

# FRONT SIGHT



Mid-Michigan Chapter Safari Club International

April - June 2017, Issue 38



**Dog Handlers at a Driven Wing Shoot  
Black Isle, Scotland  
Photo by Mary Harter**





# JOHAN PIETERSE SAFARIS



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# EVERY TROPHY IS WORTH A THOUSAND MEMORIES



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Members of Mid-Michigan SCI or Isabella County Sportsman's Club may use the shooting range located at 2872 W. Millbrook Road just east of Winn Road. The lock combination is 3040 and changes yearly on February 15th. Please carry membership identification on you when you visit the range.



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Chairmen are listed first

- Chapter Record Book - Mary Browning
- Conservation/Govt. Affairs -
- Dispute Resolution - Kevin Unger, Joe Mulders, Jon Zieman
- Matching Grants - Jon Zieman
- Front Sight Publication/Advertising - Mary Harter
- Education - Doug Chapin
- Membership - Kevin Chamberlain, Mary Browning
- Nominating - Kevin Unger, Joe Mulders, Jon Zieman
- Programs for Membership Meetings - Roger Froling, Doug Chapin
- Big Buck Night - Mike Strobe, Kevin Unger, Tim Schafer, Scott Holmes, Randy Raymond
- Annual Awards Banquet/Fundraiser - Kevin Unger, Joe and Abbe Mulders, Don and Mary Harter, and all board members
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  - Sportsman Against Hunger - Mike Strobe
  - Pathfinder Hunts -
    - Youth - Randy Raymond
    - Veterans - Randy Raymond
  - Blue Bags, etc. - Doug Chapin

The Front Sight is the official publication of the Mid-Michigan Chapter of Safari Club International, keeping club members informed about local club activities, and encouraging and defining good sportsmanship. The Front Sight Magazine is published quarterly: January, April, July and October. Distribution 400+.

Check our own [www.midmichigansci.org](http://www.midmichigansci.org) website for copies of the Front Sight, listing of events, and fundraiser auction items.

Please support our sponsors! Call or write them for catalogs and information on their products and services. Make sure you tell them you saw their information in **The Front Sight**.



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## DIRECTORS

## Mid - Michigan Chapter Safari Club International • www.midmichigansci.org APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

I hereby apply for membership \_\_\_\_\_  
FIRST MIDDLE LAST

Fill out both mailing addresses as well as email. Please indicate by placing a X in the appropriate box where you would like to receive club correspondence.

If at all possible we would like to utilize your email address for this purpose. ☐

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TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_

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### MEMBERSHIP DUES (PLEASE CIRCLE ONE)

18 +	1 Year	\$ 35 National Dues	\$ 25 Local Dues	= \$ 60
	3 Years	\$ 150 National Dues	\$ 75 Local Dues	= \$ 225
	Life	\$1500 National Dues	\$300 Local Dues	= \$ 1,800
	Over 60	\$1250 National Dues	\$200 Local Dues	= \$ 1,450

Check/Cash attached \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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## President's Message

## Editor's Message



As I sit down to write this first message of 2017, we are heading into our 38th Annual Hunter's Gala and Expo Fundraiser. The board has been quite successful in working with many outstanding Hunting and Fishing Outfitters to

bring a large number of great donations to our Auction lineup. In addition, we have many vendors also attending our show bringing a selection of guns, bows, knives, leather goods, women's clothing and accessories, taxidermy, and wood carved furniture.

The Chapter fundraisers are a very important financial element to enable us to provide things like: 1) Sending teachers to American Wilderness Leadership School, so they may teach youngsters about conservation, sustainable hunting and the outdoors. 2) Providing opportunities for both disabled youth and disabled veterans to go on hunting trips. 3) Support our local shooting sports facilities and youth shooting in schools, as well as, hunter education and 4) Support both local and national right to hunt issues.

The board and I are also very excited to again have membership meetings scheduled in April and May, where we will be hosting one of our partner outfitters who will provide a presentation of their operations, pictures of their successful client's hunts, and answer any questions you may have. It is another way to get 'up close and personal' with them to help you decide on your next big adventure in hunting. Please look for these membership meetings on our FB Page: Mid-Michigan Safari Club International and sign up to attend.

I look forward to seeing you at one of our next meetings.

Yours in Hunting,

*Joseph H. Mulders*

Joe Mulders  
President  
Mid-Michigan Chapter of SCI



Don and I spent over a week in Las Vegas attending the International SCI Convention held in the Mandalay Bay Convention Center. We attended the Beretta and SCI Foundation Gala on Tuesday night, the Chapter Night with Alabama on Wednesday night, the Night of the Hunter on Thursday night, Legislator Night with Penn and Teller on Friday, and the Grand Finale with Hank Williams, Jr. on Saturday night. I had my First Lady Luncheon with Cindy Higgins and my Diana Luncheon on Wednesday, we had the Hunter Legacy Luncheon on Thursday, the Life Member Breakfast with Ivan Carter speaking followed by the Diana Award Seminar on Saturday. We attended many after parties but very special was Saturday for the newest Diana, Denise Welker from Texas, whom we know from joining her in a camp in Argentina. As you can see, we have a very busy time visiting with many friends and outfitters we have met through the years.

I had the privilege of being a guest speaker at the Lady Hunter Symposium held at the Michigan Chapter's Fundraiser, February 10 and 11th, at the Pinnacle Center in Hudsonville. Joining me were Kendall Jones from Texas, who was sky rocked to fame after her African hunting posts created a storm of criticism. She now has over one million friends on Facebook and supports hunters and conservation worldwide. Also, speaking was Diana Rupp from Colorado, Editor-in-Chief for Sports Afield. She has had a career in outdoor publishing for nearly 25 years. For me, it seems very easy to speak about hunting and that was our job, to encourage women to hunt.

I also have finished my first book, "Camouflage and Lace", in which are all of the stories I have written for The Front Sight.

For those of you who are NRA members and receive the magazine, "American Hunter", one of my sister Dianas, Melanie Pepper, is running for the Board of Directors for the NRA and the ballot is included in the February magazine. Biographical sketches are included for the 37 people who are running. You can vote for up to 26 names and the ballots must be received by April 9, so, if you wish to vote, please do so immediately. We appreciate the NRA who defends our right to bear arms which goes hand in hand with SCI defending our right to hunt.

Keep hunting and keep writing,

*Mary J. Harter*

Mary Harter  
Editor  
Frontsight Magazine

## SCI Mid-Michigan Chapter Meeting Schedule

\* SUBJECT TO CHANGE

<u>Date</u>	<u>Meeting Type</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Location</u>
April 10, 2017	Board Membership	4:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.	Comfort Inn
May 1, 2017	Board Membership	4:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.	Comfort Inn

Reservations required. Please call and leave a message at 989-330-4463 or email Maxine Warner at [maxiwar27@gmail.com](mailto:maxiwar27@gmail.com)





# Book Review

by Josh Christensen

Title: I AM A SEAL TEAM SIX

Publisher: St. Martin's Press

Warrior: Memoirs of an American Soldier

Copyright: 2012

Author: Howard E. Wasdin and Stephen Templin

List Price: \$7.99

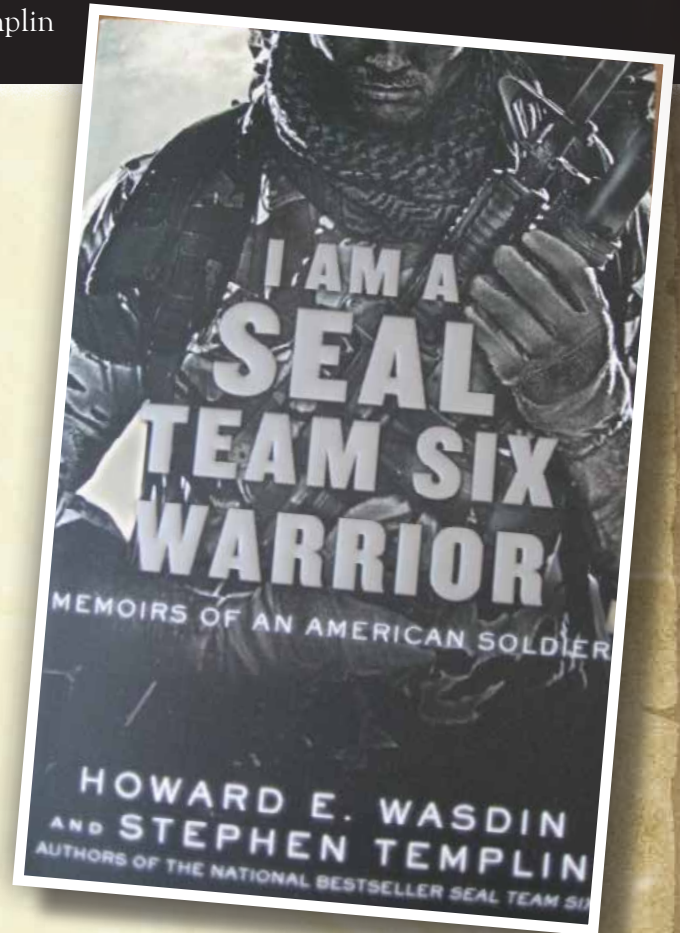
For those of you who enjoy or are interested in books about the military this might just be the quick read for you. I am a SEAL Team Six Warrior takes us through Howard Wasdin's childhood, including learning a work ethic from an abusive father and his drive to get out of that household. It details why Howard considered the military and explains the intense training he went through to become a SEAL and later a member of the elite SEAL team six.

