

Reasons to Keep a Bow Only Season

*National Archery in the Schools Program: Very effective at recruiting young people to the sport we all hold so dear. Would you rather have 17% of 2.4 million student archers taking up bow-hunting or having zero archers contributing zip to the future of hunting, because there is no Bow Only season. The survey shows that 77% of the NASP students are new to archery and potential new hunters. This remains an important premise of NASP. NASP instills archery skills in the kids and they seek to use them. NASP recent survey shows that 33% want to experience bow-hunting. Kentucky Department of Fish & Wildlife has an incentive for the student using the same equipment they use for NASP to join the sport of hunting with the bow only season that is offered today. See Roy Grimes article in the P&Y Ethic vol.46, no. 1 & 2017 NASP Survey.

*Scholastic 3D Archery, founded by Jennie Richardson, operates programs nationwide. This program has lots of energy, enthusiasm and sense of urgency. Jack Bowman, president of Bear Archery says, "Introducing youths to archery fundamentals, and teaching them the principles of marksmanship and fair chase is vital to growing archery as a sport." He believes Scholastic 3-D Archery's Clear Path Initiative accomplishes all that and more. S3-DA archers can also shoot a variety of equipment, including compounds, Olympic recurves and traditional bows. "After shooting in our program, our students want to hunt," said Richardson.

*KDFWR defines a bow (301KAR2:172) as a long bow, recurve bow, or compound bow incapable of holding an arrow at full or partial draw without aid from the archer.

*The League of KY Sportsmen, which represents all hunters and fishermen in KY, supports a bow only season. Past by unanimous vote by LKS Board December 1, 2012 and a Resolution proposed and passed by the membership at the LKS convention June 6, 2009. Both ask the KDFWR to always provide a bow only season for big game.

*The bow only season of KY, not only gives the sportsmen and women an incentive to hunt with a bow, but also challenges them to learn more about the wildlife he/she pursues. Most Bowhunters admit that they spend more time watching and learning the habits of big game while waiting for the game to get in range. At close range (under 50 yds) the game being pursued has a greater chance at eluding the hunter as they try to draw the bow.

*KDFWR has a history of sound conservation practices and that is appreciated. The department has always provided a season length based on the proficiency of the method of take. Therefore, the use of the bow and arrow has always had the longest season. Bow hunting is a close range sport, requiring more time afield to be successful. Ever since the bow was recognized for hunting, bowhunters have gained a respect from the hunting and non-hunting public alike for fair chase and "Hunting the Hard Way".

*The Future of Bowhunting: Will bowhunting remain the close range, challenging sport it is today? The sportsmen of KY believe it should. KDFWR has a great bow season now and it can be better. There are many products that make bowhunting easier, but that is not what bowhunting is about. Bowhunting is a welcome challenge now and with good management by the KDFWR will be more exciting in the future.

April 23, 2018

High kill rate has DNR looking at changing crossbow deer season

9:43 am January 25, 2019

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MADISON (WKOW) — The Department of Natural Resources is considering changing the crossbow deer season, but is struggling to balance all of the competing interests.

At a meeting Wednesday of the Wisconsin Natural Resources Board, the board heard a presentation on changing the crossbow deer season.

