

Wildest ^{Their} Dreams

You dare not expect it. You can only hope. But for these B&C award winners, dreams came true!

By **Wayne C. van Zwoll**
B&C Professional Member

A month ago as this is written, I was chatting with a young hunter who killed the first 300-point mule deer recorded in 20 years. “I had missed a nice buck on opening day,” he told me, “and moped all week because I thought I’d never get another chance.” His eye-popping non-typical trophy was one of dozens on display at the Boone and Crockett Club’s 27th Awards Program in Reno, June 22-26.



27TH
BIG GAME AWARDS
BOONE AND CROCKETT CLUB

There I found the finest collection of moose I'd ever seen. The whitetails seemed as if they'd come from a planet of giants. The Stone's rams and bighorns carried oil-drum curls, and the new World's Record elk enough tine length for any two ordinary bulls.

B&C Awards Programs give those of us who find big animals exceedingly scarce a reminder that such beasts do exist.

"I got him late in the hunt." The fellow walked up from behind as I ogled the life-size mount of an enormous grizzly. "With an arrow," he added quietly.

The event was full of surprises; I'll share some with you, in vignettes from hunts most of us only dream about. Now, though, some background:

As it emphasized at the Awards Banquet that closed out this event, the Boone and Crockett Club was established as a conservation group. Theodore Roosevelt and his colleagues founded it in 1887 to help promote the wise use of wildlife then suffering from abuse. Claims of manifest destiny had fueled expansion and development at the expense of natural resources commonly thought, in the post-Civil War era, to be unlimited. By the turn of the century, Roosevelt and other far-sighted people acknowledged the excesses of their time and vowed to do something about it. The Boone and Crockett Club was only one of many efforts to restore North American wildlands and wildlife. It was not, initially, a records-keeping organization. That function came later.

The Club has long advocated selective trophy hunting of big game. Such effort reflects the finest attributes of field sport: woodcraft and marksmanship, the patience and perseverance required to reach a difficult objective, study in their natural environment of animals not taken, and above all, an unwavering commitment to fair chase.

The first big-game records book of the Boone and Crockett Club appeared in 1932. The current scoring system was adopted in 1950. Awards Programs have been held regularly since 1947. One-year intervals became two- then three-year periods, to include more trophies and allow for better organization of activities. An Awards records book is published to summarize the results of each three-year recording period. An Awards book includes all trophies accepted at the Awards book minimums. Not every trophy appearing in this book moves on to the All-time records book, where higher minimum scores apply.

Awards records books first appeared in 1986, with *Boone and Crockett Club's 18th Big Game Awards*. That book differed from All-time records books by including hunting accounts for each of the 68 trophies displayed and recognized at the 18th Awards Program in Dallas, Texas, in 1983. It listed and ranked trophies only for the three years of the Awards



Judges Panel members Robert H. Hanson and Patrick H. McKenzie work together to verify the score of Helgie H. Eymundson's non-typical whitetail deer.





FROM THE TOP: The Club honored its legion of Official Measurers at a special luncheon at the 27th Big Game Awards Program in Reno. ■ Guests enjoyed a lively demonstration by world renowned elk caller Dieter Kaboth, who was one of four seminar speakers. ■ Over a dozen skulls from black bear to cougar made an impressive display.



Entry Period (2007-2009). As most trophies entered during the period were taken in those same years, the book was also an excellent summary of hunts that produced the best specimens. The 27th Awards records book, titled *Boone and Crockett Club's 27th Big Game Awards*, is slated for release in October 2010. It will list and rank trophies accepted during the period, with both the B&C final score and B&C gross score for each. It will continue the tradition established by the previous nine Awards records books, with 98 hunting stories that tell how these outstanding animals were taken.

Since the records listings of 1932, the Club has published 12 editions of the All-time book, now titled *Records of North American Big Game*. The 13th edition is expected in 2011. It will summarize accepted trophies through the end of the 27th Awards Program (which closed December 31, 2009). The 26th and 27th Awards Programs will add approximately 7,500 All-time trophies to those in the 12th Edition.

For each Awards Program, only the highest-scoring animals of each category are requested for final judging and trophy display. Potential new World's Records and/or trophies ranking in the top 10 of their category are required to come before a Judges Panel for final scoring—and to eliminate the asterisks that signal an unconfirmed score in records books. Judges and consultants for the final Awards judging are chosen from B&C's list of Official Measurers. All selected trophies are carefully re-measured by teams of judges. Each trophy gets measured at least twice (by two teams) to ensure that final measurements and scores are indeed, correct.

The 27th Final Awards Judges Panel was directed by the Boone and Crockett Club's Records of North American Big Game Committee to again accept the original entry score as final for the trophy if the Judges Panel scores fell within a defined range of acceptable shrinkage factor. This procedure,

implemented for the first time by the 21st Awards Judges Panel, avoids the undesirable situation of score and ranking dropping slightly due to natural shrinkage of measured characteristics.

