

BOWHUNTING ELK

BY GREG DYSON

It was the third week of the Oregon bow elk season, and the bulls were in true form.

As with any elk hunter, a night outdoors with a dozen bulls off in the distance trying to outdo one another with one thunderous bugle after the other for hours on end literally helps you dream of one standing broadside at 20!

It always amazes me awaking to dead silence when just moments earlier it was pandemonium. No place changes as fast as in God's country. There were no more thunderous bugles. All the bright stars gave way to storm clouds as light rain began to fall from above.

As any journeyman bowhunter knows, nothing quiets the rut like moisture. It's as if someone threw a wet blanket on a campfire.

This particular year, I had the privilege of guiding a couple guys new to the sport of archery elk hunting. These two hard-hunting Californians were tagged out in less than five days and headed their Dodge Powerwagon west toward home with grins from ear to ear and a couple bachelor bull racks secured down tight on top of the rest of their gear!

There's something about that first branch-antlered bull that means so much in so many small ways! With a spirited elk camp and a couple open days before our next bowhunters were to arrive, I received the nod from the boss to go hunt a couple ridges while his mood held out.

During our first week of scouting and tagging, I caught a glimpse of a 360-class Rocky Mountain Monarch that would bring the wow factor to any trophy room.

This herd master was doing work keeping his 30-some cows and calves in order, and judging by the way many of the other bulls were giving him space, it seemed he had already settled the pecking order, at least on these few ridges.

I kept tabs as this proud 360-class wapiti seemed to answer and warn every bugle made.

By the third morning, I had patterned this bull and his cows to a heavily wooded area on a north-face ridgetop. As the bugles consistently became louder and closer, my spirit was high, even though this many sets of eyes rarely miss danger.

As the cows made their way past and downwind of me, I kept getting an occasional glimpse of the big bull as he hooked and herded his cows toward my location.

It was going to take some effort on my end, as the cows began bedding down in the thickest part of the ridge.

I was a couple hundred yards from the main group of bedded-down cows. The big bruiser disappeared over the far ridge. I let out a low, slow lip bawl growl, followed immediately by a couple hollowed grunts, and the herd master came on a



Greg Dyson poses with a trophy elk he killed while bowhunting in 2015.

dead run to see who dared trespass his herd.

He covered the couple hundred yards in seconds and pulled up with his nose up in the air. His main beam was just short of reaching his hindquarters, and he began strutting as stiff-legged as possible.

With my Canon XHA1 HD camera recording every move, it was clear that this Mountain Monarch wasn't coming any closer and was staring at my slow but methodical movements.

I had him ranged at 55 yards as he began a second dry scrape.

I had to chew some crow and came to terms that I could put an arrow through Ol' 55's lungs at 55 yards quartering away.

As the cams turned on my 95-pound Tribute, I said a quickie to my maker: "I sure hope he stays still till my GoldTip Pro Hunter hits its mark!"

As the three dozen cows exploded from the bedding area and elk everywhere were on the move, Ol' 55 with all his adrenaline could only manage less than 40 yards as my arrow had sliced through the big bull's heart.

As the Canon HD camera recorded the whole thing, I stood over the prettiest 373 P&Y bull I've ever harvested and gave thanks to God, my maker, for letting me have this moment.

During our first week of scouting and tagging, I caught a glimpse of a 360-class Rocky Mountain Monarch that would bring the wow factor to any trophy room.