

Celebrated Lewiston mule deer buck with wacky rack has died

Animal some called Brillo had been a familiar sight in several parts of the city



(Courtesy Photo: Jim Hood)

This buck with an unusual rack frequented Lewiston neighborhoods for about five years. The deer died recently.

Eric Barker/Lewiston Tribune

A mule deer buck with a rack to rival Medusa that was well known in various parts of Lewiston has died.

Some fans called him Brillo, as in Brillo Pad, because of his scraggly antlers that were constantly in velvet. Although he didn't shed his antlers each year like most bucks, his rack did change over time, presumably because of injuries that broke off tines, said Jim Hood, who came to know the deer.

Hood and his wife, Cottie, frequently saw Brillo from their deck on the 3300 block of 16th Street in Lewiston, near the Idaho Department of Fish and Game office. Hood first saw the buck in 2011. It would show up seasonally and then move to another part of town.

"He'd disappear in October and show up again in July," Hood said.

He's heard of people seeing him by the Idaho State Veterans Home, near Sunset Park and near Gun Club Road.

Dwight Kilgore, a retired Idaho Fish and Game conservation officer, said he's been seen in Lindsay Creek Canyon and as far away as Hells Gate State Park. The buck frequently visited the

habitat area Kilgore manages adjacent to the Idaho Fish and Game office along 16th Street and Warner Avenue. The deer was found dead in the habitat area about a week ago.

Kilgore put binoculars on the buck years ago and said he once had 32 distinct antler points.

"Sometimes he would just lay there and look at us," Kilgore said.

Once, when the deer lifted a rear leg to scratch an ear, Kilgore noticed it didn't have testicles. After the deer died, Kilgore examined it and said "he had no indication of any scrotum whatsoever."

The lack of testicles was behind the buck's strange antlers and the fact that they were always in velvet. Most bucks lose velvet when spring turns to summer.

"It's a hormone thing," said Dave Koehler, a wildlife biologist for the department at Lewiston, of the phenomenon that can happen to bucks that either suffer an injury or are born without a fully functioning reproductive system.

Both Hood and Kilgore said the deer had an exceptionally large body. Hood figures since it never went into rut, the period in late fall where male deer do little else than try to breed and defend their territories, he didn't lose weight like most bucks.

"You can see how big his body is," said Hood while sharing a picture of the buck. "He's probably just as fat as can be."

This year, Kilgore noticed the deer's ribs began to show, perhaps from an illness. But he said someone at the Fish and Game office reported hitting a deer recently. The animal ran off after being struck and the strange buck was found dead a few days later.

"He may have been hit," Kilgore said.

He disposed of the deer and said its antlers on one side had been knocked loose.

"There was a damaged area all the way around and they were really infected, just running with puss," he said. "I think he got hit on the left side of the head."

Both men said they will miss seeing the deer.

"It's been a real novelty, I'll tell you," Hood said. "It was neat. He was here frequently. We would brag about him and show pictures."

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