All accepted hunter-taken trophies for an Awards Entry Period must satisfy requirements of the Boone and Crockett Club's Rules of Fair Chase, plus all applicable legal requirements. Heavy emphasis is placed on sportsmanship afield and extension of the Club's objectives to promote big game hunting and conservation. The resulting Awards Period displays show not only the achievements of dedicated hunters but the artistry of taxidermists and the success of North American big game management. Outstanding trophies are a credit to many people; certainly those professionals in the wildlife field who work to ensure that generations of future hunters can still dream big.

Home state advantage?

Ken Mayer, director of Nevada's Department of Wildlife, opened the three-day 2010 Awards Program by pointing out a spectacular mountain goat on display. Don Dees shot the 11-inch billy in Nevada's Ruby Mountains. You probably don't think of the Silver State as a top goat producer, but the state records book has 74 entries, 16 from the last recording period! In fact, Nevada is a deep well of trophy-class game. "We are especially pleased that in the last five years, hunters are getting exceptional animals from populations established by transplanting," noted Mayer. "This is due in large part to our committed sportsmen, working side-by-side with agency personnel. They help on a variety of projects, like guzzler construction and habitat restoration."

Nevada's game management has certainly favored hunters seeking trophies. During the last 10 years, seven new No. 1 animals have appeared in the state records book. Mayer observed that 60 entries (37 pronghorns and 23 desert bighorns) that have met Boone and Crockett minimums have not touched the scores of the top three from Nevada!

You'd expect Nevada to produce excellent desert bighorns. In fact, of the 370 rams in the state book, 69 were shot in the recording period just completed. Most of those came from transplants made since the 1970s. The best Silver State ram scored over 187.

Rocky Mountain bighorns (all from transplanted herds) have done well too. "Eight of the top 10 were taken in the last

continued on page 49...

recording period,” declared Mayer, “including the new state record, with a 196-point score.”

The state has 609 pronghorns in its book, 263 of which meet Boone and Crockett minimums. Of the B&C animals—among them a buck scoring 94—52 were accepted in the most recent listing. “Since 1900, our pronghorn numbers have grown by 300 percent,” said Mayer.

Mule deer tags in the Silver State are both rationed and coveted. The largest typical buck, from Washoe County, tallies 196. There are 1,383 more in Nevada’s book. Two of the 170 non-typical deer in those pages score over 230.

Though you wouldn’t know it from those images of Las Vegas in airline magazines, Nevada has thriving elk herds and some huge bulls. Mayer noted that they’re all from successful transplants.

“A bull topping 425 was taken in 1999 in Nye County. In the last five years we’ve added 101 elk to our book—including the second- and third-best non-typical bulls.” Both came from Lincoln County.

Mayer concluded his remarks with a tip of the hat to hunters who, by U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service figures, ring up an average \$1,814 each in pursuit of their sport annually. Multiply that by 12.5 million hunters, and you have a significant contribution to rural economies like Winnemucca and Elko and Ely. He added that we must stand together against threats to hunting—and for the habitats that make hunting possible.

“Since 1999 Nevada has lost more than 6 million acres to wildfires. Of that, 3 million acres were sage brush that supported mule deer,” said Mayer, adding that natural calamities, and the erasure of habitat by urban encroachment and highway corridors, imperil not only game populations but all wild creatures sharing the land. “Historically, sportsmen have been the first and most effective guardians of native wildlife, the most willing to finance its protection and restoration. The Boone and Crockett Club was a pioneer in these efforts.”

In their words...

Trophies come with stories. For each top-ranking entry, the Boone and Crockett Club requests a brief written record of the hunt. This year, I’ve been charged with sifting a substantial pile of anecdotes. In truth, it’s a privilege. Each has pulled me into a special time and place, a moment that will endure as a —if not the—highlight of each hunter’s career. I’ve included here selected

vignettes, chosen not on the basis of score and ranking but on the nature of the hunt. I’d like to have received all the manuscripts; alas, some have yet to arrive, including the tale of two top-listed moose shot by one man with a muzzleloader!

Yes, these summaries are edited. Because space is a constraint, I’ve omitted preambles of Red Ryder air guns marking Christmases past, and odes to camps, partners, outfitters, and horses. I’ve trashed 14 words to say the same thing in six. I’ve paraphrased hunters when words failed them. And I’ve wished I could add missing details like shot distance, rifle and load, and how hunters with those enormous moose plan to get the mounts through ordinary front doors.

Alaska-Yukon Moose, Craig S. Spencer

The six wolves headed our way, but our shots didn’t connect. Dusk was closing, so we headed back to camp for dinner. As we shed hunting gear at the tent, our guide Ed made some last-minute cow calls. In the distance, a bull grunted. The next thing we knew, we were stumbling double-time through the bush to set up. We’d gone a quarter mile or so when Ed called a halt. The bull was coming! Even before I could clearly see antlers, I could tell from Ed’s face that this was a giant moose. It appeared 175 yards away, stopping to mutilate a bush. At 150, the animal stepped into a clear lane. My shot was good, but I followed with others, to be sure. We rushed up to the fallen bull. It was indeed huge! And to Ed’s relief, very close to camp.

