



March 2023

Mendocino County Blacktail Deer Association's *Blacktail News* Magazine

In This Issue:

- Post-Pandemic
- Becoming a Hunter, My Journey
- Lake County Banquet
- Profile: Jack Booth
- Ukiah Banquet
Photographic Recap
- The Good Ol' Days

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President's Message

BY PAUL J. TROUETTE

Odd Times, Updates, and My Dad's Best Buck

As you know, MCBA was forced to cancel our Ukiah and Lake County banquets due to COVID-19 in 2021. Although we attempted to reschedule, the governor shut the state down. While we celebrated Ukiah's 2022 banquet and are back on schedule, ***please note this issue contains pictures and articles scheduled for release in advance of our 2021 banquet.***

Lastly, on March 1, 2023, all state-level COVID-19 emergency orders expired and we sincerely hope you and your family safely weathered this really odd time in our lives.

Now, let's talk hunting...

The Excitement of the Hunt

Despite the challenging condition of the continued declining deer population in public lands, and the political climate of the California machine. As I reflect back to 2020, a year in which I turned 60, permit me a little fun while I remember the thrill of blacktail hunting throughout my life as a committed blacktail hunter.

I can still see in my mind's eye that big buck with massive antlers exploding out of the chamise brush in front of me, I remember the many times my dad would tell me the story of his biggest buck, a 153 B&C that he had taken and how it happened in 1974.

They were riding in a jeep hunting the evening in a 20,000-acre ranch in Covelo. They passed by a willow patch, and out of sheer panic, this buck exploded out of the willow behind them. Dad jumped out of the jeep while it was still moving, ran to the edge of the meadow as the buck was bounding away at Mach 2.

Dad touched off a hurried shot from his .270 and saw the animal fall, get up, and run off down the hill. With excitement they all tracked the buck only to lose him at dark. Finding only a few drops of blood and 6 hairs on a rock they regretfully went back to camp.

The next day they went back to the same area with the mighty help of a fox terrier and found the buck still alive with a rear leg broken at the joint from dad's gun shot. The buck was hidden in a root wad extending over a creek bed totally hidden from them. However not fooling that terrier.

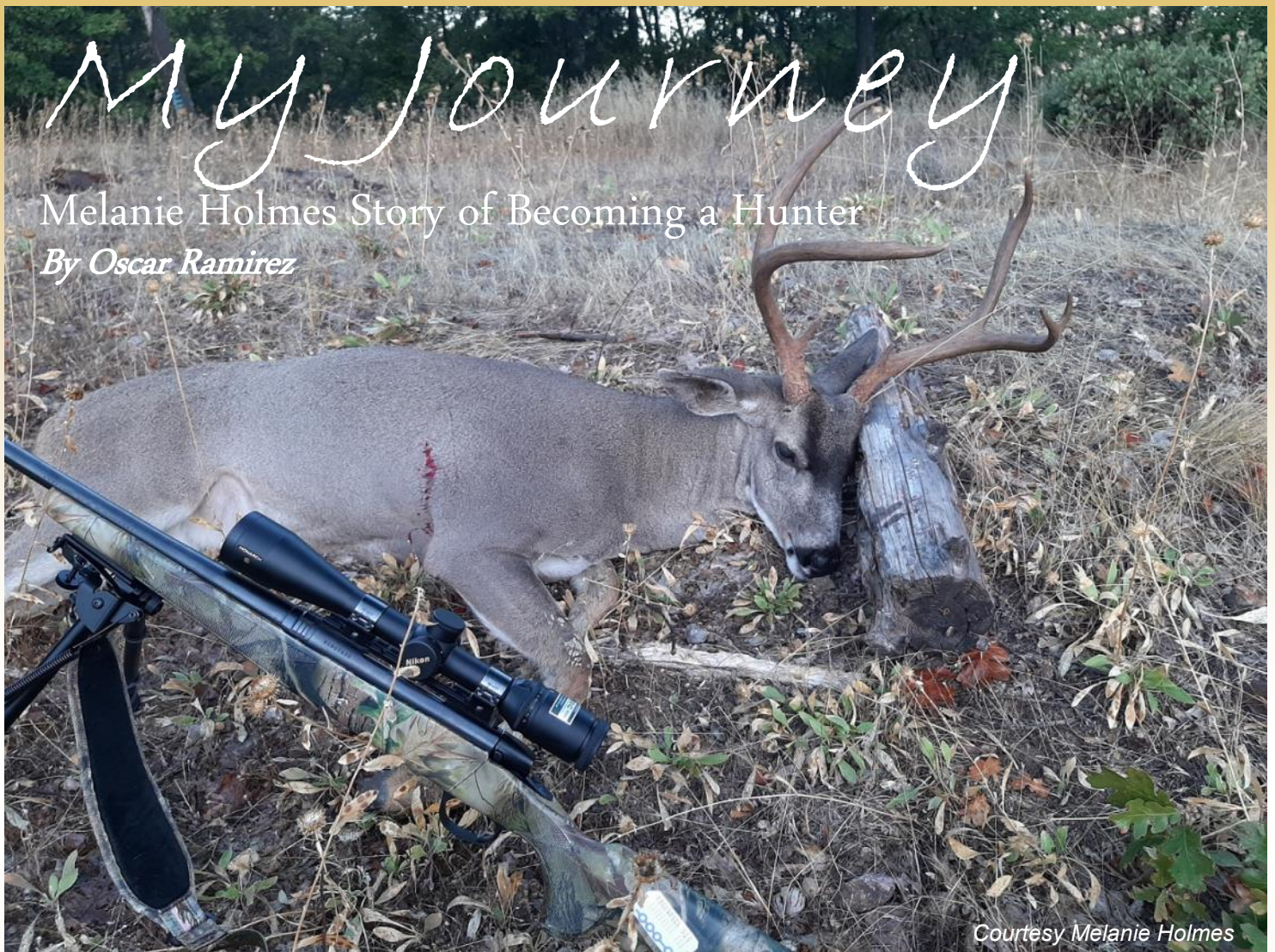
What a thrill to find a blackie scoring in the 153 B&C categories. Before my dad died in 2016, I presented him with a Boone and Crockett certificate of entry in the all-time book for his 82nd birthday. This is why I still champion their cause, fight to improve the herd for you the public, and chase these awesome animals throughout the woods still, and why they deserve to be displayed at our events. Never quit!!!

