

BEATING THE ODDS

Finally, It's His Turn

Jack Reneau ■ Story by **Ryan Hatfield**
103-3/8 Typical Coues' Whitetail Deer
Sonora, Mexico 2005

Jack Reneau started working in big-game records keeping in 1976. At the time, the B&C Big Game Records Program was being administered by the National Rifle Association. B&C was the governing body, and NRA supplied the staff.

Since 1976, minus a three-year stint as a district wildlife biologist with the U.S. Forest Service from 1980-1983, Reneau's name has become synonymous with the Boone and Crockett Club's records-keeping activities. If



Reneau's fantastic typical Coues' deer is a trophy in anyone's book. The symmetry and Coues' deer trademark massiveness make this buck an exceptional trophy. Pictured left to right are: Manny Chee, Sr., Manny Lopez, Manny Chee, Jr., and Jack Reneau.

you have ever taken a B&C trophy, chances are you can find Reneau's carefully written signature on the bottom of the certificate.

Depending on how you look at it, Reneau's job of processing and dealing with big-game trophies could be the greatest job on earth, or nothing short of sheer torture. For nearly three decades now, Reneau has watched all of the finest big-game trophies taken in North America pass right across his desk. Everyone, it seemed, was finding all of these wonderful trophies, except him.

Reneau has hunted for many years, and hunted hard, but quickly admits he is not a trophy hunter. "A trophy hunter may go years without taking an animal. We hunt hard, like everyone else; and we do look for bigger, more mature animals, but the bottom line is that we eat it, and we like having a full freezer," he said.

In the fall of 2004, Reneau received an invitation from Boone and Crockett Club Member Manny Chee to go Coues' deer hunting in Mexico. Reneau didn't hesitate, jumping at the chance to go after such an elusive animal in such grand country. And

Reneau would personally know both counts. He had been Coues' deer hunting once before — a wonderful trip with Buck Buckner, now chair of the Records of North American Big Game Committee. While it was a memorable trip, that hunt ultimately ended without Reneau being able to pull the trigger on one of those secretive desert whitetails. This invitation by Chee, coupled with the knowledge of all the great Coues' deer currently coming from Mexico, made it just too much to resist.

Reneau flew to Phoenix in January 2005, with plans to meet with B&C Club Members Earl Sherron, Keith Ward, and Manny Chee, as well as Manny's son, Manny Chee, Jr. They headed for Mexico the next morning, arriving at their destination out of Hermosillo that day.

The next morning, the hunt was on. Manny Chee, Jr., and Reneau, along with their guide Manny Lopez, were dropped off in the pre-dawn darkness. The two hunters had only one rifle for their hunt that day. Manny had left his behind, just to make sure that Reneau would have the first chance, and there would be no discussion on the matter. Reneau encouraged him to bring it, but Manny insisted that Reneau was to take the first buck.

They were led to a vantage point and, at dawn, began glassing for several hours. They saw no bucks, so they headed back for lunch, which Reneau said was some fine Mexican cuisine.

They then headed out for an afternoon hunt not far from the main ranch house. Once again, their guide had them on a knob, looking painstakingly through binoculars for the slightest movement or deer body part. Reneau enjoyed the gorgeous Mexican desert views intermittently between glassing sessions.

Near sundown, Reneau stood up and was reaching for his rifle when Manny Lopez came up to him with an excited look on his face. He made the motion of large antlers on top of his head and said, "Grande! Grande!"

Reneau wasted no time crossing the mere fifteen yards to where his guide had been sitting when he spotted the buck. He set up and, as if by magic, the buck appeared in the only opening on the entire brush-clad hillside. At 85 yards, it was a no-miss proposition. He used the only available rest — Manny Chee, Jr.'s shoulder — and squeezed the trigger. It was a nice one-shot kill, dropping the massive buck right where it stood.

And with that shot, Reneau had finally become one of the many trophy owners he had worked with for so long. Twenty-nine years after Reneau started keeping records for the Boone and Crockett Club, he had finally taken an animal that would make "the minimum." After all those certificates he had mailed over the years congratulating other hunters for their success, he would finally have one of his own, even if he did have to sign it himself! ■

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New #2 All-time

Tony L. Spriggs

128-6/8 B&C ■ Kugluktuk, Nunavut 2004

When Tony Spriggs and his friend Jess Forton went on a

musk ox hunt in the spring of 2004, it was anything but conventional. It was an impromptu decision, and booked on short notice. They were lucky and filled two spots with Fred Webb after a few cancellations. The hunts were booked in January for a March hunt.

