

ISSUE 5 - SPRING 2024

TRACKER

MICHIGAN CHAPTER SCI

2024
**CONVENTION
51 ISSUE**

OLD
MEXICO
**THE LAST
FRONTIER**

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THE HUNT
**SPRING
ADVENTURES
AWAIT**

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- D. To share our hunting experiences and information among our membership.
- E. To operate the association as a non-profit organization, consistent with its charitable purposes, while providing enjoyment for our members, always with the goal of helping to conserve the animals that we love to hunt today for those who will come to love the sport tomorrow.

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Recognizing my responsibilities to wildlife, habitat and future generations, I pledge:

- A. To conduct myself in the field so as to make a positive contribution to wildlife and ecosystems.
- B. To improve my skills as a woodsman and marksman to ensure humane harvesting of wildlife.
- C. To comply with all game laws in the spirit of fair chase, and to influence my companions accordingly.
- D. To accept my responsibility to provide all possible assistance to game law enforcement officers.
- E. To waste no opportunity to teach young people the full meaning of this code of ethics.
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JUNE 2023 - MAY 2024

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Spring Break Hunting

While finding some warm weather down in Florida is a favorite for many Michiganders, it doesn't make you think of hunting.



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OLD MEXICO THE LAST FRONTIER

Like many of you, I grew up with a passion for the outdoors. At a very early age, I began chasing every little varmint in our neighborhood. My dream was to become a mountain man like Jeremiah Johnson.





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BIG BUCK NIGHT

Todd Moelker chaired the meeting, welcoming 88 members and guests. A big thank you goes out to Naber's Taxidermy for sponsoring Big Buck Night.

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CONVENTION ROUND UP



EDITOR'S NOTES:

Welcome to The Tracker, a publication by and for the members of SCI-Michigan Chapter. This is our convention roundup issue which will be a reminder of the good times had for those who attended, and hopefully encourage those who didn't go to start making plans for next year's convention. No better time than the present to start planning. Your board is already hard at work planning for next year.

In this issue you'll find memories from the field by Vern Edewaard, a man who played a major role in making SCI and our Michigan Chapter what they are today! There are also great articles by chapter member Sam Fahl about him and his wife Danielle's incredible ranch in Old Mexico, and something that should interest many of us, an article by our chapter president, Mike Kwast, about some spring break hunting opportunities in Florida!

Once again, I'd like to remind our members that this magazine is yours. Your stories, adventures, and pictures make it a success. Be thinking about The Tracker as you go turkey hunting this spring, or as you head south of the equator for a safari.

Did you win the bid on one of the awesome hunts from the fundraiser auctions? Send me a story or report on how the hunt went. If you don't think you can write the story yourself, give me a call and we can get it done together. We also appreciate pictures from your adventures and have a place for unique trail cam pictures [check out the great trail cam pics from Paradise Ranch in this issue], as well as taxidermy pictures.

Please note that we do reserve the right, in our sole discretion, to edit or refuse any submission. If you would like to submit an article or pictures, please send them to me at: trmoelker@gmail.com or 5132 20th Ave. Hudsonville, Mi 49426 or call me at 616-889-1003.

Thank you,

Todd Moelker, Editor

PREZ SEZ

THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO PARTICIPATED IN OUR ANNUAL FUNDRAISER. THE EVENT WAS A GREAT SUCCESS,

allowing us to continue our conservation, humanitarian, and promotional efforts. Your dedication to preserve, promote, and protect hunting is appreciated. Your efforts in time and financial resources are what will allow the hunting lifestyle to continue for each of us and for future generations. Special thanks to all of our donors and sponsors who made this event possible. We are excited to put our time and financial resources into this coming year as the board discusses projects to support. If you have a passion and purpose to help, we need you. We have open board positions, and always can use help at our events. Thank you for making a difference for hunting. See you at the next meeting!

*Dr. Michael Kwast
President, SCI Michigan Chapter*



ATTENTION SCI MICHIGAN MEMBERS

Important information for our members such as chapter events, meetings and membership renewals will be emailed to every member that we have an email address for. If you didn't get an email reminder of our last meeting we do not have your email address. Please send your email to mvghareeb@gmail.com so we can get all of our emails on the list.

MICHIGAN CHAPTER UPCOMING EVENTS

June 12th

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TRANSFORMATION OF ARROWS

by Pete Miedema from Long Range Archery and Firearms



Depending on your age, you may or may not remember when arrows were primarily aluminum or wood. Then one day Beeman came out with a solid carbon arrow in a pencil diameter. Wow, with the introduction of carbon, archers were headed down an entirely different path. These first design arrows were very hard to control, but if you put the arrow in the right spot, they really had superior penetration, like a hot knife through butter.

The real evolution in arrow technology has brought us to where we are today. Carbon arrows are now hollow core with either a straight laid linear carbon fiber or a cross weave pattern. Straight line carbon represents the largest part of the market, but the cross weave patterns tend to be somewhat stronger and pricier.

Manufacturers generally are producing three diameters of arrows, with the .245 being the most popular

followed by .204 and .166. Arrows also come in different spines 250, 300, 350, and 400. The spines relate to the stiffness of the arrow so that you can match up with your bow's draw weight and draw length. Due to manufacturing efficiencies, we are also now presented with arrows of varying straightness. You have choices of .006, .003, and .001 brought about through cutting and sorting processes.

