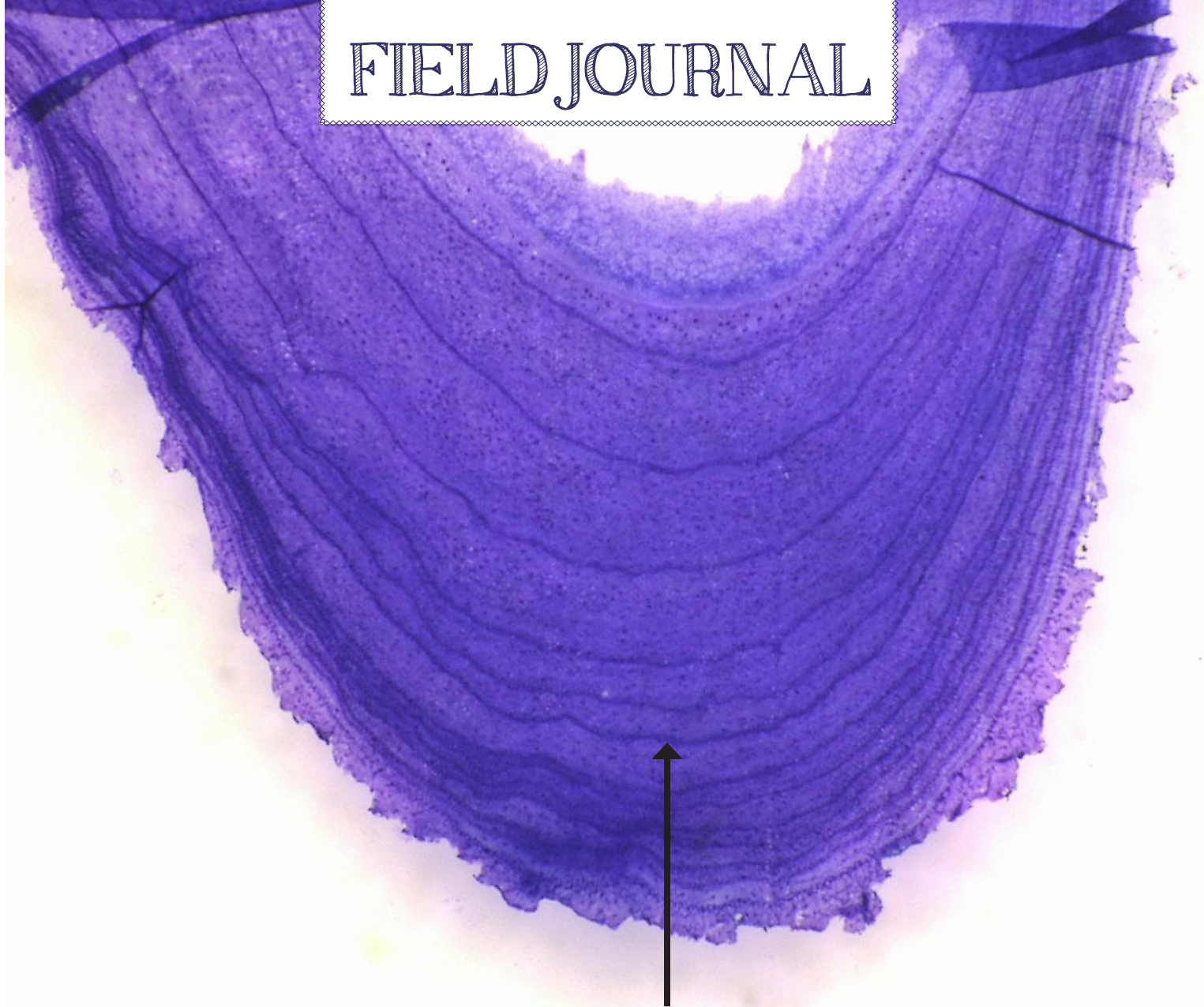


# FIELD JOURNAL



*Can you tell how old this male Black Bear was based on the rings of cementum found in his tooth? (Photo by WGFD)*

## Use teeth to find the age of animals

Knowing how old animals are when they are harvested (which means hunted and used for its meat or hide) is an important part of keeping wildlife populations healthy. At the Game and Fish Forensics and Fish Health lab in Laramie, forensic scientists use teeth that hunters turn in from animals like deer, elk, bear, moose or bobcat to tell how old the animal was. When a hunter turns in a tooth to be aged, the first

step is to slice a very thin section of the tooth off. A thin layer of bone-like tissue called “cementum” is formed on the tooth each year that the animal is alive. So, in order to age the tooth, the forensic scientists count these layers on the tooth. Each tooth slice is dyed to make the layers stand out. Just like rings in a tree, the rings in the root of the tooth will indicate the age of the animal.

### **FUN FACT!**

The Game and Fish laboratory ages approximately 2,500 teeth per year.