Craig Spencer’s last-minute bull is at this writing the 14th largest Alaska-Yukon moose ever taken.

Grizzly Bear, Rodney W. Debias

As the midnight sun inches its way along the horizon, a shadow appears. “Don! Is that a bear?” He nods, puts down the glass. “It’s the Big Guy.” Carefully but with haste we close the distance. We kneel on coarse, dry grass, surrounded by driftwood. I’m in front, Don close behind. We check wind with a squeeze bottle of talc. Don mumbles, “Look at that noggin!”

“He’s too close. I’m going to let him



FROM THE TOP: Rodney W. Debias harvested this award-winning grizzly bear in near Unalakleet River in Alaska. The bear’s final score is 27-3/16 points, which gave him a First Place Award. ■ The moose exhibit was a big draw at the Welcoming Reception held on Thursday, June 24.

walk past before I draw.”

This moment was the culmination of a lifetime of dreaming and a half dozen other grizzly hunts. The saga began when my dad gave me his Bear Grizzly recurve bow. I started shooting it at age 11. After a couple of years, a limb split, so I mowed lawns for a summer to earn an old fiberglass Ben Pearson bow.

I keenly wanted to kill a grizzly with an arrow. I’ve been fortunate to have shot many fine animals, including a brown bear.

The Hunts of the 27th Big Game Awards

A celebration of successful conservation and game management would not be complete without the opportunity to get back into the field. At Friday afternoon's auction a very select group of fair chase hunts representing a cross-section of the best areas, and guides and outfitters were offered to attendees. Through the generous support of these outfitters and bidders, significant funds were raised to help drive Club programs for the coming year.

WHITETAIL DEER

7-day Alberta, Peace River Archery Whitetail Hunt donated by Bob and Jocelyn Heyde of Homestead Outfitters
bjheyde@telusplanet.net | 780-751-2253

6-day Green Lake, Saskatchewan Whitetail Hunt donated by Grant and Shelly Kuypers of Buck Paradise Outfitters
grant@buckparadise.com | 306-344-4638
www.buckparadise.com

5-day Sumner County, Kansas Whitetail Hunt donated by Alan Helsel of Hunnewell Hunting Club
620-892-5821

7-day San Carlos Apache Reservation Combination Coues' Whitetail Deer and Black Bear Hunt donated by San Carlos Apache Tribe Recreation & Wildlife
sales@scatrwd.com | 888-475-2344
www.scatrwd.com

MULE DEER

6-day Red Deer River Valley Alberta Mule Deer Hunt donated by Glen Brown of Blue Bronna Outfitting
bluebronna@gmail.com | 403-443-5718
www.bluebronna.com

COLUMBIA BLACKTAIL

4-day Humboldt County, California Blacktail Hunt donated by Tim Pricer of Charles Mountain Ranch
woodydy@yahoo.com | 707-599-2216

PRONGHORN

3-day Wyoming Pronghorn Hunt donated by Jay Lesser of Wyoming Professional Hunters, Ltd. BG-183
wyoprofhunter@msn.com | 307-436-8655
www.wyomingprofessionalhunters.com

WOODLAND CARIBOU

6-day Newfoundland Woodland Caribou Hunt donated by Newfoundland Department of Tourism and Bob Efford of Efford's Hunting Adventures
709-543-2274 | info@effordshunting.nf.ca
www.effordshunting.nf.ca

These hunts will be filmed for future episodes of the Club's television series, Boone and Crockett Country.



BLACK BEAR

5-day British Columbia Spring Black Bear Hunt donated by Mark and Andrea Werner of Back Country Guide Outfitters
info@bcguideoutfitters.com | 250-320-8880
www.bcguideoutfitters.com

GRIZZLY BEAR

12-day Skenna Mountains, British Columbia Grizzly Hunt donated by Derek Drinnan of Misty Mountain Outfitters
derekdrinnan@northwestel.net
867-633-3779 | www.mistymountain.bc.ca

BISON

8-day British Columbia Free Range Bison Hunt donated by Mike and Dixie Hammett of Sikanni River Outfitters
sro@sikanniriver.com | 250-261-3878
www.sikanniriver.com



COUGAR

7-day New Mexico Mountain Lion Hunt donated by G.T. Nunn of Frontier Outfitting
gtunn@aol.com | 505-864-9392
www.frontieroutfitting.com

ADDITIONAL HUNTS

The following hunts were generously donated by B&C members.



4-day Pronghorn hunt in Hudspeth County, Texas
Pronghorn donated by Dan and Linda McBride

3-day Kansas Spring Turkey Hunt donated by Richard Hale



The grizzly, however, had eluded me. This hunt was to change my luck.

