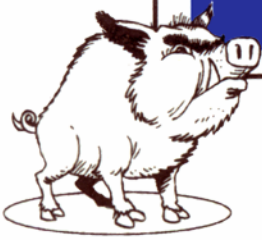


HUNTING WILD HOGS IN COLORADO



BY: CHRIS SGARAGLINO

I'm sitting at my desk finishing up with the morning's JOAD and listening to the background chatter, I hear a group of guys that had just come back from hunting wild boar talking about the hunt. The confusing part was that they never left Colorado? No, I am not currently familiar with any wild boars running around in Colorado, and the outfitters in Colorado usually head off to Texas for their hunts.

So to say the least, I was intrigued.

Now even though my only kill to date was my mountain lion last year up in Grand County, I was very interested in putting some meat in my freezer. Their tails included details such as hogs from 100 to 175lbs. and taking all day to harvest these beasts.

So I gather the specifics and hunted down Cotty, he had mentioned the hunt to me while Turkey Hunting the weekend before so I asked him if he was interested in heading down south and bowhunting for wild boar this weekend. (May 16th)



I surfed to www.RiverBottomBowhunting.com that night and filled out the reservation form for hunting on the 16th. With everything set, I was starting to get excited.

My excitement soon came to an end when the following day brought a call from Jason Chambers (RBBH), stating that he was having difficulty with his website and that the day I had chosen was already booked. So as not to waist a phone call, we spent an hour on the phone going over all aspects of his operations, including the ability for kids to hunt on the property.

Now normally this doesn't spark too much interest. Kids hunt all over the states. But in this case, things were different. What caught my attention the most was, kids under the age of 14 who kill a hog under 100lbs hunt for FREE with a paid hunter! Ok now he had my attention. With a 6 year old who's been shooting a bow for 2 years now, I was interested in testing the waters to see what he would do in a hunting environment.

Now the story would stay consistent with the theme here if it were not for the fact that Jason calls me back the following day to inform me that the hunter that booked the weekend had pulled back to a Saturday only hunt.

Hunter Profiles and Statistics:



Chris Sgaraglino

Hog: 450 pound Boar
Bow: PSE Primos STL 25" draw ~ 68lbs
Quiver: Alpine Archery
Release: T.R.U. Ball Rack Master Pro
Broadhead: NAP Thunderhead 100
Arrow: Easton Axis 500
Sight: Trophy Ridge Matrix
Rest: NAP Quicktune 4000
Stabilizer: Doinker
Scent Control: Scent Blocker & Scent Shield



Cotty Hayes

Hog: 375 pound Sow
Bow: Mathews SQ2
Quiver: Mathews
Release: Scott Rhino
Broadhead: Muzzy Phantom
Arrow: Easton Axis
Sight: Trophy Taker Top Pin
Rest: Trophy Taker Shaky Hunter
Stabilizer: Doinker
Scent Control: Scent Blocker & Scent Shield

The Hunt

"Sunday's open, you still interested in coming down?" He asks.
"Absolutely!"

Before I took my next breath, I was on the phone with Cotty.

"Hey, just got a call, we're going after hogs and not Turkeys on Sunday."

We made arrangements to meet at Cotty's house Sunday morning. We would head out the back way to Pueblo to save some driving time. We got to the ranch around a quarter to Six. Papers signed, and radios checked, we head out in search of wild boar.

As we we're following Jason's truck, he stops and walks over to us.

"Someone mention they had a Turkey tag?" he asks.
Cotty speaks up; "Both of us do, why?"
Jason points to a stack of hay. "Over there, 4-5 birds just walked past."

Cotty grabs a bow and a box call and bolts for the hay. Crouches on one knee and hammers the call. All birds freeze, and Cotty glasses over the flock.

"Only hens. If only I there was a beard. I'd love to take a Turkey and a hog on the same day."

Back to the truck focusing on the purpose at hand, we head to the gate of the 200 acre parcel of land. At first it looks like someone's backyard. But once in the game fenced area, and you hear your fist snort, you soon forget the fence. I mean, come on, we are talking about 8.7 million sq ft of land to get lost in!

Now grant it, this is not Elk hunting, but no one ever said it was. You still have to pay attention to what's going on. Hogs don't see very well, but their smell and sound senses are extremely sharp. If you're looking for a 75-125 lb meat hog, you're not going to have to go too far. Just head over to the first feeder that you see, and sit for a bit. But remember that wild hogs are just that, wild. There are beasts of upwards of 700 pounds in here.

Right when we got into the gate, we spotted a parcel of 10-12 small hogs. Instinct takes over, and Cotty and I head for cover. Jason is laughing and whispers in my ear to hold off.



"Those are just piglets; there are much bigger ones out there. You have all day."

