



EPIC OUTDOORS™

WESTERN HUNTING MAGAZINE



Alaska 2018
2018 Big Game Breakdown
Member Experience

VOL 2 • ISSUE 9 • DEC 2017



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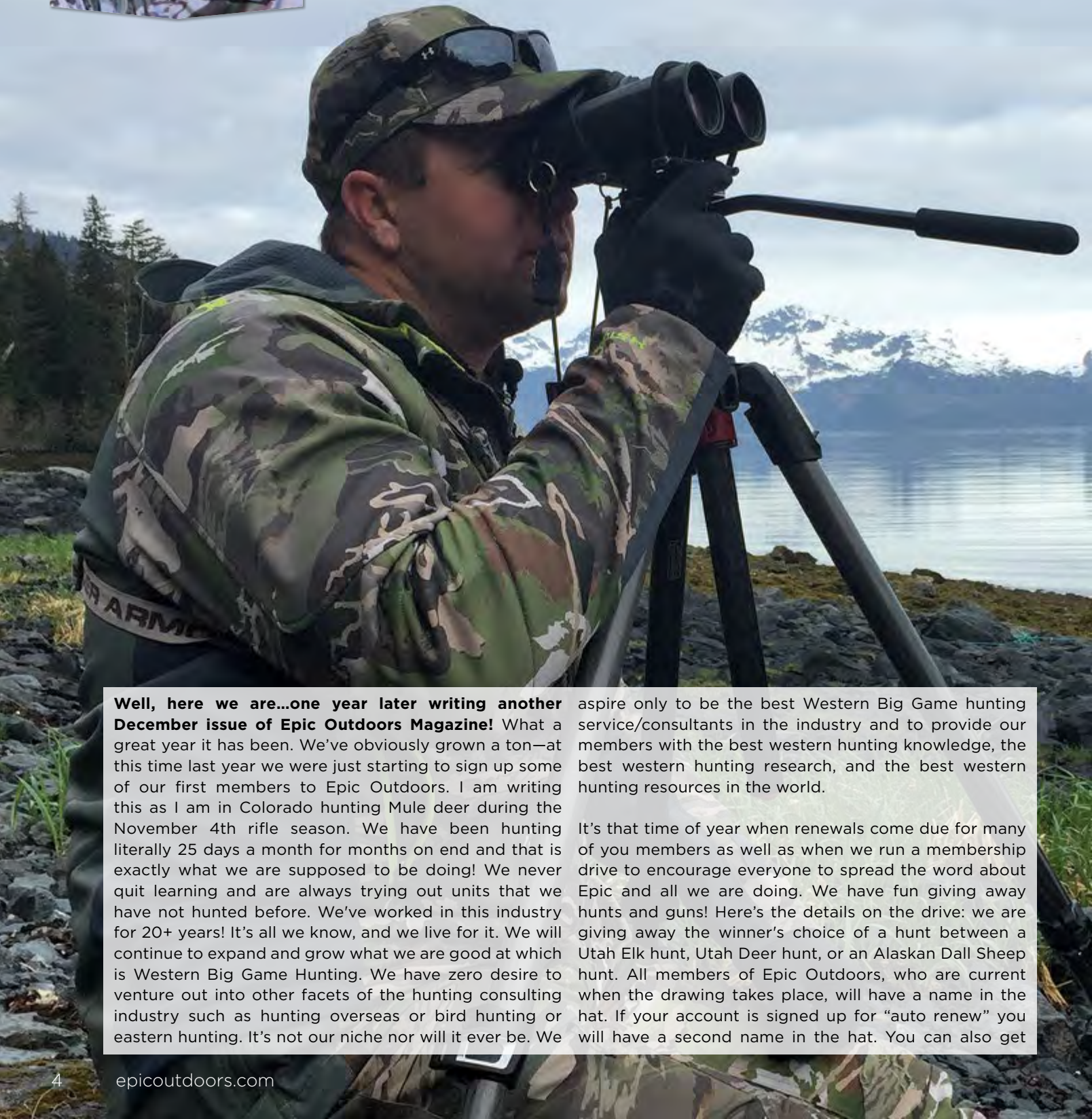
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READY FOR 2018

—BY JASON CARTER



Well, here we are...one year later writing another December issue of Epic Outdoors Magazine! What a great year it has been. We've obviously grown a ton—at this time last year we were just starting to sign up some of our first members to Epic Outdoors. I am writing this as I am in Colorado hunting Mule deer during the November 4th rifle season. We have been hunting literally 25 days a month for months on end and that is exactly what we are supposed to be doing! We never quit learning and are always trying out units that we have not hunted before. We've worked in this industry for 20+ years! It's all we know, and we live for it. We will continue to expand and grow what we are good at which is Western Big Game Hunting. We have zero desire to venture out into other facets of the hunting consulting industry such as hunting overseas or bird hunting or eastern hunting. It's not our niche nor will it ever be. We

aspire only to be the best Western Big Game hunting service/consultants in the industry and to provide our members with the best western hunting knowledge, the best western hunting research, and the best western hunting resources in the world.

It's that time of year when renewals come due for many of you members as well as when we run a membership drive to encourage everyone to spread the word about Epic and all we are doing. We have fun giving away hunts and guns! Here's the details on the drive: we are giving away the winner's choice of a hunt between a Utah Elk hunt, Utah Deer hunt, or an Alaskan Dall Sheep hunt. All members of Epic Outdoors, who are current when the drawing takes place, will have a name in the hat. If your account is signed up for "auto renew" you will have a second name in the hat. You can also get

EPIC HUNT GIVEAWAY



Utah Deer

Utah Elk

Alaska Dall

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additional names in the hat by referring your friends to Epic and having them sign up and mention your name on the form or verbally over the phone. You CANNOT purchase tickets in this membership drive. If you would like to move to "auto renew" or sign your friends up, simply email info@epicoutdoors.com or call us. You can also sign friends up online or use the sign up form in this magazine or make photo copies of the membership signup form and give them out.

We decided to change this magazine up a bit from last year. To preface the application season, we decided to outline our thoughts on all the major western species and give you some basic ideas that may help you in developing an application strategy. Obviously, we will aggressively break down all the western states' big game application opportunities over the course of the next seven months and really dive in and give you the information to make your final application decisions. In the January issue, Adam Bronson and I will take a

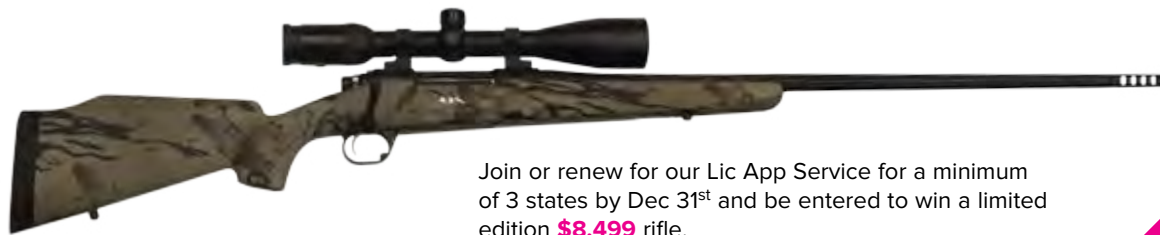
few pages and outline each of our personal application strategies to help you understand some of our thought processes behind building points across the West and when we are going to capitalize on our application investment from prior years.

If you would like us to actually apply you across the West then feel free to email or call us. You may also download a PDF application form on our website and send those in as well. We maintain and file applications for literally hundreds of clients. We are committed to continuing to be the best and most trusted hunting application service, as well as the most cost efficient. Adam and myself put our hands on all the applications that are filed by our office and hand select units and hunts that we feel are what fit your hunting goals. It only seems fitting that the guys that are in the middle of researching the states actually choose your hunts.

For our license application clients we are giving away an \$8,500 Epic Outdoors signature series and limited serial numbered Red Rock Precision custom rifle and scope that is completely set up and shoots accurately out to 1,000 yards! Every current license application member that is signed up for a minimum of three states for 2018 by December 31st will be entered into the drawing. Current license application members that refer a buddy who does not currently have us file their applications will get another chance in the license application drawing at winning the rifle. This custom rifle will be tailored to your specs including caliber. Put December 31st on your phone calendar so you don't miss the deadline. The easiest way to renew or sign up is to simply email us at huntapps@epicoutdoors.com and ask us to sign you up or renew you the same as last year and we will do it!

It's time to get ready to start the application season. By the time you receive this magazine, we will all be in the office full-time. Call or email us for anything you need.

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**DEADLINE
Dec 31st**



ADAM'S TAKE

—BY ADAM BRONSON

The dust is settling from an amazingly busy 2017 hunting season for me, my family, and guided clients.

I've been incredibly lucky to be a part of some pretty special hunts this year that I will showcase in the coming issues of our magazine. It was hard to see this season come to an end! I hope you all had a safe and successful fall. Please share your photos and/or stories of recent hunts with us to include in the coming magazines. We really enjoy seeing the success you all have each year. You may email your submissions to john@epicoutdoors.com.

ALASKA 2018

The Alaska application deadline is December 15th. If you're considering applying for Dall sheep here are a few things to consider. First, you don't have to draw a tag to hunt sheep in Alaska. The draw areas do have less hunting pressure and typically are a better place to hunt for an older or better scoring ram, but you can book a hunt with an outfitter in the general areas whenever you're looking to do so. You must apply with an Alaska registered guide for Dall sheep. Drawing a tag will not save you any money on the cost of a sheep hunt. Outfitted hunts in the general areas vs the draw areas are roughly the same price. If you want to hunt Dall sheep, don't rely solely on trying to draw a tag in Alaska. Lastly, there is no point system in Alaska and you must purchase a \$160 nonresident hunting license to apply. Then application choices are \$5 each. So it's not cheap, or a no brainer, to apply. However, every year there are some awesome rams taken in the draw units in Alaska. If you have the time in your schedule and are financially ready to go, give us a call if you need an outfitter suggestion. Draw results in Alaska will be available by February 16th.



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Utah Deer



Utah Elk



Alaska Dall

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DECEMBER 2017

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ALLEN'S NEW MEXICO BULL



KELLY'S NEVADA BULL

Crazy - Nuts - Stupid - Whack-O... are a lot of the words I hear when I tell people my fall hunting schedule. It changes a bit from year to year but there are always elk and Mule deer on the list. This year, there were a lot of Elk for some crazy reason. My two lead guys, Billy and Jeffery, drew Nevada elk tags and my sons wife, Kelly, also drew elk in Nevada. I had a New Mexico elk and a Nevada Landowner Tag.

I went to New Mexico and whacked a great 6X7, 386" bull, with Ryan and Davey. What an awesome trip! I'm proud of those boys for sucking it up and carrying on just like Marvin would have wanted them to do.

Then back to "The Bluff," the name of my place in Nevada

where we hunt, to get ready for Billy and Jeffery's elk hunt. I hired Bull Ridge Guide Service, out of Ely, to help me with the four elk so that Brock and Rance could help me pack. Ha-ha. That's not all they do, believe me. Those young studs are awesome elk hunters and I can't think of very many people I would rather be on the mountain with.

November 6th, opening day; we were all out and at first light we spotted a big bull and dang near got him, but he got run off by another hunter. So we moved to a different glassing' spot and we were glassing' for about an hour or so when Jeffery walked over to Brock and I and said, "Hey, can I bother you for a moment to come look at this elk that I found?" Well, that joker had found a big 7X7



JEFFERY'S NEVADA BULL



BILLY'S NEVADA BULL

with split fifths! Brock went into kill mode; he and Jeffery hiked up on the mountain and got the job done with a perfect stalk. Boom!... Dead! A 385" bull for Jeffery. Now, it was Billy's turn.

We hunted two days and did not find much, then on the third day, Brock found a solid 6X6 that Billy liked. So the boys went up on the mountain, in a bad wind storm, and Billy made a perfect shot. We had our second bull down. By the time we got back to the pickups with the bull, it had started to snow. It snowed all night and through the next day. On the following day, it was my turn. It had snowed 18-20 inches and was cold but clear. It was a beautiful day. We met up with Brock and Rance before daylight and took off to try and find a bull that Brock

had hunted himself during the archery season. He had actually hit this bull but the arrow hit a rib and bounced off as the bull ran away.

We looked at a lot of bulls that morning, but could not find the one we were looking for. At about noon, Brock said, "Let's head over and look where we saw that 380 bull with Bruce last year." Off we went. I was in my spot with Kristy, Billy and Lisa. Brock and Rance were about 10 miles south. Kristy sat in the back seat so she could stay warm and put her 20X50 doctors on the window mount; it worked perfect, until she said, "I got one!" Okay, where is he? Right out in the open, under the eyebrow, next to the green tree, in the snow. Okay... So we are glassing this big mountain range from 6 miles away, it snowed





18-20 inches and there are cedars everywhere. "Can you be a little more exact as to where this bull might be?" I asked. So, we started over, after about 15 minutes she had me talked into where the bull was bedded. Once I got zoomed in and all focused up, I immediately said, "Holy man girl, that is a monster!" So I called Brock and Rance, I told them to get their butts to where we were. It was hard to tell exactly what the bull was because of the heatwaves and he was a long way out. Brock and Rance got there and looked at the bull. They decided to go get a closer look and left us to keep tabs on this bull. About an hour went by and Brock called me and said, "Maybe you should come up here and have a look, the bull is one we have seen before and he is pretty big." We got directions to where they parked, drove to them and started following their tracks in the snow. (We left Kristy and Lisa in the truck.) We had not gone far when Brock sent me a picture and said to beat feet up there because there were five bulls all together and the big one, that we were looking for that morning, was one of them. So, as Billy and I were rushing up the mountain, the snow was

getting deeper. Pretty soon Brock shows up and said, "Al, you gotta go harder. The bulls are feeding away; we are going to lose them." Okay, so I dug deeper. I'm not sure if I went any faster, but I was tryin'. Finally we got to Rance and got set up to shoot. I looked in the spotting scope; I probably shouldn't have done that. This bull was BIG! At 635 yards, it took three shots from Turbo, and Mandingo was down. It took us a little while to get over to him in the deep snow but it was well worth it. Mandingo was even bigger than we had thought. We hurried up and took some pictures before it got dark, then got him all set up for morning sunlight pictures. It was negative 14 degrees that next morning, but when the sun came up it warmed up fast.

I can't say enough about Brock and Rance, and Bull Ridge Guide Service. Also Billy, Kristy, and Lisa, thanks for all the help.

Mandingo grossed 420" and net 410', the second largest 6X6 ever taken in Nevada.

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PHONE: 907-465-2376	WEBSITE: www.adfg.alaska.gov		EMAIL: adfg.license@alaska.gov

Alaska Fees	
License Type	Nonresident Fee
Annual Hunting	\$160
Annual Hunting and Sport Fishing	\$305
Sheep	\$850
Brown/Grizzly Bear	\$1,000
Black Bear	\$450
Caribou	\$650
Deer	\$300
Goat	\$600
Moose	\$800
Muskox- Bull	\$2,200
Elk	\$600
Bison	\$900
Wolf	\$60

Our Take on Alaska: You don't need to draw a permit to hunt big game in Alaska. You can hunt nearly all species in most of the state by simply buying tags online and then making arrangements to set up the details of your hunt. Keep in mind that nonresidents wanting to hunt sheep, goat, and brown/grizzly bears must hire a registered guide unless they can be accompanied in the field by immediate family members who are legal Alaska residents. See the Alaska regulations for definitions on what qualifies as legal kindred/relatives.

If you're looking to hunt trophy Dall sheep and have the ability to go in 2018, you may want to consider applying for the Alaska sheep draw. Ram for ram, the draw areas will typically produce better rams than the general areas that allow over-the-counter license sales and hunting by residents and nonresidents. One downside to applying for sheep hunts is, if successful, you find out the end of February that you have to prepare and pay for a \$15,000 or more sheep hunt in less than six months. For some, booking a sheep hunt 2-3 years in advance is a more preferred approach to align hunting schedules

and prepare physically, mentally, and financially. If you've killed a Dall sheep before and simply would like an opportunity to go again and pay less than going to Canada, applying in Alaska might be something for you to consider.

