

# A Moose Hunt On The Pitman River

By Ron Munro

Every hunter should be so lucky as to have a friend like Pete Schoening. Pete called me up one day and said "Ron, I know you don't have a desire to fly around in small airplanes anymore, and I know you're not too crazy about riding horses, so how would you like to join me for a moose hunt by boat?" Hey, I grew up on the shore of Puget Sound, and have been around boats all my life, so you can guess that it only took about one second for me to be highly interested in Pete's offer.

Pete had just returned from the annual Guide - Outfitters Association of British Columbia Auction Fundraiser in Victoria, Canada, where he was the successful bidder on a couple of outfitter donated hunts. One auction item included 10 days of hunting moose with B.C. Safaris, of Prince George, British Columbia. Keith Connors and Shane Black own B.C. Safaris, and they are now hunting a new territory in northern British Columbia on the Spatsizi Plateau about 40 miles southeast of the community of Dease Lake. Their hunting territory includes about 1.5 million acres of land. They have a lodge at Turnagain Lake, and usually fly hunters into that location, where they go out from there on horseback. Their specialty is Stone sheep, and with 10 permits that accounts for about one-third of their hunters each year. They can take six grizzlies in any three-year period of time, and have no restrictions on the number of mountain caribou, mountain goats, moose, black bears and wolves that can be harvested

Pete knew both Keith and Shane as he had hunted moose with them at a different location in the past. He considered them to be good outfitters, and what intrigued him about the hunt that was offered was that it would take place along the Stikine River and the Pitman River, which rivers form the south border of B.C. Safaris newly acquired hunting area. We had a choice of hunting late in the summer, or later in the fall. Due to other hunting possibilities we both had on our agendas we chose the late summer hunt, even though we were warned that it was not the best time of year to expect a big bull moose down along the river.

Throughout the summer Pete teased me with bits of information about the area and the hunt, and I feverously worked at getting some consulting projects and timber sales wrapped up. Finally, on Monday August 26<sup>th</sup> we were on the road heading north. That day, with the aid of an early start, a smooth entry at the border, and the aid of the Coquihalla Highway toll road, we got into Prince George in time for a late dinner and a motel bed.

On Tuesday the 27<sup>th</sup> we headed westerly from Prince George towards Prince Rupert. Miriam and the boys and I were on this road back in 1965 on our way to catch the Alaska Ferry to Ketchikan. In those days the road was a little rougher, accommodations were few and far between, and there were still totems standing in the yards at the Indian villages of Kispiox and Hazelton. We stayed the summer of 1965 in Ketchikan, completed a timber inventory on Annette Island for the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and came back home in the fall on some pretty icy roads.

However, on this trip the weather was hot, the sky was clear, and the scenery was very enjoyable. We again stopped at Kispiox, as I wanted to show Pete all the totems in the villages. We were disappointed to find the villages were now made up of government cookie cutter style houses, and the totems were all new and standing in a park! About the only thing that hadn't changed much were the Indians netting salmon at the falls on the Kispiox River. One Indian girl told us that they were currently catching about 300 fish a day there. Some were being smoked on the spot, and sold on the highway a few hundred feet away.

At Kiwanga Junction we turned north a couple of hundred kilometers on Highway 37, and then west about 50 kilometers towards the town of Stewart. About 3 kilometers short of Stewart we passed by Bear Glacier, which was just south of the highway, across a small body of water, and less than a quarter mile away. Even though it was warm and raining there were still chunks of ice breaking off the glacier and floating around in front of us. By the time we got into Stewart it was late in the day, and we were both tired and hungry.

Stewart is an interesting town as it sits at the end of the Portland Inlet, and is on the Alaska - Canada border. The Portland Inlet must extend close to 200 kilometers inland from the coast, and Stewart is touted as "Canada's most northern ice free port". At dinner time we inquired why there appeared to be so many tourists in town and were told they were here to see the bears feeding on salmon. We were told to cross over to the US side, pass through the community of Hyder, and drive a few miles up a logging road to Fish Creek. It was also suggested that if we continued up the road a few more miles we would come to the Salmon Glacier.

