



AWARD WINNERS

It is not generally known that Boone and Crockett's records keeping goes back more than 100 years. This statement will contradict previously published information, but the relatively recent discovery of an early Boone and Crockett scoring manual published in 1906 rewrites history for North American big game records-keeping.

The famous "first" Boone and Crockett book, *Records of North American Big Game*, published in 1932, was historically regarded as the Club's initial effort. It is a landmark book, and early printings have long been difficult to find. In modern times, it has been reprinted twice and these editions are readily available.

The first Boone and Crockett so-called "big game competitions" were held annually from 1947 to 1949.

Rankings were based on simple measurements of length of the longer horn or antler or the greatest length of the skull. There were no additions, deductions, or other complications.

For the 1950 Big Game Competition, the new Official Scoring system was in place. This system was a joint venture by James L. Clark, Grancel Fitz, Dr. Harold E. Anthony, Milford Baker, Thomas H. Barbour, and Samuel Webb; Webb served as the chairman. Its work was chiefly a reconciliation of the systems of James Clark and Grancel Fitz. Clark and Fitz had, in certain ways, debated the intricacies of a new system since at least the publication of the 1939 *North American Big Game* book.

Verbal and written history indicate the early awards committees were somewhat less diplomatic in deciding issues, as compared to the modern, smoothly run events assembled by current Records Committee Chairman Buck Buckner.

Since 1952, a few minor changes have been adopted. Instructions for taking measurements have been modified and added to in the interest of clarification. Minimums have been changed;

special and previously unforeseen situations have been addressed. New categories have been added.

The near universal acceptance of the Boone and Crockett Official Scoring System, as originally formulated and occasionally modified during the last 60 years, shows the wisdom and foresight of the original committee members. We owe them a debt of gratitude.

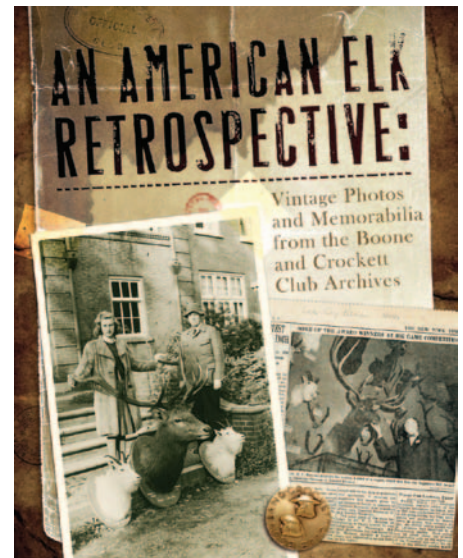
The first ten Big Game Competitions were held at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. In 1963, they moved to the Carnegie Museum in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, which held the next four competitions. After this, they were conducted in widely varied areas of the continent in an effort to involve and attract big game hunters and others interested in our native big game animals. This last change of venue has also helped spread the message of the North American model of wildlife management and conservation to the public.

The first 14 events were called North American Big Game Competitions. The 15th event was held in Atlanta, Georgia, and called the North American Big Game Awards Program. The name change came about to more accurately reflect the actual goal of the awards as a celebration of modern wildlife conservation. That name remains in use today. We have now begun planning for the 28th Big Game Awards to be held in Reno, Nevada, in the spring of 2013.

As you look through the vintage photos, it is apparent the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation

BY RICHARD T. HALE

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Members of the 14th Competition's Judges Panel verified the score of numerous wapiti including a couple of non-typical bulls that were determined to be below the minimum score for wapiti. Unfortunately, at this time in records keeping history, the Club had not created a category for non-typical elk. Since the introduction of the category with the 18th Awards Program several of these older non-typical elk have taken their rightful places in the records book.

Skull and Caliper Work at Museum Tests Skill of Modern Dan'l Boones



MORE THAN A ONCE OVER: A Wapiti Elk gets the works in the annual big game competition. Judges, laboring at the American History Museum, are (left to right) James Bond, Ernst von Lenerke, Frank Schramm, Milford Baker and Grancel Fitz.

By GEORGE KEANEY, Staff Writer.

Daniel Boone and Davey Crockett, a couple of hazy men with a powder horn, would have been right at home today at the American Museum of Natural History.

The Boone (for Daniel) and Crockett (for Davey) Club, 100 big game hunters strong, is doing the judging for its fourth annual North American Big Game Competition. And such skill work as is going on! Meaning work on skulls and antlers and such.

Five men, looking as though they never shot anything more powerful than a pea shooter, but good men to have around in a lion's cage, are judging the 34 entries sent in from around the country—bear skulls, Rocky Mountain goat heads, bighorn sheep skulls, and the antlers of various species of deer and moose, not overlooking the Wapiti Elk.