On day six, Don called a halt to our progress inland to check the sea, as the wind had shifted and ice would be blowing back in. We were out of food and soon would be unable to return to camp. Quickly we loaded our gear into the Zodiak and pushed off into the rough sea. Waves were tossing us left and right, and the crushing ice pack was pushing its way closer and closer. I decided to get the life vests ready, but found only one. Don grinned. "I don't need one. And you'll freeze to death before you make the shore. In this water, vests just make it easier to find the bodies." Thankfully, Don was a skilled seaman and we landed safely near Unalakleet. With snow machines we made our way back to camp. The next days would be very cold, with 25 mph winds and not even a single bear track. On day eight we were both disconsolate and ready to change areas for a hurried finish. Then we spied the bear.

As the giant approaches, I whisper to Don, "Range that little stick." Softly he replies, "17 yards." The bear is coming faster than I expected. There's not enough cover to hide my draw. I decide to let him pass. He reaches the stick. Now he's 15 yards. Now 12, 10. Suddenly, he stops, nose up. His nostrils flare and I hear him take a deep breath. He exhales and I smell him. He draws another breath, this time curling his lips outward. I'm amazed at his size. He exhales. He knows something is up. The wind favors us; it must be a sixth sense. He takes two steps, stands straight up and looks down on us. I feel small, and think, *Shoot him with the rifle, Don!* Then he turns his head and looks away. He drops down on all fours and begins to walk past. When I can no longer see his eye, I draw. He pauses, perfectly broadside. Don whispers "29 yards." I place my 30-yard pin behind the shadow of his right shoulder and squeeze the release. The arrow flies true, the nock glowing as the arrow penetrates

Terry French, the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Recreation for Newfoundland and Labrador, was instrumental in the auction donation of the woodland caribou hunt from Bob Efford's Hunting Adventures. Through the filming of this hunt for the Club's television series it is hopeful that more light will be shed on the growing concern of declining woodland caribou populations in Newfoundland.

his chest. He growls, bites at the wound, turns, runs, and falls.

When everything has you down, and you think there is no good in the world, buy a plane ticket to Unalakleet and walk the dirt street lined with humble homes. Strangers will invite you in to enjoy their best fish and share stories of their culture. They expect in return only that you share stories of your own.

I have one to tell now.

Alaska Brown Bear, Mikkel Sørensen

Coming from the tiny country of Denmark (Alaska is 39 times bigger!) I looked forward to hunting Alaska's coastal bears. An agricultural student in British Columbia 25 years ago, I shot a black bear—my first game with a rifle! Now I wanted a truly big bruin.

The sky to the east brightened as we guided the boat upriver, then walked to a hilltop. Beneath us lay a great mushy tundra; to the north, a creek ran from the hills east to the river. Far off we glimpsed the Bering Sea. Snow on Aghileen Pinnacles sparkled in the sun.

That afternoon, a huge bear walked from hillside alders to disappear in tall grass on the creek bank. "He's what you want," said Spencer. Now we had only to learn his routines and move in. But a rainstorm delayed our start the next day, and we did not see the bear. We spent the following days glassing. We saw wolves. And a moose—what antlers! I've hunted moose in Norway, but Alaska moose are much bigger!

Rain came again as we moved camp two hours by boat. Weather closed in that evening. But next morning, in cold wind, we spotted 16 bears. After a noon nap at camp, we again ran the boat upriver, and then walked bear trails. We found a spot on a little ridge that gave us a view to a hillside where a big bear had appeared earlier. Hours later, Spencer straightened. "There he is!" It was 7 p.m.

The bear was more than a mile away, so we walked as fast as we could through tall grass and bog. When we closed in, I readied my Schultz & Larsen in .358 Norma. The bear emerged from the river to lie on a sandbar. We sneaked to within 90 yards. The bear



stood. Carefully I triggered the rifle. The 225-grain Barnes X struck him squarely on the shoulder. He spun, snapping at the wound. "Shoot again!" Spencer yelled as I reloaded. Three shots later, the bear lay still.

"We must come back tomorrow and skin him, because it is getting dark," said Spencer. "This river will soon be full of bears." We arrived at our tent at midnight, returning to the kill site next day. The walk did not seem long at all.

Black Bear, Donald R. Corrigan

If you told the residents of Newaygo County Michigan that 400 bears lived in their woods, most would not believe you. I grew up there and hunted deer there and never saw a bear. When Michigan's Department of Natural Resources (DNR) opened a bear season, I almost laughed. Instead, I applied for a license. After nine tries, I got one. Then I called my good friend Mike Perrin at Thrill Chasers, LLC.

