

FRONT SIGHT



Mid-Michigan Chapter Safari Club International

October - December 2022, Issue 60



Oak grove with Spanish moss at
Osceola Outfitters' camp in Florida.

Photograph by Josh Christensen

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Chairmen are listed first

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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 www.midmichigansci.org for copies of the **Front Sight**, listing of events, and fundraiser auction items.

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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. In order to receive the lock combination you will need to contact Lance Norris at either (989) 621-2794 or ruter11b@cmich.edu to take a safety training/orientation to familiarize yourself with the club. When visiting the Sportsman's Club please carry membership identification on you.



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President's Message

Hello everyone, my name is Abbe Mulders and I have been a member of the Mid-Michigan SCI board for close to eight years now, and Vice President for the past 3 years under Jon Zieman. Before joining this Mid-Michigan SCI board, I was active in helping my husband Joe Mulders as co-chairs of the Annual Fundraiser Gala. One of the things that has attracted me through the years to the Mid-Michigan SCI chapter are the great people – both on the Board and within the membership. I have enjoyed both working on the fundraiser and then Co-Chairing it with Joe. Our annual Fundraiser Gala is the premier event to raise the money the Chapter uses to support conservation, hunting, education and humanitarian efforts throughout the year. Our Fundraiser moves weekends in 2023 – February 17th and 18th – to accommodate the National SCI Convention in Nashville, Tennessee.



The board and I are working to prioritize and focus on a few key areas for our 2023 season. We are very committed to reinstitute and improve attendance at our Membership Meetings. We have had great speakers and topics the past few months, and the October meeting will be great as well! At the September meeting, Captain Darrin Howard introduced his Blue Fin Tuna Fishing adventures and we had several members (including Joe & I) who have fished with Captain Darrin this past summer describing our exciting adventures as well.....Come on out and enjoy a super meal and hear from our Special Guests at the October 3rd Membership Meeting – mark your calendars now!! Bring the family along for door prizes, a Youth rifle give-away, and a 50/50 pot of money.

Happy Arrival of Fall,

Abbe M. Mulders

Abbe Mulders
President
(989) 450-8744 • abbemulders@gmail.com

Editor's Message

When you receive this issue of Front Sight the fall hunting season will be upon us. I wish you all great success and no matter if you stay in our state or travel elsewhere if you are lucky enough to harvest your intended target please share your story with us.

You may have noticed our board has elected a new president for our chapter. Abbe Mulders has taken over the duties and will do a great job. I'd like to thank Jon Zieman for doing an excellent job as our president for the past four years. Jon will still be very active on our board as he has taken over the job of treasurer and our past treasurer, Brandon Jurries has been appointed as our new vice president.



Our family preparing to take our first game drive on our recent trip to South Africa.

Since our last issue I was blessed enough to take my family on a hunting safari to South Africa, where we enjoyed the hospitality of Marupa Safaris. We had a truly enjoyable trip and will cherish the memories we made. Look to future issues for articles, some from me and some from my two sons, on our adventure.

Our chapter has continued to provide opportunities for members and their friends to gather and learn about different hunting/outdoor opportunities in the last two membership meetings. Be sure to mark your calendar for upcoming meetings. They are a great time to meet with friends, make new friends and enjoy the company of others. On October 3rd our guest speaker will be Denny Geurink, hunter and author. See a review of his book by Mary Harter on page 4.

Here are a list of all of 2023's membership meetings.

April 3rd	May 1st	July 31st	September 11th	October 2nd
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As always, we would love for you to share your outdoor experiences with us. We currently have three formats in which we put stories to print. We have the traditional written article, the journal entry format (you only need to submit your journal entries along with pictures) and we have our pictorial essay format (this is like a Facebook post with a short description of your adventure, followed by pictures with captions). Please consider submitting one of your experiences with us.

Happy Hunting!

Josh W. Christensen
Josh Christensen
Editor
(989) 329-4911 • jchappyfish@gmail.com

SCI Mid-Michigan Chapter Meeting Schedule

* SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Date	Meeting Type	Time	Location
Oct. 3, 2022	Board/Membership Meeting	6:00 pm	Buck's Run Golf Course
Nov. 6, 2022	Crooked Foot Veterans' Hunt	8:00 am	Owosso, MI
Jan. 14, 2023	Big Buck Night	4:00 Reg./5:00 pm	Comfort Inn
Feb. 17 & 18, 2023	Mid-MI Annual Fundraiser	TBA	Soaring Eagle
Feb. 22-25, 2023	National Convention	TBA	Nashville, TN

All board meetings are open to our membership. Reservations required.
Please call and leave a message at 989-560-1061 or email Suzette Howard at suzettejhoward@yahoo.com

Book Review

by Mary Harter



Title: IN THE LAND OF THE BEAR

Author: DENNY GEURINK

Copyright: 2014

Publisher: TARGET COMMUNICATIONS OUTDOOR BOOKS LLC

List Price: \$20.00

Denny Geurink spoke at the Michigan Chapter Christmas Party and we so enjoyed him that I purchased his book. Denny is from Allendale, is an outdoor writer, and was invited to be part of an exploratory safari to the Soviet Union in 1991. As far as he knows, he was the first outdoor writer ever invited to the Soviet Union. Stories of his historical trip were published in the Denver Post, the Chicago Tribune, the Detroit News, the Cleveland

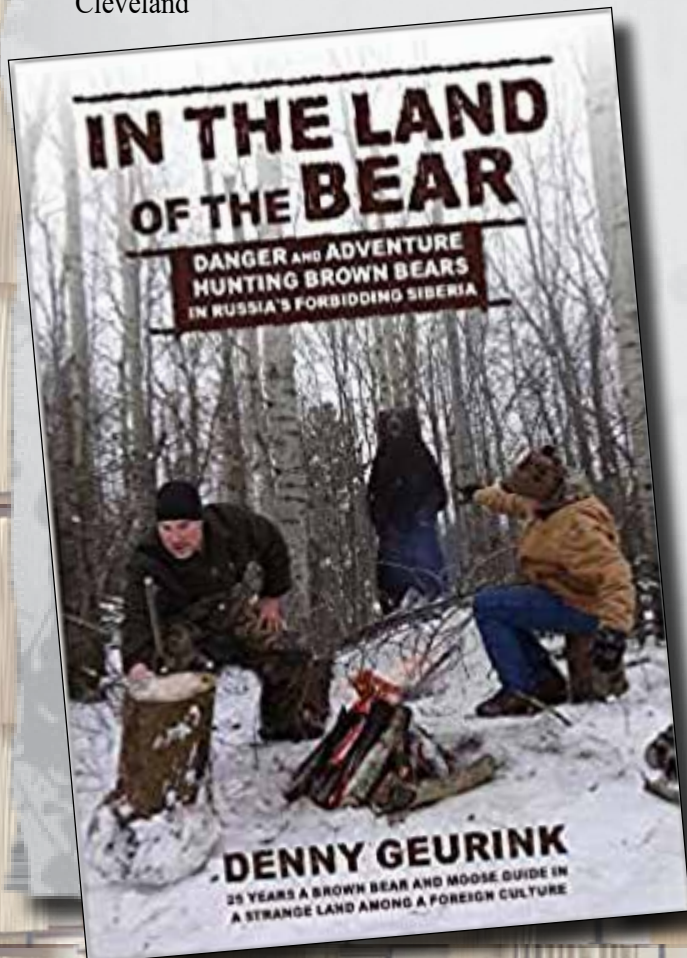
Plain Dealer, the Grand Rapids Press, and many more daily papers.

As his phone began ringing off the hook and many people said they would love to go with him if he ever went back, he decided there might be some money to be made from hunting there. He called the outfitter that set up his first trip and asked if he wanted to get into the tourism business, which became Denny Geurink's Outdoor Adventures.

His book is filled with very interesting stories of hunting red stag with the KGB out of a Russian army tank, seeing hundreds of the largest bears in the world and their many close encounters, huge moose, wild boar, hunting capercaillie, and a lot of first-hand accounts from other hunters. Denny took many important people hunting including Apollo astronaut Jim McDivitt, Earl O'Loughlin, a retired four-star general who flew RB-47 spy plane missions over Russia right where they hunted, Jimmy Carter, and many people you might know from Michigan.

His book also shares the experiences of Russian food, types of hunters from 13 to 83, and a great chapter of how hunting helps increase the animal population because of the value placed on them. Denny traveled there more than 50 times, really getting to know the people, their culture, and describes how horrible communism really is.

This book gets 10 out of 10 bullseyes



BUY, SELL, or TRADE

The following are the terms and conditions for the Buy, Sell or Trade section of our magazine.

- It is **FREE** to all members of our Mid-Michigan SCI Chapter.
- One photo per item will be used in this section. This photo will be displayed in a small size (about 2"x2").
- You may have up to four ads per issue. (You must renew each ad each issue.)
- Beyond the description of the item, each ad will need your name, e-mail and/or phone number
- Each ad should be limited to 25 words plus your name and e-mail and/or phone number unless otherwise discussed with the editor.
- **The Mid-Michigan Chapter is not responsible for items sold.**

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28 NOSLER WITH 5.5X22X56 NIGHTFORCE SCOPE 1,000+ yard Custom Rifle by Pierce Engineering. Come ups have been calculated/field tested and taped to stock. Weighs about 12 1/2 lbs fully loaded with Harris Bi-Pod. 985 CCI Magnum Large Rifle Primers. Almost 2lbs of Hodgdon H1000 Powder. Fired almost 75 rounds. 3 1/2 boxes of Nosler AccuBond 160gr Factory Ammo. 15 rounds of 175 Nosler LR handloaded ammo. 3 Boxes of once fired brass. \$7,000.00 If interested contact Ken Ransom 231-947-1554.