Calipers and Tapes.
Armed with calipers to measure skull lengths and tape measures to measure antler spreads and girths, the five judges in search of the biggest skulls and antlers couldn't be more serious if they were five Einsteins, each with a copy. The great sheet they use to check a deer's antlers for length of one in beam, clearance between the burr and

the first point, and so on, would make an income tax form look like a first grade reader.

The judges place five bear skulls on a table. (Bear entries have to be just skulls. It seems the skin could be stretched to make the bear look as though he had a bigger head than he really did.) One has been entered by a Mrs. J. W. Webb, but the bear was killed by Arthur Johnson. That puzzles the judges a little.

Milford Baker, one of New York's big game hunters, is surprised. "She's a woman who usually kills her own bears," he says.

Swift Decision.
The judges weigh the charms of the five heads.

"Here's a fair head, not a good one," says Frank Schramm, who came from Burlington, Iowa, to judge.

"But it's undershot," asserts James Bond, from Portland, Ore. Grancel Fitz, another New York "gunman," finishes the matter of bear skulls.

"Hell," he says, picking one up, "this is a better skull. That's all there's to it."

(The winners are hush-hush. Hunters will just have to wait with their pistols cocked until they're announced in a month.) The judges moved on to drool

over a giant elk's head. There was a lot of talk about spread and conformation and the "immense royal" the elk had, whatever that is.

"You just never did see anything better than this," Mr. Bond exclaimed, and one could almost see the medal with images of Daniel Boone and Davey Crockett on the one side and a powder horn on the other going to the man who laid low the Wapiti Elk.

Entries in the competition of the Boone and Crockett Club, which was founded by Teddy Roosevelt in 1887, are open to "anyone who has killed a head." Screening by mail keeps the entries in the contest down. If a skull or pair of antlers doesn't come near being a record, it's pointless to accept it. The 34 entries this year are in 10 classes. No, there is no class for stuffed and mounted hunters.



PRIZE WINNING TROPHIES Submitted for the 1950 NORTH AMERICAN BIG GAME COMPETITION of the BOONE AND CROCKETT CLUB

Early Competitions were held at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City and they received a fair amount of press from the NY papers.

has worked to a remarkable degree. You'll notice that the wapiti award-winners get larger over time: This continues today.

In the 1950s, conventional wisdom held the really top-end bulls were a past relic.

With the winter range settled, overgrazing by livestock, and fewer acres of undisturbed land, the common thinking was that the really huge bulls were gone. The 4th Big Game Competition winner was a 366-inch bull. A nice trophy, but not even eligible for the All-time records book today. If you had asked the early committee members about the potential for a new World's Record wapiti, they would have said it was not likely unless an old trophy turned up from some long-forgotten hunt. How times have changed.

Today, one of the nicer aspects of trophy-elk hunting is its varied geography. There are increasingly more states and provinces that have produced award-winners. Some areas are more consistent producers than others, but a giant bull can come from literally

anywhere it's allowed to mature. Idaho, Alberta, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, and Arizona are all represented by award-winning bulls. We currently see winners in Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah, as well.

As I reviewed the past Big Game Competitions, I could not help thinking of Art Popham, long-time regular member of the Boone and Crockett Club, Records Committee member, and veteran of many judging panels. Art chaired the 1960 competition. Forty years after the event, he still spoke of the lengthy discussion regarding two award-winning trophies: one, a new World's Record polar bear and the other, Fred Mercer's breathtaking elk from Madison County, Montana. In my opinion, Mercer's is the most beautiful elk of all time.

The polar bear was taken in full compliance with the game laws of the time by a very well-known and well-liked big game hunter—and future Governor of New Mexico. The elk was taken on a very difficult hunt and, as I remember the story, meat and, later,

antlers were packed out in a blizzard. Art spoke with a firm voice about holding out for the Sagamore Hill Award to be presented to Mr. Mercer. He prevailed and was very proud of that victory for the rest of his life. He felt that act had set the precedent to value hardship and fair chase over small numerical advantages.

As you contemplate those long-distant hunts and admire the fruits of our predecessors' labors, I hope you take a minute to mentally thank the men and women with the determination in their souls to ensure that the opportunity to pursue these majestic animals has not only been maintained, but improved. That is the final measure of a hunter-conservationist.

To enjoy the resource and leave it in better condition than you found it: This is a success story of which I am proud to be a part. You should be as well. ■

To read more about the history of elk in the Club's records program, pick up a copy of *An American Elk Retrospective*. Available directly from the Club or at select sporting goods and book stores.

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