

# SPECIAL SECTION

## Potential New World's Record

The 24th Awards Program has been the most productive and exciting entry period to date. We received score charts for 4,207 big game trophies. Not only is the quantity there, but so is the quality.



pronghorn  
SAMUEL BARRY



BARRETT

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**HAVING GROWN UP ON A** small cattle ranch in eastern Oregon's John Day Valley, exposure to big game hunting came at an early age. By the time I was six, I was accompanying parents and other family members and friends on mule deer hunts. I could hardly wait until I turned 12 to begin hunting big game myself. Looking back, it doesn't seem possible that I have been actively pursuing eastern Oregon's various species of big game, varmints, and game birds for 32 years. I have accumulated many fond memories of exciting and successful, and some not so successful, hunts with family and friends. It has been my good fortune to have taken some nice mule deer bucks and several good bull elk over the years. With the exception of one elk hunting trip to Idaho, all of my hunting experiences have taken place in eastern Oregon's diverse landscape. The different species of game that I have hunted over the years include whitetail and mule deer, American elk (my preferred big game animal), pronghorn, ground squirrels, yellow-bellied marmots (rockchucks), and my favorite varmint, the coyote.

Prior to this year, my last Oregon pronghorn buck tag was drawn in 1974. It was my first pronghorn hunt and occurred the summer after graduation from high school. On the first morning of the hunt, accompanied by my older brother Wayne, I harvested the first buck we saw. He measured an even 12 inches and was taken at less than 200 yards with one shot from my new Remington 700 ADL .30-06 rifle. Over the following 26 years, I have accompanied numerous friends and relatives on pronghorn hunts in different areas in Oregon, serving variously as spotter, gutter, skinner, packer, and camp cook. My wife Agnes was lucky enough to draw a tag on her very first attempt in 1984. She made a great shot on a buck that measured approximately 12-4/8 inches, besting me by about 4/8ths of an inch, and put me in second place for bragging rights in our household for the next 16 years.

Since that first hunt, with the exception of four years attend-

ing dental school, I have applied continuously for an Oregon pronghorn buck tag in various units. I was never successful even though friends and relatives had drawn several tags in the same period of time. After being unlucky for so long, I was about ready to give up on ever drawing another Oregon tag and considered planning for an out-of-state pronghorn hunt. But persistence eventually paid off. After 26 years, and accumulating the maximum number of preference points, I finally drew my second Oregon buck pronghorn tag in 2000.

My hunt took place in southeastern Oregon's expansive and sparsely populated high desert country of Harney County. Harney is the largest county in Oregon and, at 10,200 square miles, is larger than several states. It lies at the northern boundary of the Great Basin. This is a beautiful and unique part of Oregon in which my family and I have spent considerable time exploring, viewing wildlife, varmint hunting, and visiting friends who live there. It is a semi-arid region with an average annual precipitation between 9 and 11 inches. Elevations vary from 4,000 feet to nearly 10,000 feet above sea level. The main forms of vegetation vary from irrigated meadows, grasslands, sagebrush, and greasewood to juniper and aspen trees. Ascending in altitude, one goes from marshy valleys through greasewood/sagebrush flats, rolling, grassy sagebrush hills, rocky plateaus, rimrock canyons, and finally into the mountains. In addition to the natural water supplies, the BLM and local ranchers have developed extra water holes throughout the region. Further range enhancements have included removal of the native sagebrush in large areas and replacing it with grass seedings. These range improvements, coupled with local landowners' hayfields and grazing

practices, provide excellent habitat and forage for wildlife.