In the evening we discussed the fact that if we were going to take in these tourist activities we should get up early, so that afterwards we could get back on the road again. Pete was tired and not feeling up to snuff, it was raining hard outside, and he suggested that any bear (or person for that matter) with good sense wouldn't get up until full daylight. Regardless, we were both awake before daylight, and we headed out to Fish Creek quite convinced that we would be the only ones standing there in the rain. When we got to the bear viewing area we were shocked to see that there were numerous people there ahead of us. First we were told we were parking in the wrong area, and then we were told to stay on the catwalk that had been built over Fish Creek. As we got in line, and followed others up the catwalk, a U.S. Forest Service employee with a hand held tallywacker counted us as person 42 and 43 for the morning!

As the fellow tallied me I couldn't help but think of some of my old College of Forestry classmates who went to work for the Forest Service because they wanted to help supply the nation with wood, and I wondered if any of them were now resigned to counting tourist someplace. As we wandered along the catwalk you could see salmon in the creek below, and a nearly equal number of fancy cameras mounted on tripods and umbrellas above. I felt a little inadequate with my old 110 camera, Pete was a little uneasy with all the people standing around, and when we found that no one had seen a bear since yesterday afternoon we decided to move on.

We drove further up the logging road in rain, clouds, and poor visibility. As we climbed higher we saw no sign of Salmon Glacier, and then all of a sudden the rain let up, the clouds started to lift, and there was the glacier below us. It appeared as a big sea of ice

and snow sweeping down through the draw. As Pete pointed out the various features of the glacier it struck me that I was traveling with a companion who had spent close to six decades scrambling over glaciers on several continents in his passion to reach the worlds highest peaks. I felt very lucky to be exactly where I was, and whom I was with, at that exact point of time.

Back on the road again we headed north towards Dease Lake. The highway travels through miles of undeveloped land, and in one place it was about 100 miles between gas stations. We saw three black bears feeding close to the road in various locations, but as hard as I looked, I never spotted a moose. It was raining hard along this stretch of highway, all the rivers were very high and muddy, and we worried about the condition of the Stikine River up ahead. As we headed north, however, the weather improved some and when we crossed over the Stikine it looks muddy, but navigable. When we got to Dease Lake in the early afternoon we learned our outfitters wouldn't arrive until the next morning some time, and we bummed around the area until nightfall.

On the morning of Thursday, August 29<sup>th</sup> we met Shane Black, and as I rode out to the seaplane base with him I knew within a few minutes that I was going to enjoy hunting with him. As he was busy getting other hunters lined up to fly to the B.C. Safaris lodge at Turnagain Lake Pete and I tried to be useful, but probably weren't, and we hung around the lakeshore until Keith Connors flew in to get some supplies. As Keith stepped out of his seaplane he reminded me of a cowboy that had spent his entire life on his horse. He hopped around on the pontoons and worked at loading the plane with casual precision, and it was obvious that he knew exactly what he was doing.

As the day progressed it was decided that we would not start up the river until the next day, and in the afternoon Pete and I drove north along the east shore of Dease Lake about 25 miles, and then back to the motel for an early dinner and bed.

Looking east, and up the Stikine River from near where the Highway crosses over.

At daylight on Friday the 30<sup>th</sup> Shane had the boat ready to go, we loaded our stuff in his rig, and drove 35 miles south to the boat launch under the highway bridge. The jet boat we were to travel up river in was an aluminum hull boat about 22 feet long, and perhaps about nine feet wide. It had an uncovered cockpit and a motor of about 300 horsepower. By 10 AM we were loaded and started upstream in a light rain.

Pete Schoening and Shane Black check our maps, and discuss the route we will take to reach our destination on the Pitman River. The bridge in the background is on Highway 37, about 35 miles south of Dease Lake.

As we traveled upstream I noted that the Stikine River is a good-sized river that ranges from about one-quarter mile wide in some places, to a couple of hundred feet wide at other places. Numerous sand and gravel bars crisscross the river basin in many locations, and there is evidence of continuous erosion along the shoreline.

While Pete and I had the luxury of sitting on seats if we chose to, Shane always stood leaning against the windshield, with one hand on the steering wheel, and close to the throttle. That way he could look out ahead at all times. We had not traveled very far before I realized that Shane was very experienced in navigating the water, and was an expert at detecting underwater gravel bars and hidden boulders up ahead. He had earlier told us that he had for many years participated with a partner in competitive canoe races,

and I felt quite comfortable with him as our "captain". In fact, I thought about the fact that Keith was a very experienced bush pilot, and with Shane's boating skills they made a great team for B.C. Safaris.