Good luck hunting.

Paul Trouette

Paul is a longtime resident of Mendocino County and lifelong hunter. He can be reached at (707) 489-9663 or at mendodeer@yahoo.com





“Every time he put his head down, I’d move a little bit. My heart was jumping out of my chest, but I focused and tried to remember everything Brett had taught me—how to focus on the target, control my breathing, readying for the shot, and how and when to move. This ‘Brutus’ of a buck was cautious and wary. He knew I was there.”

Melanie Holmes was recounting her 2019 B-zone hunting season opener. This game of cat and mouse probably sounds familiar to many hunters. Young or old, hunters can identify with Melanie’s excitement of getting the drop on a big ol’ mature buck and being in a position to take that shot is the ultimate to many hunters.

As the time slows and you are waiting for chance to make your shot, you get the sense of dread

that if you do not act now, that buck—using his keen senses—will see, smell, or even feel your presence.

Melanie’s hunting story does not begin here though; her story goes back a bit further growing up in the small, rural Trinity County town of Junction City, population 101. When she was growing up, she lived with her family of five together in a single-wide trailer and typical of the area, she grew up poor. Her family lived off the land to supplement their groceries and her Dad made sure there was plenty of venison and fish available for family meals.

For Melanie, her memories of venison steaks and fish were not fun or memorable as much as they were a necessity to live. As the youngest of three



Brett and Melanie Holmes

sisters, she might guess she shared a room, but she shared the room with more than her sisters, “A corner of our room is where Dad hung the deer he killed—our very own meat locker, right there in the corner,” she deadpanned. “But it could be quite startling in the middle of the night to a little girl.”

When she grew up, she swore she’d never eat venison or fish again. According to her husband Brett, her opinions of game and fish were as follows, “Deer was gamey, and fish tasted... fishy.” Truer words have never been spoken.

How did this non-hunting, venison-and-seafood-hating gal get to being alone on the opening day of 2019 deer hunting season, vividly recounting the story of her opening day hunt? Well, let’s just say her husband Brett had something to do with it.

A Little Background

Five persons occupied the single-wide trailer, but the family was self-sufficient, independent, and proud. Melanie’s dad provided for the family by operating his own heavy equipment, a backhoe and dozer. Her dad instilled their independence early as he would not rely on the government to provide any assistance—there would be no welfare of any kind. “He was proud of that

because he provided for the family, not the government,” she said. “As you can imagine, our family was fantastic at storing food.”

In Junction City, where she met her future husband, Brett, and on their first date learned that not all fish is fishy. “I thought he kind of cheated, because he made this wonderful sauce that was so tasty, you could have served me boot leather and I would have loved it,” said Melanie. “I thought it was great.”

