

THE STORIES BEHIND THE...

TWO NEW WORLD'S RECORDS

In the Fall 2001 issue of Fair Chase the Club announced two new World's Records trophies. Both trophies were re-scored and verified by the first-ever Special Judges Panel in Missoula, Montana. On the following pages you will read about the two extraordinary hunts that resulted in these new records -- one a quest for a big ram and the other a quest for adventure in the far north. Each trophy besting the previous record by just 2/8th of an inch!



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EDITOR'S NOTE:
THE RAM PICTURED ON THE
OPPOSITE PAGE AND THE COVER
OF THIS ISSUE IS THE NEW
WORLD'S RECORD BIGHORN. THE
IMAGE WAS TAKEN IN 1999
BY WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER AND
BIOLOGIST JOEY OLIVIERI.

NEW WORLD'S RECORD BIGHORN

An “unbeatable record” that has stood since 1911 has fallen!

BY CRAIG BODDINGTON
B&C PROFESSIONAL MEMBER

It was late in the afternoon on November 28, 2000, on Luscar Mountain in Alberta's Rockies. The echoes of Guinn Crousen's .270 Weatherby Magnum had died away and the great ram was down. Many men would have run forward to see their prize up close. But Guinn Crousen is both patient and practical. He'd waited more than a dozen years to finish his Grand Slam with a Rocky Mountain bighorn—not just any bighorn, but the right one. He'd tried to obtain this particular tag for four years, believing that Alberta offered the best opportunity for the kind of ram he wanted. With the right tag finally in hand, he'd tried for 15 days to get a shot at this particular ram. Now it was getting dark and cold in the Alberta mountains. He was tired and his bad knees hurt. The ram could wait a little bit longer. So while his hunting partners sprang forward, Crousen turned back to retrieve his pack and jacket, dropped during the final moments of the stalk.

A few minutes later, moving more slowly with adrenaline levels dropping, Crousen approached his ram. His hunting team—Randy Babala, Ron McKenzie, and Lyle Moberly—were sitting quietly, looking at the downed monarch. Crousen approached from



the rear, seeing the full curl of the ram's horns. "My gosh, boys, he's big," he said.

Randy Babala looked up and spoke quietly in the silence of the moment. "Guinn, you may have a new World's Record." And Guinn Crousen sat down and cried a little.

QUEST FOR A BIG RAM
Few among us have the dream of taking a World's Record of any species, and even fewer come to believe that it might actually happen to them. Guinn Crousen of Dallas, Texas was not among either group. His father was a retired Marine Gunnery Sergeant who saw service from Nicaragua to the island campaigns of World War II. Guinn grew up with his Dad kicking his tail in true Marine Corps fashion—and teaching him a strong sense of ethics extending from the field to the workplace. As a hunter, Guinn Crousen learned to hunt hard and hunt fair. Like most hunters, he dreamed of someday taking a really great trophy—which meant, as it does to most of us, an animal that would

make the minimum in the *All-Time Records of North American Big Game*. As a businessman, he built up a successful corporation, which in time allowed him to expand his hunting horizons.

In 1985 his friend, Don Harold, persuaded him to attend the Foundation for North American Wild Sheep convention. As a result he booked his first sheep hunt, taking a nice Stone's ram with Myles Bradford in northern B.C. He followed up with a Dall's sheep with Stan Stevens in the MacKenzie Mountains of Northwest Territories. Then, in 1989, he took a desert sheep in Baja Norte. Now he had three-fourths of a Grand Slam, all nice sheep but no record-class trophies. He got to thinking that he'd like to close out his Slam with a really big ram, one that would make the book and stay there.

As a measure of Guinn Crousen's patience and persistence, he didn't just book a big-horn sheep hunt. He did his homework, deciding that western Alberta, near the Jasper Park, offered the best available opportunity

for the kind of ram he was looking for. And he booked four hunts simultaneously, four years in a row, with Gordon Utri's Whispering Pines Outfitters.

He only hunted two of the four years, allowing friends to take his other two bookings. He was hunting Unit 438, and during those two lengthy hunts he never saw a good ram in his hunting area. But from a favored vantage point he could see the Cardinal River Mine, an area closed to hunting, and in that promised land he frequently glassed good sheep.

When the Alberta auction tag first came out he recognized the opportunity. Six of the ten largest bighorns in the record book and half the top twenty came out of Alberta. Crousen was sure Alberta offered the best opportunity for a really big ram. Starting in 1995 he bid on Alberta tag for four out of the next six years, losing the bid three times. In 2000, at the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation gathering in Denver, after dreaming of a good bighorn for a decade, he walked away with the Alberta sheep tag.

