

**I had lunch today with a** friend who is planning a 5,600-mile round trip trek to Alaska this fall on a self-guided moose hunt. The trip involves driving his 4 x 4 pickup with his new boat in tow some 2,400 miles to Fairbanks and then running the boat another 400 miles up the Yukon River and one of its tributaries.

We had a very interesting and intriguing discussion of the logistics involved in the plan that led to a discussion of the value of his new outboard motor that uses much less gas than the older models. This led to a discussion of the way in which his new fish finder with a built in GPS also functions as an odometer. Then came the special insights he has gained while studying the area and the dynamics of the moose population in the area. He pointed out that aerial photos of the river were as important as topographic maps as some of the best moose hunting can be found on small sloughs located close to the river but which are not visible from the river. The aerial photos matched with his GPS would make finding these areas relatively easy. Without these tools the only way one would know the location of the sloughs and small lakes would be by having seen the area from the air or by having a landmark to use in finding location of these areas. Next we got down to the exceptional quality of the bulls in the area. Finally, we talked about getting the meat out and back home.

During the course of the discussion the topic of hunting partners came up. This trek will take three weeks total and in this day and age not many people can take three weeks off work to make such a trip. One potential hunting partner offered to fly to the last point on the river where floatplanes were allowed to land in order to join my friend for the hunt. "I don't think so," was my friend's response. "This trip will be an adventure. You either do all of it or none!" It was a great lunch!

This issue begins a new series, which I hope you will find both interesting and useful as you plan and put together your big game hunts. We have lined up a great series of writers who have fine-tuned numerous self-guided hunts for many of the species of North American big game. As you know, some states restrict certain areas or species to guided hunts for non-residents, so we will heed these restrictions as we go. Whether you choose to hunt with an outfitter on a fully guided hunt, use selected services of an outfitter, or undertake a self-guided hunt, the techniques used in carrying out a self-guided hunt can help make any hunt more enjoyable and successful, guided or not. I hope you enjoy the series.

### **How Much of an Edge Does the Hunter Need?**

About a year ago we received information at the Boone and Crockett Club's headquarters in Missoula that a particular individual was using a chute plane (ultra light aircraft) for spotting mule deer in the Southwestern U.S. I was not surprised, as I was aware of an individual who had been using such a plane for spotting elk near the Hanford Nuclear Reservation in central Washington State. The topography in this area consists of large expanses of low hills and ravines covered with sagebrush. Elk move back and forth between the reservation where hunting is prohibited and private lands where the alfalfa fields and orchards provide tempting food sources. The area has had an either-sex season to keep the herd numbers low and crop damage to a minimum. The fact that the reservation is off limits to hunting makes for some exceptional bull to cow ratios as well as some exceptional trophy bulls inside the reservation. When September rolls around trophy bulls always venture out of the reservation seeking the cows that often stay year around on the private

sage covered expanse of hills. Even though these large bulls are in an area open to hunting, when the elk season opens they have sufficient hiding cover to escape the hunters whom they have become accustomed to seeing in pickup trucks and ATVs. Now comes the hunter in the chute plane. By flying over the area late in the afternoon and early in the evening the big bulls are easily located and make easy targets for the hunter the next morning.

Recently one of our Associates sent me an e-mail copy of a series of chat room discussions about chute planes in the Southwest. It appears that these planes are becoming a common tool for those who seek the big mule deer bucks who inhabit the large expanses of desert and sage in Arizona, Utah and Nevada. It also is alleged by those involved in the "chat room" discussion that certain well-known guides are using these planes to locate trophy bucks for their hunters. Obviously the use of a chute plane for spotting or herding game from the air followed by landing in its vicinity for the purpose of pursuit and shooting is a violation of the Club's Fair Chase rules. The real question is where do we as hunters draw the line? How much of an advantage to we need? I suppose we can devise rules that will address the use of chute planes but in the end what fair chase really involves is what we as individual hunters believe is fair in the pursuit of any game bird or animal. Personally, I would just as soon go without a trophy buck rather than resort to the use of a chute plane to assist me in taking the buck. Unfortunately there are growing numbers of hunters who do not share my view. ▲▲▲



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