

Mail of the WILD



In the end

By Bill Boisvert

The hardest thing about hunting deer," says Fred Lutger, "is finding them." Deer are nocturnal and cautious, and they tend to frequent briar thickets, cattail swamps and other places too scratchy and dark for humans. When you spot a deer, it's usually because the deer has chosen to come out of hiding. Which is why a few dozen men in flannel and camouflage (with a sprinkling of wives and girlfriends) have taken time out from the Chicago Fishing, Hunting, Travel and Outdoors Show to attend Lutger's seminar, "Twenty Five ways to Trick White-Tail."

Lutger, a renowned bow hunter and guide, is filling in on short notice for a colleague who has come down with pneumonia, so he details only a few of the subterfuges he uses to supplement his basic strategy of hiding up in a tree until a deer walks by. His ruses capitalize on the horniness and naiveté of young bucks caught up in the rutting season, or in the even more tense and addled "pre-rut" period. One trick is to rattle a pair of deer antlers together. This mimics the sound of two bucks locking horns over a doe, a spectacle that's sure to draw a crowd. Another involves the liberal sprinkling of "doe estrus

urine" around the hunting blind to convey the scent of ... well, you know. A portrait gradually emerges of the successful older buck, the one that lives long enough to grow a massive rack, as an aloof, suspicious type able to sublimate his sexual urges in lonely sojourns far off the beaten track.

After the seminar I wander back out on the floor of the Rosemont (Ill.) Convention Center, amid the freeways and office towers of edge city, U.S.A., and find that wildlife isn't at all hard to come by. Over at the "Trout Pond," three dollars will rent you a fishing pole and five minutes of access to a few hundred eight-inch rainbow trout drifting lethargically in a long plastic pool. Most of the customers here are kids, and their two basic fishing maneuvers—moving the lure straight up and down like a diving bell and raking it back and forth through the water like a weed-wacker—leave the trout distinctly unconvinced. This is a problem for the trout pond's sponsor, a charter-boat company that is trying to drum up business by giving away free "walleye fishing trips on Lake Erie aboard the Lakeland Express" to anyone who lands a

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