

WOW

My infatuation with pronghorns started at a very early age. My family made a trip to Wyoming in the mid-1960s when I was 10 years old. I kept a daily ledger of all of the wildlife I saw along the way. I still remember the towns of Saratoga, Rawlins and Muddy Gap because of the vast numbers of pronghorns we saw.

I started hunting pronghorns in my home state of Texas in Presidio County when I was 15. After successfully taking a very good buck on that first hunt, I was hooked. Pronghorns became a passion. I spent hours and hours researching the Boone and Crockett records books. My research took me on multiple hunts to Hudspeth County, Texas, and Mora and Colfax counties in New Mexico.

My research always showed tremendous results for Carbon and Sweetwater counties in Wyoming. I applied for years for the fabled Red Desert and never had success in annual draws. When Wyoming implemented the preference point system for nonresidents, I knew that I would eventually draw a dream tag. It took nine years before I finally had that coveted tag. In the fall of 2015, I spent three days scouting and four days hunting before I took a beautiful, unusual buck.

Fast forward to 2017. Draw results for Wyoming came out in June, and I could not believe that I had drawn a tag in the same unit I did in 2015. My research started with the game warden and then the biologist for the unit. Both were predicting I would not have any trouble finding a mature buck. I continued my research with reviewing my copies of *Fair Chase* and studying the trends for the Red Desert.

I arrived five days early for scouting with my friend Jerrell Coburn. Jerrell had accompanied me on my hunt in 2015. He and his wife Pam have spent a great deal of time in this unit in previous years with their own tags.

Once we had camp set up, the scouting began. Five days later we had experienced snow, rain, heat and the ever-present Wyoming wind. We had located several bucks but not that special animal. The afternoon before the hunt was set to begin, we went to relocate our number one buck. I managed to accidentally get within 60 yards of him in the wind and snow. Despite the fact that he was a wide and very good buck, he wasn't why I came to Wyoming.

Opening morning found us back at square one starting in some new country. We were seeing smaller,

BEYOND THE SCORE

Brent Arrant

Photos Courtesy of Author



This column is dedicated to the system that supports the public hunting of public wildlife for all fair chase sportsmen, and the stories and trophies that are the result. Theodore Roosevelt strongly believed that self-reliance and pursuing the strenuous activities of hunting and wilderness exploration was the best way to keep man connected to nature. We score trophies, but every hunt is to some extent a way of measuring ourselves.



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younger bucks all morning. As lunch approached, we made plans to stop on an elevated area so we could eat and continue to glass the desert. When I exited the pickup to get our lunch out of the ice chest, I saw a buck behind us at over a thousand yards. "Wow, Jerrell, look at this buck!" is all I could say. Suddenly, lunch was forgotten! The winds were blowing up to 45 mph, which made it difficult to judge anything other than he was wide and big.

I gathered my rifle, my daypack and took off on a stalk. It did not take long before I had closed the distance to 360 yards. The buck was standing, facing me in sagebrush up to his shoulder. I knew that with the 45 mph crosswinds, this was not a shot I was going to take. After a lengthy staredown, the buck turned broadside, but the sagebrush covered him completely. I sat there and watched a tremendous buck walk away without being able to shoot. I returned to the truck and we began making plans on how to relocate this buck we had named, "Wow." The day ended without us seeing him again.

The weather forecast for the second day of the season called for even stronger winds. We finally found the buck around midmorning. I managed to get into a dry creek bed, and I made quick time getting near where the buck was last seen. I caught the movement of an antelope about 100 yards in front of me

in the same creek bed and was able to verify this was the buck. Things happened quickly from here. Wow caught my scent, even with the gusting 50 mph winds. He spooked and ran out of sight down the creek bed.

I took off at a jog to gain some elevation and close the distance. The next time I saw him, he was at 220 yards and facing me. He finally turned broadside with the top of his shoulder and back visible over the sagebrush. I was already sitting with my 7 mm magnum on the Crooked Sticks. I lost sight of him when the gun fired. I gathered my daypack and took off to where he was standing at the shot. The sage was so thick that I was within 20 yards before I saw him. I could only see his small horn—and it was big.

I marked his location with the GPS and returned to the truck to get Jerrell, a camera and the game cart. Jerrell was not able to hear the single gunshot in the 50 mph winds. He was not aware I had been successful. After high-fives, we took off to recover the buck. I told the story as we hiked to his location.

That evening, we measured the buck for a green score of 89 and an inside spread of 23-7/8 inches!

In a few days when we returned to Texas, I dropped Jerrell off at his home. In less than 15 minutes he called me, saying, "I think you have taken the widest buck in the records book." Sixty days later, after



Brent Arrant with his pronghorn, Wow. This buck was taken in 2017 in Sweetwater County, Wyoming and scores 84-4/8 points.

the drying period and verifying the minimum 15-degree rule for the angle of each horn (see page 139 of *How to Score North American Big Game*), I had the buck officially scored. The buck had a score of 84-4/8 points. Wow has an official inside spread of 23-7/8 and a

tip-to-tip of 23-1/8. The largest inside and tip-to-tip spreads in the *Records of North American Big Game* 14th Edition is 21-7/8 and 21-6/8, respectively. I realize that spread is a supplemental measurement for pronghorns, but it really does add to the "Wow" factor! ■

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