

# Bitterwater Outfitters expands big game hunting options

BY JIM NIEMIEC  
WON Staff Writer

**CHOLAME** — Big game hunters have enjoyed great hunts for wild boar and bison on the huge Grant Ranch under the game management of Clayton Grant, owner and master guide of Bitterwater Outfitters. With a better than 98 percent success rate of shooting a boar; as the population in the central valley continues to increase, Grant wanted to expand his hunting operation to offer up year-round hunting.

"We have great hunting terrain, the right amount of cover, good springs and vast expanses of hunting property that are committed to no development and miles away from civilization. I spent the bulk of the winter fencing off a section of land made up of canyons, ridge lines, rocky outcroppings, springs and oak savannahs that offer up ideal habitat for the introduction of exotics on to our properties," stated Grant.

It was earlier this year that the first exotics were introduced onto ranch property and hunters were lined up to challenge the rugged terrain in quest of shooting trophy Corsican rams, Spanish billies, Barbados, Jacob sheep (4 horns) and huge Rabble A sheep.

WON headed up to the ranch last week to join in on hunt with Steve Chapman of Laguna Niguel, an avid archer and reader of *Western Outdoor News*. Chapman was getting his gear ready at the hunt lodge when we pulled in the driveway. His choice for this day's hunt would be a Hoyt Katera-XL — 70# bow, that had been custom strung by Orange County Archery in Fountain Valley, and the arrow selected was an Axis 300 carbon-fiber shaft tipped with a 100 grain broad head. He would be using a Bushnell Scout range finder to make sure the shot was taken within 40 yards.

"This is my second trip back to the ranch and my last visit was successful for a huge boar, Spanish goat and a bison that I shot at close range for its delicious meat. I have switched over from hunting big game with a rifle to a compound bow to maximize my enjoy-



**ARROWED HIS TROPHY RAM** — Steve Chapman of Laguna Niguel shot this huge Ramble A ram with a Hoyt bow at 42 yards. The double curled ram weighed in excess of 250 pounds and is the fifth big game animal that Chapman has shot while hunting with Bitterwater

OUTFITTERS. WON PHOTO BY JIM NIEMIEC

ment of stalking game to get in close to the animal," said Chapman.

Prior to Chapman's arrival, this hunting editor had a chance to check out the knock down power of new the Barnes TTSX copper bullet, as we headed off into the badlands for a chance to find a Corsican ram with a "double curl" that had eluded a hunter a few days earlier. The Grant Ranch lies within the Condor Lead Ban range and only copper or non-toxic(green) bullets can be shot.

After crisscrossing the ranch a couple of times, Clayton spotted a small herd of exotics down in the bottom of a canyon. Dropping off to a ledge the targeted ram was straight below us at 150 yards on a hill that had at least an 85 percent slope. The first shot was ok left and right, but the velocity of the 120-grain Weatherby 7 MM WBY Magnum sent the copper bullet right over the shoulder of the ram and the game headed farther down the canyon.

We circled the mountain and then down hilled about 1000 feet and finally got into a shootable spot with the double curled ram standing off to the side of the heard at a distance of 245 yards. The second shot was true to its mark and the ram stacked up and the new Barnes bullet preformed flawlessly.

Then the work began of dragging the beast back to the top of the mountain.

Chapman would also have to work for his Ramble A ram that following morning. There was crispness in the air with the temperature holding at a chilly 34 degrees. Grant spotted a small group of animals across a deep canyon and suggested that an uphill stalk would not be effective. The option was to come down from the top of the mountain and hopefully use a few stands of Juniper and scrub oaks as cover during the stalk. Unfortunately, by the time the hunter and guide got into position the animals had winded something and headed across a ravine and into another section of the ranch. This resulted in a regroup, more planning and another stalk.

Finally Chapman was in position to take the killing shot and his huge ram only ran off 30 yards before falling over as the broad-head had passed right through both lungs for a very killing shot on an animal that weighed well over 250 pounds!

"I enjoy the hunting experience and nothing tastes better than a young bison. I have just invested in a new freezer to accommodate all my wild game meat that I plan on harvesting on future hunts with Clayton. This ranch

is nice and peaceful and it's a place you can get away from it all within a 4 hour drive of my home in Orange County," noted Chapman.

The main reason that Bitterwater Outfitters has added exotics to its hunt package is to offer hunters year round hunting.

"We only hunt tuskers between September and March allowing the sows to have their litters in the spring. The hogs will be fattening up on the Pistachios and wheat and these pigs will be fat come the fall. I wanted to offer additional big game hunting opportunities where a rifle shooter or archer could harvest an animal that carried trophy horns all year long and that's why we selected these exotics to expand our hunting operation," said Grant.