In short order, they were headed north—or at least Spriggs was. Forton forgot his passport, and Spriggs had to take both guns and hope somehow that Forton would find a way to meet him in Yellowknife. Forton made the rendezvous with only ten minutes to spare. Had he not made it in time, he would have missed their last flight and had to go home with nothing more than bad memories and a dented checkbook.

For the first three days of the hunt, they were trapped in a whiteout, with temperatures falling below -45°F. Spriggs says that it was bad enough that two other men, both from California, demanded to be taken back. Those hunters ended their hunt without even getting to the destination.

On the evening of the third day, Forton's Inuit guide Roy was gone for about seven hours. He returned



long after dark, with simple words. "Four bulls. All good."

The next day, they found the tracks and followed, eventually catching up to the four bulls. Spriggs remarks that all four looked to be records-book animals.

Forton had the first shot, and he capitalized, taking a huge 122 point B&C bull. Spriggs's shot quickly followed on what he felt was the best bull remaining of the three, a bull that would later score an unbelievable 128-6/8. They quickly field-dressed the animals in the extreme cold and then laid plans for getting back to a warmer and more hospitable location.

In less than ten seconds on that great hunting day, two of the biggest musk oxen ever recorded had fallen to two friends. All on a hunt that didn't even exist three months earlier.

Hunting musk ox in the Arctic has to rate as one of the great adventures a hunter can take in North America. As Spriggs said, "When conditions are that bad, you're rooting for everybody." ■

New Nebraska State Record

Robert L. Marsteller

390-3/8 B&C ■ Sioux County, NE 2004

Robert Marsteller's landowner permit for the 2004 limited Nebraska elk season allowed him to hunt anywhere in what is classified as the Elk Zone.

He prepared for this rare opportunity already knowing much about the elk in the area. He had seen them many times as they wandered from property to property. Marsteller describes the hunt as "more antelope country than elk country."

On September 27, Marsteller, accompanied by his son Ryan and a friend, Rick Deans, went out into the dark morning air. Screaming elk bugles brought much anticipation and filled the otherwise silent morning.

They watched patiently as several smaller bulls came out to feed. The main herd then began to appear, and then, in classic elk style, the herd bull came out trailing. He was truly a giant among giants.

The two small bulls winded the hunters, but in the confusion the herd kept coming. This permitted Marsteller a clean shot. The shot was true, and Robert Marsteller and his great bull elk had just become a small piece of Nebraska history. His record-setting bull now takes the top spot for his state, replacing a fine 377 B&C typical taken by John Walker in Dawes County in 1998. ■



New Texas State Record

Terry J. Fricks ■ 183-5/8 Desert Sheep ■ Brewster Co., TX 2005

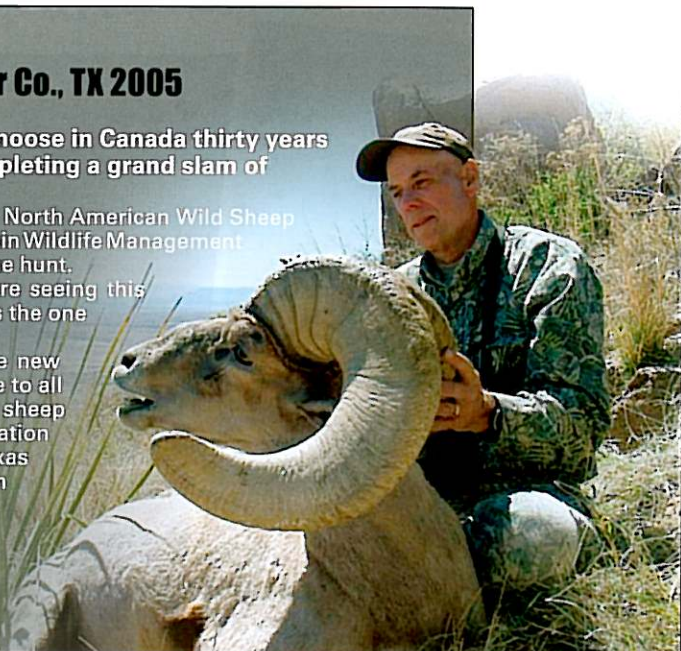
Terry Fricks got the bug for sheep hunting while hunting moose in Canada thirty years ago. Three decades later, in March 2005, his dream of completing a grand slam of sheep became a reality in his home state of Texas.

