

Boone and Crockett Club Confirms New World's Record Non-Typical American Elk

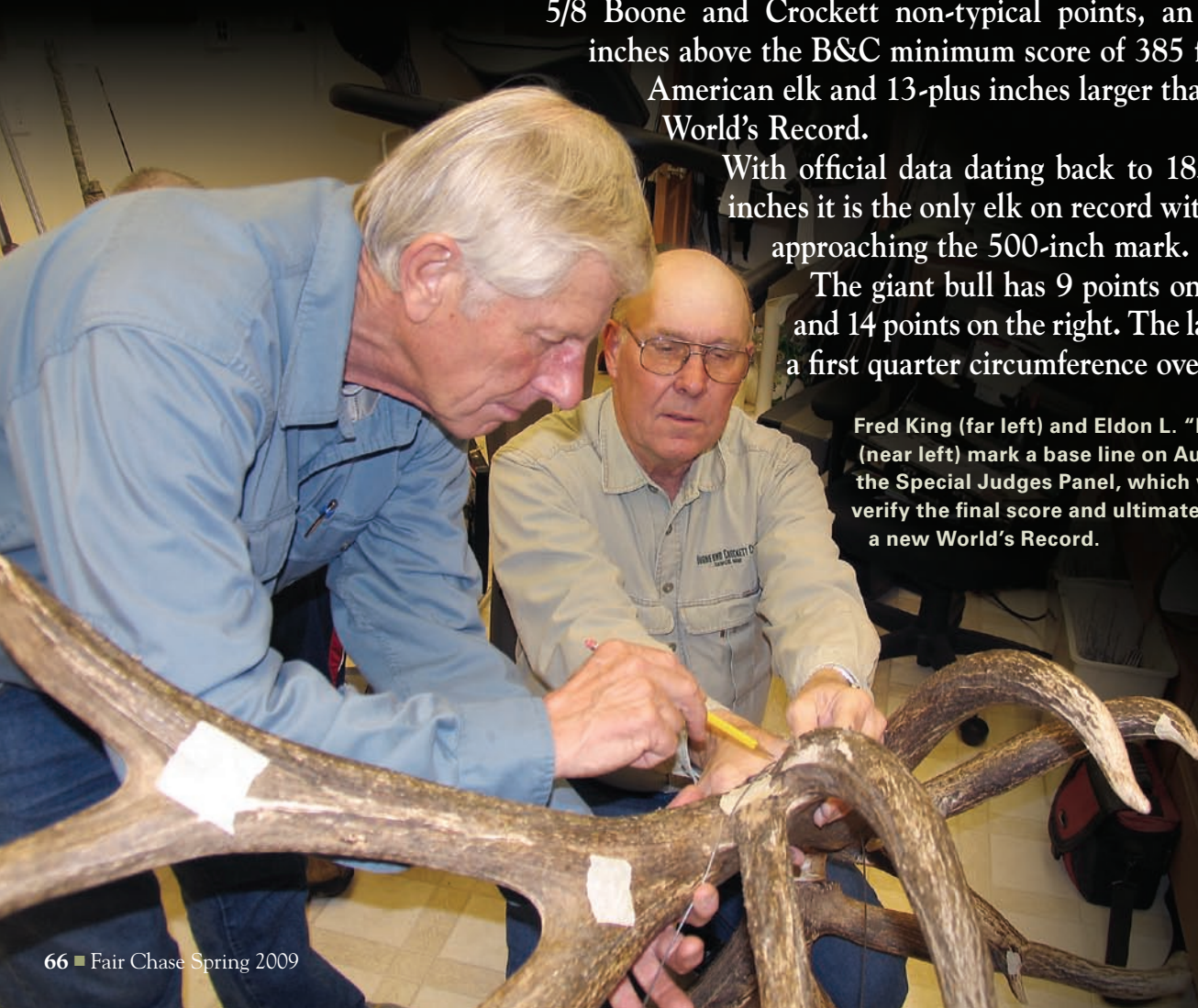
Perhaps the largest elk ever produced in the wild—a Utah bull taken in 2008 by a hunter on public land—has been confirmed as a new World's Record. The official declaration was made on January 2, 2009, by the Boone and Crockett Club.

