

Ibex Nanny
March 11, 2018 New Mexico

Job 39:1 “Do you know when the mountain goats give birth?”



I pointed my truck south with a heavy heart. Robin and I each had nanny ibex tags and I had been looking forward to spending time with her and going for a double header. My truck was loaded and we had big plans, but when I arrived at school to pick her up Robin dropped a bombshell: the girls she was working with on a major science project had scheduled a work session over the weekend on Sunday and she felt she couldn't miss it.

It's bad enough kids are loaded with homework every single weekday, but the amount of extra projects and weekend effort expected by teachers these days is ridiculous! Toss one more tag in the trash in the name of "education". Don't get me wrong, we value school and education but much of the extra stuff assigned has an unreasonable ratio of time invested to learning gained. In other words it seems teachers could get the same point across without kids spending 30 hours on a multi-week project.

If it was up to me I would have hit the mountain Saturday to see if we could make something happen and then blasted home for the work session Sunday, but Robin didn't feel that was a good idea. It was her hunt so I left the final decision to her. Laurie came to pick up Robin and I left as planned, but in a grumpy mood.

All I could do was make the best of it, so as the miles fell away rock music kept me company. Robin would have made better company though.

I had scouted a few weeks prior and I reminisced about that trip as I drove and solidified a plan for where to search for ibex during the hunt. On the scouting trip I had gotten within easy rifle range of nannies a couple of times, but there are no guarantees in hunting.



Nannies while scouting



Almost straight up!

I arrived in Deming in time for a pretty sunset but too late to do any glassing. At least I would get to sleep early, which was atypical for most hunts. I loaded my pack and organized my gear to prepare for the rough day to follow. I had planned to carry one rifle between Robin and me, so her trusty .243 was ready for action.

I began climbing early in the morning. I've been on a few nanny hunts and they can be somewhat of a circus so I tried to avoid areas where hunters tend to congregate to the extent possible. The weather was mild and breeze calm, which was welcome in Deming as the wind often howls across the southern desert flats.



Vistas seem to be appreciated more after investing hours of leg-burning climbs

It took a while to spot my first ibex, but I managed to find a few here and there as the morning warmed. Most were much too far away for reasonable shots, besides being on ridiculous cliffs that would make recovery life threatening, if not impossible. It was fun watching them and my 24x camera zoom brought them close enough to share with you.



Agile billies



Good group of billies and nannies that were virtually unreachable



Impressive beasts

I was still grumpy that Robin couldn't come, and as I hiked, slipped and stumbled, I found myself getting frustrated by difficulty of getting within range of these nimble, sharp-eyed goats. Despite having closed the distance on the scouting trip and been blessed with successful ibex hunts of my own and for Robin my mood made it feel like nothing was going right: I lost my balance and tripped when I felt I shouldn't have, I lurched on rocks and rammed my shins into cactus. Even having slayed two really nice billys with my bow at spitting distances, the terrain is so dang brutal it sometimes feels like getting within even half a mile of these incredible animals is impossible!

Midmorning I stopped to rest at a vantage that afforded potential shots in several directions. I munched a snack and glassed some far off ibex. At one point I glanced up to see billy horns poked above the skyline! I trained my Vortex binoculars on the spot and identified a handful of ibex dancing in and out of view; none legal (nannies or billys with horns less than 15" in length). At one point a small billy jumped onto a rock and stood broadside for several minutes about 150 yards away, but despite studying him carefully through Robin's scope and believing he was likely less than 15", I didn't feel confident enough to pull the trigger. He leaped down and a nanny took his place but hopped away too quickly for me to react. Another nanny and billy quickly followed the first nanny to head in my direction but their path was hidden behind huge rock slabs.

I waited at ready until a wary nanny peeked her head around a cliff at less than 100-yards and slowly shifted Robin's rifle. Another nanny head poked up and the two dainty animals jostled for footing on the steep rock. One turned for a better foothold and presented me with a broadside shot. At the sharp crack of the rifle the nanny plummeted and I knew my shot was good.

Instantly dozens of ibex streamed into view and before I knew it the handful had grown to a herd numbering over 30! They nervously scanned for danger while I remained motionless. I lamented that had Robin joined me we would have had plenty of time to take a second nanny and both of us would have filled our tags. I snapped several photos and some video as the herd bunched together and then filed below me and up and over the next ridge.



Nannies shortly after my shot



These two billies shook their horns at one another as they fled



Close-up of the billies posturing to each other



A golden eagle soared overhead

After the group disappeared I carefully picked my way to my prize. The nimble goat was piled up at the base of the rocks and I snapped a few trophy photos and made quick work of butchering the little critter.

The meat wasn't very heavy, but every extra pound makes hiking in the Floridas all the more treacherous. As I've shared in many stories before, my trekking poles were put to good use throughout my descent.

Another successful trip is in the books, but I dearly wish Robin could have joined me.

We ended up drawing only a couple of tags for the 2018 season, so hopefully we can juggle schoolwork and spend time together in the outdoors in the upcoming year. I pray I'll have an opportunity to tell you about it.



God Bless,
Carl