Now, for the controversial part. I very much am a proponent of the .166 arrows and usually go with .003 or .001 straightness factor. The main advantages in small diameter arrows is the down range kinetic energy, especially at longer distances. Small diameter arrows have less surface area and penetrate up to 40% better than .245 arrows and also are less affected by crosswinds.

We all have our favorites and thoughts on what works best for you, but this is something to consider.





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**THANK YOU!
THANK YOU!
THANK YOU!**



Thanks to the generosity of our strong supporters, outfitters, vendor merchants, and sister chapters we did it again. Not all that many years ago the West Michigan Bowhunters chapter of SCI was ready to throw in the towel, but they stuck with their mission of being the first bowhunter chapter of SCI. From year to year, we struggled financially hoping to have enough funds to have a banquet.

West Michigan Bowhunters banquet this year just crushed it and again this year, set a new record in raising over \$300,000 gross. So, what does this mean? It means we can again support SCI International in their mission statement "First for Hunters."

We can also put money back into the western Michigan economy.

We will be able to support veteran and wounded warrior programs, youth involvement, 3d archery, and hunter education, just to name some of the various programs we are passionate about.

Again, thank you to all involved. We could not do this without a solid committee and all of you that bought meal tickets and game tickets. And yes, we sold out The Pinnacle Center! Every ticket we had available to sell, you came out and bought them all!

Looking and planning on another banquet next year to see if we can continue to set records.

Thank you from all of us on the West Michigan Bowhunter board.



ANOTHER DAY



by Terry Blauwkamp

“I’VE HAD ENOUGH OF THE YOUTUBE EXPERTS.”

What I have really had enough of, are those segments like Hornady ammo sucks, or what’s better, Federal or Remington etc. I’m sure a great many of you browse on YouTube and see all the experts on guns and ammo. I really feel the truth is, all ammo is GOOD but some just happen to shoot better in one man’s rifle vs. another one. For example, you might have two .30-06 rifles, and one loves Remington 165 gr SP, and the other one hates them, and prefers Winchester 180 gr Power Points. All rifles are like people, they all have likes and dislikes, be it beer, cars or wine. About the only way to see what your rifle likes or dislikes, is to try them all.

Unfortunately this can be quite expensive, and a real quirk in it is if you find a particular load that your rifle loves, open the end flap and see what lot number is there. Now, go back where you bought that box, and see if they have more. They might have plenty more of that certain ammo, but with different lot numbers, and there is no guarantee they will shoot the same.

Why, because all factory ammo is loaded to certain specifications, and they can use a variety of powders that will produce the required velocity and pressure. But the ammo your rifle likes may have had “ball” powder, and the other ones for sale might have “stick” or “flake” powder.

Both produce different vibrations in your gun that it likes or dislikes.

This is why most of us reload and tinker with different powders (and various weights), to see what load shoots best in our gun.

Best part is that when we find that sweet load, we can reproduce it.... If we have enough of the same lot number of powder, primers, and bullets.

Oh bullets... Just because you are having great results with 165-gr Nosler Partitions, there is no guarantee that another box of different lot number will give you the same sweet results you want.

Moral of this story is to buy powder in larger than 1-Lb. cans, or buy several cans of the same lot number so when you find the right load, you have enough to use over and over.



But, in the past few pandemic years, powder prices have sky-rocketed, and are likely to stay there it seems.

Not only are there lots of experts on ammo, but also on bullet performance on game.

One fellow seems to think Nosler Partitions are the world’s greatest killer, while others do not, and like Barnes TTSX monolithic bullets better. Or someone posts that his brother lost a deer last fall, as his 7mm Remington Magnum is not effective enough.

So it goes on and on. My reply to these fellows is to go shoot 25 or 50 more animals with the same bullet and see what the performance is. One or two, or even a dozen kills, do not really give you a clear picture. What is of the most ultimate importance is BULLET PLACEMENT.

A “hole in heart or lungs” of any animal

will soon be fatal. In my own experience, I have taken game of many sizes using the .30-06 with 29 different bullets, and the results tell me that as long as I poke them in the lungs or heart, surely they don't go very far. Also, there is little difference in the animals' reaction to a .30-06 or .300 magnum except the big .300s kick harder. Next one is that the 6.5 Creedmoor is the ultimate sales job. Please compare it to the ballistics of the old .270 Winchester, and you will find very little difference in down-range performance.

It is just that the gun makers have done the most terrific job of promoting and selling the "new and improved" 6.5s that everyone just seems to have to have one.

Regardless of what gun or bullet you choose, your biggest asset is to spend time on the range and practice, practice, and practice some more.



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MARCH YOUTH NIGHT AT SCI

**75-80 ADULTS
PLUS A BUNCH OF
KIDDOES ENJOYED A
FUN EVENING!**

V.P. Stacey Platz welcomed the members, guests, and youth and made several announcements. Jim Naber came forward for the prayer and Dennis Sprick led in the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag. Jim Naber gave a membership update. Informing us that we have 415-420 active members!

A kid-friendly buffet dinner got lots of attention from all ages.

Denny introduced Tom Funk from the Outdoor Discovery Center near Holland and presented Tom with the ceremonial check for \$3,500. Tom says the ODC is open every day of the year, then gave a very lively presentation showing several live critters. All the kids and young-at-heart gathered around.

