

Bitterwater Outfitters now hunting 250,000 acres of ranch land

BY JIM NIEMIEC
WON Staff Writer

BITTERWATER VALLEY – Growing up on the Grant Ranch, Clayton Grant started hunting as a young lad and he learned how to cowboy too. It was over a decade ago that newly retired professional rodeo cowboy (healer) Clayton Grant hung up his spurs and became a licensed guide operating out of the family ranch at the head of Bitterwater Valley. *Western Outdoor News* hunted with Grant during his second season after hearing so much about the “Pistachio Run” that targeted wild hogs moving through ranch property after feeding all night on pistachios and grapes in the valley below the ranch that had been in the family name scene the late 1800s.

Bitterwater Outfitters now offers the most complete selection of big game, exotics and upland game bird species in the western portion of the United States. With hunting leases on some of the finest ranches along the central coast range, the total acreage is in excess of 250,000 acres. Whether it be Tule elk, black-tail bucks, wild hogs, exotics or upland game birds all are offered as multi-day hunt packages by Bitterwater Outfitters.

Grant has been a strong supporter of *Western Outdoor News* and this hunting editor couldn't turn down an invita-

tion to come up to the ranch for a fall combo hunt for turkey, wild hog, dove and California Valley quail last week.

Upon arrival at the home ranch, Grant was in the cow arena giving calf roping instructions to a couple of young girls. He told me to head to the cabin on the hill overlooking a couple of ponds, get settled in and wait for guide Mike Renteria to come by to pick me up in the ATV for an evening dove shoot. Having a neat pine cabin to spend the night in is a recent addition to Bitterwater Outfitters services. Hunters booking multi-day hunts with Grant don't have to stay in Paso Robles hotels any more, as they have the option of reserving one or both of the cabins. These twin cabins each sleep two guests, there is a common bathroom, covered veranda with a BBQ and outside fire pit to hang out around after a hunt. The cabins overlook two stock ponds that offer up some pretty good fishing.

Renteria was right on time and we headed up to the top of a nearby canyon with dove winging overhead. If it were not for a hungry hawk circling a hillside of oats and dove weed shooting would have been better, but we did manage to shoot enough dove to put together two dove breast shih kabobs.

Grant stopped by later that evening to make arrangements for the following day's hunt for both a Thanksgiving Day turkey

and a wild hog. The turkeys would be pretty much flocked up, with the exception of smaller satellite flocks of toms. Grant said that a local cattle rancher in Parkfield was having a hog problem in one of his pastures where prized Black Angus cows were calving. Seems that herds of hogs were coming into corals to eat prime hay and were disturbing the cattle. Grant's plan was to set up at dusk and wait for the hogs to come out of nearby chaparral and live oaks and shoot them as they crossed into an open barley field.

The turkey hunt took a little longer to come together even though we located a flock of about a dozen birds just after fly down. But this flock was pretty alert and dropped down in a deep creek bottom and disappeared. A second flock, spotted just a few minutes later, headed off into thick cover with no chance of cutting them off or setting up for an ambush.

A move to another ranch did pay off with a huge flock of hens, jennies and jakes moving through pretty open country. The plan was made to attempt to get ahead of where the flock was going and ambush a bird as they passed by under the cover of ancient oaks. It all came together pretty good and a nice fat jake will be served on Thanksgiving Day that was dropped in its tracks with a single round of Federal Prairie Storm #4 steel shot, with a muz-



THANKSGIVING DAY TOM – *WON* hunting editor Jim Niemiec will enjoy native wild turkey on Thanksgiving and this young jake should be tasty. Pictured with Niemiec is Bitterwater Outfitters Guide Mike Renteria. The turkey was shot with a single round of Federal Prairie #4 shot and 35 yards.

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zle velocity of 1,600 FPS.

There was time for a short nap and then make the drive over to Parkfield to shoot a hog. Grant spotted a group of pigs feeding on acorns under a huge oak. This would be a “spot and stalk” hunt as there was no way of getting the ATV close to the hogs without spooking them off. This shooter followed on the heels of Grant, as we worked through chaparral and ditches to get within rifle range. At 100 yards, with the wind in our favor, we lost cover and dropped to our knees. The Weatherby Mark V 7 MM WBY Mag was sighted in and a single round of a Barnes 140-grain copper bullet put a 125-pound boar on the ground.

Bitterwater Outfitters has just a few spring turkey hunts open on leased ranches. According to Grant, he wants to manage his turkeys on each ranch in the best interest of not over shooting any of the properties.

Not to be overlooked as hunting options for this outfitter are wild hog and exotic big

game hunts that have proved to be very popular with novice hunters as well as seasoned outdoorsmen. Hunters can opt to shoot sheep, goats, hogs, bison, water buffalo and varmints all year long; native valley quail, dove and turkey in season, while blacktail deer hunts take place during the zone A hunting period and elk on private ranches.

A hunt package for most game hunted by Bitterwater Outfitters are for two days and includes guiding, field dressing of game, cold storage on the home ranch and complimentary delivery to a local butcher. With all the grain available, late fall and winter hog hunting should be awesome as the pigs will head right for these rural feeding grounds. For *Western Outdoor News* readers who book a hog hunt with Grant for a winter hunt, make sure you bring plenty of warm outer wear, scarf and gloves. The ride around a ranch in the early morning, with the temperature dipping below freezing, can make for an awfully cold morning on an ATV. For additional information on booking a hunt with Bitterwater Outfitters log on their website at bitterwater-outfitters.com or give Grant a call at (805) 610-4521.



YOUNG, WILD BOAR – This 125-pound boar was shot by *WON*'s Jim Niemiec while on a hunt with Bitterwater Outfitters. The hog was feeding on acorns and was dropped with a 140-grain Barnes copper bullet at 100 yards.



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