Drawing odds for sheep permits are pretty tough at 1-3% by unit, so applying in the draw isn't the best method to guarantee a Dall sheep hunt someday. As for which units to select, we suggest you discuss this with the registered guide you choose to apply with, keeping in mind your trophy expectations, physical abilities, and other factors you and your guide discuss. There are over 15 sheep units to consider, varying from legal ram units, to more trophy units with a wide range of terrain and physicality. Be honest with the guide you choose to apply with on what you're after but also what you're capable of. Some of the sheep areas in units 13 and 14 are very physical backpack hunts.

If you would like to plan ahead and book a Dall sheep hunt to ensure that someday you go sheep hunting, call us to discuss some options. Otherwise, if you're interested in applying for the Alaska sheep draw and want to discuss guides, areas, and how to apply, we can help you with that as well.

New Changes for This Year: There are minimal changes for 2018, but it is worth mentioning that license fees doubled for nonresidents in 2017 so now, just the application for Dall sheep will cost you nearly \$200, which is non-refundable and there are no bonus points. Beginning in 2017, you could list up to six hunt choices. Also in 2016, a regulatory change for nonresidents took effect limiting nonresidents to one legal ram every four regulatory years.

Application and Draw Results/Species: We cover the

Alaska draw information for sheep mainly due to the demand for this information. There is relatively little demand for the other species. There are draw hunts for bear, moose, caribou, goat, bison, and muskox, and the information for those species as well as for sheep can be found at <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=huntlicense.draw>

The Alaska drawing permits for 2018 must be applied for from November 1 through December 15, 2017 at 5 pm (AKST). Drawing results will be available by February 16, 2018. Nonresident sheep hunters must be accompanied in the field by a licensed guide or an Alaskan resident relative. Sheep draw hunts require nonresidents to have a signed guide-client contract with an Alaskan guide before or at the time of application. Contact us if you need a recommended guide for Alaska sheep. Keep in mind, there are areas in Alaska where you do not need to draw a sheep tag to hunt sheep. You can book a hunt with an outfitter and buy licenses and tags over-the-counter. This summary for Alaska is for the limited-entry draw sheep units where typically, hunters have a better chance at harvesting a ram with less pressure and annual harvest than in many of the general season areas. If you're interested in booking a sheep hunt without having to draw a permit, give us a call.

For the 2018-2019 Alaska Draw Supplement visit <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=huntlicense.drawsupplements>

Application Instructions and Fees to Apply: There is no point system in Alaska so the sheep permits are issued by a random drawing. Apply online at <https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/Store/> Applicants must first purchase an Alaska 2018 hunting license to apply. Buy your

license at the above link before trying to go and apply for your sheep application. You will also need a signed guide-client form with an Alaska guide, before applying your guide will usually visit with you about the hunt choices they would like you to apply for based on your expectations, physical limitations, or other factors. You may apply for up to six hunt choices for sheep and all will be considered in the draw. Application fees are \$5 per hunt choice. Nonresidents will pay \$160 for a hunting license and if they apply for six sheep choices at \$30, the total nonrefundable application and license fees will be \$190.

You must apply online (VISA or MC only, checks are not accepted). There is NO REFUND of application or license fees. Draw results can be determined by looking up your first and last name at <http://www.drawresults.adfg.alaska.gov/DrawResults/>

Group Applications: A hunter may apply individually OR two (2) hunters desiring to hunt together may apply as a party. For a party application, both hunters apply on the same application and, if drawn, both hunters will receive permits. However, if either hunter is ineligible for any reason, the entire application is invalid and neither hunter will be entered into the drawing. Keep in mind several of the nonresident sheep hunts have only one permit available so applying as a group is not an option for those hunts.

Hunter Education Requirements: Requirements for hunters before hunting in Units 7, 13, 14, 15, and 20: If you were born after January 1, 1986 and are 16 years old or older, you must have successfully completed a basic hunter education course before you hunt in the units listed above. If you are under 16 years of age, you



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ALASKA TROPHY ADVENTURES

must have either successfully completed a basic hunter education course or be under the direct immediate supervision of a licensed hunter who is: (a) 16 years of age or older and has successfully completed a certified hunter education course, or (b) born on or before January 1, 1986.

In addition to the units listed above, some hunts require basic hunter education, regardless of the age of the applicant. Permit winners must have successfully completed an ADF&G-approved basic hunter education course prior to hunting.

Certified Bowhunters Only: You must have your ADF&G-approved bowhunting education course (IBEP or equivalent) certification prior to applying for the drawing hunt; this includes successful completion of the shooting proficiency test. You MAY NOT hunt with long bow, recurve bow, or compound bow in any hunt or area restricting the taking of big game to archery, unless you have first successfully completed an ADF&G-approved bowhunting education course (IBEP or equivalent). IBEP or equivalent certification courses taken outside Alaska are accepted. Your certification card must be carried on your person while you are hunting in the field.

Youth Applications/Fees: There are no special discounted license fees for nonresident youth; they must remit the same fees as adult hunters.

Age Restrictions: A hunter must be 10 years of age or older by the starting date of the hunt to obtain a permit.



BRAD MILLER & FRIENDS ALASKA MOOSE HUNT

Bonus Points/Preference Points Draw Sequence: No points system is being implemented in Alaska. You have up to six hunt choices on your application and all six choices are considered individually in the draw.

Tag Allocation System: Hunters may begin applying for 2018 permits in November with a deadline of December 15, 2017. Permits are awarded by random lottery drawing. Prior to applying for drawing permits, the applicant must obtain or have applied by mail or internet for the appropriate hunting license. The license number must appear on the drawing permit application or the application will become void. Hunters may list up to six hunt choices on an application. Draw results are available by the third Friday in February.

A new regulation change took effect in 2016 for the nonresident sheep bag limit which was modified to one sheep every four regulatory years. Keep this in mind if you have harvested a sheep in Alaska within the last four years.

Resident/Nonresident Quotas: On most units, available sheep tags are set aside with a certain number of resident permits, and up to 10% or a certain number of nonresident permits available. On the units with set nonresident quotas, the majority of the hunts offer just one tag to a nonresident. There are a couple units that offer 2-5 nonresident permits but with these and a few other exceptions, applying as a group is not an option.

Other Species in Alaska: There are draw hunts for most all the other big game species in Alaska as well; however, you can also buy tags online and hunt most of these species nearly any year you want in most areas in Alaska without drawing a tag. There are a few stand out hunts like Brown bear on Unimak Island, and Mountain goats in unit 1 in southeast Alaska where true trophy potential is higher than most over-the-counter hunting areas. Nonresidents still need to hire a registered guide to hunt these species so they are not like drawing tags in the lower 48, where you have the option to go hunt self-guided. There are some caribou, moose, muskox, bison, and Black bear areas that offer self-guided hunting opportunities but most still require logistical planning to get dropped off and picked up to and from hunting areas. They also require paying to have your harvested animals flown out. Some areas like unit 23 for moose, which have provided some great limited draw moose hunts, have been closed due to declining moose numbers. We feel that there are just as many opportunities to hunt other big game in Alaska with tags you don't have to draw. Unless you have some connections or unique insight, the draw hunts for all species are not much better options than over-the-counter tags.

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2018 WESTERN BIG GAME BREAKDOWN



This is the time of year that we all take some time and reflect on the past season and decide what we are going to apply for and try to draw next year. There are many variables that go into deciding which states and which species to apply for in any given year. The number of bonus/preference points that you have accumulated across the west is a large determining factor, as are your individual big game hunting goals.

We are all at different stages in life, some hunters are looking to use the points they have accumulated by trying to get drawn for several tags while other hunters have a hunt or two lined up and are saving points. There are some hunters that like to purchase a few guaranteed tags and try to draw some as well; then, they re-evaluate their hunting opportunities after the results of the drawings are posted and get rid of any excess tags by either turning their tags back to the state or selling off any unwanted tags that were previously purchased.

The variations of hunting and application strategies are endless. Nevertheless, in this section we will cover the different big game species applications available and give our recommendations on what to consider when applying. Then, it's your job to take that information and plug it into your personal application strategy.

Last year we covered each western state giving a quick

breakdown of the state to preface the application season. This year we are changing it up a bit and breaking down each species from a trophy or opportunity hunting perspective. We will give you our opinion on what states we would apply in and if our intent would be to draw a tag or just build points. All trophy hunters should be applying for and building points across the west regardless of your hunting budget or application strategy. There are some tags that simply cannot be bought and there are some tags that need many years worth of points to have a chance at drawing. If you need help in figuring out an application strategy then feel free to call us. We will gladly give you some ideas and help you develop a solid application strategy.

Over the next six months of the Epic Outdoors Magazine, we will break down every western state and all big game species. Detailed unit by unit analysis will be printed and available prior to the application deadlines.



PHILIP SHUFORD, 378" ELK, COLORADO
DIAMOND PEAK



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UTAH



GLENN BAILEY, DESERT SHEEP, UTAH
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ANDREW BUTLER, MULE DEER, UTAH
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DAVID TRUJILLO, MULE DEER, NEVADA
DEEP CREEK OUTFITTERS

MULE DEER

Mule deer are one of the most prized trophies in the west. They are a sensitive species for a variety of reasons and are especially prone to predation. It is a delicate balance when managing deer so there are a variety of seasons available for archery, rifle, and muzzleloader hunts. Every state employs a different management strategy and offers different seasons and hunting options.

Arizona: There are Mule deer across the entire state of Arizona. For the most part, there are only a handful of units that are managed for trophy bucks, which are tough for nonresidents to draw but you do have a chance to draw even if it's your first year applying. The rifle rut hunts on the Kaibab and the Arizona Strip are the best hunts in the state but have slim drawing odds. Guys that have the maximum number of bonus points or already have other plans may consider applying for these hunts. There are also some early season archery hunts on the Strip units that offer hard working archers first crack at the giants of the year, but these hunts take a lot of points to draw or extreme luck! Considering the minimal non-refundable fee to apply, all Mule deer hunters should be applying in Arizona. For guys that like to hunt more often and don't need bucks over 180 you may consider the early rifle hunts in October and early November or the early archery hunts in August on the Kaibab (units 12A and 12B). There are no landowner or outfitter type tags to purchase in Arizona. Detailed unit and state information will be published in the June issue of the magazine.

Colorado: Colorado is a Mule deer mecca and there's something for everyone! For guys that have the time to pre-scout, there are early rifle, archery, and

early muzzleloader seasons. For trophy hunters and opportunity hunters as well, there are three different rifle seasons! The eastern plains offers a late rut archery season as well as a late season December rifle hunt for trophy hunters. No matter how many points you have, there are hunts for you to apply for with the intent to draw or to apply for just to build points. We recommend that guys do not wait much more than 5-7 years to draw a tag. Colorado is a preference point state thus you can predict when you will be able to draw because guys that apply with the most preference points will draw the tags. There are landowner tags available to purchase in Colorado. However, hunters may only hunt and harvest one deer per year. Detailed unit and state information will be published in the March issue of the magazine.

Idaho: Idaho is a state that does not have a point system of any kind. Every applicant has an equal chance of getting drawn. There are many options for hunters to apply for including tougher October rifle seasons with liberal tag numbers, as well as quite a few late rifle season hunts in November with very few tags issued. They also have a few limited entry archery seasons on a few quality units. Some of the best genetics in the West exist in Idaho. Every year a few legit, giant bucks are taken there. Deer hunters that want to draw should

apply. If your strategy is to gain points across the west while pursuing other hunts then save the hunting license fee and ignore Idaho for now. Detailed unit and state information will be published in the May issue of the magazine.

Nevada: Nevada has numerous good units for both trophy hunters, as well as opportunity hunters to apply for. Their Mule deer archery seasons are the earliest in the west and open August 10th, which makes it hard for archery hunters to ignore. There is generally nothing else going on in the lower 48 at that time. The rifle seasons are split up for the most part allowing easier to draw seasons for opportunists but with tougher seasons. For trophy hunters the later rifle hunts that take place close to the rut (that have limited tag numbers) are the best options. Bonus points are earned and squared which offer exponentially better drawing odds the more points you have accumulated. They also have muzzleloader seasons in September with very limited tag numbers and liberal season dates that can be great hunts for guys that have time to pre-scout. There are a few late season archery and muzzleloader hunts that can be great opportunities, as well. All Mule deer hunters should be applying and gaining points in Nevada. Detailed unit and state information will be published in the April issue of the magazine.

Utah: Utah has a few limited entry units with minimal tags that produce giant bucks. These limited entry hunts have very limited tags and are extremely tough to draw but everyone has a chance to draw, no matter how many bonus points they have accumulated. In addition to the limited entry hunts, there are also the general season units that hunters can also apply for and gain preference points. A few giants are taken on the general units every year. There are early season archery hunts, late September – early October muzzleloader seasons, and October rifle seasons across the state. Deer hunts in Utah are well worth the modest cost of applying. Detailed unit and state information will be published in the February issue of the magazine.

Wyoming: Generally speaking, Wyoming is a state that is managed for the masses. For the most part, they do not believe in having trophy producing units; however, good genetics and some pristine habitat helps Wyoming produce a few giant bucks every year. Hunters willing to go with an outfitter in rugged country such as Region G or Region H can have a chance at harvesting a quality buck in backcountry, horseback type terrain. There are a few limited entry areas that produce a few 180-190+ bucks every year that are tough to draw and in most cases, it is statistically possible to draw with zero points. We recommend that deer hunters apply and gain points in Wyoming so that down the road they can have an opportunity to draw. Detailed unit and state information will be published in the May issue of the magazine.

A few states that we don't consider "must apply for" such as California, Kansas, Montana, New Mexico, Oregon, and Washington have a few good bucks in them. There are a few good units in these states but California is nearly impossible to draw and has relatively few big bucks. Kansas has a few great bucks but the Mule deer stamp is very hard to draw and to apply you have to basically purchase a Whitetail tag and the private land makes it tough to do a hunt self-guided. Montana is mostly an opportunity state where most of the deer tags are over-the-counter for residents and rifle seasons take place during the middle of the rut. There are a couple units in Montana that have some trophy bucks, but with poor drawing odds and expensive applications, it doesn't make sense to apply for them. New Mexico has a couple units that are known to produce the majority of the big bucks that come out of that state but the drawing odds are very tough. Oregon manages their deer for opportunity versus quality so gaining preference points there isn't highly recommended, but there are a few good bucks in various units on private land. Applying for Washington cannot be justified due to the expense of applying for nonresidents compared to the quality of the hunts available. Detailed unit information for California, Kansas, Montana, New Mexico, and Oregon will be published in the magazine before it's time to apply.

Guaranteed deer tag type opportunities when/if all the draws fail you: Arizona has archery tags that are issued over-the-counter. These hunts can be fun hunts that let hunters gain points for limited entry tags while allowing hunters to hunt on a yearly basis. The January archery hunts are some of the best over-the-counter hunting opportunities in the West. Colorado offers landowner tags so that landowners may sell them to hunters and bypass having to draw a tag. Idaho has over-the-counter deer tags for both rifle and archery hunters in various units across the state. These can be good hunts with a few great bucks taken on over-the-counter general season tags every year in Idaho. Nevada offers landowner tags where hunters can hunt all the seasons available in the regulation for the unit the tag is good for—hunters can hunt until they harvest a buck. Oregon has a few over-the-counter deer tags available for guys that just want to go deer hunting. Utah has a few conservation tags and landowner tags that can be purchased; however, they can be expensive.

