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HUNTING THE Scraps!

— By Marlon Holden —

I suppose it is simply a matter of opinion. By that I mean most hunters, including myself, apply and wait every year to draw that special coveted limited entry draw tag. As you know, most years go by with only an "unsuccessful" notice and a point earned toward next year's draw. Okay, I know the game and I'm in... I'll play! This past year was more of the same... unsuccessful.

So what do you do in the meantime? Try going to a state that isn't a draw, or look for leftover tags. These are what I like to call "the scraps." I guess I have been hunting off of the scraps for years now! As funny as it sounds I've grown to love it. I have gained intimate knowledge of these areas because I can hunt there year in and year out. As a matter of fact, I think to myself sometimes how bummed I'd be if I actually drew a good tag, and might have to miss my annual homage to known ground! As funny as that may sound, I know that some of you empathize with me. So I enthusiastically embarked to the deserts of Arizona with my wife, a good buddy, and our bows. I knew we were about to have a great time hunting the scraps!

It was the first of January, the weather was cool, the rut had kicked into full gear and a few good bucks were out. The stage was definitely set. When I first

arrive I like to travel around vast distances and look into my little hidey-holes, checking to see if the mature bucks are on the does. Usually a good buck will pop up and after the first day my buddy had a desert bomber on the ground, tall with terrific mass, a great 170" class four point!



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Western Hunter 35

The next couple of days were fairly uneventful and to be specific, it got hot! Within an hour after sunrise the deer were already bedding down. On the third night we had a frontal system move through and scattered showers cast a spell strong enough to keep the deer moving throughout the day. This gave me time to catch a good buck on the move. He was clearly searching for does, nose to the air and bee-lining it somewhere only he knew. When I saw him, I told myself that he was a good four on each side. But wow, look at that width! I dumped off into a wash and gave chase. The buck was moving so quickly that I had to run to catch up and get to an intercept point.

Once I reached the point I thought I needed to be, I nocked an arrow and waited no more than five seconds and there he was! I ranged him but just got lines from my rangefinder! I had to crouch to conceal my position, which in turn kept me from getting a reading on him. I stood, came to draw and picked my spot. I released and cleanly missed two inches low. I thought he was 55 yards... apparently not!

The buck clearly cared less what the noise was and seemed determined not to be slowed down. As a matter of fact, he kept on moving at the same pace, in the same direction, so I followed. It was around 500 yards later that he met with several does and another buck. At that point the does didn't like me around and busted out with him in tow. He stayed hard on their trail for over a thousand yards out into the mesquite-choked flats until they settled and began deer-type activities again.

That's when I booked it down the ridge, crossing washes, under cat claw and mesquite thickets, until my lungs burned. Once I neared the mental landmark that I had taken I slowed up and caught my wind. After gathering further bearings, I nocked an arrow and slowly made a sneak nearing his last known position.

It wasn't but a few seconds before I caught movement and saw his antlers making their way up to me 50 yards and closing! At 30 yards he stopped to look behind him and after ranging him I came to full draw, centered my pin on his shoulder and released. This time he lunged forward at the shot and I hit him back pretty far; definitely not what I was aiming for! But as I sat crouched after the shot I saw him hunch up and start bleeding profusely. I obviously got lucky and cut a major artery because he stammered 50 yards and tipped over. I was a mess with emotions! He taped 27" wide and green gross scored 165". He had tons of character with a three-inch drop sticker, a one-inch sticker on the left beam, and another sticker out the back on his right beam.

I couldn't believe our fortune, two monster bucks in the desert with archery equipment all caught on film! I love bowhunting! I guess I'll just have to wait and see what happens next year. Hopefully I won't draw! 🙏

Editor's Note:

I have always been drawn to people who find enjoyment in life's simplest gifts and who open our eyes to new opportunities. Marlon Holden is one of those sportsmen.



Marlon and his wife Alisha used their passion for the outdoors to create Gray Light Productions.

Introducing Marlon Holden

Sometime last year Anthony Dixon and I were talking about the hunting industry and the direction the hunting media was going, or better yet, not going. I had been around this business for over 20 years and was pretty familiar with the game. Anthony, though he was a seasoned hunter, was relatively new to the hunting market having just put a professional snow skiing career behind him. He was shocked at how the young, hard-core type hunters never got much attention in the outdoor media, but instead, the older guys who spent more time hovering over a keyboard rather than actually hunting got all the attention from sponsors. An hour later, after he finally convinced me that I did not fit into the latter category, I had to agree with him. So, I have made a commitment to shining some light on the younger, hard working, and talented folks who are the next generation of industry leaders or are doing some incredible things that are just a little off the radar screen.

In this issue of *Western Hunter* we would like to introduce you to Marlon and Alisha Holden. I have yet to meet Marlon face to face, but after a few phone conversations I can guarantee you that we will be sharing a camp some day. Marlon was introduced to me by Terry Howell, the manager of the Outdoorsmans. Terry was impressed by Marlon's product knowledge and intense desire

to learn more about what was going on with high performance hunting equipment. Marlon has started a hunting production company called Gray Light Productions, and hopefully in the next few issues of *Western Hunter* you will see a review of his premier production. Having seen a trailer, I can assure you that it will be fun to watch!

I asked Marlon to tell you a little bit about himself. Keep your eyes open for his name in future issue of *Western Hunter* and you will get to know him even better. – Chris Denham, Editor



Alisha and Marlon Holden

A Note From Marlon

Many sportsmen dream about making a living hunting. How cool would it be if hunting was your "day job?" Truth be told, that has been a dream of mine and I have been working for years toward that goal. My name is Marlon Holden, I am 30 years old and married to a wonderful woman who loves to share life's adventures with me. I am a bowhunter and I love the essence of the field.

Out of the box I am your regular outdoorsman. I have a day job and work diligently toward the moments in time that I can go out in the wild and pursue my passion like many of you reading this now. I, too, count the days until the hunting season starts, scout incessantly, practice, and obsess about spotting big racks in my glass. I never thought about writing articles, contributing to a column, or even starting a production company. Truthfully, it crept up behind me like a winter front and dumped six feet of fresh snow on me! But now the stars are lined up in such a fashion that I now want to share what my wife Alisha and I do for fun.

That is how Gray Light Productions came to exist! The gray light of morning and evening is that special time when the air is calm, the birds are talking, bulls are bugling, and the bucks are moving. The world is just more alive during the gray light. It is our hope that Gray Light Productions will make you feel more alive as

we bring you a fresh perspective of spot and stalk bowhunting in the West. I look forward to sharing these experiences with you, along with equipment tips and hunting tactics, in future issues of *Western Hunter*. – Marlon Holden



Marlon shows off one of his "scraps."