



# NEVER GIVE UP

BY DARCY BRAUER

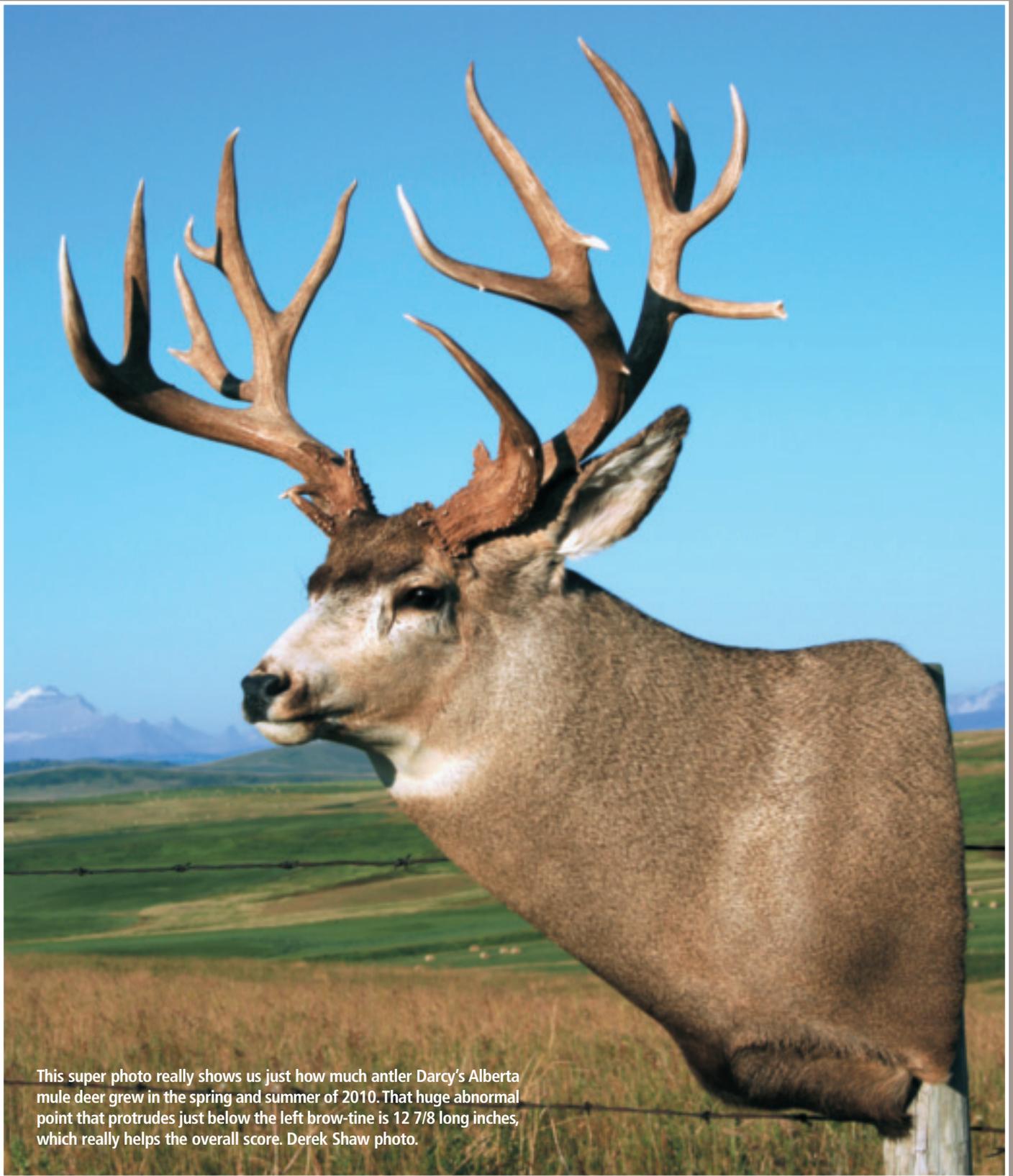
*Darcy Brauer of Fort Macleod, Alberta, with the truly gigantic mule deer he took in that province on November 13, 2010. Main beams are 27 1/8 and 25 3/8 with brow-tines of 1 6/8 and 1 4/8 inches. Longest G-2 reaches 14 4/8, G-3 is 10 1/8, and G-4 goes 10 6/8 inches. Circumferences are downright impressive with the largest being 7 7/8 whopping inches. After deductions of 8 5/8 inches, the net typical score ends up at 181 1/8. Darcy's mule deer also grew a tremendous amount of abnormal points that total 52 3/8 inches. The final score on this fine specimen is 233 4/8 non-typical points.*