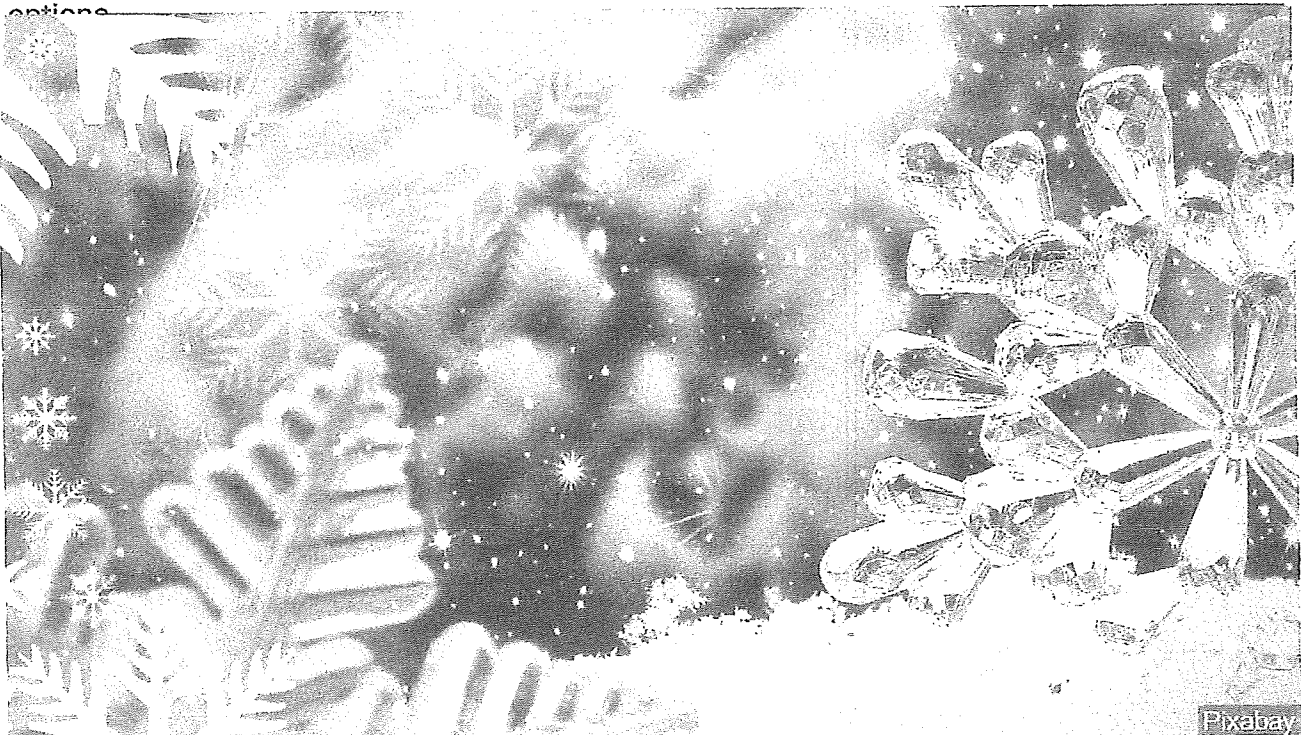
Currently, the crossbow season runs the same dates as the archery season, which is typically mid-September through the beginning of the year. This has been the case since the crossbow season was established in 2014. Prior to that, crossbows had been limited to hunters with disabilities and those over 65.

Director of Wildlife Management Eric Lobner told the board that crossbow hunters are taking a larger share of bucks. The solution would be to "reduce your crossbow harvest by five to 6,000 animals."

Lobner presented seven options for a crossbow season that he said would do just that. In every form, the length of the crossbow season would be shorter than the current archery season.

The options ranged from ending the crossbow season earlier than bows, to starting the season late, to banning the use of crossbows on weekends.

Lobner used the season structure of the 2018-19 archery deer season to come up with his



range and accuracy over traditional bows, combined with the long season accounts for the higher kill rate.

"I think that when you have a weapon that can be accurate at 100 yards ... and I have seen it and witnessed it," said Prehn. "That weapon is becoming quite lethal."

Proponents of changing the crossbow season say the weapon is too deadly to continue to run concurrently with the entire four-month archery season.

"We have a very lethal weapon out there that is allowed all the way through the season," said Prehn.

Notably absent from the presentation were crossbow hunters. While written comments were allowed, citizen testimony is reserved for the next step in the process: a scope statement. There is also a period in each meeting for citizen participation, but it does not allow comments during particular agenda items.

This didn't stop the public from reaching out. Board member Julie Anderson said, "I've been on the board nearly four years, and on this particular agenda item I have received more calls than I have in all four years combined on just about any other item we've ever discussed."

