



Bedford County Wildlife Conservation Officer SALVATORE ZAFFUTO, left, Southcentral Region radio dispatcher STEPHEN REED and Mifflin County WCO JEFFREY MOCK, who also is an official Boone & Crockett Club big-game scorer, discuss whether an antler point should be considered abnormal while working at the Big Game Scoring Program hosted Feb. 15 in Huntingdon by the Game Commission's Southcentral Region.

## One for the Record Books

**By Travis Lau**  
*Game News*

HE WAS A HUGE BUCK, and Chris Magill might have had a chance to take him.

But during that day of the 2012 archery season—that day when the buck showed up on a trail camera, during hunting hours, within 50 yards of Magill's stand, he simply was in the wrong place at the right time.

He was hunting that day, at that hour, out of his dad's stand about a half-mile away.

The buck eventually would make it to dad's stand—showing up there at precisely 8:10 the opening morning of the 2012 firearms season.

And with the buck's antlers now

part of a shoulder-mount and, at the present moment, plastered with masking tape and being measured by official scorers, Kevin Magill was going to find out exactly where his trophy ranks.

Kevin Magill, of Smithfield, Fayette County, was one of the many who braved the less-than-perfect conditions created by a stronger-than-predicted snowstorm to attend the first Pennsylvania Big Game Scoring Program event to be hosted in recent memory.

The Game Commission's Southcentral Region coordinated the effort, sending about 25 regional staff Feb. 15 to the National Guard Readiness Center in Huntingdon. There, the officers worked in teams of two or three to measure the trophies brought in by hunters eager to find out just where

their harvests (and, in at least one case, a mount that was acquired) stack up all-time.

Those trophies that score high enough are added to the Pennsylvania Big Game Records book, the next edition of which will be printed this coming fall.

The scene inside the armory was a busy one. The officers worked side-by-side in a roped-off area along one wall of the gym-sized room, getting up frequently to measure antler width, take scoring sheets to the data-entry station or report final scores to registrants. Onlookers could watch from the other side of the rope, or sit and chat at tables in the waiting area along the opposite wall.

When a team finished scoring one trophy, it started on another. A total of 32 trophies—white-tailed deer antlers and black bear skulls, combined—were measured on the day, with 25 qualifying for the state records book.

Included on that list are 12 black bears, four whitetails taken with firearms and nine bucks taken during archery season.

The two largest bears each measured 21-12/16 inches, which will place them in the top 50 all-time.

Kevin Magill's buck, a non-typical scoring 163-3/8 inches, was the largest measured on the day. His eyes popped when an officer read him the final score.

"That's 43 years of hunting, right there," he later said, pointing toward the mount. "I finally got one for my wall."

It could be that Magill's luck was



**DOUG MURPHY, of Adams County, looks over a score sheet being held by Huntingdon County Wildlife Conservation Officer AMY NABOZNY at the Big Game Scoring Program event in Huntingdon Feb. 15. The 13-point rack Murphy is holding measured 140-7/8 inches and qualifies for the Pennsylvania Big Game Records book.**

only beginning in harvesting the buck, which he said weighed 200 pounds on the hoof. Hunting from the same stand in the Raystown Lake-area during the 2013 general bear season, he harvested a 545-pounder.

The skull was still at the taxidermist, so he'll need to wait to have it measured.

Gary Gonsar Sr., of McVeytown, Mifflin County, said he'd been waiting 20 years or more to learn the official score on the mount he brought in, and the event gave him an opportunity to do so.

The buck, a large 10-point, was taken by his grandfather Dewey Speece, who died in 1979. A hand-written inscription on the hanging-end of the neck mount traces the harvest 1939, and picture of the buck published many years ago in *Game News* serves to validate the timeframe.

When the officers began taking measurements, one announced, "That's the longest main beam I've had today."

**WAYNE GEHRS, of Berks County, shows the bullet-damaged jawbone of one of the largest bears harvested in Pennsylvania in 2013-14, a 627-pounder taken in Tioga County. While the chipped jawbone didn't prevent the skull from being scored, damage, sometimes caused by hunters or butchers cutting off the back of the skull, can reduce the official score.**



Things were looking good.

Gonsar said that, many years back, he put a cloth tape to the antlers, and came up with score right around 140 inches, the minimum for firearms harvests to be added to the state book.

“If I scored it properly, it’s real close to a record,” he said, admitting that awaiting the results was accompanied by a bit of anxiousness.

