

BEATING the ODDS

Just One 176 Desert Sheep L. Victor Clark Clark Co., NV 2005

After scouting for desert sheep for 22 days in Nevada, Victor Clark felt like a kid in a candy store. There were so many quality rams to choose from, but he could take "just one."

Clark made new acquaintances in the mountains as he scouted, and they found many sheep. They even had a few named for quick reference. The night before the season, Clark saw what looked to be a good ram. Unfortunately, it was toward last light. Tomorrow would yield more information.

Clark, along with Victor Trujillo and Clay Richman, left camp at 3 a.m. and started walking across two miles of alluvial fans. By 6:30 a.m., they were starting into the

Victor Clark displays his spectacular desert sheep that scores 176 points.

foothills where he had put the big ram to bed the night before.

As dawn broke, they found that they were within 80 yards of many of the sheep! At this point, they decided to back out and get above the animals to get a better vantage point. A fold in the mountain provided cover for the ascent to a large rock outcropping.

After evaluating the ram, Clark decided to pass. Discussion followed, and it was decided to get a closer

look. Moving closer turned out to be the proper decision, as Clark realized the ram was bigger than he thought.

Clark began to work himself into shooting position. Soon the ram would be pushing reasonable shooting range. He squeezed the trigger and heard the bullet hit. It was over; there were no more decisions to be made.

As they walked up and found the ram, the animal looked enormous. Clark, a Boone and Crockett Club Official Measurer, aged the ram at nine years old. A quick look showed horn lengths of 35 inches and 37 inches, with massive 15-6/8 inch bases.

The great ram was partially the result of applying for permits for 33 years, but Clark said patience and Victor Trujillo's ability to field-judge sheep better than the Official Measurer himself were instrumental, too.

Victor wrote the following of his 2005 hunts:

After being home several days, the opportunity presented itself to return and hunt with one of the remaining tag holders. As we packed his ram out to the truck in the moonlight, I felt content knowing that I had the best sheep season anyone could have.

The next day, while driving back to camp, the sun seemed to cast an enchanting golden light on the desert. I felt sad that this sheep season was over. It was as if I was finishing the last page of a great book.

I spent 16 days during the month of August in the Chugach Mountains, where I harvested a Dall's sheep. Then in September, I spent two weeks on my second attempt to find a Stone's ram in British Columbia, which failed. I then accompanied my friend Kevin Petersen for seven days in New Mexico, as he hunted for his desert sheep. Kevin harvested a nice B&C ram. Then came the unforgettable 22 days of scouting for, and twenty total days hunting for, desert sheep in southern Nevada. It was a grand total of 79 days of sheep hunting, and still has me burning with the fever. Hopefully, next year I will turn the last page on my quest for a Stone's sheep, which will finish my goal, a Grand Slam. ■

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AT 384-2/8 B&C, JAMES HOLT'S MASSIVE WOODLAND CARIBOU IS THE LARGEST OF ITS KIND TAKEN IN THE LAST 39 YEARS, AND IS THE FOURTH-LARGEST EVER ENTERED INTO BOONE AND CROCKETT CLUB'S AWARDS PROGRAM.

Potential New #4 All-time
384-2/8 Woodland Caribou
James H. Holt
Sams Pond, NL 2005

Woodland caribou are, on average, the smallest-antlered of the five recognized categories of caribou, which also includes barren ground, mountain, Quebec-Labrador, and central Canada barren ground caribou. While typically smaller than their other cousins, they have some magnificent antlers in their own right. Normally compact and massive, an analogy saying woodland caribou are to other caribou what Coues' deer are to their larger whitetail cousins would not be far off base. To compare woodland to barren ground or other larger caribou would be a mistake; each must be appreciated for what they grow in their own way.

To James Holt, this was easier said than done. A veteran of barren-ground caribou hunts, he had little for comparative reference. Couple that with the fact that the first woodland caribou he would ever see was one of the largest in history, and it is easy to understand why he didn't quite comprehend the trophy he was looking at on opening morning of his 2005 hunt.

When Holt left for his woodland caribou hunt, his goal was to take one with a bow; however, he did take a 12-gauge slug gun as a backup. Opening morning found him packing the bow, and the guide lugging his gun for him.

They crossed a lake, walked about a mile, and had been glassing for about half an hour over the scrub and water landscape when they spotted a nice bull alone. He was between two lakes feeding in open country.

They watched for nearly 45 minutes as they made their way closer. Finally, they had the bull at about 70 yards and knew they could get no closer. Holt opted to take the bull with the slug gun. One good shot was enough, although he did take one extra for insurance.

It was no barren ground caribou, that was for sure, but by the time it was over, this rare woodland sample was likely bigger than 90 percent of his larger cousins. At 384-2/8 B&C, James Holt's massive woodland caribou is the largest of its kind taken in the last 39 years, and is the fourth-largest ever entered into Boone and Crockett Club's Awards Program. This score will have to be verified following the end of the Awards Period. Panel Judging for the 26th Awards Program will take place in April 2007. We sure hope to see this magnificent trophy there. ■

James Holt's woodland caribou, which scores 384-2/8 points, is one for the ages.