Traveling up the Stikine I noted two white birds swooping along the river in front of us. Shane identified them as arctic terns, and predicted they were picking bugs off the water with their long beaks. A short time later we came around a bend in the river and spotted two grizzly bear cubs at the water's edge. They appeared to be this year cubs, weighing perhaps 100 pounds each, and were brownish in color. As the boat got closer, they stood up on their hind feet for a second or two to get a better look at us, and then dropped back on all fours and scampered further along the sand bar. They each stopped two or three times to quickly stand and look at us before they were out of sight. We wondered where their mother was, predicted she was probably just on the other side of the sand bar someplace, and no one wanted to stop to find out.

After about 3 1/2 hours, and perhaps 65 miles, of constant travel we came to the confluence of the Stikine River and the Pitman River, and here we swung to the left and into the Pitman. About one-half mile up the Pitman we went ashore on the north bank and picked out a camping site. The area around us had burned from a forest fire a few years earlier, and while there were many green trees still remaining, there were also lots of snags and down trees suitable for firewood. As we were clearing our campsite, Keith flew over and indicated that he was going to land in the Stikine downstream a bit. As Shane went to retrieve Keith, Pete and I worked at getting the tent up and some firewood cut. We had a 12 by 14 foot wall tent, a wood stove and a propane camp stove for cooking. Shane and Keith were soon back, and between the four of us we had a comfortable camp established before dark.

On Saturday August 31st the four of us started upstream on the Pitman River. All the land on the north side of the Pitman in this area was within B.C. Safaris' new hunting territory, and this was the first time Keith and Shane had traveled this section of the river. At one location there was an old oxbow on the south side of the river, and we saw a small bull moose standing in the water and feeding. A little further along we saw a cow moose on a sand bar, again on the south side of the river, and she took off into the bush as the boat got closer. A few miles further and we came to the Tucho River, which came in from the north. B.C. Safaris' territory followed up this much smaller river, but not being sure whether we could traverse it, we turned and headed back downstream.

At one location Keith and I went ashore and walked through the brush in a large flat. We traversed through the willows and other brush in the flat, and up a slight rise to some very nice aspen trees, then swung back towards the river. Keith pointed out some areas that were heavily browsed, a fresh moose trail, and some old rubs. As we traveled through the bush he carried only a cruiser's axe, and I had to wonder just how useful it would be if we met up with a really ugly grizzly. As we walked along I stumbled at one point, and fell to the ground. Keith turned back towards me, and with a slight smile on his lips, said "checking for moose sign are you?"

While Keith and I were checking out the flat, Shane and Pete were a short distance downstream of us. While watching over their end of the same flat a small bull moose came from our direction and ran out into the river. It swam across the river, and not being able to climb the steep bank on the other side, it swam back again. It then ran down the

shoreline a ways, and swam back across the river. Pete could see it from his position, but felt it was a little too far away for a confident shot.

Except for one year, Keith Connors has guided hunters in British Columbia every year since 1976. He is a commercial pilot, with over 6,000 hours of flying in the bush. He has trapped and logged many winters, and it was a pleasure to spend some time with him during our hunt.

In mid afternoon the sun came out for the first time, and we headed back down stream. We took Keith back to his airplane, headed back to the camp, and shortly thereafter we had a thunderstorm and heavy rain.

On Sunday September 1<sup>st</sup> we head back upstream about 7AM. We see no moose along the river this morning, and stop at an old campsite that was established by resident hunters in the past. Even though B.C. Safaris have exclusive rights to guide non-residents within the area, they do not have the right to exclude Canadian residents that may choose to hunt the same area. The campsite we stopped at had probably been used for several years. In fact, it is probably still being used, but local hunters will not show up until the "rut is on". At one point these hunters built a tree stand that provided a view of a couple of brushy flats, and Pete couldn't resist getting a little higher to overlook the surrounding area.

After a while we headed downstream and stopped at another old oxbow. Pete and Shane looked over one arm of the slough, and I moved up the other fork a couple of hundred feet. I sat at the edge of the bush, and partly behind a rootwad. It was raining again, and visibility was not the best. Shane came over to join me, and as we sat there it dawned on me that all of a sudden we were looking straight across the slough at a moose standing just inside the timber. It was about 200 feet away, and identified by Shane as a cow. She knew something wasn't quite right, and she faded back into the brush and turned to her left. A short time later she came out into the slough and sloshed right across to our side. I had never watched a moose walk through shallow water like that, and I bet she picked up a gallon of water with each hoof as she went through the water. It would have been an excellent shot, but no horns.

