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## **Of The Outdoors** Spring Is Perfect Time For 'Shed Hunting'

## **BY GARY HOWEY** Hartington, Neb.

Believe it or not, spring is here, finally the snow is disappearing and the weather's there is. starting to warm.

It's something that a lot of us have been waiting on for a long time, giving us the opportunity to get outside the antler is shed. and enjoy the spring weather. As I mentioned in earlier

columns, this is the time of determine if that big buck you the year when I do my prehunted last year made it season scouting for turkey. through the winter. While I'm out there tromp-

start to drop.

ing around in the woods looking for some sign of that big Tom, I'm also looking for deer start to put together a plan as sheds or "Shed Hunting" as it's known. him this season. For those of you that

haven't hunted sheds, they're the previous years antlers that the buck sheds or dropped after the rut. Bucks shed their headgear/rack/antlers annually

and if you can beat the from the harem. rodents and other critters out there that chew on them where they use them for a source of calcium, you'll have the opportunity to find a shed or two.

A buck's antler/rack is a lot different from cattle horns, which are hollow, as they're made up of honey combed solid bone.

March. Pedicles, those knobby nubs that protrude from the buck's skull, are where the new antler/rack grows and what supports the buck's rack.

When bucks start to grow

their new racks/antlers, There are several reasons they're no more than bony deer shed their antlers, one is growths covered with skin to allow for regeneration. or and hair (velvet). They grow re-growth, of new ones. incredibly fast in 3 to 4 Others believe the reason

they drop their antlers is it months, making them the fastest growing living tissue will be easier for them to make it through the winter, These pedicles are a peras winter, with it's harsh conmanent part of the buck's ditions make it tough for a forehead and the point where deer coming out of the rut to

the antler breaks off of when survive By shedding their antlers: Shed hunting in the spring it helps them to not only conserve energy but also to elimis also an excellent way to

inate excess weight. The entire shedding process will take two to three If you find his sheds, he's weeks to complete, while the still around unless the winre-growth will take the entire ter did him in and you can summer

The first to drop their antlers are more than likely to how you're going to hunt those bucks that chased hard After the rut, bucks no during the rut, become longer need their racks as fatigued from fighting and

they did during the rut when breeding during the rut. they were used to attract and If you don't have an area impress the does and to fight where you've found sheds in other bucks that were trying prior years, a good place to to draw the females away start looking for sheds would be to drive through the country, looking for those well-It's a known fact that all of the bucks don't drop their used deer trails that cross racks at the same time. Some the roads.

I've found that heavily of them will begin to loose their racks following the rut, traveled trails, those that lead when their hormone levels from heavily wooded areas, then cross the road into the deer's feeding areas to be a As a general rule deer in good starting point.

the upper Midwest will shed their antlers in February and I'd say a good trail to start looking for sheds on would The amount of daylight in be one that resembled a hard

a day, the fluctuations in the packed cattle trail. deer's hormones, their diet Once you've located a well-used trail, get permisand stress have a lot to do as to when a deer will drop sion from the landowner to their rack/antlers shed hunt on the ground and

then formulate a plan. The main spots I've found sheds were those near their bedding areas, along a route

months.

to a food supply.

the bales.

a fence.

against the bales when

they're trying to pull hay from

include trails following the

bottom of ravines and places

where the deer have to jump

While filming in Mississip-

pi a few years back, my good

friend Bubba Flanigan

showed me how they hunt

They leave feeders out

sheds in the south

Other good spots to look

above the opening to the feeder and when the buck heading to an area where sticks his head into eat, the they're feeding and of course at their food sources. wire knocks the antler off. On one feeder there were You'll find more sheds in

areas where the deer feed, as 19 sheds, the folks down south use this method to when a buck feeds. there's a track the deer using their lot of up and down head land, which made it through movement, which causes the antler to drop off the season and to help man-Another reason that you'll age their herd.

They use the sheds to decfind a good number of sheds orate their homes and cabnear a food source is that they'll spend a lot of time ins, making decorative lights and other items that some there during the winter folks sell in their gift shops.

During the winter, when other food sources are covusing this method as if it's ered up, deer have a tendenattached too early, the buck might become entangled in cy to "Yard" up in large groups near a food supply. the wire.

These feeding areas can like hunting mushrooms, as be corn/bean fields, near you need to take your time haystacks, grain piles and even open bins, as deer know and walk through the fields these areas offer easy access and hills slowly.

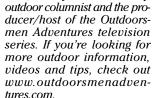
Don't be in a big hurry when shed hunting as even a If they're feeding near bale piles, spend a little extra time small amount of snow or leaves can cover a shed, makchecking these areas out as I've found a lot of sheds here ing them impossible to see as the bucks bang their rack

year round for the deer and until you're right on top of when it nears shed time, they them attach a piece of chicken wire

If they've been on the ground long, they'll have faded and will be dull grav color, making them particularly hard to see in sandy soils

This is the time of the year, especially this year when folks just want to get outside and do something, shed hunting is a great opportunity for you to spend a little time in the hills and woods, enjoying the outdoors while looking for one of Mother Natures most beautiful art forms.

Gary Howey, Hartington, Neb., is a syndicated weekly





Timing is everything when

Hunting sheds is about tures.com.