Tom showed a live female bullfrog, which can lay 15,000 to 20,000 eggs in the spring. Next, he showed a shell from a snapping turtle indicating how the ribs grow to the outside of the shell

to provide protection. And then he showed a live box turtle, indicating how the bottom shell is hinged, closing as needed to provide protection. Tom informed us that a box turtle can live to be 100+ years old!

A western hog-nosed snake was next, and Tom showed how this guy is very tame, but can bluff to scare away intruders, swelling up and spreading his neck.

Two birds of prey followed, first a red-shouldered hawk, a deep-woods bird who lives on small birds and mammals. Tom said all mammals have seven neck bones, including humans and giraffes, but birds of prey have 14, giving them greater flexibility.

Then a big snowy owl was shown around. Snowy owls live mostly on small mammals, including lemmings in the far north. Nice job, Tom!





Denise Poortenga won the jewelry raffle. Jack Gano won the youth rifle, a Savage .22 Model 64 auto-loader. And Austin Naber won the adult rifle, a Savage Model 111, in .338 Win Mag.



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WIFE



SPRING BREAK

HUNTING

by Dr. Michael Kwast

While finding some warm weather down in Florida is a favorite for many Michiganders, it doesn't make you think of hunting. However, there are some fun and unique hunts you can combine with your Florida vacation. Most people are aware of alligator, hog, and turkey hunting. There are a couple more to add to your list.

Iguana hunting is a fun, and inexpensive option. I brought my boys along on a half-day iguana hunt this year. Half a day cost me about \$600 with tip for the four of us. We used the guides' air guns. There is no license and no bag limits as iguanas are an invasive species. You have to be far enough south to see them. We hunted near Boca Raton, Florida.

We hunted out of the guide's boat on a local lake. Cruising the shorelines and channels looking for the mini dinosaurs. They are mainly herbivores. They like to dig and burrow, which causes damage to the shorelines, yards, and canals. Once we would spot one, the captain would try to close in for a headshot, or to try and catch one with a noose on a fishing rod. We were able to shoot several, and had many more opportunities. You can eat the tail meat, however, we didn't have the facilities to process the iguanas, so we left them for our guide to process.

“

THEY ARE CALLED
“CHICKEN OF THE
TREES,” LOL. THEY
VARY IN COLOR, AND
THE LARGER MALES
ARE A BRIGHT ORANGE
COLOR.

They are also incredible swimmers, and many escaped us. This was an exciting and action packed adventure I would highly recommend!





Another interesting hunt is for stingrays. Board member Don Dixon invited me to come with him on a fun adventure bow fishing for stingrays near Punta Gorda. We headed out on the water at about 8pm. Lights in the shallows revealed crabs, fish, and stingrays. Figuring out your aim point is always a bit challenging at first, as you have to aim really low. However, we figured it out and had a great evening of adventure. We ended up missing a bunch and getting ten. Our guide cleaned them and suggested cutting into small pieces and deep frying. Cost was \$475 for four hours. Another great spring break option when you are in Florida.



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big BUCK night

by Pete VanderArk

Todd Moelker chaired the meeting, welcoming 88 members and guests. A big thank you goes out to Naber's Taxidermy for sponsoring Big Buck Night. Jim and Austin Naber busied themselves measuring 20 different sets of antlers! By far the most bucks entered for a Big Buck Night. Todd Cook gave an auction up-date. Due to the hunt committee's hard work there will be a great selection of hunts and gear on this year's auction. You don't want to miss it! Speaking of this year's auction, our very own auctioneer Art Smith led in the Pledge of Allegiance and Denny Sprick opened in prayer. A very nice buffet dinner followed.

Brian Alberda, of Lost Blood Deer Tracking was our featured speaker. Brian gave a very interesting presentation about finding wounded deer with the use of his dogs, a lab and a bloodhound. He gave a bunch of tips on what to do and what not to do to improve your chances of recovering a wounded deer. This past hunting season, he responded to 152 requests for help, resulting in 47% success. There was a lot of Q&A for Brian.

Todd recognized and thanked Scott Bergsma, of Grandville Printing Co., who has done the layout for The Tracker for 30 years now. Scott is about to retire, and we didn't want to let this opportunity pass. The editors, past and present, presented Scott with a nice gift bag.



Hunters of deer in three categories were recognized for their success. Brian Becker won the youth category, Bob Gano had the biggest Michigan buck, and Rog Wangerin had the biggest out of state buck. This year a free range Michigan buck was the biggest buck entered in the contest!

Jared Veenstra won the youth rifle, a Rossi .22LR, Stacy Platz won the jewelry drawing, and Blake Veenstra won the gun drawing, a lovely Mauser 7mm magnum rifle.






