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JUSTIN E. SPRING | ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF BIG GAME RECORDS

Mike Kaufmann – Colorado Cougar

Early in 2010, I met Ohio resident Bill Hanzel, who had harvested a B&C records book mountain lion in December 2006. Listening to his story ignited a strong desire to take on the challenge for myself. I booked a hunt through Hunting Consultants Unlimited for December 2010. They reserved a spot for me with an outfitter in northwest Colorado smack dab in the middle of prime cat country. I decided to drive out from Ohio to enjoy the scenery along the way while anticipating my getting in front of a good cat. I chose to use archery equipment on this hunt. I only hoped that time spent at the shooting range would pay off with an opportunity to take aim at a Colorado cougar. I pulled into camp the second week of December, met my guide Wayne, and settled in for the hunt. The view from camp was breathtaking in itself. Being positioned between mountain ranges and rocky bluffs made a perfect setting for a base camp.

On day one of the hunt, we were up and ready to go by first light. There was snow; however, it was several days old and with

temperatures rising into the 40s, it wouldn't last long. We were on the trail of a lion by mid-morning. Most of the day was spent chasing an elusive cat across the tops of several bluffs. We ran out of time and called the hunt off in late afternoon.

Day two's forecast was for more warm weather. With the lower elevations already muddy, Wayne decided to move to a nearby mountain where there still was ample snow cover. His decision turned out to be a very good one. We cut two different tracks only an hour into the day. The first, Wayne said, was a female by the looks of the pad size and length of its stride. The second track was that of a mature tom. Wayne's best hunting partners, his dogs, were now howling and running up the mountain. We listened and followed their journey. Later that morning, Wayne said it sounded like the dogs had stopped moving; however, it didn't sound like they had anything treed. They had traveled over three miles. Now we needed to close some ground to find out exactly what was happening.

This hike was what I'd been preparing for the last few months. Stair climbers, miles of walking, and exercising to get ready for this

Official Measurer Mike Kaufmann was hunting in December of the 2010 season in Rio Blanco County, Colorado, when he took his trophy cougar, scoring 14-8/16 points.



This column is dedicated to those trophies that catch our eye as they come across the records desk at Boone and Crockett Club's headquarters. Some score high, some are downright entertaining, and many are just unique.

Cathy Turner An Olympian's Monster Buck

very moment. The mountain draws were covered with a foot of snow making it necessary to use extra caution climbing over the boulders and windfalls. We entered an open canyon and looked up more than 100 feet to see my lion backed up to the edge of the rimrock, behind a large stone formation. Wayne's hounds were standing guard over my cat, preventing him from escaping. This explains why they weren't barking towards the sky, Wayne said; they have him cornered on the ground. Wayne said we needed to get to the site as quickly as possible to protect his dogs. We made the final climb and tied up all the dogs for their safety. I took a short time to catch my breath and then slid an arrow onto the bow rest and prepared for a shot of a lifetime. Just as I began to draw the bow, this tom decided he had enough and leapt from the cliff's edge towards me and the dogs. The courageous cat ran right through the pack of tied-up hounds, passing within ten feet of me. I could hear Wayne shouting instructions not to shoot as we watched our lion run across the top of the mountain. The dogs were once again released and Wayne and I watched as they followed the scent trail out of sight.

Just as we were going to begin to follow our quarry, we noticed that this cool cat had given the dogs the slip and was coming back on its own tracks, leaving the hounds wondering where he had gone. As the lion once again disappeared, we heard the dogs start to howl after they figured out what had happened. The first dog into view was a 3-year-old female named Mickey. She was now leading her fellow hunters on the scent trail. For the second time that morning, the dogs caught up to the lion. This time was different, as the cat needed to quickly climb a large spruce tree to escape. Wayne and I had just witnessed a sight few have or will ever see. We made our way around the rimrock toward our now-treed mountain lion. The dogs were once again tied up, and this time we felt confident of our success. After studying a couple possible shot opportunities, I settled on one that positioned me uphill from the spruce, making the shot only slightly elevated. A well placed arrow brought the tom to the ground. My Rio Blanco County trophy weighed in at 133 pounds and has a final Boone and Crockett score of 14-8/16 points.

I will never forget all the scents, sounds, and sights of this magnificent adventure. My advice to other hunters is that whether you choose to hunt with bow and arrow, black powder, handgun, or rifle, a mountain lion hunt needs to be on your "Bucket List" of hunts to do. ■

My name is Cathy Turner. I am a two-time Olympic gold medalist in short-track speed skating. I also love to hunt. This past season, I shot with my bow what so many are calling a monster buck. I had heard the term before, but always envisioned a deer more like the size of a giant moose. I didn't realize until later what a prize I had taken.