Mule Deer Opportunities

Must Apply for States

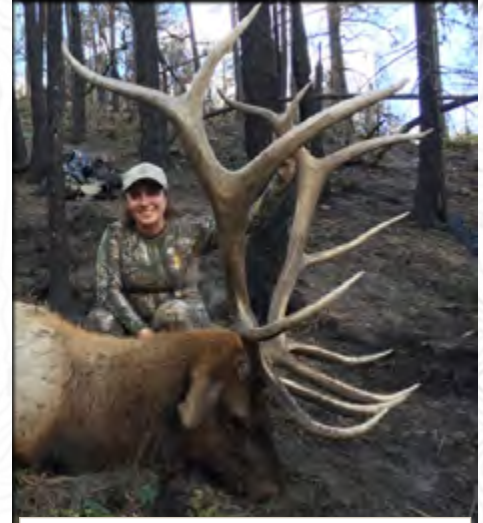
Arizona
Colorado
Idaho
Nevada
Utah
Wyoming



CHRISSY JACOB, 375" ELK, ARIZONA
A3 TROPHY HUNTS



TODD MCKENZIE, ELK, NEW MEXICO
CANYON COUNTRY GUIDE SERVICE



ELVA DAVILA, ELK, NEW MEXICO
FRONTIER OUTFITTING

ELK

Every state in the west has at least a few units that are managed for mature bulls which in turn means there are a limited number of tags available to draw. With that said, there are a few states that definitely stand out as the best trophy producing states. In most cases, the archery hunts take place in the rut, in September. Generally speaking, these hunts offer the best chance at producing giant bulls.

Arizona: Arizona is definitely a state that everyone should be applying in and gaining bonus points. The archery hunt in September is the best chance for killing a monster bull. There are early rifle and muzzleloader seasons at the end of September that are the highest demand seasons in the state. In all reality, they take place near the end of the rut with some bulls having broken antlers from fighting and hunters are left to hunt what the archery hunters didn't harvest and draw odds are terrible. There is also a late archery hunt in November in many units as well as late rifle seasons in November/December. These hunts can be pretty good considering the time frame and the ease of drawing, but they offer nowhere near the quality that the September hunts do. Great archery tags generally take 13-17 bonus points to draw with a few exceptions and the late rifle hunts generally take 7-10 bonus points to draw; however, applicants may draw a random tag with zero bonus points accumulated. Detailed unit and state information will be published in the January issue of the magazine.

Idaho: Idaho is primarily managed for average quality; however, there are a few units that produce some amazing bulls. Idaho does not have a point system of any kind so hunters should only apply in years that you can actually use the tag. There are many different seasons to choose from in Idaho depending on the unit. There are a variety of rifle hunts available from October, November, and even December. The archery hunts are generally in

September. There are quite a few wolves across the state but there continues to be 330-400" type bulls harvested in multiple units. Detailed unit and state information will be published in the May issue of the magazine.

Montana: Montana has long been known for being a great elk state. The quality in some parts of the state is incredible but finding giant bulls on public land is challenging. The archery seasons are six weeks long in the rut and the rifle hunts are the last part of October and most of November. The biggest bulls every year are taken on the archery hunt and most of them are on private land. It is a state where the general tags are easy for nonresidents to draw and there are public land units to hunt. They do have bonus points but to apply for the limited entry hunts, applicants need to apply for the general tag as well and then they can apply for the limited entry hunts. This ends up being an expensive application considering the odds of drawing good hunts. In 2017, Montana added a cheap points only option that you can take advantage of during the summer. With these new changes we recommend, at the least, building points for elk in Montana. If you have a backup plan for utilizing the general tag then by all means apply, but applying in Montana isn't for everyone. Detailed unit and state information will be published in the March issue of the magazine.

New Mexico: New Mexico is a great state to apply for

on years that you have time to actually utilize the tag. There is not a bonus or preference point system in New Mexico and so everyone is on the same playing field when it comes to applying for tags on any given year. Hunters may apply for tags in the regular drawing or if you are going with an outfitter, you may apply in the Outfitter Draw, for tags that are easier to draw. The best seasons in the state are the archery seasons in September. They do have some youth and mobility impaired rifle/muzzleloader seasons in early October (before the regular adult rifle/muzzleloader seasons) which can be incredible hunts that take advantage of the rut as it winds down. The bulk of the regular rifle and muzzleloader seasons are middle to late October with a few early October and mid-November dates. These regular firearm seasons are short, five day hunts. They allow for higher tag numbers and provide opportunities for hunters to draw tags while maintaining a good age class of bulls across the state. New Mexico is one of the best all-around states for elk hunters to be applying in due to the application process, the great elk populations, multiple seasons to choose from, and relatively good drawing odds. Detailed unit and state information will be published in the February issue of the magazine.

Nevada: Nevada is one of the best producing states there is for giant bulls. The odds of drawing are tough, with very limited tag numbers issued, but from a percentage standpoint, you can't argue the success rate on great bulls! The archery seasons are generally a little early but they still take in some of the rut and offer the best opportunity to harvest a great bull. For the most part, the muzzleloader and rifle seasons occur post rut. With large amounts of glassable terrain, late hunts can be really good. Nevada has a bonus point system where points are squared allowing you to have an exponentially better chance at drawing a tag as the years roll on, but even first year applicants have a chance to draw a tag. Even if you can't hunt, we recommend applying for and gaining bonus points in Nevada for the future. Detailed unit and state information will be published in the April issue of the magazine.

Utah: Utah is widely known for producing giant bulls. Although Utah's "heyday" for elk was about 10 years ago, it is still a top producing state for big bulls. Utah manages their elk by allowing archery hunters to hunt pre-rut, rifle hunters to hunt mid-rut, and muzzleloader hunters to finish the rut. There is not a day in September that does not have an elk season in progress. This, coupled with higher tag numbers, has contributed to the decline of the elk quality in Utah. In spite of the decline, there are still 350 class bulls in the majority of the limited entry units across the state. There are a few late hunts that take place in November for hunters that would like to have better drawing odds. It's cheap to apply and everyone has a chance to draw a tag including

applicants with no bonus points accumulated. If you can't hunt this year, apply for points only. Detailed unit and state information will be published in the February issue of the magazine.

Wyoming: Wyoming has some amazing elk country with great bulls being harvested in many different units. There are quite a few options to apply for; the archery seasons take place in September and the rifle season start dates vary from October 1 – November 5. In many of the units, archers will need to apply for the rifle tag and will be allowed to hunt during the archery and rifle season with that tag. In other areas, there are separate archery only and rifle only tags. The early hunts can be really good and some of the late hunts will produce giant bulls as well! The options seem to be endless in Wyoming for trophy and opportunity type hunters. Wyoming is a preference point state with plenty of options for hunters with 4-10 points accumulated. There are tags drawn every year by guys that do not have any points built up. We recommend that, at a minimum, you apply for points only. Detailed unit and state information will be published in the January issue of the magazine.

Guaranteed Elk tag type opportunities when/if all the draws fail you: Colorado has over-the-counter, general elk tags that may be used in many different general units. Colorado also has some landowner tags available for purchase in the limited entry units. Idaho has over-the-counter tags available for both archery and rifle hunters that can be purchased if you don't end up drawing a tag. Idaho also offers a few landowner tags as well as outfitter tags in various limited entry units. New Mexico has landowner tags available to purchase from landowners for private land only or unit wide hunts. These New Mexico tags are relatively inexpensive compared to landowner tag prices in all other western states. Nevada has landowner tags that can be purchased to hunt units without having to draw a tag. Elk tags in Nevada generally range from \$10-18K each. Utah has both landowner tags and conservation tags that may be purchased to hunt limited entry hunts. These tags are generally expensive but there are a few that slip through the cracks every year. Wyoming has some commissioner tags as well as some governor tags that allow hunters to hunt their choice of units and limited entry seasons. Prices vary from \$10-20K each.

Elk Opportunities	
Must Apply for States	Other States to Consider
Arizona	Idaho
New Mexico	Montana
Nevada	
Utah	
Wyoming	



CHRIS HALL, ANTELOPE, NEVADA
WESTERN WILDLIFE ADVENTURES



PAUL REEB, ANTELOPE, ARIZONA
A3 TROPHY HUNTS

ANTELOPE

Antelope are prevalent in nearly all the western states. What's surprising is how hard it is to draw quality antelope tags! There are states that have some easier to draw units, such as Wyoming, but areas and states that are known to have giant bucks on a regular basis usually take many years worth of preference/bonus points to draw.

Arizona: Arizona is one of the top two states when it comes to producing giant bucks. Every year, multiple 85" plus bucks are harvested across the state. They offer rifle, muzzleloader, and archery seasons with very conservative tag numbers across all of the units. Most of the good rifle and muzzleloader hunts take over 20 bonus points to draw for both residents and nonresidents. In some cases, there is only one nonresident tag available and it is issued randomly. Archery tags aren't much easier to draw as nonresidents are allocated only one tag per hunt in most cases and that tag will be drawn randomly. People with zero points can draw a world-class tag. Detailed unit and state information will be published in the January issue of the magazine.

Colorado: There are quite a few antelope units to apply for in Colorado, but it is not known for quality bucks. There are a couple units that have produced some Boone and Crockett sized bucks, but overall it is an average state for a trophy hunter. In Colorado, the applicants with the most preference points will be given the tags. The best rifle tags in the state are usually drawn by people with 12-18 preference points. Colorado is not a trophy antelope state. Detailed unit and state information will be published in the March issue of the magazine.

Idaho: Idaho is similar to Colorado as it is not known to be a trophy antelope state. Hunters that are applying for

elk and deer might as well apply for antelope since you will have to purchase a hunting license anyway; however, if that's the only species you are applying for it's a waste of money. There are a few good areas, but for the most part Idaho is known for producing average antelope. There is not a point system in Idaho so if you ever decide to apply, you will have the same drawing odds as everyone else. Detailed unit and state information will be published in the May issue of the magazine.

Montana: Montana is a state known for quantity over quality when it comes to antelope. The best bucks are generally found on private land. Montana has a system where applicants with any amount of bonus points can draw the tags but bonus points are squared which gives applicants who have accumulated a number of points the advantage in drawing tags. Nevertheless, Montana is an average state when it comes to trophy quality. Detailed unit and state information will be published in the April issue of the magazine.

Nevada: Nevada has always been considered a good state to apply for when it comes to antelope hunting but it seems to be doing even better lately. Some of the units in the north east corner of the state are producing some great bucks as well as the traditionally good units on the western side. They have a good variety of units to apply for, offering units with quality bucks as well as units with average bucks. Nevada has a system where



TODD ERICKSON, ANTELOPE
NEVADA



MARK MILLEG, ANTELOPE
WYOMING

applicants with any amount of bonus points can draw the tags but bonus points are squared which gives applicants who have accumulated a number of points exponentially better odds in the draw. Detailed unit and state information will be published in the April issue of the magazine.

New Mexico: New Mexico is without a doubt, one of the top two trophy antelope states. There is not a bonus or preference point system in New Mexico so everyone is on the same playing field when it comes to applying for tags on any given year. Hunters may apply for tags in the regular drawing or if you are going with an outfitter you may apply in the Outfitter Draw for tags that are easier to draw. The hunters that draw the any weapon tags are assigned a specific ranch to hunt, whereas the archery hunters can hunt anywhere in the unit including public lands. This gives archery hunters the opportunity to hunt bucks that don't get rifle hunted. Every year, there are numerous 85" plus bucks taken out of New Mexico. Detailed unit and state information will be published in the February issue of the magazine.

Oregon: Oregon definitely has some great antelope bucks which is one of Oregon's bright spots. The number of nonresident tags are extremely low with 1-3 tags available in most units. Oregon operates on a preference point system and nonresidents need at least 16-21 preference points to draw. Considering the cost of applying, and the odds of drawing a coveted antelope tag, it is hard for us to recommend applying in Oregon unless you are building points for other species as well. If you do not have preference points already accumulated in Oregon, we couldn't in good faith recommend that you start applying for antelope. Detailed unit and state information will be published in the February issue of the magazine.

Utah: Utah is an average state when it comes to antelope hunting. However, it is cheap to apply if you're already applying for other species as well. Bonus points are given in Utah and guys with zero points still have a chance to draw a tag. Detailed unit and state information will be published in the February issue of the magazine.

Wyoming: Wyoming is one of the best states in which to apply and hunt antelope! Wyoming was made for antelope and harbors literally thousands of them. With the preference point system in place you can somewhat predict when you will get drawn in the different units. They also give out a percentage of the tags on a random draw so nearly everyone who applies has a chance to draw a tag. Trophy bucks come from a wide variety of units across the state. Detailed unit and state information will be published in the March issue of the magazine.

Guaranteed Antelope tag type opportunities when/if all the draws fail you: Colorado has landowner tags that may be purchased, allowing hunters to bypass the draw. Idaho has over-the-counter tags for archery hunters. Nevada has landowner tags that hunters may purchase and hunt a unit as if they drew the tag. New Mexico has landowner tags that may be purchased. Utah has both landowner tags and conservation tags available for hunters to purchase.

Antelope Opportunities	
Must Apply for States	Other States to Consider
Arizona	Colorado
Nevada	Idaho
New Mexico	Montana
Wyoming	Oregon
	Utah

DESERT BIGHORN SHEEP

No matter what state or unit you apply for, Desert Bighorn are tough to draw. There are a few states that are known to produce bigger rams than others but we recommend that hunters wanting to have a chance at harvesting a Desert Bighorn should apply everywhere possible with the exception of maybe Colorado and California.

Arizona: Arizona has excellent populations of Desert Bighorn as well as having units that are known for giants. The drawing odds are tough, but with the bonus point system in place, hunters can draw the first year they apply. Hunters applying for Desert Bighorn and/or Rocky Mountain bighorns must do so on the same application. Only one sheep application is accepted in Arizona but with two choices on an application, hunters may mix the choices between Desert Bighorn and Rocky Mountain Bighorn. It is definitely worth the minimal additional cost of adding sheep in your Arizona applications. Detailed unit and state information will be published in the June issue of the magazine.

New Mexico: New Mexico has giant rams; however, the upfront fees required to apply, the nonresident drawing odds, and minimal tag numbers may or may not be worth it to you. Applicants must front the entire tag and license fee when applying which will be over \$3,200. New Mexico does not have a point system; however, the odds of drawing a tag are twice as good when applying with an outfitter versus applying in the regular draw. Applicants may apply for Desert Bighorn as well as Rocky Mountain Bighorns on the same application. Detailed unit and state information will be published in the February issue of the magazine.

Nevada: Nevada has incredible populations of Desert sheep! There are more nonresident Desert Bighorn permits issued annually than all other states combined! There are plenty of units to choose from with some units known to produce great rams and others with average rams that are easier to draw. All five choices on the application count and with the minimal fee to apply, it's well worth gaining bonus points. Applicants can draw on their first year of applying regardless of how many bonus points they have built up. There are plenty of units that are physically easy to hunt as well as tougher units. Detailed unit and state information will be published in the April issue of the magazine.

Utah: Utah is one of the least expensive states to apply for in comparison to the other western states. The hunting license is about half of the price that most states charge and the application fee per species is \$10. Desert



JIM LINES, DESERT SHEEP, CALIFORNIA
KIKI GUIDES AND OUTFITTERS

Bighorn tags are tough to draw but the cost of applying makes it worth it. The quality of sheep in Utah pales in comparison to Arizona and Nevada but any sheep is considered a trophy by 99% of the hunting population. Detailed unit and state information will be published in the February issue of the magazine.

Other states to consider applying for: There are a few other states that have Desert Bighorn but for various reasons they may not be worth applying for. California has some great desert sheep however, the odds of a nonresident obtaining the one tag that potentially may be issued to a nonresident does not warrant the cost of applying, especially if you don't have max points saved up! In Colorado, applicants must choose whether to apply for Rocky Mountain Bighorns which have many more tags available and bonus points attached or Desert Bighorn which only issues one nonresident tag on most years and the point system does not pertain to Desert Bighorns. It's an easy choice for most hunters. Texas is a little different where they run a cheap lottery and the lucky winner will have the guide fee included in the package along with the tag. Even though the odds are long—the \$10 price tag makes applying for Texas sheep a no brainer! Detailed unit information for California, Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas will be published in the magazine before it's time to apply.

Desert Bighorn Opportunities	
Must Apply for States	Other States to Consider
Arizona	California
Nevada	Colorado
Utah	Texas
	New Mexico



RYAN SKILLESTAD, 200" A ROCKY MTN BIGHORN
MONTANA



DAVID MONTROSE, 160" CALIFORNIA BIGHORN
NEVADA

ROCKY MOUNTAIN BIGHORN SHEEP CALIFORNIA BIGHORN SHEEP

Rocky Mountain Bighorn sheep as well as California Bighorn sheep, are found in several western states with the Rockies being the most prevalent. California Bighorns are known as a subspecies of the Rocky. In some states they have a separate application process and bonus/preference point system. In other states, they are all categorized as Rocky Mountain Bighorn sheep when considering the point system and when it comes to applying for them. If you'd like to harvest a Rocky Mountain Bighorn sheep some day then apply in the following states.