Using his vivid memories, Wasdin guides us through several of his intense missions during the Desert Storm war, including the takeover of an enemy ship in the Red Sea and traveling behind enemy lines to coordinate an air strike on an enemy training compound.

From there we are taken to a day by day account of his mission in Mogadishu, Somalia in 1993, where SEALs along with DELTA and Ranger soldiers try to take down the warlord Mohamed Farrah Aidid. A portion of this account was made into a movie called "Blackhawk Down". During this mission we are taken through an extremely intense battle that left Wasdin with multiple wounds which ultimately caused him to leave the SEALs and the military.

This story also includes Wasdin's rehabilitation from those injuries as well as his difficult transition back into the civilian world.

When I bought this book online I did not realize Wasdin and Templin wrote two books about Wasdin's service; SEAL Team



Six and this book. When reading the Author's note at the beginning of this book I realized this version was for the young adult whereas SEAL Team Six is for the mature adult. Nonetheless, this book was an excellent read and one I highly recommend.

This book gets 9 out of 10 bullseyes





# Beal City's Big Buck Contest

by Mary Harter

This was the fifth year for a Big Buck Contest at Tim's Barbershop in Beal City owned by Tim Martin. Several Mid-Michigan SCI members were on hand to help with the whitetail deer racks which were measured by Dave Connors, local taxidermist and official measurer. To participate in the big buck contest, your buck had to be legally taken in the 2016 whitetail hunting season and harvested with a gun, bow, muzzleloader, handgun, or crossbow.

All hunters, both youth and adult, were to register at the barbershop so we could anticipate how many would be present on January 14 for the award ceremony. Several hunters participated and many came just to see the event.

Youth hunters receiving awards sponsored by Mid-Michigan SCI were Jacob Fussman (13), Michael Kowallic (16), Alex Sytek (10), and Ashlyn Sytek (14). Michael's buck was the largest scoring 119 6/8.

Adult hunters receiving awards sponsored by Mid-Michigan SCI were Phil Ludwig, Larry Bushong, Curt Gottschalk, Grant Pohl, and Kevin Kowallic. Curt's buck was the largest scoring 132 0/8, beating Phil by only 2/8 of a point.

We hope to see you again next year. All lucky hunters stop in to Tim's Barbershop in Beal City and register your buck. Congratulations to everyone that participated and we wish you good luck for the upcoming season.



## YOUTH HUNTERS

*Jacob Fussman, Michael Kowallic,  
Alex Sytek, and Ashlyn Sytek*



*Measurer Dave Connors with Grant Pohl*





Mid Michigan Chapter of Safari Club International

# BIG BUCK NIGHT AWARDS

January 14, 2017



**Youth Hunters** - an award for every participant  
**Biggest Overall Youth Buck** - Jack Ellis with a crossbow

**Biggest In State Rifle** - Dawn Manthei

**Biggest In State Bow** - Thom Bott

**Biggest Out of State Rifle** - Stewart Hoover

**Biggest Out of State Bow** - Mike Strobe

**Biggest Estate Buck** - Randy Raymond

**Biggest Youth Estate Buck** - Egan Anthony

**Biggest In State Black Powder/Muzzleloader** - Anthony Guisbert

**Biggest Out of State Black Powder/Muzzleloader** - Tim Torpey

**Biggest In State Crossbow** - Linda Clark

**Biggest Overall Woman's Buck** - Linda Clark

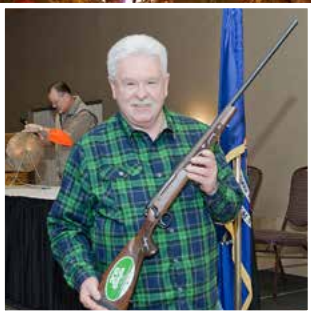
**Biggest Overall In State Buck** - Linda Clark

**Biggest Overall Out of State Buck** - Tim Torpey

**Biggest Non Member Buck** - Jeff Young

We had the largest participation ever to this fun event.  
We auctioned off several pheasant hunts donated by Chuck  
Connell at Tails-A-Waggin' Hunting Preserve.  
We had a 50/50 raffle and played reverse Bingo.

We had a gun raffle and also a special drawing  
for new members for a muzzleloader.







# BIG BUCK NIGHT



*Thank you*  
**Measurers,**  
*from Mary Browning, Awards and  
Record Book Chairperson*



Chris Manthei  
Owen Eldred  
Tim Torpey  
Dave Connors  
Mike Johnston  
Jake DeVuyst  
Nick Giuliani





# Trophy Veteran's Hunt

by Ryan Byberg



**Leon Low and Egan Anthony**

The day of October 4th, 2016 rolled around just like any other day. I had found out a few weeks prior that I was one of the disabled veterans that Safari Club International had chosen to go on a white tail hunt with Randy Raymond at Lows Trophy Whitetails. I felt bad because I was asking a lot of questions. The moment Randy said I could take my son, I lit up like a lightbulb. I couldn't wait to take my son out and have the chance to harvest a whitetail.

We arrived at Leon Lows around 2pm and had a quick introduction, got ready and headed to the blind. On our trip out I spotted a very nice buck bedded down along the fence line. I knew we were in for a once in a lifetime hunt. We got to the blind and sat for a few hours telling stories and getting settled in. It took a

few minutes to get comfortable, anyone that has taken a young kid hunting knows the struggle. My son Aiden does absolutely amazing for a 5yr old. There was only a couple times Randy and Leon

had to tell him to put the gummy bears away.

About 5:30pm I saw movement out in front of us and sure enough it was a buck. The woods were alive. Before I knew it there were four bucks, three nice eight pointers and one estimated to be an eighteen point. My son and I have never encounter such beautiful whitetails. Leon wanted me to wait on the smaller bucks and the bigger buck was for another hunter. About the time the deer started moving out my son was getting a little restless. He was laying on my lap and I was scratching his back. I kept telling him to be patient it would not be much longer.

All the sudden I looked out Leon window in the deer blind and saw this flash of horns. I knew at that moment that I wanted that buck. He was a brute. The deer was walking about 30 yards in front of the blind. I kept telling my son not to move. One loud noise and the buck would have disappeared quicker than he had arrived. Finally, the buck was moving along the trail and I could grab my rifle and get ready for the shot. Those last twenty seconds were very stressful. I was trying to get the gun out for a good shot, my son Aiden was wanting his ear muffs on, Randy was trying to plug Aiden's ears. After what felt like five minutes I got a good aim and BANG! The deer took off and stopped about 40 yards away and fell over.

The joy and excitement took over. Handshakes and high fives went around. I told Aiden he did a great job. He had a look of excitement and frustration. He wanted the ear muffs on and got Randy's fingers instead. It quickly changed though, he was full of joy. We chatted for a few minutes and headed to retrieve my buck. I was doing everything I could to stay patient, I wanted to run through those woods and find my deer. I didn't though, we put Aiden in charge of tracking down the buck. We got to the spot where we saw him fall and the buck

wasn't there. I knew I made a good shot so we stopped and found the blood trail and sent Aiden on the trail again. It wasn't long and we spotted him. I couldn't believe it. I was overcome with so many emotions. We took a few pictures and loaded the buck up and took him back to the house. The hunt was over but the lifetime memories will be there forever.

Leon Low and family, Randy Raymond, Safari Club International I want to thank you for this opportunity you gave me. It affected more than just my son and I. My wife seeing my son tell the story, my dad and mom hearing the kind words Randy spoke to him about my son and I. I will forever be grateful for all the great things you did for us. My son and I have a lifetime of memories and stories to tell. Leon Low and Randy Raymond you two are first class gentlemen. Safari Club International thank you for giving me and all the hunters give a chance to enjoy the outdoors once again.



**Vern Bergy and Leon Low**



**Aiden Byberg**



**Aiden and Ryan Byberg**



**David Sweeny**



# Sportsmen Against Hunger Program Thank You!



**GOD'S HELPING HANDS OF MECOSTA COUNTY**  
8760 50<sup>th</sup> Avenue—P.O. Box 118—Remus, MI 49340—989-967-8581  
Open: Tuesdays and Fridays only—9 AM until 12 Noon

4 February 2017

Mike Strobe  
SCI Sportsmen Against Hunger

Recent meat donation and gift card

Dear Mike,  
Once again, it was very good to hear from you and the SCI Sportsmen Against Hunger

organization.

We are very grateful to you and the organization for your kindness, thoughtfulness, and active participation in the effort to help the poor and needy with food.

We thank you for helping us, God's Helping Hands of Mecosta County (GHHMC) to be able to continue this effort for the less fortunate among us.