On second date, he made venison steaks, grilled medium and apparently cooked to perfection. “I still didn’t want any, but he insisted I at least try it and darn it—it was great too.”

While her Dad killed deer for food, with Brett, hunting was the entire experience altogether and could culminate with a kill. “Being in our hunting spot well before dawn opened my eyes—I finally was able to watch the world wake up. It’s amazing,” she said.

It was not long before Brett was taking Melanie up into the woods to fish, hunt, and generally enjoy the outdoors. She said she was impressed one time when Brett spotted some bucks, hopped off the quad while it was still rolling and in one fluid motion, he set up and took the shot. “He killed one of the bucks,” adding, “He did it so smoothly, I thought ‘You wanna impress a girl—hello!’” Melanie says she thought to herself, “This is the life and he’s the one.”

From then on, Melanie decided she would copy his approach and in 2014, she took her hunter education safety course and bought her tags. The turnaround was complete.

First Hunt

There they are, sitting in the forest well before dawn (1 to 1.5 hours prior to dawn) and she’s dreading those few minutes just before sunup, when the morning seems the coldest and she’s fidgety. She loves to see the forest wake up and things get interesting quickly as Brett spots a

buck. “At first, I can’t seem to locate him in my scope,” she said. “I guess I left my scope on its highest setting and couldn’t see the buck at that magnification.”

While she’s trying to locate the buck in her scope, Brett is whispering directions to her, pointing out location and landmarks. She was amazed the buck seems to know they were there even though it is about 135 yards away. Brett is focused, whispering directions, but gently urging her to shoot before the buck bolts.

“My chest was heaving as my heart seemed to be ready to burst from my chest and the rifle and scope are moving up and down because of all this excitement.”

Her rifle and scoped bounces up and down with each heartbeat and she tries to maintain her

composure. As she concentrates, she is finally settling her rifle and engaging the rhythm of her breathing and heart rate. When the scope’s crosshairs were aligned perfectly with the buck, she fired, and the buck disappears.

Brett found blood.

“He started showing me what he was doing and explaining why he was doing it. He made sure to follow the blood trail and not just bound into the forest.”

She was getting nervous because they heard the buck in the trees. Brett directs his wife to an old logging trail and tells her to sit and be ready to shoot. “I’m going to go around the buck and push him to you,” said Brett, in a confident, matter-of-fact manner.

“I was ready and I anchored him.”



Melanie Holmes proudly poses with her first big game kill, a quality fork-horned blacktail

Courtesy Brett Holmes

Melanie whooped and hollered, “I didn’t realize I had that in me,” she exclaimed, “I never felt that kind of high or level of exhilaration. It stood with me the entire day and I was just so...stoked!”

“It’s something you can’t explain until you do it,” she said. “It felt amazing—the whole trip, the success of the hunt all my firsts. I killed and gutted my buck and we prepared that animal to maximize using as much of that animal for our dinner table. I was hooked.” It’s something you cannot explain until you do it.

The Dread of a Lost Buck in 2018

Living in the country, she is never far from being able to go hunting. It was gorgeous out and she recalls being mesmerized by the wilderness, the river with a willow flat with oaks and berries. Melanie spot 2 legal bucks and things get exciting fast as but did not want to get too excited over antler points and wanted to make sure she could get the first buck that presented the best shot.

However, she let her thoughts run amok just a little bit by allowing herself the fleeting chance that she could fill both her tags because at the shot, the first buck just dropped!. As she moves to the second buck, the downed buck struggled to his feet. “There was so much blood was pumping out of him!” she remarked.

She radios Brett to come help. Both Melanie and Brett looked until about 10:30 that night and she was distraught. As an animal lover, she did not want an animal to suffer and she wanted to recover her buck. Reluctantly, they headed home. “It was a horrible night,” she said.

The next morning, Melanie and Brett continue the search, even floating the river, but the buck was not located. This was a new low and she did not hunt for weeks and even had bad dreams, but it did provide her with a valuable lesson, which is to never take your eyes off your buck. Finally, during the last week of the season Melanie musters up and finally goes hunting again. She decided to allow herself a few hours to see how she feels and will go into work afterwards.

Finally, during the last week of the season Melanie musters up and goes hunting again. She goes to what her husband refers to as “Mel spots.” These are areas that she is familiar with and is comfortable hunting by herself. She describes this area as “gorgeous” but was not seeing animals.