Mike and I and my 10-year-old son Jake focused our efforts in a wooded swamp, where the bait pulled in several bruins. Unfortunately, they came in after shooting hours. Then our luck changed. I don't recall seeing the bear; it was simply there, and bigger than I could have imagined! At 30 yards, I fired. The animal crashed away, but I was certain of a solid hit. Jake and I remained in the blind for half an hour, then tried to pick up the trail. Darkness closed soon thereafter, but when Mike arrived, we lit up the woods and were soon on the bear's track. It was a short trail, but through brush that forced us to go slow. The great bear died just 30 steps from the bait. But it was a three-hour job getting him to the truck! The next day we checked him in at the local DNR station. Field-dressed at 500 pounds, the animal surely weighed over 600 live. Though it wasn't the World Record Jake had hoped for, this Newaygo County giant yielded a skull measure



FROM THE TOP: Trophy owner Donald R. Corrigan and his family enjoy the reception before the Generation Next Banquet. Corrigan's black bear tied for a Second Award the following evening. ■ Denmark native and trophy owner Mikkel Sørensen (center) and his wife Tina share photos with Official Measurer Gerald Rightmyer. Sørensen's Alaska brown bear received the Second Place Award, and Rightmyer's once-in-a-lifetime non-typical whitetail received the Third Place Award. ■ Nyla K. Swast was hunting near Thonokied Lake in Northwest Territories with her father when she harvested this Central Canada barren ground caribou. The bull has a final score of 296-4/8 points.



of 22 12 /16 inches. It's the second-largest bear ever shot in Michigan.

**Central Canada Barren
Ground Caribou,
Nyla K. Swast**

"That's my bull," I said, "and you can count him dead right now." It wasn't hubris. At least I don't think

so. Ever since my dad had bought a caribou hunt for me back home in Pennsylvania, I'd promised myself it would be successful. Still, after telling me of the huge bull that frequented the area, my guide Kevin probably thought me presumptuous to consider it mine.

But next morning, cruising the lake in a small boat, we spotted several caribou, including one with very big antlers. We shouldered

our packs. Though the tundra looked flat, I found it full of hummocks that made the hike difficult. At last we got across the valley and to a shooting range of about 250 yards. Dad and Kevin placed my pack on a boulder. I took a deep breath, and steadied my .270 Ruger. My shot took down a bull with beautiful dark velvet still on the antlers. The first of my tags would go on a fine trophy! Suddenly, Dad and Kevin were motioning to the left. "There he is! That's the bull, that's the bull! Second from the right, Nyla, shoot!" The .270 cracked again. This second bull took a couple of steps and fell hard. You've never seen such a victory dance as we had that day!

I thank God and my father for the chance to fulfill my dream of a trophy caribou.

**Central Canadian Barren
Ground Caribou,
Doran J. Lambson**

Whether out of pity or pride, I didn't know, but upon my graduation from Idaho State University, my father offered me a week-long caribou hunt! After what seemed a lifetime in school, I was ready for my first vacation as a free man! My father, wildlife artist Hayden Lambson, and my older

brother Dallen planned the 1,800-mile drive to Yellowknife. There we hooked up with our outfitter, True North Safaris.

Our first day afield was truly amazing! We watched what appeared to be trees growing from the skyline. They kept sprouting until the ridge was covered! The herd of caribou passed within 30 yards of us. We heard their hoofs click, even heard them breathe. I was surprised the sound of my heart beating didn't scare them away! I remembered my guide's caution: "Don't shoot one on the first day."

Next morning Malcom took us where he had seen some big bulls a few days before. After a two-hour boat ride, we spotted a herd of caribou on a peninsula. When one of the bedded bulls stood, Malcom turned to us and grinned.

I'm no dummy. I said, "Dad, I'm going to take this one." We approached to within 160 yards. Then I steadied the rifle and squeezed off the shot. The bull dropped. Under overcast skies and a sprinkle of rain, we walked to one of the most beautiful creatures I have ever seen. The hike back to the boat with my dad and a huge caribou rack hanging over my shoulders is still the highlight of my hunting career.

Graduating from college was indeed worth the effort!

**Non-typical American Elk,
John A. Shirk**

"Hello! I'm looking for John Shirk from Goodville, Pennsylvania.... Congratulations! Your name was drawn for a bull elk permit!"

I don't know how many times I listened to that message on the phone. Of 52,087 names, mine was drawn for one of only 15 bull permits!

Elk were reintroduced in Pennsylvania back in the 1930s, but by the mid-70s they were faltering. So the Pennsylvania Game Commission and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation teamed up to improve their lot. Protected habitat, food plots and careful management increased the herd to 80 animals.

We scouted for two days before the Monday opener. But it wasn't until late afternoon that we spotted the bull we were after. A stalk got me within 110 yards, but by then, the elk was bedded, and I could see only its neck—not a good target. When he at last stood, he also moved, and my shot went astray. I followed, got a standing shot and hit him twice more with my .30-06. He ran a couple of hundred yards before collapsing. After waiting awhile, I edged up to him with my .44 Magnum for an insurance shot.



