



The Shed Antler Tree Finds a Perfect New Home

By Cheyne Matzenbacher

The “shed tree” that was once the main feature as you walked into our former National Headquarters in Georgia now has a new home at Johnny Morris’ Wonders of Wildlife National Museum & Aquarium in Springfield, Missouri.

Switching to fully remote operation was a money-saving move that increased NDA’s efficiency and allowed us to direct more dollars directly toward our mission, and we found solutions to every need for-

merly supplied by the headquarters building – except one. Housing for the shed antler tree. Thankfully, our good friends at Bass Pro Shops have solved that question, simultaneously making it possible for many more people to see the collection that includes shed antlers from every state in the whitetail’s range.

NDA Board member Joe Hamilton of South Carolina first constructed the shed tree in March 2011 using his own



JOE HAMILTON first constructed the shed tree in 2011 from his own collection and other large donations, then he sought donations from around the country. The tree now contains shed antlers from every state in the whitetail's range plus a few Canadian provinces.

personal collection of shed antlers combined with large donations from Mark and Yvonne Buxton of Alabama and Ron Haas of Delaware. Over the years, members, visitors to the headquarters, staff, and friends have all added additional antlers to the tree. Requests for donations from our members eventually provided at least one representative from every state with whitetails.

After Joe disassembled the tree in 2021, it was shipped to the Wonders of Wildlife National Museum & Aquarium in Missouri. Museum staff constructed a new base for the tree on site. With the help of NDA intern Nicholas Belles and NDA Deer Outreach Specialist Cheyne Matzenbacher, Joe reconstructed the shed antler tree in under three hours for what is likely to be the final time.

Over 700 antlers from spikes all the way up to multi-branched non-typicals make up this free-standing work of art. Some antlers have been signed, some have the state or province abbreviation, and one from an endangered Key Deer from Florida even has the required transfer paperwork attached. Arizona and New Mexico provided Coues deer sheds (a whitetail subspecies). There are also shed antlers from all but three of the provinces in Canada. The state of Oregon sent Joe a beautiful drop tine buck skull instead of shed antlers, so it was placed on top of the tree like an "angel" on a Christmas tree. The 15-year project of collecting antlers from every state in the whitetail's range and constructing a one-of-a-kind work of

art shed antler tree is complete.

You can see NDA's whitetail shed antler tree whenever you visit Springfield, Missouri and Bass Pro Shops National Headquarters. The shed tree is located in the Bucks & Bulls exhibit in the 350,000-square-foot Wonders of Wildlife National Museum & Aquarium, which celebrates those who hunt, fish and act as stewards of the land and water.

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