

SKULL



AN OUTFITTER'S JOURNAL



THE **3**
YEAR WAIT

A SANDY HILLS HUNTING PUBLICATION

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TRES AÑOS

In 2020, during the heart of Covid and after one of the worst droughts the Eastern Plains had experienced in 20 years, my search for “Forks” began. That year Jeremy mentioned a 4-year old buck that he had found in 2019 that he had high expectations of becoming a target buck in 2020. However, with the drought, he and bucks he hung with had moved. Most likely to escape the drought conditions and to find better conditions elsewhere. Jeremy eventually found the bucks about 4 miles away where they had moved onto some irrigated pivots. The bucks finally showed back up on the ranch in mid-August. Forks had certainly made some improvement but we weren’t certain it was enough. Hopefully he would grow a bit more before season started.

When season rolled around we spent a couple days looking for Forks, but had yet to turn him up. We spotted a lot of familiar bucks, but all we kept thinking was, “If they’d just had better conditions for antler growth.” All the deer had suffered and it was apparent. After a few days out, we still had not found Forks, but kept looking. We eventually located him

and tried for a long time to get him to grow in the bins, but he just didn’t. Forks, along with several other bucks received a pass during the 2020 season.

I promptly rebooked for 2021, and the rains arrived for the spring/summer growing season and along with them would come antler growth. Jeremy sent me pictures of bucks, either to torture me or to show me how huge bucks get on the plains. The hunt could not come fast enough. However, after one early scouting photo of Forks in June, Jeremy never caught another glimpse of him the entire summer and nobody would lay eyes on him again until the day we killed him.

When I arrived in Lamar, the hunt began that afternoon. Jeremy and I reviewed a list of potential shooters and how they differed. My thoughts and focus kept returning to Forks. We found one of the list bucks at under 160 yards late on the first evening. It was a fantastic buck with a large frame and a few kickers, but it was past legal shooting light. Looking back, I am glad it was because I really wanted a look at Forks. Over the next few days,



2019



we covered a lot of ground in our search for our three target bucks. We found the buck from the first night several times on a nearby farm we did not have permission to hunt. On the third evening of the hunt, Neil called and told us that he had found The Big Four(one of the target bucks Jeremy had found earlier that summer), but he was broken badly from a fight. Well, all of our attention was now on Forks....of course, he was nowhere to be found! We had ran through his territory and came up empty-handed a couple of times. The pastures he

traditionally had called home were entirely overgrown with sunflowers from all the rain. Finding deer in the area was proving to be difficult, so finding a single buck had me a little concerned. After the morning hunt on the fourth day, we backed out to rethink our plan and get some food and fuel for the evening hunt. After a short break, we headed back out. It wasn't long and Jeremy got a text from Neil that he had found Forks! Neil backed out and we headed that way. Shortly after we arrived, we found Forks not far from where Neil



2020



had left him. He was in a field of sunflowers we had picked apart earlier that day. All you could see was his rack and occasionally the top of his head. We got the wind right, made the stalk, and kept him under 150 yards for almost two hours but had no shooting lane through the sun flowers. We began flanking him and his doe with approximately a half-hour of legal light, looking for a lane but there was none. We pushed hoping they would move into a lane and finally the doe started to move him out. As we setup for the shot Jeremy was calling yardage. It was slow

motion torture watching him walk away. Jeremy said there is an opening at 306 yards if he walks into it. Luckily for us, he did and I sent the 156gr Berger and Forks was down. Walking up on Forks was incredible, the frame, the mass and most of all "The Forks". He had 21"+ G2's, 12"+ G3's, put on some mass and ended up grossing 196". What a deer!

Jeremy and his team perform an outstanding job. The Plains are a special place to hunt, and I will return in 2022!



SANDY HILLS

2021



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