Fricks secured a desert sheep permit at the Foundation for North American Wild Sheep (FNAWS) Convention in San Antonio. It was for the Elephant Mountain Wildlife Management Area in west Texas. Less than three weeks later, he would be on the hunt.

He was selective, passing over several quality rams before seeing this great trophy. Once he spotted this ram, there was no doubt it was the one he wanted.

Fricks' fine desert ram scores 183-5/8 B&C, making it the new Texas state record. Fricks remarked that his ram is "a great tribute to all the good folks at Texas Parks and Wildlife and their outstanding sheep program. The hunt never would have happened without the dedication and long hours invested by all the volunteer members of the Texas Bighorn Society who have helped make the Texas Sheep Program the successful operation that it is today." ■

Terry Fricks admires the result of an immense amount of hard work, both from the hunting aspect and from all of the conservation efforts that put more sheep in the mountains.



New Nevada State Record

Jerry H. Lazzari

189-4/8 Bighorn Sheep - Elko, NV 2004

When Jerry Lazzari drew a Nevada bighorn tag, he knew it would be a true once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. He wasted no time in hiring a guide and trying to get in shape from off-season knee surgery.

That August, he met his guide, Mike Morrison. Morrison and a few friends of Lazzari's were along for the trip, as were Mike's mules, which Jerry quickly came to view as his new best friends.

Their journey took them along Ackler Creek, through aspen groves and manzanita, as they continued upward. They finally pitched their camp at 8,500 feet.

Lazzari gives the following description of the next day. "Day two in the East Humboldts was filled with spectacular scenery. The morning started out with a mule ride

toward Lizzie Basin. The basin rises up above Clover Valley and is a spectacular sight from below and from above as well. The peaks located at the top of the basin rise to over 11,000 feet and are capped by the famous Hole in the Mountain. The Hole is a naturally created 30'x30' hole that can be seen for miles and is a landmark of significant beauty. The area was deceiving because it is beautifully green with brush and

manzanita. Walking through it was extremely difficult because the ground is covered with loose rock and shale. The grades are steep and difficult to negotiate, and by all my recollections there wasn't a stable rock on the mountain."

At 5 a.m. the next day, the hunt started. The initial hike was easy, following one of the few trails in the area. After a short time, they entered what can be best described as a steep aspen jungle. An hour later, they entered a rocky outcropping, which revealed a sight that none of them could believe. Seventeen rams were headed nearly straight up over a ridge.

Others were still bedded about the basin, raising the total count to nearly forty!

After spotting several rams, they saw one nearly a thousand yards away that stood out. There was no doubt he was the one Lazzari wanted.

They quickly crossed the canyon down low and moved up along the opposite canyon wall to avoid detection. Once there, the climb began. The canyon wall was sheer rock with virtually no even ground. At times, they were literally hanging on by their fingers.

It was during this time that Lazzari's physical and mental capacity was challenged like never before. His knee was in horrible pain and bending it was nearly impossible. Fatigue was quickly becoming a factor as well.

During the climb along the wall, the sheep all but disappeared. Morrison was concerned the animals had gone over the top. As they continued to progress, Morrison suddenly turned with an excited look and motioned for silence.

Just around the ledge they were approaching was the ram they had been searching for. He was bedded on the best spot on the mountain and had three rams around him. Lazzari had to wait several minutes for a good shot, but he finally took a deep breath and gently squeezed the trigger. It was a good hit. Just as he started to squeeze off a second shot, the ram toppled and started rolling down the mountain.

Lazzari was ecstatic! They had been on this ram for more than eight hours, and their determination had paid off with a gorgeous ram. They quickly took care of Lazzari's prize, and then were reacquainted with the unforgiving terrain during the trip back to camp. On top of that, they would be doing it in the approaching darkness.

The trip down was best described as exhausting. Continuing through rock slides, aspens, and heavily wooded terrain, Morrison led them back to camp, which was a magnificent sight for sore eyes, feet, knees, and backs. After some conversation and several Advil, bed was most welcome.

