

Smart Stuff

with Twig Walkingstick



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AND DEVELOPMENT CENTER

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Notes: North America's common deer are the white-tailed and the mule, the former present in much of the continent, the latter mostly out West. Other antlered animals that run the risk of locking antlers (and sometimes do): elk, moose and caribou. Find the Cook County bulletin at <http://www.newton.dep.anl.gov/natbltn/700-799/nb730.htm>; the *Alaska Fish and Game News* story at http://www.wildlifeneews.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=wildlife_news.view_article&articles_id=175; and a "Kung Fu" episode guide at <http://www.kungfu-guide.com/>.

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Q. Dear Twig: Do deer ever get their antlers stuck together?

A.: It's not unheard of. But then again it's not that common. When it happens it happens when two males, or **bucks**, fight, which they do at this time of year, in fall. They fight to try and win females, or **does** ("doze"). To do it they whack their **antlers** together. Again and again if they need to and can. Clack! Whack! The antlers are hard and branchy. The stronger buck wins the doe. The weaker buck leaves and maybe goes home and sits on the sofa and watches "Kung Fu." (I love "Kung Fu"!)

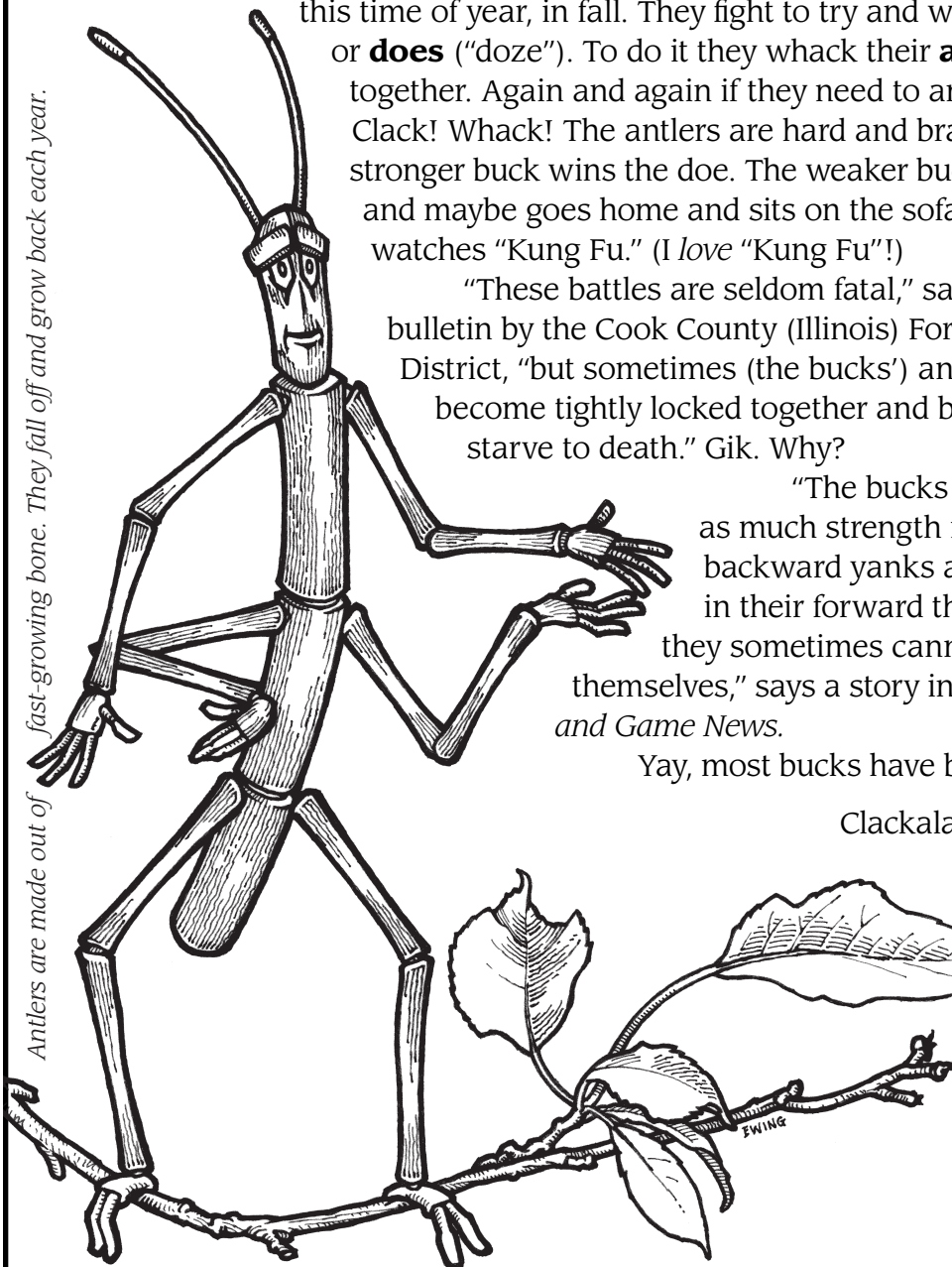
"These battles are seldom fatal," says a nature bulletin by the Cook County (Illinois) Forest Preserve District, "but sometimes (the bucks') antlers become tightly locked together and both animals starve to death." Gik. Why?

"The bucks do not have as much strength in their backward yanks as they have in their forward thrusts, (so) they sometimes cannot unlock themselves," says a story in *Alaska Fish and Game News*.

Yay, most bucks have better luck!

Clackalacka!,

Twig



Antlers are made out of fast-growing bone. They fall off and grow back each year.

From your scientific friends at The Ohio State University — specifically, the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center (www.oardc.ohio-state.edu) and OSU Extension (extension.osu.edu).