

SHORT AND SWEET ANTELOPE



by Alan Girod

Alan Girod's Utah buck grossed 86 7/8" and netted 84 6/8".

What started out as a typical spring day in April all changed when I checked my e-mail and saw a notice from the Utah Department of Natural Resources. It stated that I had been drawn for the highly-coveted San Rafael North antelope license/tag. Even with six preference points this was a total surprise. After double and triple checking everything I finally convinced myself that indeed I had my tag.

I got recommendations for two outfitters and contacted both of them. I was very impressed with both. After a little more research I decided to book with Wade Lemon of Wade Lemon Hunting, located in Holden, Utah. What a great choice this turned out to be.

In the months leading up to the hunt I started preparing. I first had to decide on which rifle I was going to use. This decision wasn't as easy as you might think, as two years earlier I'd had to start shooting right-handed after shooting left-handed all my life. I have a couple of right-handed rifles and several left-handed ones. After shooting four different rifles at various ranges up to 200 yards, the decision was easier than I had anticipated. A Remington 700 BDL 7mm Mag left-handed bolt-action with a Leupold 3.5 X 10 X III scope was my choice. I have a lot of confidence in the accuracy of this rifle up to 400 or 450 yards.

I drove to Utah, and arrived there about noon the day before the season opened. After checking in at the motel I called Wade on his cell and he asked me to meet him in a nearby town as soon as I could. He and his assistants had located at least two good bucks that he wanted me to look at.

After meeting Wade, we drove several miles to the house of his sister and brother-in-law, Craig. Craig and Tanner, one of Wade's assistants, decided to scout a nearby area while Wade and I went to check out a buck a local rancher wanted us to look at. Around 6:00 p.m. Wade spotted the buck at about 800 yards. The rancher, Chris, met us and we continued to watch the buck. He had great length and mass. The diggers could have been better, but overall this was a fine trophy. We decided that this would be the first buck we would try for in the morning so we continued to watch him until dark. We felt that we could get within 200 yards of him first thing in the morning. Plan A seemed pretty good.

We drove back to town, ate a quick sandwich, and then went to the motel. It was difficult getting to sleep as thoughts of the next day's hunt were running wild. I actually did get a pretty good night's rest, though, and was ready to go when the alarm went off. I arrived at Craig's house and transferred my gear into Wade's pickup. Reggie, one of Wade's assistants, was also there. He had located a good buck a few miles south of where we were. If something went wrong with the first buck we would try for this antelope.

We all met the rancher and he unlocked the gate and let us in. Plan A was right on track. We had driven almost to where we were going to park when, in the light of the full moon, 80 yards away there stood our buck- we were busted just 30 minutes before legal shooting light. So much for Plan A; time for Plan B. We watched the buck, and about ten minutes later he walked behind a ridge and was out of sight. We all started discussing the best way to try to sneak up on him. All of a sudden the buck

appeared on the ridge. He was standing broadside, a perfect shot. But it was still ten minutes too early. I went ahead and set up my homemade shooting sticks and was ready in the unlikely case that he would still be there when it became legal to shoot. He stood there for a long time and when it appeared that we might really get lucky the buck slowly walked out of sight. Now it was about two minutes too early. I put my daypack on and once again started discussing how to start the stalk. At least now it was legal shooting time.

We were just starting to leave when the buck appeared on the ridge again. This time he was head on, looking straight at us. I dropped my pack, set up my sticks and got in position. Wade said that when it felt good I could go ahead and take him. The sticks were rock solid and the crosshairs of the 10X scope were locked dead center on the antelope's chest. I slowly began to squeeze the trigger until the sound of the shot shattered the silence. The buck staggered backwards and there was the sound of the bullet hitting something solid. The buck disappeared as everybody was congratulating me.

As we walked to the top of the ridge I had two thoughts. First, would the buck be there, and second, if he was, how much ground shrinkage would there be? We spot-

ted him as we got to the top of the ridge. He had dropped very close to where he had been standing. The closer I got to him it became very clear that the ground shrinkage wasn't going to be a problem. I tagged the buck and the photo session began.

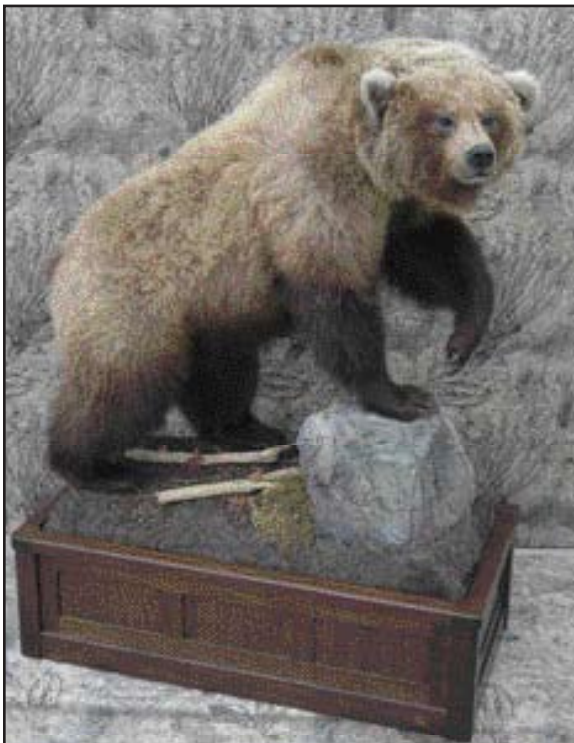
After the fact, we got a range with the laser rangefinder- 107 yards. No wonder my scope had been filled up with antelope.

I would like to thank John Williams of Andrews, Oregon, for showing me how to build my shooting sticks. As in the past, they really worked well.

At five minutes, this hunt definitely qualifies as "short and sweet". The main reason for this quick success was all the work put in by Wade and his crew. Besides being a true professional, Wade is one heck of a nice guy. The same can be said for each member of his crew.

The only thing that I would change about this hunt is that I wish that my best friend and hunting buddy, Richard Adams, could have been there. Richard and I go back to the 1960's when we met at Dover AFB, Delaware. We were both Air Force pilots and have been close friends ever since. A prior commitment kept Richard from attending.

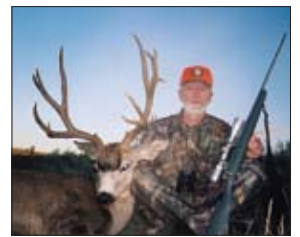
Also, I would like to thank Ty, another rancher, for all his help. What a trip! What a trophy! Thanks, Wade.



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