Colorado: Colorado is a great state in which to apply for Rocky Mountain Bighorn sheep. They have set aside nonresident tags as well as a preference/bonus point system which statistically helps your drawing odds get better with every year you apply; however, you must accrue three bonus points before you are eligible to draw a permit. Colorado has good quality sheep overall and considering the minimal, non-refundable fee to apply, it is worth applying. New in 2018, Colorado will no longer require paper apps to apply for sheep. Detailed unit and state information will be published in the March issue of the magazine.

Idaho: Idaho has both Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep as well as its subspecies the California Bighorn. There are several California Bighorn sheep units in the southern part of the state with Rocky Mountain bighorn units located more in the rugged mountain country in the center part of the state. Applicants who apply for sheep may not apply for any other species in the state or if you apply for any other species you may not apply for sheep.

This helps the drawing odds considerably and forces hunters to choose to apply for what is really valuable to them. Applicants must submit the entire tag and non-refundable license fee when applying. There is no bonus or preference point system in Idaho. Detailed unit and state information will be published in the March issue of the magazine.

Montana: Montana has the largest Rocky Mountain sheep of any state. There are many different units to choose from when applying and the units available to nonresidents change every year. They have a bonus point system where points are squared and applicants have that many chances at drawing a tag. The fees to apply are reasonable, costing applicants less than \$100 to apply and applicants are only required to pay for the tag if drawn. The odds of drawing a tag are tough in Montana, but it is a no brainer for serious sheep hunters. Detailed unit and state information will be published in the April issue of the magazine.

Nevada: Nevada has both Rocky Mountain bighorns and California Bighorn sheep; however, Rocky populations are so low at this time that nonresidents are not offered any tags. California bighorn sheep units are located in the northwest corner of the state and are a no-brainer when it comes to applying due to a very minimal application fee. There are set aside nonresident tags for the California bighorns. There is also a bonus point system where applicants can earn California bighorn points if unsuccessful in the draw. If you're after an average California bighorn then put Nevada on your list. Detailed unit and state information will be published in the April issue of the magazine.

Utah: Utah has a wide variety of species to apply for including Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep and California bighorns. Nonresidents may apply for all of the species; however, Rocky and California bighorns are both lumped into Rockys and bonus points accumulated for them are good for either Rocky or California Bighorn sheep. The additional fee to apply in Utah for sheep is \$10; therefore even with the extremely tough odds of drawing and the limited number of sheep tags it is worth applying. Detailed unit and state information will be published in the February issue of the magazine.

Other states to consider applying for: New Mexico has some incredible Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep, but the upfront fees required to apply, nonresident drawing odds, and minimal tag numbers may or may not make it worth applying for you. Applicants must front the entire tag and license fee when applying, which will be over \$3,200. New Mexico offers nonresidents a total of three tags with drawing odds between 1 in 500 to 1

in 1,100 depending on whether or not you are applying with an outfitter. Oregon has Rocky and California bighorn sheep. Their point system does not pertain to sheep so, if you are not applying for any other species, the non-refundable cost of applying (about \$170) may not be worth it for you. The nonresident drawing odds are 1 in 300 to 1 in 500 (depending on the year and the unit in which you choose to apply.) Applicants must choose whether to apply for a Rocky unit or a California bighorn unit as a first choice. The first choice is all that really matters anyway. Washington only has California bighorn units available in the state draw at this point. The drawing odds are nearly always over 1 in 1,000 which makes it really questionable for nonresidents; however, they do have some good sheep units. Wyoming has Rocky Mountain bighorns with many different units to choose from. To apply for a unit, applicants must front the entire tag fee of \$2,266 and for applicants with less than 16 preference points the random chance of drawing tags is around 1 in 250 depending on the unit and the year. Detailed unit information for New Mexico, Oregon, Washington, and Wyoming will be published in the magazine before it's time to apply

Rocky Mtn Bighorn/California Bighorn Opportunities

Must Apply for States	Other States to Consider
Colorado	New Mexico
Idaho	Oregon
Montana	Washington
Nevada	Wyoming
Utah	



ROGER KORTH, CALIFORNIA BIGHORN
NEVADA



JUSTIN JACKSON, ROCKY MTN SHEEP, UTAH
BRONSON OUTFITTING

SHIRAS MOOSE

There are quite a few opportunities to apply for Shiras moose in the western states. Generally speaking, the odds of drawing a moose tag are not great, but we definitely recommend applying for them. There are definitely states and specific units that produce great bulls versus average bulls. We will cover them in depth before its time to apply, but take a look at applying in the following states.

Colorado: Colorado is an amazing state when it comes to producing some great bulls! Nonresidents can apply and gain points for a set number of tags. Like sheep and goat, you must accrue three bonus points before you are eligible to draw a moose permit. The drawing odds vary from unit to unit but they are generally much better than 1 in 100. The rifle seasons take place in the rut during the first part of October. New in 2018, Colorado will no longer require paper apps to apply for moose. All moose hunters should be applying in Colorado. Detailed unit and state information will be published in the March issue of the magazine.

Idaho: Idaho also has plenty of good moose units. If you want to apply for moose in Idaho you cannot apply for any other species. Except for the very best units, the odds of drawing in Idaho are some of the best of any state. There is not a point system in Idaho so you are not behind if you decide to start applying. Detailed unit and state information will be published in the March issue of the magazine.

Montana: Montana seems to be an average state when applying for moose; however, moose populations across the west are somewhat limited so moose hunters should consider applying. There are many different units to choose from and the units available to nonresidents change every year. They have a bonus point system where points are squared so applicants have exponentially better odds at drawing the longer they apply. The fees to apply are reasonable, costing applicants less than \$100 to apply and applicants are only required to pay for the tag, if drawn. The drawing odds are generally about 1 in 50. Detailed unit and state information will be published in the April issue of the magazine.

Utah: Utah has had just three moose units for nonresidents. Populations of moose are low compared to the other states but for the additional \$10 to apply, we recommend that hunters apply. There are a few great bulls that come from Utah every year. Detailed unit and state information will be published in the February issue of the magazine.



BOB SIGMAN, SHIRAS MOOSE
COLORADO, WITH CWO

Wyoming: Wyoming's moose have seen better days but it is still a state that moose hunters shouldn't ignore. There are many different units to choose from for both residents and nonresidents with a real chance to draw no matter how many preference points you have. To apply for a unit, applicants must front the entire tag fee of \$1,416. For applicants with less than 14 preference points the random chance of drawing tags is around 1 in 50 to 1 in 150 depending on the unit and the year. Detailed unit and state information will be published in the January issue of the magazine.

Other states to consider applying for: Washington is a state that has some really good moose units with a few giant bulls. The drawing odds are nearly always over 1 in 300 to 1 in 800 which makes it really questionable for nonresidents, considering the \$110+ non-refundable application fee. Detailed unit and state information will be published in the May issue of the magazine.

Shiras Moose Opportunities	
Must Apply for States	Other States to Consider
Colorado	Washington
Idaho	
Montana	
Utah	
Wyoming	

MOUNTAIN GOAT

Mountain goats are available for hunters to apply for in quite a few of the western states. Some hunters would like to hunt Mountain goats self guided and closer to home rather than traveling to Canada or Alaska and going on a guided hunt. These hunters need to be applying across the west; however, if you are going to go guided no matter what and don't really care where you harvest a mountain goat, then you should consider simply booking a hunt in Alaska or Canada and save yourself the application fees and time of waiting to draw a tag.

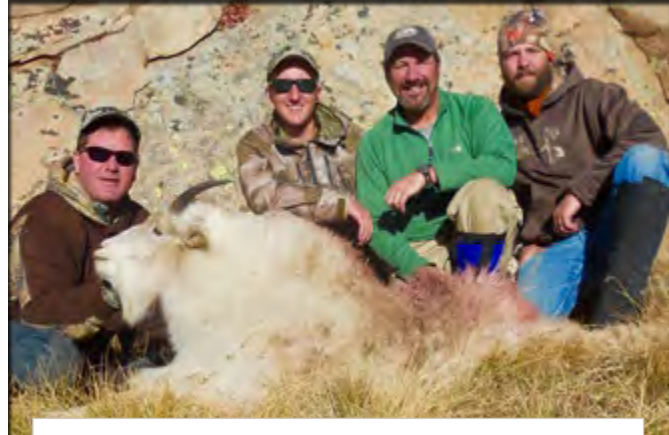
Colorado: Colorado has multiple Mountain goat units available for both residents and nonresidents. Like sheep and moose, you must accrue three bonus points before you are eligible to draw a goat permit. The drawing odds are some of the best of any state and the non-refundable fees are reasonable; however, applicants must front the tag fee when applying in this state. There are units that are physically easy as well as others that are tough to hunt with traditional rough goat habitat. New in 2018, Colorado will no longer require paper apps to apply for goat. Detailed unit and state information will be published in the March issue of the magazine.

Idaho: Idaho has plenty of good goat units to apply for. If you want to apply for goat in Idaho you cannot apply for any other species. The odds of drawing goat tags in Idaho are very good comparatively. There is not a point system in Idaho so you are not behind if you decide to start applying. Detailed unit and state information will be published in the March issue of the magazine.

Montana: Montana isn't known as a state that produces the highest quality Mountain goats, but it does have quite a few units to choose from and decent drawing odds. The units available to nonresidents change every year. They have a bonus point system where points are squared so applicant's odds of drawing go up exponentially each year they put in. The fees to apply are reasonable, costing applicants less than \$100 to apply and hunters are only required to pay for the tag if drawn. The drawing odds are usually 1 in 20 to 1 in 100 depending on the unit. Detailed unit and state information will be published in the April issue of the magazine.

Nevada: Nevada has had only has one goat tag for nonresidents. They have a few monster billies and with only very minimal application fees required. We recommend that you add it to your applications. Detailed unit and state information will be published in the April issue of the magazine.

Oregon: Oregon has had two hunts that are available for nonresidents. The point system in Oregon excludes



SCOTT COWLEY, MOUNTAIN GOAT
COLORADO

Mountain goats. If you are already applying in Oregon then throw another \$8 in and you'll be in the draw for a goat tag. If you are not applying in Oregon, we don't recommend starting to apply just for Mountain goats. Drawing odds are generally 1 in 500 to 1 in 700. Detailed unit and state information will be published in the February issue of the magazine.

Utah: Utah has Mountain goats for residents and nonresidents alike. Nonresidents have several units to choose from, it's very cheap to add it to your Utah application, but the drawing odds are pretty tough. Detailed unit and state information will be published in the February issue of the magazine.

Wyoming: Wyoming produces a few great goats for the lucky guys who draw the tagw and offers 90-100% success rates for goat hunters. Having to front the entire permit fee helps keep draw odds better than many other states across the West. Wyoming does not have a point sytem for goats and everyone has an equal chance at drawing a tag so if you really want to harvest a goat, Wyoming is a must apply for state.

Other states to consider applying for: Washington is a state that has some really good goat units but the odds of drawing are usually some of the toughest of any state. For most hunters, it doesn't make sense to apply considering the \$110+ non-refundable application fee. Detailed unit and state information will be published in the May issue of the magazine.

Mountain Goat Opportunities	
Must Apply for States	Other States to Consider
Colorado	Washington
Idaho	
Montana	
Nevada	
Oregon	
Utah	
Wyoming	



STEVE CARROLL, BISON
UTAH



JOHN GRAHAM, BISON
UTAH, WITH BRONSON OUTFITTING

BISON

Free range Bison hunts in the lower 48 are quite exciting but tough hunts. States that hunters should consider applying for are Arizona, Montana, Utah, and Wyoming. Utah has the best resident herd of bison on public land that offers a great hunt. Arizona hunts generally rely on catching them coming out of Grand Canyon National Park. The bison hunts in Montana and Wyoming rely on weather a bit. These are late season hunts where some

bison migrate out of Yellowstone Park onto accessible public land. We will cover bison in these states in depth before it's time to apply.

Bison Opportunities

Must Apply for States	Other States to Consider
Utah	Arizona
Wyoming	Montana



MIKE BOSEN, COUES DEER
ARIZONA, WITH A3 TROPHY HUNTS

COUES DEER

There are only a couple states that have Coues deer. If you really want to hunt them, you should be applying in Arizona and New Mexico. Both Arizona and New Mexico have Mule deer and Coues deer, but only allow you to submit one deer application. You may mix and match species of deer on your deer application in either state. As stated previously, New Mexico does not have a point system of any kind; which makes it nice when trying to draw a Coues deer tag and not have to use years of points. With many different units to choose from, Arizona is hands down the best state in which to hunt Coues deer. New Mexico does have a few great bucks, but overall is a tough state in regards to deer hunting as a whole. We will cover Coues deer in these states in depth before it's time to apply for them.

Coues Deer Opportunities

Must Apply for States
Arizona
New Mexico



SHANE VANDER GIESSEN, BLACKTAIL
WASHINGTON



SHARI WILLYARD, BLACKTAIL
WASHINGTON

COLUMBIAN BLACKTAIL AND COLUMBIAN WHITETAIL DEER

California, Oregon, and Washington have Columbian Blacktails. The best hunting in California is on private ranches. You can book a hunt anytime and hunt California. Oregon has over the counter Blacktail tags as well as draw tags. There are some hybrid areas in Oregon where the deer are considered a Mule deer/Blacktail cross as well as some areas that are considered to be true

Blacktails by Boone & Crockett. Columbian Whitetails are found in Oregon. There are units that you can apply for as well as a few opportunities on landowner tags. Due to limited quality opportunities, we do not cover deer in Washington, but will be covering Oregon in depth in the magazine as well as some information on California before it's time to apply.

ROOSEVELT AND TULE ELK

We will cover Roosevelt elk hunting opportunities in California and Oregon in the magazine before it's time to apply. Roosevelt elk can be hunted with over-the-counter

tags and landowner tags as well as on some limited entry draw tags. The Tule elk are found in California only. We will cover them as well before it's time to apply.



MIKE REDMAN, TULE ELK
CALIFORNIA



MICHAEL RITTER JR, ROOSEVELT ELK
WASHINGTON

LET US DRAW YOUR TAGS



Ben Adamson, ID Ram
Tag Drawn by Epic Outdoors



Peter Spear, UT Elk
Tag Drawn by Epic Outdoors



Dick Butler, WY Ram
Tag Drawn by Epic Outdoors



Brent Cattell, AZ Deer
Tag Drawn by Epic Outdoors



Josh Horrocks, NM Elk
Tag Drawn by Epic Outdoors



Justin Greene, WY Deer
Tag Drawn by Epic Outdoors

License Application Client
Mark Milleg with his Arizona Bull
— Tag Drawn by Epic Outdoors



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nonresident sheep tags.**

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EPIC SNAPSHOT

HUNTER: John Holbrook	LOCATION: British Columbia	SPECIES: Stone Sheep
WEAPON: Rifle	SCORE: 165"	OUTFITTER: Big 9 Outfitters



WEATHER CONDITIONS: My hunt was in August and the weather was excellent with slight rain as expected.

BIGGEST SUCCESS FACTORS:
Sheep population in the area

SAME HUNT AGAIN, WHAT WOULD YOU DO DIFFERENT:
Nothing

ADVICE FOR MEMBERS ON SIMILAR HUNTS:
Get in shape

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EPIC SNAPSHOT

HUNTER: Jerry Hartmann	LOCATION: Utah	SPECIES: Mule Deer
SCORE: 195"	TAG TYPE: Landowner Tag	GOOD PLACES TO EAT IN THE AREA: Carlos and Harley's, Eden, Utah
WEATHER CONDITIONS: Clear and cold		





BIGGEST SUCCESS FACTORS: Scouting. Scouting early was key in the success of this hunt. I found this buck about a month before opening day. I would go scout about every three days. Swarovski optics made keeping track of this buck far easier.

SAME HUNT AGAIN, WHAT WOULD YOU DO DIFFERENT: I wouldn't change a thing. The memories made with this group of hunting buddies are priceless. This memory has been etched in my mind forever.