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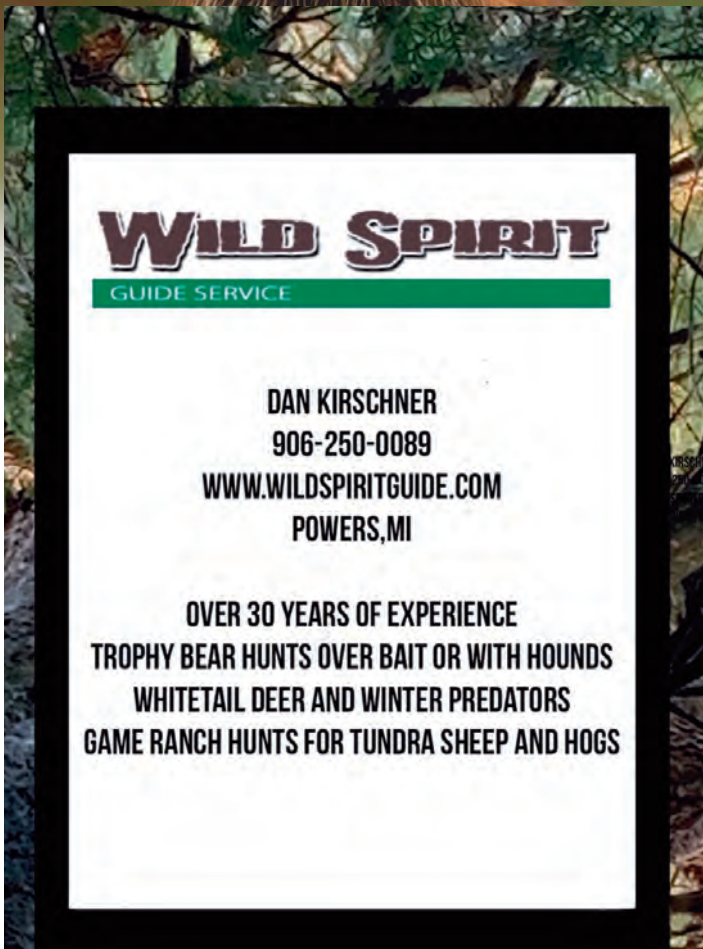
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"...the man who really counts in the world is the doer, not the mere critic – the man who actually does the work, even if roughly and imperfectly, not the man who only talks or writes about how it ought to be done."

-President Theodore Roosevelt

We would like to thank all of you who donated to our Humanitarian Fund this year. Using our Humanitarian funds is how we support events for challenged youth & adults, veterans, others with special needs, and organizations that support our mission and goals. Your continued support enables us to help so many in so many ways! A BIG Thank You again for opening your hearts in support of our Humanitarian Initiatives. If we missed your name and you contributed, my apologies. Please let me know, so we can get it corrected!

If you would like to donate to our Humanitarian Fund, want more info about any of the initiatives, or know of someone who could benefit from one of our programs, please contact me at dlsprick@gmail.com

-Dennis Sprick, Humanitarian Chair

**THE LIST OF DONORS
CAN BE FOUND ON PAGE 48**

THANK YOU SCI MICHIGAN CHAPTER

On behalf of The Wildlife Center at Legends Ranch, I would like to express our gratitude for SCI MI Chapter's generous sponsorship of two hunters in our 1st Time Hunter program. Your support has made it possible for us to offer life-changing opportunities to 71 new hunters this year, and a total of 263 since 2020.

Your sponsorship plays a crucial role in recruiting and introducing new individuals to the wonderful world of hunting. Through this program, we aim to ignite a passion for the sport and foster a deep appreciation for wildlife conservation. By providing these aspiring hunters with the chance to experience the thrill of the hunt in a safe and controlled environment, as well as providing meat for the family, we are confident that they will carry this love for hunting and conservation throughout their lives.

We are aware that without the

support and partnership of organizations like yours, achieving our mission would be incredibly challenging. Your commitment to promoting ethical hunting and preserving our natural heritage is truly commendable.

Leland Price

Leland Price is a 12 year old boy who lives locally in Newaygo County. Leland comes from a large family and never had the opportunity to get

into hunting. He had taken a Hunter Education course with us and wanted to harvest a deer and to bring a box of frozen venison home

to provide for the family. Leland took great pride in contributing to his family's food supply.



Aubrey Price

Aubrey Price is the 15 year old sister of Leland. Aubrey is a local girl who also had never been hunting before but had always wanted to go hunting. She was so happy and proud to be able to learn the skills she needs to become a lifelong hunter. Both brother and sister were both able to harvest deer on the same day and both brought home venison for their family. What a great night for everyone!

Once again, we extend our heartfelt thanks to the Michigan Chapter of SCI for sponsoring these hunts and enabling us to impact the lives of so many new hunters. Your dedication to our cause is greatly appreciated, and we hope to continue our partnership for years to come.

With gratitude,

Tony Grimard

The Wildlife Center at Legends Ranch



is a non-profit organization whose mission is to provide accessible, safe and comfortable outdoor experiences to people with physical disabilities to improve mental health.

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Dear Safari Club International Michigan Chapter,

Thank you for your generous gift of \$5,000.00 that you made on 2/13/2024. Every act of your generosity helps us further our mission. Your gift will help us get more people back into the outdoors to experience nature, camaraderie, and emotional and spiritual well-being. Your gift is allowing us to realize a dream. It's great to get back out into the woods. All that have wanted to do is to share the hunting experience that gave me my life back so that I can help as many others who might also be experiencing a life-changing disability. It was the thing that helped me more than anything else.

Thank you again for your most generous support and your willingness to make a difference.

