

Life & Times of the whitetail

Biologist



Calm before the storm

THERE IS AN EERIE CALM that settles over the Bureau of Wildlife Management in November. We can see the storm on the horizon and we have done our best to prepare for it. Now, we wait for the squall. I am referring to the November and December big game seasons. As a biologist in the Deer & Elk Section, I am immersed in the hunting seasons of both of these species. But because there are few biologists statewide, I am involved in bear season as well.

Data are collected for bear and elk at check stations. Due to their short seasons and relatively small harvests, this is the most efficient way to collect the data needed for management. With hundreds of thousands of deer harvested over a 2-week period, on the other hand, it is more efficient for us to go to the deer. Every year deer aging teams charge across the state to gather data on harvested deer. Preparation for these activities takes months. Inventorying, ordering, packing and distributing supplies, updating computer databases, arranging work locations, and tying off any of the other million loose ends needs

to occur before the first shot is fired.

By the time November rolls around, the “pre-season” activities are completed. So, we wait, like firemen. Except we know when the alarm will sound. The bell rings with the first day of elk season. But, it’s a fire for our elk biologist and technician to subdue at the week-long elk check station. The rest of us float in to give assistance and moral support. The 4-Alarm fire strikes statewide three days before Thanksgiving, with the opening day of bear season. While most folks are preparing to baste turkeys and watch football, every biologist in the state is sequestered at a bear check station for three long days. The fire rages on through the three weeks following Thanksgiving, which are devoted to collecting data at deer processor shops. Beware of the biologist you meet in December. With the holidays fast approaching, long days in the field collecting data, and everyday tasks needing tending, scrooge may be an understatement.

For now, though, all is quiet. We try to get as much done as possible before the alarm goes off. It won’t be long before we are hustling to battle the blaze. 



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