

BEATING THE ODDS

New Kansas Number Two

Gerald E. Rightmyer

266-2/8 Non-Typical Whitetail

Morris County, Kansas 2006



Gerry Rightmyer with his non-typical whitetail deer. The buck scores 266-2/8 points.

By Ryan Hatfield

When Jack Reneau and I taught two dozen eager students at a Boone and Crockett Club Official Measurer Workshop in Kittery, Maine, in June 2006, we had no reason to suspect that one of them would soon be in the limelight of the whitetail world. Now we can say we knew Gerry Rightmyer “before he was famous.” Not even Gerry knew the incredible fortune that would soon be bestowed upon him in that fall’s Kansas whitetail season.

Gerry’s good friend Scott Fratter had arranged for a whitetail hunt in Kansas by way of a hunt swap, and invited him to be his hunting partner. Gerry jumped at the chance.

They made their way to the rural area and were checking into the local hotel when the owner mentioned the “Legend of Grandpa.” Apparently, some locals had been seeing a buck for the past few years that the owner described as a “big old buck with lots of points.” Gerry dismissed the rumor.

After doing some scouting, Gerry settled on a wooded creek bottom that acted as a natural funnel. He noticed several huge rubs, active scrapes, and intersecting trails. Overnight, the temperature plummeted as a Canadian cold front arrived, wreaking havoc on the Midwest.

Opening morning produced a few orange-clad hunters and a few generic whitetails, but nothing that got Gerry’s heart pumping. The most notable thing to occur was the worsening weather, including rain, sleet, and hail. Gerry was determined to stay the course, however.

Just before 1 p.m. he turned to look behind him. He instantly noticed a buck with heavy antlers that didn’t seem to fit the norm. The buck stopped behind a large tree and, while Gerry could now see the entire body, he still wasn’t quite positive of what he had seen on its head. The buck continued on. Gerry waited patiently, and then bleated. After a second bleat, the big buck stopped, affording the hunter his first solid look at this curious trophy.

It didn’t take a genius to know this was the one he was looking for, and Gerry framed the buck with the scope on his .270 and fired. Gerry said the buck bolted “like a Brahma bull” and was down in seconds.

As he approached, he was stunned. The “Legend of Grandpa” was no legend at all. The proof lay directly before him. News of the giant buck spread quickly through town, and Gerry obliged the locals to come and get a glimpse of one of the greatest whitetails they might ever witness.

Coming full circle, the rack was officially measured by Bob Estes, a veteran measurer appointed in 1968 who just happened to be an assistant instructor at the Kittery workshop. Once officially christened, Gerry’s incredibly massive trophy became the second-largest whitetail ever recorded in the state of Kansas, behind only the state record—a 280-4/8 buck taken by Joseph H. Waters in Shawnee County in 1987. ■

Change of Plan

John M. Klucky • 187-2/8 typical whitetail • Merrimack Co., NH 2006

John M. Klucky poses with his typical whitetail deer scoring 187-2/8 points.



In hunting conversations, whether at the local café or a springtime sportsman’s show, New Hampshire doesn’t often come up as a hotbed for big whitetails. In fact, New Hampshire hadn’t provided a single All-time Records Book typical whitetail until 1991. That being said, things appear to

be changing. Since that date, the Granite State has added ten more, most of which have been in the past ten years.

John Klucky, a New Hampshire resident and wildlife videographer, was supposed to be videotaping a hunt that day. At the last minute, he got a phone call from the hunter, who had to cancel. Left scrambling, John scrapped any plans of videotaping hunts, and instead put together a quick plan to hunt the following day with some friends.

The area was characteristic of the northeast — mixed conifers and hardwoods, rolling hills, and heavy on scenery.

In their normal fashion of hunting together, John and his group conducted a couple of pushes, with selected hunters positioned at certain stands. On the second push, John was stationed near a large boulder with his shotgun. He saw deer almost immediately, including a dandy buck. It headed toward another hunter in their party, and John was disappointed when he didn’t hear any shots.

He continued to look in the direction of the push, but the sun was shining directly into his eyes. When he shielded his eyes, he spotted a doe. Further recon yielded a buck—and it was big! It had emerged from a thick, brushy, swampy area and for some reason was standing right out in the open!

Instinctively, John shouldered his shotgun and fired twice. Both shots hit home and, as he would find out later, a small piece of hunting history had just been made.

His 2006 whitetail was not just any old wallhanger. No, this buck would have a special and prominent place in New Hampshire’s hunting annals. It would soon be officially recognized as the largest typical whitetail ever taken in that state, replacing the former record holder, a 183-3/8 buck taken in 1997 by Frank Thurston in Coos County. ■



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Tennessee's First B&C Black Bear

Daniel A. Vaughn - 20-5/16 black bear - Carter Co., TN 2005

One of the most exciting things for B&C's Records Department to see is a trophy entry from a state that theretofore had never produced a specimen fine enough to make B&C's minimum score. Taking such a trophy is truly a landmark event for that particular area.

Daniel Vaughn had never been on a bear hunt in his life until that December day in 2005. He had been invited to come along with some friends that were experienced bear hunters. They were hunting the Cherokee National Forest, in typical Appalachia—plenty of rolling hills, deciduous forest carpeted in freshly fallen leaves, thick laurel bushes, and rocky bluffs.

He was placed in a likely crossing, and told, "If a bear comes through here, it'll be right here." Being a bear-hunting neophyte, Vaughn did as instructed.

The hunt had been on for less than two hours when a big black bear rumbled through the exact area he

had been told it would. Vaughn quickly rose up and fired. It was a lethal shot, and the bear raced less than 100 yards before collapsing.

