

# TROPHY TALK

## "Picked Up" and "Unknown" Trophies



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An article, based on unfounded rumors, accusations, and innuendos, was recently published in a whitetail deer publication. The article alleges that the World's Record non-

typical whitetail deer picked up in Missouri in 1982 may, and the emphasis is on the word *may*, have been raised on a game farm and possibly dumped alongside a road in Missouri by some rogue game farmers without a permit after it died in their trailer. If there is a chance that this deer is not authentic, B&C would not have accepted it in the 18th Awards Program. Personnel of the Missouri Department of Conservation were and still are convinced that it is authentic.

B&C staff had already researched these same unfounded allegations several years ago

on pages 54 of this issue of *Fair Chase*, you will no doubt notice a number of trophies listed as "Picked Up" or of "Unknown" origin in the hunter's column. Since concerns have been expressed about B&C accepting and listing such trophies, I would like to review the reasons these trophies are listed in the records books and their significance to the Club's records-keeping activities. Before I do that, however, I need to discuss which trophies are included under these general headings.

"Picked Up" trophies are specimens that have been found dead in the woods by hunters or hikers. Included are animals that have died from natural or unnatural causes such as old age, severe winters, falls from high places, as well as car, lightning, fence, and drowning accidents. "Picked Up" trophies likely include animals that were shot, but not recovered.

Trophies listed with "Unknown" hunters are those animals about which nothing at all is known. Frequently they are specimens that were purchased at auctions or from taxidermists, found in garbage cans and landfills, and a variety of other sources including yard or estate sales. Very little to nothing is known of the origin of these trophies.

It should be noted that trophies of "Unknown" origin are excluded from entry in the records book if they come from an area delineated by a boundary. For example, Columbia blacktail deer of "Unknown" origin are not acceptable because specimens must come from a certain geographic area defined by a boundary to be included in the records book. We will accept, however, a mule deer of unknown origin.

"Picked Up" trophies and those of "Unknown" origin are an integral part of the Club's records-keeping activities. Some people question their place in the records books because, as the argument goes, "They weren't taken in *Fair Chase* by a hunter." As a matter of fact, there are six World's Records in the 11th edition of the all-time records book, *Records of North American Big Game*, where the hunter is listed as unknown or the trophy was picked up, including the World's Record non-typical whitetail deer mentioned earlier. With all that out of the way, I'd now like to get to the bottom of why the Boone and Crockett Club accepts these trophies.

The Club became involved with conservation in the late 1880s when many species of native North American big game were at their lowest numbers in history (e.g. bison

and whitetail deer). Many concerned sportsmen thought many species were going to go extinct because of the excesses of market hunting, western expansion, and the absence of any regulations.

Extinction may be a hard concept to grasp these days when populations of big game, such as whitetail deer, are at their highest numbers ever. However, in 1902 B&C's executive committee appointed Casper Whitney, Archibald Rogers, and Theodore Roosevelt to a committee to devise a scoring system to record biological data on vanishing big game. In 1906 Club Members were so concerned about the future of large mammals in the world that they started the National Collection of Heads and Horns (NCHH) at the Bronx Zoo in New York City and dedicated it, "In memory of the vanishing big game of the world." One of its basic purpose was to save examples of antlers, horns, skulls, and tusks of big game of the world before each species went extinct.

One of the primary reasons the Club became involved in records-keeping was to create a permanent, written record of the different big game species before they went extinct. Prentiss Gray and his handful of early measurers scoured museums and trophy rooms around the world to record as many specimens as they could find, and published their findings in B&C's first edition of the records book in 1932. Many museum specimens, which were collected by explorers or museum personnel who either shot or picked them up, were included in that first book.

Fortunately, the big game animals of North America did not go extinct because of the conservation efforts initiated by the Club and many other dedicated hunter/conservationists. The records-keeping activities of the Club now record the successes of conservation, which is why the Club is just as interested in recording a trophy that is "Picked Up."

The Club keeps records to record the accomplishments of hunters, but more importantly the successes of conservation efforts. The underlying assumption of its records-keeping activities is the fact that trophy numbers from wild populations reflect successes and trends of conservation. The more trophies recorded, the greater the successes of conservation. So far as the Club is concerned, a World's Record is a World's Record regardless of whether or not it is taken by a hunter in *Fair Chase* or if it was found dead. ■



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and could find no basis for them. Thus, until an authentic, verifiable photograph surfaces depicting this buck in a game pen, or eating out of someone's hand, it will remain the World's Record non-typical buck (pictured above).

As you review the trophy listings, included in the "Recently Accepted Trophies"