DURING THE RUT BIG RAMS CAN BE SEEN AT ALMOST ANY TIME OF THE DAY — BUT THE KIND OF RAM GUINN CROUSEN WANTED DOESN'T COME EASY.



What to do with it? Crousen knew he wanted to hunt Unit 438, between Jasper Park and the old mine. He also knew that no one knew the area better than veteran sheep outfitter Randy Babala. Babala grew up in nearby Cadomin, Alberta, roaming the hills as a youngster and eventually guiding in the area for his uncle, Jim Babala. After guiding and outfitting Alberta bighorns for years Randy Babala eventually sold out, relocating to sheep country in the Yukon—but he still knew the area better than anyone.

THE "200 CLUB"

Crousen called him to ask him to guide the hunt. After the preliminaries Babala, bluntly asked him, "What do you want with the tag?"

Without hesitation Crousen answered, "I want to join the '200 Club'."

Babala didn't know what that meant, so Crousen explained that he wanted to join the tiny group of sheep hunters who had taken rams that achieved a final score—"net and dry"—of 200 points or better.

Long silence, then Babala said, "There are thousands of sheep hunters who have died, and thousands more that are gonna die, without ever seeing a ram that big—let alone connecting. But if you want to try, come on up and let's go hunting!"

Crousen's team would consist of Randy Babala, assisted by Ron McKenzie and Lyle Moberly, with Lenore Vinson acting as camp cook. "Camp" and headquarters would be Babala's house in Cadomin. Crousen set aside the whole month of November for the hunt, but the agreement was that there was no point beginning until the rams started to move. Interestingly, they did no scouting; everyone involved knew there were big rams on the old mine, or across the area in Jasper Park. With rutting activity the rams would move—and maybe a really big ram would show. On about the 7th of November Babala called Crousen, telling him the rams were starting to move a bit. It was time.

THE HUNT

Crousen arrived on the 9th of November, and from that evening onward they hunted all day, every day except Sundays, dawn to dark. The weather was cold, with highs in the teens, occasionally reaching above freezing, but strangely dry. Early on they got seven or eight inches of snow, but for most of the hunt it remained clear and cold, with occasional snow flurries and periods of high winds. Crousen remembers one day when "nickel-sized rocks were blowing through a drainage."

On the third day, late in the evening, they glassed a very big ram, unique and recognizable because of his exceptional length, but much too far away to see clearly. It was too late to move closer that evening, but the next morning they picked him up again on the old mine. Crousen knew instantly this was the largest ram he had ever seen. Babala was non-committal; he simply said, "He'll net/dry 200." From that moment this ram became the quest, but they never again attempted to precisely call his measurements.

On the fifth day they lost him, and didn't see him again for six long days. During this period they separated, going in different directions to glass, then meeting back up to discuss what they had seen. Ron McKenzie and Lyle Moberly went up to Mystery Lake, while the rest of the team took up different vantage points along Luscar Mountain, glassing down into the mine and west toward Jasper.

By now the rut was in full swing, with rams moving everywhere. Rams from the mine area seemed to have extremely dark horns, almost certainly because of the coal dust. Jasper Park was only four or five miles away, but the Park rams were identifiable because of golden-colored horns.

Eventually, about the 19th of November, they found the long-horned ram again, still in his sanctuary on the old mine. The rams were fighting heavily, and Crousen was afraid to look through the spotting scope. He would ask Randy, "Has he broken anything?" No, he had not. He was still pretty,

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was still the "net/dry 200" they sought—and he was still as safe as if he'd been on the moon.

Early on Crousen had told Babala, "Randy, consider this tag yours. Tell me when you would shoot a ram."

One afternoon they worked in behind some cedars, coming up just 35 or 40 yards above three ewes. A big ram came out of the draw below and stopped just 40 yards below them. Randy Babala whispered, "I'd shoot that ram."

Crousen just looked at him, so Babala went on, "You told me to tell you when I would shoot a ram. I would shoot that ram."

"How big is he?"

"He's 196 or 197, no deducts, a gorgeous ram. I would shoot him."

Crousen passed him, with Babala saying, "Gosh, that ram sure is pretty!"

