

The News Journal

Stay in a hunting frame of mind, even when the season's over

February typically marks the beginning of the long offseason for most Delaware hunters.

Over the next several months, we are forced to battle cabin fever and the sheer boredom brought on by the abrupt cessation of holiday gatherings, football games and shotgun blasts. We begin our half-hearted hibernations as we look toward the arrival of friendly fishing weather.

And while many of us welcome a Saturday or two of loafing on the couch, we hunters do not have to vegetate until spring. Plenty of late-season and post-season hunting-related activities can feed our obsessions for a few more months.

Delaware's expanded snow goose season and special regulations now enable dedicated hunters to pursue snow geese through April 18 using unplugged shotguns and electronic calls. The original snow goose season that ends on March 9 follows the previously established hunting regulations pertaining to shooting hours, hunting days (Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays only), and bag limits (15 birds). The expanded



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season offers hunters even more harvest opportunities. From March 10 to April 18, hunters can pursue snow geese Monday through Saturday, with legal shooting hours extended from a half-hour before sunrise to a half-hour after sunset. Daily bag and possession limits have been removed.

In addition to hunting snow geese, Delaware hunters can prolong their hunting seasons by trying their hands at the crafty and formidable crows that live throughout the state. Crow hunting, a tremendous way to hone your wingshooting skills, is open on Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays through March 28.

There are still more hunting-related activities that can sustain even the hunter battling the post-deer-hunting blues. Since whitetail deer typically shed their antlers in the late winter, February and March are optimal times for "shed hunting." Searching traditional deer haunts for antlers that bucks have recently shed

is a great post-season scouting method that can provide clues for deer locations, numbers, health, and movement patterns. Applying these clues to next year's hunts may help you harvest that monster that eluded you this year.

Another post-season activity I look forward to every year comes in the form of the various shows and conventions that focus on hunting and fishing. In fact, we are lucky enough to be within driving distance of one of the biggest outdoors shows in the country.

The Eastern Sports & Outdoor Show, held annually in Harrisburg, Pa., allows us to spend a day viewing hunting and fishing products; researching and reserving outdoor vacations; shopping for hunting and fishing gear, boats, RVs; and participating in various sports-related contests and demonstrations. This year's show runs Feb. 7-15 at the Harrisburg State Farm Show Complex. Find more information at www.easternsportshow.com.

Steven Kendus' *Hunter's Journal* appears monthly in *The News Journal*. Kendus is the author of "Hunting The First State: A Guide to Delaware Hunting." Follow his blog and podcast at www.eastcoasthunting.blogspot.com. Contact him at skendus@HuntingTheFirstState.com.