

**I**t was the 23rd of September, well into the Oregon bow elk hunting season and on this particular early morning, the bulls in the Silvies Unit were doing their dangdest to outdo one another in this heavily elk populated area.

Just south and west of the don't-blink little town of Silvies are sage covered rolling hills, with thickets of juniper and mahogany up the draws. A bowhunter with single digit hunting days left to fill this most elusive of all big game tags, prays for cold nights and hot days, and no, thank you, to the thunderheads that seem to form in the late afternoons, threatening to drop a wet blanket on these rut crazed elk.

This morning marked the fifth morning in a row we were getting set up for the many bulls that frequent the meadows at night and head back up to the cooler bedding areas during the days. We had been noticing the many broken bulls and the many bull fights that were taking place this year. I've had the opportunity to witness some great battles.

As we were making our way up to the bedding areas a couple miles away, I was ripping off bugles, trying to keep track of the on-the-move elk that seemed to be all around my camera man and I.

Roughly an hour into the two mile climb to the elk bedding areas, I bugled, followed by a half dozen chuckle grunts, and was met with a less than inviting response from a bull inside a hundred yards. The angry response had me on the move to cut the distance and see about getting set up with some shooting lanes.

As I was picking my way through the juniper I heard, eerily close, two bulls begin to do battle, with the clacking of antlers and the sound of rocks rolling and brush breaking. I moved to where I could silhouette through the brush two nice bulls doing battle.

Being cautious, I hurried to where I had three or more shooting lanes, loaded an arrow, hunkered down and watched the two big bulls do harm to each other. As the two bulls battled, they were

going in and out of shooting lanes and my bow was beginning to be too much to hold. I began to ponder a let off, the bigger of the two monarchs stopped in somewhat of a shooting lane, at 37 yards broadside, and with my newfound bit of energy I settled the third pin on the bull's vitals and made a smooth release. The nock disappeared into the bull's vitals, a measurable amount of blood shot back from the lung area of the big bull and I instantly thought, that has to be good.

The two bulls busted out of the juniper covered draw and all went eerily quiet. I had the most calm feeling about what just happened. Usually a bowhunter just arrowing a 370 class bull would warrant a bit of nervousness and anticipation, but with the placement of my arrow and the amount of blood exiting the bull, it made for a calm and quick recovery.

He and all of his adrenaline from fighting the other titan only managed 80 yards of 'get away' before I found him piled up in the junipers.

The 372 P&Y measured bull is my third biggest to date, and 12th P&Y Bull in the book! Thank you for this great opportunity!

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# Shooting Ranges

**Enjoy target shooting?  
Need a place to safely sight in your rifle?  
Enjoy various competitive shooting events?**

**Various shooting events take place throughout the year.  
The ranges also offer by-permission use of their facilities.**

## Seneca Trap Range

Seneca Trap Range is at the south end of Seneca. Turn west on Camp Creek Road a short distance.

Facility includes two trap ranges, one skeet range and a 100-yard small arms range. Restroom facilities are on site.

Almost every Sunday beginning at 10 a.m., all are welcome to join in. It's \$4 for 25 bird shoots, and \$2 for 10 practice bird shoots. The pot is split, depending on what is taken in. Weather permitting, barbecues are fired up; otherwise, finger foods are brought.

The site is also open by permission. For more information, call Dean Nodine, 541-575-1918.

## Bear Creek Rifle Range

Bear Creek Rifle Range is located .9 mile north of Highway 26, 10 miles east of John Day, between John Day and Prairie City.

This site features a covered, eight-bay firing line and one of the best rifle ranges in the west.

The 1,000-yard range has become popular with many shooting enthusiasts, including black powder fans. Set in a small valley, with targets scattered throughout, the range also accommodates pistol shooters. An archery range is planned. The site features year-round portable toilet facilities.

A scorekeeper's booth was completed in spring 2011, built in an old-west style with a false front.

Those using the course at other times must be with a trained safety officer who is a member. For more information on Bear Creek Rifle Range, call president Don Mooney, 541-575-0064. Heading up the black powder group is Jim Sproul, who can be reached at 541-620-0231. For more on the shotgun enthusiasts group, call Carroll Walton, 541-820-4624.

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