



Elk Hunting

By Dan Evans

Winter 2001

For the last several years I have been researching areas to bow hunt Trophy elk. Each season I apply for several states that have bonus point systems and a few that don't.

Finally this season (2001) I drew my first tags that had tough odds. One of these hunts was in Utah. The other was in a great unit in New Mexico.

On August 20th my wife, baby, and I arrived in Utah. I spent the next couple days driving roads and glassing to acquaint myself with the new area. To my dismay I found lots of people! There was a general bow hunt for deer in progress in my unit and people where everywhere. After studying my maps and hunting regulations I found an area that I could hunt, that wasn't open for the deer hunt.

By opening day (Aug 23rd) we moved camp to the small corner of the unit and settled in. There were definitely fewer people here and we even started seeing some elk! I had decided this year I was going to hold out for bulls that would gross over 350".

For the next several days I rode 4-wheeler trails, hiked, and did a lot of glassing. But after 6 days of hunting, I had not seen a bull that would meet my standards. On the sixth evening I rode my 4-wheeler several miles into a tough desert area and slept under the stars. The next morning after not hearing any bugling all-night and seeing nothing at first light I began glassing the mountainside above me.

Finally, I spotted a lone bull in a meadow surrounded by aspens. Even at over a mile I could see this was a very nice bull with extremely long 3rd tines. I watched until the bull fled into the aspens and out of sight. Even though I tried hard, I couldn't find this bull the rest of the day or the next.

On the 31st I had a decision to make. My Utah season ran until the 14th of Sept. and my New Mexico season started the 1st of Sept. and ended on the 15th. I decided to head for New Mexico...and hope things would work out so I could get back to Utah for at least the last few days of the season.

We arrived in New Mexico on the 1st of Sept. I had never been in this unit, but I felt that I had a good chance of finding a 350+ bull. I had several good pointers from friends who had hunted the unit before.

By that evening I hiked into a canyon and worked toward several bugling bulls. Most of the bulls were moving fast up the canyon, but one seemed to be hanging back, interested in my cow sounds. With 45 minutes of shooting light left I closed the distance to within 100 yards. Once I was that close the bull and 3 cows began moving my direction. From behind the trunk of a huge yellow pine I sized the bull up as he moved to within 25 yards. He was beautiful, but I figured he would score around 320" not quite what I was looking for. But what a rush!

For the next 5 days I hiked, called, and sat waterholes, but did not see a bull that would make 350". On the seventh day, by late morning, I was several miles from the nearest road. For the last hour I had been hearing bugles coming from a distant ridge. As I neared the top of the last rise the bugling stopped abruptly. I hadn't made a sound and the wind was in my face so I knew I hadn't spooked them. Slowly I snuck forward. Suddenly I saw another hunter about 30 yards in front of me! After talking to him for a minute I learned he had bumped a bull...that's when everything went quiet.

I continued on over the ridge and heard a couple bulls on the other side bugling sporadically. Without saying a word I crept toward the biggest sounding of the two. Finally I spotted a patch of elk hiding about 60 yards ahead in the cedars. I couldn't sneak any closer without risking getting busted. I mewed softly several times. The bull paid no attention. For the next few minutes I tried more intense raspy cow sounds. The bull bugled back at my calls, but did not move. After almost a ½ hour of this I decided to throw in some bugling of my own, hoping the bull wouldn't want to lose his admirer to a newcomer...it worked. The bull got up and began pacing back and forth screaming at me.

Finally he had enough and began coming toward me...as he neared the first open lane I drew my bow. When he entered my shooting window I saw his antlers for the first time. I decided he would make 350 and cow called to stop him. He paid no attention and continued to walk out of the opening. I let my bow down. Again he was nearing another lane, I drew, as he entered it I cow called again, but he walked right through! I had to let down again. Now he was walking away from me. I let out a couple raspy cow calls followed by a bugle; he stopped and began to rake his antlers on cedar. Another bugle and he turned and began circling me. I drew my bow as he approached the one opening on that side of me. When his shoulder hit the lane I screamed on my diaphragm. He slammed on the brakes and looked in my direction. I split my 30 and 40 yard pins on the spot I picked, the arrow was there, then through it and gone. I heard it clatter in the rocks behind him.

My 2001 New Mexico bull would later score and official 352 gross P & Y points.

Three days later, on Sept. 10th, we pulled back into our camp spot in Utah. By the time we had camp set I had a few hours to hunt before dark. I rode my 4-wheeler to a vantage point looking up onto the mountainside where I had seen the 3rd point bull 12 days before.

After I reached the vantage point, I could hear bugles coming from the aspens on the hillside in front of me. One of the bulls had a real scream and it didn't take long to decide to check him out. I grabbed my fanny pack and trotted across the draw and up the hill toward the screamer. I set up in the aspens at the bottom of a small meadow and let out a couple raspy cow calls. The bull screamed back at me from less than 150 yards. Not more than a minute later, I saw a tan body at the tree line above me. When I raised my binoc's I knew he was the one I wanted! He trotted through the meadow toward me, as he disappeared behind a small rise - I drew. When he passed me at 30 yards I stopped him with a cow call. The same arrow I had shot my New Mexico bull with found its mark again!

60 yards later I had my bull and man what a bull...his 3rd tine on the left side was 23 inches long!

My Utah bull grossed an official 369 P & Y.

About the Author:

Dan Evans, owner of Trophy Taker, LLC, is thirty years old.

He lives near Plains, Montana. Dan killed his first bull elk in 1992.

Since then Dan has taken 17 bulls with his bow, all on self guided hunts, 15 qualify for the Pope and Young record book.

Equipment List:

Bow - Martin *Scepter II*

Arrows - Easton *ACC 3-71*

Arrow Rest - Trophy Taker *Original Fall Away*

Bow Strings - Winners Choice

Broadhead - Rocky Mountain *Ironhead*

Release - Carter *Lokjaw (open jaw)*

Optics - Pentax, Burris