

07-02-19

Dear AZBGSR,

I am the very lucky winner of the 2018 AZBGSR Antelope tag. First and foremost I couldn't believe my ears when my phone rang last July and I was told I won the antelope raffle. I have wanted a chance at an antelope for a long time and now I had my chance. Thank you AZBGSR!

I wanted to give the lucky hunters who had drawn a regular season tag a chance to hunt before I went out as I know how hard it is to get drawn. Besides, I had a whole year to hunt, right? After the rifle hunt was over I got in touch with Ken Clay Jr. who is the Game and Fish officer in unit 4A. I know how big some of the antelope are in this unit and just knew I was going to be able to harvest a nice one. Ken sent me a picture of one of the hunters who had harvested a very nice buck in 2018 and told me that the bigger of the two bucks was still running around. So I started to go out when I could to look for this big boy. Everyone knows how life and work can get in the way and mess up plans.

Over the months I saw several very big antelope but was never able to get a shot at any of them. I had friends and co-workers reporting when they saw antelope and the size of any bucks they saw. Of course what you see today will be gone by the next day. At least I was getting reports of sightings and keeping my options open.

Now time has slipped away and it is the end of June. Knowing I only had a month and a half to go I told myself I needed to start making time to go hunt. I mentioned to a co-worker that I was going out Sunday June 30th and asked if he wanted to tag along. He jumped at the chance then later called and asked if another co-worker could tag along too. This is a new experience for me as I hunt alone, but I said sure. So Byron, John and I headed out bright and early that morning to see what we could find.

After checking an area in the north part of unit 4A, we were travelling east on Territorial Road and crossed into hunt unit 4B. All of a sudden there was a buck standing to the north a couple of hundred yards off the road and he appeared to be a decent one. We all bail out of the truck and cross the road to take a better look at him through our binoculars. After seeing his prongs I decided that this is a very nice representative of an antelope and I would try to harvest him.

I had to go back to my truck to get my rifle and then once back on the other side of the road I realized I left my shooting sticks in the truck. I plopped down on the ground but with the rise the buck was standing behind I did not have a clear shot. I crawled forward 25 yards or so and plopped back down again. The buck is still shielded by the slight rise he is behind, so I crawl forward another 20 yards or so. By now the buck has started to walk off to the east but still staying behind the rise. I reposition myself slightly and pick the buck up again.

The buck is about 170 yards away and now the top of his shoulder is visible. As I contemplate the shot he decides to turn towards me and takes 2 or 3 steps towards me which now raised his

chest area above the rise he has been behind. Not wanting to lose this antelope I placed the crosshairs just right of the center of his chest and pull the trigger. Down he goes out of sight behind the rise.

As we walk up to him I get more excited with each step. There is no ground shrinkage with this guy. He actually starts to look even better the closer I get. Once I get my hands on him I am ecstatic. He is heavy in the bases, the tips of his ears are below the bottom of the prong, and his prongs are just gorgeous! I am very happy with my decision to harvest this antelope.

Hunter's Lair Taxidermy is going to do my shoulder mount on this antelope. He scored right at 80 inches. Yes there are bigger bucks out there but again, I am very happy with my antelope. He will make a beautiful mount. And at my age this very well may be the last antelope I ever get to hunt before I can get drawn again.

My thanks to Byron Kranendonk and John Robinson for going out with me and being a part of this adventure. And thanks to Hunter's Lair Taxidermy as I am sure they will do a fantastic job on mounting my antelope.

I have my tickets in for the AZBGSR drawing this year. I have my fingers crossed and have been saying my prayers that lightning can and will strike twice. No I didn't put in for antelope again. All my tickets are in for a buffalo.

Thank you to the AZBGSR for putting this raffle on and the AZ Game and Fish Department for making these tags available. What an opportunity to help the wildlife that we love even if we don't get drawn to hunt. To those that do get drawn and win that lucky tag, good luck to you. I hope your adventure is everything that you dreamed it to be.



Sincerely,

Tony Miller