



# Elk Hunting Secrets

(Excerpts from the book *Elk Hunting Secrets, 239 Tips and Tactics from the Membership of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation*, Globe Pequot Press)

If hunting in a group, be sure you know the sound of your fellow hunters' bugles so that you don't waste time doing a sneak on your buddy.

*Todd Corsetti*

*Pocatello, Idaho*

Fixed power riflescopes should not be above 4-power. Never leave variable power scopes set at above 4-power while you are hunting. If you encounter and take aim with higher magnification at an animal that is fairly close to you, all you will see is hair, and you may not know which part of the animal you're looking at. If a long shot presents itself, you can raise the power then.

*Richard E. Bennett*

*Bigfork, Montana*

I often camp where water is scarce or has to be packed in. I use a 2-3 gallon spray jug with hose, nozzle and hand pump to wash dishes, take a shower or clean off a dirty carcass. It takes surprisingly less water compared to dipping or pouring water out of a bucket.

*Dean Hendrickson*

*Palmdale, California*

Once you have your elk down and tagged, you might want to identify your trophy in case someone steals it. Write down how many points are on each antler, any identifying marks, etc. Take a close-up picture. Measure and record the length of each point, anything to help you prove that you're the rightful owner. I like to cut off a small piece of an ear, unless it's from an animal I want to get mounted. I pocket this puzzle piece of ear, and can produce it for a game warden if needed. Also, I sometimes tear a dollar bill in half and cram half of it out of sight in the back of an animal's throat. I put the other half in my billfold. If someone steals my trophy, and is caught soon enough, I can produce my half of the dollar, and the game warden can reach down the throat of the animal and pull out the other half, and match up the serial numbers.

I use a hardened steel bicycle lock-cable to secure the head and horns to grill, roof-rack or trailer when I drive home. If the cape is attached you do not want to haul the trophy inside the rig. If you put them inside where it is warm, fleas and ticks will abandon the hide and head. The inside of your vehicle will never be the same. Also, it will smell.

*Harlan White*

*Canyonville, Oregon*

When hunting in rain, snow or mud I always cover the muzzle of my gun with a short strip of electrical tape. This keeps moisture and debris out of my barrel, even if I slip and fall. The tape does not have to be removed prior to firing the rifle. It does not affect accuracy.

*Lynn Talley*

*Hobbs, New Mexico*



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Most elk hunters have topo maps of the areas they frequently hunt. Those maps will become infinitely more valuable if you mark on them the locations you see elk or other game, or anytime you kill an elk or know of an elk killed. After a few years the same patch of dark timber or aspen stand will have more than its share of marks, and it will become apparent where the really good spots in your hunting area are.

*Scott Campbell*  
*Colorado Springs, Colorado*

During one of my first elk hunts many years ago, a veteran elk hunter told me that no matter how cold I felt, it was a safe bet that the elk were hot. Look for them to be bedded on shady slopes, in deep canyons, and in the thickest part of the brush. On early season hunts, this is particularly true. Although your teeth are chattering, the elk are looking for relief from the heat.

*Grady E. McCright*  
*Las Cruces, New Mexico*

In September it can be pretty hot and dry, which makes moving around in the woods quietly very difficult. I will put on four pair of wool boot socks and sneak around in them. The wool will even muffle the sound of dry pine needles and by wearing four pair my feet don't take a beating if I happen to step on an occasional rock.

*Jeff Keller*  
*Bend, Oregon*

Many people have a hard time with diaphragms, but they make some good calls with the diaphragm attached to the grunt tube. Use what is easy for you. Don't be intimidated by people that sound better than you. Elk all have different personalities and voices. I don't feel that I'm a great sounding caller, but I call a lot of bulls in. Some of the bulls don't sound as good as I do. I called a bull in last September that sounded so bad he needed to take some lessons himself. If the bull doesn't come in, don't take it personal, there are a lot of reasons why a bull won't come in that have nothing to do with you. Just keep downwind and leave the area quietly without being seen. You can try for him another day.

*Richard Robinson*  
*Washington, Utah*

I call this personal invention a lifesaver: Pour the contents of a bottle of Cutex clear nail polish into an empty 35 mm film canister, then mix in as much 4831 rifle powder as can be incorporated. Cut off the little plastic brush from the fingernail polish applicator and stick it into the mixture for a wick to light it. Let it set up hard, with the lid off. Then you have a firestarter that can hardly be put out once it is lit.

*Harlan White*  
*Canyonville, Oregon*



# Elk Hunting Q&A

(Excerpts from the new book *Elk Hunting Q&A*,  
Globe Pequot Press)

**Question #1: Shooting a bull in its bed means you did a lot of things right. What is the most important factor in catching a bull with his guard down?**

*Dan Crockett*

*Missoula, Montana*

**Members answer:**

To successfully take a bedded bull elk, you must beat his nose. Use any combination of the popular scent-control clothing or sprays, commercial cover scents, or naturally occurring scents like pine or sage, and stepping in elk wallows or droppings. But most important: play the wind. In the mountains the air is seldom calm. In addition to thermals and storm fronts, slight and fickle breezes swirl most days. Use a small squeeze bottle of unscented talc or a small feather tied to a bow or rifle barrel to constantly monitor air currents.

I've hunted elk and guided elk hunters for the past twenty-five years in Wyoming, Montana, and Colorado and been lucky enough to take three elk in their beds. I won't mention the number of times I heard one go, or saw a flash of antler or hide making a clean getaway.

*Dave Engelhardt*

*Waverly, Iowa*

Of primary importance is to be scent-free. Follow this advice, which is older than our forefathers: "Always keep the wind in your face and the sun at your back." Next, use every bit of natural terrain to remain inconspicuous. It helps to be as familiar as possible with the bull's natural habits and habitat. Whether or not a kill is made, finding a bull in its bed is the thrill of a lifetime.

*Kale B. Barb*

*Harrisonburg, Virginia*

If you hunt where elk bed in the dark timber, you might benefit from trying this tactic I discovered on my last bowhunt. After getting into a calling match with a very responsive bull across the creek, I arranged to have my hunting partner Mark keep the bull bugling. Meanwhile, I was able to follow the sound until I spotted the beautiful 5x5 bedded down just beyond my bow range. From there I closed the distance to thirty yards, before spooking him in the process of nocking an arrow. Disregarding the final outcome, the plan worked remarkably well for at least three reasons: (1) the bull was distracted by Mark's consistent challenge calls; (2) thanks to his vocal assistance, it wasn't just a shot in the dark to try and find him; (3) after I spotted him, I was able to make intelligent decisions on how to make my approach.

*Jon Klacik*

*Grand Junction, Colorado*

More Q&A can also be found at <http://www.rmef.org/Hunting/ElkHuntingQA/>