Thank you for the donation of 320 pounds of meat and the gift card for \$250.00.

Mike, should you want to get a hold of us in the future, our number at GHHMC, is, 989-967-8581 and is answered on Tuesdays and Fridays. My personal home phone (unlisted) is 989-967-8090. If I am not home please leave a message and I will get back to you ASAP.

Once again Mike, thank you to you and your fellow compassionate friends and may God bless you all mightily!

Sincerely,  
*Randy L. Platt*  
Executive Program Director of GHHMC

*Thanks Mike!  
-Randy Platt*



**GOD'S HELPING HANDS OF CLARE COUNTY**

February 2, 2017

Mike Strobe  
SCI Sportsmen Against Hunger

His Helping Hands of Clare County would like to thank the Mid Michigan Chapter of Sportsmen Against Hunger for the 326 lbs of venison and beef and the \$250 Gordon Gift Card. The meat is divided among three food pantries in Clare County. The 2015 statistics state that 26.1% of individuals are below poverty level in Clare County. Our food pantries are regularly used and your donation will add a good source of protein to their diets. We will use the gift cards to buy staples and possibly cleaning products, toilet paper, Kleenex and paper towels. These items cannot be bought with food stamps and are in high demand. Hunting is a sport that you can do what you love and be able to provide meat for your family. We thank everyone for going the extra mile and donating meat to this great organization. It will allow a better quality and healthier choice for them. Thank you to SCI Mid Michigan Chapter for allowing a better quality and healthier choice for them. Thank you to SCI Mid Michigan Chapter for following us to be the benefactor of this gift of food for our pantries.

*Cindy Luther*  
Director of Helping Hands of Clare County

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[www.icsk.org](http://www.icsk.org)

February 3<sup>rd</sup> 2017

SCI Mid-Michigan Chapter  
ATTN: Mike Strobe  
1100 Bollman Dr.  
Mt. Pleasant, MI 48858

Dear Mr. Strobe,

Please extend our sincere gratitude to all of the members who participated in the Sportsmen Against Hunger program for the wonderful donation of 326 pounds of meats to our kitchen this year, along with the generous donation of a \$250.00 gift card to Gordon's Food Service. The continued commitment of your group towards helping community members who struggle with hunger is truly inspirational.

Your donation will allow us to continue to provide approximately 100 free hot lunches daily to our community. As a 501c3 organization your entire donation is tax deductible.

Sincerely,

*Kim Friedrich*  
Kim Friedrich  
Executive Director

*And a very special thank you to Mike Strobe for picking up and transporting the deer, many which he processes, and delivering them to these various Services.*

*Your volunteer services are helping feed many in our communities and we all thank you for your efforts.*

*And a very special thank you to Shagena Meat Processing for donating their time to process our wild game for our program. They have been a continued supporter since this program was initiated.*

PO Box 743  
Mt. Pleasant, MI 48804-0743

**Women's Aid Service, Inc.**  
Serving Clare, Gratiot and Isabella Counties

Service Office (989) 773-0078  
Admin. Office (989) 773-7960  
Fax (989) 773-9470

February 15, 2017

SCI Mid Michigan Chapter  
Sportsman Against Hunger Program  
Attn: Mike Strobe  
1100 Bollman Dr.  
Mt. Pleasant, MI 48858

Dear SCI Mid Michigan Chapter Members and NAC Taxidermy,  
On behalf of the staff and Board of Directors of Women's Aid Service, Inc., we would like to thank the SCI Mid Michigan Chapter and NAC Taxidermy for their donation of the following items:

50 lbs. venison  
15 lbs. ham

60 lbs. beef burger  
\$250 Gordon Food Service gift card

The generosity of SCI Mid Michigan Chapter and NAC Taxidermy is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

*John R. Haycock*  
John R. Haycock  
Executive Director





# Crocodile Bay

## COSTA RICA

by Ann Koch

It all started at the SCI Annual Fundraiser in Mt. Pleasant and 9 months later we were off on our adventure to Costa Rica! November 2016 we walked through the massive wooden doors that had two crocodiles carved into them to a waiting welcome cocktail at the front desk of Crocodile Bay Resort. We checked into our spacious room and the fun began! We started our first day with an Eco tour to see the monkeys. We learned Costa Rica has four species of monkeys and we were lucky enough to see three species (squirrel, spider and howler) plus a sloth! Our tour guide even took my camera and shared his photography knowledge with us. He took the best wildlife pictures using my camera. We saw a lot of birds, too, including toucans and macaws!! We got back to the resort and had a great fresh fish dinner.

Our second day started with breakfast, then we were off to fish! Costa Rica had just had a hurricane. Their last hurricane was in 1851 so it was rare for them to be hit. They had to cancel a few visitors so we were the first group to the resort after the hurricane hit. Luckily the resort didn't suffer any damage. The water was still stirred up so we decided to stick to inshore fishing. Our first fish on were a few jack fish! What a thrill to reel them in while they were thrashing and fighting the whole way! Mark ended up catching a pompano which they made into ceviche and served to us as an appetizer for dinner that same night.

The third day we decided to enjoy the day relaxing by the pool at the resort watching the toucans play in a nearby tree







and the macaws squawk as they flew overhead. We took a short bike ride into the town of Puerto Jimenez using bikes the resort provided. We went into a small tourist shop and into the grocery store. We passed by several cute restaurants. The scenery on the way into town was breathtaking!

The fourth day we fished again. After hearing the fishing reports, we decided to stay inshore to try to catch roosterfish. It was rainy and a slow start but a good fisherman knows to be patient and stay positive. Our patience paid off or maybe it was the lucky cookies they sent with us but we ended the day with 4 rooster, 1 snapper, 1 grouper, and 2 margarita fish. The roosterfish were such pretty fish! They were my favorite fish to catch! So exhilarating to cast out and have one of them hit our line! We were lucky enough both times we fished to see a sea turtle swim by!

When we got back to the resort we got spoiled with a couples massage before dinner. What a relaxing way to end the day!

Food!! The food there is AMAXING!! Full menu ranging from shrimp, fish, beef, pasta. If it's



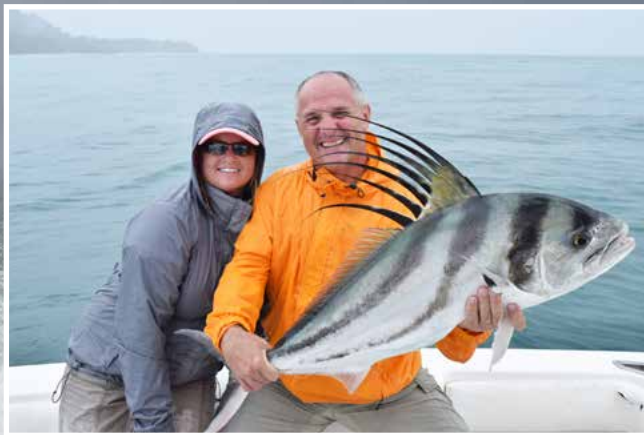




not on the menu, ask. They really do go above and beyond to accommodate your needs. We couldn't get enough of the fresh fish! We had it served several ways: blackened, garlic, picante, and a lemon butter wine sauce (my favorite). Don't forget to order Olympia's extra special chicken salad when you go fishing! Tastes best with their homemade tortilla chips!



Most of the other guests we met at the resort have been return guests. Crocodile Bay also boasts several walls



of fame of famous people who have fished with them. We met the Williams brothers (owners) while we were there. They served a Thanksgiving buffet for the locals who helped others during the hurricane. Really shows what kind of care not only goes into their resort but giving back to the locals as well. You will leave feeling like family. Definitely add a trip to Crocodile Bay Resort to your bucket list.

While you are there, don't forget to take the path to go see an actual crocodile! Yep, just throw a stone or stick into the water and he will pop his head up. Just you, nature, and a crocodile. (Yes, I was a little scared but they assured me he hadn't eaten a guest - YET!!)





# TROPHY AWARDS PROGRAM

BY Mary Browning, CHAIR

To refresh your memory, trophy awards for our Mid-Michigan Chapter of SCI are decided as follows:

Score sheets are collected for a two year period. Before our Hunter's Convention in February, the sheets are categorized by country and species. The top entry for each species receives a gold award, the number two animal receives a silver award and the number three animal receives a bronze award. Animals are also separated by method of take so there could be two gold awards in one category if one animal is taken by rifle and one by bow.

The continents of North America and Africa receive numbers one, two, and three awards each; the other continents receive one award. The winners are decided by which animal scores closest, numerically, to the top in the International Record Book. To find this score the rank of the entered animal is divided by the total number of ranks in the International Record Book. Estate deer and turkeys are in categories of their own and are not eligible for the top awards in North America. Exceptional Estate deer, Estate Elk and all species of turkeys will receive their own awards only if they score in the top 10% according to the International Record Book.

