

Robotic Decoys Help Hunters, Catch Poachers

It's natural for a deer to turn and look at an approaching animal, whether it's another deer or a hunter. It's not natural for a decoy to do it, unless you've got one made by Brian Wolslegel, a Wisconsin taxidermist.

Wolslegel creates life-like, robotic decoys controlled by hand-held remotes. He collects several hundred hides each year from deer hunters and transforms them into moving decoys equipped with a robotic head and tail. If desired, one of the legs can be made to stomp up and down. Removable antlers allow the deer to be used as a buck or doe, and the head can be removed for transport.

All moving parts are operated by separate motors controlled by switches on the remote control.

Besides white-tail deer, Wolslegel also offers robotic black-tail deer, mule deer, turkeys, coyotes, fox, elk, grouse, grizzly bears, black bears, mountain lions, pheasants, moose and big horn sheep.

His motorized decoys, which he markets under the name of Custom Robotic Wildlife, are used both by game wardens and by private landowners to catch poachers. He has clients in 48 states, Canada and Argentina. "As far as I know, I'm the only full-time manufacturer of motorized wildlife in the U.S.," says Wolslegel. "Game wardens have used stationary wildlife decoys to curb poaching for years. However, my motorized decoys are much more lifelike. The average

deer decoy normally lasts about two to three years, depending on how often poachers decide to take a shot at it."

Game wardens and hunters aren't his only customer. "Some 'entertainment farms' that offer hay and sleigh rides use the deer as attractions, placing it in the woods."

Wolslegel says his fastest growing motorized decoys are turkeys, largely because of the increasing popularity of hunting wild turkeys. "I can make the tail go up and down and use a fan to ruffle the feathers. The only shortcoming of the turkey decoy is its longevity. It's important to place the decoy just out of range to avoid a direct hit."

According to Wolslegel, his decoys can play an important role in curbing illegal hunting. A single robotic deer decoy is capable of helping game wardens collect \$20,000 to \$30,000 in fines, he says.

He's continually making improvements and recently finished mounting a robotic deer on an 8-ft. long track so that it's able to move through woods or grass. He did the same thing with a wild pig for the Texas wildlife department.

The white tail deer decoy is mounted on a form that represents a 130 to 140-lb. animal. However, the actual weight of the decoy is only about 20 lbs. A white-tail deer, including robotic head, tail, and removable antlers, sells for \$850. Add \$25 for packaging and crating and \$130 to \$160 for shipping. An extra large



Life-like decoys are equipped with robotic heads and tails controlled by hand-held remotes. Head removes for transport.

decoy - and a laying down deer - are available for an additional \$200.

The elk weighs about 150 lbs., but the head and legs can be removed making it easier to handle. An elk with robotic head, removable legs, and antlers sells for \$2,100.

The turkey decoy with a robotic head sells for \$625; with robotic head and swivel base,

it sells for \$800.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Custom Robotic Wildlife, Inc., 839 Oak Road, Mosinee, Wis. 54455 (ph 715 692-3000; fax 715 692-3003; E-mail: brian@wildlifedecoys.com; Website: www.wildlifedecoys.com).

Decoy Fitted With "Tail Flipper"

Bob Sampson, Petersburg, Ill., modified a plastic deer decoy so he can switch its tail by remote control from his deer hunting stand.

"Nothing attracts one deer to another deer like motion," says Sampson, who uses the decoy for bow hunting.

He replaced the decoy's original tail with a real one. The tail is glued to a 1/4-in. dia. steel shaft that's connected to a solenoid valve. A push button airplane controller is used to activate the solenoid. The tail rotates clockwise and will swing from 9 to 3 o'clock. Works from up to 200 ft. away. Four 6-volt batteries are in a battery pack inside the deer.

"It works good and didn't cost a lot to put together. My brother-in-law, who is a retired engineer, built it," says Sampson. "I paid \$90 for the deer and less than \$200 for the electronic components.

"It works a lot better than just using a stationary decoy, because if a deer stares at another deer long enough and doesn't see any movement he gets very suspicious. There are commercial tail wagggers that are designed to attach to a deer decoy and operate on a timer. However, a tail that wags at regular intervals isn't natural. Another problem is that the tail wags exactly the same every time, which also isn't natural. I've had deer come right up to my decoy and smell it.

"The wagging tail works well when combined with rattling antlers. Deer often get suspicious when they hear antlers being rattled together, but if they can see a life-like deer they will normally come in."

For transport, the deer's head and legs come off and fit into the hollow body, along with the battery pack and push button remote.

Sampson made a couple of other modifications to the deer that make it look more realistic. He hung a piece of white cloth from each ear so that when the wind blows it looks like the deer is flipping its ears. He also



Bob Sampson replaced the tail on a plastic deer decoy with a "real" one that switches by remote control.

made life-like new eyes for the deer out of pieces of plastic Coke bottles.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Bob Sampson, Rt. 3, Box 115, Petersburg, Ill. 62675 (ph 217 632-2016; E-mail: rrsampson@mail.com).

When Bob Sampson, Petersburg, Ill., is lucky enough to bag a deer with his bow and arrow, he usually has to haul the carcass back himself. To make the job easier, he came up with what he calls a "deer barrow".

"It's not fancy, but it saves a lot of work," says Sampson.

The handlebars and the wheel were salvaged from an old Harley Davidson motorcycle. The deer is secured to a carriage made from lengths of conduit pipe.

"I place the deer with the head facing

forward and tie the antlers to the frame. The deer's rear legs extend toward the handlebars. I wrap nylon cords around the body. The big wheel makes the rig easy to push and also to maneuver through brush and fallen logs. I can push a deer right over a 6-in. log.

"It's amazing how short I can turn. When I get out of the woods I can roll the deer up a ramp and right into my pickup."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Bob Sampson, Rt. 3, Box 115, Petersburg, Ill. 62675 (ph 217 632-2016).



If he's lucky enough to bag a deer with his bow and arrow, Sampson uses his "deer barrow" to haul the carcass out of the woods.

Yes! I want to be first to learn about latest new products. Please sign me up for FARM SHOW. I understand I can cancel at any time and receive a full refund if not satisfied.

Check here to renew.

United States

- \$19.95 for 1 yr.
- \$37.95 for 2 yrs.
- \$51.95 for 3 yrs.

Canada

- \$30.95 (Can.) for 1 yr.
- \$58.95 (Can.) for 2 yrs.
- \$79.95 (Can.) for 3 yrs.

My check (\$ _____) is enclosed. (Add 7% GST in Can.)

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State /Prov. _____ Zip _____

Make check payable to FARM SHOW.

Clip and mail this coupon to:

FARM SHOW, P.O. Box 1029, Lakeville, Minn. 55044

Or phone toll-free 800 834-9665

VISA & Mastercard accepted.