

ASSOCIATES PROGRAM UPDATE

Elk, ATV's and Outlaws



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ADVERTISING IN FAIR CHASE

SINCE WE BEGAN PUBLISHING FAIR CHASE, THE BOONE AND CROCKETT CLUB HAS HAD A NUMBER OF DISCUSSIONS AND A GREAT DEAL OF SERIOUS DEBATE ABOUT THE INCLUSION OR EXCLUSION OF ADVERTISING IN OUR MAGAZINE. AS THE COST OF PAPER HAS RISEN SIGNIFICANTLY IN THE LAST YEAR THE COST OF PRODUCTION OF THE MAGAZINE HAS SIMILARLY INCREASED. AFTER A GREAT DEAL OF THOUGHTFUL DISCUSSION, THIS PAST JUNE AT THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE CLUB, THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE APPROVED THE INCLUSION OF ADVERTISING IN FAIR CHASE AS A MEANS OF KEEPING THE COST TO ASSOCIATES LOW WHILE MAINTAINING THE QUALITY OF THE MAGAZINE. OUR ADVERTISING WILL NOT BE WHAT YOU SEE IN MANY OTHER MAGAZINES. INSTEAD IT WILL BE PRIMARILY LARGE DISPLAY ADS WHICH ADD TO THE EDITORIAL QUALITY OF THE MAGAZINE. WITH THIS ISSUE WE WILL BEGIN INCLUDING SOME OF THE ADVERTISEMENTS WE HAVE IN MIND. WE ARE INTERESTED IN YOUR COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS IN THIS REGARD.

Hawkeye's ears were alert and his eyes were fixed on the horizon as he climbed up out of the swale and on to the bench where a grassy field lay hidden from below. Jere was aware of Hawkeye's alertness and he too was intent upon seeing what his horse was so intent upon seeing. Out of the corner of his eye he saw his partner who was riding alongside. Duane's horse, Reno, was similarly alert, anticipating something on the horizon. At that moment, Duane pointed, silently. Out of the swale in front of them emerged a dozen cow elk accompanied by this year's calves. As these elk came into view another twenty or so flowed into the herd out of the same swale. Then came a tremendous bull. Bugling as he walked amidst the cows talking to their calves.

More elk seemed to flow out of the draw. "Twenty, thirty, fifty, seventy five," Jere whispered as he counted and Hawkeye hastened his walk in order to keep pace with the herd. Spikes and young bulls flowed along among the cows and calves. The grassy field gave way to another rolling knob behind which emerged another group of cows, calves, and young bulls. Then the second big six-point emerged, bugling as he walked as if to challenge the first bull. Now there were a hundred elk walking abreast of the horses with the closest elk being fifty yards. More elk kept flowing out of the two draws joining the main herd. As Jere's count reached a hundred and fifty, the first of the big bulls realized that the elk were no longer alone. He bolted for cover at the edge of the field with the entire herd gradually picking up their pace and following him.

The elk merged with the brush and scattered firs at the edge of the field. Jere and Duane simply sat on their horses, awestruck. The tan and bronze bodies of the elk seemed to flow among the golden bunch grass and dark brush still covered with bright yellow and orange

leaves like paint flowing across the hillside. And then they were gone into the timber. The sounds of the bulls bugling and the cows and calves calling could be heard for some time after the herd was engulfed by the dark timber.

It was two days before the opening day of elk season in Idaho's Payette National Forest and we were arriving at a point at the end of the road from which we would pack our hunting camp high up on the mountain to a spot we had located during the previous summer. A spot sheltered from the wind with good water, lots of grass for the horses and a level spot for the tents, which is hard to find in this part of Hell's Canyon. The spot we had located provided all of this plus it was in a good strategic location for hunting elk.

The next two days were filled with great anticipation as we packed our gear to our campsite and got everything in order for opening morning. Most of the elk were below our camp but there were several bulls in a meadow near our camp as well. Back at road's end, the herd of elk had melded into the steep, aspen choked draws and timbered hillsides surrounding our jump off point over the next two days. Gradually they moved up the open face of the mountain, groups of thirty to fifty could be seen at various times of the day on the open face of the mountain facing our campsite. The elk were unaware that their presence had not gone unnoticed by hunters who were observing them from above. Since we had packed in from below, what we could not see were the 4x4 pickups laden with hunters and their cycles coming into the area from logging roads on the back side of the mountain.

