

SKULL

AN OUTFITTER'S JOURNAL



ONE GROUP
3 BUCKS
OVER 190

YES, PLEASE

A BIG BUCK TRIO

SHHC
NOV 2021

TRIO

Last year John, Jon, and Levi Hinkleman came on their first hunt with Sandy Hills Hunting Co. After many conversations with Jeremy they decided they would apply for late season rifle tags in a couple of our Eastern Plains units. We decided to split them up between different units to give them the best chance at harvesting three bucks without putting too much pressure on any one of our ranches. The units we chose were close enough together that we could have a central camp and eliminate excessive drive time in either direction. The hunt was on!

Earlier that season I had a couple of encounters with a buck I had dubbed “Cacti” for a couple reasons. First, and most obvious, was all the junk this buck had on his head going in every direction. Secondly, every encounter I had with Cacti was in sand hills which had from what I could tell the most densely populated cactus patch in eastern Colorado. Stalking was literally painful as it left cactus needles in the hands and knees of a few prior archery clients and definitely attributed to a couple missed opportunities. The evening before the guys arrived I had seen Cacti and he was in a good spot to hopefully get a crack at him on the first day, given he

stayed close to where I had left him. After showing the guys a few photos, Little Jon was excited and had a tag for that unit!

Well, as sometimes happens, we get out to the ranch the next morning, everyone eager for the sun to rise, and wouldn’t ya know it, he doesn’t show himself. We searched high and low for several hours that morning and while seeing a bunch of deer, we could never find any sign of Cacti. We decided we would make our way to town and stop at a few spots on the way to see what else we could find, then grab a bite and head back out that evening and continue our search. On our way back out I spotted a group of deer so we stopped to get a better look through the spotting scope. The herd I had spotted was all does, however about 500 yards west of them were two bucks and I knew almost immediately after picking them up in the scope our search had ended. They were about a mile away and heading our direction. We had some good cover to hide us, so Jon got ready and off we went. Slipping in to 230 yards didn’t take long, however that was about as close as we could get. That was no issue for Jon as he steadied himself on the sticks and dropped Cacti where he stood. Jon nearly broke my hand from the high five I received



after he saw the buck drop. We were all ecstatic as Jon got to put his hands on a monster Eastern Colorado muley.

Next up was Big John and we had a few days to spend in his unit as Levi wasn't scheduled to arrive in camp until the evening of day 4. Jordan showed up to guide Big John on a ranch he was familiar with and I would split off and be an extra set of eyes for them and help in any way I could. Jeremy had found a really old, heavy, chalky-horned buck earlier that season while doing some scouting. We named him "Chalko" and looked forward to eventually getting a shot at him. On the third day we finally laid eyes on him, however he was on a neighboring ranch so we had to play the waiting game to see if he would come back across the fence. On day four I picked Chalko up in the spotting scope. He was bedded about 100 yards away from a herd of about 30 deer up feeding. Jordan couldn't see the buck from his glassing spot, however he could see the rest of the herd. I gave him the location the best that I could as they made their way around for a stalk. I sat and watched from a mile and a half away as Jordan and John began about a 2 mile stalk to the bedded buck.

cacti





chalko

Everything was working out perfectly until the boys got to about 400 yards. Then, for whatever reason, the buck decided he was lonely, got up, walked over a little rise and joined the herd that were now mostly bedded out of my sight. Fortunately, Jordan was able to see the buck move and as he disappeared over a rise, they hurried into 200 yards. I watched them through the scope as they set up for the shot and shortly after I heard the report of Big John's rifle followed by high fives and back slaps! By the time I got there the photo session had already started, however John's smile was still apparent and his excitement over his ancient Eastern Colorado muley was contagious. I began to understand the appreciation John and Jon had for the time and work we had all put into helping him and his son harvest their best mulies ever!

Levi arrived to camp that evening and was overwhelmed with stories and photos from his father's and brother's hunts. As you could imagine, Levi's excitement to start hunting the next day was through the roof! Luckily, I knew of a few big deer still in his unit, however finding them was probably





going to be challenging. We spent his first morning in an area I knew there was still a 190 class typical and although we found him later in the morning, there was nothing we could do with him and he would have to travel quite a ways before we could hunt him. We decided to grab some lunch and head back out and start looking in a couple different areas, however we would only make it to one of the places before we would find a wide, deep-forked buck that had a split coming of his G2 as well as an inline on the same side. Without much discussion we decided that we were going to make a play on him. Levi had never harvested a mule deer so even stalking a deer of this caliber on your first hunt is something that memories are made of. The deer were in a good spot for us and although we had a little ground to cover,

we were able to do so quickly and found ourselves sitting 180 yards away from a buck we later named “Chester”. Levi settled in on his sticks and we waited for the buck to turn. As soon as he offered a shot, Levi sent a perfectly-placed bullet and the buck went down immediately! I never would have thought earlier that spring that this hunt would turn out the way it did. Jeremy and I discussed the many challenges of filling three rifle tags in one week, let alone filling them with giant deer. That’s just the way it goes sometimes.

After spending 5 days with these guys, I am not sure that this could have happened to a much better group of people. Congratulations fellas, can’t wait to do it again!!!

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