But, out of the corner of her eye, she sees a doe. The doe is not scared and is feeding and one of Brett’s tips is whenever you see a deer, any deer—get that rifle ready because you never know when there is a buck around and as luck would have it, behind the doe Melanie spots a set of horns and she’s thinking, “Hello!” The buck spooks and is spinning to run, but since Melanie was at the ready—she shoots, and the buck disappears.

Not wanting a repeat of a lost buck, she gets after it immediately. She catches movement through the brush, lines up the buck and finishes him off. After the dreadful feeling her lost buck caused her, she was elated about her accomplishment and proceeded to gut and drag the buck by herself. She again found a place where she was back into hunting and hopes that a lost buck never happens again.

Back to the beginning

Which leads us to the 2019 season. Brett and his longtime hunting partner always put in together for an X-zone and Melanie wanted to hunt closer to home. She puts in for a northern California X-zone, “One closer than 300 miles from home,” she said. It turns out they all drew their X-zone tags. However, Brett’s X-zone opener conflicted with the B-zone season opener. She would be hunting the opener alone.

As is the custom, Melanie would be hunting a spot familiar to her and Brett and sets up in the dark. While sitting and enjoying her hunt, she said she made a small prayer, asking God that if he saw fit, to bless her with a buck so she could make her husband proud.

Melanie starts checking off the tips shared by her

husband, looking at specific and obvious spots, but also careful not to ignore less obvious areas and to be as still and quiet as she can be. Using her eyes to scan her surrounding, but also looking behind her. “Ooh, a buck,” she thinks to herself.

The buck was legal and mature, which brings us back to the beginning of this story with Melanie patiently waiting to move into a shooting position on a “Brutus” of a buck in her 2019 season opener.

Each time the buck put his head down, she incrementally made advances to getting into position to fire. Finally, she was ready. Once the buck relaxed and returned to feeding, she just needed to pick her spot and shoot. While this all was playing out, she was also praying to God, asking him to please not to let the buck leave. She wanted this nerve-wracking episode to end on a high note. She said, “Please Lord, allow this hunt to end with venison in the freezer and a set of horns I can show her husband.”

Her heartbeat was causing the rifle and scope to bounce unmercifully up and down, and she tried to settle on the buck. She remembered what her husband had taught her that worked previously, which is when the reticles met perfectly on the vital of the deer, let'er rip! Upon squeezing the trigger, the deafening boom roared through the woods and the buck disappeared from her sight.

Melanie felt good about the shot and when she was about 30 yards from where she expected the buck to be, she spots antlers sticking up from the ground. She was elated. “I hit that buck right in the ticker and died instantly,” she said, “He was a fat, old mature bruiser—a 4x2.

She promptly called Brett, who congratulated his wife and reassured her that she would be able to do everything herself, like she had before. Melanie said, “I’m not a small gal—I’m 5’9” and I dragged that buck about ½ mile uphill to a road. I then went to get my SUV and loaded that buck up right into the back.”

Melanie headed to the local forest service station to get her deer validated and found several employees at the location, including some women. She felt quite proud—did it all by herself.



On a Personal Note:

From a woman's perspective, one of the things you do not expect to get from the hunting experience is courage. Women have courage in many areas, but this is a different type of courage. It's a deep level of trust in your own abilities that is developed over time. It's developed when you push yourself past your fears to hike alone in the darkness, deep into the forest to find that perfect spot to wait, to hunt, and to stalk.



Mel's 2020 4x4 buck

Courtesy Brett Holmes

As God's creatures wake up with the sunrise and fill the woods around you with their songs and sounds, you are more present than at any other moment in your life. You are aware of every movement, every sound, and breath of wind.

Yet, when you find him and that rush of adrenaline hits you like a flash flood, you push yourself to make decisions in the blink of an eye that will impact the outcome of your hunt, all the while trying to control the vibration of the exhilaration and fear that is humming through your veins.

As a woman, I feel strength in a way that goes beyond the physical, and nothing can compare to it. I also find that I know myself in a way that I never did before. I have gained a level of tenacity and self-confidence that came from learning to hunt—and it's priceless.

Melanie Holmes, Hunter and Angler

Lake County Annual Banquet



PROFILE: Jack Booth, MCBA's Resident Biologist

Retired CDFG biologist lends insight & expertise to MCBA

By Oscar Ramirez

Editor's Note: Article written in late 2020 for early 2021 publication. Jack has since moved out of state to be closer to his loved ones. Good luck, Jack!

