

WYOGA HUNTING STORY CONTEST WINNER WELL WORTH THE WAIT

By Steve Wiley

BIG GAME HUNTING

I MADE MY FIRST OUT OF STATE

HUNT to Wyoming in 1994 and had gotten the hunting bug after 15 years away from large game hunting. I always knew Wyoming was the place to go for some real hunting adventure. I've taken Antelope, Mule & White-Tailed Deer, Elk & Bear over the years in the Cowboy State and when the opportunity to build preference points was established by Game & Fish, I was in!

I diligently purchased points for Bighorn Sheep and Moose (except for one year) and with 23 points drew my Ram tag in the Porcupine unit in 2018. My guide for this hunt was Jeremy Dickson of Lovell and we took an excellent 8 ½ year old Ram. I considered skipping a year to save & put in for the Shiras draw in 2020. Jeremy gave me some sound advice; "You only live once; you might as well go for it". I put in and drew a coveted non-resident tag for Unit 34 in the Big Horn Mountains with 23 points.

I contacted Bob Barlow of Barlow Outfitting in Story and he asked if I might consider the archery season in September as it was during the rut. I couldn't use a compound bow due to cataracts in both of my eyes, but Bob had the solution. He offered his Ravin R-10 Crossbow to use and upon reading the specs (400 ft/second, illuminated scope and a cocking crank), I was sold. I agreed with Bob to go with Jeremy as my guide and we would start the 7-day hunt on September 27th so we could overlap with the rifle season starting on October 1st if need be.

I've never shot a crossbow but arrived in Lovell early and spent two days shooting over a hundred arrows at the neighbor's place from 20 to 80 yards. The crossbow was amazingly accurate, and I consistently shot 1-inch groups at all distances.

We hit the trailhead west of Buffalo on the 27th and rode through the forest to a nicely equipped 12 x 12 outfitters tent just below the



timberline. We went out that evening and Bob who had packed in with us and was on his way out texted us a picture of a bull he had seen in a creek drainage.

We saddled up the next morning and after an hour's ride found the bull with a cow/calf in a meandering willowy part of Clear Creek. The bull headed up a low ridge overlooking the creek, so we dismounted and crossed through the creek bottom and ascended to the ridgeline. Jeremy let loose with a couple of bull grunts and we heard rustling below us in the cut parallel to the creek. We worked our way down the slope with Jeremy calling and raking brush with an elk scapula. We got to the bottom and I set up a rest on a deadfall while Jeremy continued to call & rake the brush. In a heartbeat I could see the bull's legs below some small pines, and he emerged head on and started raking a small pine tree just 40 yards from us. I was waiting for him to present a side shot but he kept looking in our direction without turning. I've

made this same shot on deer & elk and made up my mind I better let an arrow fly before he decided to turn around and leave. The arrow flew exactly where I had aimed, and I watched it disappear into his chest. The bull turned out of sight, we heard it crash & bellow, then heard it get up and run only to hear it crash again. We waited a bit and walked over to where I had shot the bull. We could see where he fell just 10 yards away and looked up and saw him lying dead just 30 yards away from us. The arrow had penetrated 40 inches into his chest, clipping the heart and coming to rest in his liver. My second bucket list hunt in two years was over and taxidermist Tim Peterson of Hawk Creek Taxidermy in Kaycee met us to cape the bull and help pack it out on Bob & Jeremy's seasoned mountain horses & mules. This hunt couldn't have ended any better and Game & Fish aged the bull at 5 years. This hunt was well worth the 24 years of waiting and I hope one day to draw a Mountain Goat tag. 🏹

