

SKULL



AN OUTDOORSMAN'S JOURNAL

HAPPY
RUSSELL

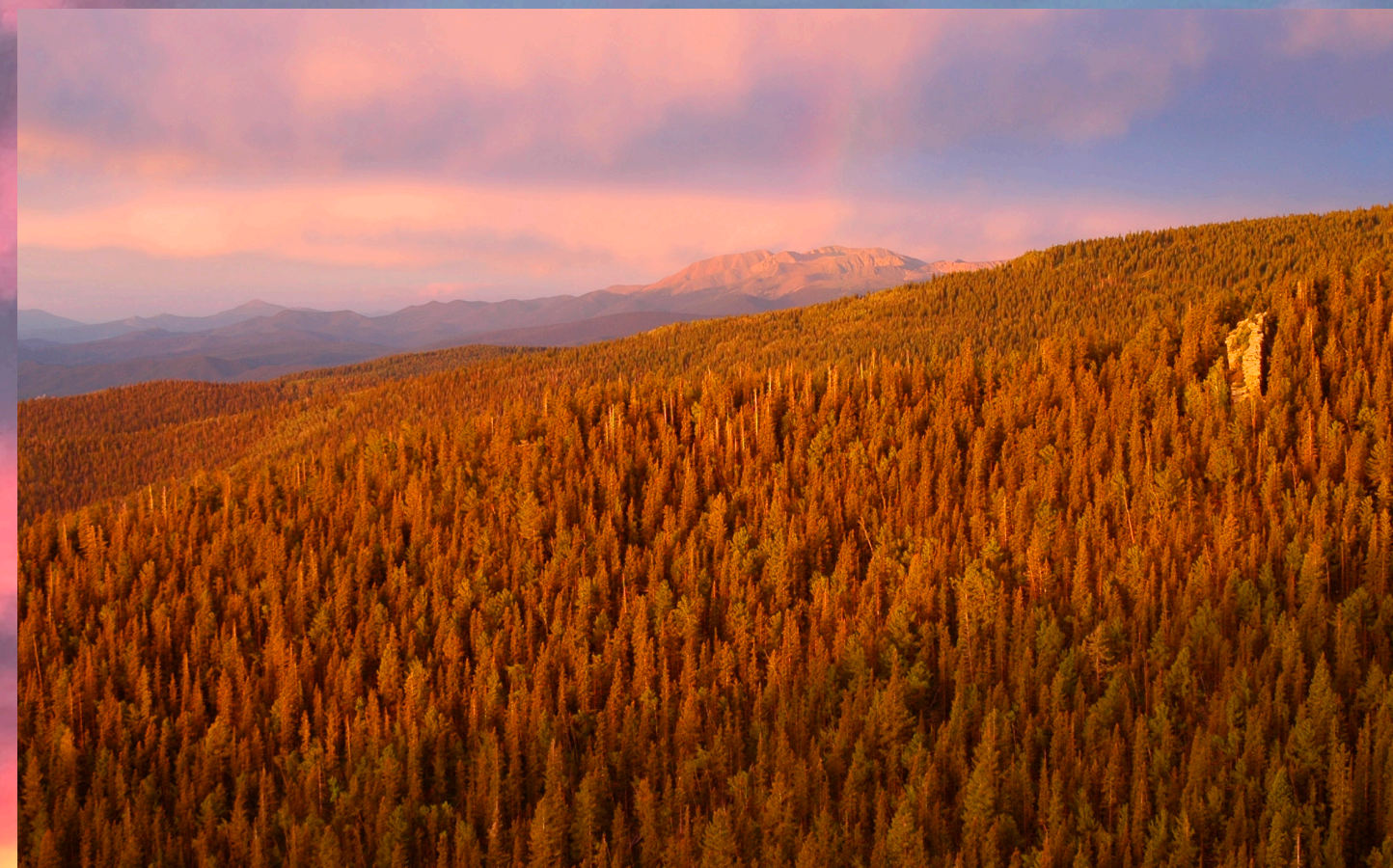
TAKE YOUR
BEST
BULL

KYLE'S BIG BULL

SHHC
MAY 2021

ELK

dreams



Is there anything better than an elk hunt during the rut? I would have to say after my muzzleloader hunt with Sandy Hills Hunting Company last fall, the answer would be nothing! I had gone on several DIY elk hunts with some friends in the past, but decided that 2020 was going to be the year I bit the bullet and booked a hunt with a professional outfitter. After doing some research and a phone call with Jeremy Fiscus I knew where I would be heading that fall! I booked a 2x1 hunt with my friend, Matt, and the wait began!