Other Major Awards are for the Crossbow Hunter of the Year, Muzzleloader Hunter of the Year, Handgun Hunter of the Year, Bow Hunter of the Year, Men's Hunter of the Year, and Women's Hunter of the Year. These awards

are voted upon by the Awards committee. This decision is made on the basis of which hunter had the greatest achievements during the past two years. We do not consider more than the past two years of activity. For the Women's Hunter of the Year, she must have taken at least three animals. Because we have so few women submitting score sheets often we do not have a winner in this category. We have not had a Handgun Hunter of the Year for many years either.

The Men's and Women's Hunter of the Year can only be won once in a lifetime. This allows more hunters to get a chance to win this award.

The period for score sheets this year is:

DECEMBER 1, 2015  
TO  
DECEMBER 1, 1017

Send your score sheets to me, Mary Browning, 6030 Madeira Drive, Lansing, MI 48917 You may contact me at 517-886-3639, or email at [lrc05@att.net](mailto:lrc05@att.net).

Please remember to send pictures and to notify me if some score sheets are youth entries. Children and grandchildren of members under age 17 are eligible for youth awards.

*Dear Members:*

*The Mid Michigan Safari Club will no longer be printing copies of the Record Book. It is available on our website – [www.midmichigansci.org](http://www.midmichigansci.org) under "About".*

*If you have any questions you may contact me at [lrc05@att.net](mailto:lrc05@att.net)*

*Mary Browning  
Director*



# Zimbabwe

by Mary Browning

**Introduction** - I wasn't going to document our trip to Zimbabwe but as I'm looking back on it, it was a trip that must be put into words. I'm not sure, even today how to categorize this trip, a tragedy, a comedy, or a satire. It is for those who read this to make their own judgment.

On my bucket list of must hunts was a leopard. Having made up my mind in the spring of 2013 I gave Johan Pieterse my deposit. OK, it's a go (or so I thought). First Ron got sick and was hospitalized for back surgery, then I got a debilitating disease or condition in my ribs called costochondritis (an inflammation of the cartilage of the rib cage). Then when I thought everything was OK, South Africa quit issuing leopard permits in their country. It appeared my dream hunt was fading away. So instead of a leopard hunt, Ron, Johan and I decided to hunt in South Africa for a cape buffalo, plains game and a trip to Kruger National Park. Then the clouds seemed to part and the sun peaked through. Johan had found a leopard hunt for me in Zimbabwe with "Hunters Africa". Ron planned to hunt cape buffalo while I was leopard hunting. We planned the trip, signed the quotation, and our hunt was a go.

Our next step was to wire the deposit. We went to our local bank and wired our money to the accounts in Botswana we were given. When -- that's done (or so we thought). WRONG!!! This was done on March 4, 2016. One month later Johan emailed us to say "Hunters Africa" never received the wire transfer. On March 29, 2016 we learned that the money was returned because it was formatted incorrectly. The only problem was that we did not have the money in our bank account. Oops, said the bank, we better find it. The next day they called and said they had deposited the money back to our account minus \$600.00. Now that did not fly with me. Their excuse was that the difference was due to the exchange rate. I did some research and found that there was no fluctuation in the exchange rates that would add up to \$600.00. We went around and around and they finally agreed to return the \$600.00 into our account. Later when we were transferring another deposit for the trip, the money discrepancy was brought up and the branch manager made a snide remark about how the money was returned to us as a favor. He also kept making unfair innuendos about hunters. I digress from my story, so back to the saga. Johan sent us a new account number in Texas so we rewired our first deposit to "Hunters Africa" on April 7, 2016. It went through without



a problem -- WHEW.

Our next step was to send our applications to "Hunters Permit Africa" to temporary import our rifles into South Africa. Pretty easy -- you would think so. We completed

all our paperwork and FedEx it to "Hunters Permit Africa". A week later we get notification that the address was incorrect and that the package can't be delivered. Several calls to Adele Janse Van Rensburg at "Hunters Permit Africa" and the mess was cleared up. Adele went to the FedEx station and picked up our package. The paperwork was approved and ready for us when we arrived in South Africa.

One thing that went without a hitch was our airline tickets. WOW -- no problem -- maybe the rest of this adventure would run smoothly.

On July 7, 2016, we sent our final payment to "Hunters Africa" without a hitch. Ron and Dan Catlin took Ron's .375 Ruger to the range to sight it in. His rifle packs quite a punch but all went well. I took my Savage .308 out later that week and all went well -- the rifle was spot on.

We left for our safari on July 30, 2016. We flew out of Grand Rapids to Atlanta and from there to Johannesburg, South Africa. Everything went smoothly at check in and TSA was a breeze. Our flight to Atlanta was smooth and on time. We had plenty of time to find the gate for our next leg of the trip and have dinner at a TGIF. Our plane left on time and I even slept on the flight.

We were met at the gate in Johannesburg by a representative from "Hunters Permit Africa". He sped us through customs with no long waiting in line. Then we





were off to the police office to register our rifles. There we met Johan and Adele. Our registration process was no problem. We packed our gear into Johan's truck and we were off to Nkanga Lodge for dinner and a room for the night. Adele met us there for dinner and drinks. We had an enjoyable evening catching up.

The next morning we took Johan's truck to Adele's house and she took us to the airport for our flight to Harare, Zimbabwe. Johan had to register his rifle with the police because he was taking it out of the country. Then it was off to "South African Air", check in to get our boarding passes and check our luggage. While in line somehow the topic of ammo came up. Both Johan and us had it locked in our luggage. When Adele became aware she told us that the ammo had to be taken out of our luggage. Luckily we had the ammo in its own locked case. Our flight to Harare was uneventful, everything went smoothly. When we arrived at Harare our first stop in the terminal was to apply for our temporary visa. Zimbabwe is on the American Standard for currency so they only accepted American cash. After receiving our visas we then proceeded through customs. We claimed our luggage and the next step was to register our rifles. It was a simple process but what struck me the most was they still used old style carbon paper. Once outside we were met by our pilot, George, who was to fly us to our

After settling in we went to the range to sight in our rifles. This is where things started to unravel. First Ron shot -- it was off, but after a lot of rounds his rifle was sighted in. Now it was my turn. Now remember, before we left for Africa, I went to the range and checked out my rifle and it was spot on. My first two shots were low, so Johan made some adjustments. My next two shots were center about one inch apart. When Johan took some shots with my rifle it again was way off. Looking over the rifle he discovered the scope was loose. So to make a long story short, it took two times at the range and twenty some bullets before it was again sighted in. I was a wreck by the time it was all over.

Our guide (PH) Peter Ballard, arrived in camp that evening. After a wonderful meal we chatted around the campfire. Peter's family lost their farm to the government. They were one of the lucky ones who were given several months to vacate. He is married, has two small children and lives in Harare. He said he would like to farm someday like his parents so he could be home more but doesn't know if that would ever be possible. He loves Zimbabwe, his country, and doesn't want to leave.

We slept in the next morning until 8 a.m., then we were out

## Chenje Camp

camp at Chenje. On the way out of the terminal, George and I struck up a conversation about the United States. He asked where we lived and he said that his son was a junior at a college in Kansas. Walking into the domestic terminal was like going into a ghost town. The only people there were two security guards. They checked our rifles against the paperwork making sure the serial numbers matched. Then it was out to the runway to board our plane. It was a small four seat Cessna. This was taking us to our final destination, the Cheware Safari Area located in the Zambeze Parks and Wildlife lands. Our flight was a one hour and forty minute ride and a little bumpy. We landed on the only permanent air strip in the area (it was built during the war). From there it was a hour drive to Chenje camp.

to the bush to look for leopard tracks, shoot impala for bait and start setting baits up. We also were on the lookout for cape buffalo. The only problem was that there were few plains game animals to shoot for bait. Between poaching and an over abundance of lionesses, it was a challenge. We were out all day and only shot a couple of impala. We had lunch in the bush. In late afternoon we did see a small herd of cape buffalo. Ron, Johan, Peter, his trackers, and the park ranger started out on foot tracking the buffalo but the wind shifted and the buffaloes took off. That evening at dinner the other guides at camp told us it was good we gave up because there were families with this herd and all were too small to harvest.

One of the things I forgot to mention was the park





ranger. We had to have one with us at all times because we were hunting on Zimbabwe Park and Wildlife land. Our ranger's name was Mafukibse. He was a wonderful chap and didn't hesitate to help out whenever he could. He told us he had five children (four boys and one girl) but he was somewhat depressed because the park rangers had not been paid in four months.

Next morning I'm up at 6 a.m. with a sore throat. After coffee we took the dead impalas and some cape buffalo quarters out to set up more baits (our final count was eleven baits). During the day we shot more impala for bait. We found more leopard tracks and set up four more baits.

Woke up the next morning with my sore throat getting worse. Besides me, Ron and Johan were also sick. I still went out to check on the baits but no luck. When we returned home in the evening we all took flu medication and went off to bed early.

Felt worse in the morning. Ron and I stayed back. Peter radioed back to camp that a female leopard was on our first bait and that he will check the remaining baits before lunch. Johan and Peter came in for lunch and reported another female on a bait but no males. I did go out that afternoon and shot one impala for bait.