We pull back, and start down an old road. Jason points to a trail leading into the brush. Pointing to a near by tree, I'm told to hold up there.

"There's a group with some big boys that use that trail. Hold tight, you'll hear them coming." Jason states.

We sit, and Jason heads out. It didn't take long for Cotty to get the itch. He started out towards the back of the

pasture and disappeared. 15 minutes later I see him in the far corner gesturing to me.

"See anything?" he asks.

Shaking my head no, he came over; "I'm going up through there, I'll call ya if I see anything."

Not ten minutes later...

"Chris... Chris...."

"Get over here, I got my hog and there's another nice one for you", came from my radio.

"Where are you?", now I'm walking in circles, trying to figure out where he is.

"I'm over by the second feeder."

When I get to Cotty, he's smiling from ear to ear and pointing to a sow on her side.

"Dude, that's huge."

"Don't worry about her, look." Cotty point's to a group of about 20 hogs, 200 yards away.

"I want that one." I stated specifically pointing at the largest hog in the group.

Obviously, I had picked the biggest in the bunch, but the question was whether he was going to stay with the group or head out on his own. Focused and with a plan, we ducked back into the thicker cover and started the stalk. Following the tree/bush line, we worked our way through the thick brush to get in front of the beast. Checking the wind regularly we soon lost sight of the target, but not his sound. Every step, every snort, we could tell that we're getting in front of him. Ever so slowly we work our way through the middle of the field down a dirt road that we found. We traveled about 1/4 mile in 30 minutes, and totally got in front of him without getting busted.

Keeping the wind to our face, we make our way towards him. 30 yards in, we hear him snorting again, so we jump back into the brush. Before we knew it, he was on us. I'm tucked behind a tree, and Cotty is stuck, frozen in the middle of a clearing. Being left handed and having a tree in the way, I just stood there waiting for the hog to continue past me to the left, in hopes of a facing away broadside shot. Minding his own business, the hog continues waddling along past the tree. I draw my bow and reposition myself on the left side of the tree. Now in full draw, just 3 feet away, the hog turns and looks into the clearing and stares right at Cotty.

Now I don't think he busted Cotty, but with a 450 pound wild boar staring right at him, Cotty was starting to get a bit nervous.

"Shoot him, Shoot him," I hear whispered from behind.

Remembering my anatomy lesson I read from my PDA on the way to the ranch, I picked my spot right in front of the shoulder blade and let it rip.

With the loudest creak, and the shriekiest squeal, the hog pulled a 180 and bolted right back down the path he came from. All the while in the background I can hear Cotty bailing for cover. I backed up against the tree, took a breath, and looked at Cotty.

"Man I can't get that 'Crack' out of my head." Cotty said.

"It was loud, wasn't it?"

"Did you get a good shoot?"

"Yeah, it went through the blade, and stuck into the other side."

"What about blood?"

"It's everywhere, look!"

Blood was covering everything. Grass, bushes, and trees were covered from the ground up about a foot and a half suggesting that clean cut to the artery.

"You guys ok?" came over the radio.

"Yeah, Chris got his monster!" Cotty replied.

"I see him!" Jason continues, "He just crashed over here in front of me".

Cotty and I start back down the path following the blood trail. About 60 yards up we see the fletching moving slowly in the brush.

"He's not completely down yet." Jason states. "Is blood coming out of his side?"

"No" I reply. "But he's covered on top."

To end this quickly, Jason recommends that we puncture the heart and let him expire. With instructions of where to strike, warnings from Jason that he may get up and charge, and Cotty in full draw, I pull my knife and slowly walk up behind him. I find leverage from a cut off tree stump, and with one hand steadying myself, I burry my knife to the hilt and pull back.

Jason asks, "Is there blood coming out?"

"No, but there a lot of air."

"Move in about 3 inches and hit him again." Jason commands.

With hand back on the stump, I burry my knifed again to the hilt. This time as I pull out, it's covered in blood. The hog takes its last full breath, blood pours from the hole. With the heart hit, we head over to check on Cotty's hog. When we get back to his hog, we're standing there scratching our heads trying to figure out what to do with these beasts. We decide that the best thing is to get the truck and load them up to take them to the skinning area.

We drop our gear and bows and head back to check on my hog.

So the plan is; Cotty is going to get his truck and Jason is going to get the 4 wheeler and we are going to drag these monsters out of here.

"What the..." Cotty takes off running.

"Hey, get away from there!" Cotty yells again.

When Cotty got to our gear, there were 10-15 small piglets rummaging through our stuff. I suppose that our lunch in our back packs were enough to get those piglets riled up.

Laughing, Jason and I prepare the brush so that we can get the 4 wheeler in there. With Cotty's pig tied up to his truck, and mine tied to the 4 wheeler, we make out for the barn.