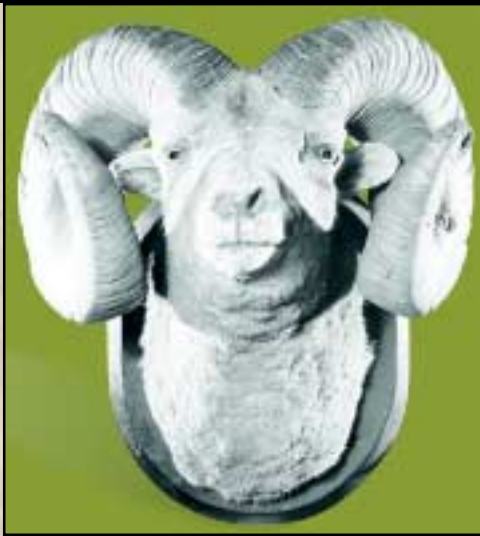
By November 27th, with time growing short, they had the long-horned ram pretty well located—but he was staying well within the sanctuary. After they came off the mountain Crousen took a shower, then came into the main room. Nobody was saying anything, so Babala broke the silence. "Guinn, we better have a talk. Maybe that ram isn't gonna come out. We should start thinking of a different ram or you might be going home in four days with nothing."

Crousen thought about it for a moment, then replied, "Well, that's all right. It's going to be that big ram or nothin'."

"Okay, let's have supper," said Babala, and that was that.

NOVEMBER 28, 2000

The ram was still there that morning. Crousen and his crew spread out on the backside of Luscar Mountain, glassing down along the mine's sawtoothed boundary. In the late afternoon a pack of coy-



GUINN CROUSEN'S MAGNIFICENT BIGHORN HAS THE SECOND-LONGEST HORNS (AVERAGE OF BOTH HORNS) OF ANY BIGHORN IN THE ALL-TIME RECORDS. ITS BASES ARE ACTUALLY QUITE AVERAGE, BUT IT CARRIES THE MASS WELL INTO THE QUARTER MEASUREMENTS. AFTER PANEL-SCORING IT OFFICIALLY MEASURED 208-3/8 POINTS, BEATING THE FRED WEILLER RAM PICTURED ABOVE (INSET) BY 2/8THS OF AN INCH.

otes—at least three, maybe more—dashed into the herd of sheep down on the mine's flat, reclaimed meadows. Suddenly sheep were running everywhere, moving out of the flat and up into the rough rocks. Babala appeared at Crousen's side. "He's coming out. Let's go!"

They left their gear and ran, pulling up short as Babala said, "There's the ram, there's the boundary stake. He's out. Take him!" It was a going-away shot at just about 70 yards, and the ram that would become the new World's Record Rocky Mountain bighorn belonged to Guinn

Crousen, his team, and all of us who care about such things.

A WORLD'S RECORD BIGHORN

In 1911, in Blind Canyon, Alberta, Fred Weiller took a ram that stood as the World's Record for 90 years. Among all of Boone and Crockett's categories for North American big game only the World's Record woodland caribou has stood for a longer period. As Guinn Crousen and his ram have proven, records are made to be broken—but few of us who have studied the record book ever believed that Fred Weiller's ram would be beaten.

The reasons for this are obvious. Our bighorns have made a wonderful comeback in many areas, so it isn't necessarily clear that there are fewer bighorns today than there were in 1911. But in today's well-managed herds the permits are carefully allocated for a sustainable yield, not necessarily to allow the maximum growth potential. Few herds have the genetics and the feed and minerals to produce "net/dry 200-point rams," and among those that do very few rams escape predators, hunters, hard winters, and other natural calamities long enough to reach their maximum

potential. Were I a betting man, I would have bet that Fred Weiller's Blind Canyon ram would stand forever as the largest-horned bighorn sheep known to have ever lived. I would have been wrong. Guinn Crousen's Luscar Mountain ram, taken on November 28, 2000, was officially scored on August 15, 2001, in Missoula, Montana, by a B&C Panel of Judges at 208-3/8 Boone and Crockett points, the new World's Record bighorn by 2/8ths of a point.

It's interesting to note that Crousen's ram achieves its fabulous score in unusual fashion. With bases of 15-7/8, it is not particularly heavy-based as bighorns go. Crousen and his team were absolutely correct when they recognized its incredible length; at 47-4/8 on the right and 46-5/8 on the left its horns average the second longest of any bighorn sheep in the All-Time record book. And while the bases are not huge by bighorn standards, it carries the mass very well into the first, second, and third quarter measurement. He is a great ram, well-judged, well-hunted, and well-taken. Now he's a part of hunting history, and I think I would have cried a little on that mountain as well. ▲▲▲



NEW WORLD'S RECORD MUSKOX

A LIFE-LONG DREAM OF
THE ARCTIC
RESULTS IN A
NEW RECORD!

