

LETTERS & PHOTOS

Technology and Fair Chase

Please send your letters to us at Boone and Crockett Club, 250 Station Drive, Missoula, MT 59801. You can also send your letters via e-mail to bcclub@montana.com. We welcome a lively exchange of ideas and suggestions. Associates are encouraged to send their hunting and trophy room stories along with photographs. We try to publish as many letters as possible. Letters are published as written but may be edited for brevity.

USING A GPS IN THE FIELD

In the Fall '96 issue of *Fair Chase* in your "Trophy Talk" column you mention an unethical use of GPS. The scenario is that a trophy would be disqualified from entry if it was previously spotted from the air and a GPS was used to guide the shooter to the animal's location. I agree whole-heartedly, but not because GPS is used. Rather, I believe the trophy would be ineligible because its location was determined from the air and the shooter knew s/he was headed for a specific animal's location.

Using GPS to guide the shooter isn't the point. Anyone with any field experience could use a topographic map and compass and get to the animal's location. If that person used a map and compass instead of GPS, I think that

my chances of finding one are improved over just wandering around at random. This is fair chase. If my neighbor calls up one morning and says that he just saw a big bear in a particular clearcut on a specific forest road, and I go there and shoot the bear, this is unfair chase because I knew that specific bear was there. No GPS, just map and compass and prior information. It is the immediate prior information gained from another source that makes it unfair. There are two points to consider: the outside source of information and the immediacy of such information, and it is the immediacy that counts. For example, my neighbor was up at Noname Lake fishing a few years ago and he saw some mountain goats on a cliff at the north end of the lake. My neighbor tells me this one evening, so I go out and buy a topo map of the area and find the cliffs on the map. The following goat season, I go up there, find the cliffs just where the map said they were, find a goat there, stalk and shoot it. That is fair chase. Yes, prior information was involved. I knew there was goat habitat on Noname Lake, so I hunted the habitat. I also knew that it was occupied by goats one summer several years ago. That information was old. The habitat conditions could have changed, the goats might only use that as summer seasonal habitat and be off in Timbuktu by the time fall hunting season rolls around, he could have been mistaken about seeing goats, or any of the other things that contribute to hunters' luck. That all makes it fair chase.

Suppose, however, I was camping on the lake at the time it was legal goat season, I had a tag, and one evening a fisherman stopped by for a chat and told me he had just seen goats at the cliffs on the north end of the lake. Could I launch my canoe before dawn the next morning, go to the cliffs, and ethically shoot a goat as soon as the light made it legal? I think there are two points to consider. 1) the im-

mediate usefulness of the information, and 2) the level of detail of the goat's location. Knowing that goats are not too inclined to wander about in the dark, the information is certainly of immediate usefulness. If, however, the cliffs extend for 5 miles across the north end of the lake and I wasn't told just where the goats were in that 5-mile stretch, the level of detail is slight enough that it might still be fair chase. If, to the contrary, the fisherman took my map and marked the goats' location to within 100 yards or so, then it would be unfair chase. It doesn't matter whether I used a GPS unit to find that spot the fisherman marked, whether I used a compass, or whether I just used my eyes and the contour map, because the technology involved is irrelevant. The unethical part stems from the immediate usefulness and accuracy of the information.

Just to clarify for you why I emphasize the knowledge aspect over the technology, let me give an example of where I think GPS use would be totally ethical and any trophy animal taken would be qualified for entry into the "Book." I looked at my topo map of the area where I live and found a small lake. I know this is moose country, I know that small lakes are prime moose habitat, and I know there has been a lot of logging near where I live so that this lake, if not near logging, has an even better chance than normal of holding moose. Next moose season, I want to hunt this lake, so I use a GPS to navigate through the woods from my house to the lake. If I find a big bull and shoot him, I think he would be taken in Fair Chase. In my opinion it is the lack of immediate prior knowledge that makes it fair chase, not the use or lack of use of GPS.

I appreciate your columns and read them with interest and enjoyment, so keep up the good work.