In addition to big game hunting on the Grant ranches, Bitterwater Outfitters is currently in negotiations for leasing another 5,000-acre ranch near Santa Margarita. Come the fall season this new ranch could offer up some good coastal mule deer hunting, additional hogs and there will be a limited number of fall and spring Rio Grande turkey hunts available for booking. For additional information, contact Bitterwater Outfitters at (805) 610-4521.

## Mendocino turkey...

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**FROM OUR** vantage point about 100 yards away, we took photos of guide Tony Giorgi of Bass 'n' Boars Guide Service as he set up the turkey decoys depicting a gobbler with surrounding hens, then took up position by an oak tree, then began calling. Just minutes later, this writer snapped photos of two toms approaching from the front, and from the back of him. The final photo is Giorgi twisting around and shooting the turkey coming in from the back, as he couldn't see the one in front.

WON PHOTOS BY BILL KARR

It didn't take long for the action to start. After Giorgi's second call, two toms lit up... one behind him and the other down the hill from us. They were coming fast, and within minutes Gaines and I spotted a big gobbler and two jakes running towards the decoys. At the same time, the other gobbler appeared behind Giorgi. The back turkey was more vocal, so that's the one that held

his attention.

Not more than another minute or two went by when we saw Giorgi swing his gun around the tree and fire behind him. The two jakes below us had disappeared before that, apparently not liking the odds with all the big toms around, but the other tom was still standing there. Then he turned around and ran off.

Giorgi's turkey was a beautiful gob-

bler with a 9½-inch beard and inch-long spurs. The total elapsed time from when he first called to pulling the trigger was 10 minutes.

While some turkey hunts can last for days, these two hunts, where we shot 3 toms, took a total set-up hunting time of just 15 minutes. And it was just 10 a.m.!

Tony Giorgi of Bass 'n' Boars Guide Service no longer hunts for wild pigs,

but still guides for bass at Lake Sonoma and Clear Lake, and has been guiding for turkeys for over a decade now. He has 5 private ranches to hunt in Mendocino County, and has a 100 percent success rate of putting his clients on turkeys... it's up to them to shoot straight! For more information, Call Tony at (707) 291-2181 or (707) 463-1034.



**SCHWEITWATER** By Bradley Schweit

*Lookin' for some fun this Sat.?*

Okay, so I know I'm probably flogging a dead horse on this one, as many of you (or am I giving myself too much credit?) are going to read this column and think to yourselves, "Jeeze! How many times can we be bombarded by an event until we submit to signing up?" And, in a roundabout way, you wouldn't necessarily be incorrectly arriving at the above assessment, however, this weekend's (Saturday, April 18) *Western Outdoor News* Irvine Lake Southern California Trout Opener (is that enough words for ya?) truly is an event not only worth writing about, but also participating in.

First and foremost, let's talk about the lake itself, shall we? Water levels are at a unprecedented high, and fishing is booming as a result. And no, I'm not blowing sunshine up your respective hineys here; nearly every finned inhabitant of the fishery is on some sort of bite. Bass chasers are relaying 30- to 50-fish days on the water. Crappie anglers... well, let me just say you should check out Pat McDonnell's On-the-Spot in last week's paper to get an idea of just how good the slab fishing is. Add panfish, catfish and carp to the mix and it's a veritable springtime smorgasbord.

But the Southern California Trout Opener (SCTO) isn't about any of the above species. I merely used them to illustrate how the fish are responding favorably to the current conditions. No, this event is all about trout, and if you've been keeping up with your *WON* reading as of late (If you haven't, for shame...), you'd already be well aware of the fact the lake has been enjoying an epic bite since the first trout were planted back in October.

Never mind the new lake-record 22.6-pound rainbow caught mere weeks ago, or the tens of thousands of pounds of fish that have been dumped into the water these past few months. You're already well aware of these incentives. So, if what you've read thus far, or what you've experienced in similar previous *WON* grass-roots tournaments (a la Troutfest or Striper Derby) aren't enough temptation, and you find yourself still asking "Why should I fish the SCTO?" continue reading along.

How about a \$45 entry fee? Or even 30 bucks for the young'ns... Not to mention those costs include your \$20 gate fee. So, for a mere \$25 or \$10 you and the kid(s) (if applicable) can not only enjoy a day of fishing at the lake, but you also have the opportunity to win a plethora of prizes while doing so. That alone would be enough to garner my entry, but alas, I'm going to be there as it is, covering the event for this here paper.

There will also be hundreds of tagged trout planted specially for the SCTO, with each fish earning its captor prizes ranging from Shimano Voltauus rods (I have a couple of these new sticks and they're great), Shimano reels, gift certificates, tackle boxes and more.