ELK HUNTING IN *Colorado*



by Raymond Erickson

How does one describe the feeling of Colorado Elk Hunting? I'm not sure if I can but I'll start out by saying I lived a Colorado Rocky Mountain High at 8346ft. Traveling there was the easy part and I enjoyed every minute of it with my friend Phil Patterson. We started out early Wednesday morning with the goal of reaching Cheyenne Wyoming. This would be about 17 hours, and 1157 miles. We made good time and settled in around midnight.

We woke up the next morning to find a little bit of snow had fallen. We drove to local dinner and had a nice breakfast. We knew we didn't have far to travel to Craig Colorado, only about four hours away, so we checked out the town of Cheyenne. While there we learned Cheyenne has a festival called Frontier Days every year. It looked like a lot of fun and I might have to go back some day.

We then headed out of town towards our final destination of Craig. The scenery from Cheyenne to Craig was absolutely breathtaking. Truly God's creation. We saw a lot of pronghorn and mule deer too. We even saw many mule deer within the city

Raymond with the elk

limits of Craig. We eventually found our hotel, got checked in and decided to drive out and find where Bearcat Outfitters was located. During that time we saw some awe inspiring mountains, ravines, small rivers and discovered later as we followed the road map that we would be right in the middle of it all. What a feeling. Eventually we ventured back into town and found a nice place to relax and have dinner.

The following morning we wanted to do some shopping to see what we could find for our families. We were able to find a place called the Bargain Barn and purchased some nice things. We had a nice conversation with the ladies running the place and learned Seth and Linda Peters, owners of Bearcat Outfitters, are well known throughout their community. Every place we went people knew of them. We also found Mountain Man Processing, a recommended processor of Bearcat Outfitters. I was lucky enough to find out later these guys are really good.

Afterwards we decided to make our way out of town to our outfitter's location. When we arrived at the gate we punched in the code given to us and the gate opened for us to make our way through. I couldn't believe it was happening. I had to pinch myself. My elk hunting adventure was about to begin. We still had about three miles to go and the road was narrow with only enough room for one vehicle. Once we made it to the lodge the guys motioned for us to back the truck up to unload our things. We introduced ourselves and met Seth and the crew.

Once everyone arrived Seth wanted to do a draw out of a hat to figure out who was going where to hunt the following morning. Phil was going to "Mikes" and I was going to the "Condo." With the way the draw worked out I didn't need to be fitted for a horse,



Loading up!

but Phil did so once everyone knew where they were going the guys who needed to be fitted for horses loaded up in the back of a pickup and off they went disappearing into the woods. I learned the “Condo” was an elevated blind and there was another called the “View” which another hunter drew.

Later that evening, after the guys returned from being fitted, we had a meeting where we met Linda, Rita, Klein, Jess, and some of the other crew. They talked about what a legal bull was (at least four tines one side or at least a five inch brow tine), how to ride the horses, ammo, gun safety, and then the game plan for opening day. Based on what was talked about our day would start out every morning with breakfast served at 4:45am and then everyone who needed to ride horses would need to be ready to load in the truck heading to the stable no later than 5:30am. The guys who drew the elevated ground blinds would go out a little later in the morning. After getting everything set we finished out the night with dinner, and couple of drinks to help get some sleep.

Day 1: Opening day started with breakfast with the guys. When we finished we grabbed a sandwich, water, and snacks for our afternoon lunch. Phil and I wished each other luck as he walked out and climb into back of truck. It wasn't long after this before Seth asked us to get ready. The guys heading to blinds loaded into a different truck. Our first stop would be the “Condo”. The “Condo” wasn't far from the lodge and when we got there it wasn't hard to find. It was still pretty dark as I walked up the steps of the blind. When I climbed in, it was pitch black. I had to wait until the sun started to come up before I could see the layout inside the blind. Most of the windows were closed so I opened a few to get a better view.

The first picture I took was of the sun rise from the front window of the blind. This was a wonderful beginning to the day. Throughout the morning and afternoon I saw six elk. Four were cows, and two were bulls. They all traveled between the blind and the peak of the mountain to my left. I didn't see where the cows went but the two bulls ended up the top of a ridge around 300 yards away. One bull was a spike and I couldn't make out the other one very well. He looked like he had three tines for sure on top but I couldn't see any brow tines. So I just watch and enjoyed the view.

Looking out the right window the view from was amazing. I did not see any more elk that day. When the sun went down the truck arrived to pick me up and we drove back to the lodge. Seeing as we were closest to the lodge we were the first ones back. So we waited for the others to arrive to tell us about their days. It seemed like it took forever for my buddy Phil to show up. I found out later that “Mikes” (the place Phil was hunting) was one of furthest hunting spots from the lodge.

When Phil arrived I could tell by the look on his face that he experienced a thrill of a lifetime. He told me about his horse Scotty, and how this horse was just like a kid. He explained the guides told



The view from the right of the condo.



The view from the front of the condo.



The view to the left of the condo.

the riders not to let their horses stop and eat and to try to keep them moving. Phil explained he would pull up on Scotty's reins but that didn't stop him from pulling up grass while walking the trail every chance he got. Phil said it was like being with a kid. No matter how much he told his horse not to, he was going to do it anyways.

Linda and Rita prepared a fabulous dinner along with desert that evening. Our day ended with great stories. Three elk were taken by others on the first day. After dinner we relaxed and had a couple of cold ones. During this down time I was informed I would be going to the stable in the morning for a horse back adventure. They told me once I made it to the stable in the morning I would be fitted for a horse. I was excited and nervous at the same time. I had never ridden a horse so I wasn't sure what to expect. Phil told me not to worry. So we relaxed for a bit then went to bed early to be ready for the next day.

Day 2: This day started with the same routine as we ate breakfast and grabbed lunch for the day, but this morning felt different...something special. I could feel it. I put my gear on, walked out to the truck, handed my rifle up and climbed aboard. You can only imagine what it was like riding in the back of truck while in the dark. The temperature was in the teens, I had one hand holding onto the truck while going through the mountainous terrain. My other held onto my rifle. We traveled awhile before we came upon the stable.

Once the truck was parked and we were all unloaded, the first thing I noticed was how quiet it was, even with all the horses being there. We were asked to wait in the barn until called. In my case I didn't have to wait long. As I walked out of the barn I noticed a very large horse. I couldn't believe his size. His back was as tall as me standing. There was a stepping stool for me to get up onto the horse. So I put my left foot in the stirrup and pulled myself up but even at that it was very hard to throw my leg over to the other side. My stirrups were way too long. Once I mounted the horse all I could think about was, "How in the heck am I going to get down and up again?" Then Jess whispered not to worry about my steed, "He's a good ole boy." Klein adjusted my stirrups so they fit my legs. My horse's name was Hank and before I knew it we started to move out.

Hank followed Klein's horse and I found out very quickly that I was just a passenger. Which was fine by me. I didn't know what I was doing. After a short period of riding I started to feel more comfortable and I was able to look up to see the beautiful stars in the moon lit morning. I could see horses and guides in front of me as we traveled the trail to our hunting areas. It seemed like we rode for an hour before coming to a stop. That's when it dawned on me again that I was going to need to figure out how to get down. I slowly swung my right leg over and tried to find the ground. I was relieved once I did. My first horse ride ever, and I made it!

At that point Klein took my rifle out of the scabbard, tied up the horses and we made our way out into an area that was flat.

Then down a small hill until we came across a set of chairs. In front of the chairs was this makeshift shooting bench made out of a couple of small logs strapped together. We sat there and watched the sun come up. What a sight to see. I knew then why this location was known as the "Scenic."

It wasn't long before we saw some action. Two elk took us both by surprise. Klein whispered one was a spike and the other was a shooter five point. He ranged them both at 400 yards. By the time I got a chance to see them through the scope both elk traversed across an open area, then went south and disappeared back into the forest. I sat there thinking at this range I'm going to have to put myself in a better shooting position. Things happened fast.

We didn't see anything else after that and as the early morning slowly passed Klein decided to go and check on another hunter. He said he'd be back later in the day as he quietly stood up and walked away. Time seemed to stand still but I didn't mind. The sun was keeping me warm, there was no wind and I had the best view a hunter could ask for. I sat there enjoying every aspect of being on a mountain in Colorado.

Around noon I decided to have some lunch and that's when I noticed a couple of guys quartering out an Elk down in the valley. It didn't take them long, but looked like a lot of work as they loaded each quarter onto mules. It wasn't long after that



View from the "Scenic"

Klein showed up. We sat and enjoyed each other's company while glassing for elk. After a little time Klein decided, once again, it was time for him to head out and check on another hunter. This time he said, he wouldn't be back until after dark. He told me to just make my way back up the hill and follow the ribbons until I got to the trail head and he'd meet up with me there. There wasn't much I could say but, "Ok, see you later." Once Klein left I started to really scope out the area. My farthest shot was out to 420 yards, with my closest being 265 yards. The yardage looked deceiving and I'm glad I had my range finder.

