



TANK

BY BRANDI-LEA FULLER

Brandi-Lea Fuller of Fort St John, British Columbia, with the colossal whitetail she took in 2012. This big dude showed up at the tail-end of the hunting season and was captured on the Fullers' trail camera and the hunt was on. All the tines are very long on a basic 5x5 frame. The buck wasn't done there, and added a beautiful drop-tine along with a big sticker point. It ended up netting 176 5/8 non-typical points. Photo by Trevor Fuller.

It was the beginning of another hunting season for my husband and I. We had just been given exclusive permission on some new land and we could hardly contain our excitement on our first scouting trip. We came across some remarkable sign with loads of rubs and game trails criss-crossing everywhere.

We found the perfect spot to try out our new trail cameras; it was the first time ever using them. We hung them in the areas that seemed to have the most activity which was the south west corner of an alfalfa field and in other spots along the edge of the field. The first time out checking the cameras we were treated to some incredible pictures. There were mule deer caught on camera including some really nice bucks and other ones with great future potential. There was also a small herd of elk, a cow and calf moose and some whitetail does. It was fascinating to see all the animals in this one area and very special to know this incredible piece of land was ours to hunt

As fall crept into an early winter the mule deer seemed to disappear, and more and more whitetail flooded in. Seeing this had me excited as I was going to hopefully get an opportunity at a whitetail buck, finally!

We built a blind from straw bales on the edge of the field about 110 yards from where the deer seemed to be funneling out the most. As the winter got colder and the snow got deeper, the whitetail bucks started to join the does. There were lots of smaller bucks and we kept getting pictures of a nice 3x3 with heavy horns, and a very large body. I decided that he was the one I was going to try for, and while he was regular, coming out every morning and evening, it was always just before first light and just after last light. We knew we had our work cut out for us.

When we began hunting from the straw blind we sat patiently waiting on him to come out. Days passed, with every morning and evening finding us sitting in that blind, and that cagey old buck just wouldn't show up in daylight. I was frozen and tired but determined to keep trying for my opportunity.

As we kept checking our cameras the bucks seemed to go almost completely nocturnal. The season was slowly starting to slip away. It was now close to mid-November, we had been at it for weeks and weeks with no luck. Our days were short and the temperatures were cold. My husband and I somehow managed to stay persistent, dutifully heading out morning and night for our chance at one of those elusive whitetail bucks.

More evenings of sitting and more evenings of waiting, and more evenings of nothing showing up.

We switched the camera cards on our way out from the last hunt of the week. We got home and looked at what we had. There was still a tremendous amount of deer activity coming into the field, but all of it was after dark. As we scrolled through the hundreds of pictures, we were in shock as to what had appeared on the screen! Nothing prepared us for the image that popped up.



Trail camera photo of Brandi's whitetail.

The biggest whitetail buck either of us had ever seen, complete with a drop-tine, found his way onto our camera. "NO WAY!" This great buck on our camera and in our spot? This was too good to be true! As we kept going through the rest of the images, there he was again. We then decided this was it; we were going to hunt even harder for this big boy. We gave him the nickname "Tank", because of his body size and the size of his horns. He truly looked like he could live up to his nickname!

We made plans for the following evening and the next day my husband got home from work early. We headed out with renewed enthusiasm.



Another look at this dandy British Columbia whitetail. This province doesn't produce the number of trophy bucks like the prairie provinces of Canada, but it certainly has and still continues to put big whitetails in the record book. An interesting note is the biggest non-typical whitetail ever taken in B.C. scored 245 7/8 inches, and was taken way back in 1905. I should mention that the big drop-tine on Brandi's whitetail is an eight-inch dagger.
Text by Garry Donald.

We snuck into the blind and began our vigil. We were both just praying that he would show himself in the daylight, breaking the night feeding pattern. I just hoped he had to cross our path at some point. It was a cold and unforgiving -28 C. After sitting awhile we were frozen but we knew we had to wait and wait some more. It was almost sunset, time was again slipping away. It is amazing how such extreme temperatures can sap even the highest of expectations. We were beyond our limitations and decided to pack up and start to head home, by this time our feet felt like blocks of ice. As I put some of my