For as long as the MCBA has been around, one of its most valuable

assets has been the knowledge and experience of Jack Booth, retired Associate Wildlife Biologist with the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), which is now known as the California Department Fish and Wildlife.

As a longtime wildlife professional operating and living in the heart of blacktail country, Jack is a wealth of information. He brings his professional scientific background along with decades of field experience. In addition, Jack also hunted, which probably made him the most well-qualified individual to help MCBA accomplish our mission.

His insight and experience are invaluable as he shares guidance on flora and fauna to MCBA as a member of the Board of Directors. Let's get to know him and why he is a valuable member of the MCBA team.

California Born and Raised

Jack is a native-born Californian and was originally from Bakersfield. Jack's family, father Don, mother Pauline, brother Richard, and sister Michele lived and worked on his grandparents farm in the tiny Kern county town of Wasco, California, until Jack's father moved his young family north to San Jose to attend college. The family moved again to accommodate Don's new job but remained in the Bay Area living in the tiny Delta hamlet of Isleton, as the elder Mr. Booth began teaching school locally.

Bird-doggin' and the Making of a Hunter

Isleton is where young Jack got his first taste of hunting, bird-dogging for his father until he was



Courtesy Mimi Booth

old enough to wield a .410 shotgun. "Although I couldn't smell pheasants like a good bird dog, they would still flush at my feet," said Jack, chuckling at the recollection, "I loved hunting."

The family moved again between 6th and 7th grade as Jack's dad changed teaching jobs. The family settled in Concord until he graduated from Clayton Valley High School. Jack shared that in his junior year of high school is when he finally secured his driver's license, which allowed Jack to add a multitude of upland birds, waterfowl, and small game to his hunting pursuits.

Jack the Big Game Hunter

In 1964, when Jack turned 19, he decided to add big game hunting to his repertoire and purchased a rifle with a scope: a Remington 30.06, Model 721. The young hunter had permission to hunt on a 120-acre parcel of property in western Yolo County and took full advantage of this gift.

The novice did one of the smartest things any

The Last of the B-zone “Mohicans”

Jack Booth has contributed far more than his 29-year career as Mendocino County’s finest wildlife biologist. He has continued to passionately and wisely contribute his time and expertise to our MCBA team for the last 15 years.

In addition, Jack has given me a wonderful education on more than deer; we have talked about plants, soil, animal behavior, diseases of deer, answered many zoological questions and has recounted numerous stories about managing wildlife in the good old days.

He has also answered many phone calls patiently explaining his findings to this rookie. Jack has generously shared copies of his hand-written survey records, maps, and findings from his working days—it’s my favorite reading material. I couldn’t have done any of this without him. Thank you, Jack!

Paul Trouette, President, MCBA

hunter could do, besides securing permission to hunt private property, he did some homework by scouting the property the weekend before the opener. He found a well-used game trail and opening day found him about 60 yards above his chosen spot. Ten minutes into legal shooting time, Jack had a forky and 4x3 below him walking down the trail. Not surprisingly, Jack anchored the 4x3 for his first big game animal.

“Everybody told me how difficult it was finding legal bucks, but I had killed a 4x3 only 10 minutes into opening day. I went back later in the season and took another forky off the property and I thought deer hunting was pretty easy,” he recounts. “I later found out that was not the case.”

Jack went back to that property the following year and killed another buck. As it turns out, in 1965 and 1966, the deer populations in California were on the tail end of their highest populations ever and he found out hunting was indeed more difficult than he originally believed.



Jack Booth

Higher Education

It’s no surprise that with Jack’s love of the outdoors and hunting, his pursuit of higher education led him to Humboldt State College where he majored in Wildlife Management while continuing his waterfowl and deer hunting pursuits throughout college.

Only 1 in 10 students with this major have a likelihood of getting on with a big agency like the California Department of Fish and Game, but Jack was undeterred and finished his degree. Besides, he shared that his father eventually transitioned from teaching to becoming a self-employed contractor. “I could always be a carpenter,” he said.

Like many other recent graduates, he took any scientific or wildlife job offered and began the first of 7 seasons with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), working out of Vale in eastern Oregon mapping vegetation. For several more years, he continued seasonal work with BLM, taking seasonal positions back into northern California (Modoc County) and even back down to the Bakersfield BLM office to work in the Owens Valley.

“I enjoyed my time as a seasonal worker, but more importantly, I was in the field learning my trade and gaining experiences. I was identifying vegetation composition and mapping all over BLM lands, which allowed me to be in the field and not stuck in an office,” said Jack, echoing a common refrain throughout his career.