FROM THE TOP: John A. Shirk (pictured above receiving his award) harvested Pennsylvania's new non-typical American elk state record. ■ The trophy display was open to the public from June 22-26. Here, a guest points out the unique structure of Jack L. Wilson's barren ground caribou antlers. ■ Helgie H. Eymundson harvested this non-typical whitetail near Cross Lake in Alberta. The buck was recognized with a Second Place Award.



But my adventure wasn't over. After field-dressing and taking the required liver and lung samples, we loaded up the trailer. Its axle failed some distance down the road, and we had to park it. Jeff Caldwell, who had accompanied me as my guide, took the wheel of the van we picked up to complete our trip. Just a few miles from his place, a deer ran out in front of us. Jeff swerved to miss it and lost control of the van. It overturned, spun around and slid down the road. All the glass was knocked out of the right side. When the vehicle stopped, I was unconscious, my right arm under the van. My wrist was crushed, my finger broken, my right elbow and wrist badly lacerated.

Instead of celebrating my elk hunt that night, I ended up in the hospital. I chose to delay surgery so I could return home with my bull. At the scales it weighed 656 pounds—an 850-pound elk live. Though banged up, I smiled broadly. This had been a good day!

Non-typical Whitetail Deer,
Helgie H. Eymundson

It wasn't the first time I'd seen him. In fact,

my wife Gail and I had both shot at and missed him! He was quite a sight; even at 500 yards there was no mistaking that massive rack, the webbing so deep that most of his face was obscured. It shocks you when you see that much bone in the binocular!

I was hunting an abandoned Alberta hayfield consisting of brome, timothy and clover. Behind it lay an old pasture that gave way to thousands of square miles of bush that could swallow platoons of deer.

But now here he was, exposed. Unfortunately, a light breeze was blowing almost directly to him, and a couple of does had already moved to the edge of the field. I knew I had to get ahead of them quickly. It was hard to turn my back on the biggest buck I had ever seen! But I did, looping tight to the bush. Then, as does started to sift into the trees, I picked up my pace and cut across open ground. The does were almost across from me now, the buck trailing. I moved faster! Now the lead doe got my wind. She blew and ran north. The other deer followed, tails high. There was just one thing to do; I charged, sprinting toward the tree line as hard as I could go. Tears were streaming out the

corners of my eyes as I shed my mitts and leaped that barbed-wire fence going full speed! Clutching my .30-06, I crashed through the trees. Suddenly, there he was, 300 yards out, hot on the heels of a doe. With every bound his heavy antlers bobbed low.

I grabbed a tree for a rest. "Stop!" I almost yelled it. Miraculously, he halted. I jammed the reticle onto his shoulder and fired. As he went down, I cycled the action of the old .30-06 and dashed toward him. Then, mid-stride, I realized he wasn't moving. I stopped; bent over, put my hands on my knees and started gasping for air. My lungs were burning, my cheeks were stinging and my fingers were numb. I didn't care.

Typical Coues' Whitetail Deer,
Joshua J. Manning

Opening day of the 2008 Arizona deer season, my father Randy and I targeted Carr Canyon. We saw only one doe all morning, so we decided to check Parker

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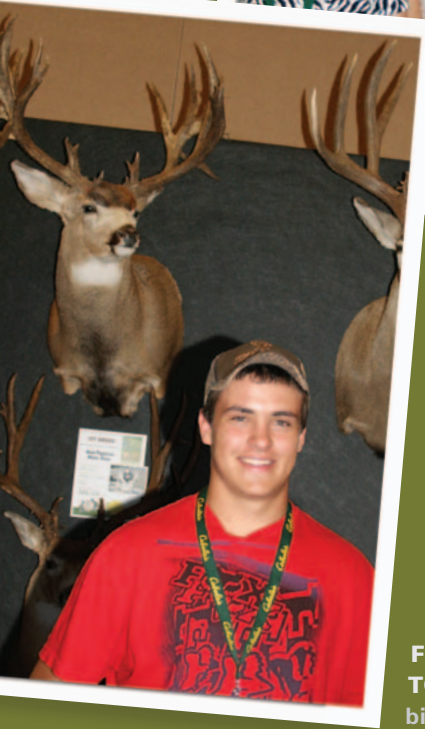


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FROM THE TOP: Two bighorn sheep

were recognized at the Awards Banquet, both taken by women hunters from Montana (left Toni Sannon, right Debby L. Perry). ■ Kyle Lopez received a First Award for his non-typical mule deer. He was also recognized during the Generation Next Awards. ■ Don South went to British Columbia numerous times over an eight-year span in search of records-book Stone's sheep. His perseverance paid off in 2008 with this exceptional ram scoring 180-4/8.