A Long Time Coming

Barry L. Klusewitz

400-2/8 Non-Typical American Elk
Elk Co., PA 2005

The last-known native elk in Pennsylvania was killed in the 1870s and, for the next forty years, they were absent from the state. Yellowstone National Park's desire to get rid of a burgeoning elk population presented an opportunity to bring them back. Several transplants took place in the 1910s and 1920s. The first hunting season on these new populations took place in 1923, with the peak harvest occurring in 1927. Conflicts, poaching, and depredation killings amounted to closing the elk season following the 1930 hunt. The season would not again open for another 71 years.

A contentious and tumultuous relationship between elk, farmers, and hunters prevented elk from making much more of a recovery for those seven decades. A brainworm problem in the 1970s further complicated matters.

The situation finally began to change in the 1990s. From 1990-93, the elk program received a significant boost, coming from the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation. It came in the form of money to purchase land, habitat enhancements, and electric fencing to deter elk from damaging crops and frustrating farmers. Elk soon began to rebound, from populations estimated possibly in the double digits in 1982 to an estimated 224 by 1993. By 2000, it was estimated at 566. Populations became significant enough that they began a trap-and-transplant program in the late 1990s.

This history is important, as it not only teaches us where we come from as conservationists, but to be thankful for all of the work that has been done for us by those who preceded us. All of this work helped to lead to a very special encounter on November 7, 2005.

As with many of the top trophies taken in today's hunting world, Pennsylvania's elk hunting permits are on a very limited basis. Barry Klusewitz was one of more than 22,500 hopeful hunters to apply for those permits, and one of only 10 to draw a bull tag for the 2005 season.

Barry knew this was a rare chance to do something special, and left no stones unturned in his quest. He decided to hire an outfitter, and did some scouting with them.

By opening day, they had decided to hunt a piece of State Game Land. As they arrived at an access parking lot,

they found they were not alone in their decision. Several vehicles were all parked in the same location. Knowing where the hunting pressure was going to come from, they elected to head further into the timber and hope for the pressure to push elk in their direction.

Daylight broke, bringing with it high anticipation. They soon saw a large elk headed their way, but could only make out antler tips in the dense foliage. Klusewitz said it was a time of high drama. To add to it, the bull began to move away. This was a bad sign, as Klusewitz was shooting a .35 Remington Thompson Center pistol.

It was then that they had the only stroke of luck they would need. The bull stopped, turned broadside, and looked at them. Barry fired his pistol, mortally wounding his target. One insurance shot followed, anchoring the colossal bull.

As the party approached, they could see the bull had been radio-collared. According to the Pennsylvania Game & Fish Commission, the bull was six years old, and had occupied a modest range in the area throughout his life.

Barry Klusewitz's gigantic non-typical American elk, an 8x8 with 46 inches of abnormal points, is the largest bull elk ever recorded in the eastern half of the United States. It is a true symbol of all of the efforts by sportsmen to put sheep on the mountain, ducks on the pond, and in this case, elk in Pennsylvania's forests. ■



Barry Klusewitz's big non-typical American elk is more than just another All-time records book entry. It represents all that was put into overcoming struggles with unregulated hunting in centuries past, conflicts with different interest groups, and all the efforts of sportsmen to help make this occasion occur.

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Too Big to be Real

Todd A. Robillard
351-3/8 Tule Elk
Colusa Co., CA 2005

Today's hunting in the western U.S. involves the need to understand the application process for special hunting permits. These special permits can often create incredible opportunities for those fortunate enough to obtain one. Such was the case with Todd Robillard, who overcame odds of 259:1 in drawing a tule elk permit for central California.

With tag in hand, Robillard had no intentions of doing anything less than his best in fulfilling this special opportunity. Along with a couple of friends and a guide, he began scouting the area. They saw plenty of elk, but none that Robillard felt were large enough to use his premium tag on. That was about to change.

The night before the opener, a member of Robillard's group videotaped a bull that left them all speechless. Most of them had the same thought — tule elk aren't supposed to get that big! With those visions fresh in his mind, Robillard was unable to sleep for most of the night.

The next morning, the group headed out into

typical tule elk habitat; it was dry, open, and grassy, with groves of oak dotting the rolling hills. Only one thing was different today — the overwhelming anticipation.

They found the bull and his harem at 9:30 a.m. Robillard squeezed the trigger on his .45-caliber muzzleloader, and the bull hunched up. Robillard scrambled to reload, eventually taking a second shot that found the mark. The rut was in full swing, and no sooner than the big bull hit the ground, two six-pointers ran over to smell him. Sensing his demise, they began fighting right there for the right to take over his harem.

Robillard says the intensity of the whole experience was overwhelming. He is very humble and grateful for the chance to experience something so special, and appreciative

of all the help given to him during his quest.

With the squeeze of a finger, in conjunction with planning, scouting, support from others, and many hours of work from wildlife agencies involved in recovery of tule elk populations, Todd Robillard was able to be a part of a small piece of history. It is the legacy of conservation, the living history that is the Boone and Crockett Club's records book, and of great days of hunting in the field. ■



Todd Robillard's massive tule elk has 65-7/8 inches of circumference measurements. Most of the larger records-book American elk don't approach this figure.

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