

# MONGO

**After almost 30 years, a California tule elk nicknamed “Mongo” finds his way into the Boone and Crockett record book.**

It was 1992, one of the first years to hunt elk on California’s Grizzly Island Refuge. Becky, at age 32, was one of the first women to draw a tag. After numerous weeks of scouting, she set her sights on an elk with enormous width and symmetry, and the elk was aptly given the name “Mongo.”

As fate would have it, the other two tag holders both tagged out the first morning on nice bulls.

That afternoon we finally found “Mongo” sleeping deep in the tules. The island refuge is also a great place to hunt waterfowl. Becky waited patiently for her bull to get up, which seemed like an hour. Once the urge to eat became overwhelming, he made his way

into the open marsh. Mongo was now on the ground after a 170-grain bullet from Becky’s Winchester .30-30 found the mark.

Back at camp, J.J. McBride, an official scorer for Boone and Crockett, was on hand. His green score measurements were 308-2/8 inches. He used a Roosevelt’s elk score sheet, since tule elk had not been given a place in the Boone and Crockett book yet. Mongo and Becky would have to wait.

Many years went by, as life does, raising kids. There were many moves and different walls that Mongo would enhance. On the last move from Lake County to Alameda County in 2017, our moving trailer was stolen before we could unload the last items. Unfortunately, Mongo rested in the trailer, lost forever, we thought—no recognition in Boone and Crockett for his amazing set of antlers and for what Becky had accomplished.

The following year, our daughter Christine had a dream that someone was selling a trophy elk mount—we call it a spiritual gift of knowledge. After waking up, she searched all the local websites of items for sale. Eventually



**ABOVE:** Rebecca posed in the yard with the skull after the hunt. **RIGHT:** Rebecca in the field, August 11, 1992.

This column is dedicated to the system that supports the public hunting of public wildlife for all fair chase sportsmen, and the stories and trophies that are the result. Theodore Roosevelt strongly believed that self-reliance and pursuing the strenuous activities of hunting and wilderness exploration was the best way to keep man connected to nature. We score trophies, but every hunt is to some extent a way of measuring ourselves.

## BEYOND THE SCORE

Rebecca Bradley  
Photo Courtesy of Author

finding an ad for a trophy elk mount, she sent us the pictures, and we knew it was Mongo. Immediately we called Ryan McCoy with California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Ryan and his team put a sting on the guy selling the elk. Thankfully, they were able to recover the elk and return it to us after a couple of weeks. It was held for evidence and identifying purposes. We soon met up, thanked Ryan and his team, then brought Mongo back home and mounted him back on the wall where he belongs.

There was now only one thing left to do to close the chapter on Mongo and Becky's history. We needed to finally have the elk officially scored for the Boone and Crockett record book, since they long now have had a category for tule elk.

Sadly, J.J. McBride had recently passed away, he was a wealth of information on the Grizzly Island tule elk. We reached out to Donald Biggs, another B&C official scorer in Northern California, to do the honors. We were

sure the drying time was more than adequate after nearly 30 years since the first green measurement. Don knew J.J. well and was also a great person for information on the tule elk. In 2020, Mongo's final score came back at 303-2/8 B&C points. Don gave us the score sheet, final

papers, and congratulated us for such an adventure.

The journey is now complete, Mongo and Becky will now reside alongside all the other trophy tule elk and fair chase hunters that have come after them. To this day, many of those elk in the book probably carry his genes. ■



ABOVE: Official Measurer J.J. McBride measuring Mongo in 1992. FAR LEFT: Rebecca finally reunited with her elk in February 2018. LEFT: California Fish and Game Warden Ryan McCoy (right) and Gene Bradley (left) recovering the elk in 2018.