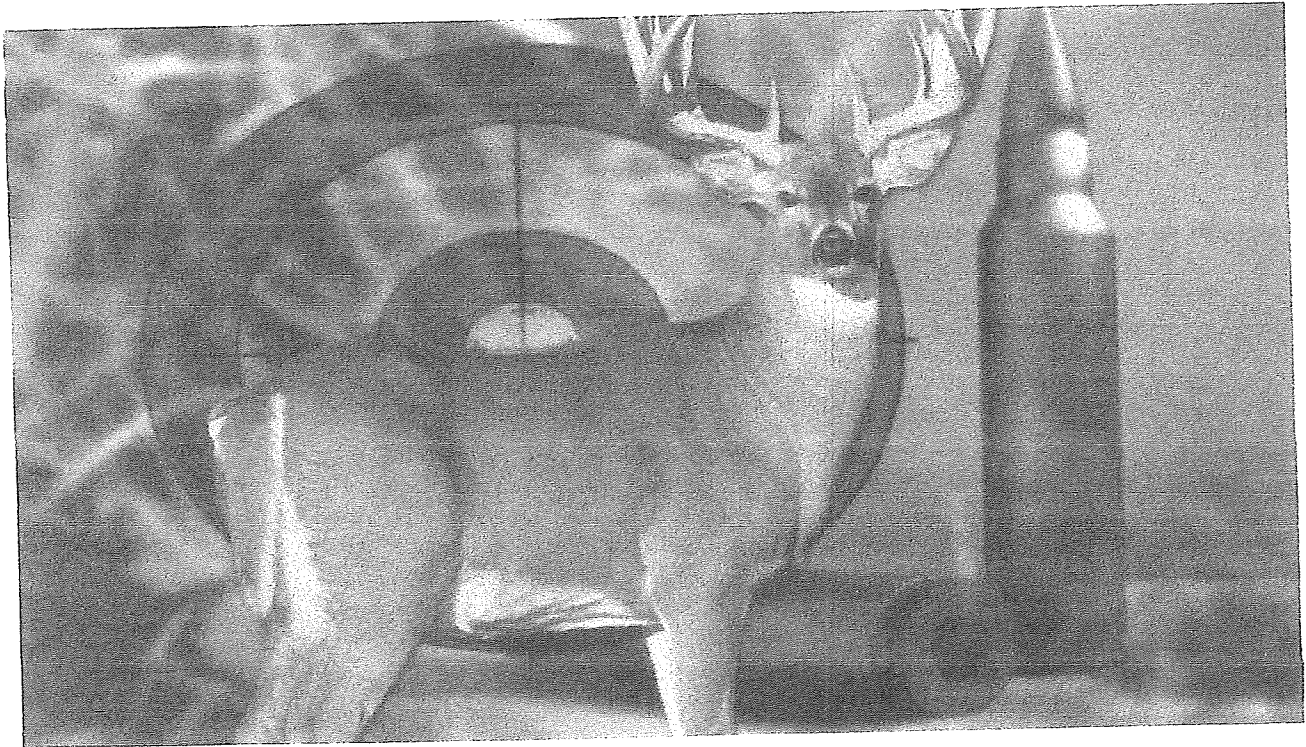
Complicating the entire discussion is a concern for adding more red tape and confusion.

A widely held view that hunting's many rules are driving people away is backed up by DNR data.

Lobner said that DNR surveys have shown that complicated hunting regulations have led to a reduction in the number of hunters.

"Rule simplification is generally the name of the game," said Lobner. "I think you have all heard the [phrase], 'you need to have a lawyer with you when you are out hunting.'"

The next Wisconsin Natural Resources Board meeting is Feb. 26 – 27, 2019.



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Counter Effect: Are Crossbows Threatening the Tradition of Bowhunting?

Crossbows during archery season help recruit new bowhunters, right? These days, some are having second thoughts

By WILL BRANTLEY NOVEMBER 19, 2018

29 Comments

Looking at the numbers, the compound bow business is in trouble. Pro shops are closing, and bowhunter numbers are falling. The reasons are no doubt complex (the steep price of the equipment, for example, hasn't helped), but there's been a big, undeniable change in the bow woods over the past decade: Crossbows have surged in popularity.

In 1979, Precision Shooting Equipment (PSE) introduced the Crossfire, the first commercially successful compound crossbow built for modern sportsmen. It was championed by PSE founder and bowhunting icon Pete Shepley as a tool that could help recruit new hunters.

"Pete really took a lot of heat over crossbows," says Blake Shelby, current executive vice president for PSE. "But we pushed to get them legalized, hoping they'd get more people into archery."

That hasn't exactly worked out. PSE continues to make and sell crossbows, but Shelby says the crossbow boom has actually proven bad for business, and he worries that their full inclusion into archery seasons is threatening the tradition of bowhunting altogether.

Purist Points

Hunter participation numbers have been dropping since 1982. That seemed to be a good argument in favor of allowing full inclusion of crossbows into archery seasons. Vertical-bow groups pitched a fit, of course. They warned that the woods would become too crowded during bow season, harvest rates would skyrocket, and the tradition of bowhunting would be eroded. The Pope and Young Club refused then—and refuses still—to accept animals taken with a crossbow into its record books.

But in the big picture, the opposition lost the fight—and lost it so completely that, these days, complaining about crossbows is likely to get you labeled a purist who is out to divide hunters. Twenty-seven states now allow full inclusion of crossbows during archery season, largely based on the premise that these easier-to-shoot tools would recruit enough new bowhunters to reverse the trend of falling overall participation.

Yet that doesn't seem to be happening. According to the most recent (2016) outdoor recreation survey conducted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, hunter numbers fell by 16 percent from 2011, and the overall hunting participation rate is the lowest it's been in 25 years. The total number of bowhunters declined 19 percent in the same time period—and Shelby believes the total has fallen even more since 2016.

