



Trusting Your Instincts

STORY BY JIM DAVID

Sometimes you just know when something good is about to happen...and that was exactly the case for me and my hunting buddy, Don Schlegel last year. You see, we did not have the maximum points for the Arizona rifle deer drawing, but somehow, we just knew that we were going to draw coveted Arizona Strip deer tags.

When the successful news did indeed find its way to us, the first thing I did was investigate the prospect of a guide. I knew that it was not going to be cheap, but these tags were probably going to be once-in-a-lifetime opportunities and I wanted to be sure that we made the most of them. I contacted four or five of

the most popular guides available for the Strip and found out that one in particular, David Pereda, with **Yavapai Outfitters** lived right in the same town that I lived in. After a lengthy conversation over lunch, we opted to hire Dave...and obviously, by you reading this article, we were very glad that we did.

The week before our hunt started, we took our trailers up to the unit. Dave was already there scouting, checking trail cameras, etc., and so when we arrived, we had some great pictures of some fantastic bucks to look at. Unfortunately, I had to come back to town the following day, but Don was able to stay and he and Dave spent the week scouting.

I arrived the day before the hunt was to start, and again, my instincts kicked in. I knew that I needed to plan to be in the field all day and when I saw the trail camera pictures that Dave and Don had to show me, I knew it was going to be a great hunt. Dave had several good bucks located, two in particular caught my attention...one, a beautiful 6x8, we called "Flames". He was in the same area as a 35-inch wide 3x5 and a massive 4x4. The second buck was a very massive 5x7 with a unique whale tail on his right side. Our plan for opening morning was to head to the area where Flames and his buddies resided.

We left camp early the next morning for the 45 minute drive to our glassing loca-

tion. Upon arrival, we were excited to see that there was no one else on the hill. That changed quickly though as in the next 20 minutes, seven other vehicles were parked with us on the mountain. Now, I enjoy glassing, but Dave has taken it to an art form. He got behind his 15x56 Swarovskis and literally picked every tree and bush apart in his search for our deer. By 7:00am, he had a buck spotted and even at over a mile away, Dave knew that this was the massive 4x4. How Dave spotted this buck while none of the other 18 or so pair of eyes did not, is beyond me! Don asked, "Is it my buck," but before I could answer, Dave said, "Let's go."

It seemed like an eternity, but at 8:15 I heard one shot, then a second. About five minutes later, I got the signal that Don had just put a toad of a 4x4 on the ground and to bring the truck.

After taking care of Don's buck, Dave and I were once again in hot pursuit. We looked at five other bucks that afternoon, all very nice typicals in the 180 to 190 inch range...just not what I was looking for. Instinctively, I knew that there was a non-typical here somewhere with my name on it.

We awoke the next morning to a couple of inches of snow. Knowing this would make glassing deer much easier, Dave and I left camp with a feeling that this could be a great day.

Within 20 minutes of our arrival to glass, Dave found a dandy 190-inch 4x4 with six does. He was bedded, so we sat and watched him for about 20 minutes. I would never have guessed that I would be comfortable passing on a buck of this caliber, but I still had the "trash factor" in my mind. During the next couple of hours, we glassed two other bucks—a nice 3x3 and a 180-class 4x4. At 10:30, just as we were getting ready to roll it up for the morning, Dave decided to glass "just one more time". It was then that he spotted a group of deer at over two miles away...six does, and with them, the 5x7 "whale tail" buck from the



Upon seeing trail camera photos of the heavy buck (above) the author's hunting partner wasted no time in putting this massive 4x4 on the ground! With 45 inches of mass, Don Schlegel's opening day Strip buck taped out at 191 inches!



trail camera photo! For the next several minutes, we watched intently until the buck finally separated himself from his does. After he made his way into a deep pocket, we waited another half hour before launching our assault.

In the mid-day sun, we slowly worked our way up an adjacent ridge where we had last seen the buck. Once on top, we both began glassing and in literally no time at all, Dave quietly whispered, "I have your buck." It was an amazing spot...only one eye, about three inches of the buck's white face, and a two-inch piece of antler was what had given the buck's location away to Dave! The

adrenaline immediately began flowing and although the buck was only 150 yards out, it was difficult for me to find him in my rifle scope. Finally, after about two minutes of adjusting, whispering back and forth, and the usual panic that goes on during a time like this, the buck had had enough and began heading out. As he wound his way up and through the trees on the opposite hillside, I tried to keep the crosshairs on him. Just as I was feeling as though my opportunity might not materialize, the buck finally gave me a shot at about 300 yards. Both Dave and I were mortified to see that I had promptly put one right over his shoulder. In auto-pilot, I quickly

cranked in another shell and thankfully, that second shot found its mark and hit him hard! He went down immediately, but got right back up and started moving for distant country. My third shot, (according to Dave), was also a hit, but the buck continued up and over the top of the ridge.

Dave and I raced to the top of the ridge and quickly found the crippled, but very much alive, buck. Two more shots to the shoulder, was what it took to put finally put down this tough Arizona Strip buck! His final resting place was on a bench about eight feet wide and directly above an 800 foot drop!



GROSS SCORE: **199** | POINTS: **5X7** | SPREAD: **30** | LOCATION: **ARIZONA**

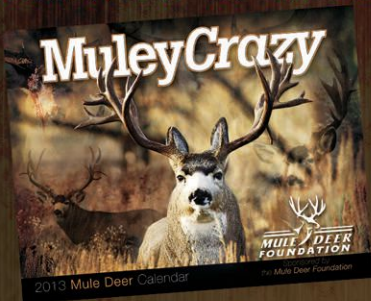
When I walked up to the buck, I was in awe! He had everything that I wanted—a unique 5x7 with a whale tail and one bladed eyeguard! As I was examining his gorgeous antlers, I got ill when I noticed there, in the center of the left main beam, a perfect .308 bullet hole! Even more, that bullet had clipped off

one of the bladed eyeguards and narrowly missed the right antler! I was disappointed in myself, but glad that it had not taken off the right antler completely! The time was 1:15 on the afternoon of day two and I was glad that I had trusted my instincts. I had held out, passing on several very good bucks, and stayed

out all day and it paid off. Dave had done his job extremely well and in less than 36 hours both Don and I had the bucks that we had our sights set on for this hunt. When you do draw that tag of a lifetime in Arizona, I recommend that you give Dave a call or look him up on the web at yavapaioutfitters.com.

2013 MULEY CRAZY CALENDAR

NOW IN STOCK! 435-644-2486



\$9.95 + 4.95 S&H

- 12 exciting months featuring awesome live photography.
- All images were taken during the 2011 & 2012 seasons
- Hunt application deadlines are listed for each Western State.
- Complete monthly moon phases.
- Dimensions - 8.5 X 11 inches
- The perfect gift for all mule deer enthusiasts.

GET 2 CALENDARS FOR ONLY \$13.95 + 5.95 S&H