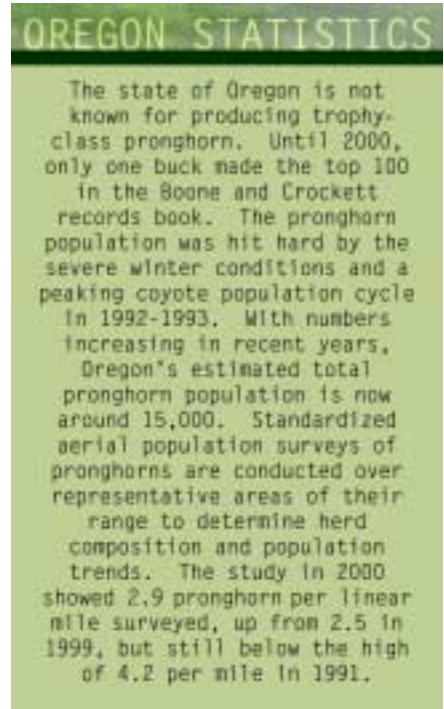
The excitement of drawing the tag was somewhat dampened when I realized that I was to be in southern Florida on business the entire week before the hunt and would not return to Oregon until Sunday night of the opening weekend. The season lasted only nine days. At that point I missed the scheduling flexibility of being my own boss as a self-employed general dentist. I had gone through my "mid-life crisis" four years earlier and made a career change into the corporate business world. Now, working for a large dental supply and equipment dealer as a field sales consultant, I quickly found out that pronghorn hunting was not an acceptable excuse

to skip the Florida meetings. I would miss the first three days of the hunt, as it would take all day Monday to finish packing and travel to the hunt area. It became imperative to complete any scouting before I departed for Florida. To make matters even worse, the very dry, hot summer with temperatures still in the low to mid 90s created extremely high fire danger conditions in eastern Oregon. There were threats of closure of public lands and the pronghorn hunting season if the conditions did not improve.

My brother Wayne and son Brian, age eight, accompanied me on two different weekends to scout the area and visit with local ranchers, some of whom we knew from previous trips to the area. After

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By Samuel Barry



**INSET: B&C  
Official  
Measurer,  
Glenn Abbott  
with the  
author's  
pronghorn,  
which he  
scored.**

**Typical  
pronghorn  
country in  
southeastern  
Oregon.**

stopping at several different ranches, we were able to obtain permission to hunt areas of their private land that is interspersed among the large tracts of BLM land and were given good tips on where to focus our scouting efforts. Our scouting goals, besides locating some nice bucks, were to learn the roads that access the different hunting areas, familiarize ourselves with the terrain and property boundaries, and locate sources of water. For our scouting trips, I stocked up on USGS topographical 7.5 minute quadrangle maps. As fine optics are essential for locating game, I borrowed my wife's "prized" Swarovski SLC 8x30 binoculars (knowing full well if I did not return them in good condition I would never hear the end of it) to go along with my Nikon Spotter XL spotting scope.

On our first scouting trip we spent one hot day in July looking

some of the area over. Numerous pronghorn were spotted but no really big bucks. The biggest buck we saw was estimated at 14 inches. We definitely felt we could do better. It was still six weeks before the start of the season. Conditions would certainly change and the pronghorn would move accordingly, plus we had a lot more area to look over. For now we were content with making connections with the landowners and becoming familiar with the terrain. In my opinion, one of the keys to consistent hunting success with any species is knowing the country well. This allows you to maximize your time in the field to your best advantage. It will keep you in the best habitat for finding your quarry and you won't have to waste valuable time trying to find your way back to camp or your vehicle.

The first weekend in August found us on our second scouting trip. Again, pronghorn appeared to be plentiful with good numbers of average sized bucks in the 10 to 14-inch range. We eventually spotted a bachelor group of eleven bucks bedded down at midday. As we glassed them over from about 400 yards, we spotted a huge buck bedded in the center of the group. Using the terrain to our advantage we moved in for a closer look. Most of

the bucks remained bedded as we approached to within 200 yards. The one buck definitely stood out in size from the others.

This large buck, we felt, definitely had record book potential even though we have had only limited experience field judging really large pronghorns. At that time, we were not completely familiar with the Boone and Crockett scoring system. This buck appeared to have longer prongs and greater mass to his horns than any other buck we had seen while scouting. He was very symmetrical with a white ivory tip visible on one side. We estimated his length at 16 inches with a 6 to 7-inch prong. I decided I would be more than happy with a buck like this and hopefully, with enough time and luck, we could find him again when it counted. Finally, the group of bucks spotted us and stood up and trotted off. This allowed us to note the larger overall body size of the large buck compared to the other bucks.

As we moved on and were still recovering from the excitement of our find, we spotted another buck feeding by himself in a small valley about 1/2 mile from the group of eleven. This buck was another tremendous animal in the 16-inch class. We did not feel he had quite the mass of the other buck we had



seen 20 minutes earlier, but he was close. Now we were really excited, knowing that two trophy class animals were using this area with less than three weeks to go before the season opener. I was trying not to be too optimistic, however, since I would miss the first part of the hunt. Other hunters could possibly kill one or both bucks, or at least chase them out of the area before I returned from Florida.