Jerry Lazzari's big ram now becomes the new Nevada state record. It surpasses Sam S. Jaksick, Jr.'s 186 bighorn, taken in Pershing County in 2001. ■



Fifty-Two Years Later, A Giant is Christened

Picked Up by
Harley L. Gowerly
190-7/8 typical whitetail ■
Cedar Co., Nebraska, 1952

In 1952, twenty-three-year old Harley Gowerly was working cattle on his family's ranch. He went on a normal route to check on the cattle when he made an interesting discovery. It was a dead whitetail buck — a real dandy, too!

Gowerly recounted the story in a letter to B&C. "Since deer were relatively new to Cedar County, there was no open deer season at the time. After removing the head (and not realizing the extent of how big it was), it spent the next seven or eight years in various places on the farm while Mother Nature bleached and weathered the antlers."

Since 1974, the antlers have hung in the stairway of Gowerly's home, less than a mile from its final resting place. Fifty-three years after that discovery, Gowerly finally had the deer scored, after much urging from many people.

The result was incredible. Gowerly had the third-largest typical whitetail ever recorded in Nebraska. Had the long-tined buck been entered when Gowerly discovered it, it would have been the state record for many years. The current state record, a giant 194-1/8 Dakota County buck, was taken by E. Keith Fahrenholz in 1966.

LEFT A younger Harley Gowerly holds the unlikely find on his family's ranch 53 years ago. After more than five decades, the great deer finally has received proper recognition.



New Jersey's New #2 **James Porcelli - 175-7/8 typical whitetail** **Monmouth Co., NJ 2004**

On December 9, 2004, the fourth day of the Garden State's six-day rifle season, Jim Porcelli got up for another day of hunting. He made his way to the stand and, over the course of the morning, saw some does and a few small bucks. He hunted until 10:30 a.m. and then left the field for lunch.

About 1 p.m., he returned to the stand. As usual, he was hoping for a decent buck to show; but also as usual, he probably wouldn't hold his breath.

About an hour later, in the mild December afternoon, he caught movement and could hardly believe the sight before him. A massive-racked whitetail was headed right toward him!

The closer the huge deer got, the more Porcelli started to shake. The buck was gigantic! He had to keep reminding himself to settle down, or he wasn't going to be able to hit a thing, should he get the chance.

A few moments later, the buck was finally within range, but Porcelli had to wait for what seemed an eternity for the buck to turn and present a decent angle. Finally, it did, and Porcelli put a slug right behind the shoulder. The buck was down instantly, giving Porcelli an improbable trophy and the buck of his dreams.

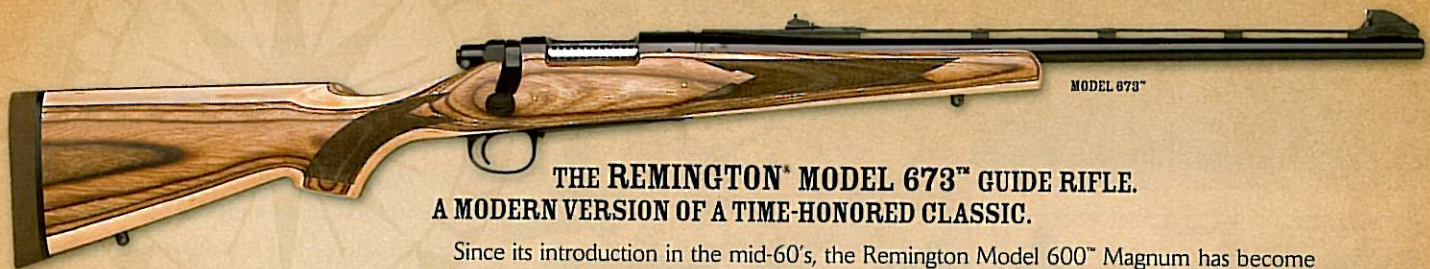
In New Jersey, Jim Porcelli's tremendous typical



Jim Porcelli holds the second-largest typical whitetail ever taken in New Jersey. The mass and symmetry on this great buck make him an exceptional trophy.

whitetail is nothing short of historic. It becomes the new #2 for the Garden State, and it is only the second typical whitetail ever from that state to make Boone and Crockett's All-time list. Congratulations, Jim, on truly "beating the odds." ■

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