ADVICE FOR MEMBERS ON SIMILAR HUNTS: On hunts like this, perseverance and patience are important, never give up on an opportunity. Don't settle, a tag sandwich tastes far better than the feelings of settling for less than your goal.

OTHER COMMENTS: Years ago, I would have never imagined having an opportunity to harvest such an incredible buck. Mature Mule deer are ghosts. Day after day, they can be in the same area and then they suddenly disappear without warning.

A group of hunters on horseback are following a trail through a snowy, brushy landscape. The lead hunter is wearing a camouflage jacket and an orange helmet. The horses are brown and equipped with saddles and gear. The trail is marked by a line of snow in the grass. The background shows more trees and snow.

Bear Country BOONERS

BRAD HIMMEL • 394" ELK • WYOMING

The absolute best part of hunting is never about the size of the animal or the amount of bone it sports on its head; it is the adventures that we share with friends, in the wonderful outdoors. Of course, if Mother Nature smiles upon you with a monster bull elk, that's also wonderful!

After applying for ten years in Arizona I drew an archery tag for unit eight. There I met another "elcoholic," Rod Lindsten. We were unable to connect on that trip. However, we became good friends and when Rod invited me to go to Kansas for a deer hunt with him, I jumped at the opportunity. He and I stalked up on a beautiful muley

buck— which is my best archery deer to date. We now hunt together each year becoming great friends.

Last year, deciding which tags to apply for, Rod had seven Wyoming elk points and I had three. He had us apply as a party so that we had five points together, which he thought would be enough to draw the unit where he killed a B&C bighorn a few years back. Upon drawing the tag we booked a hunt with Corey and Mickie Fischer of Crandall Creek Outfitters. Rod and I scheduled the hunt to be the third week of October. I had to fly from Florida to Denver where Rod picked me up and we drove to Cody, Wyoming.



ROD LINDSTEN
WITH HIS 379 7/8"
WYOMING ELK



The weather forecast was for a blizzard to hit in the high country on the weekend, and the winds were up to 50 mph the night before, as the front approached. In the morning we met up with Corey and Mickie Fischer who were busy packing the horses to begin what was supposed to be a four hour ride. The trail had been closed in September as the Forest Service was fighting a huge fire, and they were unwilling to clear the trail afterwards. There were trees knocked down all over the trail from the high winds—which had to be hand cut to get by. The ride ended up being closer to seven hours and exhausting. Rod had almost cancelled the hunt due to a sore back and this ride did not help. When we got

to camp, I unpacked my horse and hit the sack. The next morning was snowing and windy, as promised. We had no visibility so we hung around camp until afternoon, when the clouds lifted. We loaded up the horses and began a hunt up towards the Yellowstone boundary glassing as we went. The views were amazing! After a couple miles, Corey jumped off his horse and pointed to a bedded bull which I immediately knew was a shooter. There was no discussion about whether to shoot, and I volunteered to hold the horses so that Rod could try to kill this bull. I guess since he donated more points to get the tag, giving him first dibs was the least I could do! Rod hammered the bull with two shots from his trusty



BRAD HIMMEL
WITH HIS 394 4/8"
WYOMING ELK

270 Win. There was a second bull with him which trotted off. I looked up higher on the mountain and another bull appeared crossing the meadow at 500 yards. Rod yelled for me to shoot him and I was almost on him when he disappeared. Rod said that it was the biggest, widest bull he had ever seen. We climbed up to Rod's bull and I field judged him to be 370— exactly the kind of bull we came for!

Back at camp, we scored the bull at 379 7/8! I am pretty good at math, but they both had to add up the score again. That was great news for Rod as the bull will net over the B&C awards minimum. Bad news for me—now I knew there is another big bull running around and I would spend the rest of my hunt chasing him.

The next morning as we were coming out of the mess tent, a grizzly was running through our camp! Our meat pole was too high for him to get an easy meal, and I was thankful that they had an electric wire around the tents.

Corey and I rode out, past where we had left the carcass from Rod's bull, to look for the big bull. It now looked like a small mound as there was a grizzly bear sleeping on top of it! He saw us and made no effort to come chase us. We could not find the big bull and went back to camp.

The following day's hunt was clear and cold. We had heard bugles from migrating elk all night long. Corey and I headed down the valley to try to catch up to a herd which we suspected had gone by. Corey finally spotted a lone cow bedded so I dismounted and got ready. Elk began pouring out of the coulee up into the timbered hillside. I was trying to judge the biggest bull in my scope, but with so many elk, was having a tough time. Corey whistled and I turned around to see the biggest grizz of the trip! His stomach was dragging the ground, but he wasn't looking at us—he was after the elk too! We watched the bear for a mile as he crossed the same ridge as the elk. We were relieved he was gone.



Wednesday morning found Rod looking at a decent bull in the spotting scope, which we thought might be 330-340. Not the big guy Rod had seen before, so Corey and I began our morning hunt. We rode into a new drainage where the wind and snow was howling and saw no elk. On our way back we hadn't gone far when I glassed up something moving on the ridge—another grizzly! I whistled for Corey and he tried to spot him. Instead, all he could see was a bedded bull up there. I thought it was probably the morning bull Rod saw, but Corey got his spotting scope out to take a closer look anyway.

Corey's next comment was that I needed to shoot that bull! Still thinking he was not the type of bull I wanted, I took a quick look at him through the spotter. I didn't really study his rack but did notice he had huge whale tails, and thought we had misjudged him earlier. Corey ranged him at 650 yards straight up. I was holding a Weatherby 30-378, which had plenty of capability at that range, however, I did not shoot. My previous furthest

kill was a whitetail at 475 yards—a poke considering I don't have a ballistic turret on my scope! Corey offered to let me use his rifle, which was all set up for long range shooting, but I declined. I wanted to stalk within 300-350 yards where I knew I could kill him; so off we went. First we had to walk up the trail to get the wind right, and we were virtually out in the open. Then we began a climb over blown down pines to get into the adjacent chute. It was slippery and steep, but we took our time and progressed until we reached a stand of timber which we felt would be the ambush spot. Corey stuck his head out of the ravine and looked across the small meadow—no elk, no grizzly. I moved up to him and as I did, I looked up the hill and saw the bull on our side of the ravine. Corey threw down his pack and I settled in for the shot. I heard Corey say, "194," and I drilled him. He stood motionless absorbing the 180 grain partition, so I put another round down the barrel. We never did see him drop, he just backed up and tipped over. We were both excited, of course, and gave him a few minutes to expire.



As we continued our climb up to him, I think I was more concerned about where the bear had gone, then what size elk we had down! The bull was on his back with his rack jammed into the only little tree on the hillside—what bad luck. We could not free his rack from the tree to turn him around, and had to begin quartering him. It was then that we realized, not only did this bull have incredible mass, but all the tines were long as well. Perhaps it was because his body was enormous that we had thought

his score was lower? Luckily, Corey found the tip from the third antler which was broken from the impact. After skinning and quartering we took a few pictures—but with the grizzly somewhere nearby, we didn't waste much time.

We packed up the horses and made the short ride back to camp. Rod was thrilled to see the size of my bull. We put the tape to him, after dinner, and came up



with a gross score of 400 $\frac{5}{8}$; the largest typical bull the Fischer's had seen, in over 30 years! I had included a 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ inch point which Rod said was no good because it was wider than it was tall. Of course with many entries of his own in B&C, he was correct. The official score was 394 $\frac{4}{8}$ gross, 384 net. So I did get a big bull for my den!

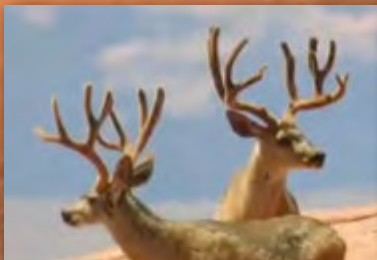
It was a long ride back down the mountain, but with two giant bulls on the horses and a week of fun with new

friends, I can't wait to draw my sheep tag for the unit with Mickie and Corey. As for the grizzlies, they were certainly well fed that week!

The unbelievable news was that Rod put in for the same unit this year with no points and drew one of two random tags! He will undoubtedly be trying for something bigger; I just hope I don't have to stand guard while he has all the fun.

The Video Buck

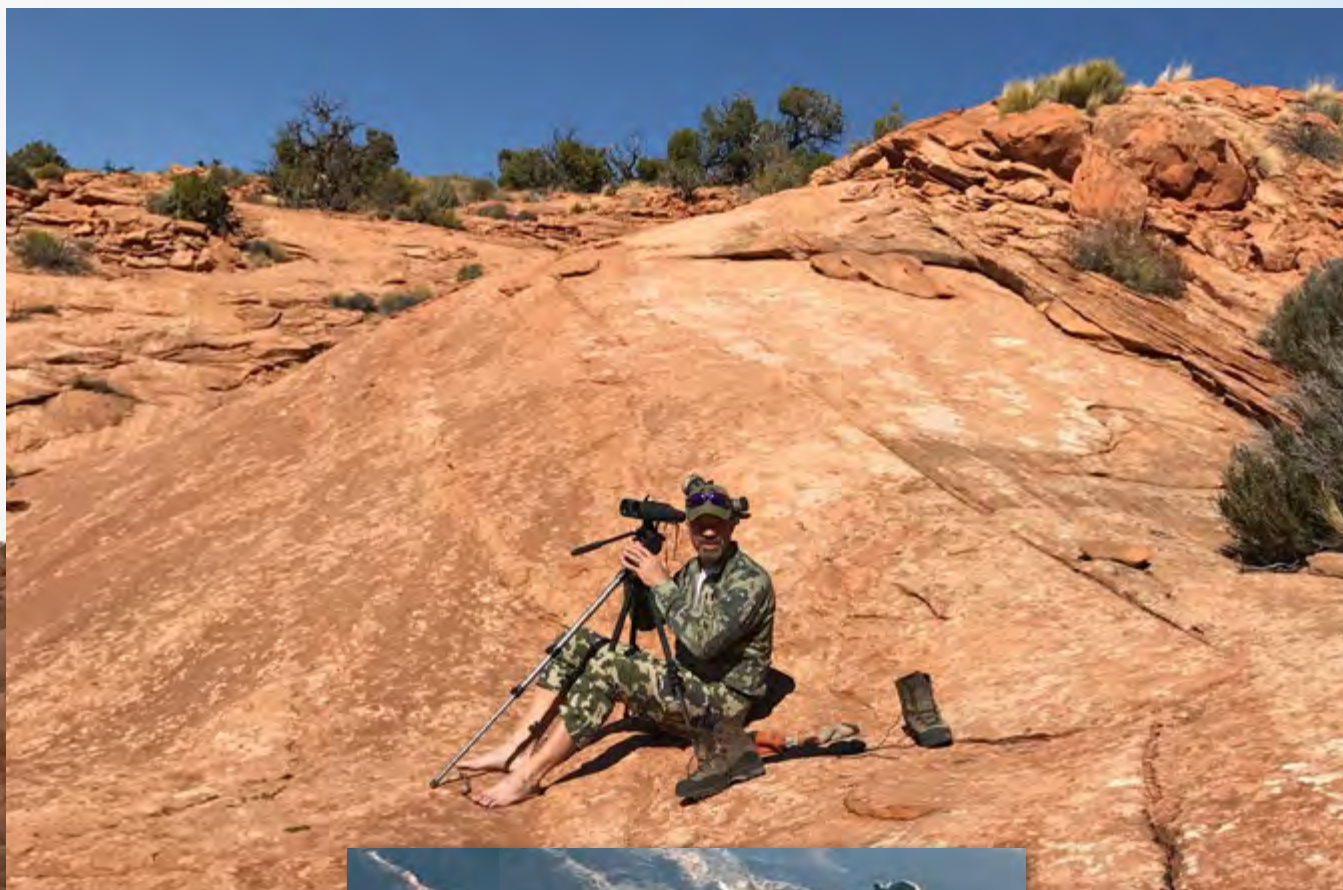
TRENT HARTLEY • 221" MULE DEER • UTAH



I love to hunt Mule deer! My favorite place to hunt them is in Sonora, Mexico. I have been traveling there for years and years and plan to keep doing so. I love the people, the weather, and the deer in that part of the world, but part of me wanted to stay closer to home and chase deer in Utah for a change. I haven't hunted trophy Mule deer in Utah since 1997, which was the year that I drew a Paunsaugunt tag and had a great time chasing big bucks, in Southern Utah . So, I began to ask questions and research the best areas in the state to focus my energy. Epic Outdoors magazine was one of the resources that I turned to, for information. Jason Carter has always been very willing to talk and help as I have consulted with him several times over the years. In fact, Jason and his father, Garth, were the first people I talked with about deer hunting in Mexico, back in 2008. My next conversation was with Kalan Lemon, of Wade Lemon Hunting. It was no surprise to me, that Kalan Lemon and Gunner Steele and his family knew the San Juan area very well. A plan

was put in place and a tag for that unit was secured. Before I knew it, I was all dialed in for a rifle deer hunt in my home state of Utah.

It seemed like eternity before summer arrived and we could begin seeing what animals were going to surface on the trail cameras and scouting trips. The first week of August I received a phone call from Gunner Steele and he sent me a video of a couple of bucks hanging out together. One of the bucks had a very unique set of antlers that were well over the 200" mark, and the other one was a good looking 190" buck. The big buck became known as the "Video Buck" in my conversations with my wife, Laurie, and other people. We filed that information and went back to looking for that heavy, non-typical, baseball bat mass type of buck that I had dreamed about coming out of that part of the state. The rest of the summer didn't turn up any bucks of that caliber, although during the muzzleloader hunt, there were some



big deer killed and even a few dead heads that surfaced that kept me anxiously looking forward to my hunt.

It was finally time for the drive to deer camp, to get this hunt started. Laurie and I loaded up every possible piece of hunting equipment and motorized form of transportation that we could think of. Our plan was to meet up with Gunner Steele, his father (Gary) and brother (Clay.) We had decided that we were going to approach this hunt sort of like a sheep hunt. The plan was to load up our backpacks and head into some uncharted and rough country in hopes of turning up a new buck that wasn't on anyone's radar. We had a blast hiking, glassing and sweating, in some of the most beautiful and remote country in the state of Utah. We saw a few deer but nothing that I wanted to pursue. We started to run low on water after a couple of days so we headed back towards camp to refuel and stock up on supplies.

We had just arrived back at camp when we were greeted by Gary Steele. He told us that he had gotten a good look at the "Video Buck" and it was big and beautiful. Now, up to this point, no one had seen him hard horned and we figured we would go look for him, toward the end of the hunt, if we didn't turn up something new. Gary wasted no time in telling us that we were crazy if we didn't change our plans and go kill this buck. We knew he was big, but we weren't sure exactly how big. Well, Gary solved that problem. He happened to have a video that he took just before dark the previous night. As I watched the video, I could see that it was a no brainer. This was a big deer, his body was huge, and his antlers were wide and gorgeous. I was all in, no doubt about it—I had found my buck.

Kalan Lemon and his family, along with Gunner's brother Bowdy and his friend Chase had wandered into camp while we were out on our opening weekend hike. I was glad to have the whole crew to help locate the buck.



It shouldn't have surprised me that it took Bowdy about 30 seconds to pull up on a spotting knob and locate our buck hunkered down in the shade taking a rest. We got the call and in a matter of minutes we turned the RZR around and I was driving like I was in the Baja 500. We needed to get to another high point to locate the buck for ourselves. We covered a lot of ground in a very short time, and then we were out of the RZR and headed to get a look at the buck. We weren't running, but we were certainly not walking either. The closer we got to the top of the ridge the more excited I got. My heart was pounding and I kept telling myself to slow down and get my breathing under control, but every time I slowed down, my wife and Gunner would leave me in the dust. I knew they couldn't do anything until I got there, but I felt a lot of pressure to keep up. We topped the hill and we were in perfect position, 600 yards away from a big old buck that had no idea we were there.

I laid down and got comfortable and situated for the shot. My breathing slowed down and I became pretty calm considering the situation I had found myself in. "Video" was up and slowly walking toward a watering hole in the rocks. The cross hairs were solid and it was game time. Gunner and Laurie had front row seats as I pulled the trigger and hit the big bodied buck right

where I wanted. He lunged forward and disappeared, but I knew the shot was good. I have complete confidence in my Gunwerks rifle and knew if I did my part, the gun would do its part.