Knowing it was a big bear and wanting to know the true weight, the entire hunting party dragged the animal intact to a location at which it could be weighed. The result was staggering—580 pounds.

Even more surprising was something they would not find out until much later. Vaughn's first black bear, taken on the first morning of his first hunt, became the largest bear to have been shot in Tennessee, and the first one to make B&C's records book.



Daniel A. Vaughn with his black bear. This trophy entry from Tennessee scores 20-5/16.

Editor's Note: B&C-class trophy black bears have now been recorded in 39 states and provinces. In this regard, the black-bear category ranks behind only whitetail deer, with 53 states and provinces represented. ■

An Exclusive Club

A quick glance at the records book shows only 21 Alaska brown bears that have ever surpassed the 30-inch mark for B&C score. Of these, 18 were taken before 1967. The last, a 30-4/16 giant taken by Will Gay on Kodiak Island, came in 1997. Are the true 30-inchers a thing of the past? The World's Record, taken by Roy Lindsley on Kodiak Island in 1952 and scoring 30-12/16, doesn't appear in danger of being dethroned anytime soon. Here's a breakdown of 30-inch Alaska brown bears by decade:

Prior to 1910 -2	1910s - 0	1920s -1	1930s - 1	1940s -2	1950s - 7
1960s -5	1970s - 0	1980s -0	1990s - 3	2000s -0	

Hail Mary

Robert J. Castle

**29-10/16 Alaska Brown Bear
Uganik Lake, AK 2006**

Hunting the giant Alaska brown bear, whether on famed Kodiak Island or the Alaska Peninsula, is a lifetime dream for many hunters. Robert Castle was no different. He was awestruck by the animals' power and size, and lured by the legends of hunts he had read about.

His first two hunts, on Chichagof Island, had not yielded the type of bear he was looking for. He had his mind set on a 9-footer, and went home empty rather than settle for less. On his third attempt, Robert was able to arrange for a hunt on Kodiak Island—home of most of the biggest brown bears ever recorded.

This was to be a much different hunt than the first two. Whereas the other hunts consisted largely of glassing shorelines and mountainsides by boat, this hunt was excruciatingly physical. Many stretches of hiking miles of steep mountainsides on ground resembling a sponge could break down even the fittest of men.

Robert estimates that he saw up to 15 bears every day, but they were either too far away or not of trophy quality. They had chased a couple of good ones, but hadn't bagged them.

On the evening of the eleventh day, they saw a bear quite a distance away. At that distance, and with the view they had, it was a gamble. To commit to that trek would gobble up the rest of the day, and would push Robert to the edge of his physical limits. They took off after the bear.

They closed the distance and set up to relocate the bear. They saw the rump of a bear and, upon further observation, determined it to be an average-looking sow. They continued to sit dejectedly when Robert heard another rumble coming out of the same brush patch. It was a big boar! Robert nudged his guide, seeking the guide's opinion on the size and was quickly instructed to shoot. At 60 yards, he loosed a round from his .375 H&H and had instantly fulfilled his dream.

Robert's patience and selectivity was a gamble, but one that paid off handsomely. His bear is the largest brown bear taken since 1999, and the 39th-largest ever to be recorded by Boone and Crockett Club. Looking back, Robert now knows full well that it was worth every excruciating step. ■



Robert J. Castle poses by the giant Alaska brown bear taken near Uganik Lake, Alaska. The bear scores 29-10/16.



Coming of Age Franklin D. Scott - 361-4/8 typical American elk Knott Co., KY 2006

Franklin D. Scott is pictured above with his typical American elk scoring 361-4/8 points.

One of the most important attributes of B&C's Records Program is that it is a vital tool in being able to monitor trends in conservation successes (or failures). Much as the Forest Service has its Indicator Species that help to determine overall health of a particular ecosystem, seeing an abundance or absence of trophy-quality animals in B&C's listings can illuminate trends and overall herd structure for a particular area.

In 1997, the Kentucky Department of Fish & Wildlife, with technical and monetary assistance from the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, began the reintroduction of American elk into Kentucky. A total of 1,547 elk were reintroduced over five years, with the animals hailing from Kansas, Utah, North Dakota, Oregon, Arizona, and New Mexico. Reclaimed coal-mine lands provided the bulk of the release sites. According to RMEF, the area is 500,000 acres larger than Yellowstone National Park.

The herd soon grew even faster than hoped and, by 2001, a limited season was in place. Six bulls and six cows were taken in that inaugural season. By 2005, the herd had boomed to nearly 5,000 animals.

Franklin Scott was one of many thousands of people to put in for a very limited number of elk permits for the 2006 season. Akin to winning the lottery, Scott was both shocked and ecstatic when he found out he would be able to hunt bull elk in his home state of Kentucky that fall.

He was intimately familiar with the area, having worked in one of the areas when and where the reintroductions took place, a decade ago now. He instantly went to work scouting, meeting landowners, and doing everything he could to put himself in position to utilize resources at hand.

By the first morning, he was ready and hunting. Fog began rolling in, and visibility was limited. At one point that day, he had a 200-yard shot at a big bull, but the animal was skylined, and he decided to pass.

The next morning, he was within 100 yards of elk, and felt that he needed to push the situation before the lead cow, who had him pinned down, split. He managed to get the big bull in his sights and pull the trigger. Soon after, the bull tipped over and expired.

Kentucky elk hunting had just come of age. Because of the intense conservation efforts of American sportsmen, Kentucky had assumed its place in history, alongside Western states like Arizona, Idaho, Colorado, and Montana, by having its first records-book bull recorded by Boone and Crockett Club. ■

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