Canyon in Cochise County. But our luck didn't improve. A truck tire blew. We didn't have a spare. As we were in a canyon, I had to walk up a hill to find cell phone service to summons help. Repeated calls to my brother Jeremy, asleep after a night shift, finally got a drowsy reply. Meanwhile, two men stopped at the truck to help. Without a spare, they couldn't. But they

started talking hunting and one told my dad about a promising area.

Next morning my dad and I were out the door at 5:00 a.m. and on the road with two spare tires in back. We decided to check out the tip we'd gotten and soon found the drainage. We parked, then walked. Presently, I spied a big deer far off. Dad and I watched it and determined it had exceptional antlers. The buck was on the side of a hill, with smaller hills between.

"He's about 250 yards off," said Dad. "You can make that shot." By this time, my rifle was shaking. I had not shot a deer before, and I wanted this to be a clean kill. Finally I asked Dad to let me rest the 7 mm magnum on his shoulder. The shakes diminished.

From that moment on, everything seemed to move in slow motion. I saw dust puff on the buck's neck. He leaned forward as if to take another bite of browse. "You hit him!" My father clapped me on the shoulder as the deer nosed into the grass, motionless.

Pronghorn, Michael J. Wheeler

The results were disappointing. I didn't draw either a deer or a pronghorn tag for Wyoming. But I really wanted to go. So I checked the leftover list and, with pal David Rowe, bought permits for Natrona County.

We'd hunted here before. Our knowledge of the terrain helped us take two mule deer bucks the first day! By the third day, we'd seen lots of pronghorns, but nothing big enough to kill. Breaking for lunch, we kept one eye on the prairie. That's when I spotted a handsome pronghorn on a distant rise. I closed most of the distance right away, but the ridge I'd used for cover was still too far from the buck for a sure shot. I dropped back, circled the ridge and crawled through low cover to

a small rock pile. From prone, the 175-yard shot with my .30-06 was easy.

Mike's pronghorn is most unusual. The horns tape only 14 5/8 inches in length. But they carry almost 60 inches in circumference and prong measurements! The larger base is an amazing 7 5/8 inches around, the larger D-2 (second circumference) 9 1/8 inches. The best prong comes to 7 2/8 inches. Total score: over 91 inches!

Rocky Mountain Goat, Robert L. Schermer

Over 150 miles of hiking in the Ozarks with an 80-pound pack has melted off 10 pounds. My Mendle boots are broken in. I'm ready to hunt mountain goats. Tim Metcalf and guide Abe Dougan will join me in the mountains above Telegraph Creek in northern British Columbia. Tim hunts with a bow; I'll use my .300 Winchester.

A bush plane takes us to a remote lake at 4,000 feet. From there we climb another 6,500 feet and camp in very steep country. But we spot goats immediately, and on the second day we're close to killing....

From a distance, Abe and I see Tim stalking goats, even as we spy a big billy that would look very good on my den wall! The goat spies Tim and stands. I'm concerned about anchoring this animal with one shot. Carefully I crush the trigger. The billy drops. Other goats nearby seem not to have noticed. Then two more appear, and pass by Tim. He looses an arrow.

Abe and I confine our movements to the retrieval of my goat. We don't want to disturb Tim if he is waiting for a goat to expire. Our pack-boards loaded, we spot Tim's prize below us. It is dead.

We burn two more days descending through alders and other brush, at times climbing back after getting "rimmed in." It is all I can do to put my boots the last morning. My big toenails turn black and will later fall off.

But that's a small price for two records-book goats on one hunt!

Bighorn Sheep, Debby L. Perry

"Do you know how lucky you are to get a sheep permit in 680?" Well, no, I didn't. Not at the time. The Missouri Breaks of Montana just seemed like a good place to hunt. But my partner Joe took my good fortune seriously. "This summer we scout," he declared. He began contacting ranchers, collecting maps.

As an elementary school counselor,

I could hunt only on weekends. September 19, with Joe and my friend Amy, I left after school Friday and drove 175 miles to an old cabin a rancher invited us to use. For the rest of September and October, we hunted all day Saturdays, and into the afternoon Sundays. My sheep-spotting skills improved. What a thrill it was to see bighorn rams dotting a hillside!

Late in October, we spotted a lovely ram. He and other bighorns were bedded in a wheat field. We watched him for over an hour. We weren't in any hurry to end this hunt. The following week I looked at the picture we'd taken of that ram. I asked Joe, "Why again didn't I shoot?"

We returned to the breaks October 31. After much glassing, we finally spotted the ram. But again I decided to wait, so we could explore another area. That night, though, I dreamed about shooting the giant bighorn, and promised to take him at the very next opportunity.

We rose early. Dawn's sun brought a rainbow, and I stopped on our hike to take a photo. Then I looked below us—and spotted the ram. I had only seconds to fire. Joe ranged the animal at 265 yards. I lay on a rock, aimed, and squeezed the trigger. The ram struggled uphill a short distance, then bedded. Before I could get another shot into the vitals, he stood and fell down the nearly vertical face, bouncing off boulders. I feared for the horns.