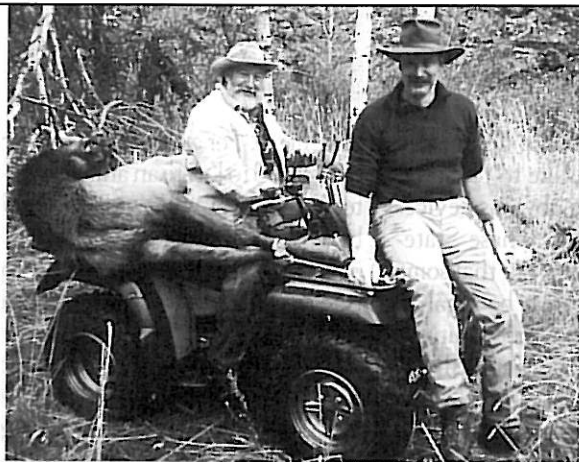
The hunters on top had been there before and knew what the elk would do on the steep open hillside once the first shot was fired. Long before first light on opening day one group of hunters slipped down a ridge and took up positions at the bottom

of the deep canyon, blocking the escape route of the elk who were soon to be routed from the big open, grassy hillside where they had been grazing for most of the previous month. These hunters had done this for years and so they knew just where to be for the perfect intercept.

As it became light, rifle shots sounded at the higher elevations above the largest groups of elk. One of my friends described the hunters as being "like a pack of wolves" in pursuit of the elk. Immediately the hillside became alive with elk hurling themselves down the mountain for the creek and the thick black timber that would provide escape cover on the other side of the canyon. The four hunters saw them coming and readied themselves. As the herd approached they began firing into the herd. A small bull was the first to be hit. He stumbled and then rolled into the bottom of a draw. A larger bull was hit too. He made it to a timbered stringer of firs before he expired. Then a cow was hit by an errant bullet. She went down and slid down the hillside leaving a blood stain more than a foot wide and some fifty yards long as she slid down into the bottom of the draw coming to rest just short of the second bull. Finally another small bull went down and the herd disappeared into the bottom of the canyon, consumed by the thick timber and brush.

The hunters quickly claimed their elk and began the chores of butchering the bulls and simply ignored the illegal cow that was lying just yards away on the hillside. The hunter who did not have his bull took off in hot pursuit of the herd in hopes of taking his bull.

Once the butchering was complete the hunters hiked to the top of the ridge where their pickups were parked. Reaching their pickups they unloaded three Yamaha "Big Wheels" and one Honda "Fat Cat". Each of the Yamaha bikes was outfitted with chains on the rear wheel as this was no ordinary sand dune



ALL TERRAIN VEHICLES (ATV's) ARE A VERY EFFICIENT MEANS OF TRANSPORTING BIG GAME OUT OF THE FIELD. UNFORTUNATELY, SOME INDIVIDUALS TAKE THE ATV'S INTO AREAS WHERE THEIR USE IS PROHIBITED.

up the mountain climbing some 3,000 feet in elevation back to the top just before dark.

The next morning I hunted my way through a series of benches, and

small meadows hidden in the timber to the knife ridge from where I observed the elk, the cycles and outlaws the day before. As I arrived at the ridge I could see five or six hunters across on the other side of the big canyon. I could also see about two dozen elk, mostly cows and calves feeding in a variety of draws and meadows scattered among the timber. I spotted a young bull meandering through the middle of a meadow some 100 yards to the side of a hunter perched on a basalt outcropping.