I applied for the mule deer draw in a different zone this year, mostly just to change things up and see some new territory. Having heard that there were some really good bucks around, I was hoping to meet one of them. I decided to hunt the far south end of the zone that I was drawn in because I had seen good-sized deer there before.

I was pretty darn excited to have a draw tag in my pocket, but I have to tell you that it sure started off as a

slow year. The deer just were not moving at all and some days I didn't even see a buck. While talking to landowners, they reported that they hadn't seen many deer either. Still, I knew there had to be some trophy bucks out there somewhere and I would just have to keep scouting.

After weeks and weeks of relentlessly scouting this southern region, I was ready to throw in the towel. I started thinking I would take the first legal mulie buck I came



This super photo really shows us just how much antler Darcy's Alberta mule deer grew in the spring and summer of 2010. That huge abnormal point that protrudes just below the left brow-tine is 12 7/8 long inches, which really helps the overall score. Derek Shaw photo.

across. However, after a good night's sleep, I realized it would be foolish to just give up as these draw tags are hard to come by. Then I met a couple of people who told me they had seen a really big buck in the northern part of this zone. I didn't really want to believe them as I had travelled the northern part a great deal the last few years and rarely saw a decent buck up there. My friend, who works at a feedlot, told me he saw a huge buck

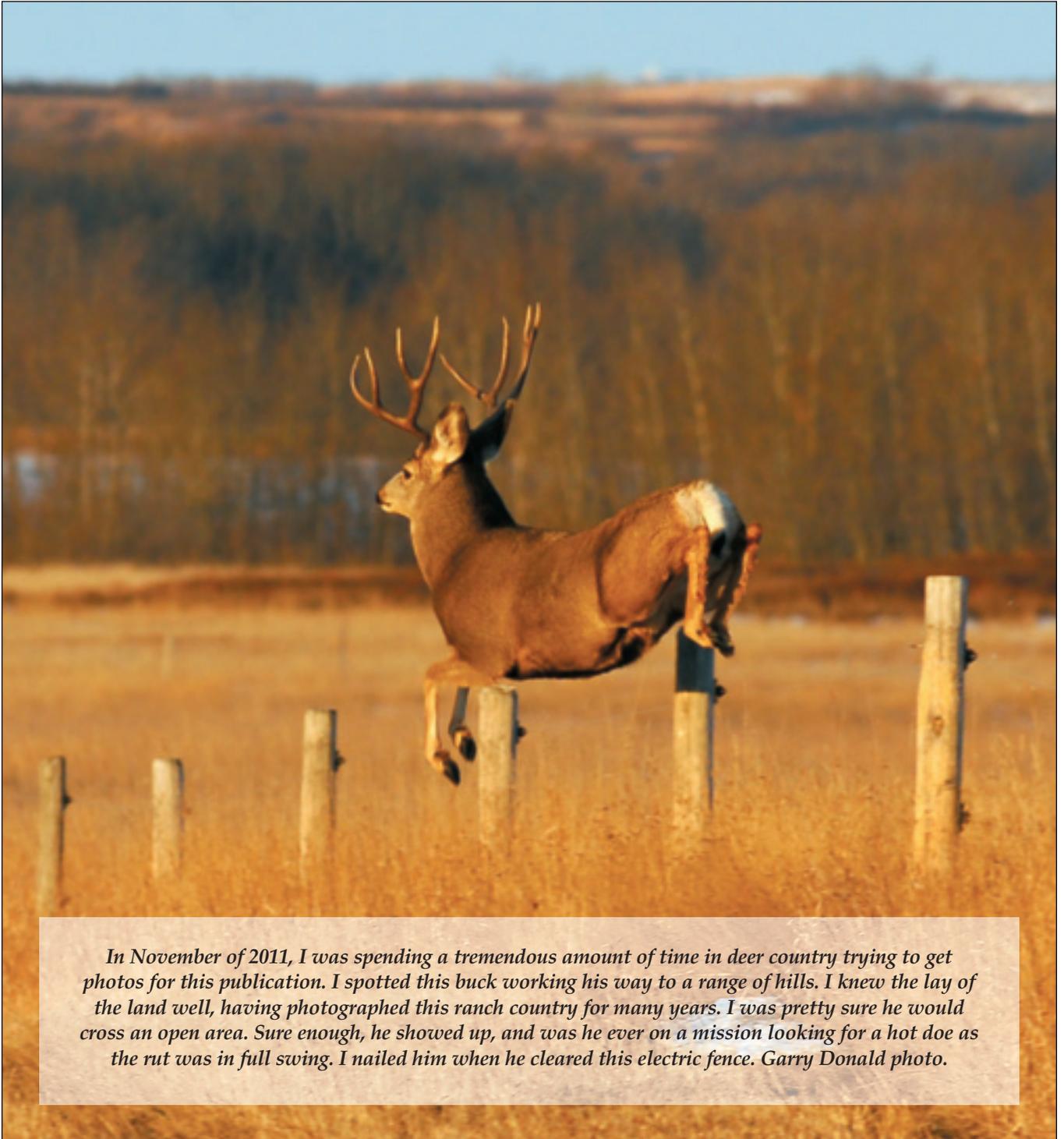
almost every day and as far as he knew no one was going after it. So I went and got permission from the landowner and set out to see if I could find this so-called mega mule deer.