But a broken right curl can't take anything from this hunt, one of the most remarkable adventures of my life.

Non-typical Mule Deer, Kyle Lopez
Beep, Beep, Beep! The alarm signaled the start of hunting season. I jumped out of bed. Dad was up and ready, along with my uncle. I grabbed some breakfast and assembled my gear.

We hunted hard that day and the next. My uncle got a fine buck. Sadly, I missed a mature mule deer. I relived that botched shot for most of the following week. Then, November 7, 2007, Dad and I headed for the hills again. We wound our way up a steep drainage, three miles through burned timber to the base of a mountain.

As we reached the head of the creek, the hillsides became more visible. Dad glassed them carefully while we still had the cover of the creek. He whispered that there were two does up ahead. As we watched, they started walking toward us. Would we be able to avoid detection and slip past to continue our quest for a buck? They paused about 50

yards from us, then quietly trotted off.

Turning back to the hillside, Dad caught my arm. "Kyle, there's a buck looking right at us!" He told me to rest my rifle against the side of a tree to take the shot. The deer was facing us. I let out my breath and squeezed the trigger. POW! The buck jumped, sun-fished, hit the ground and plowed his way over a bluff. Dad exclaimed, "You got him Kyle! Good job!"

We gave the deer several minutes (they seemed like hours) before taking the trail. Where we last saw the buck standing, we immediately found blood. Fifty feet farther on, he lay dead in a small defile. Dad tossed a rock. "He's done, Kyle."

Good fortune? Surely! But neither of us was prepared for what we found in that ravine. The deer's rack was tremendous—heavy and tall, with points extending in all directions. A young hunter still in high school, I had shot the highest-scoring mule deer taken by anyone in 20 years.

Typical Mule Deer, Warren M. Stadnyk

I don't have lots of time to scout for deer. I work on a farm in southwestern Saskatchewan, near Moose Jaw. Most of my scouting is from the tractor and combine and during drives to and from work.

In 2008, I hunted a week or so for a buck, then decided to punt and shoot a doe. On my way to Old Wives Lake, where I'd seen plenty of deer I met a rancher who pressed upon me a little tri-fold quad ramp. "It'll help you load a buck if you get one," he said. I thanked him and continued on.

Near a bluff where I expected to see a mule deer, I was astonished when two huge whitetail bucks galloped into view. I watched them until they vanished. Then I hunted in their direction, stopping to glass a pasture that had held deer in the past. A group of does appeared—and with them an outstanding mule deer buck. Alas, the does spied me and ran off. I crouched to hide, hoping if I stayed down for a few minutes they would settle down, and the buck wouldn't go far.

No deer were visible when I again peeked into the field. I couldn't resist jogging up the nearby hill that would show me their exit. To my surprise, I saw the buck standing in thick brush at the bottom of the hill. Trying to catch my breath and steady my rifle, I realized he hadn't seen me. So I took my time. As the rifle calmed down, the buck turned broadside—a perfect opportunity at 140 yards! But my bullet missed!

Quickly I reloaded, expecting him to run off. But he seemed almost oblivious. I fired again, and this time connected. The great buck dashed 20 yards, then collapsed.

The little quad ramp would come in handy after all!

Stone's Sheep, Don South

"I think you just took a Boone and Crockett ram" said Jerry Geraci. *Had I?*

That was surely my hunting priority since talking with Jerry (Upper Stikine River Adventures) a decade ago. My first hunt for these slate-colored sheep in 2001 failed to give me a shot. Still, the 14-day effort in British Columbia's lovely Cassiar Mountains was a great adventure. In 2002 I killed an eight-year-old ram in that country. I came up empty on a 2006 hunt, so I extended the trip another 13 days. The result didn't change.

The 2008 trip started at Stikine River Lodge. Heavy rain delayed our start, but the second day we rode 20 miles on horseback to Grizzly Camp. Another seven trail miles, and we reached Hidden Valley Camp, the base for our hunt. Jerry secured the horses in a box canyon where they had plenty of forage and water.

Weather the next morning was cool and clear. We donned our backpacks and hiked and glassed our way up the mountain behind camp. We saw sheep, but no rams to shoot. The following day, under clear skies, we tried another slope. About halfway up the mountain, I turned to glass back and discovered four rams working across the hill we'd climbed the day before. One of them was impressive, with heavy horns. We headed back down the hillside, deep in tangled spruce. The big ram caught our movement, but after a long stare went back to feeding.

We crossed the bottom double-time and climbed to within 150 yards of the ram, which now looked fine indeed! Jerry immediately gave me the "shoot" sign. Two quick shots later, the animal was mine!

Most hunters who kill records-book animals will acknowledge an assist from Lady Luck. But like the hunter who routinely pulls ordinary game from the hills when others fail, they also persevere. You can dream at no cost. Putting dreams into action requires commitment. Good luck happens most often to people who don't depend on it. ▲