

BOONE & CROCKETT CLUB'S  
NATIONAL COLLECTION OF  
HEADS AND HORNS



# A BISON TALE

The bison featured in the logo for the 31st Big Game Awards lived more than a century ago in the Peace River Country of northern Alberta. And you will find the story behind how the bison head became part of the National Collection of Heads and Horns is as wild as the country it called home.

The Slave and Peace Rivers meander through the boreal forest, while caribou run from mosquito hordes. Wood bison (*B. bison athabasca*) have a stronghold in northern Alberta now, numbering around 2,500. Those numbers, though, hit rock bottom in the late 1880s, which is why Caspar Whitney set out to collect one of the last remaining specimens—or so he thought.

At the turn of the 20th century, the United States was awash with interesting and inspirational adventurers. Caspar Whitney was one of them. He was a war correspondent in Mexico, France, and Cuba. He even reported on the exploits of Theodore Roosevelt's Rough Riders in the Spanish-American War.

When he wasn't reporting, Whitney was hunting. On his expedition to the wilds of northern Alberta in a futile attempt to obtain a wood bison specimen, he quickly learned he was chasing ghosts. Ever the journalist, Whitney recounted the perils of his wood bison hunt in *Harper's* magazine in the late 1890s, and he compiled all the adventures in his book, *On Snow-shoes to the Barren Grounds*.

Regarding the precise character of the Wood Bison, much remains to be disclosed, but the cessation of all killing relegates the gathering of more "material" to the distant future. Judge, then, the zoological value of the head presented by Mr. Whitney, and of the very, very few other specimens of the kind which possibly exist elsewhere. So far as we are aware, in the days when this so-called "Wood" Bison could lawfully be hunted and shot, no sportsman ever killed one. The only complete specimen known to the writer is a huge mounted bull in the Government Museum at Ottawa.

The head in the National Collection shows one marked peculiarity. The hair of the entire head, exclusive of the neck and chin, is remarkably curly, and of a uniform, deep-black color. The hair of the forehead, muzzle and cheeks looks as if it had been gone over with curling-irons. The frontlet is rather short, suggesting a September growth; but the beard is of good length.

Judging by the horns, the animal was, when killed, about six or seven years old. The head is in an excellent state of preservation, and in view of all circumstances it is of really priceless value. The measurements of the horns are as follows:

Circumference at base.....	15 inches
Length on outer curve.....	18½ "
Greatest outside spread.....	30½ "
Distance between tips.....	27½ "

This excerpt was taken from *The National Collection of Heads and Horns - Part 1* brochure published by the New York Zoological Society in 1907.



BOONE AND CROCKETT CLUB  
**31ST  
BIG  
GAME  
AWARDS**

# SAVE THE DATE!

SPRINGFIELD, MISSOURI - JULY 21-23, 2022

**BASS PRO SHOPS  
JOHNNY MORRIS' WONDERS OF WILDLIFE  
NATIONAL MUSEUM AND AQUARIUM**



The National Collection of Heads and Horns is part of Johnny Morris' Wonders of Wildlife National Museum & Aquarium in Springfield, Missouri. It is a most befitting home because the National Collection could very well have been named a Wonders of Wildlife exhibit from the beginning. Such public displays are a constant reminder that conservation matters to everyone.

He and his hunting partners tried for weeks to track down the elusive wood bison. Their accounts of hiring local guides only added to the frustrations of brutally cold temperatures, surly dog teams and impenetrable forests.

It has long been thought that Whitney was, in fact, the hunter that killed this particular wood bison, but that just isn't the case. Rather, that distinction goes to an already distinguished individual: Dr. William MacKay.

Dr. Mackay was born in Scotland, became a surgeon and joined the Hudson's Bay Company in Canada. By 1867, he had moved his practice into Canada's interior. For decades, he was the only doctor north of Edmonton. Dr.