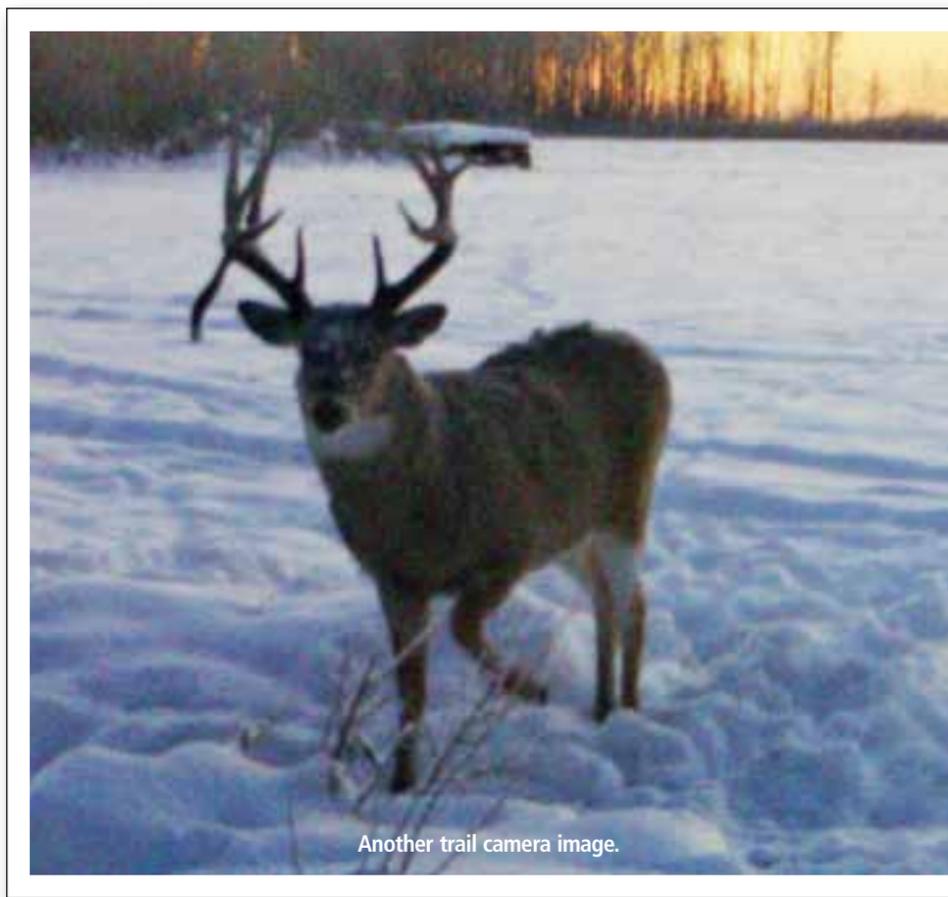
things into my pack, I looked up to see two does pop out of the cover along the edge of the field. They definitely got our attention, I couldn't help thinking, "where there are does there has to be bucks". Two more does joined up to begin feeding. Watching them paw through the snow was remarkable. It seemed amazing that these hardy animals could find enough sustenance in that frozen field to survive. Suddenly they all stopped and looked toward the trees, something was coming. By the sound of the brush crashing, I figured it had to be a moose. The does scattered and then were gone. The rustle and

crash in the trees was getting closer and then out he came! There was Tank! My husband and I were both in shock. I raised my gun up and waited for the perfect shot, my adrenaline was through the roof. I could feel my heart in my throat and the thumping was pounding in my ears. His backside was towards me as he was feeding heavily. It soon became clear this deer was not going to turn.

I made a small grunt in hopes that he would move but he did not even glance our way as he continued to eat. I made another grunt and still nothing. Shooting light was fading away, and fast. This deer just had to turn. If he didn't move quickly the chance would be gone. The wait seemed like an eternity, like time had stopped and everything was standing still. I made louder noises but there was no change of position. He just kept his head down gobbling the dug up alfalfa. I began to bark and yell but still the buck paid no attention at all to me. He was all about feeding, and that was it. My fingers were so cold I couldn't move them. He just had to turn. I had to get this deer's attention long enough for him to present a different angle and give me that shot. I began to yell louder, and make all kinds of noise. Finally he slowly started to move but he was still not interested in what was going on in our direction. My husband yelled, "HEY YOU!" and the buck finally turned, giving me the perfect shot. I gently squeezed the trigger on my Tikka .243, it was like it was all a dream. I heard the "smack", and knew he was hit. He jumped at the impact and ran off. I was hoping he wouldn't go far. I didn't want him down in the big ravine near the edge of the field.

We were ecstatic as the blind erupted with "high fives" and "good jobs". We were both so excited, our faces began to hurt from all the smiling. Now we had forgotten about being cold all together. Our adrenaline was pumping, and we couldn't wait to get out of the blind and go find him.

We knew we had to settle down and let him expire. After waiting several long minutes we came out of the blind and began to walk to where he was standing at the shot. The blood-covered snow showed me I got a good hit on him. We followed the trail for 20 yards and there he was! Piled up, with nothing but bone protruding from the deep snow. It had actually happened. We got Tank, and on the first evening of hunting him. Talk about luck! It was incredible, we were beyond happy.



Another trail camera image.

The rush and excitement was something I've never felt before. The time spent scouting, watching and waiting had finally paid off. The trophy of a lifetime was mine. I had only dreamed of getting a buck like this, and together with my husband, I accomplished it.

Now the work began, and after the gutting was complete, it was a chore to get him into the truck. It is going to be tough to top a buck like Tank but with hard work, determination and a little luck, I know it can be done. Being patient and waiting gave me the best trophy, and my biggest hunting accomplishment. This event will be remembered forever as one of the best, and I have my husband Trevor to thank for that, and for really getting me into hunting. He has taught me everything he knows and I could not have done it without him. He is my biggest support when it comes to hunting and life in general. Together we make one heck of a team. I would also like to thank the taxidermist for mounting this amazing trophy and bringing this buck back to life. It will forever be a reminder of the greatest hunt I've ever had.