

"NON TYPICAL ARCHERY ELK RUT HUNT"

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A COUPLE OF YEARS AGO

when a lifelong hunting buddy mentioned about going on an elk hunt, I was all in. We discussed several options and decided to try Seven J Outfitters out of Sundance Wyoming. Although we had never hunted elk with Jeff and Deb, we knew they were a first class operation since we had chased Whitetails with them on several occasions during the last 20 years.

In each of our Whitetail hunts we came with a party of four. I still remember the first day I spent on a deer stand in Wyoming. It was a parade of one buck after another filtering past my stand. I thought I had died and gone to deer heaven. Needless to say everyone was successful on that trip as they were in all the subsequent hunts.

Our elk excursion was a private land hunt, based out of their main lodge which was full of Whitetail hunters. This was great as we were able to interact with the whitetail hunters in the evenings. It's good to hear that the whitetail hunting is as good now as it has ever been.

We arrived the day prior to the hunt, it was great to be back in hunting camp. The lodge is a beautiful three story log cabin taken straight out of a postcard. We met everyone that afternoon including my guide Kirby Nauta who I had never met before. He was easy going and from the beginning I felt confident with him.

The first morning found us riding a road that bisected a mountain ridge. Our second stop yielded a quick response to our call. After setting up in front of Kirby he started to call. Every call was answered with a loud bugle that was closer than the last. The bull angled to my left which brought him out of the trees at thirty yards. When he bugled you could see his breath in the brisk air. Although he was out in the open he was shielded by a couple of branches covering his vitals. I was glad as I really didn't want to make the decision of shooting a three hundred bull thirty minutes into the hunt. The fickle wind solved my dilemma as the bull whirled and left the same way he came in. You can't ask for anything better than in the first half hour of your hunt you are put in the exhilarating situation which quickly reminds you why elk hunting has no equal. The rest of the morning we spent walking the ridge and calling. Although we had several bulls bugle back to us, we were never able to get a shooter to come in.



That afternoon found us in the same ranch. We were in the same ridge we hunted in the morning which had a meadow to the west. Kirby had mentioned that he had some bulls coming out on to the meadow at a particular point. His plan was to wait until the thermals changed, sneak into the point and start calling as the bulls came off the mountain. Right off the bat I loved the plan, although I must say it was hard waiting for the thermals to change before moving in. We walked the two miles to get into position in an eerily quite setting. Once there Kirby set me up and walked

back 50 yards before calling. It was instantly answered by a bull that was 100 yards away. A second bull with him chimed in to increase the excitement level one notch. I had just knocked an arrow when I saw his long fronts coming over a knob as he was bugling at less than 20 yards. In my excitement I jerked the bow back to full draw which caught his attention causing him to whirl and start to head out. I cow

called to him while still at full draw to try to get him to stop. Luckily he read the script and did just that, stopping quartering away to look back at me. I found a small window and sent an arrow through his vitals. The last time I saw him he was going full blast down a fence line one hundred yards away.

An hour later found us at the fence line following a surprisingly long blood trail. I could not believe he had gone the three hundreds we had already covered. I started to question my shot placement so we decided to back off and resume the trail in the morning. The next morning after some time looking with the help of the other guides we were able to find my bull. He had expired 100 yards from where

we had parked that morning. He had traveled four hundred yards, jumping a gate before walking into the timber. The shot was perfect and to this date we don't know how he was able to make it that far.

I have bow hunted in many states and even in overseas on a couple occasions and I have not found a more exciting trip as bow hunting for elk during the rut. This trip with Seven J's was as good as it gets, my only complaint is it didn't last long enough. I would like to thank Jeff, Deb, Kirby and the rest of the crew for a wonderful experience.

Oh and if you are curious, my buddy Joey Mickler arrowed a 6X6 bull two days later to keep our batting average at 1000. 🏹