Finally, in 1969, Jack became an employee of CDFG, starting out as a Seasonal Aid helping run



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the waterfowl hunting program in the Sacramento Valley. He worked primarily at Delevan National Wildlife Refuge for three waterfowl seasons, yet still worked concurrently as a seasonal employee with BLM. One of his final BLM jobs was to help finish a field study of the Tule elk herd at the Cache Creek Wildlife Area out of the Ukiah BLM office. "That job provided me with good knowledge of Tule elk that served me well later in my career at CDFG," he added.

Job of My Dreams

"My first permanent job was with CDFG was at Mt. Shasta Fish Hatchery in the fall of 1973. I then transferred to Feather River Fish Hatchery in the spring of 1974, where I worked for two years. I enjoyed the work," said Jack. In 1976, Jack was promoted to Wildlife Biologist in the East Bay Wildlife Unit (San Francisco Bay), where he worked for another two years. It was then that he became aware that the Mendocino/Lake Wildlife Unit Manager retired.

Jack and his wife Mimi both agreed that the Ukiah area was very desirable area to settle down. He applied for the position and was transferred in 1978 and kept that position until his retirement in 2002. It was his dream job.

As someone who is at home in the field, Jack didn't pursue the next rung on the promotional ladder at CDFG, explaining that Senior Biologist's either supervised field biologists, worked as specialists in regional offices, or worked in the state offices in Sacramento. None of those options seemed compatible with Jack's desire to be in the field, designing and developing habitat projects benefitting wildlife.



Tule elk bull, Lake Pillsbury
Mendocino National Forest

Jack adds that his job as a CDFG wildlife biologist included many other responsibilities besides managing wildlife hunting programs. "I dealt with problems caused by bears, rabid skunks, mountain lions, and many other nuisances," said Jack. "But the species that caused the most problems were people. They did things that should not be done but did not know any better, although sometimes they did."

Professional Highs

While he is considered our resident deer expert, Jack shared that some of his most rewarding work-related experiences included the expansion and reintroduction of California's Tule elk back into their historic range. As we all know, Tule elk are indigenous only to California and Jack had unique insight from his field work studying the Cache Creek herd during his seasonal BLM work.

Jack the Teacher

"When I met Jack, I was new to California (coming from Alaska and then New Mexico), which meant I had a lot to learn about deer and deer management in California.

Jack took me under his wing and started showing me the ropes because he is such a good teacher of practical field knowledge. But I think he is a botanist at heart, and he taught me how to recognize and identify most of the plant species important to deer management.

I worked with Jack quite a bit over the years and I consider him a mentor. From our initial field work together, I put together and completed the Mendocino deer [study](#) and I am still investigating some of the ideas instilled in me by Jack."

David Casady, CDFW Environmental Scientist, Wildlife Branch

Jack was instrumental in the reintroduction of Tule elk into Grizzly Island (Suisun Marsh), Lake Pillsbury, and about 20 elk onto the Shamrock Ranch, a 15,000-acre piece of private property that had a willing landowner. Since wild animals do not respect property boundaries, those herds have flourished and dispersed into outlying areas and established new herds.

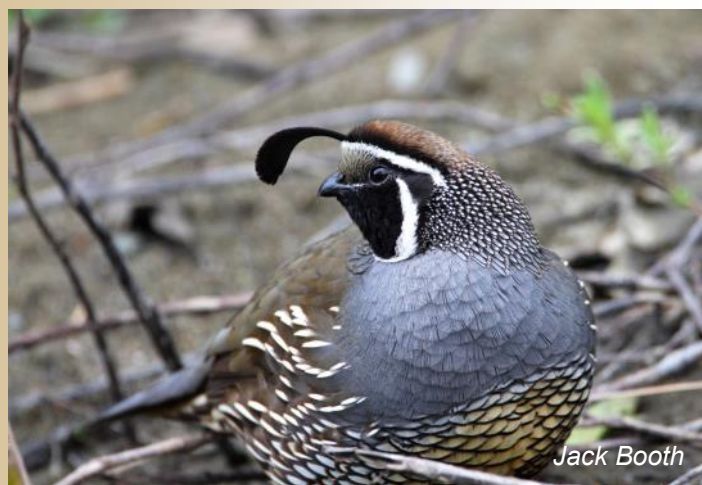
The establishment of these new herds is one of the reasons California has continued to expand elk hunting opportunities on public and private property via the state CDFW hunt lottery or [SHARE](#) hunts.