I could see an elk trail going through middle of the open area which was 350 yards. I figured my best shooting opportunity was going to be at 300 yards, which Phil and I practiced shooting prior to coming on our hunt. I felt pretty comfortable shooting out to 400 but that was a long ways away. I thought I really didn't want to chance that. I made up my mind, any shooter 350 yards or less I was going to let the lead fly. I also looked for hypothetical follow up shot areas just in case an elk ran into any of those areas after my first shot. I did that all afternoon. When 5pm came around I knew if anything was going to happen it was going to be between now a 7pm.

I started to put myself in that frame of mind. I put my ear plugs in, and put my hunting jacket on and continued to watch over the whole area again and again. Sometime after 6 pm I saw something brown. I knew it was around 300 yards and was standing between 2 pine trees. I knew it was an elk, but was it a cow or a bull? And if it was a bull, how many points did he have on one side? As I moved my rifle into position I looked through the scope and I could count one, two, and three with a "y" on top, making him at least a five point and legal. I refocused on his shoulder and as he was getting ready to take another step I squeezed off a round.

I could see through the scope as the elk hunched up and picked up his right leg like I hit him in the shoulder. He then ran down and back into the woods below. I knew it was a good shot but I didn't know how good. Elk are though. I've heard stories that it usually takes more than one round and I was only able to get one off. Needless to say, I was little worried. I was also experiencing a rush like no other.

Each hunter had a radio to call in case we shot an elk or if we had an emergency. I turned my radio on but couldn't say much because of the rush I was still feeling. It took me awhile before I could relay my situation. Klein replied back on the radio. We talk back and forth just a little bit about which way the elk went and rough location. He responded by saying, "Sounds good, sit tight, be there shortly after dark."

After dark Klein called back on the radio asking me to climb back up the hill and to the flat area, and he would meet me there with the horses. I made my way up the hill which was much harder than I expected because it was very slippery. Once I made it to the top, Klein was waiting there with the horses. Klein had located a stump for me to get back on Hank. He moved Hank into position and

then something unexpected happened. Hank lurch forward and knocked Klein right off his feet. I could instantly tell something was wrong with Klein. He was in an enormous amount of pain. Something happen to his knee and he had a hard time standing back up. I asked if there was anything I could do to help. He said to just give him a few minutes.

While he was trying to recover he began to explain we needed to go and find my elk and we couldn't leave it overnight. I nodded and said, "Ok" as he explained. He told me we were going to have to go down a steep hill, cross a creek, and travel across a ridge into the general location. From there we would need to track him, and after recovering him we needed to come back up the same way. He looked at me and asked if I was up for it. I thought for a few seconds thinking to myself, "Man what did I get myself into?" Of course I couldn't back out, we had to find the elk. So we moved Hank back into position and I climbed aboard.



View from the "Scenic"

We moved across the flat area first, stopping at the edge of the hill we needed to go down. I have to admit I wasn't ready for that, but down we went. Hank slipped a couple of times but never fell, thank God. It seemed like forever before we made it to the bottom. Once there, we crossed the creek and stopped for a short period before going across the ridge and back over to the other side.

When we started to move again Ol' Hank passed under a bunch of trees, and I had to dodge a few branches before we made into a clearing. Once there, I could tell we were close based on the trees. We found a spot to get off the horses and walked up the hill, and over to the two trees I marked in my mind where the bull entered the woods, but everything was so much taller than I imagined it would be. Once there, Klein looked at the area and notice fresh tracks. I looked for blood but didn't see any, which made me worry even more about my shot. Klein continued for a short period, then stopped and turn and said, "I think we are going to have to stop tracking and come back tomorrow." I thought to myself, "What? That was a long ass ride down, and I'm not sure I want to do that again." Then he turn and looked at me with a big grin as he shined his light on my elk. Needless to say I was in a little shock. The elk was a magnificent old bull. I had no Idea how big he was. I felt at that point I had just won the lottery!

WHITETAIL DEER HUNTING



Michigan



Michigan



Michigan

by Dan Caitlin

As most know, Charlotte and I have been blessed to hunt all over the world chasing big game and visiting hunting outfitters at the same time. However, at the end of the day, our passion really ends right where it started. Whitetail deer hunting!

I would say Charlotte's favorite state is most certainly her home state of Iowa because the deer are obviously "way bigger" than in our back yard here in Michigan, however hunting right here at home is a huge passion of mine because it's year around puttering in the woods. I'm able to plant food plots, hang stands, and mow paths through our hunting property's each change of season. Together we both agree that it's not always the size of buck we collect, but the size of the EXPERIENCE we gain by spending our time afield together and with our closest friends.



Michigan

In 2021 we had great success here in Michigan, with us both filling our combo tags. I tagged out with a bow, and Charlotte passed on everything with her bow, but eventually killed a mature buck with her rifle out of MY gun blind. She wasn't really wanting to collect a 2nd Michigan buck, but on the second to last day of the season, again setting in my blind, she bagged the biggest buck of our year here in Michigan. Time to LOCK the door on my deer shack! LOL.

Charlotte was also able to harvest a great buck in Iowa with her bow and another solid buck in Kansas with her Rifle. I hunted Missouri with a bow but was unable to connect with a mature buck, however I did connect on a great 8-pointer in Kansas. As you can see, we have a deeply rooted passion for whitetail deer hunting. Not only for collecting bucks, but for collecting memories. We look forward to the whitetail deer woods again in 2022!



Iowa



Kansas



Kansas



Conservation Affairs

Compiled and submitted by Autumn Gonda



MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF
NATURAL RESOURCES

CONSERVATION CORNER

Black Bears:

Black Bears are most common in the northern two thirds of the state, with occasional sightings further south. Black bears have enormous appetites and an excellent sense of smell. They can remember the locations of food sources from year to year. Bears will travel great distances to find food. Black bears are omnivorous and opportunistic feeders, eating both plant and animal matter.

Preventing conflicts with bears at home:

- Never intentionally feed a bear.
- Remove potential food sources, like bird feeders, from your yard. Do not feed the birds in the spring, summer and fall, when bears are most active.
- Keep pet food inside or in a secured area.
- Keep garbage and odor at a minimum by removing trash often and cleaning container with disinfectant.
- Keep garbage in a secured area or in a secured container with a metal, lockable lid until disposal.
- Keep grills and picnic tables clean.
- Apiaries (bee hives), fruit trees, and gardens can be protected from bears by electric fencing.

Preventing conflicts with bears when camping or hiking:

- Never intentionally feed a bear.
- Keep a clean camp - minimize food odors and waste.
- Food and toiletries should NEVER be kept in tents.
- Store food and toiletries in airtight containers in a vehicle trunk or suspend food in burlap, plastic bags, or backpacks from trees. Hang 12 feet above ground, 10 feet from trunk, and 5 feet from nearest branch.
- Always cook at a distance from your campsite and wash utensils shortly after eating.
- Don't sleep in clothes that have cooking odors or blood on them.
- Store trash as you would food - burning or burying waste attracts bears.
- Travel in groups and make noise when hiking.
- Carry bear spray.

If you encounter a black bear:

- Stand your ground. DO NOT run or play dead.
- Make loud noises and back away slowly.
- Always provide a clear, unobstructed escape route for the bear.
- Rarely do bears attack. If they do, fight back.
- Treat bears with respect and observe them from a distance.



Know the laws:

Excellent black bear hunting opportunities exist in Michigan. Hunting is used to maintain populations at acceptable and manageable levels. Details on season dates and locations can be found in the current Michigan Black Bear Digest, found online at Michigan.gov/Bear. Black bears can only be killed by a licensed hunter or when human life is in danger. Anyone who is experiencing problems with black bears should contact the nearest DNR office and speak with a wildlife biologist or technician for further assistance.



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"If you work on something a little bit every day, you end up with something that is massive." – Kenneth Goldsmith

August Membership



On August 1st over 50 people gathered at the Mount Pleasant Comfort Inn for a Mid-Michigan membership meeting. It's important for readers to know you don't have to be a member to attend, so feel free to invite a friend who isn't a member to show them some of the many things SCI does.



The evening started at 6:00 with a social hour followed by an excellent meal of chicken, phenomenal potatoes, green beans, salad and several different types of deserts. As the meal was coming to a close Jon Zieman, our current treasure and former chapter president, came around to all the tables and told the kids, with a smile on his face, there

was a minimum quota for kids of two desserts each. At the conclusion of the meal the program began.

For this meeting board members Doug Chapin and Josh Christensen described their experiences on their recent trips to Africa. Both Doug and Josh booked their safaris at our annual fundraiser and encouraged people in attendance to come to the fundraiser if they too were interested in hunting in Africa or anywhere else for that matter.



Chapin spoke first of his and his wife's adventure with Steele Game Safaris. He had a slide show with many pictures to go along with his presentation, highlighting a few of his hunts, the lodges he stayed and animals taken on his trip.