We immediately headed down the mountain to find my buck. As we approached, I saw several guys in camouflage along with Katie and Kalan, who had their twins in backpacks, approaching too. By the time we arrived and saw my buck we were joined by everyone that was a part of this experience. Gary, Clay, Bowdy, Chase, Kalan, Katie, Remi, and Trackan were all there to celebrate with Laurie, Gunner and myself. It was awesome!

I have been around some pretty big deer in my life, and the body on this buck was big, to say the least. That was the first thing that I noticed as we approached, then I started to look at his antlers and they were more unique than I had ever imagined. They were wide, had extra points with blading and were much bigger than we had expected. I suppose that the size of his body made it more difficult to judge the antler size. We took a ton of pictures. Laurie and I were in the first pictures and by the end we had a total of 11 people in the pictures. We all jumped in and started taking care of the meat and cape.



The kids were playing in the watering hole and it was wonderful. Good people, in amazing places, doing what we love to do.

The next morning we broke out the measuring tape and admired the old buck one more time. The fact that this deer survived so long and was so big and healthy in the area that he called home is absolutely amazing to me. We rough scored the old buck at around 221 inches. I love hunting big bucks and I score all of them, but the

score means nothing compared to the experience. The experience of backpacking in pristine back country, eating Mountain House meals with my wife in the great outdoors, and having her by my side from start to finish is something that means a heck of a lot more than any score. Spending time with friends that I have traveled many miles with and have had many similar experiences with is also right there at the top of my list. I'm very grateful to be able to do what I love to do, in a state that has some of the best Mule deer hunting in the country.

EPIC SNAPSHOT

HUNTER: Kyle Meintzer	LOCATION: Illinois	SPECIES: Whitetail Deer
SCORE: 165"	TAG TYPE: Draw Tag	WEAPON: Mathews Halon 6
OUTFITTER: River Bottom Bucks		



BIGGEST SUCCESS FACTORS: It has great property with great bucks. The shot was at a tough angle, given it was very sharply quartering away, but if you put your arrow in the right spot, it's an incredibly deadly shot!

Same hunt again, what would you do different: Nothing! What could you do differently if you tag out with a bow on a 160+” buck in the first 45 minutes of your hunt?

ADVICE FOR MEMBERS ON SIMILAR HUNTS: Learn shot placement and be able to execute the shot!

OTHER COMMENTS: This was my second year hunting this area. The first year I did not see a buck I wanted to take. The second year, less than 45 minutes after I'd gotten to my tree stand, this buck came in under me, following a doe. He walked directly away from me, then finally turned just a bit so I could take the shot. He went no more than fifty yards. The Blairs are about the nicest people you could ever hope to meet. Absolutely Top Shelf!

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After waiting two plus decades for a Utah elk tag, this would finally be the year I saw the word “successful” when the draw results came out. Over the last 20 years I think I switched units 5 or 6 times. This year I had heard great things about the Boulder unit, so that is where I decided to try and draw my nonresident elk tag. As soon as I had the tag in hand, I called a friend who had hunted this unit in the past. Thankfully he offered to come along and help me out.

Prepping for a hunt like this is something I really enjoy. Whether it's just looking over maps, watching videos or my favorite, talking to past hunters. They always seem to provide some of the best information. Most past hunters are always helpful when it is a tag that might as well be once in a lifetime. Everyone I talked to had nothing but great things to say about the Boulder unit.

September could not get here fast enough. After two days of travel, I met my good friend Leroy in Torrey, Utah. We gathered a few groceries and headed down highway 12. After a little searching we found a nice spot for our wall tent. While setting the tent up we had two bulls bugling on the hillside right above us. This seemed too good to be true.

Opening morning we had a plan, it just did not turn out like I thought it would. There were way more people around than what I had expected. We covered a lot of country that first day, chasing rumors of big bulls. I did not see or hear an elk until right at dusk. I walked off the mountain that night wondering where all the elk were.

That night while lying in my sleeping bag, the woods around our tent came alive with bugling bulls. For what seemed like hours, five or six bulls carried on in a bugling, rut frenzy. Morning could not come fast enough. Day two was night and day difference from day one. We chased bulls all morning, having several close encounters. It was the same for the evening hunt also. At the end of the day I had passed eight bulls. There were a couple of times I really wanted to push the safety off, but didn't knowing the size of bulls that have come off this unit.

The next day we decided to try going further to the south. We wanted to maybe get a look at some different bulls. We found plenty of bugles to chase. Getting a good look at them in the heavy cover the Boulder is known for was another problem. I did come close to ending my hunt that morning, I found a big bull but the thick cover never gave me a clear shot.



Day 4 was a lot like the day before. Bulls were bugling. We would sneak in close, but each time we got busted by a cow or the swirling wind. I had never been so close to so many bugling and glunking bulls as I was on this hunt. With all the commotion going on in the thick timber, at one point, it felt like I was in Jurassic Park. Again the wind ruined this epic encounter. I was really beginning to wonder when my luck would change. On the way back to the truck I met a super nice local guy, who took the time to visit with us. He mentioned a place we should give a try. So that evening we thought, "Why not."

It was a couple of miles to get back into the spot. Like most of the unit, it was a beautiful area. The aspens were as pretty as they get. There was also a light fog hanging in the forest. On this evening the wind was fairly still, which made it very easy to hear the bulls carrying on ahead of us. Two bulls were really going at it just a few hundred yards apart. The first bull was in a big park, it was nice to finally get to really check him out. He was a 5x6, by far the biggest bull I have ever had the chance to shoot. We watched this bull for probably 20 minutes,

enjoying every minute of it. This whole time another bull was screaming his guts out on the hillside above us. As soon as the 5x6 drifted off, we headed up the hill. Scanning the trees ahead, I could see lots of tan bodies grazing in an aspen stand. The bull gave himself away with his constant talking. He appeared from above the herd with heavy coal black antlers. His antlers appeared to be unbroken, plus we saw he had 7 points on one side. I hate making split second decisions, but this was going to be one of them.

I hurried to a large boulder ten feet in front of me. With a sturdy rest, all I had to do was find an opening through the quakies. The bull was about 150 yards away. Finding a clear window I just waited for him to come through. A couple shots later, he was on the ground. Walking up on him was a moment I won't soon forget. My dream of hunting one of Utah's limited entry units was over. I will probably never draw another Utah elk tag. That is ok with me, I just hope others get to experience what I did.

EPIC SNAPSHOT

HUNTER: Kayla Yaksich

HUNTED WITH: Father, Rod Yaksich

LOCATION: New Mexico

WEAPON: Rifle

SPECIES: Desert Bighorn Sheep

SCORE: 168"

TAG TYPE: Draw Tag





LODGING OPTIONS AVAILABLE IN THIS AREA: Hotels in Truth or Consequences, New Mexico

WEATHER CONDITIONS: This was an August hunt. It was hot with afternoon showers because of monsoon season.

BIGGEST SUCCESS FACTORS: Pre-scouting and the ranch gives full access to public draw hunters.

ADVICE FOR MEMBERS ON SIMILAR HUNTS: Apply for the desert sheep hunts in August. The weather can be tough because of heat, but the rams were very active due to the rut.

OTHER COMMENTS: My 16 year old daughter drew this as the second choice option on her application. Her first choice was for the Rocky Mountain sheep. Even though she qualified for youth, she actually drew her once in a lifetime.

GEAR RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THIS HUNT: Great optics are a must. It is nice to have good tires and snake gators and of course lots of water.

Over in a Flash

STEVEN STAYNER • 234" MULE DEER • UTAH

Our Utah muzzleloader hunt happened so fast; I can honestly say, it was over in a “flash!” Although the hunt was over quickly our pre-season preparations took a considerable amount of time. Both my brother Brent and I had tags, and our preparations for this hunt started in early August. Thankfully, Brent, my father, and I all share the same passion for mule deer. This makes burdensome and difficult pre-season tasks a lot easier to bear. One of those tasks that can often be burdensome is pre-scouting. This year, my dad, brother, and I headed off to scout Utah’s southern region. We have hunted this area for over 20 years taking several mule deer, but never one much bigger than 200 inches. Over the years, we have found a few sheds that would score over 200 and we saw a deer, in the early 1990’s, that we thought would score in the 230’s. This year our preseason efforts paid off and we found what we were looking for.

As we came over a ridge scattered with Pinyon and Juniper trees, in the area that we thought we may start seeing deer, we instantly spotted a buck that was tall, with lots of mass. We didn’t get a great opportunity to take a look at him, as he was on the move when we spotted him, but we had enough of a look to know this was a big deer – heavy, tall and lots of extras. Exactly what we were searching for. After the deer had disappeared into the trees, we had time to ponder what we had just seen. We surmised this deer was going to score in the upper 220’s. Although we were extremely excited about having located a shooter, we knew relocating him during the season would be difficult at best – especially if he stayed in the trees.

For the remainder of the week we continued to scout the area. Our remaining time was not productive. We only saw a few small bucks along with some does and several days without seeing a deer at all. When it was finally time to go home, we discussed the upcoming hunt. We had a major dilemma to resolve – there was one giant deer and

two tags. After much discussion, we agreed upon a plan we all thought was fair – whoever spotted the deer got the first shot. We also determined we were going to hunt the big buck and nothing else.

As the weeks moved on, we kept thinking about this deer and how difficult this hunt was going to be. More than a few times in the past, we had found a huge deer while scouting, hunted him the entire season, but never caught sight of him. We definitely didn’t want that to happen this year.

The location of this deer was not ideal. He was in an opening between two groups of thick trees that would be nearly impossible to shoot through. Just getting a glimpse of him close enough to shoot, during the season, was in itself, going to be a tall order. Mule deer hunters are dreamers– always hoping for the best even when the odds are stacked against them. We were no different.

As we made the 12 hour drive to Utah from our homes in Arizona, we made plans; plans about where we were going to be opening morning, where we were going if the buck wasn’t where he should be, what to do if there were too many other hunters, etc. Sometimes the best plans are altered for some reason. On this hunt we decided not to bring a tent as the weather report showed a 0% chance of rain. We slept wonderfully under the stars until about 2 a.m. when the rain started down. We all jumped from our cots and searched for something to protect our gear. As we all scrambled to put our stuff away, I worried about the muzzleloader.

Rain can cause havoc on them so I worried the rest of the night. With a muzzleloader you only have one shot. The rain stopped a while later and we settled back into our damp beds. As the alarm sounded and we prepared for the morning hike, my dad said, “I am sure I have had worse nights in my life, but I can’t remember one.” We



had a quite a hike ahead of us if we were going to get to the area we planned to be before the sun came up, so we got on our way.

Between the rain, the gear being scrambled and no sleep, we were behind schedule. We soon noticed we were not going to make it to the ridge and field where we saw the buck, before the sun came up. As we moved through the thick trees, I told my dad and brother that since it was going to be light in a few minutes we should glass an opening that we planned to pass in the dark. We got to an area where we could see the opening and waited for first light. As soon as we could see, I immediately spotted a deer below us in the opening. It was him! Brent and I left my dad there to watch the deer and we moved to shorten the distance, the best we could. As previously agreed, I had spotted the deer, so I had first shot. We set up on some rocks and readied to shoot. I knew I had only one shot. I ranged the deer at 302 yards. I dialed my scope took a deep breath and BOOM!

I looked to Brent and instantly began questioning, "Did I hit him? Did I hit him?" I couldn't see anything due to the smoke from the muzzleloader. Brent was pumping his fist triumphantly. The deer had not taken a step. I had shot high and almost over him, but hit his spine. He was dead instantly.

We sat there for several minutes and could hardly believe what had just happened. We had killed the deer we were after on opening morning, just minutes after daylight! We went back to get my dad who had witnessed the whole event. We were all in a state of shock and amazement at the events that had just taken place. When we got down to the buck we found him to be everything we had thought and more. We spent a couple of hours just savoring the moment, savoring the special indescribable feeling one feels, hunting and harvesting mule deer, savoring being together on the mountain doing what we love.



After our moment, we had a decision to make; did we want to continue to hunt to fill Brent's tag? At the very beginning of this hunt, we'd decided we were hunting the big buck and nothing else. We were going to honor that decision. We had another tag to fill, but we were headed home on cloud nine.

This was definitely one of my favorite hunts! The time with family in the outdoors has always been special to me, but to take a deer of this caliber with my dad and brother beside me, makes the experience all the more memorable. The deer ended up scoring 234 4/8 gross!



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 JIM HAMBERLIN - AZ

EPIC SNAPSHOT



HUNTER: Eric Stanoscheck	LOCATION: Kansas
SPECIES: Whitetail Deer	SCORE: 181"
TAG TYPE: Draw tag	LAND HUNTED: Public
WEATHER CONDITIONS: Hunted December 4th. It was cold and clear	
BIGGEST SUCCESS FACTORS: Perseverance	



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MAN VS. STALLION

JASON SPENCER • 84 4/8" ANTELOPE • NEVADA

On my most recent adventure, I had the great pleasure of having my friend Mark Powell, aka "Pounder," tag along with me. I spent a lot of my luck on just drawing the tag. I beat tough odds and I wanted to make sure I did it justice. The unit I had drawn had been, in the past, Nevada's number one trophy area, but the last five or so years the extreme drought had taken its toll. I had talked with a bunch of the other hunters that have hunted the area in the recent past and they were very skeptical on the possibility of finding a monster.

After over 10 hours of travel, Pounder and I arrived at the Royal Peacock Mining camp area. You have to camp in designated camping areas in the Sheldon Wildlife Refuge, and there is zero tolerance for any off-roading. The Royal Peacock camp was a nice little area. We found wild burros, nice muley bucks, and other wildlife—just no antelope. I had my heart set on a buck that would hit one of two requirements: 16" tall or 83 plus B&C points and I was ready to eat my tag if I could not find a great buck.

Morning came and Pounder and I headed out in search of the elusive antelope. The first hour after light left us with nothing more than an incredible sunrise, dirt roads, and waterfowl. The next hour we were debating on taking the road toward the Catnip reservoir area, thinking that where there was water, there would be antelope. After the first three hours we wondered if there were actually any antelope there. We stopped and glassed another basin when a couple of locals from Reno stopped to chat. They said that our goals were very lofty and that with the drought for the last few years, the average sizes of bucks had gone downhill. These guys were great and

very helpful in recommending areas to try, as they had hunted this area many times before. We were now really wondering if I had set my standards a touch high for the unit.

Then fortune finally hit. After driving only 300 or so yards we glassed an antelope on a mountain many miles away! We were right—find the water and find the antelope. It wasn't long and we were looking over many antelope and a few good bucks. One in particular I believed to be a very heavy 15" buck with exceptional prongs. The problem was, that there were other hunters already chasing him.

We left that area and found Catnip reservoir. It was nestled in a cool basin. I went up the side of the hill to the top of a table to look around, there, I encountered a ticked off Stallion. The closer I got to him the louder he snorted. Pounder who watched from a distance, was getting concerned for my safety as I had no way of warding off any attack. I was even more concerned than he was. I had never seen a horse act that way and he was getting more and more aggressive. Pounder was working on getting his camera ready for a YouTube special, "Man vs Stallion." I decided to walk to the side of him, giving him a little space, about 50', to hopefully calm him down. It worked.

I was looking over some country when Pounder got my attention. He was looking over a big herd in an area that had some natural barriers. I had only seen a few up there but he had a great view and said there was a good buck in there and we needed a better look. I came down



and we drove closer as we were three plus miles from them. We got a better look at him and decided he was a potential shooter. We hiked up a hill to get the sun at our backs and come out from the top just equal to the herd.

We finally came out on the edge of the table. The antelope were in a great spot to keep from danger, and they had no idea we were there. We ranged him at 675 yards. I left Pounder to sneak off the cliffs, find a great rest and hopefully get a shot. After three different attempts to find a good solid rest, I found one suitable for my shot. I checked the wind and took a few practice trigger pulls to make sure my rest and heartbeat were up to the task. I adjusted my turret on my Weatherby and loaded a bullet. My rest was great, heart beat steady, and my quarry was broadside. I touched it off and WHOP! He dropped in his tracks. He never knew what hit him.