About 5-6 years ago, Jack shared he was lucky enough to draw a cow elk permit for the Lake Pillsbury hunt where he took a beautiful Tule cow roughly 20 minutes into opening day.

Home on the Range and Post-retirement

Now, Jack spends his time at home on his property outside of the Ukiah area with his wife Mimi. Jack and Mimi have been married for more than 40 years and have two sons, Tyler and Austin. They have also been blessed with three grandchildren, Grady, Corinne, and baby Olivia, who was born March 12, 2020.

While both have been retired for over ten years, Jack said he maintains a very large garden, “I grow about 500 tomato plants, 50 miscellaneous melons, squash, and peppers and I sell some of my crops to local restaurants and at farmers markets.”



Jack Booth



Jack with his tule elk cow
Jack Booth

As for hunting, I was surprised to hear the Jack’s Remington 721 has been retired; photography is now Jack’s main manner of shooting wildlife. “I stopped hunting 3 years ago. I don’t know how to explain it, but I get to hunt with a camera and that provides me the ability to shoot any wildlife I want legally, including some rare sights that I get to capture with the camera.”

Jack expanded that when he was younger, he just had this drive to hunt, but it was never to get the largest buck because he received great satisfaction in harvesting his own food, which was cheaper and more nutritious. Now, he only gets to enjoy wild game shared by friends, but he no longer feels the need to hunt.

“It’s difficult to explain, but it’s no longer that important to me. But, I still like to fish and I’ll run out for rockfish and lingcod in the ocean. I love to travel up to Modoc County for trout too—I love the Great Basin,” he said, adding that he almost always has a camera with him. “I have been taking photos since I was a kid in high school. I took a photography class and actually learned how to develop and print my own black and white photos, although now I use a digital camera.”

“Sometimes, I can photograph a rare sight,” said Jack. “And even if it’s not a rare occurrence, I sell some of my photos,” adding, “For couple of weeks in 2018, I was photographing some red fox right on my property and I was able to get some great shots.”

Now, Jack travels in- and out-of-state to enjoy some photographic excursions and Mimi will join her husband on nearly all of the photography trips. Most of the time, she is beside him taking her own photos, “That is unless she sees something she likes better, which is often,” Jack notes wryly.

CDFW and the State of Deer

Jack rarely gets the opportunity to speak with the wildlife management staff he used to work with, but says, “I really do not know if CDFW has changed that much or not since I retired, besides reclassifying some positions. I know several Unit Wildlife Biologists that were working when I was still there that are close to retirement. They seem to be doing the same type work I used to do while I was there,” said Jack.

But with the huge drop in number of hunting and fishing licenses sold, CDFW has had to make some changes. Jack said that includes changing some classifications, which are not funded through the sale of licenses. Many hunters point

The Old School “Dirt Biologist”

Former Nevada Department of Wildlife Director and former CDFG Deer Program Coordinator, Ken Mayer, said of Jack, “Jack was respected by his peers for his knowledge of deer and deer habitat. I called him a ‘old school dirt biologist’ because he was way more at home in the field than the office.”

He added, “Back when I was the Deer Program Coordinator, Sonke (Mastrup) and I met him in the Mendocino National Forest to track down some long-lost field plot markers from Longhurst’s (W.M.) work that were 50 years old. Even using Longhurst’s notes, we could not locate all the markers due to substantial overgrowth. But there was Jack, using his local knowledge and skills he was able to locate these overgrown markers. He knew his stuff.”

to the lack of deer for the drop in license sales. Jack adds, “Deer harvest numbers have dropped to almost the same point it was at when CDFW started keeping records. Buck harvest records peaked from about 1955 to 1970, but the human population increases along with their impacts on deer are wide-ranging.”



Jack Booth



Jack Booth

He points out that roadkill, agriculture, and housing developments are having impacts on deer herds, but are hard to quantify in terms of effect on wildlife. In addition, predation on deer by coyotes and mountain lion are also impacts on deer populations, but the loss of deer habitat in acreage and quality is the major cause of deer population reduction. “It is much more serious on migratory deer populations. The loss of a small amount of deer winter range has more impact than the loss of the same amount of deer summer range,” he adds. “Good winter deer winter range is usually in the same areas that people chose to live.”

Fixing our deer herds

“To stabilize and increase our deer herds, we need to create better quality habitat,” he said. Further, he explained that deer need young brush sprouts that they can access during the summer and fall until it rains. Specifically, after the first major rains, there is plenty of nutrition in the young forbs and grass that comes up. “Managing brush fields with fire or mastication equipment can keep them available for deer. When not managed, deer can only use the edges of those brush fields as they get too thick and

decadent, which have less nutrient by volume consumed than younger treated brush fields.”

