

EL DORADO

By Garry Donald



When the Saskatchewan 2009 hunting season came to a close, I was about to give up on my photography and video sessions. After being on the deer trails from the beginning of August to the end of November, I had already come to the conclusion that big trophy whitetails did not exist in this area which only a few years ago had held some real giants. After four long months, I was ready to throw in the towel. Still, one of my favourite sayings is "Never say whoa in a mud hole," so on December 10, I decided to give my blind one more visit.

Lo and behold, just when the sun set, a great buck I had never seen before showed up. He came in slow and cautious like he didn't want to get caught in the open during daylight hours. Maybe that is why I hadn't seen him for the past four months. Since it was too late for my camera, I grabbed my video camera and got a few minutes of footage before he disappeared. This encounter got me pumped, but he was a no-show for the many more return trips I made.

On January 19, I went out to check my trail cameras and the sixth photo that was taken was an amazing one. As I studied the images, I decided to call him "El Dorado," a Spanish word for "the golden one." The name fit him perfectly. In 5 1/2 months, I had seen him only once and my trail cameras had captured him on only one day of the 100 days they were set up in his territory.

In mid-April, my daughter Mandi and I were out hiking and looking for sheds. She had already found six before we moved to another spot. As we left the vehicle, about 1/8 of a mile out, she scooped up a mule deer shed that looked like a war club. It had probably been there for two years and I had walked by it many times. On the way back to my truck, I also spotted tines sticking skyward. When I picked up the shed, I realized it was El Dorado's left antler. Unfortunately, we had to get back to Saskatoon, but I vowed to return soon.

Two days later, back at that spot, I soon picked up the other side of the set. If not for the broken brow-tine, the buck would net 165 typical points. Needless to say, I am hoping to cross paths with El Dorado again this fall. ☺



Garry Donald with El Dorado's sheds. Bill Longman photo.