The next morning Johan and I stayed in while Ron and Peter went out. Ron came close to another herd of cape buffalo but all were too small. Ron, Johan and I are all still

sick -- we must have contracted the flu on the flight from South Africa to Zimbabwe.

Ron and I didn't go out till the afternoon of the next day. We set up our ninth bait. The next day was a repeat of the day before. Drive around, check baits, and look for leopard tracks. The only tracks found were females. There were few exceptions. Peter locked his keys in the truck with the spare locked in the tool box in back. And guess what, the key to the tool box was locked in the truck. So it was a test of strength, who will win -- the lock or Peter. Peter won. The lock was broken and the truck keys retrieved. Then out of nowhere the tsetse fly appeared. They are one nasty biting bug. I found if I sprayed my hat with DEET they would stay somewhat away. Also, it helped to wear long sleeved shirts and pants.

Finally on the tenth day tracks were found on two baits that appeared to be from male cats. One was average size and the other really large. We built our blind where the large cat was eating, left and came back that evening. Nothing. Next morning before sunrise a mile out from the bait we walked in. About a half a mile from the bait we took off our shoes so we would be real quiet approaching the blind. We sat for about four hours with no luck. The rest of the day was spent checking baits and replenishing our meat supply for the baits that were being hit in hopes a male would join the females. The next day we checked the bait where we had the blind and the cat was gone.

The following day we set up a blind at another site. There were some nice tracks looking to be a male leopard. This was about noon. It was extremely hot and the tsetse flies were vicious. We went back to camp for lunch and took a small nap before going back to the blind. It was quiet that evening but the next day the leopard came in. I had my crosshairs on this boy and was ready, but it was very young so we left it to grow up. I was devastated and we pulled down that blind to hopefully move somewhere else.

Nothing happened until two days before our departure. The big leopard was back at the bait that we had sat on at first. This time he had a female with him. Peter had taken down that blind so again we built it and sat the rest of the day until dark. You could hear both of them vocalizing





right at the bait site but neither got in the tree to eat. The next morning we parked a distance away and snuck in barefoot to our blind. As the sun started to rise in the morning sky you could hear both of them at the site. They were there but just wouldn't take the bait. As we were leaving the blind that morning I told Peter the hunt was over. I was totally discouraged. After lunch Peter said the hunt wasn't over and promised me there would be a cat on bait that evening. Tonight was the night. So off we went. Well Peter was correct, both cats were there. Finally after a lot of conversations and whatever male and female cats do on a date, one finally climbed the tree to eat. My time has come or so I thought. But to my dismay, it was the female. I couldn't believe this was happening. Only I would get a male leopard that was a gentleman and let the lady eat first. Whatever happened to male chauvinism. So we sat till dark watching her eat -- thanks to my pocketbook.

That evening we enjoyed another great meal. Sitting around the fire we reminisced about the past few weeks. I know Pete was upset about not getting a leopard -- "if we only had a few more days" -- he kept repeating. Because we spent so much time checking baits and looking for leopard tracks, Ron did not have much time for his cape buffalo, so he also was leaving without a trophy. With all the mishaps this was one strange hunting adventure. With us leaving in the morning you would think nothing else could go amiss -- WRONG!

Next morning we were up and packed. Our plane was arriving at 10 a.m. to take us back to Harare. From there we were catching a 1 p.m. flight to Johannesburg. Going to the airstrip we passed the last blind I sat in. I wondered if that big male leopard was up in the tree laughing at us as we drove by enjoying the impala left for him.

We sat and waited at the airstrip about 15 minutes before the plane landed. George said it was real windy so be prepared for a rough ride back to Harare. As George was loading our gear in the plane I looked up to see the door fall off the opposite side of the plane. I couldn't believe what I just saw. I got George's attention and told him what I just saw. He ran around to the other side and sure enough the door has snapped off of the plane. At this point panic set in. Gareth (one of the other PH's in camp) radioed Bernie (the camp manager) to contact the air service to get help. They said they would get another plane sent out from Harare but could not guarantee a time. This was going to be a problem if we missed our connecting flight. Thirty minutes later the airline company radioed and reported that there was a plane leaving Mana Pool -- east of us over the mountain range. They would be here in 45 minutes to pick us up. It was a twin engine plane so it would help us make up for lost time. The flight was smoother than I thought considering the high winds.

We arrived in Harare at the domestic terminal, unloaded our luggage and proceeded to the international terminal. There they checked rifle serial numbers against our documents. They also recorded the number of bullets we had left. We checked into "South African Air", obtained our boarding passes and stowed our luggage. Only one more hurdle (security) and we are on our way back to South Africa.



Johan and I had no problems but Ron was another story. They asked to check his coat and backpack. Well, with nothing to hide Ron gave them his OK. The guard pulled our cash out of the backpack and fanned it out so all could see. She asked how much money was there and why he had it. It was about \$2,000.00 left of what we had brought into Zimbabwe. I went back to where Ron was standing and asked the guard if there was a problem. She continued to keep flashing our cash so all could see and I wasn't very happy. We told her it was our money left over from what we brought into the country. At that point she tossed the cash back into the backpack and let us go.

We boarded our plane back to South Africa. We were leaving the next day to the United States. While flying I looked back at our trip. All I could think of what a comedy of errors this had been. Sadly, neither Ron or I got our trophies. But all was not lost. Little did we know Johan had a surprise for us back in South Africa. Check out that story in the next issue of The Front Sight.





# Scotland 2016



We attended the Michigan Chapter fundraiser and purchased a hunt in Sweden. Joe Pederson came over to our table and invited us to join them and two more couples for a hunt in Scotland a week prior to our newly purchased hunt which we readily accepted.

On October 1, we joined Joe and Debbie Pederson, Brian and Katharine Judge, and Brant and Kari Erbentraut at the Grand Rapids airport and flew all night arriving in Glasgow the next day with a five hour time difference. We were met by Stefan Bengtsson and his wife Sofia Hammarskjold of Scandinavian Pro Hunters and were taken to Leys Castle near Inverness, about four hours north of Glasgow. Inverness gained notoriety for being featured in the "Outlander" novel series. We stopped for lunch at a shopping area on the way. There they had much of the typical wool tweed hunting clothing for sale as well as many other Scottish items. It was special to see all of the cheeses, meats, breads, as well as clothing and souvenirs for sale.

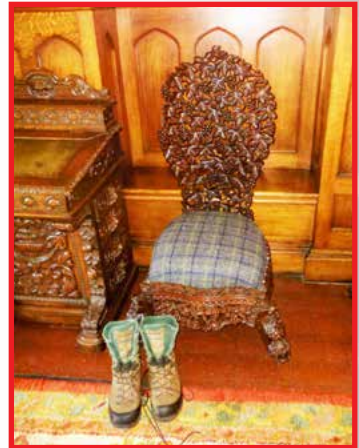
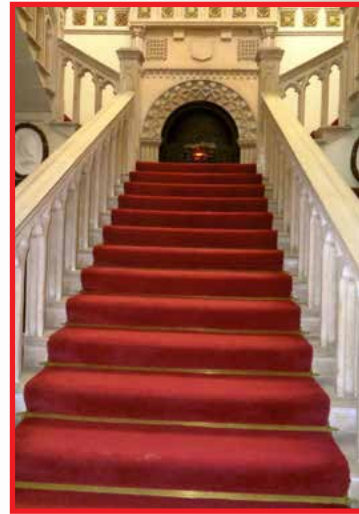
Leys Castle is a real castle over 200 years old, renovated with modern heating and plumbing but keeping all of the wonderful decor of Gothic and Romanesque with ten exquisite and opulent bedrooms and charming and sociable public rooms. We took off our boots in the grand

entrance hall, enjoyed refreshments in the octagonal library with a fireplace, and ate in the magnificent dining room. We stayed in a huge



*Sika Stag*





bedroom with a canopy bed and very large bathroom where the Dali Lama once stayed. Our rooms overlooked the 3,200 acre estate.

The first night we dined on salad, prime rib, salmon, Yorkshire pudding, potatoes, rutabagas, carrots, and chocolate dessert. Every night we were presented with a wonderful meal even including some of the game we harvested.

The first morning we were out for a driven wing shoot at the Black Isle. Hunting in Scotland is quite a social with the men wearing wool tweed suits with dress shirts, vests, and ties. They walk through brush with these dressy outfits. Even when we hunted red stag, the men were dressed as if to go to the office but wearing boots.

They did five different drives, one right along the ocean. I had never been on a driven hunt so just walked along and watched. Many people were involved. Several people came with their hunting dogs of all breeds. One woman traveled about 500 miles with 13 dogs just to give her dogs a chance to hunt. She used different dogs on different drives. Many of the handlers were women and I have no idea how many total dogs were involved because they weren't all used at the same time. The four men hunting harvested about 125 birds, mostly partridge





but many pheasants, and snipes. There were also woodcocks that could have been harvested.

