Push Back-Part 1***

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REMEMBER John Phillips, the man who believed he killed the last deer in Pennsylvania in 1883. Well, seven years later, after nearly all of the state's abundant game had disappeared and 70 percent of Penn's Woods had become agricultural fields, Phillips, along with other sportsmen, formed the Pennsylvania Sportsmen's Association. Phillips lobbied the legislature for an agency that would protect the wildlife they so loved. Better late than never.

After five years of labor, the Game Commission was born, in 1895. Before its creation, most hunters thought a state wildlife agency was a great idea — it meant there would be more game. Who wouldn't support that?

But wait...you mean I can't hunt where I want, when I want, and take what I want. You're crazy! This Game Commission thing is for the birds.

That was pretty much the attitude of the general populous of Pennsylvania. They believed it was an inherent right to take what they wanted at will. The Game Commission floundered for the first few years. No money and no one to enforce the game laws on the books allowed people to continue to do as they pleased. Normal Joe (the one who spent all his money in the bank) thought game protectors were nothing more than an annoyance sent to prosecute "honest" people. I guess people's definition of honesty was different 100 years ago.

Well, the "honest" people of Pennsylvania had had enough of this wildlife protection nonsense by 1903. That's when the first field officer was shot. In 1904, three more were shot. And while 1905 passed without an incident, 1907 made up for it with seven officers being shot, three of which were fatal. That was the same year a bill providing complete protection to antlerless deer and establishing a seasonal one-buck bag limit was passed. The first buck-only season resulted in less than 200 bucks being harvested, and the state's first accident-free deer season. The "great majority" of hunters were pleased with the new law not only for the protection of the deer herd but for the "feeling of personal security."

So, once again, the old saying held true — you can't have your cake and eat it too. It seems after 10 years of bloodshed, both human and wildlife, the good citizens of PA finally decided to at least have their cake even if they couldn't eat it too.