I didn't begin hunting until I was 30 years old. My mom had moved to Hilton, New York, about 15 miles outside of the city of Rochester, and it seemed like everyone there hunted! Since my then-husband, Tim, also hunted, I decided to take the hunter safety course and learn all about this hunting stuff. It was interesting. I learned how we actually promote conservation and also help reduce the number of deer-vehicle accidents. While driving to work one day this past fall, I heard on the radio that seven deer had already been hit by vehicles that morning—and that was all before 6:30 a.m.!

Tim and his family always hunted in the Southern Tier (west of the Catskill Mountains along the northern border of Pennsylvania) opening day. The year I got my hunting license, they decided to take me along. It was an awesome experience for me. I was up in a tree in the middle of the snowy woods, by myself, in the dark, and even though it was a little scary, I actually loved it! As the sun came up, I saw deer, turkey... lots of animals, and I was instantly addicted to the outdoors. That same year, I shot an 11-point buck with my gun. I remember how nervous and excited I was all at the same time. The buck died almost instantly, so even though my entire body shook continuously for some time after the shot, I was okay. We made deer jerky and sausage, and ate the back straps. I was instantly hooked. I love venison! Since then, I have harvested only does. I have had my

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“My 12 year old just went on her first youth pheasant hunt and now has both her bow and hunter’s certificates! My 10 year old is very jealous and is often sporting her camo and hitting the woods in our back yard with her sister’s BB gun! She is also training a drahthaar puppy, which is Germany’s premier hunting dog. She is going to put the dog through the whole VDD (Verein Deutsch-Drahthaar) testing process and will be the youngest to ever do so if she passes the trials. It’s so very cool to watch her train the puppy with her whistle around her neck, dragging dead game around for her dog Anja to practice tracking. At 13 weeks, she already had Anja doing water retrieves from out in the middle of the pond.”

bowhunter’s license for several years, but I only started bowhunting about four years ago and have loved it ever since. There is so much skill involved, and it’s such a rush when I can put it all together. I have gotten a doe each year since I started bowhunting, but little did I know that this year was going to be very special.

THE BIG BUCK

Last year, while putting up my ladder stand in my back woods, I saw him. He came out of nowhere and ran right in front of me into the pines towards my front property. I was immediately in awe. I said to my friend, “Holy cow, did you just see what I think I just saw?” He had seen it, too. It was my first time ever laying eyes on a big buck up close. I never saw him again that whole season, but I never forgot him.

I chose my favorite tree stand that beautiful late October morning. The temperature was in the mid- to high-30s. The tree that my stand was in sits along a large group of pine trees facing about 70 yards of an open, grassy field with more thick pines on the other side. Since it’s so open, I would never have enough time to get ready to shoot, so I always have to be ready in case a deer suddenly appears before me and runs out into the open. Hence, I always stand completely still, bow in hand with my release engaged and ready for action.

I began my usual visualization techniques, imagining myself taking shots at various distances I had mentally staked out. About 40 minutes had passed when I heard it—a deep grunt coming from the pines across from me about 60 yards away. I had just studied deer grunts on a website a friend had sent me a few days before, so I knew it sounded like a buck. A few minutes went by, and I heard it again, this time much louder. All of a sudden, a quick, loud rustling of some branches from the pines in front of me and out popped a buck—a big buck! Due to my lack of experience when it comes to bucks, I figured it was maybe a large eight-pointer. I was so excited just to see a buck, a rare occasion for me. As quickly as it appeared, it then disappeared back into the woods about 15 yards adjacent to where it had entered. I remember saying to myself, “Wow! That was cool!” and then I just relaxed a bit and continued waiting for a doe to casually show up.

But the rut was on.

About a half-hour later, I heard a quick rustling of branches close to where the earlier buck had disappeared back into the woods. All of a sudden, a doe came blasting out followed by a buck chasing her, and they were running right toward me! I immediately drew my bow and positioned myself toward where they were heading back into the woods to my left. I remember thinking to myself, “Gosh, they’re running fast. I’m never going to get a shot in.” They were now about 60-70 yards away. I could feel my heart pounding fast and hard. I knew I had to pull myself together quickly and focus. Instinctively, I began to use the same relaxation techniques I had learned while training for the Olympics. I closed my eyes and took a deep breath and let it out slowly. For those few seconds, I was able to imagine myself shooting the deer with a perfect shot. When I opened my eyes, I felt much calmer and was prepared for the oncoming challenge.