Sincerely,

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JAN OELOFSE

LEGACY AWARD HUNT

by Geoff Newmyer

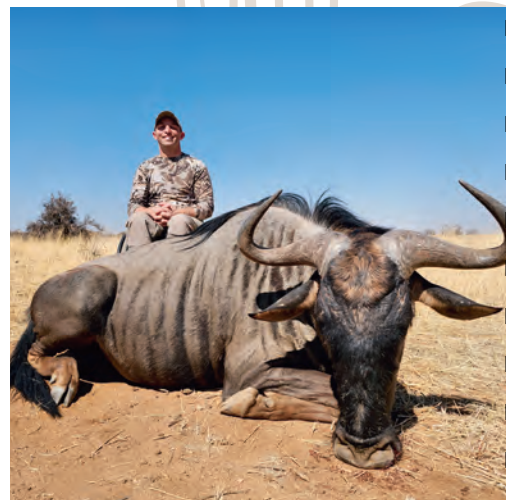
When I found out I was the recipient of this award, I knew it was going to be an adventure! But it was an adventure of a lifetime!!! The memories made will never be forgotten! Thank you!! Annette, Alex, and Carola Oelofse!! This award is an amazing gift that Jan Oelofse started 30 years ago and a true testimony and legacy of his. Jan Oelofse Safaris is an unbelievable place, and the entire crew is one of the reasons I will never forget all the memories made. Also, a special thanks to SCI Michigan Chapter, Legends Taxidermy, and Coppersmith Global Logistics. Without you this blessing wouldn't have happened! Since my accident, I have been blessed in so many ways!! I thank God for my family, friends, and all the people He has put in my life! Tony Salerno, thanks for making the trip with me. We sure

had fun!!! Thank you too for using your frequent flier miles to upgrade our seats on such long flights!

This adventure involved so many great memories that it is hard to choose just a few to relate here. As so often happens, the target species would play hard to get. I really wanted a gemsbok, and we hunted hard to find a good trophy. Finally, just before dark on the third day, everything came together. Of course, after that, we saw trophy gemsbok everywhere we went! Next on the list was blue wildebeest. They also proved very elusive until I connected on one, and then they too seemed to be everywhere! No memories of the hunt story would be complete without the memory of the one that got away. The last of the target species I really wanted was a kudu, so we spent the last three days searching for a trophy kudu. On the second to last day, we had a mature bull at 30 yards, but he had

broken about ten inches off from one of his horns. We got down to the last afternoon, and things weren't looking good. It was windy when we got in the blind overlooking a water hole. The windy conditions made the animals very skittish. I had resigned myself to the likelihood that I'd be going home without a kudu, when suddenly a trophy bull appeared. The bull stopped in a spot that was very tempting to take the shot, but it was just too risky. Next, my optimism soared as he moved to a great spot for a shot. Just as I settled my sights for the shot a cow kudu stepped right in the way! If that wasn't bad enough the wind decided to swirl and that was it; he was gone.

The memory of the one that got away is less about a sad event than it is a motivation to go back. My friend Tony and I are already plotting and planning our next African adventure! Until next time Mr. Kudu; until next time!






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SCI MICHIGAN

recap of the annual convention, fundraiser, and auction



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HAS STARTED



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OUR 51ST ANNUAL FUNDRAISER

Thank you to everyone who came out to enjoy a great time and raise the funds needed to fight for hunter's rights, promote conservation, and make a difference here at home and around the world with our humanitarian programs.

Once again, our auction committee put together a great program of hunts from all around the world to right here at home, as well as fishing trips, guns, bows, and many other great items. A big THANK YOU to our outfitters and vendors who generously donated to the auctions!

Those who attended Friday evening enjoyed a great buffet dinner as well as the auction. The fun carried into the night with the band Moonshot putting on a great show.

Saturday started off with a variety of seminars. We had the opportunity to learn about everything from wine to food plots and planning a whitetail property, to elephant hunting, to long range shooting.

Time flew by on Saturday as the day was packed with raffles, games and time spent with friends old and new. Having the convention hall full of great outfitters and vendors provided an excellent chance to plan that next hunt and purchase the next level of gear. After a great dinner it was time to get down to business, with Art Smith once again getting it done on the auction stand and leading the way with the humanitarian fund raiser. In years past, the night would have been over after the auction but with the great new venue and hotel rooms just a short walk away, the fun continued late into the night with great entertainment by the Dueling Pianos.

Thank you to everyone who came out for our 51st Convention! It was a great time for a great cause!



Michigan Chapter Banquet Review

2/10/24

Dear Mr. Kwast,

First and foremost, I want to thank you for having me attend your banquet fundraiser last weekend. I had a tremendous time, and your event was incredible. Congratulations to you and your board members for hosting such an event, for all that you do to have a greater influence in your community; promoting and advancing SCI's mission to protect our hunting freedoms. Believe me when I say, all of us at SCI appreciate and are thankful for your efforts to make this event something special.

I am writing to you to share some of my thoughts on your banquet, as a banquet review. The goal is to not only highlight your strengths but to also provide some pointers to help with improving your event. By no means is this meant to be critical of your efforts, truly you all did an amazing job.

First, I would like to start with how well your event was orchestrated. It was inspiring to see the amount of help that you had from your fellows. I can tell your board members and volunteers put a lot of time and effort into your special weekend. All hands-on deck gives a good sense of a quality work culture within your chapter and serves as a catalyst to allow your chapter to flourish.

