

ROSS, S. W.

SIXTH INTERVIEW

HEADLIGHT HUNTING

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Elizabeth Ross, Investigator

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HEADLIGHT HUNTING.

Interview with S. W. Ross

Park Hill, Oklahoma.

Some years ago there were a number of men living in and near Fort Gibson, Indian Territory, who hunted deer at night, using headlights. A small kerosene lantern with a reflector was so arranged that it could be attached to the hunter's head and a number of deer were killed from time to time.

Sometimes, the hunter could get near enough to the animal to see its outline but more often saw only the eyes. Having "shined" the eyes of a deer the hunter calculated about where to send his bullet and those experienced in the use of firearms were quite successful in killing deer.

"The appearance of the eyes of the deer," said the experienced hunters, "differ somewhat from the eyes of other large four-footed animals." Thus the hunter who had taken note of such difference, knew when the rays from his headlight shone upon the eyes of a deer. There were hunters who were sometimes deceived by the eyes of cows or calves, and occasionally someone lost a cow, steer or colt which had been fired upon by someone who

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believed he had shot at a deer.

Wild deer were rather plentiful among the hills, valleys and forests along the Grand River, as well as elsewhere in sections outlying Fort Gibson. Hunters using the old-time muzzle loading rifles were often successful in their quest for deer but more deer were slain following the advent of magazine rifles. All deer hunting was in daylight during many years, but when the headlights came into use there was considerable night hunting. The headlights did not come into general use among the hunters for there were many who considered the use of the lantern and reflector unsportsmanlike and rather dangerous to other hunters who might be abroad in the darkness.

The name of the originator of the headlight for deer hunting at night is unknown as is that of the man who first used a headlight for hunting in the Fort Gibson section, but during several years a number of these headlights were in the possession of some of the hunters of the period. Some of the elderly men of today who were youthful during the eighties recall having heard accounts of the killing of deer by men who were equipped

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with headlights.

The weight of the metal frame, the small lantern and its reflector would become quite wearisome to the wearer after some hours spent in seeking to locate deer.

In these days, 1937, a headlight would be regarded as somewhat of a curiosity. A relic of a bygone day.

In contrast to the appearance of the eyes of the deer in the light of the lantern and reflector were those of small four-footed animals such as the skunk for instance. The hunters reported that the eyes of the skunk glowed a ruby red in the rays from the headlights.

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