BY VICENTE SANCHEZ y
SANCHEZ-VALDEPENAS
B&C LIFETIME ASSOCIATE

My quest for muskox began long ago; a natural consequence of being an avid reader of hunting books. I have read wonderful books by Theodore Roosevelt, Frederick Selous, and others. Any kind of hunting book is good reading for me, but I became particularly intrigued by hunting adventures in the far north . . . there is a story about the first hunt for muskox that will remain forever on my mind. Is it not incredible that on my first trip I would harvest a World's Record muskox?

I have hunted my entire life. I took my first deer at eight years of age . . . that means 60 years of hunting. For centuries, my family has farmed the land and hunted in the mountains near Zamora in northwestern Spain. We hunted mainly red deer and wild boar in Spain, along with lesser quantities of roe deer, fallow deer, mouflon, chamois and Spanish ibex. My father, who taught me to hunt and shoot, was a serious shotgun competitor, having been a world champion in live pigeon shooting and the recipient of 263 awards and silver cups in many different shooting events. Despite my preference to spend all my waking hours hunting, I finished with a doctorate degree in agricultural engineering at the Uni-

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VICENTE'S MUSKOX WAS RE-SCORED AND CERTIFIED AS A NEW WORLD'S RECORD BY THE BOONE AND CROCKETT CLUB'S FIRST SPECIAL JUDGES PANEL THAT CONVENED IN MISSOULA, MONTANA, ON AUGUST 15, 2001. THE SPECIAL JUDGES PANEL VERIFIED THE ORIGINAL ENTRY SCORE OF 127-2/8 POINTS AS THE CORRECT FINAL SCORE OF MR. VALDEPENAS' MUSKOX. HIS MUSKOX IS 2/8THS OF AN INCH LARGER THAN THE FORMER WORLD'S RECORD TAKEN BY BOB BLACK NEAR COPPERMINE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES, IN 1996.

versity of Madrid. I worked for the state agricultural department for 20 years until starting my own tobacco company. But always I was, and always will be, a farmer – with family farms in northwestern and now, southern Spain.

I love the mountains, the snow and the cold areas. I was the first Spanish hunter to go to Mongolia in 1980 during Khrushchev times, which was difficult. Most of my cold weather hunts have been in Alaska for moose and bear, and in Canada for caribou and polar bear. Fred Webb & Sons has outfitted most of those hunts, and I also used them to organize my muskox hunt. I learned about Fred Webb & Sons through the magazines and record books of Safari Club International. Oddly enough, at the time I harvested my muskox, I knew nothing about the Boone and Crockett Club! They are not well known in Europe. My first knowledge of the Club and its records program was through the

taxidermist in Yellowknife who measured my muskox. He encouraged me to have the trophy measured by the Boone and Crockett Club, and I followed his advice. I am very proud to be first (and so far, the only) Lifetime Associate of the Boone and Crockett Club from Europe.

THE HUNT

It had been a long journey from Zamora, Spain to the Northwest Territories during the last week of March 1999. From Yellowknife, I went to Kugluktuk in the Coronation Gulf where I met Charlie, my Inuit guide who was to lead the hunting operation. I spent the next day traveling by sled pulled by a snowmobile with two other American hunters to reach the designated hunting area.

The area we were hunting was slightly hilly, and visibility was hampered by the foggy weather. The temperatures ranged from -30°C (-22°F) to -57°C (-71°F). The Inuit people

handle these conditions very well, but the camp facilities were really quite sparse. For example, there was no real tent. Instead, there were three pieces of wood and some old multi-colored curtains or sheets held together and sealed from the wind with ropes, braces, and some snow. But inside, with the caribou and muskox furs and the cooking stove working, it was very comfortable.

It was my second day of hunting with Charlie. He had been following the footsteps of a muskox herd, hoping to locate the animals and get close enough to attempt a stalk. Finally, our persistence paid off. There they were! On the other side of an open arctic valley was a group of 30 muskox napping placidly on the ice, at temperatures of close to 60 below zero. The day was shining; a soft sun veiled by scudding clouds that slightly blurred the sky. It was the best possible weather that could be hoped for at a latitude exceeding 70 degrees north.