The venue was perfect and accommodated adequate space for your guests. The layout of the foyer and banquet hall were great. I liked that you utilized the space in the foyer well by having SCI merchandise, the membership table, men's, and women's raffle tables, along with vendors and games. Saving the space around the perimeter of the banquet hall for your vendors is a nice touch as well. I know how important vendors are for our chapters and fundraising efforts and having them inside the hall gives them front row seats to engage with your attendees. Well done!

Your banquet program was a perfect example of what a banquet program should look like. It has a professional appearance, it contains a message from the President, and highlights your current board members. You also thank your sponsors, share programs you support, and include both Friday and Saturday's detailed auction lists. One cool thing that stands out in your program is the "What's Happening" page. On this page you include an agenda, all the fun raffles, games, and prizes to win, along with seminars.

The prizes that you had for raffles and games were perfect. You had a wide array of outdoor goods, guns, optics, and prizes for the ladies to win. I especially liked the basket prizes that were put together, I haven't seen that at another chapter event yet and it seems to have done well for the Michigan chapter.

To add to this, you did a great job at putting together your auction items. There were many unique hunts that went well, along with some other cool items like the Bed Quilt from Mary Harter, and the SCI Dickinson Shotguns and Henry Side Gate. It's always great to see chapters capitalized on their live auction, and using Online Hunting Auctions can certainly supplement that. I highly recommend keeping OHA in your arsenal. Excellent job on the live auction!

There are many more components to your banquet that I thought were unique and made your banquet standout such as the 'A Worldwide Fireside Chat' featuring several outfitters, the Humanitarian Services fundraising initiative that generated \$28,000, and a great auctioneer. Your strengths certainly outweigh your weaknesses, and I can't think of any recommendations other than keep doing what you're doing - this was a grand slam event!

I'm thankful to have been able to join you for your big event. I wish I would have been able to participate in both nights, but duty called for me to show support in Novi on Friday. I certainly believe this is a tremendous feather in your cap and I look forward to seeing your chapter hit it out of the park again next year.

That's it from me! You all did an amazing job, and we can't thank you enough for your efforts. Your chapter has a lot of great things on the horizon, and I am here to continue to assist you with your chapter needs. If you have any questions on the banquet review, I would be happy to discuss them further.

Kind regards,

Jordan

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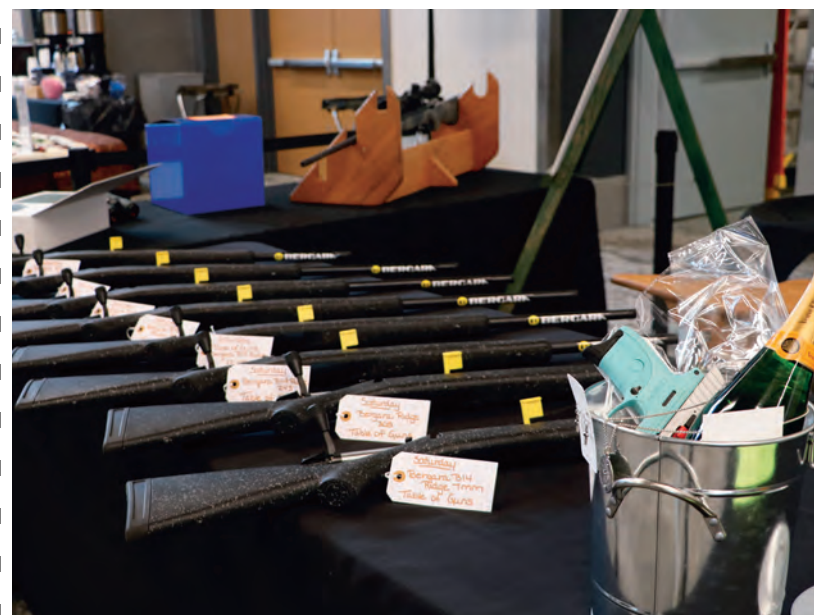




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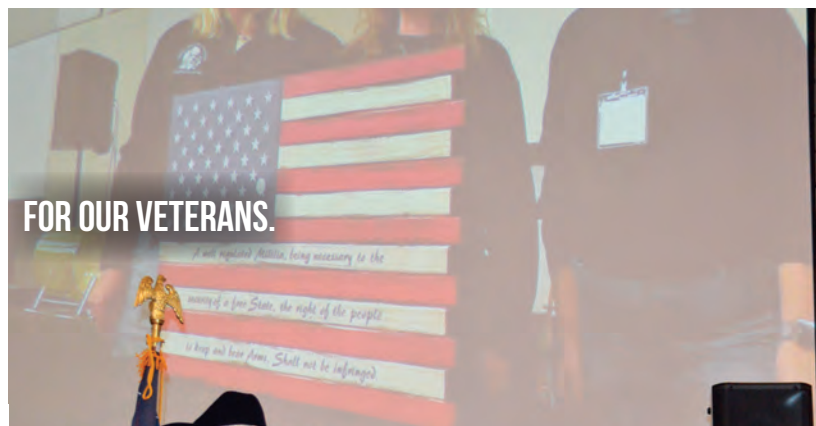
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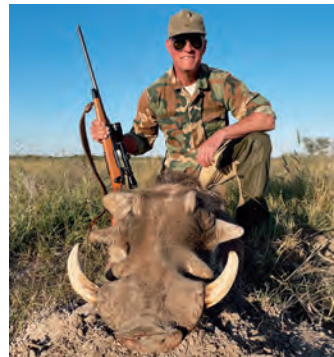
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OLD MEXICO THE LAST FRONTIER

by Sam Fahl

Like many of you, I grew up with a passion for the outdoors. At a very early age, I began chasing every little varmint in our neighborhood. My dream was to become a mountain man like Jeremiah Johnson. I yearned for the adventure of exploring the wilderness. My high school years couldn't get over quick enough.