We made our way over to him wondering if we were going to have ground shrinkage. When we got to him

we were very pleased to find a fantastic buck—my tallest to date. My shot had been placed as perfectly as I could have asked for. My only sadness was the fact that my hunt was over so fast. I hunted for about 4 or 5 hours before taking him. But I was very happy with the results and my hunting partner made the hunt that much better. We caped him out, then boned and quartered him for the hike back to the truck. The stallion made its way down to my truck to keep an eye on us. I was wondering what we were supposed to do if he came at us now in the open sage. Then it came to me—hide behind Pounder! He never ended up doing anything except freak us out. We made it back to the truck without any problems!

The Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge was an incredible area to explore and see, if only for a couple days. My buck ended up being 16.5" and 16.25" tall, with great prongs and mass. We roughed him at 84 4/8 B&C, meeting not one but both of my goals.

Bitter Sweet SUCCESS

ANDREW RALSTON • ELK • WASHINGTON
STORY BY WADE RALSTON • PHOTOS BY LUKE CARRICK

How do you describe something which is bitter? How about something that is sweet? What is success? Each one of these questions can be answered in a couple of different ways. To each of us, these three words by themselves are pretty easy to describe. Put them together and now you have a story that can make you realize all that is good in this life. This is how I would describe the phrase “Bitter Sweet Success”.

It was the middle of July and the Washington state special hunt drawing results had just been posted. Like little kids at Christmas, every hunter who puts in for special tags rushes to their computer to hopefully see that word “SELECTED” next to the hunt of their dreams. For me I had not been successful in drawing my dream hunt. However, my younger brother, Andrew Ralston, had. He had drawn a Quality Bull Elk tag for the unit

in the Wenaha National Forest of the Blue Mountains. We quickly made a phone call to a good friend, Luke Carrick, of Guiderite Adventures. Luke has many years of experience and has been very successful in the backcountry of the Wenaha Wilderness Area. And so, the preparation began. The plan was, come September second, we would be making the four and a half mile hike into base camp at roughly 6400 feet above sea level. From there we would drop around 1000 vertical feet to hunt the big canyons below camp. In the meantime, we would make a few trips to check trail cameras, get an idea of what was in the area, and try to get in shape for the grueling hikes we were sure to endure.

Fast forward one month—the middle of August. We have a couple of weeks until the big hunt. We had been on a couple of scouting trips and had some really

good bulls on camera. One in particular that Andrew had made his number one. We named him "Hook", as he had double drop tines that looked like hooks. He was a 7x8 that Luke figured would score somewhere in the 370" Pope and Young range. He was an absolutely beautiful representative of the class of elk that this area has to offer. We could hardly wait for September fifth, the first day of the hunt. On Sunday August 28th, I got a call from my mother saying that my grandfather was in the hospital and not doing well. Grandpa "B," as we all called him, was 84 years old and up until that point had been doing great—or so we all thought. As a family, we headed for the hospital in Colfax, WA to be with him. On Tuesday August 30th, we got the bad news that the doctors had given Grandpa "B" two weeks to live as he had an inoperable cancerous tumor between his heart and lungs. As you can imagine, we were all devastated at the news. Only a week before he had been out working in his garden. For me and my siblings, grandpa was our hero. He was the leader of our family. My brothers and I were ready to give up our hunt to spend the rest of grandpa's days with him. But he would not have any part of that and made us promise that no matter what, we would not miss our hunt. All he said was, "You guys go get the big one and bring him back here and let me get my hands on that rack". So, we took grandpa home as that's where he wanted to be and we left him with that promise.

Friday September second, two days after leaving grandpa's side we were at the trailhead, preparing to hike the four and a half miles into our backcountry

home, for the next however many days it would take us to accomplish our goal. We had our Stone Glacier packs loaded with around 70 lbs. of gear. My brothers, Andrew and Tyson, and I headed out. Luke and his girlfriend, Kali, would be getting into camp later that night. It didn't take long before we heard our first bull sound with a growly bugle. We all looked at each other with enthusiasm in our eyes and our hearts pounding. I would like to say that it was purely from the excitement but truth be told, it was partly due to the steep hike into camp. You sure could forget about the hard walk as we were serenaded by bugling bulls all the way. As the sun went down, the bugles slowly stopped and we prepared ourselves for a couple days of glassing from the ridge top before the season actually opened. Unfortunately for us, during the next few days the elk never showed themselves and went quiet.

Opening day was September fifth. The plan was to walk the ridge line and cow call hoping to have a bull answer and give away his position. "Hook" was on our mind and that was who we were after. We woke up, around 3:30 am to a chilly 30-degree morning with overcast skies, ate a little breakfast and loaded our packs to hit the trail an hour before daylight. As we made our way down the trail with Luke sending out the flirtatious calls from his Primos cow call, it was hard not to think about Grandpa "B" and how I wished he could be with us. As the sun rose over the adjacent ridge line, the excitement grew and the guilt of not being with him made its way into my mind. I had to keep telling myself that this is where grandpa wanted us to be. I could only imagine Andrew's feelings as this was his tag and hunt. It didn't take long before we heard an elk bugle way down in the bottom of the canyon and the chase was on. We dropped about 1800 vertical feet into what looked like a very promising drainage. We knew that the elk had to be somewhere close by. Luke told us to go ahead of him 50 yards or so to set up and he would start calling. We set up several times with no luck; the elk had gone silent. We spent most of that first day in that canyon only to see a couple of very nice mule deer bucks and a black bear that walked past one of our set ups at only 30 yards. At around 4:00 in the afternoon we decided that it was time to make the long 4 hour and 1800 vertical feet hike back to camp. With no success and not a whole lot of bugles to be heard, the thoughts of grandpa were hard to fight back and I kept reflecting on all the hunts we had shared as I was growing up. On more than one occasion, I found myself wiping tears away from my face along with the sweat from the rigorous hike to camp. We finally made it back to camp where we prepared a Mountain House dinner, on our Jet Boil stoves, and prepared for bed. We were lucky enough to have cell phone service where we were and were able to get an update on grandpa. He had a pretty good day with some old friends stopping in to see him. That made sleeping that night a little easier. The fact that, except for Luke and Kali, my brothers and I were not cut from the same mold they were, when it came to time in the backcountry, may have had something to do with that as well.



Day two, we awoke well before sunrise and prepared for another long day of hiking by filling our packs with all of our provisions for the day along with our Kuui rain gear as it looked like it could rain—and rain it did! We did see one little rag-horn bull that snuck in on us as silent as a mouse. After a couple of hours of nothing but the sound of rain and no elk, the decision was made that we would pull out and go home to save some vacation days and to let the rut get going a little better and come back on the weekend.

When we got into camp a few days later we found Andrew and Tyson in good spirits as they had heard a lot of elk bugling before we had arrived and were pretty excited. With a new sense of optimism we hit the sack in hopes they would be responsive to the calls in the morning. It seemed like I had just closed my eyes and Luke was waking us up. It was time, we put on our gear and loaded up our packs. Andrew got his Expedition Xcentric bow ready and we hit the trail, heading down the ridge before sunrise.

It didn't take long for Luke to get an answer from a bull. 500 yards down the canyon, on a bench below us, was Andrew's "HOOK!" He was there with 10 - 15 cows. Our hearts sank because we knew how hard it was going to be to get him to come up and cross the ridgetop. We decided to keep working our way down the ridge. We hadn't gone very far when Luke got another answer from a bull. It was time for us to make a stalk into shooting range. With Luke's vast knowledge of the Unit, he put us on a trail that took us right to where he said the bull would be. We came upon a rocky outcropping overlooking a basin and a rocky side hill below us where two draws came together. We were right in the middle of, not one, but three different bulls. One would answer Luke's cow call and the other two would scream back at him. We had the perfect position. Luke backed off just a little and proceeded to cow call. Andrew readied his bow and I got the camera set up to hopefully catch it all unfold. Within minutes, we had a bull screaming right below us. Andrew drew his bow before the elk showed himself from behind the rock outcropping. I raised the camera in hopes of catching the shot on camera. Tyson gave a little chirp on the cow call and the bull stopped in his tracks, just 42 yards away. It was like slow motion; the arrow came out of the bow and down the elk went with a loud crack as the four-bladed slick trick buried into the spine of the elk—it was a pretty steep downhill angle. The bull dropped and rolled a good 200 yards to the bottom of the drainage. We were all in shock; it was high fives and a lot of hugs!

We spent the next 6 hours boning the trophy and packing it out to a spot that we could get the horses to the next morning. We had found our "Success". The next night we found the "Bitterness". My brother Andrew was able to keep his promise with our Grandpa "B". He walked into the house with the rack, stood next to grandpa's bedside and let him get his hands on "The Big One". Three days later grandpa took his last breath surrounded by his family. And with that we learned the meaning of "Bitter Sweet Success". Love you Grandpa "B".





EPIC SNAPSHOT

HUNTER: Tyke Posey

LOCATION: New Mexico

SPECIES: Barbary Sheep

WEAPON: Rifle 7mm

TAG TYPE: Draw Tag

LAND HUNTED: Public



WEATHER CONDITIONS: 30-60 mph winds

BIGGEST SUCCESS FACTORS: Good glass and miles on the boots

SAME HUNT AGAIN, WHAT WOULD YOU DO DIFFERENT: Buy a camper so tents don't get destroyed in the winds.

ADVICE FOR MEMBERS ON SIMILAR HUNTS: Don't skimp on glass and be willing to hike miles and miles.

GEAR RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THIS HUNT: Take the biggest glass you can afford. You need some Kenetreks or other good mountain boots. Take a pair of good leather gloves. There are sharp rocks everywhere that tear your hands up. Take a packable pad to sit on while you glass. There are cactus and sharp rocks everywhere.



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EPIC SNAPSHOT

HUNTER: Nino Ripepi

LOCATION: Colorado

SPECIES: Mule Deer

SCORE: 181"

TAG TYPE: Draw Tag

LAND HUNTED: Public

WEATHER CONDITIONS: It was unseasonably warm, but some cooler weather and a skiff of snow in the middle of the hunt.

BIGGEST SUCCESS FACTORS: Keep moving until you find the does and be patient waiting on a nice buck to show.

COMMENTS: This was a 4th Season hunt. I spent 10+ points hoping the late dates would allow for snow to concentrate the deer during the peak of the rut. I took a chance as I had never been in the unit. If Colorado had not changed the return tag rules, I may have turned the tag back. The hunt started slow, but picked up with a few inches of snow and colder weather. The deer were spread out and not concentrated, but were definitely rutting. On the morning of day three, I found this 29.5" wide 4X4, the 6th buck I saw, and could not pass him as he was the best I had seen to date in the unit.

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EPIC SNAPSHOT

HUNTER: Dave Billings	LOCATION: British Columbia
SPECIES: Stone Sheep	WEAPON: Rifle
SCORE: 175"	LODGING: Tents
OUTFITTER: Kinaskan Lake Outfitters	





WEATHER CONDITIONS: Weather conditions included rain, low fog and high winds

BIGGEST SUCCESS FACTORS: With our guide and one pack horse, we hunted eight days for Stone sheep. We lived out of small three man tents, slept on rocks and ate macaroni or pork and beans. After 7 days, we met back with the crew at base camp.

SAME HUNT AGAIN, WHAT WOULD YOU DO DIFFERENT: I'd take some mountain house dinners.

ADVICE FOR MEMBERS ON SIMILAR HUNTS: Be prepared to spend nights under a tarp.

GEAR RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THIS HUNT: Invest in the best rain and wind gear money can buy.

Hot Trick

DAN FREI • MULE DEER • UTAH • NEVADA • MEXICO

The smell of dust and gasoline hung thick in the dark pre-dawn air. It was opening morning of the Utah Muzzleloader deer hunt and as I lay in the rocks and oak. I couldn't believe what had just happened. My hunting companion, Mike, and I had been working an ATV up a steep two track trail, when all of a sudden and without warning, the ATV flipped over backwards and landed squarely on top of me. I was dazed and as I regained my senses, I could feel a nasty pain in my right shoulder—my shooting shoulder.

I was immediately worried that the injury might be serious, but hoped that it wasn't because this was the third year of a three year personal quest. Two years prior to this, during the fall, I was hunting central Utah. When, finally, on the sixth day of a planned six day hunt, Ryan Jones and I glassed up a big buck. He was across a deep canyon from us and working his way to a bedding area. We watched him for over an hour, until he finally bedded

down. We made a 2 1/2 mile stalk, found an angle and I shot him at 360 yards. The buck was a clean 4x4 typical, 32" wide and gross scored just under 200 inches.

The next year, I went to Old Mexico in search of big Mule Deer in the Sonoran Desert. I was with my good friend Tyson Cannon and on the very first day of our hunt, we glassed a giant buck on the side of a small hill that protruded out of the flat desert floor. We covered the 1,200 yards quickly and climbed up the backside of the hill. We reached the top and looked down the hillside where we had previously seen the buck. There he was, less than 100 yards away, below us, and looking straight up at us. I could instantly see unbelievable width, huge eye guards and extra heavy mass. I was still breathing hard from the run and climb and there was a stiff North wind and the shot was quick and off hand. The buck collapsed into the desert brush and we whooped, hollered and high fived each other.



All of a sudden, he got up and took off out across the desert flats with the afterburners on. A quick check of the tracks showed no blood. Not even a drop. I was dumbfounded and absolutely sick to my stomach.

Hoping against hope, we hiked about a mile in the direction that he ran, climbed another hill and immediately spotted him rutting a doe at 280 yards. This time a large rock provided a steady rest and I quickly had him on the ground. As I approached him, I couldn't believe my eyes. We figured he was big, but on the ground lay a slick 4x4, 35" wide, 5" eye guards and 7 1/2" bases. I immediately could tell why there was no blood from the previous shot. The bullet had struck his left antler, just above the base. Normally the 180 gr. bullet would have blown the antler off, but because of the extraordinary mass, the bullet passed through the antler, leaving it intact. The buck gross scored a little over 200".

As the next season approached, I wondered if three big bucks, three years in a row would be possible. As the hunt approached I set a personal goal to kill a buck big enough to give me 600 total inches in three years, which I thought would be quite a feat. A mule deer "Hat Trick." Then the ATV accident happened and I my dream seemed instantly crushed. Just getting out of the hills and back to the truck was no easy matter. But, I kept thinking how thankful I was to be heading to the Orthopedic Surgeon's office and not to the morgue.

X-rays revealed a horizontal break where the shaft of the humerus bone meets the end ball and two vertical shear fractures off the ball itself. Obviously the Utah hunt was a "bust"—pun intended.

But, I had also drawn a Nevada deer tag and that hunt wouldn't start until the first week of November, five weeks after the accident. At the four week mark, we took



DAN'S 32" UTAH BUCK

new x-rays and everything was still in good position. The Doctor was a good friend and fellow hunter. I explained to him that I had a deer hunt in a week and asked him if the shoulder would take the rifle recoil. He looked at me, laughed, and said, "Now that would be a miracle." I've always believed in miracles, so I did not turn the tag back and decided I'd do the best I could to complete the "Hat Trick."

The first part of November came and went with the shoulder still not feeling great. I stayed home. The hunt would go until after Thanksgiving and I knew that with the rut kicking in, my chances would only get better with a little extra time for the shoulder to heal.

By mid November the shoulder was feeling okay and I was tired of waiting. So on November 15th, I decided to give it a try. I pulled out of my driveway at 5:00 am, picked up two good friends and neighbors, Ernie Hafen and Wade Ovard. By daylight we were in my hunting unit.

This part of Nevada is very desolate and dreary—inhabited mostly by rattlesnakes and a few jack rabbits. But, I knew of an isolated water catchment where a local cowboy told me he had seen a big buck the previous year. We decided to hunt some rolling breaks behind the catchment. Within 30 minutes I had spotted some deer;

four does and a rutty old desert buck. We could tell he had a 4x4 frame with an inline extra on one side and an extra kicker on the other side. We could also tell he was wide and massive around the bases.