Jack points out that during the deer population highs of the 50’s and 60’s, the brush lands were being managed with fire to provide more livestock forage, which produced large amounts great deer habitat. Later in the 60’s, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (since renamed CalFire) reduced the ability of private landowners to conduct their own burns and deer habitat and populations crashed in the mid-60’s. Also, for many years fire suppression has been a priority on public lands, reducing the natural positive effects of fire. Previously, large portions of good deer habitat created by burns and logging are now either farmed or occupied by human development.

Many conservation organizations agree that much more work needs to be done and in grander scale, but Jack adds, “MCBA is doing great work trying to convert old, decadent brush into food sources deer can utilize and thrive in, which is why I applaud Paul and the board for recognizing where to put MCBA’s limited resources towards achieving that goal.”



Jack Booth

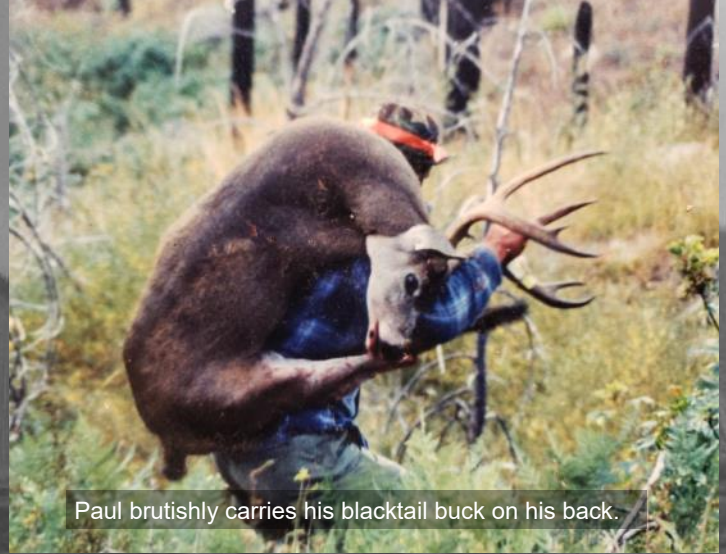
The Good Ol' Days

Big Blacktail Bucks Around Mendocino County

Shared by Paul Trouette



A young Paul Trouette with a heavy-horned blacktail.



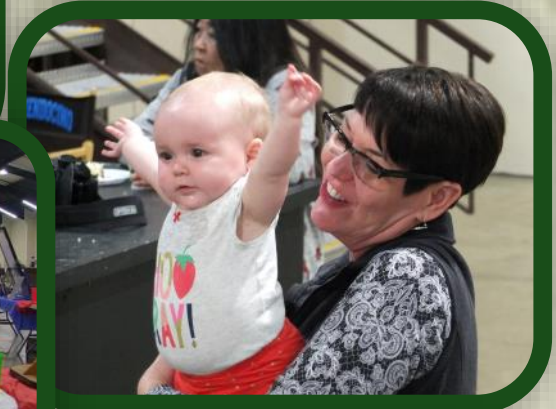
Paul brutishly carries his blacktail buck on his back.

Dutcher family success represents the heyday of blacktail hunting—the good ol' days..



MCBA's Ukiah Banquet

Family, Friends, and Hunting



Photos courtesy of Hal & Rosie Wagenet

Ukiah Annual MCBA Banquet



MCBA — UKIAH



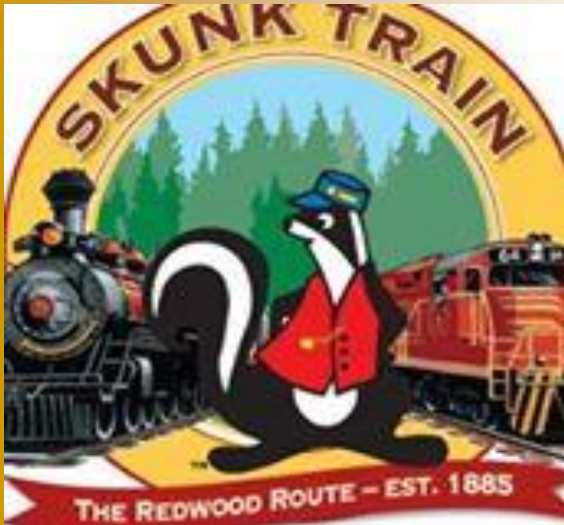




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