

THE DAILY GAZETTE

Outdoor Journal: Simone's wait is finally over

Thursday, December 10, 2009

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When we talk about "first deer," we're usually referring to a young hunter or one who's only been in the deer woods a few years, but the first deer buck tale that I am

going to lead off with is about a more mature hunter.

Florindo "Floyd" Simone, 81, of Clifton Park has been a member of the Mountain Boys Hunting Club in Schoharie County since its beginning almost 30 years ago. The Simones are one of three families — the Popolizios and Ragozzinos are the others — who founded the club. I'm sure he had plenty of other opportunities to take a deer during all these years, but this year he decided it was time.

Shortly after being put on watch at his favorite spot by his grandsons, Anthony and Matthew, a buck broke out of the woods. The buck was on a dead run across a clearing about 100 yards from Florindo, who calmly grabbed his Browning BAR .30-06, swung on the buck and took him down with one shot.

Florindo's first deer carried a large eight-point rack and tipped the scales at a dressed weight of 150 pounds. If you'd like to see a photo of his first deer, go to my blog at www.noonanpics.blogspot.com.

The two other members of the club who filled buck tags were Schenectady hunters Joey Popolizo, with a 10-pointer, and Anthony Popolizo, with a seven-pointer.

Two area young hunters also collected their first bucks recently, one with a gun and one with a bow.

Martin Baylies of Saratoga Springs was hunting from a tree stand in Hadley when a six-pointer stepped out of the woods and he dropped it with one shot from his Ruger .243. The buck dressed at 140 pounds.

Wayne Van Valkenburgh of Ballston Spa was hunting from his homemade tree stand in the Milton area when his six-pointer walked by at about 15 yards. One arrow from his Hoyt Big Game bow rewarded him with a 122-pound buck.

On opening day of the Southern Zone, Dave VanDerzee of Clifton Park, along with several friends, decided to stay in the Northern Zone, where they hoped to take advantage of the rut, which was just peaking there.

Throughout the day, they saw several smaller bucks and does, but no shooters. His company left that evening, but Dave stayed and was in the woods bright and early carrying his 30-year-old Marlin 35 caliber rifle — perfect for the mountain climbing, sneak-and-peek hunt he had planned for the day. After sitting for several hours watching at the top of the mountain he headed back down for lunch and it was then that he saw a big bodied deer. And when it finally turned its head he saw the antlers — nine points.

There were several does with him, and Dave began a 40-yard stalk that took about a half hour. Then he had the shot he wanted. The Marlin barked just once and Dave had his trophy. A perfect ending to a perfect day. And the good part of it was the rest was all downhill from there.

In the heavyweight division, there were two big deer taken

locally, both with bow and arrow, and both were backyard bucks. Rich Williams of Esperance was hunting from a tree stand when he arrowed his big nine-pointer that tipped the scales at 215 — dressed. He was shooting a Hoyt Vectrix compound bow.

Dan Stadler of Schenectady was in his ground blind talking to his wife on the cellphone when his big eight-pointer appeared. Hanging up, without a goodbye, he raised his Martin compound bow and at about 25 yards, released the arrow. A perfect pass-through shot and the buck went down less than 100 yards from the hunter. The buck had an 18½-inch spread and tipped the scales dressed at 188 pounds. It was his sixth eight pointer taken in those woods and it was his biggest.

Don Dennis of East Berne also bagged a backyard buck during the Southern Zone archery season. One shot with his Matthews compound bow at 25 yards from his tree stand rewarded him with a spike horn that dressed out at 118 pounds.

The Marzullo brothers, Ralph and Mike, each shot bow bucks on state land in the central part of the state. Ralph, of Cicero, grunted in a big nine-pointer which he arrowed at 20 yards. Waiting about 40 minutes before retrieving his buck, he found that the coyotes got there before him. His buck had an 18-inch spread and dressed at 168 pounds. The next day Mike shot a four-pointer.

For the past several years I have received a buck tale from Adam Beecroft of Schaghticoke, who only uses his grandfather's old Remington Model 141 .35-caliber pump rifle. And this year he, and the Model 141, did it again.

Hunting from a tree stand in the Rensselaer County deer woods, he shot a big six-pointer that carried an 18-inch spread and dressed at 160 pounds. Adam also has photos of the buck captured on his trail cam prior to the hunt.

Patience paid off for Mike Miller of Colonie, who sat all of opening day in Montgomery County. Late that afternoon, he was rewarded with a seven-point buck. The buck broke from the woods into an open field about 150 yards from Mike, and one shot from his .308 caliber Sako A7 ended the hunt.

Steve Rajeski of Gansevoort was about ready to begin a deer drive to his buddies when the buck came on a dead run about 60 yards from him. Quickly, he centered the crosshairs and touched off his new Browning bolt-action 325 short mag, ending the hunt. It was Steve's best deer to date; a nine pointer that field dressed at 180 pounds.

Here's a family buck tale about five Granville hunters who were quite successful this season.

J.D. Durling downed a big six-pointer in Albany County during the archery season that tipped the scales at 155 pounds. Jessica Durling bagged her 165-pound, eight-pointer in Washington County opening day of firearms season. In the first deer category, Zack Durling shot his first buck, a three-pointer, in Washington County with a rifle while Taylor Liebig shot his first deer, a doe, with a bow and arrow. Zack, also shot a bear earlier in the season in the Indian Lake area with a shotgun that dressed at 165 pounds.

My tale, as of right now, is a doe tale that took place on opening day hunting out of the Good Guys Hunting Camp in Allegany County.

With about an hour of legal shooting time left, and after sitting in my stand all day overlooking a Christmas tree field, a big doe appeared on my right side about 180 yards out. I figured it was time to use one of my Deer Management Assistance Permits, but there was one problem. I could not get turned around in the stand without spooking the deer. My other choice was to shoot left handed—something I had never done. Why not?

Slowly shouldering the gun, I fumbled around the left side of my .308 Savage 99 for the safety, which was on the “right” side. Then I shouldered the gun, closed my left eye and looked through the scope but could not see a thing. Panic struck for a second until I realized that when you shoot left handed, you have to close your “right” eye not your left. Now I was laughing at myself, but did managed to get the crosshair centered on the deer’s shoulder. And I admit my trigger pull was anything but smooth, but the doe went right down. And those tenderloins went quite well with the spaghetti dinner the next evening.

The highlight of this year in our camp was the success of three of our young hunters. Sixteen-year-old Alex Lanfear of Glens Falls took a seven-pointer that dressed at 140 pounds with one shot at 138 yards. Samantha Gavin and Jonathan Otto, two 19-year-old club members and cousins from Andover, collected their first whitetails. Samantha shot a five-pointer, Jonathan a doe. Both were taken with Ithaca model 37 featherlight 20-gauge shotguns.

Other club members filling tags this year were: Tim Blodgett, Wilton, two doe; Jamie Guy, South Glens Falls, two doe; Ed Degner, Clifton Park, doe; and Glens Falls hunters Fred Kaiser, Skipper Clark and Aaron Weils all filled their Deer Management Permits. The

total deer harvest for the Good Guys this year to date is 18; six bucks and 12 does.

TREE STAND SAFETY

There have already been two tree stand accidents reported this season — one fatal.

I wonder how many other hunters have fallen out of a tree, and it never was reported? Is it really worth the chance? These accidents are two very good reasons to wear a safety vest whenever you climb into an elevated stand. In the past these safety harnesses were quite uncomfortable, but today they’re just like another piece of clothing — clothing that can save your life.