

# Tracks™

## October 2009



### **The Last Minute Hunt (Jay Burscough, OK)**

This last minute hunt turned into a trip of a lifetime! Being in business for yourself, you never know when you will be able to take enough time off for a hunt like this, but there are times when you see that window of opportunity and just have to take it.

After receiving an Outdoor Connection update from Greg Ray on 9/18, I noticed a New Mexico hunt for elk. I have always had a quest for a true trophy elk. This hunt was an early rifle hunt in big game unit 12, Oct. 1st thru the 5th, on approximately 20,000 acres of private land. Knowing that rut would still be going on, I contacted Greg for the hunting inspection report. After review of the report, I called Greg to book (9/21).

With only a week and a half to get ready, I had no time to spare. I flew in from Tulsa to Albuquerque on the 30th and was picked up at the airport by one of the outfitters personally. From there we met up with the other two hunters from Indiana and went to the fish and game office to get our tag and license. After leaving Albuquerque, it was a two hour drive west to camp. Camp was set up in a beautiful public area inside the national forest approximately 20 miles east of the hunting area. After getting settled in camp, it was off to sight in the rifles before dark set in. This was a 1X1 guided hunt with Ron, my guide.

The next morning we were up at 5am for a quick breakfast before setting out for the hunt. It was still dark when we arrived at the area inside unit 12. The weather was very calm with clear skies and in the high 20's. I'm thinking to myself, what could be more perfect then for the bulls to be bugling on a morning like this?

Ron and I took off hiking to the southeast to an area he called Maria. Along the two and a quarter mile hike in, we stopped and called several times but never heard a peep from anything.

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After it started getting daylight, I could see several rubs and broken trees and a lot of fresh sign; the sort of thing that really gets your heart pumping.

By 7:30am we had arrived at Maria, a small watering hole. The water had a skim of ice on it except for a small hole that held a lone drake mallard. It was obvious that nothing had been into water overnight. While standing in the trees overlooking the water hole, we commented how strange it was that we had not heard anything at all. No sooner had we said that, we heard a bugle approximately 800 yards to the south of us and then another to the northeast of us. We both looked at each other, smiled, and the chase was on.

We moved in to get in between the two bulls and then decided to go after the one to the south. Ron was very good with the cow call and had both bulls bugling back and forth. We also heard a third bull to the east of us. We were able to close in fast on the bull to the south with Ron's calling. At one point, we were within 80 yards of the bull but had not seen him yet when all of a sudden we saw a big cedar tree moving back and forth as the bull stood hooking it. The tree never had a chance. We still could not see the elk yet so we moved to set up so we could see him when he moved away from the cedar, hoping he would move through the small clearing just to the left.

The elk never saw us but when he did move, it was away from us keeping the tree between us and we only got a glimpse of him. That glimpse was all we needed to see he was BIG! Ron decided to hold our ground and continue to cow call. It amazes me how an animal so big can make a slip on you so fast, but before we knew it, the bull had made it to a ridge 200 yards away and had 3 cows and a small bull with him.

There was no shot until they reached a small clearing on top of the ridge. They all stopped, the bull stood broad side, but I could not shoot because of a cow behind him. I was standing and shooting off hand with the bull 200 yards out. When they moved, I had about 5 seconds to make a shot with the bull quartering away. When the 340 Weatherby went off, the bull dropped like a rock.

I knew the elk was big but had no idea how big it really was until we hiked up to the top of the ridge to see him. He was a 7x7 with a gross score of 391 1/2". Unbelievable! Later that afternoon one of the other hunters tagged a nice 6x6 elk. Many thanks to Greg, Ron and the rest of the crew for the hunt of a lifetime!

*For more information about **NMH2**, contact your local Outdoor Connection franchise owner.*

## Alaska Anniversary (Ron Diersen OC-KY)

FANTASTIC!! That word sums it up. Tina and I just spent a wonderful week and a half in the southern part of Alaska for our 30th wedding anniversary. The beauty of the landscape and the fishing was phenomenal. We visited several of our lodges and charters to get first hand knowledge of their operations. It was a dream trip come true.