Christensen spoke next on his family trip with Marupa Safaris. Josh was accompanied on his trip by his wife and their two sons. Christensen started with the point that it is very

Meeting

safe to travel to South Africa to hunt and anyone with a family thinking about the adventure should seize the opportunity. He also had a slide show to accompany his description of his and his family's adventure, highlighting several of the hunts and adventures his family had. He mentioned several times there would be stories coming in the Front Sight magazine from him, and his sons Elijah and Ivan.

To end the meeting there were drawings for the youth gun, where one lucky young lady won a .410, one person won over \$150 in the 50/50 raffle and many people went home with door prizes. There are two more membership meetings this year. One on Monday, September 11th and one on Monday October 2nd. Please join us



GATORS AND TURKEYS

by Josh Christensen

With the onset of Covid I had a lot of time in the spring of 2020 to get back into turkey hunting. While in the woods during that spring I hatched the idea to try to get the grand slam of turkeys (all four subspecies in the United States) and possibly do the world slam (the four subspecies in the United States, plus two additional subspecies in Mexico). This is the story of my quest for the Osceola turkey, which turned out to be much more than a turkey hunt.

In January of 2021 I began looking for outfitters to hunt an Osceola turkey with. I researched multiple places online, but I also asked a friend who had hunted in Florida, and all around the United States, for information on an outfitter I might want to use. Without hesitation my friend recommended Hoppy Kempfer and Osceola Outfitters. I was told Hoppy ran a class act operation and I couldn't go wrong hunting with him. My friend also mentioned Osceola Outfitters has plenty of hogs and alligators to hunt if I was interested.

After one conversation with Hoppy I knew he was the one I would be hunting with. I sent my deposit in and selected my hunting dates for the spring of 2022. My wife Sara and I decided we would make the trip together for our spring break.

Throughout the following year Sara and I discussed the possibility of adding additional animals if the opportunity presented itself on the trip. By the time we left for Florida in late March of 2022 our plan was for Sara to harvest a pig or two and for me to go after a turkey, management alligator and a few pigs. This trip was shaping up to be quite the experience.

Our plan was to drive our car rather than our truck because our car got much better gas mileage and as spring break approached the price of gas soared to well over \$4.00/gallon. The only problem was at the beginning of March a deer decided to run into the driver's side fender of the car as Sara and Elijah were heading into work/school. Lucky for us, our insurance company and local body shop were able to work quickly and we got our car back the evening before we were to leave.

After work on Friday Sara and I loaded up the car with our hunting gear, coolers and firearms to start our trip south. We didn't have a set destination that first evening, we just knew we wanted to get



Sara and Josh with the gator.

somewhere into Ohio. The temperatures were still cold in Michigan and Ohio, but that wasn't going to be the case in Florida, where the temperatures were going to approach mid-80's all week. After a night in Ohio we were able to make it to southern Georgia and the following day we were able to make it to the hunting ranch in Florida by 4:00. We also were able to stop in northern Florida to have lunch with some retired colleagues who moved to this area years ago.

Once we arrived at Osceola Outfitters, Hoppy showed us our room in the "cabin." The cabin had three individual rooms with their own TV and bathroom. It was similar to the setup of a motel. The cabin was located around a hundred yards from the lodge where there were also three rooms and a group bathroom. Hoppy chose the cabin for us to stay in because it was more private and he wanted Sara to feel comfortable and give us our own space as he had two other hunters coming in the following evening.

Once the orientation of the cabin and lodge were given, Hoppy told us to get settled in and if we wanted to we could go out hunting that evening. Of course we were all for getting the opportunity to hunt. We quickly unpacked and got prepared to head out for the evening. Hoppy told us when we arrived what his plan for the next few days were. He wanted to try to get a gator the next day after an early morning turkey hunt as the temperatures gave us the best opportunity with it getting the coolest that night (the temperatures were going to drop to the low 50's). The other nights we were scheduled to be there weren't going to go below 60.

Now that we were unpacked and ready to go Hoppy told me to grab my rifle, we were using Sara's .243 for both pigs and alligator. Our plan was to try to find an alligator Sage, Hoppy's older son, had spotted on the property within the past few days hanging out in a small body of water with a culvert going under the two track. Sage thought the gator was at least eight feet long, but probably closer to nine. This was based on the short moment he had to look him over before he vanished under the murky water.

As we approached the area on the property where Sage saw this gator we saw a sounder (group) of pigs. When we were a few hundred yards from the culvert Hoppy stopped the truck and we got out and started sneaking our way closer to see if the gator was visible. The skies were



Josh preparing for a shot on his alligator.

AND HOGS, *Oh My!*

clear and the sun shining as we approached. Hoppy stopped several times and used his binoculars to see if he could spot the gator, but the gator was nowhere to be seen. Hoppy had me get set up on shooting sticks looking over the small area of water and told me to be ready as he used his phone to make sounds that sound like little alligators.

Looking over the small area of water made me think two things. First, this looks like areas back in Michigan were I used to play as a kid where the rains would make a small swimming hole on one side of a culvert. My second thought was, how could an eight plus foot alligator live in this small space? At any rate, I was set up, but nothing happened. Hoppy said either the gator would come out to investigate or he would sink down into the water and vanish from the surface. We gave it a few minutes, but when nothing surfaced we walked to the other side of the culvert to have a look at the entire area of water. Once again, I was thinking how in the world could a big gator live here? As Sara and I were looking at the small body of water, Hoppy climbed onto the culvert and peaked his head over to see if he could see the gator. He did not see anything but water. I was thinking there was no way I would hang my head over the culvert, even though it was a big one at around three to four feet in diameter, if I knew a big alligator was hanging around.

From here we walked back to the truck and drove a little further down the road. We went over the culvert and to the next fence (more on the fences in a moment). This is where we saw several turkeys including several hens, a jake or two and a tom strutting around. We watched them through our binoculars for a while before turning the truck around to head back to the lodge for dinner.

Osceola Outfitters has many cattle fences on their property as the family owns 25,000 acres of land and have since the mid 1800's. This is a family owned cattle ranch that now has the seventh generation living on it. It was amazing how far we could drive and still be on the property. Hoppy and his family do an awesome job of game management as well. On our trip I don't think we took a drive where we didn't see game. We would see either alligators, turkeys, hogs or deer and many times all four on a single drive we made. So when a fence is mentioned it is a cattle fence that only impeded the movement of cattle and not wild game.

Over dinner that night, Hoppy and his sons Sage and Case, discussed what animals they had been seeing and where on the property. We all discussed the different animals on the property and they answered all of Sara and my questions about the animals, the ranch, and this area of Florida. Through our conversations we also learned that Case and Sage would take people hunting at night for hogs using their 7.62 rifles on AR platforms. These two rifles had thermal scopes on them that connect via an app to Case's phone so an observer could see what the shooter was looking at through the scope. This kind of hunting really intrigued Sara

and me and we would participate in several of these outings over the next few days.

The next morning we were up early, getting a quick snack before heading out. We went to a large field with a pine grove at one end where the turkeys liked to roost. Hoppy had a blind constructed out of palmetto leaves and we were able to tuck back into a cluster of trees to await first light. Hoppy put out decoys for this sit that were visible from the stand of pines some 350 yards away. We were using two hens and a strutting jake that had a tail fan that could be moved using a string attached to a fishing reel. In Florida like many other states besides Michigan hunters are able to use moving decoys to try to bring turkeys in. Hoppy had been seeing turkeys in this field the past few days. We also had Thermacells to keep the bugs away. The mosquitos would get thick at dawn and dusk.

As day light started coming over the eastern sky we sat listening for the gobble of turkeys, but didn't hear any. Once it began to get light Hoppy would hit his box call and/or his slate call to try to entice a turkey to come and investigate. We waited for forty-five minutes to an hour before we got our first response to the calls and when we did we had two toms calling from totally different directions. Every so often Hoppy would call again and the toms would answer back.



Sara and her hog.

Around twenty minutes later a tom appeared where Sara could see it. She was sitting to the left of me. She whispered she saw a tom and he was working his way towards us. I relayed the message to Hoppy. Within ten minutes the tom approached to within 100 yards and would gobble, but he wanted our hens to come to him and didn't want any confrontation with our strutting jake. The tom stuck around for five to ten minutes before deciding something wasn't right and walked off into the field and out of our sight to our right into some taller grass.

We continued to sit and call periodically for the next hour before we saw a tom coming from our right into the field over by the pines 350 yards away. We watched as he went through a fence towards us and worked his way to within 200 yards before stopping and strutting around. We soon saw why he didn't come any closer to us. A hen emerged from the tall grass to our right. She was also around 200 yards away and she went toward the puffed out tom. After a long courtship dance the tom bred the hen and they both left the field going away from us.

After this we packed up our gear and headed back to the lodge for breakfast. When we arrived Sage had our breakfast ready for us and we sat down to a great meal of eggs, sausage and toast. When we finished eating it was time for us to go out looking for alligators. The temperatures were approaching 80 and the sun was beating down on us as it shone bright in the sky. There were a few times on this warm day that I got uncomfortably hot as my body was not ready for the high temperatures.

We drove to a part of the property that was new to us. Along the drive we stopped at a little creek to see if a gator was there. Once again, this body of water seemed too small for any alligator, but as Hoppy explained to us alligators feel comfortable in any area of water it can submerge its' body in. This small creek did not produce any gator sightings so we moved on. Next, we made our way toward the swampy part of the property where there was an overflow pump station where water can be pumped out of the fields toward the lower lands. Next to the flow station was a large pond and a canal.