Sincerely,
Warren Eastland
Official Measurer

What is a GPS?

A hand-held GPS (Global Positioning System) allows the operator to pinpoint their location anywhere in the world, 24 hours a day, no matter what the weather conditions. It does this by utilizing a system of 24 satellites in orbit 11,000 miles above the earth. A radio signal is transmitted from the satellites to the GPS. The GPS calculates the position based on the information from that signal. You can record your location in your GPS and use that information for in case you get lost or as a guide to find that specific location again. GPS units come in a variety of prices and sizes and are available at most sporting good stores.

would still rank as unfair chase.

Any hunter is going to hunt in appropriate habitat for the animal being sought. I know that black bears here in central British Columbia love to eat clover immediately upon exiting their den, so it makes sense that I hunt the edges of burns and logging cuts where clover grows. I do not know that any specific bear will be out munching clover, but I know that

ASSOCIATES IN THE FIELD

LASER RANGE FINDERS

I am an Associate of the Boone and Crockett Club and thoroughly enjoy reading each issue of Fair Chase. I am especially pleased with the Club's willingness to discuss controversial issues.

I was particularly interested in your recent article on electronic devices, which are being seen with increasing frequency in the field. Mike Cupell, a B&C Official Measurer and a good friend of mine have held several discussions concerning the electronic devices and their use in the field with regard to Fair Chase requirements of the Club.

In the article you specifically mention that using a laser range finder built into the scope would disqualify a trophy from entry. You did not mention whether the use of a range finder itself would disqualify a trophy. For instance, if I am hunting with a friend and he is taking aim at a Coues' deer across a canyon and I pull out a laser range finder and tell him the range does that action violate the rules of Fair Chase of the Club and disqualify the trophy? Suppose he puts the rifle down, uses the range finder himself and then shoots the animal?

Since I am seeing an increasing number of articles in some hunting magazines where these devices are being used I think that it is important for the Club to take a clear position of this issue. The majority of these articles are appearing in "trophy hunter" type magazines where a great deal of emphasis is being placed on trophy size. I would appreciate any help you can give.

Sincerely,
Roy G. Jones, M.D.

EDITOR'S NOTE: FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THESE TOPICS PLEASE REFER TO "TROPHY TALK" ON PAGE 10 OF THIS ISSUE, AS WELL AS "TO HUNT OR TO KILL" ON PAGE 28. THESE ISSUES WILL BE ADDRESSED AT THE RECORDS COMMITTEE MEETING THIS MAY.



HAROLD "HAM" RAMBERG WAITED A LIFETIME TO GO ON A GUIDED HUNT. HAM IS PICTURED HERE WITH A 57" ALASKA-YUKON MOOSE TAKEN NEAR SOLDOTNA, ALASKA.



FAR LEFT: MICHAEL L. KELLER WITH HIS 400 LB. BLACK BEAR TAKEN ON THE FIRST DAY OF HIS HUNT IN BRITISH COLUMBIA.

LEFT: LYNN A. SOISETH WITH HIS DALL'S RAM TAKEN IN 1996. HIS HUNTING PARTNERS, TOM LOVAS AND MARY ANDERSON, ALSO TOOK RAMS, THAT YEAR AFTER MUCH PERSISTENCE.



FAR LEFT: DAVE MICHAUT WITH HIS DALL'S RAM TAKEN NEAR NAHANNI BUTTE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES WHILE ON A BACKPACK HUNT IN 1996.

LEFT: IN 1992, JOHN KUZMA, B&C OFFICIAL MEASURER, TOOK THIS ELK, HIS FIRST GOOD ELK AFTER TRYING SINCE 1958, AT A DISTANCE OF 25 PACES.



STEVE BACON, RIGHT, AND HIS GUIDE WITH STEVE'S BIGHORN THAT COMPLETES HIS GRAND SLAM OF NORTH AMERICAN WILD SHEEP. THE RAM WAS TAKEN ON THE 18TH DAY OF THE HUNT IN ALBERTA.