

# TROPHY TALK

## Scoring Caribou



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**It has been said that** caribou are somewhat like snowflakes; that is, no two are alike. It has also jokingly been said that the easiest way to score a caribou is to let someone else do it.

In reality, caribou are rather easy to score once you understand the basic concepts behind the scoring procedures. Given a choice, I would rather score a complicated caribou rack than tackle a massive non-typical whitetail or mule deer. A non-typical rack – more than any other category of North American big game recognized by the Club – has strained friendships among measurers.

This column isn't intended to be the definitive statement on scoring caribou. You can check out the back of a caribou score chart and the scoring manual, *Measuring and Scoring North American Big Game Trophies*, for complete instructions. I just want to point out ways to make the caribou scoring procedure less onerous, and to highlight the areas where the most frequent mistakes occur.

The first step to scoring a caribou, or any trophy for that matter, is to read over the score chart; the second step is to familiarize yourself with the rack. Stand back and make an objective effort to identify the five basic structures that are measured on all caribou racks. The Boone and Crockett system for caribou requires measurements for the

main beams, brow palms (shovels), bezes (second points), rear points, and top palms. Take all the time you need to identify these five features first and everything should fall into place. Take several hours, if necessary, to study a rack before you ever lay a tape on it.

The scoring manual, *Measuring and Scoring North American Big Game Trophies*, clearly identifies all the measurements scored on each caribou antler. The main beam measurements include its length (E) and three circumferences (H-1 through H-3) taken at the locations indicated. Only two measurements, namely the length (F-1) and width (G-1), are taken on the brow palms, which are more commonly referred to as the shovels. The only measurement taken on the bez is its length, which is labeled as F-2. The length of the rear point, if present, is the F-3 measurement.

The top palm is the most important structure contributing to the final score of any given caribou rack. Most people look for double shovels when they should be paying closer attention to the top palms. Over the years I have seen caribou racks, especially the woodland variety, with a well-developed brow palm on each antler that

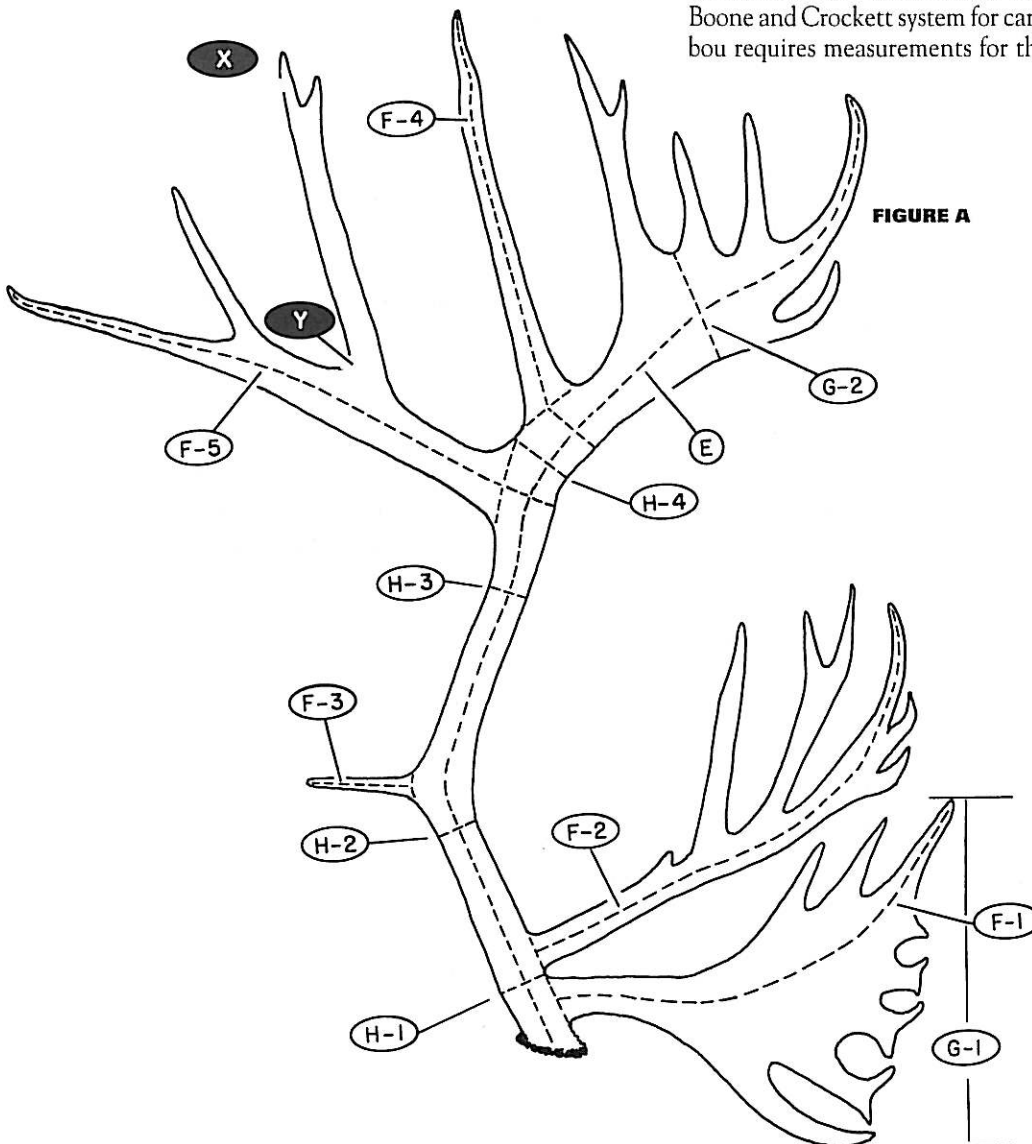


FIGURE A

**The Boone and Crockett system for caribou requires measurements for the main beams, brow palms (shovels), bezes (second points), rear points, and top palms.**

didn't score well because the top palms were poorly developed. There are plenty of caribou in the records book with a poorly developed or missing brow palm, but there are very few with poorly developed top palms.