With two scouting days under my belt, I never saw hide nor hair of this phantom giant. I was thinking my luck had forsaken me. The next day I ventured back to the south again. At the crack of dawn I checked every nook and cranny, and by that

afternoon, depression was setting in. With only a couple hours of daylight left, I called my hunting buddies to see if it was OK to check out the north part of the zone again. I got the nod and headed to that spot, which took me 45 minutes. Reaching the field where this buck had been seen, lo and behold, my luck had at last changed.

This king buck was standing in the middle of the field with his lady friend. Wouldn't you believe it, I ended up with a bad case of – you guessed it – buck fever. My first shot was only 150 yards, and I missed him clean. I nearly cried. Then a doe stood up and started to run. In that precise moment I knew that

my one chance at a true lifetime monster was fading fast. I quickly raised my rifle one more time, and as I found him in my scope, he simply disappeared into a depression. Looking over my scope, I saw the doe pull up and then the buck came into view and stopped. The crosshairs settled just behind his front shoulder and I sent a bullet on its way. With tremendous relief, the buck collapsed and he was mine to admire forever. I sure have to thank that doe for stopping or the outcome likely would have been different. Thanks also to Derek Shaw of Shaw Taxidermy for the great mount and taking pictures. 🍀



*In November of 2011, I was spending a tremendous amount of time in deer country trying to get photos for this publication. I spotted this buck working his way to a range of hills. I knew the lay of the land well, having photographed this ranch country for many years. I was pretty sure he would cross an open area. Sure enough, he showed up, and was he ever on a mission looking for a hot doe as the rut was in full swing. I nailed him when he cleared this electric fence. Garry Donald photo.*