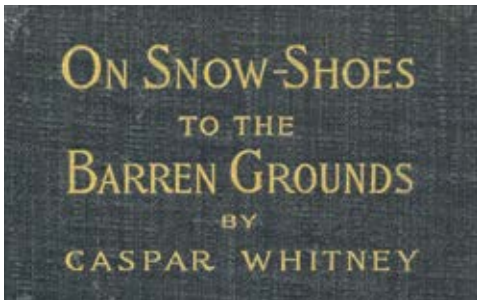
Mackay was himself quite an adventurous man; no one without a zest for adventure travels northern Canada to administer health care to tiny villages and towns for months on end. Along the way, Mackay and Whitney became acquainted. From his book, Whitney reveals the origins of this particular wood bison that now resides in the National Collection.

"When I was in the country in the winter of 1894-1895 not even a bison track had been seen up to the time of our hunt, and the head I obtained through the kindness of Dr. Mackay was the last one shot, and that two years before," Whitney wrote. Fortunately, that wasn't the last wood bison of the land. ■

**DID YOU KNOW:**  
*To save the remnant populations of this woolly beast, the Canadian government set aside more than 17,000 square miles of wood buffalo habitat in northern Alberta in 1922. Today, we know it as Wood Buffalo National Park, a World Heritage Site and Canada's largest National Park.*



Caspar Whitney wrote *On Snow-Shoes to the Barren Grounds* after his expeditions in the wilds of northern Alberta. The illustration, by Frederic Remington, is in the chapter titled 'Our Wood Bison Hunt'.



**HONORING WHERE WE'VE BEEN.  
CELEBRATING WHERE WE'RE GOING.**

# WELCOME FEDERAL AMMUNITION AS THE CENTENNIAL PARTNER OF THE 31<sup>ST</sup> BIG GAME AWARDS

For more than a century, state agencies, conservation groups, and industry allies have partnered with the Boone and Crockett Club to support sound scientific wildlife management and fair chase hunting—all for the betterment of our nation’s wildlife resource. To celebrate these conservation wins and the animals that call these landscapes home, the Boone and Crockett Club celebrates the most impressive specimens every three years with our Big Game Awards Banquet. In 2022, we will celebrate our 31st Big Game Awards.

Through key strategic partnerships, the Club has spearheaded impactful conservation outcomes. One of our strongest partnerships includes Federal Ammunition, which has become the Centennial partner of the 31st Big Game Awards—the highest level of sponsorship for the awards.

“We are very excited and honored to have Federal as the Centennial partner of

these awards,” said Boone and Crockett Club chief executive officer, Tony Schoonen. “This is just one more way our friends in the industry support our conservation and advocacy efforts.”

Federal was only 15 years old in 1937 when Boone and Crockett Club Members, among others, helped inspire the U.S. Congress to pass the Pittman-Robertson Act, which created an 11 percent excise tax on firearms and ammunition, earmarking sportsmen’s dollars for conservation and game management. Since that legislation passed, sales from Federal Ammunition have contributed hundreds of millions of dollars to wildlife conservation.

For more than a decade, Federal has been a Boone and Crockett partner supporting our mission. They also have been a sponsor of four Big Game Awards programs, reaching back to 2010. Coming up in May, this strategic

partnership will showcase our conservation success to hundreds of visitors at Johnny Morris’ Wonders of Wildlife Museum and Aquarium. Here, we will celebrate some of the biggest heads, horns, and antlers from each North American big game category entered in the last three years—and they will all be on display for three months. In addition, the top trophies that qualified for a Boone and Crockett record harvested by youth 16 or younger will be on display. There is not a grander gallery of record-book trophies in all the world, and there is not a better celebration highlighting hunting and conservation.

You can also be a proud partner for conservation by coming to the museum and

*Celebrating a partnership that spans more than a decade, Federal Ammunition shows its support of wildlife conservation in a very big way.*

inspiring others to work toward conserving our natural world. The Big Game Awards happen only once every three years, then those trophies go home to become one of the greatest stories these hunters will ever tell. Stories that will once again be shared in the annals of history among some of the greatest conservation supporters and achievers of all time, much like Federal Ammunition and the Boone and Crockett Club. ■



## THANK YOU TO ALL OUR SPONSORS

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