The lodge in Sterling (AF3) is located two hours or less from everything you could want to do in Southern Alaska. With the lodge as your base, you can use their boats in Seward, Homer, or Whittier for fishing or for wildlife/glacier tours. Take a trip into one of the cities for shopping, canoe the Moose river, bike ride, visit bear camp where you can get up close and personal (in a safe way) with a lot of wild brown bears, fish for your limit of Salmon right from the shore, drift fish the Kasilof, catch King Salmon on the Kenai, and more.



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Sit on your porch and watch wildlife that includes the occasional bear, lots of bald eagles, and more.

I am sure there are few places in the world that provide the level of service and comfort that this lodge extends to their guests. This riverfront lodge provides it all. Meals are included with your stay as well as daily happy hour. The rooms are luxurious with big, comfortable beds and gas fireplaces. Daily maid service is provided. I've never met a group of people who would provide for your every need. All you had to do was ask and they made it happen.



A typical day includes a hot breakfast, followed by the days activity, be it fishing, hiking, or just enjoying the view. Activities wrap up by mid afternoon and you can kick back or try some shore fishing. The shore guide is available from 1 PM to 10 PM to assist with teaching you how to fly fish, use the spinning real gear, netting and filleting your fish. Fish can be sent to the local seafood shop for final processing, flash freezing, and vacuum sealed. Or you can have them cook it up for you for dinner. Happy hour with free beverages and appetizers are available from 7-8 pm. You will meet with your guides at happy hour to discuss the next day activities. Chef prepared dinners are at 8 pm. Our dinners included BBQ chicken, prime rib, roasted turkey, and of course, salmon. The evening is yours to enjoy as you see fit. Some of us went after sockeye salmon from the shore and others kicked back on the deck or settled down for the night.

Repeat business is a testimony to how great this lodge is. We met folks who have been returning year after year for over 20 years as well as other families that had been returning for the last five years.



For more information about **AF3** contact your local Outdoor Connection franchise owner.

## Fur, Fin and Feathers (Larry Boll OC-WI)

Sometimes everything just seems to go your way. Not that often, but every once in a while it seems like you are in the right place at the right time. I just returned from a caribou hunt with 21 insurance agents who earned the trip through a company promotion. The trip to northern Quebec started in Montreal with a stop in Kuujuaq and ultimately out to a remote camp in the tundra. The entire trip there and back went flawlessly which is quite a feat with such a large group.

We were blessed with great weather, fishing, bird hunting and of course tens of thousands of caribou came through camp right on key. As the travel coordinator it made my job easier. By the end of the hunt all of us had harvested 2 caribou with some very nice trophies mixed in the group. This was not your ordinary hunt as we had 21 guys that wanted to stay in the same camp. The outfitter will normally put about 10-12 in a camp at one time so we were about to put a stress on everything



from the cooks, guides and the hunt itself. The outfitter understood where we were coming from and picked a camp that could accommodate our number comfortably. With plan "B" (move some of the guys if the caribou didn't show up) in place we flew into camp using wheeled and float planes. It looked somewhat like a military operation as we came in by sea and air. They flew in extra guides, food and beer to make sure we were comfortable. We never needed plan "B" as the caribou were right in camp by the second day. I estimated that ten thousand caribou came within my view that day and my count was probably low. The cooks worked overtime to provide great meals. The camp manager, Wally, even put up an extra shower to accommodate the oversized group. Did I mention that these were all insurance agents and I expected to have to do some hand holding and receive some criticism as they were used to 5 star accommodations? None of that occurred. These guys were awesome! They held their

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own and said it was one of the best and most memorable trips they had ever been on. They couldn't believe the outfitter could provide all the comforts of home hundreds of miles into the roadless Canadian wilderness.

Many of us had our two caribou by the second or third day and elected to go fishing or ptarmigan hunting. We all had fun catching lake trout and brook trout from the lake and river we were staying at. Some even got to go out and shoot ptarmigan. Of course the cooks accommodated us and served up fresh bird and fish with the regular meals. All in all everyone enjoyed the adventure.

For more information about **QBH3** contact your local Outdoor Connection franchise owner.



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