



DENNIS TRESIDDER

Take Your Whitetail **SITTING DOWN**

Optics. If you're a consistently successful whitetail hunter, you don't have to be told how important optics are to whitetail hunting—you're already using them. Many Arizona hunters have prior experience hunting deer in different habitat types that are not so dependant on long-range vision. To be consistently effective as a whitetail hunter in Arizona you must use binoculars. Even a cheap pair of 7X35 binoculars will increase your chances of bagging a buck tenfold—if you use them.

You should buy the best binoculars you can afford; you will never be sorry for buying binoculars that are too good. Serious whitetail hunters don't carry binoculars to get a better look at a buck's headgear; they use them to find the deer ~~spot~~. You should be searching for deer

By Jim Heffelfinger
Région V Game Specialist

with your binoculars and using a spotting scope to get a better look at the buck once you've found him.

It is often said that serious whitetail hunters wear out the seat of their pants before the soles of their boots. You should be spending at least two hours sitting for every one hour walking. Depending on the terrain and how much country you can glass from each vantage spot, you may spend 10 hours sitting and two hours walking.

Your whole goal in whitetail hunting is to place yourself in locations where you can systematically search large areas for bucks that are walking, feeding, standing

still, or bedded down. Once a buck is located, a long, painstaking stalk brings the hunter within range for a comfortable shot at a stationary target. If that doesn't sound like your last hunt, maybe it's time to change your methods.

There is no substitute for good pre-season scouting. It is extremely important if you want to feed your family venison this winter. It is hard for many of us to break away from our busy schedules to scout for the upcoming deer hunt, however, scouting is most important for those hunters who only have time to hunt a few days of the season. If you are applying for an October or November hunt and know you'll get drawn, you can scout in the spring or summer. Even scouting in the spring before antler development gets into full

swing will show you how to get into an area and what the quickest and easiest way is to get to good glassing locations. Spring is a beautiful time of the year to be in whitetail habitat. Take your family out and turn it into a picnic (just don't tell your spouse you're scouting).

If you don't already have maps of the area you are hunting, the first scouting trip of the year should be to the map store. If you're hunting whitetails, you are probably on or near U.S. Forest Service land. Forest Service maps are extremely valuable for navigating the multitude of 2-tracks and jeep trails. These maps will also show you where the private land is in the bottoms of some canyons. These maps do not have topographic features represented in any amount of detail, so in addition you will need a topographic map of the area. A 15-minute map is usually detailed enough for most hunting, but a 7.5-minute map shows details more accurately and is usually a more recent map. The topographic map will help you plan your strategy for glassing the area you are hunting.

How you hunt a particular area depends on the topography and habitat characteristics. Ideally, you want to plan on walking in to your first glassing location shortly before sunrise. Early morning glassing locations should be on the south or east side of the canyon so you are in the shadows as the sun rises. This means you are glassing the side of the canyon that is illuminated by the rising sun. Conversely, afternoon locations should be on the west or south side of the canyon so you are not glassing into the setting sun. The topographic map helps you plan high points, knobs, and the end of ridges from which you can set up and glass.

Once you get to a good point to glass from, find a comfortable spot to sit down. Sitting in the shade will reduce the chance of the sunlight catching your movements and advertising your presence. Also, the addition of a foam pad to sit on will add tremendously to your ability to spot deer.

If you are comfortable you can concentrate on what your eyes are looking at instead of trying to guess what that sharp object is you're sitting on.

You should consider purchasing a tripod and adapter for your binoculars. Once you glass with the aid of a tripod you will never go back to "off-hand"



GEORGE ANDREJKO

It is often said that serious whitetail hunters wear out the seat of their pants before the soles of their boots. You should be spending at least two hours sitting for every one hour walking.

glassing. The tripod offers two advantages. First, it stabilizes your field of vision. With your field of view stationary, you are more apt to detect a deer's movement. If the whole background is trembling, it is awfully hard to see an ear flick or a tail wag.

The second advantage to a tripod is being able to search systematically. You

can search a portion of the canyon "row by row." By starting at the skyline, you carefully glass across from left to right, then move the binoculars down a bit and come back right to left. This is repeated until you reach the bottom of the canyon. Using this method not only allows you to cover the entire area but also lets you pull your eyes away and rest them, returning to the spot where you left off when you are ready.

Many bucks move during the day, so don't head all the way back out of the canyon for lunch. Bring a sack lunch and eat it while you're taking a break at one of your glassing locations. Other hunters heading back to camp for lunch may get a buck up out of his bed and moving, which means he is more visible.

Never assume your gun is still "on" from last year's trip to the range. You should never be afield with a gun that you aren't familiar with in terms of ballistics. You should know exactly where to aim at 100 yards, 200 yards, 300 yards, on up to whatever you and your gun can shoot

accurately. Recognize how far you can shoot accurately with adequate terminal ballistics before you hunt. Don't attempt any shots farther than that distance. You should never be holding the crosshairs over a buck's back and wondering how far the bullet will drop. Know your limits and stay within them.

Deer hunting is 100 percent luck, but patience, perseverance, and hard work will increase your chance of getting lucky this year. You still have time before the season starts to buy that good pair of binoculars you've been thinking about or picking up a tripod at the camera store. You never know when a little investment like that is really going to pay off. Even if you don't fill that blank spot on the wall over the fireplace this year, you will be more consistently successful by using optics to their full extent. This fall try spending a little more time hunting with your eyes than your legs. It's not only more productive, it's easier on your lungs. 🦌