Of course, in addition to the tagged-fish prizes, big-fish awards will be doled out to the top 5

heaviest rainbows caught in each division — Adult Male, Adult Female, Junior Male and Junior Female.

And to top it all off, just like every other *WON* freshwater event, you've come to grow and love, the Southern California Trout Opener will feature dozens of raffle prizes, including the grand raffle prize of a Lowe 1467 boat and trailer package complete with 15 hp Yamaha four-stroke.

And all for a mere \$25 or \$10... Seems like a no brainer to me.

If you agree, and would like to get in on this Saturday's action, call Tournament Director Bill Hutcheson at (949) 366-0030, ext. 29. Interested participants may also register the day of the event at the Irvine Lake main gate at no additional late charge.

*Freshwater columnist Bradley Schweit, who will hopefully see each and every one of you this Saturday, can be reached by e-mail at brad@wonews.com.*

**Eighty-five-pound sturgeon tops catches at the SABL**

**ANAHEIM** — Trout action was steady at the Santa Ana River Lakes this past week, however, it was a whopper of another sort taking big-fish honors and turning heads.

Ricardo Landeros of Pico Rivera pulled the trigger on the 85-pound diamondback while soaking a nightcrawler at 3 Pipes.

In trouting terms, David Aguilar of Boyle Heights bagged a 19-pound rainbow using a salmon egg lathered with garlic Gravy at Levitz Corner. Jocko Smith of San Pedro landed an 18½ pounder on chartreuse Nitro Dough at Levitz Corner. Wallace St. Clair of San Pedro nabbed an 18-pound, 2 ounce using a Lip Ripperz jig at the boat dock. Tim Meyer had a 17½ pounder on chartreuse Nitro Dough with garlic Gravy at Levitz Corner, and Brian Carter of Ontario used a jig for a 16-pound fish at the same locale.

"Hot spots this past week were Levitz Corner and Pump House," noted lakes' staffer Holly Jelderda. "Chartreuse Nitro Dough with garlic Gravy or nightcrawlers were the hot baits."

The lakes' next 24-hour fishing will be taking place Friday and Saturday, May 8 and 9.



**PERFECT PAIR** — Dave Moniz of Julian and son Tony tag teamed the trout during a recent trip to Morena Lake. Dave scored his 14-pound whopper (that would have been a new lake record had it been caught a week earlier) on 2-pound test, and backed it up with a 6.9 pounder. Tony contributed a 6.2 pounder to the stringer.



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**Log on to [www.wonews.com](http://www.wonews.com) and click events to print out an entry form or Contact Bill Hutcheson at 949 366-0030 ext. 29 for more info.**

**May 16-17, 2009**

**GRAND RAFFLE PRIZE**

**fish in the Following Divisions**

- Open Division
- Husband-Wife
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**PRIZES AWARDED TO TOP 15 OPEN DIVISION WINNERS**

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**\$20,000 In Blind Bogey Cash Awarded on Saturday and Sunday**

**Official Entry Form — 2009 WON Striper Derby**

\*\*\* **Entry Fee — \$160 per team** \*\*\*  
Includes event hat and T-shirt, sponsors goodie bag, Saturday casting contest, Saturday BBQ and beach party, and your chance to win thousands in cash and prizes.  
Please enter our team as: (Check box — son and daughter teams must have child 16 or under)

<input type="checkbox"/> Father/son Grandfather/grandson	<input type="checkbox"/> Father/daughter Grandfather/granddaughter	<input type="checkbox"/> Husband/ Wife	<input type="checkbox"/> Regular team entry
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**Blind Bogey Contest (Optional) Pays up to \$10,000 each day depending upon # of entries**

<input type="checkbox"/> Saturday Blind Bogey Contest \$40 per team	<input type="checkbox"/> Sunday Blind Bogey Contest \$40 per team
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<p><b>Angler #1 (team captain)</b></p> <p>Name _____</p> <p>Address _____</p> <p>City _____ State _____ Zip _____</p> <p>Phone _____ Email address _____</p> <p>T-shirt size: __Sm __ Med __Lg __XL __XXL __XXXL</p>	<p><b>Angler #2</b></p> <p>Name _____</p> <p>Address _____</p> <p>City _____ State _____ Zip _____</p> <p>Phone _____ Email address _____</p> <p>T-shirt size: __Sm __ Med __Lg __XL __XXL __XXXL</p>
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**Each angler receives one T-shirt — extra T-shirts are available at \$15.00 each**

**Please return your completed entry form along with your check payable to: Western Outdoors — Dept SD26, 185 Avenida La Pata, San Clemente, CA 92673**