By that, an officer appeared, holding a score sheet. The total: 139, an inch shy of making it into the book.

“Want to measure it again?” Gonsar asked, jokingly.

But the fact that beautiful buck scored what it did says a lot about the

Big Game Scoring Program and why it’s considered such an honor to be included in the records book. There’s no question that even those antlers, mounts and skulls that were measured at the event and fell short of qualifying are trophies in their own right—massive specimens any hunter would be lucky to harvest.

And while the book, since antler restrictions were imposed, has been growing by about 200 entries a year, some elite animals just won’t score high enough.

All things considered, Game Commission regional staff were more than pleased with the day’s results.

Truth be told, attendance likely took a hit from the weather. But as Game Commission Southcentral Region Director Brad Myers pointed out, once you schedule an event like this, there’s really no postponing it. It’s an undertaking just to juggle the schedules of so many conservation officers and deputies to free them up for the event, Myers said. And there’s no effective way to communicate a postponement to the hunt-

### RECORDS BOOK

The Pennsylvania Big Game Records book is updated continually and published annually each fall.

Those lucky hunters whose trophies will appear for the first time in the records book’s 2014 edition are urged to send in their trophy photos for possible inclusion in the book.

Digital photos can be sent by email to [pgcnews@pa.gov](mailto:pgcnews@pa.gov).

This is the preferred method for receipt and images should be sent at the highest quality possible. Photos also can be sent by mail to:

**Bob D’Angelo**  
**Pennsylvania Big Game Records**  
**2001 Elmerton Avenue**  
**Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797**

The price of the 2014 edition, and other details will be available closer to the book’s release in the fall.

For information on ordering the 2013 edition, see the back cover of this issue of *Game News*.

ers traveling considerable distances, he said.

A number of those who registered made trips of two hours or more. Wayne Gehrs came from Berks County, though his trek included an overnight stop in Selinsgrove. Residents of Indiana and Clinton counties also made the trip.

While hunters who want to have trophies measured and officially scored have other options to do so, some who attended the event in Huntingdon said they wouldn't want to do it any other way.

Doug Murphy is one of them, and he said he wasn't going to let a little snow stop him from making the trip north from the Gettysburg-area in Adams County.

Murphy knew the 13-point he took near Marienville, Forest County, on the opening day of the 2013 firearms season was going to come close to meeting qualifications for entry into the book.

What was obvious was that—regardless the official measurement—he had taken the trophy of a lifetime in the Allegheny National Forest in 2013.

It was thanks in no small part to his hunting buddy, a former fraternity brother at Slippery Rock University, who radioed to Murphy he was getting cold and was leaving his stand. Not long after, a doe appeared, heading right toward him. And trailing her by about 40 yards, was the buck.

Murphy, a federal park ranger and firearms trainer at Gettysburg National Military Park, hit the buck with two shots. Now its rack was pasted with masking tape, as three officers teamed in an effort to measure it.

The measuring complete, Huntingdon County Wildlife Conservation Of-

### SCORING PROGRAM

While events like those Feb. 15 in Huntingdon happen at irregular intervals, there's always an opportunity to have trophy whitetail and elk antlers and black bear skulls scored for inclusion in the program.

Measuring must be performed by an official Boone & Crockett Club scorer, and in most cases, appointments can be made for a measuring session, free of charge.

For a list of scorers in your area, contact Boone & Crockett Club certified scorer and coordinator of PA's program Bob D'Angelo at [rdangelo@pa.gov](mailto:rdangelo@pa.gov) or call the Game Commission Harrisburg Headquarters.

ficer Amy Nabozny walked outside the rope that separated the scoring tables and viewing area, looking for Murphy.

As the officers did with each trophy they measured on the day, Nabozny presented the score sheet to Murphy and began explaining what features on the rack led to point deductions. A point on one beam that was unmatched on the other led to a deduction, she told him.

"That always gets you," Murphy acknowledged.

But the final score still was to come. And Murphy was right, it was close—140 7/8.

"So you made it," Nabozny told him, "with seven-eighths to spare."

Moments later, as an elated Murphy told the story of the buck's last hunt, he remarked that after downing such a trophy, maybe he ought to quit hunting. At least a handful of others who came at the event would offer similar comments.

But the odds are probably better that they'll all be back out there again next year, and for many more to come.

Likely until their very last days.

Trying for another trophy of any size.