

FROM THE PRESIDENT



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The Barometer of Wildlife Management

Fascination with heads and horns can be traced to the upper Paleolithic Age in Europe when Stone Age man preserved and displayed in one form or another

their big game quarry. Prehistoric man's pictographs and petroglyphs decorated their caves with animals, the earliest dating back to 32,000 BC in the Grotte Chauvet Cave in southern France, near Vallon-Pont-d'Arc. The early prehistoric inhabitants of the North American continent similarly recorded big game, and American Indians emphasized herd sizes and numbers on their hide robes. Tangible records of herd sizes, heads, and horns preserved the spirit and vitality of man and animal in the hunt, and spoke of the primeval contest between man and the environment as represented by the quarry.

Boone and Crockett Club's interest in trophy heads can be traced to 1895 and the 1st Annual Sportsmen's Exposition in New York City when Theodore Roosevelt, George Bird Grinnell, and Archibald Rogers served as competition judges. A review of their early scoring techniques and challenges is detailed in a chapter of the Club's 1895 book *Hunting in Many Lands* titled "Head Measurements of the Trophies at the Madison Square Garden Sportsmen's Exhibition."

In 1902, the Club established a Committee on Game Measurements, comprised of Roosevelt, Rogers, and Caspar Whitney, to determine the exact method by which antlers and other dimensions of North American big game should be measured, thus to create an exact standard of measurement that should receive the sanction of the Club. No record of their findings or report existed until this spring when a previously unknown 1906 Club publication titled, *Big Game Measurements: Game Book of the Boone and Crockett Club*, was discovered authored by Professional Member James Hathaway Kidder, who chaired the Committee on Game Measurements from 1908 to 1910. Consisting of 107 unnumbered

pages, this pocket-size book provided instructions on how to measure 17 categories of North American big game.

In 1906, Club member William T. Hornaday, who was then director of the New York Zoological Society Park, donated his private collection of 131 heads and horns of the world's representative species to establish the National Collection of Heads and Horns. Boone and Crockett Club established the New York Zoological Society in 1895, and heavily supported Hornaday's efforts to establish a world-wide collection of the world's ungulates arranged zoologically and geographically. By 1912, the collection contained 798 specimens. The North American specimens from this collection today are owned by the Boone and Crockett Club and are on display at the Buffalo Bill Historical Center in Cody, Wyoming. Continually being upgraded, the collection features five No. 1 record heads.

Boone and Crockett Club member James L. Clark, a taxidermist earlier in his career, developed a system of scoring trophies for his clients following the tradition of Rowland Ward Ltd.'s initial 1892 *Records of Big Game*, which contained only trophy species taken by hunters using their

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company's taxidermy services. Rowland Ward Ltd.'s measurement system provided the basis for the 1932 *Records of North American Big Game*, published by Boone and Crockett Club's Heads and Horns Committee (1930-1932), and chaired by Prentiss N. Gray under the auspices of the National Collection of Heads and Horns and the New York Zoological Society. The measurement system was initially conceived and the book published to record perceived vanishing North American big-game trophies, and to heighten awareness in North America of the plight of wildlife's declining populations. The 1932 book, and its 1939 successor, were richly illustrated by Boone and Crockett Club member and artist Carl

Rungius, and contained 27 and 28 game categories, respectively.

The 1932 records book, limited to 500 copies, was popular and controversial, precipitating much argument and criticism over the scoring system and formulae used. The measurements were quite simple, the length of the skull, or the longer antler or horn, plus a basal circumference. Accordingly, Chairman Gray of the Heads and Horns Committee was asked to prepare a more comprehensive treatment of the subject establishing a system of measurement that could secure broad approval. His untimely death prevented this, and the sequel, 1939 *North American Big Game*, was published by Boone and Crockett Club's Records of North American Big Game Committee created in 1935, with the cooperation of the National Collection of Heads and Horns, the New York Zoological Society, and the American Museum of Natural History. It adhered to the measurement method for scoring trophies Gray adopted for the 1932 records book, thus perpetuating the agitation among sportsmen for a universally acceptable formulae of measurement and tabulation, which finally evolved in 1950.

A solution to the two-decades-long measurement controversy was a product of a special Committee on Revisions chaired by Samuel B. Webb, and consisting of Boone and Crockett members James L. Clark, Harold E. Anthony, Milford Baker, and Frederick K. Barbour, and non-member Grancel Fitz. At the Club's annual meeting in December 1950, the new scoring system for trophy measurement was adopted with 30 categories, which remains relatively intact today. Quoting from a 1997 article by the former Director of Big Game Records, Emeritus Member William H. Nesbitt: "The scoring system depends upon carefully taken measurements of the enduring trophy characteristics to arrive at a numerical final score that provides instant ranking for all trophies of a category. By measuring only enduring characters (such as antlers, horns, and skulls), the measurements may be repeated at any later date to verify both the measurements and the resulting ranking in each category. Anyone doubting the correctness of a particular trophy's ranking can readily prove or disapprove his own contentions by a simple replication of the measurements.

“The system places heavy emphasis on symmetry, penalizing those portions of the measured material that are non-symmetrical. This results in even, well-matched trophies scoring better and placing higher in the rankings than equally developed but mismatched trophies, a result that most people readily agree with and accept. For those antlered trophies with unusual amounts of abnormal antler material, non-typical categories were developed to give them recognition as they would be unduly penalized in the typical categories.