With a call for help from Jason to a buddy of his, the skinning doesn't take too long. The call also brings several of the locals to see the two largest hogs every pulled from these fields.

We get the hogs skinned and loaded into the coolers and the back of the truck. With a few handshakes, and a prayer of thanks, we head out from a day well spent hunting. Being that this was Cotty's and my first time hunting together, there was a calm peace in knowing that a friendship was borne from the passing of two of God's majestic creatures.

The Kids

While I was visiting with Jason, I got the lowdown on his program for the kids. Interesting enough his philosophy is: "I want the kids to take the experience all the way. I want them to know that the hunt is not over once the arrow has been released. I want them involved in the tracking, maintaining, gutting and skinning."

So I put together a set of questions that should prepare you and your youngen for a hunting trip you two will never forget.

Ages under nine are welcome to hunt *with* the adult. Simply put, the child can go out in the field with the paid hunter but not actually do the shooting. Children between the age of nine and fourteen can hunt for FREE up to a 100 pound hog with a paying adult. There's a \$50.00 trophy fee for hogs over 100 pounds.

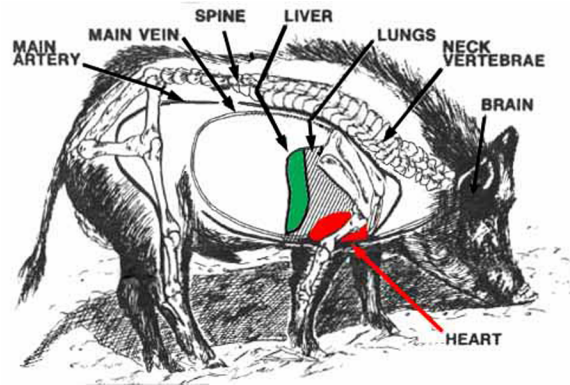


The youngster needs to be able to group arrows in a pie plate at 20 yards with a minimum of a 35 pound bow, and they need to be able to do it consistently. I highly recommend a cut on impact broadhead. This will give the best opportunity for a clean kill at the lower weight. Do not use expandable bradheads at these low weights.

You will only be able to take in three arrows per bow, you do not want to have to use all three to put down the hog. No firearms are permitted in the hunting area, so make sure that your youngsters shot is a good one. You will have plenty of opportunity for hogs, don't shoot the first thing you see. Remember this is to be a teaching trip for your kids, teach them ethics as well as good hunting skills.

Your optimum shot is going to be slightly quartering away and right above the elbow of the front leg. A hog can survive on one lung, so it's important to get both lungs. I suggest a slight quartering shot so you can hit far enough forward to catch both lungs, or another vital organ. Also,

keep in mind that a hog only bleeds when you have a low wound, so when shooting from an elevated stand, a pass through is necessary to get a good blood trail. You really need to cause a severe hemorrhage to get a good blood trail from a hog. Their thick hide, body fat and remarkably fast clotting times really do prevent much external blood loss by these animals. Note: As well as the shoulder blade being very tough to penetrate, hogs have a protective shield that develops from rubbing on the trees. This callus area covers the shoulder blade and is used to protect them when fighting. The bigger the hog, the harder it will be to penetrate, this is why you really want a slight quartering away shot to get in behind this mess and take out both lungs for a quick death.



You are guaranteed to see hogs, and they will do everything in their power to give you both an opportunity to shoot a hog. There are ground blinds available, and even a tree stand 25 yards from a feeder. The guides will even setup your kids on top of hogs to help insure a successful hunt.

Remember this area is 200 acres, so if you're going to stalk and hunt, you and your child could hike up to 6 miles to find the right hog. Also remember that these are wild feral hogs and put in the right spot will charge you or your youngster. There are hogs upwards of 700 pounds and tusks 4+ inches long. Jason has stated several hunts where he had to get the hunters (not kids) out of a tree.

Dress weather appropriate. There is no need for fancy camouflage clothing due to the fact that hogs don't see very well. But make sure that you mask your scent as much as possible. Keeping the wind in your face will be your best bet for getting close. There are a lot of areas with mud and water; boots are a good choice for footwear.

Writers Note: At the time of this writing, the object was that we would hunt with the kids first and then go on our hunt. As you can tell, this is not the way it came about. We are scheduled to hunt with the kids on November 6th, 2004. There will be a follow up story that will include, in detail, the hunt from the perspective of a 7 year old boy and a 15 year old young woman you have never hunted or been on a hunt before. Also worthy of mentioning is at this time Jason is in the process of building a two story cabin that will be available for those who want to come the night before. This makes the 5:30 mornings a little easier.

The Outfitter



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