I watched the elk only momentarily until they all became alert, across the entire hillside some 2,000 yards across. Then I could hear the bikes. The same four that I had seen the day before plus two more. The elk immediately moved into the timber and began to descend to the bottom of the canyon. The Rat Patrol descended the 3,000 feet down the face of the mountain to the various kill sites, strapped on elk quarters, and rode back out to the top. I suspect the hunters who were not among the bikers worked that hillside all day long in vain for the elk were gone moments after the bikes appeared. I had more hunting to do so I slipped back into the ponderosa pine and fir thickets in search of my bull. As I walked through the timber I recounted the unlawful and unethical behavior I had witnessed on the far hillside. Hunters shooting indiscriminately into herds of elk almost always kill cows and calves by accident. It happens in every state where elk are hunted wherever hunters encoun-

ter herds of elk in the open and behave unethically. The bikes are a good means for getting elk out of the back country but in this case they were in violation of U.S. Forest Service policies which prohibit the riding of ATC's, ATV's and cycles off roads and formal forest service trails. Information on such policies is readily available on Forest Travel Plan maps which are available at Forest Service offices.

As I hunted the next several days the behavior of the hunters kept bugging me. It prompted me to ask questions of other hunters whom I encountered, all of whom were Idaho residents from the local community. Not one of these hunters objected to the bikes being ridden indiscriminately off roads and trails. In fact, most of the hunters knew exactly who the bikers were. "Oh, those are the Green boys. They have been doing that for years," was the common remark. The illegal cow got no comments from the local hunters. I suspect they had seen that before too.

Over the next few days we got a very early snow and lots of it. The snow was accompanied by high winds on the mountain, drifting the roads on the top shut for all but the most hardy souls. The bikes disappeared as the weather got worse and we got our elk. As we packed our gear and left the area, the spectacular experience of just a few days prior of riding our horses among more than a hundred and fifty elk as they walked and called to each other was somehow spoiled by the hunter behaviors I had witnessed on the hunt. On one hand, the Payette National Forest employees will tell you that they are short-handed and do not have time to police the off-road use of ATC's, ATV's and cycles on the Payette. On the other hand, hunters should have enough respect for the land, the elk, and other hunters, to ride their cycles on the trails and backpack their elk quarters to the trails where they can legally ride.

HUNDREDS PARTICIPATE IN ANNUAL FUND DRIVE

We are not sure if it is because of the information in *Fair Chase* alerting people to the state of the conservation movement, or that Boone and Crockett Associates have an above average knowledge on things in general. When it comes to conservation, Boone and Crockett Associates understand the "big picture" better than most. The participation rate of Associates in the Associates Annual Fund has been remarkable. Not only because of the high numbers during our first ever attempt, but that we have surpassed participation rates of many of the most successful annual funds in the country. With our average gift over \$50, we have raised almost \$10,000 for the research station at the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Ranch.

Next year we hope to seek funding for a specific research partnership to be carried out on the TRM Ranch. Boone and Crockett Associates joining with the other species specific conservation group to support research will help promote the very best in conservation. Whitetail, Elk, and Sheep projects are under consideration. As always, all comments and suggestions are welcome.

At time of printing, the Associate Drive was entering into its final days. Keep a look-out for a listing of the winners of the Ruger rifles and hunts in the next issue of *Fair Chase*!!

that had to be climbed. This was Idaho's Hell's Canyon and the elk lay some 3,000 feet in elevation below where the pickups were parked. The chains were necessary to keep the tires from spinning in the grass on the steep hillsides where there were no trails to follow.

From where I sat on the ridge across from where this "hunt" took place I could hear the sound of the bikes well before they emerged from the timber at the top of the ridge. Even though it was mid-afternoon on opening day, I could see a few cow elk with their calves feeding near the edges of the broken meadows that lay between me and the hunters and their bikes. The elk heard the bikes well before I did and drifted into the timber.

Down the ridge they came, something akin to the Rat Patrol. Single file they came. . . as if in a parade. As they reached the elevation of the three dead bull elk, the trailing pair swung along the contour to the left as the lead pair kept on going straight down the ridge to a bench where they too swung along on the contour a hundred yards below the first pair. Following cow trails and game trails the bikers worked their way in seesaw fashion down the mountain until they were at two of the kills. The lead pair rode within a few yards of the dead cow now beginning to bloat in the afternoon sun. Within minutes each of them had an elk quarter (no ribs on these quarters) strapped to the racks on the rear of their bikes. Just as fast as they came down the mountain they traversed the same route back