

Oryx 2022 June, New Mexico

Proverbs 19:21 “Many are the plans in a person’s heart, but it is the Lord’s purpose that prevails.”



Hunting season began earlier than ever for me this year with an oryx tag during arguably one of the hottest months of summer. Between Robin finishing up school and graduation ceremonies, other activities, and our recent purchase of a house Phoenix to be used as a short-term rental and easy way to visit Robin at college, it seemed I barely had time to prepare for my hunt. Even though my season was technically a month long, we were scheduled to take occupancy of the house mid-June and needed to invest a fair amount of time getting it ready to rent (painting, updating fixtures and lighting, refurbishing bathrooms, furnishing, decorating, etc.). I felt stressed and pressured. Knowing the first foray would be my best chance to fill a tag, I scheduled 5-days to hit the desert. My friend Brian would serve as my wingman, and we braced ourselves for a hot, grueling hunt.

In preparation I filled one large cooler with 2 cases of frozen water plus another couple frozen gallons to be used to cool meat or for cold drinking water as they thawed. Another cooler was filled with 3 cases of drinking water along with extra gallon jugs.

Brian met me at home after work and we headed south. My poor truck was buffeted and tossed by the high winds and for much of our drive the howling crosswind held my truck well below the speed limit. Blowing dust created a brownish cloud. Our intent had been to keep eyes peeled for a wayward oryx during the remaining daylight once we exited the highway, but the foul weather all but ruined that plan. It was hard to imagine any animals not hunkered down out of the wind, but we did spot a few cattle out and about. However, we weren't surprised that darkness fell with no oryx sightings that evening.

We continued driving to our intended campsite and the wind began to lessen, offering hope for the new day. We managed to find a little hollow to pitch our tents, although we still battered them down with plenty of stakes.

Morning dawned with no wind and comfortably cool conditions. We shouldered our packs to begin hiking, but the surrounding terrain didn't look quite right to me. I quickly consulted my GPS and

realized we hadn't parked at my intended location. Brian suggested we continue farther down the road and stick with our original plan, which was only about half a mile farther. I asked what he wanted to do about our tents. "It's daylight, let's hunt and deal with them later". I couldn't have agreed more.



We piled back into my truck and meandered down the road. We reached a little rise and eased up just as the front windshield cleared the surrounding vegetation. We each lifted binos to our eyes and within a minute Brian sang out "I see an oryx...seriously". It was so unexpected he felt he needed to add "seriously" to affirm he wasn't just kidding around!

I turned in the direction he was looking and could barely make out a distorted form through the curvature of the front window. I couldn't see horns, but Brian insisted it had two (they often break their horns when fighting). I rearranged and confirmed his assessment, but the animal appeared rather small. Brian concurred and stated he could only see one, but there might be others. I agreed it only made sense to take a closer look and eased my truck into reverse to drop back out of sight.

We hopped out and took another quick peek to be sure the animal hadn't spooked, then quickly grabbed our backpacks and my rifle. We eased up for another look but the oryx had disappeared. Being relatively confident it hadn't run away, I suggested we may as well close the distance while it was out of sight, and off we went.

Although we moved relatively quickly, each of us paused regularly to scan with our binos. Soon Brian whispered "psst...to the left". I froze and glanced over to see an oryx within a couple hundred yards. It was facing our way feeding but obviously hadn't seen us. It only required a handful of steps for us to reach some cover, so we eased forward and then angled toward the animal, certain it was a different one than Brian had originally spotted, due to its horn configuration, although it was also medium-sized. A small rise provided a good vantage, and everything fell into place as I eased to the crest and immediately spotted another oryx. I barely had time to turn and whisper to Brian that there were two...no, make that three, before Brian echoed "There's another, and another". The slight breeze was in an ideal direction, the sun was at our backs, and we had vegetation for cover. We couldn't have asked for a more perfect setup. We sat ready while about a dozen oryx fed broadside before us. Brian whispered the range at only 120-yards. I carefully scanned the herd and identified a mature bull near the rear. Oryx are difficult to judge since bulls and cows both have horns and they all appear fairly similar, but this one looked big enough to shoot even on the first morning.

I whispered to Brian that I'd wait until the bull cleared a small bush, then BOOM. The herd whirled in confusion before beginning to file away to our right. I lost track of which one I had shot at, and neither of us could confirm the hit. Another oryx stopped broadside; however, I hesitated to pull the trigger again without confirming the results of my first shot. The herd began to lope in a line, none appearing

wounded. Then suddenly Brian sang out “The one in the rear, he’s ginger!” Typically hunting is all about hard work, blood, sweat and tears, so I have no idea how he came up with that term (and later teased him and laughed about it with him), but immediately knew what he meant. The animal in the rear was moving gingerly, or differently than the rest. The herd filed behind a small, vegetated hump and he didn’t appear as the rest continued. I asked Brian for confirmation, and he agreed the bull must have stopped.

I waited at ready while Brian glassed. “Yep, I see his horns,” Brian announced, “he’s there”. The bull had stopped in the only spot where a follow up shot was impossible. I stayed ready, assuming he’d soon follow the group, which had since disappeared into the desert. From my seated position I could just barely make out the tips of his horns. After a time, they lurched and disappeared. Had that really just happened? Were we actually done hunting only minutes into our first day?

We looked at each other in disbelief. We’ve been hunting for years, and things rarely come together so easily. But indeed, it was true. My bull was down and instead of spending a handful of days hiking and baking in the desert, and then returning for another round, we’d be butchering and heading for home even before the day was over! It took more time planning, preparing, and filling my truck with ice than actually hunting. All of our detailed plans and strategies had been moot. Me getting worked up and worried about not having enough time had been for naught. Despite all my plans and backup plans, God’s purpose had prevailed and just like that my perceived lack of time was no longer an issue.

Heck, we hadn’t even hunted long enough to develop much of a story, but sometimes you just need to say “Thank you, Lord” for the easy ones!



There they are!



Great bases on the horns



Thank you, Lord!



And thank you, Lord, for my partner, Brian!