

JUSTIN'S FINAL TROPHY TALK

It is with mixed emotions that I write my final Trophy Talk column for *Fair Chase* magazine. Realizing I am stepping away from a prestigious position that, for the last 15 years and over a third of my life, was the full focus of my attention and passion is sobering. My excitement for the opportunities ahead as executive director of Pope and Young Club and the chance to see Kyle Lehr move into a well-deserved position as director of big-game records for Boone and Crockett has made the decision far easier.

Kyle's start at Boone and Crockett was unconventional because I got to know him through adult league hockey. He was our goalie and continually carried the team, as most of us could count the times we had been on ice

skates on a single hand. I knew he had some experience with the U.S. Forest Service and had graduated with a B.S. in recreation resource management from the University of Montana, so I encouraged him to apply.

As soon as he started, his work ethic and attention to detail set him up for success in records. He was an integral piece of the last three Big Game Awards programs. While he has been involved in nearly all aspects, from invites to uncrating and re-crating, he excelled at overseeing the youth program. He also was an integral part of the trophy display set up as well as proofing and editing the record books.

Running point on processing trophies since he started, Kyle's knowledge of the scoring system and

manual places him amongst the top experts in the world on the Boone and Crockett scoring system.

Kyle's interests outside work include being a lifelong hunter, family man, and distance runner. I was fortunate to be there when he took his first bear in Alaska and his first antelope in Montana. His passion for the outdoors and fair chase hunting, as well as his experience and knowledge surrounding records, leave no doubts that he can lead the department into the future.

The other well-deserved promotion is to Jennifer Schwab, moving from a 3/4-time records-data support position to assistant director of big game records. While she is the young gun in records, do not let her age lead you to question her passion and knowledge of the scoring system. Jennifer

TROPHY TALK



Justin Spring
B&C PROFESSIONAL MEMBER
DIRECTOR OF BIG GAME RECORDS

moved from Oregon to Montana for college, and like Kyle, she is a graduate of the University of Montana's renowned W.A. Franke College of Forestry and Conservation. She started working for the Club during her last semester of college and has balanced her time working at local veterinary clinics and the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks as a CWD monitoring technician.

Jennifer is a successful hunter who spends what little spare time she has pursuing all the big game species of

LEFT: Kyle and Justin were hunting in Alaska in 2021 when Kyle took his first bear. RIGHT: Jennifer with her pronghorn taken in Montana in 2022.



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Jennifer, Justin, and Kyle at the Club's 31st Big Game Awards Banquet in Springfield, Missouri, in 2021.

Montana with her bow and rifle, as well as putting her time in the fields and waterways around the West in pursuit of waterfowl with her husband, Daniel, who manages the local archery store.

The future of records is in great hands with these outstanding staff members.

As a final message to all of our Official Measurers, members, and supporters who regularly read this column, thank you for the opportunity to serve in this role. While the world in which we live gets divided further by politics and an us-vs-them mentality, never forget that wildlife and wild places were passed down to all of us in trust for our use and to ensure future generations are afforded the same opportunities. While conservation efforts began with our forefathers, and their wins were enormous in providing us with the public lands and wildlife we have today, continually expanding human population means challenges continue to emerge. As Theodore Roosevelt said, "Do what you can, with what you have, where you are at."

Score every trophy that makes the minimums to ensure the dataset is maintained for generations. Let's ensure we can use records to analyze decisions, both successful and not, that we are making today to carry forward. In another, albeit modified quote from TR, support organizations in the arena, whose faces are bloodied from battle, the doers of deeds. And finally, remember every action or statement you make is being scrutinized by those who desire to end our way of life and those who don't care. Every hunt you embark on tests your abilities and ethics. Make sure you are riding proudly for the brand of fair chase—a Boone and Crockett Club and North American continent original.

Thank you again for the unified efforts in this conservation world, and I hope to work with you in my new role on another hunting and conservation front line. ■

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2. Stanley Zirbel – 173
3. Bucky Ihlenfeldt – 160
4. Ken Witt* – 113
5. Dale Weddle – 88
6. Steven Taylor – 83
7. Jerry E. Lunde – 57
8. John Bogucki* – 46
9. Matt Olson – 37
10. Robert Wood – 36

*deceased

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