Hoppy pulled the truck to within 50 yards of the pond, a large hill kept us concealed from seeing the pond and from anything in the pond from seeing us. Hoppy jumped out of the truck and snuck up towards the pond to see if he could see any alligators on the bank of the pond or floating on the surface. He quickly signaled for me to come join him as he had just set eyes on a good gator. As we crept along the shoreline Hoppy told me he thought the gator was at least eight foot long, and wanted me to get set up but before shooting he wanted to take a second to make sure it was big enough.

We set up the shooting sticks and I was able to see the gator's head as he was floating at the surface of the pond. The only problem was there were tree branches between the gator and me and with the light breeze the branches were moving into and out of my sights. With me being left handed, I wasn't able to angle further out on the bank without going into the water to get a clear shot. We tried a new plan. Hoppy let the alligator see him and it sunk to down under the water. We then made our way to the other side of the pond to get set up for a shot. Hoppy said the alligator should come back up after five to ten minutes and should offer us a shot. Unfortunately the gator didn't follow the script. We did see him again, but he was over 100 yards away down the canal. It was decided we shouldn't follow him down the canal because the odds of closing the gap without him being on to us were slim.

We next traveled to the area we looked for the gator in the culvert the night before. We were coming in from the other side of the culvert and were approaching the area we spotted the turkeys. Hoppy stopped the truck and did a bit of a walk around calling to see if he could get any turkeys to respond and give away their location. Even though it was an awesome looking area for birds none were willing to give up their location so we continued on down the road to where we looked for the gator near the culvert.

Around 100 yards from the culvert Hoppy stopped the truck and went

to investigate. He quietly crept up and looked over the water with his binoculars but didn't see the gator anywhere. He then made his way over to the culvert and peaked over the lip as he laid on top of it. Next, he moved down the creek to see if there was an angle he could see the gator in the culvert to get a shot. We were watching as he did all of this thinking he hadn't seen anything. When he returned to the truck he told me there was a great shot opportunity for a left handed shooter.

So I loaded the rifle, grabbed my shooting sticks and as quietly as I could followed Hoppy toward the stream. As we approached the creek, Hoppy said we should be able to move down the hill leading to the bank and I should be able to slide down and sit on the bank with my feet and shooting sticks in the water affording me an excellent opportunity to shoot. In my mind I thought, "Awesome" then I thought "Wait, what? Put my feet in the water...with an alligator?"



Josh with his first boar of the hunt.

At any rate, we made it to the spot Hoppy wanted to sneak to. Once there, I slide down to the bank and placed the shooting sticks in the water while sliding my feet into the stream. Hoppy positioned himself to my right using his binoculars to look down the culvert. Once I had the shooting sticks set up and got settled in for the shot I was able to see the top of the gator's head through my scope. He was towards the other end of the culvert. Hoppy whispered the gator was facing the other way and I could shoot any part of the head I saw. I placed the crosshairs on the dark outline of the head when the gator shifted positions and was now quartering away. At this point I placed the crosshairs on the eye or where the bump for the eye was in the shadows of the culvert and took a deep breath before squeezing the trigger.

The result of the shot was observed instantly as the alligator started to thrash around in a death roll. Hoppy instantly jumped up saying, "That's a big gator!" and ran up the bank to get his fishing rod to possibly get a hook in the gator. As he was making his way toward the rod and reel he asked what was happening. I

explained the gator was doing a few death rolls, then I told him the gator stopped moving and all I could see was one leg up in the air. Hoppy replied the alligator was finished and we needed to work on a plan to get him out of the culvert.

To retrieve the gator we were going to use the rod and reel to try to hook the alligator and drag him out. We attempted to retrieve him from the side of the culvert I shot through, but he was too far into the culvert. We next tried to get a hook in him from the far side of the culvert, but before we could do that we needed to cut down many thick tangled bushes that were growing over the culvert. Once the bushes were cleared Hoppy laid on the culvert while I stood off on the bank with the rod and reel. I gave Hoppy plenty of slack as he threw the sinker and hook back into the culvert and was able to get a hook into the leg of the gator on the first try. Together Hoppy and I pulled the line slowly to get the gator out into the little pool of water and from there onto the bank.

After some time, we were able to get the gator out of the culvert and over to the bank. Once Hoppy was able to get his hands on the gator he kept a tight grip on the jaws of the reptile and had me do the same. Together we pulled the gator's head out of the water and onto the bank, where Hoppy used a knife to sever the spinal cord. Even with this, the

alligator moved multiple times over the next ten minutes or so. This really freaked Sara out. Anytime his legs or tail would move Sara would let me know.

Hoppy and I were able to pull the gator up onto the bank, but we weren't going to be able to pull the massive dinosaur up the hill leading down to the bank. To get the animal up the hill Hoppy had me wrap a heavy rope around the gator's neck and then he tied it off to the front of his truck and pulled him up that way. After getting him on the bank we set him up for pictures and put a tape measurer to him finding he was just over ten feet long! I was in awe of the size of this huge animal. Hoppy estimated his age to be at least fifteen years old and his weight between 300 and 400 pounds. Loading him into the back of the truck took a monumental effort but we got it done.

After taking the gator to the walk-in coolers, we headed back to the lodge for lunch and some relax time. Around 3:00 we got our turkey gear around and headed out to a different location where Sage had been seeing a nice tom turkey. This location was known as the fourteen acre field. We would be hunting a funnel type area where a two-track connected the smaller fourteen acre field to a very large pasture.

Once we arrived at the spot Hoppy went to great lengths to construct the perfect blind for us to sit in. He used a small grove of oak and palm trees along with the palmettos growing in a clump as our base. From there he cut other palmettos around the area and stuck them in the ground to fortify our blind. When he was finished we had a spacious blind for the three of us to sit, but virtually impossible to see from the surrounding area.

For this setup Hoppy placed two hen decoys straight out in front of me at around twenty-five yards. He had constructed the blind to where, as a left hander, I had three shooting lanes. One to my slight left, one straight ahead (where the decoys were set up) and one to my right. Separating the lanes were different trees that grew up in the grove. Hoppy would be sitting directly to my left and Sara would be sitting a few yards to my right. Where Hoppy was sitting he could see the fourteen acre field and let me know if anything was coming from that direction and Sara was able to see the very large pasture and do the same.

As we were getting settled in I began to range the areas around us. To my slight left, where the two-track connected the two fields, the wood line was around 50 yards. Straight out in front of me there was a small hill line constructed to form a canal to help water drain in times of rain. This hill was 46 yards and directly behind that were woods. And to my right was the vast pasture. I could see close to 500 yards in this direction, but I ranged the taller grass in the field to give me a benchmark. The taller grass was between 40 and 60 yards.

Once we settled into our low rise chairs, Hoppy started with a series of calls. It was still early and we had a short quiet conversation where he showed me a video of a friend of his recording some Merriam turkeys gobbling. A few minutes later Hoppy started his second series of calls. He had just started his calls when I saw a dark bird, presumably a tom, appear from the woods directly in front of me and stand atop the small canal hill to look over the decoys and the situation.

I whispered that I saw a bird, but Hoppy and Sara both couldn't see him. Sara was facing the big field to my right so there was a tree in the way and Hoppy also had a tree in the way from his position. The tom started moving to our right and Hoppy was able to see him. He told me the bird was looking for a way through the ditch of the canal and would probably come to investigate the hens. Well the tom followed part of that script. As he dipped down into the ditch I raised my shotgun for a possible shot. Once the tom came up the other side of the ditch he did not go straight to the hens, instead he skirted around them toward the big field. I was

following the bird with my shotgun hoping he would stop or come in closer, he did neither. He kept walking from straight out in front of me to our right.

As the tom continued to walk a large oak tree obstructed his view of me as well as my view of him, but this allowed me to move the barrel of my shotgun to the next shooting lane. It didn't take the moving bird long to come into that window. Hoppy asked if I could see the bird and I told him I could. He then mentioned it looked like a fairly



Over an inch-and-a-half long spurs!

long shot and maybe I should wait to see if the tom would come back towards the hens. At this point the tom was in a half strut. Hoppy hit the call with a quiet cluck and the bird stopped and put his head up. Hopped asked if I thought I could make the shot. My reply was a "Bang" as I squeezed the trigger. The result was the bird dropping to the ground and flopping around.

We were all excited as we jumped up. Fist bumps were exchanged and then we ran out of the blind to claim the bird. He was a big bird for sure and when we got to him we saw he had some big spurs. Each was over an inch-and-a-half long. He was a great looking bird with a tint of red reflecting off him in the afternoon sun, which Hoppy said the older birds in this area get. We took many pictures from different spots around the blind trying to capture the Florida scenery. It was estimated this big old bird was four or five years old.

On the way back to the cooler with the bird we joked with Hoppy that he spent more time constructing the perfect blind than it took to shoot the bird. But all his work paid off later in the week for another left handed hunter who was able to connect on a nice tom from the same blind.

That evening Sara and I sat in a double ladder blind over a feeder in hopes a big pig would come in. We did see one group of pigs, but we were waiting for a boar and this group only had sows and piglets. They stuck around eating most of the food until a group of crows came in making all kinds of noise scaring them off. During our sit we also saw several whitetail deer including one doe that walked to within one step of our ladder. She had no clue we were there.

