

BEYOND THE SCORE

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27th Awards Top 5 Grizzly

Jeff Brigham's 2008 spring grizzly bear hunt began on May 1st. The pilot had the hunter, guide Kelly Vrim, and camping supplies all on board as they landed on a slight rise in the tundra-like surroundings near Alaska's Anvik River. The hummock was the only suitable landing strip, considering the rest of the area was still under far too much snow.

The two set up camp that day and started the hunt the next morning. While out on snowshoes, they came across the remains of a 3-year-old bear that had been killed and eaten by a larger bear. Judging from the size of the tracks, this was a trophy worth some effort.

The pair set up within an area the bruin was thought to be using and began the waiting game. After eight hours of no action, they made their way back to camp and pulled out a couple chairs and the spotting scope. Almost instantly the big boar appeared following the trail that they had just taken out. Snowshoes were quickly re-attached and the distance cut to around 500 yards. At this point the duo stopped and surveyed the situation. The wind was unfavorable, so they returned to camp.

The following morning they returned to where the bear had been the previous evening, and he was still lurking! Unfortunately, the wind was still not favorable so it became another waiting game. Eight more grueling hours passed before the wind finally stabilized from an acceptable direction and they began the approach over the last 400 yards. At 90 yards from the bear, Vrim said it was close enough, and Jeff prepared himself for a shot. Vrim gave him the okay. The first shot from the .338 Winchester Magnum broke the shoulder and the big bruin was down. After a couple of insurance shots, silence again fell over the snow-covered landscape.



Jeff B. Brigham harvested this grizzly during a hunt near Unalakleet, Alaska, in 2008. The bear scores 26-12/16 points, ranking it third for the 27th Awards Program.

When the two reached the bear they were two miles from camp, with a 9½ foot grizzly to take care of. This left them with the very daunting task of getting it back to the landing area for the pilot. Jeff's bear scored 26-12/16 points. If this score holds through the 27th Awards Program Judges Panel, it will be tied for the 12th largest grizzly ever killed at the time it was taken. It is the third largest grizzly entered into the 27th Awards Program. ■

First-Time Bear Hunter Topples Maryland State Record

The Chesapeake Bay island where Coty Jones grew up had a much higher population of boys than girls. When she was young, her father immersed her in hunting and the outdoors, teaching her to shoot at the age of 8 and going on their first hunt together when she was 10. In this environment she became a self-proclaimed tomboy. Her love for her community and passion for hunting carried through to her art major at Corcoran College in Washington, D.C. Her teachers and peers were not accustomed to rural lifestyles, so she focused her photography assignments on community and hunting. Her reasoning was "... so that I could expand the minds of the non-hunters in my school and allow them to understand how hunting wasn't about bloodshed and slaughter just for fun. It was a way of life and existence."

The 2007 bear season was the first time she applied for the very limited and politically charged Maryland bear season. Having no real expectation of being selected, she was very shocked when her number was drawn second.

Maryland is an interesting state to hunt bears since it has a limited draw, and no bait or scents are allowed. Dogs can only be used to locate a bear after it has been killed or wounded. They require anyone actively involved in the hunt to possess a bear license. The terrain is not conducive to a spot and stalk approach which can be successful in many places in the west. These limitations leave sitting in a tree stand as the most successful approach.

The history of bears is a long one in the state, though bear-hunting season is a relatively new opportunity. In early 2000, surveys showed Maryland's bear densities were higher than neighboring Pennsylvania, which is one Boone and Crockett Club's leading black bear states.

Thirty minutes into legal shooting time on the first day of her first black bear hunt, a truly magnificent trophy appeared. Her first shot was a good hit in the shoulder, and a quick follow-up dispatched the 614-pound (live weight) bruin. After the required check-in by the state where an official weight must be taken, she was informed that her bear was the current state record in the weight department, beating the former record holder by 129 pounds. Since Coty's bear, which scores 21-10/16 points, is the first black bear accepted in B&C's records book from Maryland, it is also the state record. ■



White Mountain Apache Reservation Produces Top 10 All-Time Non-Typical

2008 was a banner year showcasing the success of elk management in North America. The largest non-typical elk ever taken under fair chase fell in the Monroe Mountains of Utah. In a year of the outdoor press being inundated with the now infamous “Spider Bull,” two possible top ten All-time bulls were harvested, as was a potential Washington state record non-typical elk.

On September 19, 2008, William H. Junell shot a non-typical elk scoring 441 3/8 points during a trophy bull hunt on the White Mountain Apache Reservation. To those familiar with trophy bulls, White Mountain is a reoccurring name. Boone and Crockett Club’s database shows that 149 elk have come from the three counties occurring on the White Mountain Reservation. This reservation and the management plan the tribe has implemented and enforced have indeed created some of the highest ranking free-range elk anywhere in the world.

Junell’s first day of the hunt was in an area that he called his honey hole. Eighty-five-to-ninety percent of the hunters on the reservation are return guests and it wasn’t his first trip. (The waiting list to get a chance at one of these magnificent bulls is currently closed.) He saw around 30 bulls the first day and had passed on three or four great bulls, but not up to the standards that his guide, Richard Di Valentino, had set for them. Day two started at 3:30 a.m. with breakfast and then a long drive

into a relatively un-hunted portion of the management area. After the success of the day before, the lack of bugling from the area was slightly discouraging. A single bugle echoed in the distance and in Junell’s mind, sounded too far. He wanted to go back to his favorite spot but Richard said no. They began to work in the opposite direction from the bugling bull after Junell said he didn’t want to pursue it, but the guide decided they would go after him anyway. Over two miles later they were in elk. Four bulls were bugling with one sounding very dominant. When the bull came into view, he was the trophy of a lifetime, a clean 6x6 pushing 380 inches. Junell’s finger was hard to pry from the trigger though Richard said to wait. After watching the bulls and cows move through, they were preparing to leave when a light bugle came from behind the herd. As the bull stepped into a clearing, the rifle report was almost instantaneous. The first shot hit home and the second sealed the deal.

Hats off to the hunter, guide, and tribe for a great hunt facilitated by great management resulting in a spectacular non-typical bull. ■



ABOVE: William H. Junell took this non-typical elk, scoring 441-3/8, while hunting on the White Mountain Apache Reservation in 2008. This bull currently has an All-time ranking of 9th place, and the score must be verified by the 27th Awards Program Judges Panel. **LEFT:** Coty Jones harvested her first bear—and the only bear entered in Boone and Crockett from the state of Maryland—from Garrett County, in 2007. This bear scores 21-10/16 points.