

# NEW YEAR, NEW BIG GAME CATEGORY, AND NEW BOUNDARIES

## TROPHY TALK

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The records department had a monumental 2024, culminating at the Boone and Crockett Club’s annual meeting in Charlotte, North Carolina. What an exciting time for conservation and big game. At this meeting, the committee discussed creating a new category and expanding two other categories—all conservation milestones that speak to successful big game management throughout North America.

The journey to creating a new category started in early 2024 when a proposal was presented to the records committee by individuals representing the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, Arizona Game and Fish Department, Texas Wildlife Association, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Wild Sheep Foundation, and Ecuemene Desarrollos. They urged the committee to add javelina (collared peccary) as a category to Boone and

northern Argentina. For Boone and Crockett Club’s big game records, we would focus on the javelina that reside in Mexico and the southern United States, the collared peccary.

“Wildlife management agencies in both the U.S. and Mexico officially classify native javelina as a ‘Big Game’ species, and they are managed using the same science-guided process as all other big game, such as elk or mule deer.” They also stated that the population throughout its range is healthy, appears to be growing, and is sustainable enough to allow hunting. They provided evidence to support that javelina populations have been expanding and growing and that hunter harvest also seems to be increasing.

For the committee to consider creating or expanding categories, the interested parties must address certain conditions. The records committee outlines the conditions necessary for category creation and expansion in our Official Measurers manual, *How to Score North American Big Game*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition. The conditions are as follows:

- There are extensive geographical areas where the proposed category occurs.
- The animals occur in good numbers.
- Suitable boundaries can be drawn.
- The game department(s) managing the proposed category favor creating such a new category.
- Scientific evidence supports the new category.

Crockett Club’s Records of North American Big Game. This allowed the committee to ask questions and thoroughly vet the proposal.

The group stated javelina range from the southern United States



Approximate distribution of the javelina in the United States and northern Mexico.

“In the U.S. and Mexico, each jurisdiction has some combination of closed seasons, bag limits, a lottery-style draw, or limits to license numbers. In Mexico, javelina are managed identically to deer, and hunters acquire licenses through a participating ejido or landowner. These programs are designed to limit javelina harvest and monitor populations to ensure sustainable harvest into the future.”

Interest in hunting these animals has only grown in recent years. Javelina also offers opportunities when other big game seasons are closed; in some areas, javelina can be hunted through March or later. Mexico is also seeing this trend in increased hunting interest, especially by the locals, who are being priced out of some of their other, more well-known, big game

species. “For hunting operations in northern Mexico, having a javelina category in the Boone and Crockett record book would add value to this species, equating to more management and conservation attention for javelina.”

Now that the committee has approved the javelina category, we need to determine the minimum entry score and develop scoring procedures and a score chart. We will work with the proposal group to hammer out all the details. Lucky for us, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas already possess a comprehensive dataset, including minimum scores and established scoring policies and procedures, which we will reference for guidance. By the time this reaches your mailbox, we should be well on our way to finalizing these details.



## BOUNDARY EXPANSIONS

The records committee was asked to expand two categories: our bison boundary, which includes the Fort Peck Indian Reservation, and our Shiras’ moose boundary, which includes the state of Nevada. When an agency wishes to recognize a big game species from its area, we ask that they submit an official request addressing the same conditions as category creation.

The director of the Fort Peck Tribe Fish and Game Department submitted a well-written proposal outlining the tribe’s management of its bison on the reservation. The tribe works hard to maintain a healthy carrying capacity by setting tag limits based on birth rates every spring. The herd was restored from bison brought in from Yellowstone National Park, and the tribe also uses its reservation as a place where overflow bison are brought from Yellowstone on their way to other recovery areas in North America, such as Oklahoma and Alaska.

As Nevada’s first moose season was underway, the Nevada Department of Wildlife contacted our office to see if we could supply their department with our moose

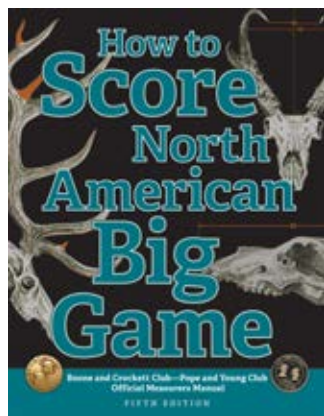




Proposed boundary expansion for Shiras' moose to include Nevada.

chapter from our Official Measurer manual so they could provide their staff with a general understanding of scoring moose for departmental use. During this conversation, we noticed Nevada was not within our Shiras' moose boundary, meaning that if one of their hunters harvested a moose during the season that met the minimum entry score for the Club's records, it would not be eligible. When asked how they could remedy this, I explained that we would need an official request to include Nevada within our boundary. Based on the proposal submitted, moose in Nevada seem to be thriving with a high survival rate and adapting to the microclimates in the state's northeast corner. While there have been confirmed moose sightings in Nevada since the 1950s, it wasn't until 2024 that biologists in the state felt the population was sustainable enough for hunting harvest. By harvesting these animals, they could learn even more about the species.

Through collaborative efforts like these, big game animals in North America continue to survive and, in many cases, thrive. Thank you to everyone who dedicated much time and effort to making this possible. I don't know if the records committee has ever had such a monumental year. ■



Read more about all the category boundaries in *How to Score North American Big Game, 5th Edition*

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2. Bucky Ihlenfeldt - 220
3. Stanley Zirbel - 208
4. Dale Weddle - 132
5. Steven Taylor - 128
6. Ken Witt\* - 113
7. Brett C. Ross - 78
8. Jerry E. Lunde - 72
9. Hanspeter Giger - 68
10. John Bogucki\* - 46

\*deceased

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