

# Punching his Super bison tag

by Tyrell Perry

**T**hey only draw one ticket out of the hat, so I bought one ticket for each drawing for the 2015 Wyoming Game and Fish Department's second annual Super Tag raffle.

This spring, according to my wife, I was a little hard to be around when I found out I did not draw a single tag in Wyoming. Not even a cow elk tag. By the time September rolls around, I am usually feeling less devastated and more enthusiastic to hunt one of the many great general area hunts close to Rawlins where I live, but this year the excitement came early. In July, I had a voicemail on my phone from Wyoming Game and Fish Department Director Scott Talbott saying I had some licensing issues and to give him a call back. Right away, I was skeptical as to the real motive of the



call. I knew the Game and Fish Department was undergoing budget cuts, but I did not think that would mean the Director would be making 'licensing issue' calls. So I called back and found out my one ticket had been drawn for the wild bison Super Tag! There were 4,300 tickets in the hat, but it only took one.

As soon as I heard the news, I began researching everything I could find on bison from equipment to field judging. I was able to talk to the year's previous wild bison Super Tag winner and got some great tips on places to look and things to consider.

My first trip to hunt bison was in early September with a longbow borrowed from my father-in-law. I have had this borrowed bow for a couple years and had been shooting around 60 arrows a day in preparation. I spent most of the first few days walking and driving a lot trying to get a bearing in a completely new-to-me hunt area. On the third day, I saw my first bison on US Forest Service land, which was exciting but short lived, he wined me and moved on, never to be seen again. After roughly 60 miles of walking, a lot of rain, and unfilled tag, I began to think I was going about this all wrong. The first trip came to a close without a bison on the ground, but a lot of knowledge was gained.

My second trip came in late November after Thanksgiving. I had a National Elk Refuge

permission slip in hand and some help tagging along, I was positive this would be a great trip. Morning came and we drove into the Refuge where we met a friendly Game and Fish biologist who informed us the bison were not on the Refuge and had not been there since August. Well that threw a wrench in a well devised plan. We decided to head north where I had seen some bison earlier in September. It was just as a long shot and a result of no better ideas. The snow wasn't bad enough to keep us off Forest Service roads so we made it to a high spot and got out spotting scopes to glass the surrounding area. Not long after, we spotted what looked like a small group of bulls two miles off. They seemed close to the National Park and Forest Service boundary, but it was worth checking out before we ran out of light. We started off a small hill and discovered the road ended; upon turning around to get back up the hill we found ourselves stuck. We chained up and still were not able to climb the small hill as the ground was frozen, but all was not lost. We had a portable winch! We hooked it up and began pulling. Not long into the pull my front driveline snapped and proceeded to angrily destroy everything within reach. Now we were stuck. Luckily we were in cell service to get a hold of a ride and began walking towards the highway in defeat. To add salt to the wound, we met other



bison hunters with cow tags who informed us those bison we spotted were indeed all bulls and indeed all on USFS land. The second trip ended with a \$1,000 tow bill and a \$5,000 mechanic bill. I'll just say I'm glad I have insurance!

The third trip came at the end of December after Christmas with my father-in-law in tow

who was gracious enough to let me borrow his Browning model 1886 45-70 government. I was pretty excited to hunt with this gun, mainly for nostalgic reasons. The first day we checked out the refuge, but still no bison to be seen. We spent most of

the day checking for any sign of legal bison in and around the Jackson area. The second day was a cold one; my truck stated it to be -24 degrees. I told my father-in-law at least we don't have to worry about the meat if we get one! It turns out that a

small herd of bison had moved onto the Refuge overnight, probably because of the extreme cold. We pulled up to one of the parking lots in the refuge, it seemed we had missed the party. Several bison had been taken and hunters were already working on

the processing their kills. About 50 bison were still hanging around with horseback riders trying to push these animals away from the downed bison so that they could begin processing their animals. This was a sight I didn't exactly expect!

I couldn't get excited about a turkey shoot and decided to take a different approach. We went to another parking lot where we decided to hunt a part of the herd that had split off and began walking north. We made it to the herd, but

decided to be patient. I knew some of the herd was still down by the parking areas and wanted to be sure something bigger didn't come along. After a little more walking, I saw one in a herd of 10 who was sticking around and seemed worth taking. We got to within

100 yards and he didn't seem fazed. I decided we could get a little closer. We slowly walked towards the small herd and were able to get to about 40 yards. I figured this was close enough, but just kept thinking I sure wish I had my bow! Either way,



**This was an awesome experience I'll never forget. And remember, it only takes one ticket!**

I decided now was the time to punch my tag. I raised the heavy octagon barrel at my bull and gave the trigger a squeeze, 'click', nothing. I jacked another shell into the chamber thinking maybe it was a bad primer, 'click', nothing again! It seemed as though the firing pin had possibly failed in the cold temperatures. I couldn't believe it! Luckily my father-in-law carried a backup rifle, a 30x416 Rigby, in case a longer distance shot was required. The gun fired true and the bull ran about 10 yards where he tipped

over.

It was over and I punched my wild bison Super Tag! I was excited to be taking a species I never thought I would ever have the opportunity to hunt. I approached the bison and ran my hand through his beautiful, thick coat he put on for the winter. It was a great feeling of accomplishment and pride. My father-in-law and I began the processing and were able to have the bison skinned, quartered and loaded into my truck within three hours. (Hint: shoot bison close to the retrieval roads, like I did, he was within 50 yards of a retrieval road!) This was an awesome experience I'll never forget. I want to thank the Wyoming Game and Fish Department for putting together such an amazing opportunity for hunters, as well as what the money raised does for wildlife. Remember, it only takes one ticket!