A Special Judges Panel determined a final score of 478-5/8 Boone and Crockett non-typical points, an incredible 93 inches above the B&C minimum score of 385 for non-typical American elk and 13-plus inches larger than the previous World's Record.

With official data dating back to 1830, at 499-3/8 inches it is the only elk on record with a gross score approaching the 500-inch mark.

The giant bull has 9 points on the left antler and 14 points on the right. The larger antler has a first quarter circumference over nine inches.

Fred King (far left) and Eldon L. "Buck" Buckner (near left) mark a base line on Austad's elk during the Special Judges Panel, which was convened to verify the final score and ultimately declare the bull a new World's Record.





NEW WORLD'S RECORD ELK PROVIDES 'EDUCATIONAL MOMENT'

The Boone and Crockett Club's recent announcement of a new World's Record elk has generated unprecedented news coverage as well as public craving for details about the giant bull.

Taken in 2008 by a hunter on public land in Utah, it is the only elk on record with a gross antler score approaching the 500-inch mark, at 499-3/8. Official data dates back to 1830.

"It's been crazy. People across the country, including many non-hunters, are flooding the B&C headquarters with requests for more information about the new record elk, the habitat that produced it, the hunter's role in conservation and our system of records keeping. It's an educational moment unlike anything we've seen in years," said Tony Schoonen, chief of staff for the Club.

Much of the desired info, said Schoonen, was compiled during the Club's research into the authenticity of the new record. This additional background information has been posted to the Club's web site: www.booneandcrockettclub.com.

Schoonen said, "This background data was accumulated by Eldon Buckner, chairman of our Records of North American Big Game committee. He led the exhaustive due diligence investigation, a process our Club requires for all potential new World's Record trophy entries. We've never released this kind of internal document before but I think observers will enjoy a peek behind the scenes."

Readers will discover, for example, that Buckner confirmed at least 55 other hunters were hunting the area where the record bull was taken, that local law enforcement personnel investigated but found no evidence that the bull was pen-raised or escaped from a pen, nor any illegal conduct, and that many hunter-based conservation groups contributed to the quality of the area's habitat.

Web site visitors can also explore the many Club policies that govern official records keeping, such as required fair-chase methods, antler drying periods and more.

Denny Austad with his new World's Records non-typical American elk. The bull officially scores 478-5/8 points and was taken in Piute County, Utah, in 2008.

The Boone and Crockett scoring system, long used to measure the success of wildlife conservation and management programs across North America, rewards antler size and symmetry, but also recognizes Nature's imperfections with non-typical categories for most antlered game. The bull's final score of 478-5/8 inches includes an incredible 140 inches of abnormal points.

"Along with measurements that honor the quality of the animal, Boone and Crockett Club records also honor fair-chase hunting," said Eldon Buckner, chairman of the Club's Records of North American Big Game committee. "Through our entry process, signed affidavits and follow-up interviews with the hunter, his guides, and state and federal officials, we were satisfied that this bull was indeed a wild, free-ranging trophy and that the tenets of fair chase were used in the harvest."

The hunter, Denny Austad of Ammon, Idaho, hunted the Monroe Mountain District in south-central Utah. Hunting with a self-designed rifle, Austad killed the bull on Sept. 30, 2008. He hunted for 13 days before connecting with the trophy, dubbed "spider bull" for its unique antler configuration.

On behalf of the Boone and Crockett Club, Buckner congratulated Austad and credited his new World's Record to the tremendous management of habitat and wildlife by the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources and the Fishlake National Forest.

"Utah's conservation professionals really deserve a pat on the back, as do the citizens of Utah for their support of their state's wildlife programs," said Buckner.

Across North America, ever-improving conservation practices have translated to flourishing big game populations, with balanced age-class and mature, trophy animals. Over the past 30 years, qualifying Boone and Crockett records book entries for American elk have increased 193 percent from a total of 14 in 1977 to 41 in 2007.

Across all categories of native North American big game the overall trend is even higher with 344 qualifiers in 1977 up to 1,151 in 2007—a 234 percent increase.

The previous World's Record for non-typical American elk was 465-2/8 B&C points. That bull was found dead, frozen in Upper Arrow Lake, B.C., in 1994, and was entered into Boone and Crockett Club records by the B.C. Ministry of Environment on behalf of the citizens of British Columbia. ■