THE SHOT

When the doe got to within 20 yards of me, it slowed down to a brisk walk. I felt a quick rush come over my body. So far, luck was on my side; but, there was one single branch of pine needles that I knew was going to block my view of each deer as it approached. After that, there would be only one single opportunity for a shot before they would disappear into the woods. I had visualized this exact shot many times in my mind, so I had confidence. When I finally saw the first deer pass the branch and enter my narrow target, I confirmed it was the doe and ignored it. I then focused my energy solely on the buck I knew I was about to see. Two steps later, the doe disappeared into the woods. Then, out of the corner of my eye, I could see the buck approaching the line of the branch. He was still walking at a good pace. I knew I needed to take a risk and do something I had never done before. I made a little whistle noise with my mouth and sure enough the buck stopped! It worked, except...the buck stopped directly behind the one branch that was in the way. I didn’t have a shot. I completely froze. This wasn’t supposed to happen. I waited for him to start walking again. He took a couple steps and all of sudden was completely in the open. Nervously, I half-whistled once again and sure enough he stopped



Cathy Turner took her trophy buck while bowhunting in Monroe County, New York, in 2010. Her typical whitetail buck scores 170-1/8 points.

right where I wanted him to, a perfect 15-yard side shot. I took a deep breath in, let a little out, held it, and took the shot.

I knew I had hit him and thought it was just behind his left shoulder. I was just hoping I didn't rush things and somehow miss his vitals. He didn't run, just quickly flinched and then walked into the woods. I could hear him slowly moving through the pines behind me, breaking a branch every now and then. I could tell he was in no rush to go anywhere. I waited, reliving the whole experience in my head over and over again. Did I get him? Was it a good shot? Was it really big? About an hour and a half later, I sent a text to a friend, "Shot BIG buck about 1.5 hrs ago!! Lots of blood on arrow....blood trail. Gonna wait longer."

When I finally got down from my stand, I walked over to where I had shot him. There, lying on the ground was half of my arrow, and it was really bloody! I couldn't resist. Quietly, I crawled on my hands and knees just a little ways into the pines to check things out. There was blood. I knew I hit him well.

I decided to wait longer. I wanted my two girls, Britney and Bayli (ages 9 and 11), to help me track him. They love helping me find a deer and would be upset if they weren't a part of this.

THE BLOOD TRAIL

About an hour later, at least 2-1/2 hours after I had made the shot, my daughter, Britney, Tim, and I headed out to track the deer from where I had last seen the blood in the pines. My other daughter Bayli was at gymnastics and couldn't make it. We were all excited, especially my daughter. She was at the head of the line, yelling every few seconds, "Found some!" I was in the back double-checking everything. It didn't take long before Britney wailed, "I see it!

I see it!" At that moment, I felt a huge shot of adrenaline come over me. I had gotten a buck with a bow!

The deer had only gone about 70 yards through the pines and my daughter and Tim were first "on the scene." As I approached, I excitedly asked, "Is it big? Is it big?" The strength, slowness, and deepness in Tim's response said it all, "Ooooooh yeah." Then I saw it, and I couldn't believe my eyes. I jumped up and down, hugging my daughter. It was bigger than any deer I had ever seen! Thoughts like, *Where did this deer come from? Was this really my deer?* immediately ran through my head. It was just so big! Tim was already counting—13 points, he concluded. It was a perfect heart/lung shot.

We took pictures, field-dressed the deer (found the other half of my arrow), and then loaded it up and took it to my friend, Ben Adams, who owns Creekwood Archery in Clarkson, New York, where my daughters and I practice shooting our bows from time to time. I didn't understand anything about scoring, but as Ben blurted out measurements, I could see everyone's eyes getting bigger and bigger. I knew this deer was special. We got him on the scale and he weighed 199.5 lbs. We took more pictures and then Ben broke out the record books. He said to me, "Girl, you have no idea do you?" He told me that my deer's score at that moment was the 2nd largest deer ever taken with a bow in New York state and that it would probably be the deer of the year. "Wow, record books!" It felt like I had just won another Olympic gold medal! I was thrilled.

After that, everyone was telling me I had to have the buck mounted, something I knew little about. As luck would have it, Bill Yox, world-renowned whitetail taxidermist, lives in the very next town over! Bill is known for being one of the best whitetail taxidermists in the country, so this was the next stop for my big buck. He had it butchered for me and then safely hung on to the rack until it was time to have it officially scored.

On January 5, 2011, the buck scored 170-1/8 points net and 181-6/8 gross. It was enough to make it into all of the "big books." How cool!

SUMMARY

Hunting has changed my life in so many ways. I love the solitude of being out in the woods by myself, watching the sunrise, and experiencing all that nature has to offer. It makes me happy. I love the challenge of hunting for my own food and feeling like a warrior in my own way. In today's crazy, busy world of technology, the great outdoors is a true blessing to me and my family. We camp, we fish, and now I'm fortunate to have an opportunity to pass on this exciting, fun and challenging sport of hunting to my own daughters.

I don't know if I'll ever get another monster buck again, but one thing I do know for sure—I will always be able to hear the excitement in my daughter's voice when she first saw the buck, "I see it! I see it!" and for that, I'm truly grateful.

Cathy Turner
 2 beautiful daughters
 2 Olympic gold medals
 1 Monster buck
 ...life is good. ■