

2003 Success Rates

Winter lion hunts

Our winter lion hunts went without a hitch this year. We had 7 hunters and killed 6 lions. Most hunters were done on the first day or shortly there after. We did not, however, take a record book lion. All of the toms were good mature toms but did not quite make book.

The fishing season went well also. We caught some 3 and 4 lb trout out of the lakes in July and also had a lot of fun on Big Creek again in July and August.

Cast and Blast hunts

Our cast and blast hunts in late August and early September did not do as good this year. We took 9 hunters and only shot one bear. The white bark pine cones were on this year and the bears stayed high instead of coming down low. We did shoot several limits of grouse and caught lots of fish. The one boar we did shoot was over six feet squared.

Elk, deer, bear and lion combo hunts

Our combination hunts went well. Even though our overall success on elk was down, our opportunity was greater than last year. We took 50 hunters and we killed 23 elk and missed 18. With the mule deer, we killed 27 bucks and missed 12. We also missed a bear. All of our hunts this year were guided. The specifics are as follows:

First hunt: We had 5 hunters. We killed a 6 point, a 5x6, a large 5 point and a small 5 point bull. The only hunter who did not get a bull passed up three 4 and 5 points to try to get a good 6 point that he and the guide saw opening day. One hunter missed a 5 point also.

Second hunt: We had 5 hunters. Two of our past hunters left early due to illness and business at home. One hunter shot a 5 point bull and missed a bear. Another hunter shot a 5 point bull and a 24" buck. The third hunter passed up several bulls and some small bucks looking for a 350 bull which he never saw.

Third hunt: We had 7 hunters and a non hunter. One hunter and the non hunter went backpacking with me. We were looking for a large bull but did not find anything that we wanted. Altogether, we saw about 10 bulls including 2 or three small 6 points. Four hunters stayed at base camp and shot three 5 point bulls. They saw a large 6 point and a 6x7 but did not get them. The other two hunters went to another camp and shot a 5 point bull. They had some other bulls bugling but did not get them.

Fourth hunt: We had 4 hunters and a non hunter. Two of the hunters were a father and son. The son shot a 5 point on the last day of his hunt.

He and his dad chased two big bulls but did not get them. The dad missed a 5 point and passed up some other small bulls including a small 5 point that was bugling two days in a row in camp. Another hunter shot a good Mule Deer but did not get to shoot at a bull. The other hunter and his non hunting wife shot a spike bull and saw close to 30 deer. There was a 5 point bull in with the bunch of elk that he shot his spike out of but he said he was not a trophy hunter and was happy with the spike. Cows are legal but he chose not to shoot one of them.

Fifth hunt: We had 4 hunters. Two hunters were in good physical shape and spiked out from the main camp all week. They shot a 26" non-typical buck and missed a 5x6 bull. One of the other hunters killed a 6 point bull and a 4 point buck and the last hunter missed a small 6 point bull, shot a 5 point bull and a heavy 23" buck.

Sixth hunt: We had 6 hunters. One hunter shot a 5 point bull and a 25" buck. His son missed a 5 point bull and two cows. He shot a bull calf and a 4 point buck. Another hunter shot a cow and a 3 point buck. Two hunters did not pull the trigger at anything but saw lots of game. Their hunt ended with a mule kicking one of the hunters' gun in the scabbard and breaking the stock in half. The last hunter missed a 5 point bull and shot a 24" buck.

Seventh hunt: We had 9 hunters. One group of 6 hunters booked a camp to themselves. On the way out here from back East, they got in a car wreck and one guy was not able to hunt. From the sounds of things, they were very fortunate just to be alive. That did not stop them from

hunting hard, however and the guides said they worked harder on their hunt than they did all season. They shot 5 bucks and missed 3 other bucks. They also shot a 5 point bull and missed a nice 6 point bull. The other three hunters were in a different camp. One hunter shot a 24" buck the first day and missed a 5 point bull the next day. Another hunter shot a 26" buck and missed a 5x6 bull. The last hunter shot a 25" non-typical buck and missed the same 5x6 bull.

Eighth hunt: We had 7 hunters and a non-hunter. One of the hunters and the non-hunter spiked out with me and we got lucky and shot a 315 bull on the second day. We also saw a 28" to 30" buck on the way to camp but could not get a shot. They were happy with their bull and chose to go home early. Two of the other hunters were brothers. They each shot respectable deer and missed a bull. The last 4 hunters booked a camp together. One of the hunters missed a 5 point and a 5x6 and killed a 5 point on the last day. He also killed a 26" buck. Another hunter passed up several 5 points and shot a 28" buck. The other two hunters missed their first two days of hunting because of a previously scheduled trip. They each shot nice deer but did not pull the trigger on an elk. They were looking for a good 6 point bull and finally found one on the last day but could not get a shot.

Ninth hunt: We had 5 hunters. One hunter shot a 6 point bull and passed up several bucks. Another hunter shot a 6 point bull, missed one buck and passed up several other bucks. Another hunter shot a 4 point bull and a 4 point buck. The fourth hunter shot a 26" buck and the last hunter killed an 18" buck.

Overall, the deer hunting was better than last year. As always, the weather plays a major role in the amount of game we see. After the first hunt, we did not get any precipitation until the first week of November. I believe that our deer hunting is going to keep getting better. We saw numerous sets of twins and three does this year with 3 fawns each. The largest buck we took scored 178 but we missed several that would score better than that. We saw more spike bulls this year than I have seen in the past which only means more large bulls to come in future years, however, I did not see any really monster bulls this year. The largest

would probably score in the 300 to 320 range. I was disappointed in the shooting this year. Missing 31 animals felt a little unrealistic but some years are like that. The good news is that there are plenty of animals left for next year and even though the season is just getting over, I already can't wait until next hunting season. Good luck and practice shooting..

Sincerely,

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