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A very thick layer of wool-like hair fell in a cascade over their bodies until it brushed the ground. They looked like the direct descendants of the woolly mammoths—those hairy elephants that became extinct 10,000 years ago. The mummified carcasses of woolly mammoths can still be found frozen in ice. But not my dear and yearned-for muskox, which are still here, having changed little since the Ice Age; silent witnesses to the past, perfectly adapted to their harsh arctic environment.

We carefully approached the herd, but the muskox saw us first. It was useless to try and hide in the snowy, open valley. The herd reacted quickly to our closeness, creating a circle of defense with the females and pups towards the center and the large and powerful males lining the outer part of the circle.

Charlie and I tried to locate a good bull. The males, who were very uneasy and nervous, thinking we were bears; they are not afraid of man. They are rightly afraid of bears, however, and man is the only one, in addition to the bear, that sometimes stands on two legs. We concluded that it was impossible to shoot under the circumstances—it was a very compact group and a bullet could wound a second animal after passing through the first.

Suddenly, the nervousness culminated in a stampede. Even though it was the first time I had seen a muskox herd, I focused on a large male whose wool was lighter in color and lingering behind the rest of the group, unable to maintain the pace for escape. After retreating about one and a half kilometers, the herd regrouped. We followed and managed to get within about two hundred meters of the herd but they were very nervous and excited and quickly ran away again. The singular individual with the lighter coat once again fell behind the herd.

Charlie was trying to locate a good trophy, and I continued to insist, "Charlie, excuse me. I don't know anything about muskox but

that animal that falls behind is either sick or the oldest one in the herd. These animals do not lose their horns. If he is the oldest one, he must be a good trophy."

"Yes, Vincente," Charlie patiently replied, "but no one really knows. I am going to see if I can spot a really good one in the herd."

Dressed in that marvelous arctic gear, which is the result of new and advanced technology, I was about to start boiling. These suits protect you from intense cold temperatures, but when you walk long distances the suits turn you into an oven. You think you might even burn yourself! I was not prepared to run any farther.

The herd moved away from us again about one kilometer, and regrouped on a rocky hilltop where the wind had swept the snow away. The snow was very fine, like dust or sugar. Once again they formed a circle. Charlie kept trying to locate a good trophy, but was hampered by the herd's increasing nervousness. When we got about 170 meters away, they started to run. My light-colored old muskox fell behind the herd again as they stampeded across the tundra.

I could not resist the temptation. I took off my right mitt since it limited my capacity to handle the rifle, and aimed my dear and powerful .30-378 Weatherby Magnum. Without asking Charlie, I centered the reticle on the body of the light-colored animal, trying to avoid the mistakes of localization caused by so much hair above and below the animal. I softly pressed the trigger, trying to pace the movement of the rifle to the rhythmic galloping of the mythical animal. Even now I can remember that moment as though it was a movie of an imaginary animal moving in slow motion through the reticle of my scope. Suddenly my dream ended, and I was awakened by the powerful recoil and roaring of my rifle. The marvelous moment of the muskox galloping ever so slowly before my surprised eyes was gone. The animal stumbled and then remained still while the herd moved on.

With a quick, automatic movement, I placed a second bullet in that marvelous beast. I was grateful for my many years of hunting "monteria ways" in Spain, which is a traditional driven hunt for deer and boar necessitated by the densely wooded and mountainous habitat that makes a stalk almost impossible. As the animals move from the thick cover across narrow fire roads, they are running at full speed. Spanish hunters learn to shoot very quickly and very accurately, because there is no time. If a hunter waits for an animal to stop, he will never harvest anything.

The hunt was over. Charlie did not know whether to be angry or to congratulate me. The Inuit are natural hunters, and I could see the joy shining in Charlie's oblique and Asian black eyes. He leaned over and congratulated me in the traditional manner.

The muskox was large and beautiful . . . a relic from the past. I felt like a Neanderthal from Atapuerca with the stone in my hand. An atavistic shiver flooded me from deep within, from where my ancestors were lying. I had the sensation, the experience, and the feelings that might have been felt by ancient hunters millions of years ago.

I had finally achieved my life-long dream of hunting muskox in the arctic. But my hunting days are far from over. Next year, I have plans to shoot a barren ground grizzly bear in the Northwest Territories, a mountain goat in Alaska, and a Marco Polo sheep in Tajikistan.

My passport says I am an old man. But there must be something wrong because I feel very young and strong. I work 14 hours every day, and want to hunt as much as ever. Do you think my mother lied to me about my age? ▲▲▲