

SPANISH IBEX HUNT

Submitted by Donald Black

“I’ll never do **that** again” I said to myself. And “I should have done **it** twenty five years sooner” was another phrase I used at the time and many times since. “That” and “it” were one and the same. Both referred to a hunt for Bezoar ibex, which are known by the Farsi name of “Pasang” and also as Persian ibex, that I had completed in the Taurus Mountains of Turkey in December 2000. Yet even though I had taken a spectacular trophy on the last day of my hunt I kept repeating to myself that “I will never do that again and I should have done it twenty five years sooner.”

I have been on several mountain hunts during my long hunting career but my hunt for Bezoar ibex was the most physically demanding I have ever experienced. I, along with Mustaf, my Turkish guide, an interpreter named Arthur, a government game scout, and two porters, had backpacked into these limestone mountains of south central Turkey where we spent eight nights sleeping in caves. People seem to forget that caves are formed by running, seeping, water. At least the pine boughs which we scattered on the floor of those damp caves kept our sleeping bags out of the water. But, because it was mid December, we needed a fire to keep us warm at night and to heat our meager meals. This meant that it was difficult to stand upright in those caves due to the thick smoke which lingered below the low ceilings. Snow on the ground outside made climbing to hunt during daylight hours difficult as did the sharp edges of the limestone which cut my leather boots and the gloves on my hands as I grabbed onto the rocks in order to pull myself upward or to ease myself down from the jagged ridges.

Yet in spite of all that, five years later I found myself talking seriously to Giuseppe Carrizosa about hunting ibex in his native country of Spain. “Your hunt for Ronda ibex and Southeastern Spanish ibex will not be as difficult as your hunt in Turkey” Giuseppe repeatedly assured me as I recalled my earlier ibex hunt and the fact that five additional years had been added to my age. “You will have excellent meals with comfortable sleeping accommodations and the climbing will be like a walk in the park.”

Taking Giuseppe at his word, and because I longed to return to the Andalucia region of southern Spain where I have hunted in the past while enjoying the splendid food, wine and Flamenco dancing of the region, I signed on for hunt. Soon thereafter I learned that my good

friend Farley Daniels, president of the SCI - Paso del Norte Chapter, was considering a hunt with Giuseppe which would include Gredos along with Ronda and Southeastern Spanish ibex. As it turned out he was planning to take his hunt at about the same time as my hunt.

When I hunt abroad I like to take time to see the country before and/or after my days afield. Therefore I spent several days revisiting the city of Madrid before driving to the Mediterranean coast to begin my hunt. Upon checking into a small, quaint hotel at seaside I learned that Farley was also registered there and that he had shot a Ronda ibex that afternoon which qualified for entry into the SCI Record Book of Trophy Animals.

Over drinks in the bar accompanied by a variety of *tapas* that afternoon and during a fresh seafood dinner in the hotel dining room that evening I heard the details of Farley's successful hunts during the past few days for excellent record book specimens of Spanish red deer, Fallow deer, Mouflon, Gredos ibex and, of course, his Ronda ibex taken that day.

My turn at Ronda ibex, one of four sub-species of ibex indigenous to Spain recognized by Safari Club International, would come the next day. Shortly after day break I spotted a large male on a hill side opposite our position along the coastal highway not far from our hotel. Hunting in the hills above the nearby town the rest of the morning convinced us that none of the many ibex we observed there were better than the one seen earlier that day. By the noon hour we had returned to the location of the first ibex and after glassing for a short while we spotted him bedded in the shade of a small bush. A short stalk and a quick shot at about eighty yards ended my hunt for Ronda ibex with an animal which would also qualify for the record book.

With both of our Ronda ibex "in the salt", as they say, Giuseppe, Farley and I headed north that afternoon to the city of Granada which is known for the world famous Alhambra de Granada situated in a strategic location high above the city. This red walled castle built in the 9th century was the last stronghold of the Moors, or Arabs, of North Africa who ruled southern Spain from 711 A.D. until the Catholic Spanish monarchs King Ferdinand and Queen Isabelle I drove them out of Europe in 1492. Situated beside the Alhambra de Granada is the fabulous 145 room Alhambra Palace Hotel built in 1912 to resemble a Moorish Castle. Any doubts that I might have had about Giuseppe's previous statements concerning living accommodations were quickly erased during our check in at the hotel and as I settled into my very comfortable room. Dinner that evening and the next along with breakfast the following two mornings also dispelled any

culinary concerns that might have lingered.

My hunt in the Sierra Nevada north of Granada the next day resulted in my seeing numerous Southeastern Spanish ibex, another of the sub-species of Spanish ibex recognized by SCI. However, I did not spot a trophy class male animal that day while Farley's continued good luck and excellent hunting skills in a different area of the same mountains resulted in his taking another splendid record book trophy. My trophy of this sub-species was collected the next afternoon from the prone position at a measured distance of 260 yards after a short walk to the top of a ridge where, in addition to seeing several mature male ibex, I was also able to examine the ruins of numerous Spanish Civil War bunkers overlooking the valley below and the city of Granada in the distance.

From Granada, Giuseppe, Farley and I then traveled to El Castanar, a large *finca* which specializes in red legged partridge shoots near the ancient City of Toledo, which was the capital of Spain for six hundred years. While Farley and Giuseppe went on to Madrid I, like Don Quixote de la Mancha four hundred years before me, visited this imperial city for the next three days after which I likewise returned to Madrid to again see the Prado National Museum and other sights of the city and surrounding area before continuing my travels across Europe where I could hunt once more in France and the United Kingdom.

Giuseppe Carrizosa has twice donated to the SCI - Paso del Norte Chapter and can be reached via his web site at www.giuseppecarrizosa.com. Anyone considering a hunt in Spain should seriously consider talking to Giuseppe or his sons Marco and Curro and bidding aggressively on any future donations made by Giuseppe and his family to this chapter's fund raising efforts.