While most seniors at my school were choosing colleges, I was remodeling an old school bus that would take me deep into the wilderness. My plan was to head for Alaska as they still allowed homesteading there at the time. Fortunately, my mom talked me into trying the upper peninsula to live off the land before I ended up 6,000 miles away. My Mom was wise. Late March approached and I had to ask for my parents to come and rescue me as I had been snowed in for months and was slowly starving.

In the late 70s, fur prices were high, and I was making a very good living chasing fur. From coon trapping in Iowa, to cats and coyotes in Colorado and Texas, I was living my dream come true. Eventually the fur market crashed and I ended up starting a logging business in northern Michigan. I have been blessed to be able to have spent the vast majority of my life in the outdoors.

Most of my hunting centered around chasing whitetail deer, and through my business, I had an opportunity to buy properties that had enough timber on them to pay for the land. The desire for the wild country still burned strong in me, and I took a few trips into northern Canada where I eventually was able to purchase a farm in Northern Manitoba. Once again, I was drawn to this secluded wilderness area satisfying

a need in me to take the path less traveled. The wildlife numbers were impacted greatly by weather and predators, and the hunt was especially challenging in many ways, and I thrived on the that. Most of the deer seasons here in the north country were over by the end of December, but of course I wasn't done "wanting" to hunt. Browsing through some hunting magazines, I saw where whitetail hunts were still going on in





Mexico. I booked a hunt to Mexico and have never been the same since I stepped off the plane in Laredo TX! I spent the first day in Old Mexico in a tripod stand. It was 60 degrees, the sun was shining and I saw over 20 deer in the first day! I thought I might have died and went to heaven. The people were friendly, the laws were relaxed, and the hunting was incredible. The following year I had the outfitter who I had booked my first hunt through introduce me to a rancher and I was able to lease his ranch. His cowboys helped me with setting up blinds as well as keeping the feeders full. It gets very dry some years there and without supplementing food sources, the deer struggle to stay healthy.

After a few years on the ranch and experiencing by far the best deer hunting of my life, the U.S signed NAFTA with Mexico and a free trade zone was created along the Mexican border with the US. This helped us to settle on a ranch about an hour west Of Eagle Pass. It was 12,000 acres for \$67/acre. The ranch met my major goals of being located in the perimeter zone. No permits, visas or other obstacles as many of the restrictions begin when entering the interior or second check points. It was important to me to not have a public easement that would allow traveling through my place for any reason. Not being completely fluent in Spanish handicapped me in some areas and avoiding these interactions would save me some hassles. There is a saying in Mexico that “water is life.” so it was very important to also have an available secure water supply and being the sole owner to those water rights along with

proven wells. I was very excited and could hardly wait for closing day to arrive. I was able to secure title insurance because of where the ranch was located as well as a written promise from the Mexican government never to apply “eminent domain” to the ranch for any reason as some of the larger ranches in the past had been split into small blocks and given to Mexican citizens. The day finally arrived, and I closed on my piece of Paradise, and the adventures began.

Running a ranch from 2,000 miles away took some time to work out all the details. Usually at least two or three tries before I could successfully accomplish the simplest of tasks. There are quite a few “foremen” selling their talents, and I had to sort through a couple before I found an honest and trustworthy fellow. But once I did, things came together quickly. He hired and fired the ranch cowboys, connected me to local honest and quality contractors and setup a gun club for me that allowed for rifles and shotguns to legally stay on the ranch. This was huge because of the permitting system that Mexico requires for importing guns is time consuming and expensive. My wife and I eventually were able to build a decent home on the place for a fraction of the cost of one in the U.S. The ranch is 20 miles from the nearest power, so we depend on solar power for electricity and water. Occasionally there will be periods of cloudy weather and for those times we use a generator powered by propane. Ranching in Mexico is not for the faint of heart. Over the past 20 years, we have faced many challenges. From equipment break downs, cowboys quitting, terrain that eats a set

of tires in a couple months and logistical nightmares to name a few. Danielle and I never ever even considered giving up. The beauty of this unspoiled area has touched us in a way that is hard to explain. The whitetail deer hunting is hard to describe. On good days we will see 30-40 deer with at least a third being bucks. These are free range bucks, common life span to be seven or eight years old. The Mexican government considers the deer owned by the land owners. They require you to have a management plan written and then you submit that to the wildlife department with a request for how many tags you need to accomplish your management goals, and that’s it. There are many outfitters here now to assist with gun permits and other aspects for hunting in Mexico.

The most common question that we get asked is about safety in Mexico. We have been traveling down here for over 20 years, been robbed three times, all while traveling through the U.S. Twice at hotels by breaking into our vehicle and trailer at night and the other time in broad daylight in a Walmart parking lot. We have had two interactions with the Cartel. Once, they stopped to load up my partner’s cows with his men telling my partner’s cowboys he owed their boss money. They were convinced to confirm the location and were told they were at the wrong place. They apologized, unloaded the cattle and went down the road a piece. Another time a young Cartel fellow was cutting through our ranch after his group had been raided. He hadn’t had water for a couple days, so we fed him, gave him water and he thanked us and continued on his way.

