Whitetail deer again flourishing in state

By Frank Davis

By the first part of November, when Louisiana's 1980-81 whitetail season opens, there will have been thousands of hunters who have spent countless hours walking bottomland hardwoods, upland hills, and mixed pine forests just to try and get an edge on the most popular big game species in the South!

Some opening day, they will have pre-scouted every deer trail. They will have checked out every rub. They will have found most of the bedding and feeding areas. They will have plotted on their topographic maps every stand site. And they will have constructed tree-top architecture, in some cases, that even Tarzan would find impressive.

All for the pursuit of the deer!

Not Always So

But even though just about every sportsman who buys a hunting license now can get an opportunity to stalk Louisiana's whitetails... it wasn't always that way. And the story of how deer numbers grew in Louisiana is probably among the accounts of the greatest success projects in conservation annals.

History confirms that shortly after the turn of the century, the original deer herd in the Bayou State, like those in most of nation, suffered a double-dose of misfortune: illegal, uncontrolled harvest and unregulated hunting, without regard to seasons or seasons. Market hunting flourished. Most of the virgin woodlands were stripped. Farms blanketed Louisiana. And illegal hunting took a significant toll on deer statewide.

Then in 1949, the proverbial worm turned. Louisiana initiated a restocking program, transplanting just over 3,000 deer on selected, suitable ranges across the state. And what resulted was a virtual explosion of the numbers. Madison and Tenesee parishes were the first to notice the upsurge in populations. Hill areas, old fields, and pastures that had grown over became prime deer habitat. The Atchafalaya Basin boomed. And the hardwood bottomland of Concordia Parish was transformed into a hotspot.

Then, following a decade of changing agricultural and forestry practices, all designed to enhance deer range—the state, in 1960, opened the deer season under the "big game licensing practice"; and by the end of the season deer herd had come from virtually every part of Louisiana.

The success story—just as the herd's—has grown consistently since then, and today's total population conservatively numbers between 250,000 to 400,000.

Last season there were over 173,000 big game licenses sold to deer hunters in Louisiana. Figures this year are expected to be even higher. Add to the gun hunters the archers who like to hit the woods in search of the whitetail and there exists a respectable contingency of advocates.

Even though Louisiana, like much of the nation, is finding that open lands for public hunting are dwindling, the situation still remains attractive for the Bayou State sportsman. Over 30 wildlife management areas offer deer hunting opportunity, tremendous timber holdings in the state maintain open-hunting policies, and the vast Kisatchie National Forest provides 65,000 acres of prime bottomland hardwoods, and both Red River and Three Rivers wildlife management areas are open to public hunting.

Also among the best parishes are Blevins and Claiborne. The former supports good deer herds in the hill-lands, browse is excellent, and public hunting is available on a few timber tracts. The latter, at times, has been listed nothing short of "excellent", especially in the hilly sections, and the public can hunt Kisatchie lands.

Of course, some of Louisiana's wildlife management areas, established especially for public recreation, lead the rest of the state's deer areas in potential for success. Union WMA, for instance, has always supported lots of big deer, but usually runs short of hunting pressure. Located in central Union Parish, about 12 miles north of Farmerville, the tract is comprised of 12,500 acres of mixed pine and hardwoods, and is easily accessible via three different highways.

Best places to hunt on the property are around food plots,武术-big

Big buck

An entire hunting fraternity each winter spends countless hours in pursuit of the whitetail deer. And whether it be for a fresh supply of venison for the freezer or a trophy cape of magnificent antlers, the sportsman covers the whole state of Louisiana in search of his quarry. (Photo by Lloyd Poissonet)