After a late dinner, Sara and I went out with Case and Sage in search of a boar pig. We were excited to be using the thermal scopes. It was quite interesting to see how the thermals worked and it was also awesome to see what the shooter could see in the scope. Case was able to connect his phone to the scope and watch what the shooter

was looking at. Otherwise the observer would just be looking into the darkness and not knowing what was happening.

While out looking for a boar that night we saw many pigs, but no boars. Case and Sage spend a great deal of time assessing the pigs in the field to insure the shooter gets what they are going from. We did come across a lone pig at one point, which usually means it's a boar, and we snuck to within 50 yards before Sage identified it as a lone sow. We set up the shooting sticks and practiced on this sow to try to prepare if a boar were to be spotted. That evening none were. But we were able to observe the coolest fire fly display that we've ever seen. The fire flies in Florida are much bigger than the ones we have in Michigan and they are much brighter. It was amazing to see the number of large green lights flashing in the fields we visited looking for pigs.



The "cabin" Josh and Sara stayed in during their hunt.

The next day Sara and I slept in a little and spent the day relaxing and waiting for the evening to come to hunt pigs. We did go to Hoppy's place, where the walk-in coolers are, to discuss what we wanted from the turkey and what we were planning to do with the alligator. We also dropped off a cooler to put the meat in. The plan was to load up the cooler with meat and place the cooler in one of the freezers to make sure the meat was good and cold for our long drive home in a few days. It was discussed that all of the meat from the turkey and gator should fit into our bigger cooler which meant we still had room for meat in our smaller one. So Sara decided she wanted to take a meat hog on this evenings hunt if she could.

Around 5:00 Sara and I were taken to a ground blind to sit and hopefully get a shot at a pig. The blind was located on a gas line so we were able to see quite a ways down the gas line path. That evening sit the only animals we saw were two hen turkeys, mosquitos and one pig that was around 200 yards away and was moving away from us.

We had a late dinner again and then prepared to go out on a thermal hunt. This time the two other hunters in camp, Larry from Pennsylvania and Mark from New York, would be accompanying us. Larry was just going along for the ride and Mark was hoping to get a meat hog. Our first stop was the feeder Sara and I sat at that evening. As we got closer to the feeder Sage identified a boar at the feeder. The shooting sticks were set up and I got behind the rifle. The boar was facing away from us and we waited for several minutes before he offered a shot. Unfortunately, I didn't do my part. With the shot, we all thought I missed. Case, Sara and I went back to the truck while Sage went to see if I hit the pig. The rifle we used had a suppressor on it and when the shot would hit the pig it would make a thud sound, we did not hear this sound.

Sage did find a little blood, but it didn't go for long and he deduced by watching the phone as I was shooting that I pulled my shot and grazed the brisket of the pig. I was a bit dejected by my poor shot to say the least.

We moved on from here and in the next field a large sow was spotted. Sara was up. As we walked out into the field in a line. Sage and Case have found it was better to walk in a line rather than side by side in the

darkness, because the pigs are less wary. When we closed the distance to around 50 yards the shooting sticks were set up and Sara got the pig in her sights. The pig was still moving and to try to stop it Sage let out some sort of pig sound. Apparently it worked and pig stopped. That's all Sara needed as she sent a round down range. We could hear the thud as the round struck the pig. The sow didn't go far and congratulations were given and pictures taken.

That evening offered several more shooting opportunities and Mark was able to take a very large pig that we were able to watch on the phone. His pig ended up crossing a canal where Sage was going to cross, but Case told him he was not going into the water. Later Mark and I discussed that Case didn't want his brother going into a body of water at night with gators possibly being in there. In reality Case didn't want his brother, who was driving his new truck, getting wet and getting back into his truck. Case ended up going into the water because he was riding in the bed of the truck.

The next day Hoppy took Sara and me around different parts of the property to look for alligators. We saw many animals along the way including deer, turkeys, white egrets as well as some pigs. One of the places we went to look for alligators produced five different gators included one in the nine foot range.

Our plan for the afternoon hunt was to drive from feeder to feeder to see if we could catch a boar eating and sneak up on him for a shot. The first feeder we went to had a sow and some piglets, the next one didn't have anything and third one also didn't have anything. This third feeder was on the edge of the gas line going through the property and we parked the truck around 200 yards from the feeder and decided to sit there to see if anything came in. We sat in the truck for only about five minutes before a pig appeared and crossed the gas line to the feeder.

We quietly hopped out of the truck and snuck our way towards the feeder. We had the wind in our favor and used our cover to conceal us from the pig. We snuck to within 50 yards and waited. Hoppy saw the pig at the feeder was a boar, but he wasn't very big. Five minutes later a bigger boar came in and kicked the first one out of the area. Hoppy said it was bigger and if he offered a shot I should take it. It took the pig a few minutes to offer a shot, but when he did I dropped him with one shot.

After pictures and loading up the pig we went back to the lodge to pick up Case and try our luck for another boar with the thermals. The second field we came to had a solo pig around 200 yards from us. We were able to keep the wind in our favor and get with 50 yards. This gave Hoppy and Case an opportunity to look at the phone to determine if the pig was a boar. Right after they identified the pig as a boar he offered me a good broadside shot. The thud was clearly heard as I sent a round toward the pig. He didn't make it far before he dropped.

If you are looking to do an Osceola turkey, pig or alligator hunt Hoppy and Osceola Outfitters is the place for you. Their Southern hospitality and knowledge of each of these animals is second to none. They definitely gave us one of the best hunting experiences we've ever had, and we look forward to hunting with them again sometime soon.



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"The best way to appreciate your job is to imagine yourself without one." – Oscar Wilde

Mountain

by Bill Mayhew



I was a Boy Scout Leader for many years in Midland, and my son Jameson is an Eagle Scout. One of the other leaders, Ed Schultz is a hunter also. He showed me his trophy room one day and I was in awe of the mule deer, pronghorns, bobcat, and the other animals he had, but the one that most impressed me was the Mountain Lion. From that moment 12 years ago, I dreamt of going hunting for these great cats.

My chance finally came in December 2021 when a friend of mine, Darrel



Bluemein, offered me an opportunity to join him on a guided hunt in Colorado. Darrel owns Prescott Predator hunts, where he targets bobcats, coyote and red fox with his pack of hounds. In the last couple years, he attained his guiding license in Colorado pursuing mule deer and Mountain Lion! I jumped at the chance to go.

Once I took the online course and bought my license it was time to hit the gym. The elevation at the lodge was around 10,000 feet and there would be deep snow on the steep slopes. I needed to get my lungs and heart in condition for the hunt.

Finally, December rolled around, and I drove out to Colorado in my Ford F-150. I wanted to drive so that I could bring the full carcass back home, assuming I would be successful. We would awaken at 4:30am every morning for the day. Hot coffee and some snacks were breakfast and then we would jump in the 4-wheel drives and looked for tracks crossing the mountain roads. Darrel's son-in-law Dominic was assisting and proved to be an amazing driver on those treacherous roads and conditions.

We found a few older sets of tracks, saw 100's of mule deer, several elk, and lots of golden Eagles, but no fresh lion tracks. We would drive the ranch until mid-morning then go to another ranch and check them out too. We even found a set of nice big bobcat tracks that I wanted to go after, but not bad enough to abandon the lion hunt. Generally, we were done looking by 4:30 and would retire to the lodge for a delicious and hearty meal. We had elk heart tacos one night that were the best tacos I have ever had!

On the afternoon of the second day, another hunter, Gary and his brother Tony arrived in camp. Gary would be hunting lions with his bow and Tony was observing and taking photos and videos. The very next morning about 5:00am, Darrel and I found a nice set of lion tracks coming onto the main road. The problem was we needed to find where the cat left the road, to be able to put the dogs on it. It took us about 45 minutes, but we finally found where the cat had either leapt to the bottom of a culvert crossing from the road or had crossed the road through the culvert. The

Lion Hunt

December 2021



cat tracks were in the bottom of the deep ditch, and they were fresh.

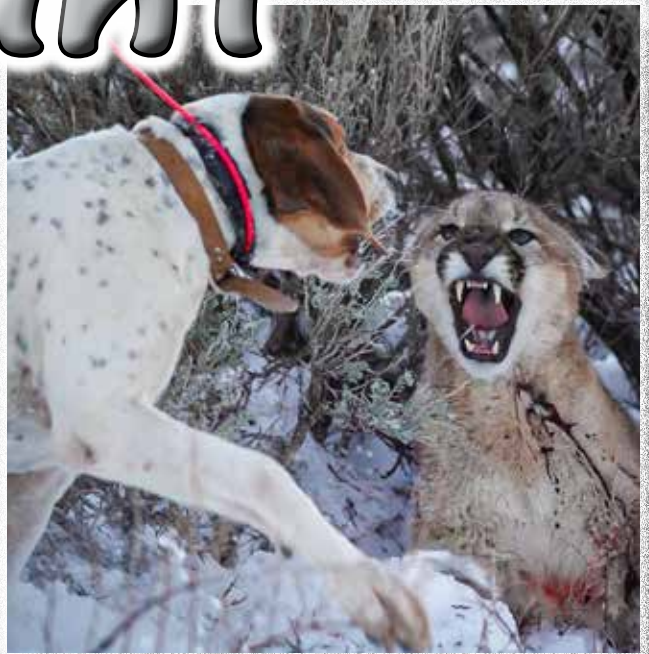
By this time, Dominic, Gary and Tony had joined us to assist. We put the dogs on the cat, and it was GAME ON! But to our dismay, the dogs took the tracks right back where the cat came from. They were back tracking it. Or so I thought. Darrel knew his dogs and doubted they would backtrack. "Lets just see what they do," he said confidently. After about 20 minutes, Dominic said, "I think they have it treed about 650 yards away."