The next day we were out at 6:00 a.m. to hunt sika with David Thomson and enjoy his thick Scottish brogue. Some of the others were hunting roe deer and some were touring. We hunted near the castle in the Ashie Woodlands, Inverness Shire. In the first field we saw a red stag and his hinds. We saw areas just cut with logs stacked ready to be loaded and a couple of loaders at work. The area had a lot of blow downs that they were utilizing. We walked many grassy trails, many made by the animals. We heard a few shrill sika calls. We saw a nice old spike that Dave said was a very old deer but only had about 12" spikes. We watched him a long time and finally he walked off. In one area Don saw a male inside the tree line but we couldn't see him before he ran. We saw a hind and her little male fawn.

Finally we slogged back to where we started and there were three male sikas out in the field. Dave got me set up in a pile of discarded logs around a stump and I zeroed in on the largest, shot, and he bucked. He was definitely hit and Don and Dave went out after him through a grassy marsh that was hard to walk through. They found him and dragged him back to where I was. Just before they returned, Joe Pederson and Sofia came by and went out to help with the drag. It had been a 250 yard shot and I hit him in the heart.

The next day we went out for red stag in the Highlands north of Loch Ness. The other women went touring. We drove about an hour and a half from our castle. We each had a guide and an Argo to navigate the rolling hillside. The Highlands here are very barren of trees but full of heather and other low shrubs, very boggy to walk through. We took the Argos up the huge mountains and then walked and scoped. We saw one stag standing on the

skyline. We looked and looked and finally Rory, my guide, went searching over the edges. We ate a bag lunch sitting on one of the huge boulders. Finally Rory found a stag over the edge of one of the mountains feeding by a stream. Rory had me



crawl to the edge and even out a ways. Eventually I could see the stag about 200 yards away. He was almost straight down from me. I had the gun on a backpack, found him in the scope and squeezed the trigger. He was hit. He went a few steps and fell. Another stag was with him and he ran off. I was so far out on the edge I felt like I would roll down the mountain and beat my bullet to the stag but Rory had his arm by me and said he would hold me and not to worry. He walked down to the stag but I went to the Argo with Stefan and a driver and we drove around the mountain because it was too steep to drive down. It took a long

time on very rough terrain but we made it. We took pictures and headed back to where we unloaded the Argos early in the morning. Don was already there with a very nice red stag. He had been waiting for over an hour so we drove back to the castle. The other hunters who had gone to various places had nice red stag, also. The next day,





Don went out with David for sika again and I went touring with everyone else. Our tour guide, with a very enjoyable Scottish brogue, was Bob Thompson. We toured Dunrobin Castle and enjoyed a hawk, falcon, and owl demonstration. Lunch of mussels was at Luigies. We toured and tasted at the Glenmorangie distillery. Many different Scotch whisky distilleries are in the area. The peat in the area give Scotch its distinctive flavor with some having a very peaty or smoky smell and taste.

Don saw several sika while walking (slogging) many miles but nothing to shoot.

Dave and his wife came for dinner and to celebrate her birthday. We had a wonderful meal of poached egg on toast with mushrooms, steak, potatoes, asparagus, crème brule, and birthday cake. We toured the castle including the billiards room in the basement. I showed her our room, also.

The next day, Oct. 7, Don and Brant went out early for another red stag and the rest of us went touring with Bob. Don got two more red stags and Brant got one.

We toured Culloden, a battle ground where in 1746, 5,000 Scots, led by Bonnie Prince Charlie were killed by the British. With the orders of the Duke of Cumberland, they were to take no prisoners so even all of the injured were killed. The whole battle lasted only 46 minutes and is a very solemn place to visit.

We also toured Clava Cairn, a graveyard with several mounds of stones with huge stone slabs standing on end around them. Many myths surround this ancient, Bronze Age, graveyard.

Lunch was at the Schoolhouse which was once a real school house. I had cullen skink soup made of smoked halibut, potatoes, chicken broth, cream and vinegar.

Sofia picked me up from the tour to meet up with Stefan and Don to leave for Glasgow where we spent the night before flying to Heathrow and on to Stockholm.

Many of my ancestors were from Scotland and my grandmother said we were Highlanders so



*David Thomson*

this trip was especially special for me. While there I called a cousin I had never met

but had corresponded with regarding our family tree. He lives south east of Edinburg so it was too far from where we were to come and visit us for an evening. Maybe we will meet another time. I could see how someone from Scotland could make their home in Michigan. There were many similarities with the land, animals, crops, and people.

And hunting in Sweden is another story.



*Brian Judge*







# Drop Tine Delight!

## Vocatio Suprema; Excellence Requires Passion

*by Dick Stockmar & David Pittman*

I hunted TimberGhost in 2014 and my memories of a great hunt have not faded. That hunt was chronicled in two SCI chapter publication in 2015. I was anxious to arrive at the lodge and say hello to my hunting family. Although I missed the 2015 hunt because of back surgery, I kept track of their season on Facebook and their website. It is amazing what Mike Hine and Jeff Eaton and their staff have accomplished in the past 16 years. I have known Mike since 1991 and was introduced to Jeff in 1997. Jeff has been my guide at TimberGhost.

Shortly after arriving I met the other hunters that would be hunting on this hunt. There is always plenty to talk about because hunters have a lot of common ground. Two of the hunters had hunted at the ranch before. A father and his son were new to the ranch. Dave Pittman had very successful hunts in the past using his bow. He showed me pictures from his last hunt. He would have a challenge improving on his record.

Shortly after arriving, my new hunting friends and I walked up and down the deck that overlooks one of the many large food plots. Antlers from the previous hunts were on display. What an incredible group of racks. Soon the topic of "What have you been seeing? Ergo. What is left?" came up. Jeff and the rest of the guides assured us that the number of big bucks remaining was plentiful; just as it had been in the past. Many of the

large bucks were just starting to move around a bit. It had been quite hot the previous ten days. A cool down front was predicted with some rain. The prediction of increase deer activity with bucks starting to cruise was fulfilled over the next four days.

Following a generous lunch with BLT subs, everyone relaxed and prepared their gear for the evening hunt. The guides drew the cards and selected the stands for the first evening. I sat down with Jeff and reviewed his top deer that he knew I would really like. I wanted a big main frame buck with some character points. He described several that I knew would immediately twitch my trigger finger. We discussed whether or not I would kill on the first night or hold off. My response







was I would not hesitate. I had guided several hunters who killed their trophy on the first night and described how they were able to relax for the rest of their hunt. Little did I know what was to come.

Following shooting at the range to check my Nosler Custom Limited Edition 270 WSM, we headed to Long Park. A friend from Nosler recommended that I try their 150 gr. Accubond Long Range bullet. The hand loaded rounds were very accurate even at long range. I was eager to see how they performed on whitetail deer. It was about 3:30 PM when Jeff and I climbed into the box blind. Because deer movement was slow, Jeff and I talked about reloading and favorite calibers for a goodly amount time. Like me he is a rifle enthusiasts'; we whispered continuously about the new 6.5 calibers especially the Nosler 26.

It was 5:20 when the first deer walked into Long Park seeking to feed on the lush food plots. Jeff and I both field judged the deer to be a 3 year old buck with a typical 10 point frame that would score around 190

inches. This buck had the entire field to himself. He feed on the lush food plot for about 200 yards across the field to the north and then slowly turned and started feeding back to the runway from which he entered the field. With about 100 yards remaining before he would reach the south edge of the field, the buck suddenly when on point. He stared hard toward his entry point. Jeff and I were put on alert and kept scanning the heavy brush at the edge of the field. After about five minutes of the young buck pointing to the edge of the field, we saw movement and the top of tines slowly moving...one small step at a time. The bleached white antler was easily distinguished from the heavy under brush. My first impression when the buck was not very visible is that it was not one of the trophy deer we were looking for. I started scanning the edge of the field for additional deer. The young buck was still on point.

As the giant trophy entered the field, Jeff whispered that he was one of the bucks that we were looking for. With a little doubt in my whisper, I said that I wanted him to turn his head. Within seconds, the buck turned his head and I could see the giant typical frame with a lot of character points including three drop tines (two on the right beam and one on the left beam). My trigger finger began to twitch as I told Jeff that we would shoot him. I readied the Nosler rifle on the blind shelf with a shooting rest under the back of the stock. We estimated him to be 225 yards so there was no need to adjust the Huskemaw turret. It was zeroed at 200 yards.

I told Jeff that as soon as he turned a little more broadside, I was going to shoot. In less than thirty seconds the big buck turned just enough. The rifle discharged and recoiled. As I got back into the scope,







I could see the front of his body head toward the lush clover. The Nosler Acb LR hit him perfect on the center of his left shoulder and he was literally dead on his feet. I bolted another round and put the safety back on. I really didn't believe I would need another shot.

As Jeff and I high fived and hugged, I started to shake. The huge adrenaline rush was getting to me as it always does after the kill. It is difficult to explain that level of excitement that hunters feel. The comradre with your guide is very special.

We slowly picked up our gear and loaded our back packs. We were headed to the spot the buck fell. As we approached, there was no shrinkage. In fact he kept getting bigger. The length of the main beams, the mass on the beams and the length of the tines were truly impressive. When I picked up the bucks head, the drop tines stood out impressively. Four drop tines including one that was broken off at the base of the left beam. It was sure delight.