What does seem to be happening are some of the very things the purists warned of. In some cases, archery seasons are becoming more crowded and harvests are getting bigger. Consider Ohio, which is a good case study because it has had full crossbow inclusion for 34 years now. According to the 2017 Deer Survey conducted by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, 76 percent of gun hunters now also bowhunt. Back in 1981, before full crossbow inclusion, that number was 30 percent. A decade ago in Ohio, the archery harvest made up just 25 percent of the state's total deer take. Last year, at 45 percent, it exceeded the gun harvest—and 61 percent of those animals were taken with a crossbow. Yet for the seventh consecutive season, overall license sales have declined in the state.

Nationwide sales trends seem to reflect the same, according to hunter panel surveys conducted by Southwick Associates. In 2014, crossbows constituted 28 percent of all new bows sold, while compound bows made up 72 percent. In 2017, compounds

were down to 53 percent, while crossbows were up to 47 percent. No doubt, gun hunters are picking up crossbows—but it seems that former vertical-bow hunters are switching too.

"I believe the industry is on the cusp of losing some of our best [bow] manufacturers," Shelby says. "We've had to eat a little crow. Crossbows are not the saviors we thought they would be. If we had to go back and do it over again, especially on the topic of [advocating] full inclusion, we would handle it differently."

Changing Seasons

Equipment evolves and the market changes. So what if crossbows replace vertical bows?

Of course, there's a tradition to protect. But more tangibly, the timing and structure of hunting seasons in most states are heavily influenced by the equipment used. Archery seasons tend to be long and occur during the best times of the year—the early season, the rut—because bowhunting is inherently more difficult.

Crossbows make it much easier. The performance gap between vertical bows and crossbows is wide—and getting wider. Some crossbow companies now tout 100-yard accuracy in their marketing.

To be fair, compound bows are way better than the recurves that they replaced. But with a compound, the fundamental bowhunting skills of drawing and maintaining shooting form under pressure are preserved. I've seen good 100-yard groups from a compound—but they're attainable by such a small group of expert archers that they border on trick shots.

On the other hand, having tested just about every new flagship crossbow to hit the market in the past six years, I can tell you that they're pretty much all capable of 100-yard accuracy in the hands of anyone with some rifle experience and a rangefinder.

"When discussions of full inclusion first came up, crossbows weren't that good," Shelby says. "Now many of them have speeds in excess of 400 feet per second, and with a good scope, they're accurate to 100 yards. Of course, there's a lot of drop at that distance, and the argument can be made that it's not an ethical shot. But crossbows are capable. They have other advantages. You can use a rest, hunt from a box blind—things you just cannot do with a regular bow. Inside 100 yards, they're very much like a gun."

As to the timing of the harvest, both the Michigan and Wisconsin DNRs have data that shows more bucks are being taken earlier in the season than ever before—and in both states, as in Ohio, more hunters are using crossbows than vertical bows.

Think no one notices? Last winter in Wyoming, which was one of the few Western states to allow full inclusion, a panel of biologists and game wardens with the Game and Fish Department recommended in a report to the commission that crossbows be limited to firearms seasons only. A quote from the report read: "If archery success continues to rise due to advances in equipment, opportunity provided by those seasons will have to be reduced, or more stringent limitations put on legal gear." Ultimately, after several rounds of debate, the commission voted to keep crossbow use legal during archery season. Still, that the issue was raised at all is telling.

Shared Time

In their own right, crossbows are an excellent hunting tool with many applications. One big reason for the decline in overall hunter numbers, for example, is that baby boomers are retiring from the woods. More boomers use crossbows than any other age group (see sidebar), and without them the attrition rate could've been higher. It's a good argument for keeping crossbows available for senior hunters throughout archery season (which several states without full inclusion do allow).

It should also be recognized that while they're not vertical bows, crossbows aren't guns either. I enjoy hunting with them at times myself every fall. Relegating them to firearms seasons only is too restrictive. Of the states that currently allow crossbow hunting, two—Kentucky and New York—provide crossbow hunters with several weeks of extra time without overlapping throughout the entire archery season. I'm at a loss as to why more states don't follow such a model and offer special crossbow seasons—and that includes the handful of states that still only allow them to be used during gun seasons.

I'm as tired of hunter infighting as anyone. But I also think the tradition of bowhunting should be protected. I think it's OK to acknowledge the performance difference between a crossbow and a vertical bow. And I think it would be nice to be able to say those things without being ostracized as a "bow snob."

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