

Men choose the bow for a hunting challenge

By Karen Krien

*The Saint Francis Herald
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Chet Gardner and Josh Moberly, both avid bow hunters living in St. Francis, agree that they hunt with a bow and arrow because of the challenge.

Gardner said he was interested in archery as a kid. Then he started watching Howard Hill and Fred Bear, both well-known archers, on television, and that encouraged him to take up the bow and arrow. He has bow hunted the last 30 to 35 seasons for deer. He said he has also hunted with a high-powered rifle and a muzzleloader, but prefers the sport archery has to offer.

It is the challenge, he said, getting close to the animal, trying to figure out what the deer plans to do and then ambushing it.

"The experience of the hunt is fulfilling, even if I don't harvest the deer," he said.

To Gardner, there is more to hunting than the kill. In his deer stand, he has the opportunity to look out on nature's unsuspecting animals. He once saw a flock of turkeys beat up a coyote and a mama bobcat and her kittens sitting on a log. One time, he had a deer decoy set up near his tree stand and a buck just kept calling and shaking his head, asking the decoy to come follow him. After about 45 minutes, Gardner said, the buck gave up, but it was fun to watch.

The most exciting experience came one day when he could hear the rustling of the leaves as a doe, followed by a buck, came into sight. The

doe circled and circled the tree Gardner was sitting in. The buck just stood and watched, turning his head as she circled. She finally went on and he followed.

About 14 years ago, he said, he started gathering information for the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks. Each year, he keeps track of how many deer (mule and whitetail), turkey, coyotes, bobcats and other wildlife he sees and reports it to the state.

"It is amazing how many times I see the same deer," he said.

Moberly, at the age of 29, has been hunting with a bow and arrow for almost half of his life, or the last 14 years, and loving every minute he is out in nature. He not only hunts mule and whitetail deer with the bow, but also turkey and antelope. He hunts mostly in Cheyenne County, but also goes to Wallace and Sherman counties in Kansas, and the mountains of Colorado.

Moberly says he likes the technical part of hunting deer. He said it takes him 45 to 50 hours before he ever starts hunting. He finds the deer trails, then sets up a trail camera on a tree which has an infrared eye that trips the camera, taking a picture of the deer as it moves by. This way, he knows what is in this area and if he should move to another area.

Last year, he shot several does but, he said, he was more particular about the bucks, looking for one with a bigger rack. He never did bag one.

Moberly likes to lure deer in with scents,

game calls and rattle bags, which sound like horns clashing together in fights between bucks, and decoys. He also likes having his deer stands in the trees, though he is conscious about how dangerous that can be.

"It's all about safety," he said, "since tree stands are generally 15 to 20 feet off the ground."

He said he uses a climbing stick and a tree harness while in the stand.

Again, technology comes into action. There is now range finder or arch technology, he said, which calculates the distance and angle of the shot when a deer comes into range.

"It takes the guess work out of aiming," he said.

However, if a hunter doesn't have this technology, Moberly said they need to shoot below the deer when in a tree stand and, if on the ground, a little above the body.

A hunter getting started in the hobby can tie up a lot of money, Moberly said. Equipment is a big investment.

Hunting antelope, especially the pronghorn, is fun, Moberly said. He generally uses a decoy, then belly crawls close enough to get the animal. On antelope, he said, it is important to get a good shot – something that brings it down quickly – then gut and bleed the animal and get it on ice. It makes a lot better eating, he said.

Moberly also hunts turkeys with the bow. The biggest turkey he has bagged weighed 23 pounds and had a 10 1/4-inch beard. He prefers

to hunt turkey in the spring rather than the fall because they respond better to the calls then.

Calling is a part of the hunt which Moberly really likes.

Because he loves archery, he decided to open Mobe's Archery Supply west of St. Francis on U.S. 36. The shop carries a full supply of archery equipment, lures and calls. Everything, he said, to get the beginner started, to supplying the seasoned hunter with needed equipment. He also repairs bows.

Last year, he took on the 4-H archery program. He had 20 4-H'ers in the program and a team went to state competition.

"I have always liked kids," he said. "I want to give them something more to do that play video games and watch television."

Seasons and equipment

The fall archery hunting season for turkey is from Oct. 1 to Nov. 30, Dec. 13 to 31, and after the first of the year, Jan. 10 to 31.

The deer season for archery is from Sept. 20 through Dec. 31. There is an extended antlerless-only whitetail season from Jan. 1 through 9.

A crossbow is not legal for fall turkey or deer, except for disabled hunters who qualify for a special permit.

Legal archery equipment includes longbows, recurve bows or compound bows that are hand drawn, have no mechanical device to lock the bow at full or partial draw and are designed to shoot only one arrow at a time.

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Brody Kaup points over his younger brother Brayden Kaup's ear. Brody was helping his little brother aim and shoot his bow and arrow.

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