The rifle I chose for the hunt was one that has served me well over the years. It was the same .30-06 that I had used 26 years ago on my first pronghorn hunt. Since then the old rifle has been customized with a 26-inch Douglas barrel and the scope upgraded to a Leupold Vari-X III 2.5x8. It is extremely accurate and consistently shoots 1/2 to 3/4-inch five shot groups at 100 yards with my handloads. This load consists of 60 grains of Hodgdon H4831 powder in Remington brass with a CCI 200 large rifle primer. The Nosler 165 grain partition bullet leaves the barrel at 2,840 fps.

I shoot as often as possible to stay in practice, whether it is testing new handloads for various rifle calibers, target plinking, or hunting. Also, when target shooting or hunting, I always carry a pair of shooting sticks or a bipod with me to provide a stable rest. An accurate rifle and load combined with a good rest does wonders for my shooting ability and confidence. The day before I departed on my business trip to Florida, I made sure that the rifle was zeroed in. It was sighted to shoot 1-3/4 inches high at 100 yards, dead on at 200 yards and 8 inches low at 300 yards. This allowed me to hold exactly on an animal out to 300 yards without having to compensate for bullet drop.

On Sunday morning, August 20th, I arose in Boca Raton, Florida at 5:00 AM. It had been a restless night anticipating a hunt that had started the day before without me. To my delight, the flight from Ft. Lauderdale to Portland was on schedule. I made an unsuccessful attempt to sleep on the plane. Arriving in Pendleton, Oregon at 6:30 PM and tired from the trip, I finished packing, loaded the pickup

and trailer, and tried sleeping. The next morning I had to return phone calls and take care of customer problems before I finally hit the road for the hunt. I hitched up my utility trailer and pulled out of my driveway only to discover that in my haste I had forgotten to raise the trailer jack. Now the jack was bent backwards and unusable. I wondered what else would go wrong. I hoped this was not an indication of what the rest of the hunting trip was going to be like. Two hours later, I picked up my brother Wayne.

I was still suffering from the effects of jet lag and the previous day's six-hour drive when my hunt finally started on Tuesday morning, the fourth day of the hunting season. Shortly after daylight we started seeing pronghorn. I made a short stalk on the first herd we spotted only to find a small 12 to 13-inch buck feeding with a herd of about a dozen does. Using binoculars and the spotting scope, we spotted several other small herds of 12 to 20 pronghorn that morning with only small bucks traveling with them. Early in the afternoon we spotted a nice 14 to 15-inch buck with heavy horns and two does at 300 yards. I was tempted to end the hunt, but elected to pass since this was my first day and I hoped that at least one of the larger bucks we had seen on our second scouting trip was still around. To finish off the day, I took a long hike to check out some plateaus and basins that lay between the next major drainage and us. One of the ranchers had told us that it was a good area for an old buck to hide in. I got a lot of exercise but saw only four does and a little buck.

Wednesday started much like Tuesday. Several small herds with little bucks were seen. Late in the morning we got a quick look at what we thought was a very nice buck with three does on the run. They disappeared into a thicket of juniper trees before we could tell much about him. Since we were in good pronghorn habitat I spent the next several hours hunting in the same general direction that the buck was headed. Having no luck locating him, and with a blister starting on

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my left heel, I headed back to meet my brother. For my efforts, however, I only managed to see a smaller buck with four does and one lone doe. As the day progressed we saw five more bucks, none of which were bigger than 14 inches. Late that afternoon we spotted what we thought was the large buck feeding with a group of about 30 does at least 1/2 mile or more from us. We were hoping this was the one we were looking for. Being so late in the day, having sore feet from two days of hiking, the terrain not ideal for stalking, not being certain if this was "the buck," and with four days remaining to hunt, we talked it over and decided to pass until the next morning. We did not want to take a chance at spooking them off at dusk.

