



DIRTY SOUTH: AFTER THE HUNT

SOUTH GETS DOWN AND DIRTY DISCOVERING ONE OF THE REGION'S MOST BELOVED PASTIMES

WRITTEN BY EZRA SALKIN | PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN FULTON PHOTOGRAPHY

Standing next to the front half of a foam antelope waiting to be dressed, in a room of mounted animal heads, Shawn Scott, owner of Soggy Bottom Taxidermy & Adventures, gestures down a gazelle's neck to its white underside, carefully following the body's curvature.

"There's a reason God laid the fur the way he did," Scott says. "Water runoff—prevents hypothermia. An experienced professional is sensitive to that type of meticulousness. You're paying more for my skill and knowledge than you are for the parts."

The term taxidermy means just that: taxiing—or moving—the dermis. That said, it's a lot tougher than just draping skin. "It's no lazy man's profession," Scott notes. "Let's clear that up right now. During deer season, I'm here 24/7. Then I get a little break. Then it's turkey season."

According to Scott, clients are people seeking to relive the thrill of the hunt. "It's like a 3-D memory. Photos just aren't the same," he says. Hence, Soggy Bottom's motto is "The moment lives ... Forever." Scott credits his grandfather, a charter boat captain, for fostering his love of hunting and the outdoors, ultimately leading him to open Soggy Bottom 10 years ago. Scott's first mount was a squirrel. "Most

people start with a squirrel because they're easy to obtain and they're an easy first mount. It's not until you get good that you realize how difficult it is to get a squirrel right," he explains.

Scott's proudest moment came when he was recognized at a major taxidermy association show for a boar's head mount, meriting the Best Game Head award as well as a slew of other ribbons.

Unlike, say, for a mechanic, there is no specific taxidermy tool kit. Unwilling to reveal too many trade secrets, Scott does say you can't do it without needle and thread or glue. "You have to be able to sew." It also helps to have a cast-iron stomach. "Blood and guts don't bother me much," he says.

One unique service of Scott's is booking African safari hunts. Occasionally, clients hire him to accompany them to Africa. Scott prefers those assignments to the Georgia fare. "They're more challenging," he says.

Prices, local to exotic, range anywhere from \$125 for a turkey fan of tail feathers to \$30,000 for a full-size elephant.



SOGGYBOTTOMTAXIDERMY.COM, 233 WILD ROSE DRIVE,
GUYTON, GEORGIA 912.772.4781