The adrenaline rush kicked it up a notch! Fortunately, there was a trail that we could drive to and get us within 200 yards of the tree location. We jumped in the trucks and were off. When we got as close as we could, Darrel let me go first. "Go really slow," he instructed. The adrenaline must have been pumping because I was range walking and going way too fast, despite the 2 1/2 foot deep snow. Darrel cut me off and took the lead.

We got into position under the scrub oak tree. The cat was treed about 25 feet up and the dogs were bawling. When I raised my grandpa's Winchester 30-30 to my shoulder, I aimed for the shoulder. My hope was to go through the shoulder and into the neck for a quick kill. I drilled him in the shoulder and hit the neck, but the cat just snarled and leapt down from 25 feet up. The chase was on again!

Fortunately, the dogs cornered the wounded cat about 200 yards away against a big sage bush. I fired a shot square in the chest from 10 feet away, but the cat wouldn't die. The dogs continued to fight the cat for a minute or two and finally Darrel said to shoot it again. When I stepped up, the cat tried to bound away. I fired from my shoulder and hit him square in the neck. The cat died instantly.

I have shot dozens of whitetail deer, several black bears, and a moose in Alaska; but the adrenaline from this hunt exceeded them all! It was a 3-year-old female cat, weighing in at 140 lbs. I have it at the taxidermist now and will be getting a full body



mount. I intend to make the habitat myself. The meat is some of the most delicious wild game in the world! Incidentally, Gary was unable to fill his tag. The next hunter filled his tag and also got the bobcat whose tracks we saw, a 42 lb tom. Many thanks to Darrel, Dominic and Madison Ranch.



DYLIN'S

By Cami Polzin

My son Dylin is a mentally and physically challenged young man who loves to hunt with his dad. He has never let his disabilities stop him from doing what he loves. In December 2021, he had the opportunity to hunt in the disabled youth hunt at Low's Trophy Whitetail Ranch.

He looked forward to the big day with so much anticipation and of course some nerves. He practiced shooting in our backyard several times. His dad reminded him of everything he had taught him over the years and I reminded him to take a deep breath, especially when he saw the giant deer I knew he would see.

The big day finally came. Snow, frigid temps and ice were predicted. Dylin, his dad Duane and Mid-Michigan SCI board member Autumn Gonda set out for



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"If you are not willing to learn, no one can help you. If you are determined to learn, no one can stop you." – Zig Ziglar

BUCK



Falmouth, Michigan, with high hopes of taking a once in a lifetime trophy deer.

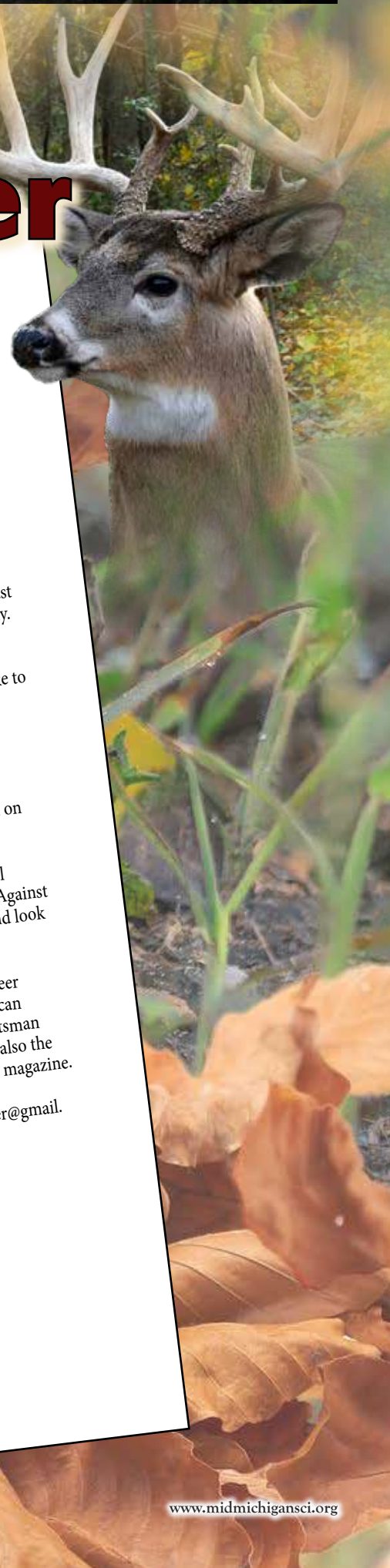
They arrived at the ranch and were taken out to the blind. Not long after, some deer came in. Duane said, "They were absolutely amazing...unlike anything I have ever seen. Our jaws literally dropped. I don't know who was more excited, him or me." At 2:40 pm, three deer came in. Leon told Dylin which one to target. Dylin took a shot. He looked at his dad and with excitement in his voice said, "I got him dad!" The deer was tracked and found at 5:14pm. Dylin and his dad were in tears. Dylin had taken down a 9 point.... his first buck. An experience he will never forget. He laid on his buck, totally overwhelmed with emotion.

Dylin, his dad and I cannot express our gratitude enough. Disabilities are a challenge but they don't define a person. Dylin continues to overcome these adversities. He just earned his driver's license and participated in the Summer Special Olympics in swimming and brought home three medals.

Thank you again, Leon, of Lowe's Trophy Whitetail Ranch, his sponsor Autumn and SCI (First for Hunters Mid-Michigan Chapter).



Sportsmen Against Hunger



Mid-Michigan SCI Members,

Please join us this hunting season in supporting our SCI Sportsman Against Hunger program. Shagana's Meat Processing in Clare has teamed up with us again this year. Shagana's will take our deer donations from October 1 thru November 22, 2022. Please try to get your deer donations in during this time.

Remember both meat and money are a tax deduction. Your generosity would help us stretch out our funds and reach our goal of 25 deer this year. If you can't help cover any cost and want to donate a deer, we will cover the cost up to 15 deer.

Also, anyone cleaning out freezers for this year's hunting season can donate meat that has been processed in the last year. All meat you give to us, fresh or frozen, will be donated to soup kitchens and pantries in our own community.

Currently we donate to the Isabella Community Soup Kitchen, Love, Inc., God's Helping Hands, Isabella County Womens Shelters and Community Compassion Network of Isabella County. As the program grows we would like to add more entities.

You do not have to be a SCI member to donate to this program. Please tell your friends and family.

Shagana's is located at 11285 Schoolcrest Ave., Clare, MI 48617. If you are coming from Mt. Pleasant, you will take 127 north to Clare exit 156. Continue north on McEwan until you see Witbeck's grocery store. Turn right on Schoolcrest Ave. and head east until it dead ends into expressway. Shagana's will be on your left.

If you have any trouble getting the deer there yourself, they can be dropped off to me, Mike Strope, and I will make sure they get there. When you drop off your deer at Shagana's, specify that it is for the SCI Sportsman Against Hunger program and we will take care of everything from there. I am very passionate about this program and look forward to doing bigger and better things with the program.

For those of you located nearer to the Big Rapids area, you can take your deer in to Colin Kelly at Kelly's Deer Processing located at 19077 13 Mile Road who offers a 24-hour deer drop-off during the deer season. You can contact Colin at 231-796-5414 or colin@cks-place.com. He will process your deer for free under the Sportsman Against Hunger program and donate it himself to one of 25 different locations to which he donates. He is also the one that makes jerky from venison and sends it to our troops. You can check out his ad on page 24 of this magazine.

If you have any questions, please contact Mike Strope at 989-506-1113 or by email mstropecustombuilder@gmail.com

Thank you for your support and happy hunting,

Mike Strope

SCI Mid-Michigan Chapter
Mike Strope, Chairperson for Sportsmen Against Hunger
1302 Granger Street | Mt. Pleasant, MI 48858
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What is the Humanitarian Ask Program?

by Jon Zieman

Introduction

The Humanitarian Ask program falls into a special category where SCI waives the normal 30% allocation from the Annual Convention funding raising. 2022 was the second year of our program and the first to substantially benefit from it. Here are several SCI program areas that fall into this category.

Humanitarian Services develops and administers programs and projects worldwide that involve hunters or hunting in providing aid to people in need. Examples include Sportsmen Against Hunger campaigns, filling and distribution of Blue Bags, Sensory Safaris (including events, permanent displays, and mobile units), and any hunting related activities to raise funds for cancer research.

Pathfinder Activities are chapters working within their communities to engage disabled or terminally ill youth, adults, veterans, or wounded military personnel in SCI sponsored hunting, shooting sports and other conservation related outdoor events/projects. Funds from these grants may be used for transportation, hunting, shooting and other outdoor gear, ammunition, food and lodging or other expenses directly related to providing outdoor events/projects.