When we back into the parking spot near the fire pit, the staff and other hunters came out quickly to congratulate Jeff and me and to take some pictures. We then had a toast and some hors d'oeuvre at the camp fire. The



Chevis Regal scotch went down slow, but I could feel myself relax and chill out. The remainder of my hunt time would be spent scouting with Jeff and videotaping deer. It was no pressure sheer enjoyment.

The next morning, Dave Pittman and his guide (Eric) headed for a bow blind overlooking part of Short Field. Somewhat late in the morning hunt they spotted another big drop tine buck. He had exceptionally long matching drop tines off both beams. The buck walked around on the edge of the food plot long enough for them to get a real good look at him before he disappeared back into the timber. He was just too far for a bow shot. The buck re-appeared a short time later only two tease them. Dave really wanted a shot at that deer.

Dave decided to borrow Jeff's Ultimate Muzzleloader to use in case he could not get within bow range. "The Johnston Ultimate Muzzleloader (BP Xpress) is second to none in accuracy and long range capability. The rifle will fire a 300 grain bullet at speeds approaching 2400 feet per second (fps)."(1) Dave was very comfortable with this rifle because he owns one.

For the evening hunt Eric and Dave selected a bow blind overlooking a field not too far from short field. While they had a wonderful evening hunt and saw several big bucks, none could erase the memory of the big double drop tine buck. As luck would have it, Jeff Fox and guide, Mike Willems, had the buck that Dave and Eric were looking for walk twelve yards from their stand. As hunters returned from the evening hunt and gathered around the fire pit, strategy for the next morning hunt was being discussed. Dee Wohlers had killed a monster old buck at the Adventure ranch, so only two hunters and their guide had the whole ranch to select from.

Dave and Erick decided to go back to Short field. They





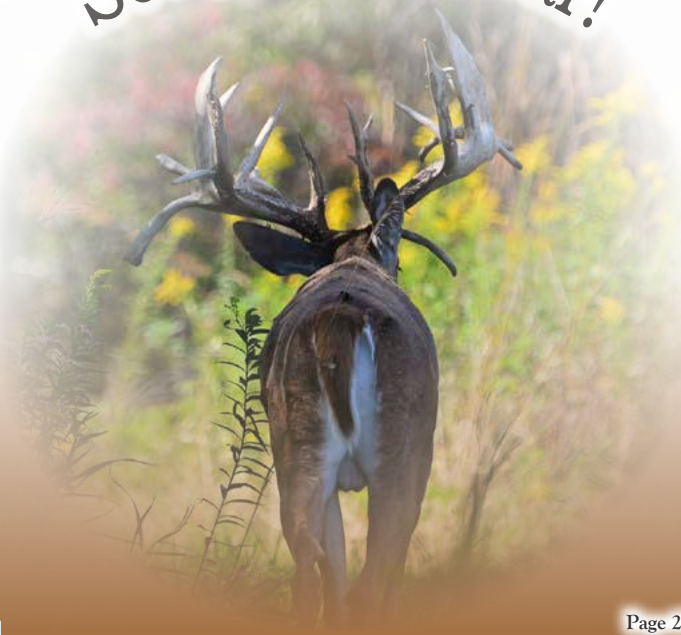
wanted to see if the double drop tine buck would come back to the spot that he had the previous morning. They were hoping lightning would strike a second time.

With the cool down, the deer were really moving. Bucks were cruising looking for a doe and the rut was beginning to arouse the bucks and does. When sitting in the box blind at Short Field, both hunter and guide periodically check out the back window where the field has tall grass and a finger of timber coming up to about 100 yards from the back of the blind. Eric was looking out the back late in the morning hunt when he spotted two bucks coming out off the timber to the southwest and into the tall grass. He was so excited that he could only whisper with a stutter ... "D.D. Drop Tine buck." All loco motion started in the blind with the hunter with his gun was exchanging sides with his guide. Dave quickly leaned over and put the muzzleloader out the smaller blind window. As the buck stopped on the edge of the tall grass, David squeezed the trigger. The buck took the 300 gr. bullet, spun around, and fell over like a cheap lawn chair.

At the sound of the gun, Jeff said "That was a muzzleloader!" The radio sounded and Eric

announced that David had a big buck down. Jeff and I quickly loaded our packs, headed for the truck, and drove the half mile to the spot where the big buck lay with Dave and Eric admiring their accomplishment. There was a lot of high fives, hugs and handshakes prior to setting up for field pictures. Dave added to his collection and had drop tine delight.

*See ya next year!*





# ICELAND ~

by Roger Card

About seven years ago my hunting partner, Rod Merchant, and I started conversing about different locations that would be a unique hunting experience. Iceland was a country that seemed to peak our interest the most, and we began the process of securing permits to go on an Iceland Reindeer Hunting Adventure.

Iceland has a permit system very similar to our Michigan bear tags. A certain number of permits are issued through an annual draw, plus those not chosen would get a priority point, supposedly securing them a spot higher in next year's lottery. Theoretically those accumulated points would "secure you a license by year three - - most certainly by year four - - practically guaranteed at year five, and our favorite, absolutely guaranteed in the drawing for year six."

Probably by nothing other than dumb luck, we failed in drawing a permit, six years in a row. During this six year drought, our files on Iceland became huge, as we read and kept everything we could find on Icelandic travel, knowing we would get there someday. After our failure in year six, we decided to fly to Iceland, see what in the world was up with our not getting tags, and do the touristy stuff that we had planned on doing, after the hunt.

Iceland has a national hi-way that circumvents the entire island, called "The Golden Ring Road." Upon arrival in Reykjavik, we rented a car at the local Thrifty franchise, secured a GPS that spoke English and took off on our mission to see the country, purging our files of "Things to do in Iceland," plus trying to find out why we could not secure a hunting permit.





# WELL, WE ALMOST WENT HUNTING

On the sightseeing trip, we were very successful. Being a former pilot, I assumed the navigation detail and Rod managed to drive the eleven days without issue. A couple of my most memorable stops were when we hired a young lady with a Zodiac inflatable to drive us up close to a glacier, actually a little too close!! Then one day, almost by accident, we were able to hitch a ride with a local adrenaline junky, in his quest to drive his Land Cruiser to a mountain summit on top of the glacier. He had invested more than \$25,000 in this new vehicle and Rod and I happened to be there on his day off work when the truck was done and the weather was right. This was exciting and I am glad we did it, however it was a little more extreme than we probably would have signed up for.

Between the wind and rainstorms, we witnessed scenery that was nothing short of spectacular and the food was both interesting and delicious. We found the Icelandic people to be very friendly, spoke excellent English, and were always available to offer us help and assistance when we inquired.

We saw one nice bull reindeer and, despite numerous inquiries, we are no closer to the answer on how to obtain a permit, then simply hire an outfitter and have him put your name in the lottery. Except for the lack of hunting, this was a most enjoyable safari.

Happy Hunting!





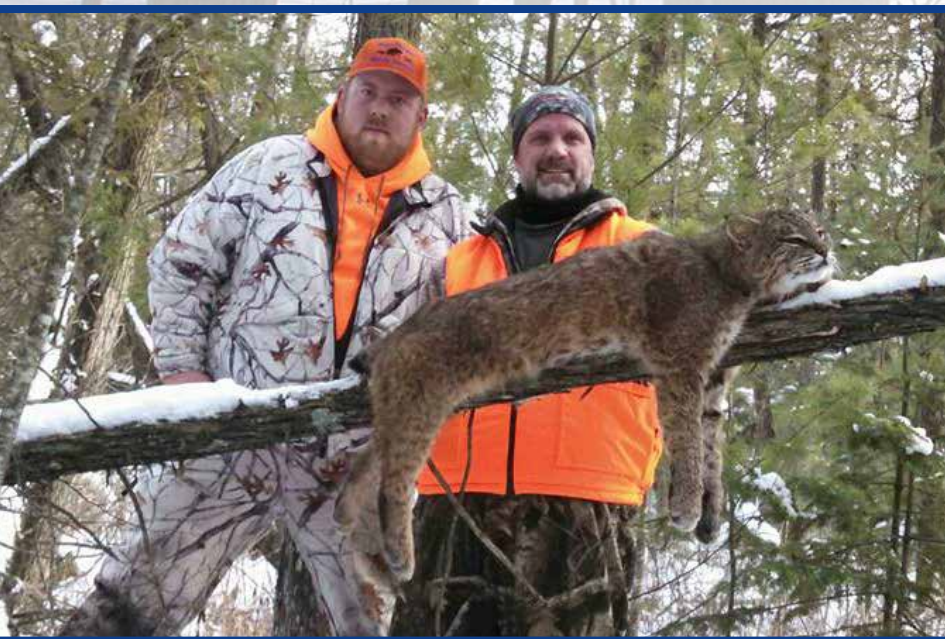
# Moments of Pure Exhilaration

by Chad Stearns

“Get in here now...he’s HUGE!” hissed across the radio with an urgency that was clear despite the whisper! As the hounds bellowed their approach, we had little time to get into position. Without a word, we sprang into a run, dodging the pine boughs aching with heavy fresh snow. As the curtain of falling snow opened, we emerged at the edge of a creek bottom. We paused, struggling to quiet our heavy panting before Mike’s voice broke the silence... “THERE HE IS!!!”

