

The Nature of Southborough: Antler Quest

The latest in Southborough Open Land Foundation's contributed series.

by [BETH MELO](#) on [MARCH 12, 2026](#)



Above: Admiring an 8 point buck with velvet coated antlers. (image cropped from photo by Debbie Costine)

[This post is part of a special guest series focused on appreciating nature in Southborough, contributed by the [Southborough Open Land Foundation](#) (SOLF), a non-profit dedicated to preserving and stewarding natural resources here in town.]

Every winter I have a goal; to find freshly shed deer antlers in the woods. So far, no luck.

Every year in the spring, male deer, or bucks, grow a new set of antlers for the mating season known as rut. Rut is generally late October through December. Strong, large antlers are essential to more healthy offspring since the display, or “rack” reflects the buck’s health and strength. As soon as the rut season is over, testosterone levels fall and so do the antlers. New ones begin to grow within a few weeks.

Antlers grow very fast – up to an inch of new bone per day! This is made possible by rich nutrients provided by the new velvet coating on the antlers. In late summer, as mating season nears, testosterone levels rise significantly causing the velvet to dry and fall off. This is when “buck rubs” are found on trunks of small trees where bucks rub their antlers to remove the dried velvet.

Now that the snow is melting, I will again, be in search of newly shed antlers.

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Debbie Costine (a SOLF Trustee, artist and curious naturalist)

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