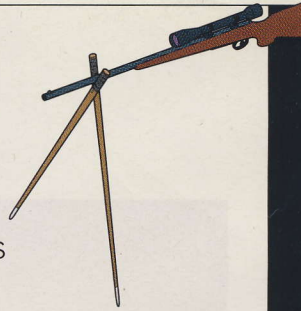


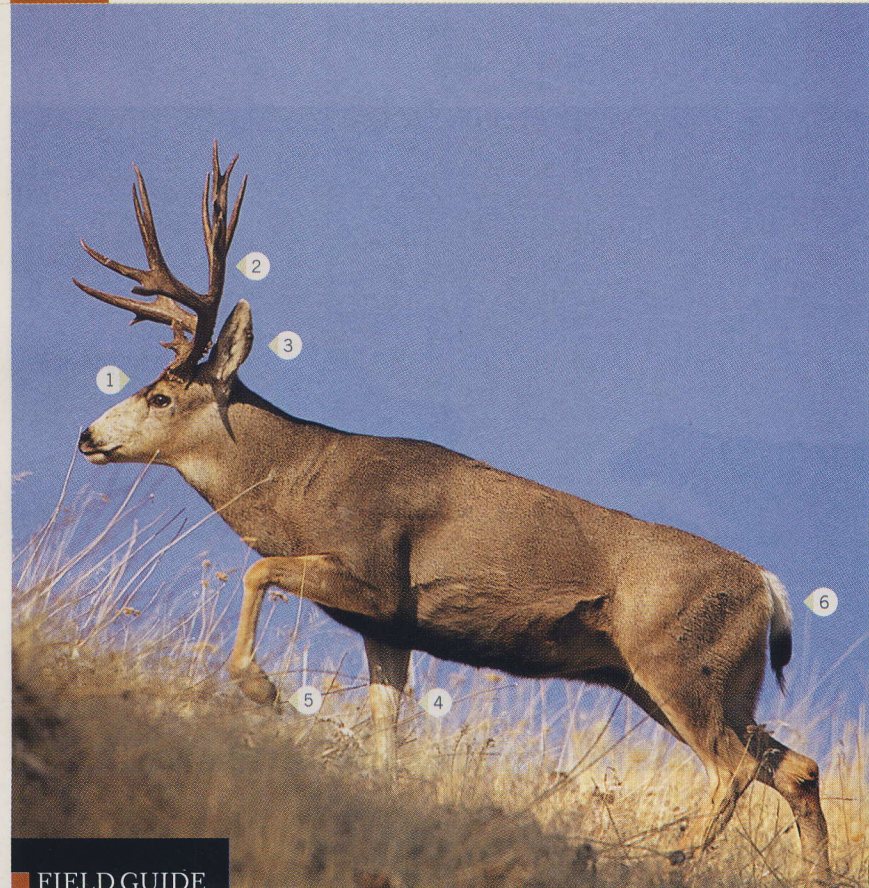


GIVE IT A REST

Turn an old pair of ski poles into a bipod



In your garage right now is probably a pair of ski poles that haven't seen action since your knees started creaking years ago. Converting them into a bipod will give you quick and easy shooting stability in a very light package. —SCOTT BOWEN



FIELD GUIDE

Mule Deer

First identified and named (for its conspicuous set of ears) by members of the Lewis and Clark party, the mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*) is the rugged western cousin of the more abundant and widespread eastern whitetail. Ranging from the western plains throughout the Rocky Mountain states and to the Pacific coast, the mule deer sports a slightly more muscular profile than the whitetail and may attain a live weight of more than 400 pounds. —JACK LARSON

1 EYES

Side-mounted eyes provide the mule deer with a near panoramic field of vision but very poor depth perception. The mule deer's sensitivity to the ultraviolet light spectrum, which prevails during the low-light hours of early morning and evening, coincides with its crepuscular foraging habits.

2 ANTLERS

Unlike the main-beam-with-tines antler configuration of the whitetail buck, the mule deer sports main beams that branch out symmetrically into high tines. A typical mature buck will have 4 points on a side. An exceptionally large rack will carry a spread up to 4 feet wide with a total of 12 points or more.

3 EARS

The animal's poor visual depth perception is offset by the acute hearing its oversize ears provide. (The animal also got its name from its ears, which are so large they resemble a mule's.) It is thought that the mule's superb sense of hearing is sensitive enough to discern from what distance a slight sound was made.

4 LEGS

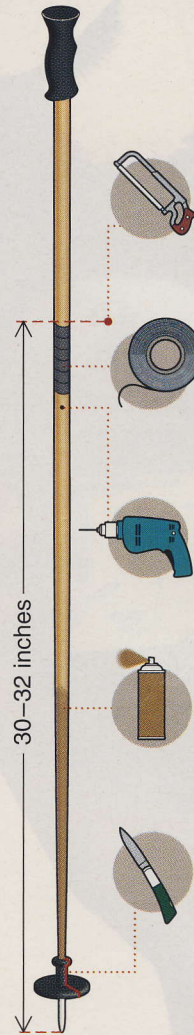
The mule employs a bounding, goatlike stride in which it jumps high into the air and all four feet alight simultaneously. Called *stotting*, this peculiar gait allows the deer to ascend steep mountainsides with remarkable ease, attain speeds of up to 35 mph on flat land, and clear fences and obstructions up to 8 feet high.

5 HOOVES

Despite the diminutive size of its hooves, the mule deer is a capable swimmer, though it rarely uses this ability to escape predators.

6 TAIL/RUMP

Though the mule deer possesses a white rump patch similar to the whitetail's, it does not raise its tail in alarm when fleeing danger.



1 Measure 30 inches up the shaft from the bottom point (32 inches if you're a taller-than-average person). Use a hacksaw to cut the pole at this spot.

2 Remove the plastic cuff around the bottom of the pole with a knife and pliers. File or peel away any remaining pieces that cling to the pole.

3 If necessary, spray paint the poles a dull brown or other camouflage pattern, sanding them down first.

4 Wrap the top end of each pole in a double layer of electrical tape, stopping 4 inches down the shaft.

5 Drill a 1/4-inch hole through each pole just below the bottom edge of the electrical tape. Slide a cotter pin through one of them, fit a small, thin washer over it, and then slide the pin through the hole in the second pole. Crimp the pin so that the poles can turn snugly but smoothly on the washer. Go shoot.

OFF THE HOOK

Free snagged lures with this simple trick. When you're fishing around structure such as blowdowns, lily pads, or dropoffs, lures often get hung up. You'll never manage to free all tangled lures, but here's one way to get some of them back.

Take a pyramid sinker (use various weights based on the pound-test line you're fishing). Attach a split ring to the loop. Next, attach a snap-swivel to the split ring. When you get tangled, fasten the snap to your line. Keep enough tension on the line to guide the pyramid down and onto the lure. In numerous instances, the weight of the sinker dropping down the line will dislodge the tangled hooks. The entire setup costs less than a \$1 to make. —TOM KEER