Common sense tells us these guys don't want the attention that hassling Americans would bring them. That said, we don't travel the backroads at night and don't drive fancy vehicles or flash cash anywhere we go. Nearly two decades ago the U.S. government started a program to reward in cash those that tip off others that are crossing drugs. \$75K cash. This is the root of many of the battles that take place.

The common folk are incredibly kind and hardworking. The wildlife is unimaginable. The freedom of the ranch spoils us to no end. The only limit is how hard you want to work. The abundance of wildlife is hard to believe when you look at the terrain. It's only after you have sat in a blind and watched the parade of critters gobbling up the corn you placed in the road do you begin to understand to some degree of what is here. The dove and quail hunting are great, predator calling is crazy wild, javelinas add sport to protecting your road corn for the deer to eat, and the lion and bear populations are substantial. The most intriguing aspect for me is to watch the interaction between different age class bucks. Because these bucks get old here, you see an abundant amount of intimidation and outright fights as the rut begins to heat up. Watching the big boys bristle up as they enter the sendero or the road lane is fascinating to watch. It's not always the biggest guy. It's the one with the greatest attitude! This is an unspoiled paradise and we have never grown tired of watching the sunset over the San Madre Mountains, as nature abounds in every direction around us. Viva La Mexico!

If you are interested in seeing some photos and videos of what hunting is like in our part of Mexico, you can search our ranch's Facebook group at "Paradise Canyon Ranch in Old Mexico." There is also a FB group dedicated to hunting in Mexico at "Old Mexico-The Last Frontier."

MEMORIES OF THE FIELD

by Vern Edewaard

When taking the boys to Africa a few years ago, oldest son Steve decided to take his girlfriend Wendy along. Wendy's family had never heard a louder noise than a slamming door, but Steve had her shooting a rifle to prepare for the hunt.

So, while scouting for an impala to shoot, the black guide in the back of the vehicle spotted a nice impala across a pretty big gully. Wendy couldn't find it in the scope so I said, Can you see that big dark tree on the opposite crest of the valley? Yes, she could. OK, now a little to the left, do you see that light green bush? Yes. OK move a little more left, do you see those 2 trees close together? Yes and then, I see it! OK, stay quiet and shoot, and the guide said she hit it. So a couple boys and guide and Wendy crossed the gulley where the guide told his dog Choppy to find the impala. A few circles and he found the trophy. Then while gutting the impala, one of the boys shot a warthog which was wounded and ran into the brush. The guide put Choppy on the track and said, Choppy, find the warthog. Choppy took off and a half hour later came back with blood on his nose. He had found the warthog. So, the guide again told Choppy to find the hog and we followed him. About one hundred further, Choppy fell over and laid there. I asked what happened and the guide said Choppy got heated up and passes out. So the guide took his water bottle and poured a cup full on Choppy and we were on the way again. Just before the warthog, Choppy had another dose but we got the nice hog, gutted it, hung it around a young guides neck and we went back. Two times more, Choppy caved in but we had enough water and made it. CHOPPY IS A GREAT TRACKER!





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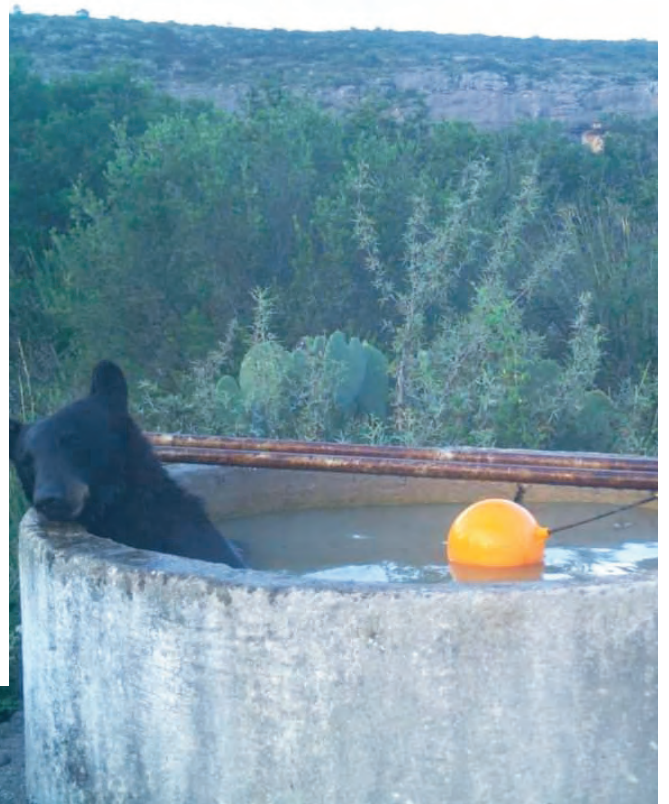
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SCI MICHIGAN CHAPTER 2024 CONVENTION SUPPORTERS

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***If we missed recognizing or thanking anyone, we apologize.
Please let us know so it can be corrected in our next Tracker magazine.***

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