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GameTrails

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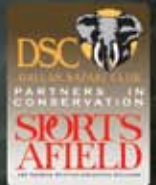
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Game Trails - JOURNAL OF DALLAS SAFARI CLUB

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The Place for **BIG BUCKS** *(and then some!)*

When I first looked at him through my binoculars, I thought I was looking at an elk!



This deer taped at 215 3/8 inches in 2008.

Eric Fletcher from Flower Mound, Texas has hunted a lot in his life. Eric and his dad and brother all have impressive trophy rooms. Eric and his family invest a lot on their own whitetail hunting property. So you might say he is a bit of a fanatic when it comes to white-tailed deer

“The one thing that none of us had was a world class hitetail,” says Eric. “None of us had ever shot one over 170.” That changed for Eric, fall of 2008.

“As a member of The Dallas Safari Club, I had the privilege of meeting Donald Hill during the move-in for our 2008 Annual Convention. I was lucky enough to be the individual assigned to the loading area that Donald pulled up to and began assisting with the unloading of his trailer that was filled with the most incredible deer

I had ever seen. By the end of our 2008 convention, I had my mind made up and was well on my way to Missouri to hunt with Donald at Oak Creek Whitetail Ranch.

“Upon arriving for my hunt in the fall of 2008, I soon learned that Oak Creek was more than a whitetail hunting ranch. It was a family that had a passion for the outdoors, offering an unbelievable hunting experience. Donald and his wife Angi welcomed me into their lodge and

treated me like family the moment I walked in the door.”

Fate crossed paths that particular day, as is the case so many times at the Dallas Safari Club Convention. “I think once Eric handled a few of our mounted deer, he was impressed with what he held in his hands,” says Donald Hill, owner of Oak Creek Whitetail Ranch “I will never forget the look on Eric’s face as we kept bringing big deer out of the trailer.

“I knew he was coming to hunt with me before he did,” says Donald, “He kept asking, ‘And you harvested this one last year too?’

The look on his face was priceless.”

Eric says, “I ended up buying his donated hunt that was for a 150-class buck. But when I got there I decided to shoot a bigger 200 deer. I ended up taking a 212 buck with 22 scorable points first. On the last afternoon I shot a second buck that scored 202.”

Eric’s whitetail fever burned once again, and he signed up for his second hunt at Oak Creek for a late season 2009 hunt. “Our first morning proved to be something I will never forget. Just a few days before Christmas, while stalking an impressive 230-plus buck, we bumped the biggest deer I have ever seen in my life. While we were glassing the 230-plus buck, an absolute monster buck came



Eric’s 2009 “Big Boy”— 270 inches, 298 pounds

staggering out of some cedar trees in pursuit of a couple of does.

“When my guide got me to take a look at the new arrival, I was at

a loss for words. He was literally the biggest whitetail I had ever seen. My guide asked me if I was interested in this new arrival. The safety was already off and the trigger was on its way to touching off a round in my Weatherby.

“As we approached the massive whitetail, he literally grew with every step. This buck had everything a hunter could dream about in a deer. Scoring a massive 272 inches, he weighed in at 298 pounds and had length and mass that you simply can’t imagine a Whitetail being able to carry.”

Eric’s big 270 was even bigger earlier on in the season as evidenced by good trail camera photos of the Missouri monster grazing in a field of Donald Hill’s proprietary “Magic Beans.” The 270, still in full velvet at the time, was carrying at least another 11 inches of antler on his left side. At weigh-in, Donald pointed out to Eric that his 270-inch, 298-pound deer would have been well over 300 pounds had it not been late in the rut. Donald figured Eric’s deer had shed at least 30 pounds during the annual mating season.

As a fanatical Whitetail hunter and with one more day to go, Eric and his guide went out on Oak Creek’s nearly 2,000-acre property again, “just to kill some time before dinner,” according to Eric.



2nd 2009 Oak Creek buck, 233-inch 2009 Class C.

“We decided to sit in the late afternoon hours. As we watched several does and young bucks feeding at the end of the field about 300 yards away, another incredible buck walked out with about five minutes of shooting light left in the day. By chance, could this be the buck we were stalking this morning?”

“After a close inspection we knew it was indeed the buck from our morning hunt! As my guide ranged him at 315 yards, I prepared myself for a



Fletcher’s 2nd 2008 Oak Creek buck, 202 inches



Eric Fletcher’s 270-inch whitetail in the “Magic Beans” while still in velvet.

challenging shot. Losing daylight fast, I had to adjust my scope down in power to gather as much light as possible. I touched off a round from my trusty Weatherby and the big buck stumbled off into the woods. We found him about 30 yards into the woods and began the process of loading him up in the dark. This second buck ended up measuring 233 inches.”

As for Eric’s shooting ability, Donald says, “Eric is a terrific shot. When he pulls the trigger you never have to worry about that deer running off and having to track

it over hill and dale. When Eric shoots, it’s one shot and down! Eric and I have gotten to know one another well enough that I consider

us good friends,” says Donald. “He’s always got a smile on his face, always in a good mood and a real family man. I am looking forward to Eric’s hunt with us in 2010 because he’s bringing his dad, his brother, his wife, son and daughter. It should be a great experience having the whole family at the lodge at one time.”

Eric recalled, “when we loaded my two deer the day before Christmas for my drive back to Texas, we were tagging the antlers and capes from the two whitetails I had harvested. Donald and I had to laugh at the fact that we were labeling the 233-inch deer as ‘Eric’s Small Whitetail.’”

Eric’s “big” whitetail will be full body-mounted and on display at the 2011 DSC Convention. For further information, contact Donald Hill, Oak Creek Whitetail Ranch, 178 Oak Creek Lane, Bland, MO 65014, 573-943-6644, www.oakcreekwhitetailranch.com, oakcreekranch@earthlink.net. *GT*

Look for Oak Creek Whitetail Ranch’s fantastic “First Week of the Season Hunt” donation on the DSC Saturday night auction for up to four hunters. DSC Booth #s **517/518/617/618**