

Whitetail

Predation



Turn! Turn! Turn!

TO EVERYTHING there is a season...a time to live and a time to die." Whether you get your proverbs from the Byrds or the Bible, there's no denying this one. Deer die; so do people, trees, tomato plants, and all those silly butterflies that insist on flying in front of the grill of my car. It's a fact of life – the minute you pop into this world, the clock starts counting down. It's a sobering thought and one that we don't like to dwell on. But as Disney taught us in the Lion King, it's the circle of life and that's what I am going to dwell on for the next several months.

"Really, J.T., that's what you're going to muse about for the next 10 months — the many ways a deer can complete its circle of life?" You betcha! Specifically, I'm going to talk about deer and those that love to eat them. Yes, predators of all shapes and sizes. Why? Because it seems the collective conscious believes that deer are innocent victims in a horrible plot perpetrated by the devil himself. The devil has nothing to do with it but people, coyotes, bears, and the occasional fisher do.

Humans, bears, coyotes, wolves, bobcats, mountain lions, fishers, foxes, eagles, and even alligators kill deer. It is no secret. There is no conspiracy afoot. It is simple biology and ecology. The fact of the matter is that deer are a prey species and, as such, predators (single-celled, 2-legged, or 4-pawed) have always and will always kill them. It's the very definition of prey — an organism that is killed and eaten by another organism (i.e. predator). The sooner we understand this very complex and necessary relationship the better off we will all be.

We are going to talk about coevolution, adaption, and predator exclusion. Mother Nature is one tough cookie. And while deer may be a menu item, there is no great skill required to obtain their 'daily bread.' Not the case for a predator — as illustrated by Wile E. Coyote. He's skinny for a reason.

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These growling monsters with big teeth and sharp claws are trying to make a living just like everyone else. And like the monster in the closet, when you open the door and shine the light on it, there is really nothing to be afraid of. Remember there is a time to every purpose under heaven. And turns, turns, turns.

By J. T. Fleegle

