

Up came Pocola, Oklahoma hunter Ofelio Garcia's .30-06 and down went the buck. It can be that simple on some of the state's public hunting lands and the 31,360-acre Cherokee Wildlife Management Area is certainly no exception. About 10 a.m. on a cold, blustery opening morning of the 2015 deer season, Garcia had a simple story about how he downed his first-ever white-tailed deer buck. "He just walked down the hill, there, about from here to the corner of that house," he said while checking in at the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation hunter check station at Cherokee Wildlife Management Area. "He just showed up there." The area in the southwest corner of Cherokee County, combined with the adjacent 30,000 acres of the Camp Gruber Maneuver Training Center in Muskogee County, occupies a large swath of hunting lands. Although heavily regulated lands, these are public areas that are hard for any Green Country hunter to ignore. The Cherokee WMA area is divided into a 16,000-acre Public Hunting Area, which is open for most seasons and a 15,360-acre Game Management Area, where controlled permit draw-in hunts are held. Brent Morgan, biologist for Cherokee and 2,500-acre Tenkiller WMAs in Sequoyah County, said the area sees a lot of pressure, particularly during the rifle season, but hunters who put extra effort often are rewarded with larger bucks. Combined 2014 deer harvest for all of Cherokee and Sequoyah counties in 2014 totaled 4,314 deer. "There is a lot of country out here," he said. "We see a few nice bucks every year." The 2014 Oklahoma Big Game Report listed a combined 302 deer killed in the archery, muzzleloader and rifle seasons on the Cherokee and Gruber public hunting areas. For maps and information on hunting regulations specific to the Cherokee WMA see the Wildlife Department web site at [wildlifedepartment.com](http://wildlifedepartment.com). For information on Camp Gruber see the link for information on the Wildlife Department web site or call the Gruber Environmental Office at 918-549-6223. " Kelly Bostian, World Outdoors Writer