Stump Sitting – Recipe for Success

To sit or not to sit? For me, that question is one hunters will never agree on. But be perfectly clear – whatever style of deer hunting you choose, if you stick to your guns, you will succeed.

Over the last 30-plus years of hunting, I’ve tried many different tactics in the pursuit of the whitetail deer. At this particular stage in my hunting career, I’m sold on a tactic that has brought me great success. Though maybe not for everyone, if patience is one of your stronger traits, this is the technique for you!

The method to is what some in the hunting community refer to as “stump sitting.” Though the term is familiar, I typically don’t like the feel of a hard stump with no back rest! Whether I’m in a tree stand or on the ground, I like to lean against a large tree that gives me a comfortable spot in order to make it easier on my body and mind to sit from dusk to dark in the same spot. Yes, that’s what I said, DUSK TO DARK!

Did I mention that this could mean staying in that same spot for several days? Some of my hunting buddies think I’m absolutely crazy to sit in one spot all day, but I say when it’s not broke, don’t fix it. Since adopting this new style of hunting 12 years ago, I’ve tagged a deer 11 out of those twelve years! So for those naysayers out there, don’t knock it till you try it. Those trackers may be covering a lot of ground, but are they bringing home the venison?

Now let’s get to the nitty gritty of it all. How the heck can you sit that long without getting bored? How do you keep from going stir crazy? How do you keep comfortable? And most important, what do you do when nature calls? These are all great questions, so let’s see if I can answer them.
has meant making friends with some not-so-common critters over the years. I’ve had five years now of sharing my peanut butter and jelly sandwich with a family of field mice that live in the stone wall near my ground stand. There have been many occasions when the local owl or hawk made frequent visits to check out the subtle movements they saw from a distance along the stone wall, only to be disappointed that it was me and not their next meal. I actually think the mice are using me as a bodyguard!

Keeping comfortable while “stump sitting” is definitely not an issue, as I pack in a nicely padded cushion and plenty of warm layers of clothing for when the temperature fluctuates throughout the day. I also bring enough food and water to feed a family for a week! I’m thinking stump sitters may have invented the term “comfort food.” To be honest, there have been a few times where I’ve actually gotten so comfortable that I fell asleep for what seemed like an eternity. I literally had to take a moment to gather my bearings when I woke up. Meanwhile, those diehard trackers are beating their way through thickets and swamps as the deer circle behind them, snickering.

And as for the final question, let me just say to all you hunters who take the human scent issue overboard...when nature calls, I answer. If everything you read about needing to be in a scent free area were true, I would never shoot a deer!

So if you’ve never tried it, give stump sitting a whirl. Scout out a promising spot where you’ve seen sign, and station yourself there this season. I promise if you are patient and persistent, your chances are pretty good of putting venison in the freezer!

**Tracking Is REAL Hunting**

My introduction to deer hunting came from my father, grandfather and uncle. All three men were walkers, trackers and stalkers. The woods we hunt are vast and wild. This is big country, so you’re not going to sit and wait if you want to see game. You have to get on the move and track that game down. For me, sitting around all day bored out of my mind while freezing off body parts just doesn’t appeal. Getting to put some miles on and see the woods – now that’s my kind of hunting.

Tracking deer in the North Country brings many challenges, especially the weather. During one snowy November hunt, I was making my way up an old skidder trail. The snow in places was thigh high. With the snow still falling at a good clip, I pressed on. The snow makes things so quiet in the woods. If I were a stump sitter, the snow would have probably covered me up. I was nearing the top of the trail when just a few feet in front of me, the snow suddenly rose up six feet high! It took a moment for me to register what I was seeing, as a moose shook the snow off and trotted off up the hill. You’re not likely to have those kinds of encounters while just sitting around on a stand.

Unlike the stump sitters, my style of hunting has one goal – to cover ground. The idea of spending the day sitting in one spot staring at the same piece of woods doesn’t excite me in the least. Often a day of hunting will take me several miles from camp.

Tom Flynn is the Manager of N.H. Fish and Game’s Owl Brook Hunter Education Center.
I have been in the bowl for about an hour and walked just 200 yards along the swamp. As I slowly step over a fallen log, I freeze as a brown figure emerges from the trees. She hasn’t seen me; she can’t smell me. If I move, she’ll bust me for sure.

The doe is less than 30 yards away, eating and moving through a hilly area covered in brush. I wait for her to continue feeding before I move a muscle. Finally, I slowly plant myself onto the log I just stepped over. She still has no clue I’m there. I sit for a while and watch her. Minutes pass as she feeds and walks. My heart rate gradually returns to normal.

When I can just see her backside, the outline of a second deer catches my eye. All I can see through the brush is its body. This deer has sneaked in from the other side of the small hill. The two deer close the distance to each other – and me. Now both are moving beside me. I strain to get a better view, and then all I see is the light reflecting off a huge rack. That’s all I can see – he’s 30 yards away, and the brush is blocking my view. Then it happens…the sound of a deer snorting. When you hear a deer “blow” at close range, your adrenaline goes through the roof. One of the deer stomps its hoof, trying to get me to move. I don’t move, and the deer trot off up the brushy hillside. I better get going – stump sitting in this spot would only result in a much-needed nap! I waste no time – there’s still more of these big woods for me to hunt.

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