



The Sonoran Trifecta

By Wade Derby - Owner of Crosshair Consulting



Dedicated to my father Richard Derby who passed on the tradition of the outdoors and hunting to me. "You are missed and never forgotten"

It is still fresh in my mind. Less than 10 days ago I left Hermosillo, Sonora after experiencing one of the greatest hunts of my life.

More than thirty years ago I was a teenager living in Arizona. I was an avid reader of Jack O'Connor and his tales of hunting of hunting North American rams, as well as the creatures of the Sonoran Desert. Living within reach of the very places he wrote about helped shape my hunting desires.

I avidly pursued Coue's deer and Mule deer in mountains of Arizona. Like O'Connor I hunted the Catalina, Chiricahua, Graham and Ga

-liuro ranges with a growing passion for more.

It was at that time too I began applying for desert sheep permits. In my travels I would occasionally run into these majestic creatures always dreaming of the day I could hunt for them.

About 15 years ago I regularly started hunting in Sonora, Mexico with outfitter Ubaldo Lopez. He and I formed a friendship after I made my first hunt with him for Coue's deer. During that hunt we made plans I would some day hunt desert sheep with him; unless I got lucky enough to draw a permit. Well, after years of applying for desert sheep in three different states, the envelope with my permit had yet to arrive. Enter option number two; Sonora.

Some day finally came and on December

27, 2012, I met Ubaldo in the Hermosillo Airport accompanied by friends Bob Robb and Brian Yeoman from Houston, Texas.

After clearing customs and such we drove to the area where I would get the opportunity to hunt sheep. We unpacked immediately and sorted out our equipment. Ubaldo was on a mission. Without wasting anytime we were in the field seeking rams, glassing the ridges with a few prime hours of daylight left. It really had not yet hit me; I was actually desert sheep hunting.

As fast as it started, it was done. Ubaldo located a ram he wanted me to take. After we positioned ourselves and I fired, hitting the ram. The mountainside came alive with sheep and in the confusion it took what seemed like forever to locate my ram. I took a second shot; he leaped forward and went down in the rocks next to an Ironwood tree on the steep side of the ridge. I was elated and thankful for this privilege. He was an old ram and his growth rings put his age at 12 years plus. The ram was more than I could have ever wished for.

Funny, we joked that at the pace this hunt was

going there might be time to take all three of the popular Sonoran big game species (Desert Sheep, Mule Deer, and Coue's Deer). I started referring to it as the,

"Sonoran Tri-fecta."