The top palm is measured four times. Its width (G-2) is taken at the widest place between any two top palm points. The longest (F-5) and the second longest (F-4) top palm points are recorded. The H-4 circumference is taken at the narrowest location between the two longest top palm points (F-4 and F-5). Needless to say, the more developed the palmation is on the top palm, the greater the H-4 circumference will be. For example, the top palm circumferences for the World's Record mountain caribou, which scores 452 points, are 17-6/8 points and 26-4/8 points for the right and left antlers, respectively. If the H-4 circumference for the right antler had been nearly equal to the left antler, the World's Record could have scored another 17-4/8 inches higher.

In spite of the fact that I feel caribou are relatively easy to measure, there are several measurements that present problems and pitfalls to even trained measurers if they don't regularly measure caribou. I would like to take this opportunity to briefly discuss each of them.

The first concern is to correctly record the number of projections on each antler that qualify as a point. You must remember caribou is the only species where any projection that is at least a half-inch long, with length exceeding width at one half inch or more of length, is counted as a point.

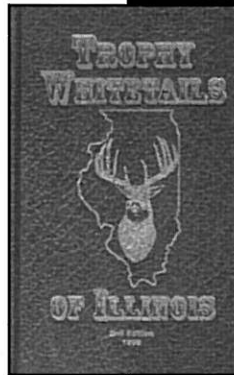
Also, you should not "double count" the number of points on the brow palms. Because there is no penalty for the absence of a brow palm, the number of points on each is separately recorded on the score chart from the number of points on the rest of each antler. If the brow palm is a single, unbranched spike,

with no discernible flattening, its width (G-1) is simply recorded as 1/8" to identify its character.

You should also remember that the lengths of the two longest top palm points (F-4 and F-5) are measured from their tips to the bottom edge of the main beam as illustrated in Figure A. Caribou are the only categories where a point's length is measured to the bottom edge of the beam. This is done to give additional credit for a well-developed palm that may have short points.

Finally, special care must be given to selecting the longest (F-5) and second longest (F-4) top palm points. Both projections must arise from the top of the main beam or palmation if the antler is palmated. This is frequently difficult to discern. In other words, the second longest top palm point cannot be a branch off the longest top palm point. It would be incorrect to label point X on Figure A as the second longest top palm point because the structure it arises from is not a fully developed palm. If you called Point X the second longest top palm point, it would be necessary to take the H-4 circumference from location Y to the bottom edge of the main beam. Neither of these measurements would be reflective of a well-developed top palm that the system is designed to credit.

Caribou really are not as difficult to score as they first appear if you just take the time and effort to follow the instructions on the score chart. Just keep the above situations in mind while you score your trophy, and you shouldn't have a problem. If you do, feel free to call the Boone and Crockett office for additional instructions. ▲▲▲

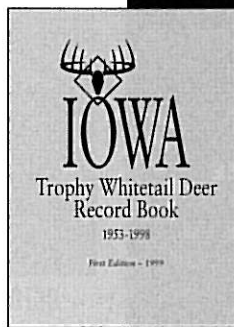


## Trophy Whitetails of Illinois, 2nd Edition

The Illinois Big Buck Recognition Program of Whitetail Deer is pleased to announce the release of the 2nd edition of Trophy Whitetails of Illinois with listings of 7,895 whitetails taken in the Land of Lincoln. That's nearly twice as many as were listed in the 1st edition, which was released only five years ago. This 267 page book features 114 photographs of some of the finest bucks ever taken and recorded in Illinois. Included are rare photographs and stories of the top forty bucks taken in Illinois, as well as several chapters on a select handful of topics of special significance to the Illinois hunter by noted outdoor writers Les Davenport, Ron Willmore, Mike Roux, and others. Entries are numerically listed in six different categories so Illinois hunters can see where their bucks place in the standings. To order your own copy of the 2nd edition of Trophy Whitetails of Illinois, send a check or money order for \$28.95 (S&H included) to: Tim Walmsley Enterprises, Inc., P.O. Box 8, Fowler, IL 62338.

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The Iowa Trophy Records Association recently culminated several years of research and production with the release of a new book entitled Iowa Trophy Whitetail Deer Record Book. This embossed 3-ring binder, with the look of rich leather, is packed with 250 pages of highly informative data on Iowa's whitetail deer. Included are records listings of over 5,500 trophy bucks scoring over 125 points typical and 150 points non-typical. Forty of Iowa's finest trophies are featured with full color photographs and complete scoring details. Iowa Trophy Whitetail Deer Record Book opens with a fact-filled, 42 page section written by Boone and Crockett official measurer and wildlife biologist Micky Hellickson on the history of Iowa's whitetail deer herd. You can order your copy for \$29.95 plus \$5 for shipping and handling. Call (800) 875-9453 to place your order, or order on line at [www.legendarywhitetails.com](http://www.legendarywhitetails.com). You can also order by sending your check, money order, or major credit card information to: Wildlife Images, 1115 Liebau Rd., Suite #300, Mequon, WI 53092. When placing your order, ask for Item #1013.



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