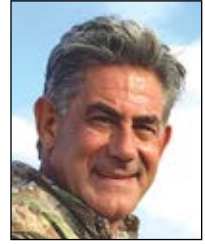


Tony Caligiuri
PRESIDENT



THE LOVE OF THE HUNT

It is often ironic how we progress in our hunting careers. As a small boy in Iowa, I started hunting pheasants and other upland game. Sixty years later, I enjoy watching others hunt and discover their own path to enjoying the outdoors.

I have always loved to hunt. Fortunately, my father instilled a spirit of ethical hunting and conservation in me at an early age. Growing up, we had an abundance of nearby pheasants, and it was usually a cinch to shoot a three-bird limit. Most days, though, my dad would say, “Two’s enough. We need to save some for next time.” I might not have understood it then, but I certainly do now.

The thrill of the hunt is universal, but it’s only one piece of the larger puzzle. My father’s lessons laid the groundwork, and my involvement in local conservation groups deepened my understanding of the vital relationship between hunters and wildlife. Over time, those grassroots efforts evolved into opportunities to volunteer at the national level.

In addition to being a long-time B&C member and serving on the board in several different roles, I’ve been privileged to work with organizations like the Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation, where I served as both a board member and chairman, and the Wild Sheep Foundation, where I’ve held board and officer positions. These experiences have given me a broader perspective on the challenges and opportunities facing wildlife and wild places. Conservation is not just a responsibility; it’s a legacy we must

safeguard for future generations.

As hunters, we are the original conservationists. Our license fees, excise taxes, and direct contributions fund most of the nation’s wildlife management efforts. Yet our role goes beyond financial support. We are stewards of the land, advocates for ethical hunting practices, and ambassadors for the outdoor way of life. It’s a role I take seriously, especially now as president of the Boone and Crockett Club.

You may have noticed that most issues of *Fair Chase* have a theme. This issue centers on deer, which is fitting as deer hunting is a rite of passage and tradition for almost all North American hunters.

Like many of you reading this, my big game hunting journey started with deer, but not the path that someone from the whitetail-rich Midwest might normally take. Deer were rare when I was growing up in Iowa, even seeing a doe was a major event. Today, we have one of the best whitetail deer herds in the nation in terms of both quality and quantity. Still, as a teenager, fueled by stories from *Field and Stream* and

Outdoor Life, I had a much greater interest in mule deer than white-tails. Yet they were a far-off dream at best, and a Western hunt was certainly not a reality for my limited financial means.

Some days after school, I would often sit with my grandfather, who had spent some time in Kansas at the turn of the last century. He loved to talk about the big-eared, bounding mule deer he saw. He knew how much I wanted to hunt them. When he died, he left me a small gift of money to cover the expenses of a budget-minded trip west. With a Greyhound bus ticket to Albuquerque and a \$20 sleeping bag, I ventured out on my first (real) big game hunt—a self-guided mule deer foray into New Mexico’s Carson National Forest. Though I did not even see a single buck on that hunt and nearly froze to death, it fueled an even greater desire to explore far-off places. Since that hunt many years ago, I have been blessed to have gone on over 100 different hunts in search of most of North America’s big game species.

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This issue contains a story by Allen Bolen about a hunt for a Sitka blacktail that took first place in the 31st awards program. Allen's name may be familiar to many of you as he is one of the most accomplished bowhunters, with multiple entries in the B&C records. Though our paths had probably crossed, I had never met Allen in person. Yet last fall, at a small restaurant in Dawson City, Yukon, I found myself across the table from another hunter who looked somewhat familiar. At about the same moment, we both realized we had a common connection through a couple of Stone's rams that had won awards in the Club's 30th and 31st Big Game Awards. Soon, Allen and I were talking like lifelong friends. We both took great mountain caribou on that Yukon hunt, but in typical Allen Bolen fashion, he did it the hard way with his bow.

Newly elected B&C president with a Sonora mule deer buck.



This issue also features other deer hunting stories, along with articles on current management and wildlife health issues that deer continue to face. Still, we are making progress, so don't despair quite yet.

From those early days in the Iowa woods to the far reaches of the United States, Mexico, and Canada, hunting has always been about more than the quarry. It's about the journey, the lessons learned, and the legacy we leave behind. For me, that legacy is one of respect—for the animals, the land, and the people who share this remarkable tradition. As I embark on this new chapter as president of the Boone and Crockett Club, I am humbled and grateful to be part of a community that values those principles as much as I do. ■

Tony Caligiuri



SITKA



LEUPOLD



THE BOONE AND CROCKETT CLUB ASKS THAT YOU PLEASE THANK OUR TRAILBLAZERS WITH YOUR PATRONAGE.