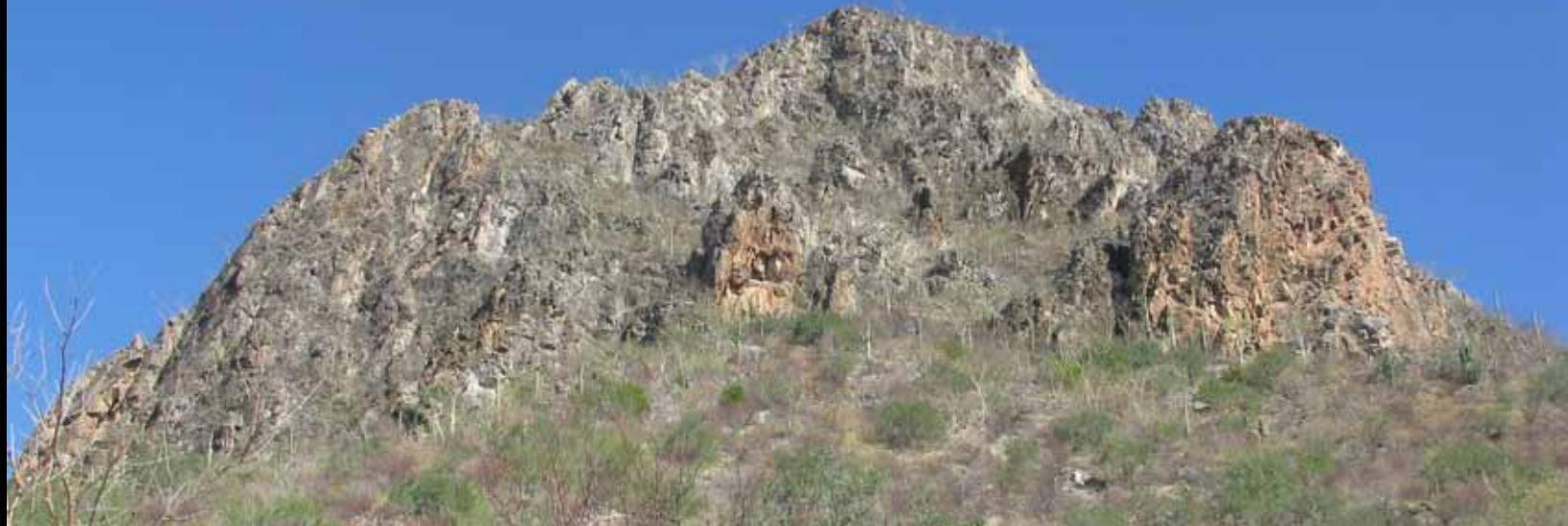


out some new leases with Ubaldo for Coue's deer and Desert Mule deer.

Brian sat waterholes for whitetails while I covered ground in the high rack. Late that morning we spotted a Coue's buck bedded at 291 yards. He had great mass and a great spread, but we could not accurately judge his points due to brush. Regardless, after looking the deer over we knew it was a grand old buck.

We were right; he was a large 3x2 going downhill due to age.





I have been fortunate to take a fair number of Coue's and this one did not disappoint. With a couple days left to hunt and with a great deal of good luck we needed to get Brian a Coue's too. Now, I really felt the "Sonoran Trifecta," might be in reach.

From off in the distance we heard a single shot! Brian had his Coue's down at the waterhole. He took a great buck and was beaming with pride. Jim took a shot at the big buck.

We left the ranch and headed for Ubaldo's base in Cobachi. It was New Year's Eve. Ubaldo asked us if we wanted to check out a new place in La Colorada for muledeer the next day and we did not hesitate to tell him, "yes." On the morning of December 31, 2012 we arrived at the ranch about 30

minutes later than we liked. Though cold out, we contended with a full moon most of the trip and deer movement was very early in the day and

also very late in the day. That morning we saw a number of deer including two very respectable bucks. Had we just been a few minutes earlier we would have had an opportunity to take them. We decided not to push these deer and

made a plan for the next day's hunt.

After spending an uneventful night in Cobachi, we got up early on New Years Day 2013. Once we arrived at the ranch Brian went off in one direction and I went the other way, as we planned the night before.

My guide Vicente wanted to check out a cholla flat with a small reservoir (Represso) near the area the two bucks eluded us the day before.



As we entered the flat no deer were in view. I thought our plans were solid and I was a bit surprised no deer were present. As we moved through the area we strained our eyes glassing the cover and edge areas.

We left the area and then decided to double back one more time. This proved to be a very lucky move. I saw two deer moving quickly through the cactus flat



and made out the chocolate antlers of a large buck. There was no time to judge him beyond knowing he was mature and tall.

The buck stopped just for a second next to a Palo Verde tree. His mistake allowed me the window I needed to take him. At the report, he bolted and ran about 25 yards and fell over.

He was a big 3x3, heavy mass, long tines. While not the perfect four point most of us seek, he was a great trophy in his own right.

What a perfect way to celebrate the New Year! Taking the, "Sonoran Trifecta," encapsulated a lifetime of hunting goals for me. My Army drill instructor, SSGT Timothy Sumner always inspired me when he said, "Time, Patience and Perseverance will accomplish all things." From an Arizona teenager fascinated with O'Connor and the Sonoran Desert to now, a middle aged father of four still inspired; "Yes it will!" Thanks to all who helped along the way to make journey a reality.