“With the newly established system in place [and copyrighted], the Club set about rescoring those trophies previously recognized in the 1932 and 1939 records books. The results, along with other trophies qualifying under the new system, were published in 1952 in *Records of North American Big Game*. This is then the “first” records book that used the Club’s copyrighted scoring system adopted in 1950.” Eventually, the Club published a total of 17 official score charts used to measure 38 separate categories of native North American big game.

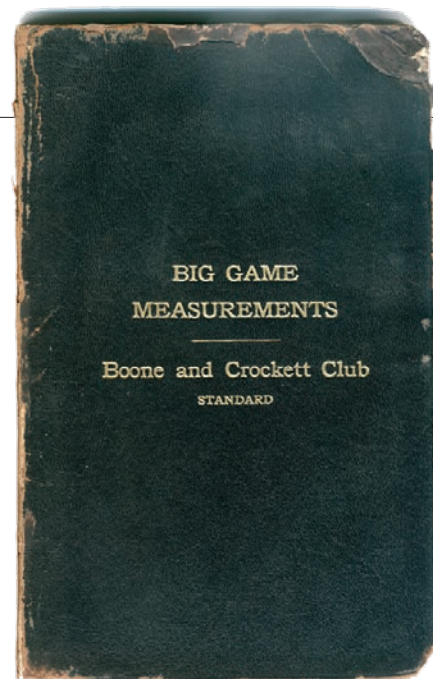
Since 1932 all of the records books have included chapters emphasizing a hunter becoming intimately familiar with a quarry’s physiology, behavior, and habitat to better judge animals of superior quality. Game management and conservation techniques for habitat enhancement required to achieve superior animals have been a continuing focus of the records books, plus ongoing discussions of the roles of Fair Chase and hunting ethics afield that promote the 19th century sportsmen’s code. Successive records books have provided the strongest single vehicle available to Boone and Crockett Club to communicate the ethics and principles of Fair Chase to the American hunter, and given the professional game management and scientific community an invaluable database to measure animal population trends (from which game seasons and bag limits are set), genetics, nutrition, age, and habitat characteristics unavailable elsewhere in the world.

To encourage hunters to submit their trophies for measurement and to ensure the Club’s records books were accurate and up-to-date, Club President Archibald B. Roosevelt (Theodore Roosevelt’s son) began a series of public Big Game Competitions, which became known as Awards Programs,

beginning with the 15th Awards Program (1971-1973), to recognize top-ranking trophy heads as determined by the Club’s new measurement criteria. These were held on an annual basis from 1947 through 1951; thereafter, only a two-year interval for seven competitions, and since 1968 on a three-year basis, totaling 26 to date.

Beginning in 1976, four-day measurer training workshops were initiated to begin formalized training of approved Boone and Crockett Club Official Measurers. The Club sponsors an average of three workshops annually. Workshops have provided Boone and Crockett Club another vehicle of continuing education to reaffirm the principles of the sportsmen’s code, ethical hunting, and Fair Chase, prompting greater scrutiny of entries and a higher level of detection of fraudulent entries. Today, there are approximately 1,200 trained and approved Official Measurers for Boone and Crockett Club throughout the North American continent available to all sportsmen for measuring trophies in 38 categories. To ensure integrity in the records system, the original score chart, signed by a B&C Official Measurer, a minimum of three photos, a notarized Entry Affidavit, formerly called Fair Chase Statement, a completed Hunter, Guide and Hunt Information form, a copy of the hunting license, and a \$40 entry fee are sent to Boone and Crockett Club’s headquarters in Missoula, Montana, where B&C staffers process, scrutinize, and evaluate each for accuracy and completeness. Questionable entries are investigated further and referred to the Big Game Records Committee Chairman, who may then refer the entry to the entire Committee.

At the end of each three-year entry period, top-ranking trophies are invited to an Awards Program where they are measured by two separate independent teams of two judges each. Trophy scores are verified by the Judges Panel, and each trophy is examined for split skulls, breakage, repair, etc., utilizing x-rays where necessary, in the final evaluation before awards are presented. If an entry is later discovered to have been illegally taken, it is purged from the records. Boone and Crockett Club’s records today constitute the “gold standard” for records of native North American big game because of its long history of tedious development over the last century, and the disciplines



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built into the system to protect its integrity and sanctity.

The Club’s big-game records-keeping program has been a continuing barometer of wildlife management across the country. Entries in 1980 totaled about 300 per year. For the last 14 months alone, they totaled 2,260 entries. The 18th Awards Program (1980-1982) had a total of 909 entries, while the 26th Awards Program, celebrated in 2007 in Fort Worth, Texas, had 4,844 entries. Close to 6,000 are estimated for the 27th Awards Program to be celebrated in 2010 in Reno, Nevada. In 1980, records were kept for 31 categories. Today, there are 38 game categories, and the records keep increasing every year. All of this despite the decline in the sale of hunting licenses.

What better barometer is there than our records to reflect the health of our game species, and wildlife management practices across America? That’s why state game management biologists rely so heavily upon them to measure animal health and related habitat conditions in developing conservation techniques and practices across America, which was the fundamental premise of the Boone and Crockett Club when they initiated the records system in 1932. The records system moreover has become our primary vehicle to impart the ethics and principles of Fair Chase, and promote the 19th century sportsmen’s code of conduct afield. That is why the records system remains the “gold standard” in North America for measuring native big game. ■