Several years ago, I had the opportunity to experience hound hunting for the first time in the mountains of Idaho. I will never forget the hounds man’s yarn in the waning hours of our final hunting day; “Cat hunting is hours of mind-numbing boredom followed by moments of pure exhilaration.” As it did with that hunt, a recent bobcat hunt in Michigan would hold the same lessons taught decades earlier!

After unsuccessfully drawing for mule deer tags, my close friend, Mike Strope and I, decided we would fill the hunting void with a local bobcat hunt. Mike had a contact with quality hunting hounds that could accommodate both of us on the same hunt. However, as our hunt date approached, business travel complicated my schedule so I encouraged Mike to go as planned and I would hunt later in the season. As I waited to board a flight home, I started receiving text messages documenting Mike’s day.



Message after message buzzed into my phone providing a play-by-play of Mike’s marathon day. He met Marcus Garner, Chris Sellers, and Kevin Keeler of ‘Blue Plague Guide Service’ north of Baldwin, Michigan to take advantage of a special, one-week bobcat season in that management unit. They were quick to find two different cat tracks and put dogs on both. With the limited snow and easy running for the cats, the dogs logged 26 miles before being pulled off the track at sunset. Knowing there were good cats in the area, they would try again the following morning.

In the pre-dawn hours of the second day, they found a fresh track crossing a remote National Forrest road. Given the proportions

of the track, they decided to wait for light then turn the dogs on the trail. Mike described the confusion trying to sort out the cat’s trail in the sparse snow as he ran from one section to the next, evading his pursuers. The tom ran through two active logging operations, down the middle of paved roads before leaping into the next section and using leaning trees to vault across nearly frozen creeks, making his tracks nearly impossible to follow. It was obvious





this mature tom knew the game being played, and used every trick of a cagey old bobcat nearly losing them on countless occasions.

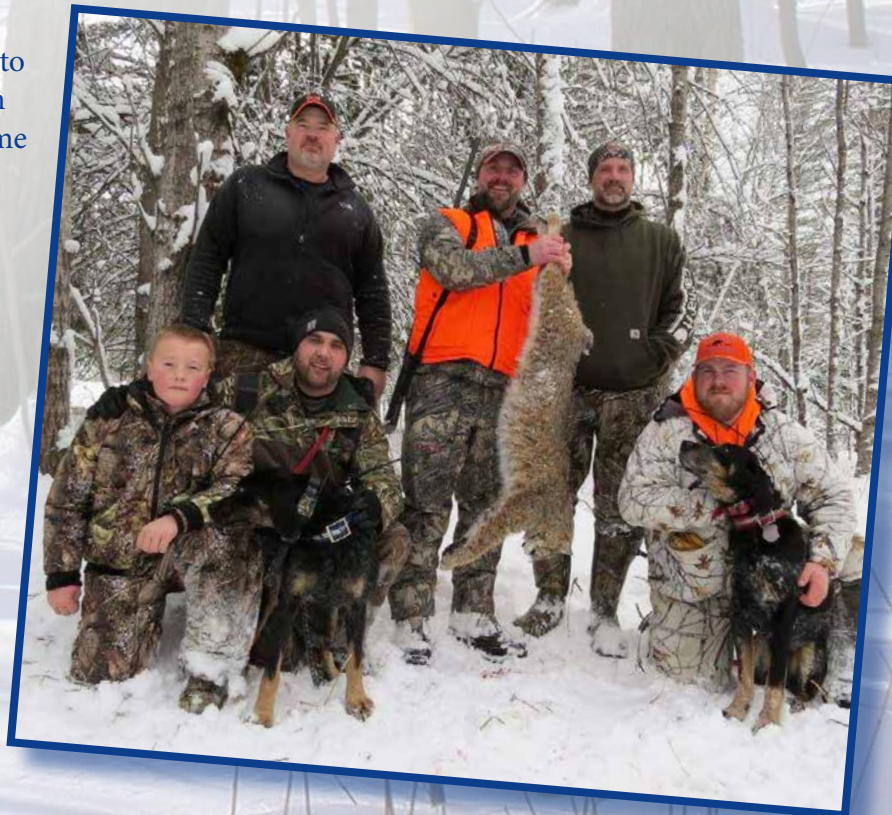
Mile after mile they stuck to the cat's track, doubling back to find him circling and doing his best to confuse the relentless hounds. As afternoon changed to evening, they followed the track to the edge of a giant, nasty swamp. "If you want a chance at this tom, we've got to go in there", Marcus stated. "And it ain't pretty". Without hesitation, Mike and the crew forged ahead. He recounted the details of biting cold freezing his pants as they crossed the half-frozen marsh, breaking through the ice and knee-deep snow, desperately chasing the hounds' signal. After countless miles and hours of busting brush, Mike intercepted the giant tom and with one round from his favorite twelve gauge, anchored the wily old cat.



He was quick to send pictures revealing the tom's 36 plus-pound frame and giant head. Reading carefully and savoring every detail of Mike's quest, it was the furthest tale from the 'mind-numbing boredom' of my previous hound experience and I couldn't wait for my opportunity.

Four days later I met Mike and we made the pre-dawn trek west across fresh snow-covered highways to meet the Blue Plague crew. After sharing his story in person, Mike decided to take a day off work to join me for the final day of the Baldwin unit hunt.

My anticipation soared as we crept up the same remote trail looking for tracks in the falling snow. Should we find them, they would assuredly be fresh! Then just as had happened with Mike, Chris's rig jerked to a halt! It took only two words from the guide's mouth to realize we were on another giant tom! This was going to be EPIC! As blackness gave way to varying shades of gray, we turned "Jug" and "Daisy" loose on the fresh cat track. Their excited howls pierced the nine-degree morning air as they sped through the cattails bordering the trail. Suddenly, Chris hollered, "Get out here...the dogs are headed back this way." I leapt from the truck, scrambling to load my shotgun as the bellowing hounds approached. I stood frozen, waiting for the giant cat to slip onto the trail, but nothing. Seconds felt like minutes...the cold wind bit at my finger poised to squeeze at any moment until the sound turned abruptly away and faded back into the morning gray.





We loaded into the truck to circle the section, watching the dogs' progress on the GPS unit. As the color-coded paths circled one another, it became evident that this cat was also up to the challenge. Just as quickly as our hopes had risen, they were suddenly dashed. Hoping to sort out the cat's direction, Chris trudged off into the fresh snow and cattails. As he broke brush away from our vehicle, another truckload of hunters approached. They had also turned hounds on the track, only a short distance from our position! After several hours of walking, we met Chris on the opposite side of the section. He had found the tom's escape route from both sets of dogs which was directly onto private property. Kevin and Chris quickly collected their dogs and pulled them from the private ground...we were done!



Despite being wet and cold, Chris and Kevin quickly formulated a plan. Based on the additional hunting pressure, they circled to the far side of the private property where we searched for the track that could be seeking refuge in a pine thicket with public access to the west. As luck would have it, the track emerged from the east heading directly toward the thick and dark cover of the pines as they had anticipated. In another stroke of luck, Marcus joined the crew after work and moved ahead to the thicket to search for tracks. Shortly after his arrival he found the track and let loose his best hound, "Sock". In no time, he had the big tom running circles in the relative protection of the pines. Suddenly, we heard Marcus hiss into his radio, "Get in here now...he's HUGE!"

Chris immediately plowed directly into the thicket, his broad shoulders and chest knocking the fresh snow from the boughs. Struggling to see through the falling snow, we ducked and dodged heading in the direction of the echoing hound. Suddenly, we hit the edge of the thicket and immediately stopped. As if in slow motion, here came a huge bobcat running down a frozen creek bed right toward us. Mike, in the excitement, pointed urging "THERE HE IS!!!" As the large cat bound toward us, I shouldered my Benelli and yanked the trigger sending number 4 shot through the brush. He faltered only slightly so I hammered the trigger again dropping him motionless into a bed of fluffy snow.

For an instant, everything was still and quiet. Then suddenly, the throngs of back-slaps and high fives rang out in unison with the dog's celebratory howls. We had taken another 30-pound Tom bobcat that surpassed my wildest dreams. And while the congratulations and photo session ensued, I kept flashing back to my old cowboy friend and thinking how much I cherish these "moments of pure exhilaration".





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The man who does things makes many mistakes, but he never makes the biggest mistake of all - do nothing. -Benjamin Franklin





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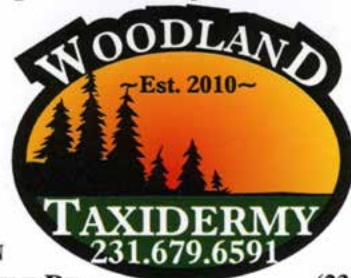
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