

# A Passion FOR ELK

BY GARRY DONALD

*One evening I was with my good friend, Dion Dieno, as he knew where a herd of elk had been spotted. Well, I couldn't believe it when we found the herd right away. I checked my equipment and sure enough my Sony video camera was on the blink so I grabbed my Nikon still camera along with a big lens and we were on our way. We hurried the half-mile in and I took a series of photos and soon the herd passed by us. Here the herd heads for parts unknown and they sure can eat up ground in an awful hurry. Garry Donald photo.*

That morning I had hiked in to the guts of the forest and quickly set up for elk. It was another great day to be alive as the scene in front of me was stunning. The fall colors were like a painting and even the birds were happy. My weapon of choice was my Sony video camera and soon I could hear bulls bugling in the distance. I was hunkered down in front of a big tree waiting and hoping they would come my way. Then more bugles erupted and they were much closer. At last I saw part of the herd with a big bull following a hot cow. My camera captured the moment as he put his head back and let out a call that made my hair stand up. I drank in the sights and sounds. Suddenly a big cow locked in on me and soon the bull was staring at me too. How in the world had they spotted me? A split second later he was in full gallop right for me and I didn't

even have time to move. Well, that bull ran right by me and I could have touched him if I could have moved. The problem was my heart had left my body but I managed to move my neck so I looked over my shoulder to see the 6 X 6 bull chase another big bull back into the thick timber. I then realized that the new bull had come in behind me and both the bull and cow were looking at him. How he didn't get my scent was beyond me. With enormous luck the herd stayed in the clearing for 20 minutes and I ended up with more footage. That trip and another one a week later made my year for elk one of best. The footage will be featured in my new wildlife movie coming out in 2015.

The pastures and prairie regions across Saskatchewan and Alberta have always held elk but they are generally hard to

*I travelled from the forest to the prairies in search of bull elk and ended up with amazing sights and sounds. There is nothing better than being 20 yards from a bull and having him bugling so loud it is downright scary.  
Garry Donald photo.*



find. In 2013 I figured out a couple herds of elk in two different areas and spent a great deal of time with them. To top it off I was one of the very lucky hunters that drew a special elk tag and ended up harvesting a massive southern bull in September of that year. With lower deer populations in the central and southern regions of Saskatchewan, I decided to switch it up and try to get more elk footage. I managed to do exactly that. One day I went out and set up on a bush line, waiting for first light. This area was one of the best places to ambush a trophy whitetail or mule deer but that morning all I saw was a small three point whitetail and two mule deer does. I was ready to pull up stakes and call it a day when I spotted movement. It was a big bull elk working his way back to

cover. I turned on my video camera and got him as he splashed across a small body of water and then laid a licking on a willow tree. He then turned and started towards me. At 30 yards he at last caught my scent, switched ends and headed for Manitoba. My footage was priceless as he went right through a slough spraying water everywhere. I will remember that moment forever.

So this fall, when the leaves are starting to turn color, and a distance bugle shatters the stillness of another morning the retired editor of this magazine will be waiting patiently somewhere in Saskatchewan for another rush of elk madness. There is just no better place to be. 📷