We cut the distance to about 200 yards, I got a good rest on my pack and waited for him to give me an opening. The buck was rutting the does. He was up, then laying down, then up again circling the does. In and out of the rocks, visible then invisible in the gullies. I kept telling myself that if I was patient, he'd eventually give me a chance. After about 45 minutes of this, he finally stood broadside in the open. Without even thinking about the shoulder, I pulled the trigger and let the air out of him.

The buck has a 5x5 frame and 32" of width. He also has an additional five eye guards on one side and three eye guards on the other side for a total of 18 scorable points. Just enough to complete the "Hat Trick". Three bucks in three consecutive years, all well over 30 inches wide and a three deer average of 600 inches!

I am grateful to have been raised in a home where I was taught the love of wild things and wild places. I was also taught in that home that miracles can happen—even with improbable odds, miracles can happen. Yes sir, they certainly can.



DAN'S 35" MEXICO BUCK



DAN'S 32" NEVADA BUCK

EPIC SNAPSHOT

HUNTER: Scott Ewaskowitz | **SPECIES:** Elk

LOCATION: Utah, Central Mtns Manti Unit

WEAPON: Rifle | **TAG TYPE:** Draw Tag

LAND HUNTED: Public

WEATHER CONDITIONS: It was a full moon, very hot, moderate rain and heavy wet snow

BIGGEST SUCCESS FACTORS: There was great hunting chemistry and friendship in camp with my buddies. Always enjoying the magic of the west. Loved the walking. The never give up, attitude and extreme determination of the Hunter with the tag.

ADVICE FOR MEMBERS ON SIMILAR HUNTS: At least a week of pre-scouting. Give Adam in the Epic office a call for great advice on the unit.

GEAR RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THIS HUNT: ATV is very useful, but not a must. Bring chains for vehicle in case it snows or has lots of rain. Horses can be obtained, to pack, in Fairview



EPIC SNAPSHOT

HUNTER: Scott Breedlove	LOCATION: Ohio
SPECIES: Whitetail	WEAPON: Bow
LAND HUNTED: Private	SCORE: 167"



OTHER COMMENTS: After seeing this buck on the 1st day of my hunt I sat in the same stand for 6 days and 40 hours before I saw him again. Shot him with my bow on the 6th day of the hunt. Thankful for a great hunt.

Quality TIME

JASON MILLAR • 80" ANTELOPE • WYOMING

My dad has been my main hunting partner since my early twenties. He took me hunting as a kid, but it wasn't until I started guiding/running his outfitting business that we became hunting partners. Since that time, we have found more time for the two of us, along with my brother and uncle, to just enjoy each other's company and the outdoors.

Wyoming has always been our focus, and we were up for an antelope tag. Dad picked the area and we applied—guaranteed to draw the tag we wanted. He went out a week early with a friend of his who also had a license in the same area. Opening day, the two of them saw a monster that they both figured would score in the mid-80s. The two of them were nearly within shooting range of the buck when a truck came nearby.

I won't go into details, but the driver of the vehicle intentionally scared away the buck—never to be seen again. Frustrated and angry

beyond belief, he decided he was done hunting. That was it! Fast forward a week; his friend went home without an antelope and Dad was content sitting in his new camper sipping coffee.

My arrival did seem to lift his spirits. We work well as a team and looking over antelope together is a huge part of the fun and challenge. After getting the lay of the land and gauging animals we found a nice 78 1/2" goat for me.

The next day at dusk we were exploring a new area and saw an antelope with big hooks. I did not get a good enough view, in time, to tell dad to shoot—and then he was gone! I had gotten him excited enough to shoot though. The next morning we tried the same area and saw our big hook friend at first light. We had him on the ground within an hour.

I enjoy our time when together and am glad I could get him out of his funk for a very nice 80 1/2" buck.



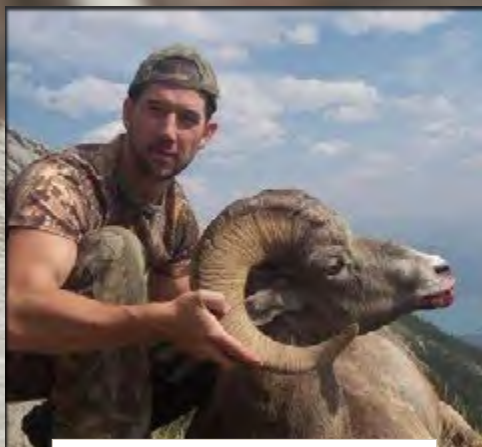
EPIC MEMBER SUCCESS



MATT THOMPSON, SHEEP, NM
COMPASS WEST OUTFITTERS



BEAU JOHNSON, MULE DEER
NEVADA



PAUL BRENNAND, SHEEP
ALBERTA



CHARLIE BOARDMAN, MTN GOAT
UTAH



TIM COTTON, ELK, NEVADA
WESTERN WILDLIFE ADVENTURES



DON PERRIEN, 388" ELK, ARIZONA
A3 TROPHY HUNTS



DAVID CULLEN, 200" MULE DEER, NV
BULL RIDGE GUIDE SERVICE

EPIC MEMBER SUCCESS



JOHN ANDERSON, DESERT SHEEP
CALIFORNIA



ROBERT STOWERS, ELK, AZ
BURN'T TIMBER OUTFITTERS



CAROLE WHITE, ELK
NEW MEXICO



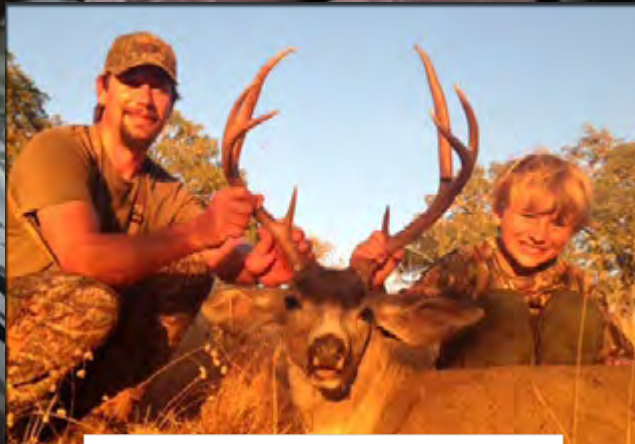
CASEY ORR, MULE DEER
NEVADA



LARRY BRITT, WHITETAIL DEER
KANSAS



ERIC PRATT, MOUNTAIN GOAT
COLORADO



AARON BEHRENS, BLACKTAIL
CALIFORNIA

EPIC MEMBER SUCCESS



MICHAEL JOOS, & FRIEND LAFE
WHITETAIL, KANSAS



TRAVIS OSMOND, MULE DEER
COLORADO



LESTER SMITH, 175 MULE DEER
NEVADA



BYRON WHITNEY, ELK, WY
COW CREEK ADVENTURES



JAMIE BRAGER, 186" MULE DEER
COLORADO



TODD GLASS, 187 4/8" MULE DEER
WYOMING



TAMMY MUNIS, 340 ELK
MONTANA

EPIC MEMBER SUCCESS



TRACY CLEVERINGA, ANTELOPE
WYOMING



STEVE TERRY, 230LB WILD PIG, CA
WESTERN WILDLIFE ADVENTURES



ROBBY CASTAGNO, WHITETAIL
KANSAS



MADI MCKEACHNIE, MULE DEER
COLORADO



BRAD ALEXANDER, 30" MULE DEER
UTAH



DALLIN HEINER, MULE DEER
IDAHO



JASON JOHNSON, 107" COUES DEER
MEXICO, COLBURN AND SCOTT OUTFITTERS

EPIC MEMBER SUCCESS



CHRIS TOOMEY, WHITETAIL DEER
MINNESOTA



CHASE FLADELAND, MTN LION, UT
HOROX OUTFITTING



DERECK SHUT, 170" WHITETAIL
KANSAS



JEFF MEE, MULE DEER
COLORADO



NICK DUNCAN, MULE DEER,
UTAH



RON BUSH, MTN LION, UTAH
HOROX OUTFITTING



JOE DEMASI, ELK, COLORADO
WITH CWO

EPIC MEMBER SUCCESS



BUDDY HARRISON, 335" ELK
COLORADO, WITH CWO



DANIEL O'BRIEN, MULE DEER
COLORADO, WITH CWO



SKIPPER WILLIAMS, ELK, UTAH
HOROX OUTFITTING



SCOTT SEMOUR, WHITETAIL DEER
KANSAS



DARREN BACHAND, MULE DEER
COLORADO



DALLIN HEINER, ELK
IDAHO



BUDDY COOK, ELK, UTAH
HOROX OUTFITTING

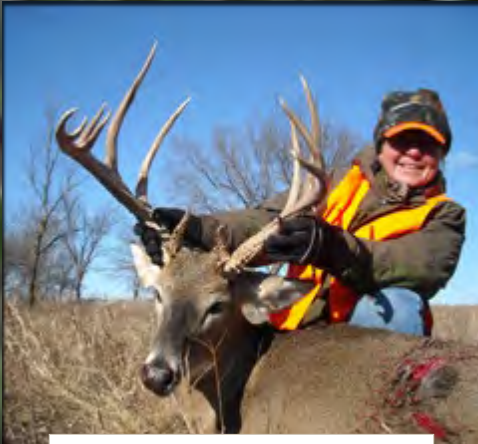
EPIC MEMBER SUCCESS



WILLIAM DAVISON, ANTELOPE
WYOMING



MICHAEL HALTER, ANTELOPE
WYOMING



MARY CLARKE, WHITETAIL DEER
KANSAS



MICHAEL AHO, MTN LION, CO
HOROX OUTFITTING



SHANE VANDER GIESSEN
BLACK BEAR, WASHINGTON



LITHENA VAN DUSEN, ANTELOPE
WYOMING



SHANE STUHR, ELK
WYOMING

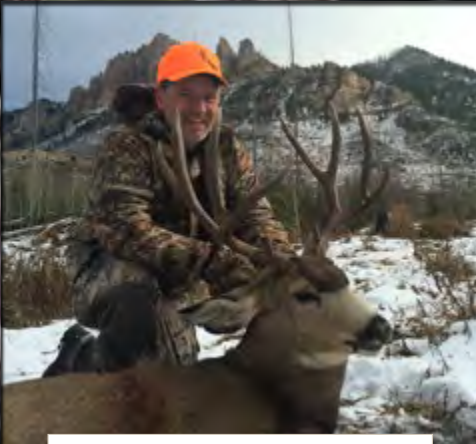
EPIC MEMBER SUCCESS



JARED LINDSTROM, ELK
COLORADO



GABRIEL THURMAN, MULE DEER
KANSAS



LYLE PETERS, MULE DEER
WYOMING



COLBY OLESON, ANTELOPE
WYOMING



STEVE BACHMANN, MULE DEER
WYOMING



SHANE VANDER GIESSEN
137 7/8 BLACKTAIL, WASHINGTON



WACEY AND ELI CLARKE, WHITETAIL DEER
KANSAS

EPIC MEMBER SUCCESS



CHRIS MOORE, ELK
WASHINGTON



JONAS VOSSLER, ANTELOPE
NEW MEXICO



MIKE BURCH, MTN LION, UTAH
HOROX OUTFITTING



KONLEY HEATON, 32" MULE DEER
WYOMING, MF HUNTING



DON TRAYNHAM, COUES DEER
MEXICO

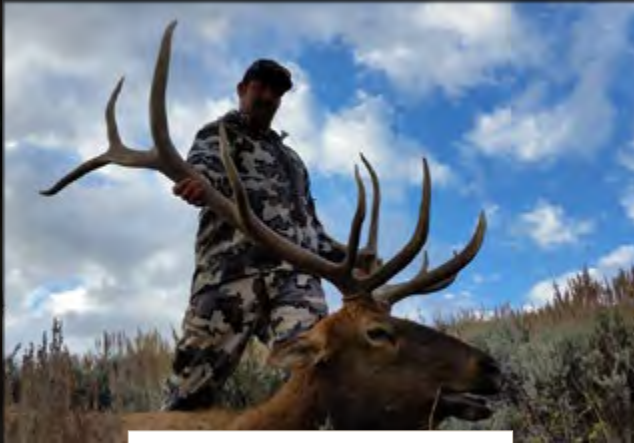


LEE SORCINELLI, COUES DEER, MEX,
COLBURN AND SCOTT OUTFITTERS

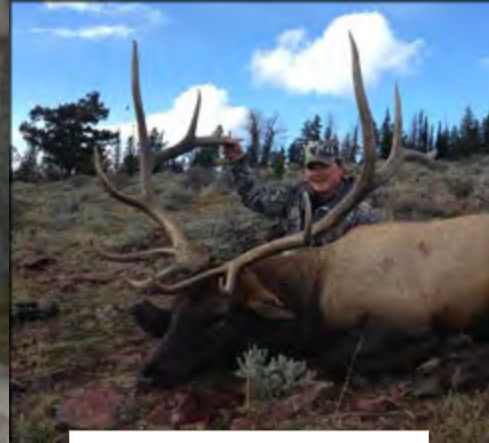


TY LAFRANO, ELK, UTAH
HOROX OUTFITTING

EPIC MEMBER SUCCESS



ERIC DOWNS, ELK
UTAH



ZACK AUGUSTINE, ELK, UTAH
HOROX OUTFITTING



MONTE GREEN, MULE DEER
UTAH



JOSEPH FARINSKY, ELK
NEW MEXICO



FELIPE GONZALEZ, IBEX
NEW MEXICO



DAN BURNS, ELK COW
WASHINGTON



LEVI GILLIS, ELK
WASHINGTON

EPIC MEMBER SUCCESS



RANDY ISAACKSON, ELK, UTAH
HOROX OUTFITTING



KYLAN HUEFTLE, MULE DEER
NEVADA



LEXI CARTER, ELK, NEVADA
WESTERN WILDLIFE ADVENTURES



TONY GRECH, 188" MULE DEER, NV
WHITE RIVER GUIDE SERVICE



CHAD NEWMAN, DESERT BIGHORN
EWE, NEVADA



MARK LAGORIO, MULE DEER, NV
WESTERN WILDLIFE ADVENTURES



SCOTT GILLIS, ELK
WASHINGTON

EPIC MEMBER SUCCESS



CHARLES PAPPAS KIDS, TURKEYS
KANSAS



JON MURPHY, 30" MULE DEER
NEVADA



JIMMY PEARSALL, ELK, NEW MEXICO
FRONTIER OUTFITTING



ALLEN SHEARER, ELK, NM, CANYON
COUNTRY GUIDE SERVICE



BRYCE RATLIFF, MULE DEER
NEVADA



MARK TICHENOR, MULE DEER, NV
WITH DEEP CREEK OUTFITTERS



SAL PIAZZA, 350" ELK, NEVADA
NEVADA HIGH DESERT OUTFITTERS

EPIC MEMBER SUCCESS



JOHN ADAMS, ANTELOPE, ARIZONA
HIGH POINT OUTFITTERS



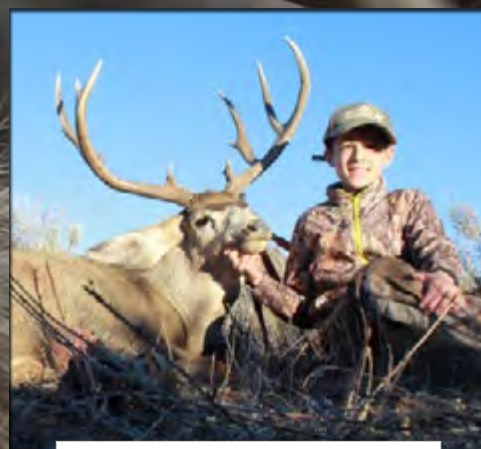
SHAWN HANCOCK, 122" COUES DEER,
MEX, HIGH DESERT OUTFITTERS



BROCK SHERWOOD, ELK
NEVADA



ANTHONY RUSSO, ELK, AZ
BIG CHINO GUIDE SERVICE



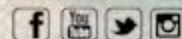
FELIPE GONZALEZ, MULE DEER
NEW MEXICO



TREVOR VOSSLER, ANTELOPE
NEW MEXICO



ANDY WOOD, DESERT BIGHORN, AZ
HIGH DESERT OUTFITTERS



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