

Extreme Shooting and Filming

At the shot, we all erupted with shouts, high fives and knuckles. To my knowledge, no one had ever pulled this off for national television—a 1000+ yard shot on a football-sized varmint known as a rockchuck! We were ecstatic!

February of 2013 found **No Off Season** at the **Pacific Northwest Sportsman's Show** in Portland, Oregon. The PNWSS is billed as "The Largest Sportsman's Show West of the Mississippi". Tens of thousands of people and their families attend this huge event each year. No Off Season was there again this year promoting our predator and varmint hunting gear and hunts. But, our neighbors had



changed this year as Bob and Chris Beck of Extreme Outer Limits TV (www.extremeouterlimitstv.com) set up shop just across the aisle promoting their show and selling McMillan rifles and Nightforce scopes. **No Off Season**, in addition to predator gear, focuses on long range varmint shooting gear including McMillan rifle stocks, Jewell triggers and other items to help make long range shots on small targets a reality for our clients. (www.no-off-season.com) **NOS** also specializes in high-volume varmint hunts for Beldings Ground Squirrels (locally known as "sagerats") and long range rockchucks, a western cousin to the eastern woodchuck or groundhog. We mentioned the possibility of filming some long range rockchuck shooting and sagerat shooting to Bob. Before the show ended, Bob and his friend Chris Brooks of Kershaw Knives stopped by making plans to travel to Burns, Oregon to film an episode for EOL TV.

Long range rockchucks are a passion of mine. I grew up reading Jim Carmichael's articles about accurate rifles and varmint hunting. Jack O'Connor's stories of sniping jackrabbits also fueled the long range varmint shooting fires. As big game tags became more and more difficult to draw, predators and varmints became more and more of our focus. After all, there are **"No crowds, no limits, no seasons...no bad days."** A hunter can pursue varmints and predators on their own terms and their own schedule. Factory rifles eventually evolved with fast-twist barrels and high-powered glass sporting target turrets. "Long range" also evolved from a celebration over a hit at 285 yards to **beginning** our shoots at over 400 yards. Conservation came into play as well because the limited size of the rockchuck colonies in this area could be wiped out in one day as the equipment became more accurate and more effective. The success of our hunts began to be measured more by the distance of the shots than the number of animals taken. My son, Ben, displays his first 1000 yard rockchuck mount in the living room as proudly as any mature bull elk.

Why not just do some rock shooting? We actually love rock shooting but, well, it's just not **hunting**. Live targets add several things to your practice that rock shooting can't—actual glassing for game, a definitive kill-shot-or-miss and time pressure. Time is always of the essence. Live

animals present targets then leave. The closer the hit, the more likely the leaving. Live target varmint shooting more closely emulates the scenarios of big game hunting as well as being a challenge in and of itself. With these things in mind, we planned a hunt that would be both challenging and realistic for an episode of Extreme Outer Limits TV.

The planning included finding a shootable population of rockchucks on private property to avoid public land issues. The Spot also needed to provide over 1000 yards shots—not all places do. A friend allowed us the opportunity we needed to hunt his ranch out of Burns, Oregon. I loaded the optics, the portable benches and the Polaris Ranger and met Bob, Chris and Bob’s cameraman, Cole. With anticipation building, we headed out to the ranch.

Filming adds a dimension to the hunt that includes much extra time creating a show that “brings the viewer along” on the hunt so, by the time we actually got set up to shoot, the day’s breezes were already beginning to add to the challenge. Bob decided to start things off with a couple of McMillan Tactical Hunter rifles in .243 Winchester caliber. One of the rifles wore a Nightforce 8-32X and the other was topped with a Nightforce 3.5-15X scope. The breezes not only varied in intensity but shifted in direction actually moving from right-to-left then left-to-right and back again. Needless to say, it made the shooting pretty challenging since we started immediately engaging targets at over 1000 yards. Chris Brooks started the shooting as Bob used him as a Guinea Pig.

The relatively small 87 grain Berger bullets proved difficult to remain consistent in the changing conditions and the 15X limitation of the scope made locating small targets with coloration similar to the surrounding rocks extremely challenging. Bob made the call to step up to the 6.5X284 topped with a 5.5-22X NF.

The 6.5X284 proved better in dealing with the shifting winds and another decision was made to begin to wait for similar conditions rather than dialing the wind for each shot. Eventually, with all the variability at these extreme ranges and with targets this small, they began using the windage marks on the horizontal crosshair for the wind calls speeding the response to those ever changing breezes. Before long the 6.5X284 was replaced by a .300 Remington Ultra Mag shooting Bob’s proprietary Berger EOL 230 grain Hybrid bullet sporting a ballistic coefficient of .743. Chris had really been thrown into the fire as he had never shot anything past 350 yards. So, he took a break



after some intense range time and Bob ran the dope on the .300 RUM through his Nightforce ballistics program on the PDA. The very first shot was extremely close—easily “minute of deer” as we say. The second shot was another near miss and the third shot at 1070 yards was seen clearly as a direct hit on a large Southeast Oregon rockchuck. The celebration was immediate and intense!

Of the three cameras in use, one was mounted to a 20-60X Meopta spotting scope which captured the hit and answered my initial concerns that a hit would actually be viewable on the final footage. The big 230 grain slug leaving the barrel at over 3000 feet per second left no doubt as to the contact of the bullet through our optics! We had accomplished our goal: a confirmed kill on a rockchuck at over 1000 yards for national television and Bob proved he is the Real Deal in long range shooting.

Chris switched to the big .300 and continued his quest. As the sun got lower, we thought he may have accomplished a 990 yard hit but our search didn't turn up the victim. The rocks and crevices on these rims sometimes allow rockchucks to make it into unretrievable spots. And, as I told them going into this project, No Off Season's rule is..."**No Body, No Count!**" Although there was no confirmed kill, Chris really made some pretty amazing shots following Bob's coaching showing that with the right equipment and circumstances, long range shots like these are within the grasp of a determined marksman. I hope we get a chance to have Chris back. Maybe we'll start by putting him into The 500 Yard Club before taking him past 1000 again.

The next day found us in the sagerat fields shooting at targets the size of the cardboard tube from the center of a roll of toilet paper. These small targets present their own challenges as Bob and Chris quickly found. We set them up on a platform with their own pivoting shooting benches and once again broke out the .243's for some quicker action removing these pesky critters from the rancher's fields. With so many targets in the field at once, the most difficult part of this filming proved to be getting shooter, camera and spotters on the same target at the same time! More than once, the response after the shot was, "That wasn't the one I was on!" But, it was a fast paced day of shooting and allowed Chris to release some of his pent up bloodlust from the previous day. The EOL cameras captured many kill shots some of which were spectacular! **No Off Season** treated the crew to our big field lunch making a nice, laid-back day for everyone.

The Extreme Outer Limits episode will be edited and air some time after the first of next year. Varmint hunters and long range hunters alike will find this to be an action-packed show with some unique footage and a very unique kill shot on a football-size target at around 5/8 of a mile!

Good luck and good hunting.

God Bless,

Tim

www.no-off-season.com

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