

New Mexico Elk

By MCF Member Doug Wood

My friend Kevin and I purchased two New Mexico bull elk landowner tags over the summer from a rancher that he had met while driving his race car at Aztec Speedway. She said that they usually kill a few good bulls every year but really did not know much about hunting. So we talked to some locals and found out that their ranch would be most productive late in the season.

So we booked our hunt with the state for Dec. 16th thru 20th, 2011. A New Mexico landowner's tag is good for 5 consecutive days. The Moon phase was right and I could miss the Holiday rush returning home on the 21st, my wife's birthday!

Their ranch is located in Regina New Mexico about 30 miles from town of Cub. They have a little over 3000 acres backing up to a national forest with plenty of caverns, sage brush and timber for cover.

The landowners were so nice they even let us stay in their cabin. This was a huge benefit since the evenings were usually in the single digits and the days in the mid 20's.

The weather was perfect, I thought, for stalking but because of the deep snow, it was almost impossible to walk without spooking the elk. They would hear us at 100 yards and run off into the forest, so we had to get to where we were going to hunt and stay there for hours at a time...the good old fashioned whitetail hunting method. Sitting and being still was not really a problem for me, because that's the way I'm accustomed to hunting but for my buddy from Colorado, where they do a lot of walk and stalk it was tough to just sit for hours at a time. Another thing that surprised me was the lack of activity between the hours of 7am until noon. It seemed like the elk did not like the crunchy snow any more than Kevin and I did and were hesitant to move in the AM hours. But at noon it was like someone flicked on a switch and they would appear out of nowhere.

During the first four days of hunting we managed to see over 200 head of elk with four legal shooting bulls, plenty of spike bulls and a few good mule deer bucks. We passed on the shooter bulls because we wanted something larger or he just would not cooperate with us.

On the last day of the hunt, Kevin and I were planning on hunting the eastside of the property where we were seeing most of the elk. While grabbing a quick bite to eat and cleaning up camp so we that it might be a good idea to first check out the open areas on the Westside, so we did, thank God that we made that decision!

Around 12:30: PM, I spotted a shooter bull bedded down in the timber and told my buddy Kevin where to look for him. Kevin raised up his binoculars and within seconds he yelled "shoot that bull"! I ranged him at 208 yards and placed my scope's 200 yard reticule on his vitals. About three seconds later my 300 Winchester magnum rang out and the big bull flipped and moved out of sight. We gave him a few minutes to die and then followed up on the shot. In the spot where the bull had been bedded down there was plenty of blood and hair, so we began following the blood trail. We jumped him at approximately fifty yards and I finished him off with one last shot to the head. I was now the happiest man in the world!

Believe it or not the fun wasn't over yet. To our surprise another bull was bedded down with my bull all along and we had never seen him. When I finished off my bull the other bull moved into the open and Kevin downed him broadside at 100 yards. We just stood there in amazement, looking at two trophy elk bulls within a hundred yards of each other. It was a moment that I will never forget!