Mid-Michigan Chapter Humanitarian Programs

Here are some programs the Chapter implements as part of their humanitarian efforts and have been described in Front Sight articles.

1. Mid-Michigan Chapter Sportsmen Against Hunger program provided about 17,500 pounds of food and \$4,250 in cash for incidentals to local food banks over the last nine years. Four organizations which include six food banks have been supported in recent years.
2. Blue Bags is a program where hunters bring needed educational, health, and sports equipment to the locations where they are hunting. The Chapter sponsors many bags each year with an obvious reduction during the Covid travel restriction period. Local residents responded very favorably to the items delivered.
3. Various hunt opportunities are supported for Veterans and Disabled Youths. The Chapter coordinates with multiple organizations and outfitters to maximize the experience. Most participants experience improved mental health from participation. Many make statements to the effect "Now I know I can get out and do this!".
4. The Chapter is an ongoing sponsor of the Walleyes for Warriors annual veterans fishing event. Veterans from World War II through the present have a good experience and are recognized.

Program participants are encouraged and sponsored to Chapter events to thank them and share their success with members. Veterans are acknowledged with a free Cooler Raffle at the Annual Convention. Chapter Members donate their time, money, and travel to attend and assist with events.

The activities are publicized to generate participation, support, and good will. The 2022 Convention Humanitarian Ask presentation demonstrated that strong communication encourages support and donation.

Chapter Plan for 2022 Humanitarian Ask
The Ask in 2022 was to support veterans' activities with an emphasis on disabled veterans. About 50 mostly Michigan veterans are being sponsored this year. Two disabled veterans are supported for a whitetail hunt through the Heal 2 Heal Organization(<https://www.hunt2heal.com/>) and three veterans supported for local whitetail hunts. Partial support for two antelope disabled veteran hunters through the Hunting with Heroes, Inc (<https://huntingwithheroes.org/>) has been provided. About 40 veterans are supported for pheasant hunts between the Crooked Foot Annual Veterans Hunt (<https://www.crookedfoothuntclub.com/event-directory/6th-annual-veterans-hunt/>) and the Veterans Pheasant Hunt at Tails-A-Waggin Acres (<https://veteranshunt.org/>). We are ongoing Walleyes for Warriors (<http://www.walleyesforwarriors.org/>) sponsors.

Future Humanitarian Ask:

The Chapter Humanitarian Ask will have an annual focus on a specific area. These will include existing efforts with disabled youths, Blue Bags, and Sportsmen Against Hunger and add new areas such as first responders and cancer research. Please note that future contribution to this program should qualify as tax deductible charitable donations with acknowledgement from SCIF. The Board of Directors thanks the donors at the 2022 Annual Convention! We look forward to your continued support and will continue these efforts in the ensuing years!

Sharing Some Good @ookin'!

SCI CHEFS



ALLIGATOR KABOBS

by Sara Christensen

Ingredients

- 3/4 cup orange juice
- 2 TBSP soy sauce
- 2 TBSP brown sugar
- 1 tsp cumin
- 1/4 tsp cayenne OR 1 tsp chili powder
- 1 lb alligator meat, cut into 1 inch cubes
- Cubed pineapple

1. For the marinade, combine o.j., soy sauce, sugar and spices in a medium sized glass bowl or Ziploc bag. Reserve half for basting.
2. Add alligator cubes to marinade and stir to coat well.
3. Marinate for 2 hours in refrigerator.
4. Soak wooden skewers in water for at least 10 minutes to prevent them from burning.
5. Thread marinated alligator onto skewers alternating with pineapple (or other fruits and veggies)
6. Heat grill to high heat and grill kabobs for 6-8 minutes, turning



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APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

WHY JOIN MID-MICHIGAN SCI

- Membership meeting with outfitters and conservation representatives
- Quarterly Issue of **FRONT SIGHT MAGAZINE**
- Online Record Book
- Michigan conservation efforts (example: chronic wasting disease)
- Protect Michigan hunting rights

WHY JOIN SCI INTERNATIONAL

- Bi-monthly issue of SCI's **SAFARI Magazine**
- Monthly issue of **SAFARI TIMES Newspaper**
- Access to SCI First for Hunters Website and SCI online Record Book
- Representation in Washington D.C. for hunters' rights issues and conservation
- Eligible to attend SCI's Members-only Annual Hunters' Convention

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"Perseverance is failing nineteen times and succeeding the twentieth." – Julie Andrews

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Reponses to: *What is your favorite caliber of rifle and why?*

☛ My favorite caliber is still the 300 Weatherby. I've used this caliber for the majority of my mountain hunting, a lot of whitetail and a pile of hogs. The 300 Weatherby is dated today, but is as good as it was when Roy Weatherby introduced it. If you want a rifle that doesn't need dials to shoot 450 yards the 300 Weatherby will do it. I know it's not necessarily better than other 30 caliber magnums like the 300 Winchester or 30 Nosler, but I've always admired the company Roy Weatherby built. Honestly, his cartridges drove the magnum craze that was such a big part of our industry for decades. Roy's story is a good one and his cartridges still have no dust on them. – **Doug Chapin**

☛ My favorite caliber to hunt with is my 300 win mag. This caliber combined with a 180 grain Nosler Acubond can take down about anything. No matter what caliber you shoot, shot placement is key. That being said, no matter what hunting trip I'm going on my Christensen Arms 300 win mag is coming with me. – **Brandon Jurries**

☛ .303 British. It was my dad's and I shot my first buck with it. – **Robert Bills**

☛ My favorite caliber rifle is the 30.06. I use my custom built one that my grandfather built and passed down to me. The recoil isn't bad and the trigger pull is smooth. It's the perfect caliber to hunt most animals. – **Autumn Gonda**

☛ My favorite caliber is .243, because it has little to no recoil and it shoots consistent making it an accurate round. – **Sara Christensen**

☛ My favorite would be .308, but not just any .308. Mine is the Tikka T3 .308 my husband had made for me in left handed. – **Lori Card**

☛ My favorite rifle is my Remington 338 Winchester. I have shot steenbok, brown bear, leopard, elk, whitetail and lots of plains game. When sighted in two inches high at 100 yards just aim at the shoulder and right on up to 300 hundred yards it's on. I have a 2.6 to 10 power swarovski scope. A great combo. I have had more than one PH tell me their two favorites rifles for clients to have is a 338 along with a 416 Remington. – **Timothy Hauck**

☛ My go to rifle is my 7mm Remington with a 3x9 Leopold scope. I have hunted with this rifle on most of my trips around the world that would allow firearm imports into their country. The rifle has so many scrapes and chips on the stock it looks 100 years old. It shoots straight out to 400 yards and has done the job as far as 600 yards if needed. I change the bullet weight if I hunt smaller game and heavier grains if a big trophy is in the picture. For the big game my 375 H&H mag will do the trick. – **Roger R. Card**

☛ 338 Lapua Magnum. It's accurate enough to hit a man sized target at 2.5 miles, and powerful enough to make an elephant disappear from that distance. – **Eric Stanaway**

☛ I have two calibers as my favorite depending on what I am doing. For big game hunting I truly enjoy my 7mm Remington Mag. It is a flat shooting rifle and can take down any North American animal. My other favorite is my .22. This cartridge is great for squirrels, but also for honing marksmen skills at a fraction of the cost. – **Josh Christensen**

☛ My favorite caliber is the .270 because it is good for long range and flat shooting. – **William Blood**

☛ My favorite is 30-06 and my back up rifle is 7mm Rem. Mag. – **James Walker**

☛ My favorite caliber by far is the 300 win mag, or anything 30 caliber for that matter. You can collect nearly any game species on the planet with this caliber and it not only has adequate knock down power, it works for long range shooting as well. – **Dan Catlin**

☛ The old model 94 in 32 spl. Shot my first buck with it. It just always feels good in the hand. I hunt with more modern guns, but I always have it in the front of the safe for a quick walk out back or a change of luck. It's a tag filler. Would never part with it. Low recoil and doesn't hurt much meat. – **Russell Curtis**

☛ 300 Weatherby mag. It pleases them all. – **Randy Raymond**

☛ 7mm Rem Mag because it is capable of taking game up to Brown Bears with relatively mild recoil compared to .30 cal and it is flat shooting with awesome ballistics. – **Craig Plowman**

NEW QUESTION:

Two of the most important pieces of equipment we take into the field hunting are our weapon of choice and optics, but many of us have something else we always take hunting with us. Maybe it's a lucky rabbit's foot, a certain snack, a good book or your phone. At any rate...

Besides your weapon of choice and optics, what is your go to, or must have item when hunting?

Write in and let us know. Submit your answer to jchappyfish@gmail.com and look for it in our next issue of the Front Sight magazine.



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"If you only do what you know you can do - you never do very much." - Tom Krause

Looking Ahead

In An Upcoming Issue



FAMILY VACATION, SOUTH AFRICA STYLE
by Josh Christensen



FIRST AFRICAN ANIMAL
by Ivan Christensen



MISSED OPPORTUNITY
by Josh Christensen



LION HUNTING IN AFRICA
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MORE ARTICLES AND RECIPES YET TO BE SUBMITTED



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