The next morning, we headed off for the basin where we

### OREGON STATISTICS

In Oregon, all hunts for pronghorn are controlled hunts. Tags must be applied for through the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW). Successful applicants are awarded tags at a public drawing. Hunters who apply and do not get a tag receive a preference point for future drawings. Hunters with the maximum number of preference points are allocated 75% of the available tags. The remaining 25% are drawn randomly from the whole pool of applicants. A maximum of 3% of pronghorn tags go to nonresident hunters. The total number of tags allocated each year varies and is determined by the ODFW from data collected during their annual aerial pronghorn population surveys. In 1999, a total of 1,074 pronghorn tags were issued for rifle hunts in all of Oregon's game management units and 845 tags were filled. In the unit in which I hunted, there were 80 tags issued to the 2618 applicants. The odds improved slightly for my successful draw in the year 2000:104 tags for 2,419 applicants.

For more information, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife may be reached at: P.O. Box 59, Portland, Oregon 97207-0059. The phone number is 503/872-5268. Their website is found at [www.dfw.state.or.us](http://www.dfw.state.or.us).

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had left the large buck and his herd of does the night before. The day was clear, sunny, warm, and calm, making for ideal hunting conditions. On our way we saw another really nice buck with 15-inch horns and good mass. It was a difficult decision, but I decided to take a chance and pass on this buck until we checked out the basin just ahead where we had seen the big buck the evening before. Arriving at the basin, we again spotted the herd with what appeared to be the buck we were looking for. They were feeding along at 800 to 1,000 yards from us on the opposite side of the valley. Again, it was in an area where it would be extremely difficult to stalk very close to them.

After studying the buck with the spotting scope for quite awhile, we were confident that this was one of the big animals we had seen on our second scouting trip. Using the terrain to our best advantage, we decided to take a chance at not being spotted while they were busy feeding. We made our way off the ridge to a patch of taller grass and took cover in it, hoping

that they would eventually feed closer to us. For approximately the next hour or more the buck and his harem continued to feed. They would move closer to us for awhile then move farther away, as if they were taunting us. Several times a doe broke from the herd running in the opposite direction from us. I thought each time that we had been detected and that the entire herd would take off and follow the doe. But each time the buck would take after the doe, turn her back toward the herd, hook at her rump with his horns, and drive her back into the group.

Finally, the herd made its way to within 200 yards of us. The buck surrounded himself with the does and offered no clear shot. I was getting more nervous by the second, fearing that they would see us and bolt, making for a very difficult running shot, or no shot at all. At approximately 9:00 AM, the buck was finally clear of the does and presented me with a clear, broadside shot. I placed the reticle on the center of his shoulder and squeezed the trigger. Down he went. The always reliable Nosler 165 grain partition bullet had done its job for me once more.

As we walked up to the buck, I was overwhelmed with excitement. He was a tremendously heavy

horned buck, taller than we had estimated, and should make the record book. He looked even bigger now than before. However, at the time, I had no idea that he would be a potential new World's Record. I truly did not know what a trophy I really had until stopping at my mother's place in John Day, Oregon on my way home. A family friend, Carl Stout, an avid hunter, came by to check out the buck. Being a surveyor by trade, he loves to measure things and he immediately took his tape to the horns. He informed me that this was an extraordinary pronghorn and I needed to have him officially scored.

Glenn Abbott of Sandy, Oregon, a Boone and Crockett Club Official Measurer, contacted me the following week to green score the buck. When he saw it he was shocked at its size. The green score was 95 even. He took multiple photographs from various angles to send to Boone and Crockett for a verification of the measurement locations before his final measurement. The prong was low and the second circumference measurement fell into the area of the prong's swelling. In the last three years, Glenn has measured eight pronghorn bucks taken in Harney County that have scored over 80 points. He returned to my home after the 60-day drying period and scored my buck officially at 94 6/8, easily a new Oregon record and potentially a new World's Record. The BUCK of a lifetime!!! The final score and ranking will be determined by the Boone and Crockett Club's scoring panel in May of 2001.

I look forward to hunting pronghorn in Oregon again someday, if I am fortunate enough to draw another tag. I am also eagerly anticipating many years of hunting with my son Brian and daughter Katie, both of whom have passed their hunter education classes and are excited about learning to hunt. Katie has already informed me that she is going to apply for a pronghorn tag in 2001 when she turns 12 years old.

No question about it. Waiting 26 years to draw my second Oregon buck pronghorn tag was definitely worth it! ▲▲▲

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