Fast forward to September 10th and we were finally arriving in elk country! We met up with our guide, Russell and began discussing the current situation in the woods. I could tell by his excitement that the bulls were really starting to crank up! The week before they had a fluke snowstorm roll through and

dump 10 inches, but things were starting to get back on track. I couldn't wait for the next morning!

Opening morning we headed out and no sooner than we got out of the pickup, we began hearing bulls raising hell in the canyon below us. The only problem was we had a bad wind, so we decided to climb a high ridge and get eyes on them. What a sight when we finally got glass on the herd; there were 50 cows and 7 bulls. Two of the bulls were the type that fill your dreams. We didn't have a good play that morning and we knew we had 5 days to make it happen, so we waited.

That evening found us back on the high point glassing. At around 4:30 we began to hear bugles from their bedding area. We had already decided we were going to let the herd dictate our next move, so

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we waited patiently. As elk do, they went the wrong direction for a sure-fire play and we decided to just enjoy the show and come back in the morning. What a first day in Colorado!

Morning two started out just like opening morning with the bulls putting on a scream fest! However, this time the wind was perfect and we knew we could make a play. We began working down the canyon quickly towards a pond on the south end. Russell knew exactly what to do. We made it to within 300 yards of the bulls before we started to get eyes on the cows. We slowed our pace and crept toward the pond. One of the bulls was glunking and splashing and as we rounded the corner he exploded out of the pond to chase off a smaller bull. He was headed up a ridge and would potentially present a shot if we were patient! Shortly after he crashed out of the pond, he was broadside at 150! I cocked the hammer on my muzzleloader, buried the iron sight into his side as best I could, and filled the canyon with smoke! To my dismay, I saw rocks explode just below his chest and heard Russell say, “You missed! Reload!” My heart fell out of my chest as he cleared the ridge, but Russell assured me we were going to get it done.

That evening, Matt decided he was going to sit a treestand on the pond with his bow. Russell and I decided we were going to climb back on the high knob and see which way the elk would move that evening. The big herd never made an appearance. However, 30 minutes before dark I got a text from Matt, “Bull down! Watched him go down next to the Pond!” Russell and I were ecstatic and





hustled down to help him. It was a beautiful 6x5, and Matt was pumped! As we were working on the bull, we could hear the big herd working back in the canyon. We quartered the bull and got out of there so we didn't spook the herd in the dark.

The next morning the bulls were screaming 300 yards from where we park. I thought the first two mornings were intense, but this was a whole other level! Thank the Dear Lord above that the wind was absolutely perfect. We eased our doors shut and slowly worked to a saddle just above the herd. When we peered over a little rise there were elk rutting everywhere! The cows were vocal and the bulls were going nuts. The two big bulls were on the far end of the herd, so we decided to slowly belly crawl through the oak brush along side the herd and see if we could get into range. It seemed as if we would never close the distance.

An hour later found us within 100 yards of the big bull as he was trying to bed his cows. He was

constantly running satellite bulls off and wouldn't present a shot! Russell said, "Be patient, he is going to stop." After what seemed like an eternity, he went to scent check a cow at 80 yards. This was the opportunity we had been waiting for! I had a small opening with his vitals between two trees - boom! As the smoke started to clear, I could see the bull humped up in front of us. I don't remember the next 30 seconds, but I reloaded and put another one in him. We had spent hours within a huge herd of elk and came out of it with the bull of my dreams. As I walked up to him, I was simply in awe. He was a beautiful old long-beamed monster of a 7x7! I've had many experiences in life, but this one was up there!

I want to thank the guys at Sandy Hills for the operation they run and the beautiful country they hunt. For two boys from Michigan to kill two awesome bulls in 3 days is simply a dream come true. We are already planning our return trip!