Monday September 2<sup>nd</sup> we head up river about 8 AM, and stop at the slough where I saw the moose last evening. As we sit near the edge of the trees I have learned to sit a few feet away from Shane so he can listen for a moose. Pushing the head of his axe into the ground, he folds his hands over the handle, puts his head down on his hands and listens intently. He has very good hearing (just like I had when I was about his age), and I think he could hear a moose walking in the water about one-half mile away! We sit there for a while, and he once hears a moose walking at a distance. Out in front of me are some cinnamon teal in the water, and a short time later 4 grouse fly across the slough to our side. I'm hoping a big bull coming our way flushed them, but that turns out to be wishful thinking on my part.

As we continued further up stream a large mountain caribou swims across the river in front of us. He is a nice bull, with his antlers still in velvet, and as he gets to the shore he climbs the bank and shakes a few gallons of water from his hide. Pete has seen, and shot, caribou on some of his past hunts, but I believe the only other time I saw caribou in the woods was when we worked on a late winter timber inventory in northern Idaho, and a small band had drifted down into the area where we were working. That would have been

in the mid sixties sometime, but I'm no longer sure exactly which year it was. We stop at the location that Pete and Shane saw the bull swim the river a couple of days ago. Here we build a fire for lunch, and watch out over the brushy flat for an hour or two. At one point Shane detects a moose walk out to the river about one-half mile up stream. I am very impressed as I can only see it with the naked eye when its exact location is pinpointed, and to tell the truth I can't see it a whole lot better with my binoculars. I envy Shane's young eyes and excellent hearing! On the way down stream in the evening we see one other cow moose, but no bulls today. Today is the first day it hasn't rained since we left Prince George.

On Tuesday September 3<sup>d</sup> we head up river in better weather. We see a cow moose on the sandbar across from the slough where we have seen moose before, and she jogs off as the boat gets closer. As we go ashore we can see another cow feeding in the water a couple of hundred yards away, and Pete stays there to watch in hopes that a bull will join her. As Shane and I circle the slough Shane can hear a moose in the timber, and sure enough a large cow soon comes out and swims the slough to our side. I don't recall ever seeing a moose swimming before, and I am quite impressed that they are every bit as comfortable in the water as they are on the land. As we later return to Pete he says that he had cow moose within his view at least 50 percent of the time he was on his stand. After seeing so many cows I have come to realize that they far outnumber bulls along the river at this time of year.

By mid day it is warm and sunny, and Shane declares it to be perhaps the warmest day he has seen all summer. By evening it is cool and cloudless, and throughout the night we get a fair display of the northern lights.

Looking easterly up the Pitman River. The gun sight mountain on the left is Mt. Blair. For several days it was so overcast that we didn't know this beautiful range of mountains was just a few miles to our east. Shane declared it as excellent sheep country.

As the weather cleared up, it was a little colder standing at the the bow of the boat. For Pete, however, it was "old hat" to have a cold nose, and it didn't bother him a bit. Wednesday September 4<sup>th</sup> breaks clear and frosty, and we are soon on the river again. We return to our now favorite slough and Pete takes a stand where he can watch in a couple of different directions. Shane and I head through the timber to check around the comer of the old oxbow. We see a cow moose just below us swim across the slough, and a little further along we can see a cow and calf on the other side at the waters edge. As we sit watching them, we see another cow come out of the willows across the slough maybe 400 yards away. Shane can hear another moose back in the timber, and it soon comes out to join the distant cow.

As it appears, it is immediately evident that this moose is much blacker than the cows, and with the aid of binoculars we can see that it is a small bull. As I try to study its antlers with my good eye (and one half of the binoculars), I note that it seems to have a red streak in the velvet on its antlers, and I assume this is the result of starting to rub off the velvet. The bull joins with the cow that is about 400 yards away, and they start drifting in the general direction of the cow and calf. The cow with the calf is watching them intently, and when the other bull and cow get within a couple of hundred yards of her calf she charges across the slough and chases them away. What a great display of protection she demonstrates! The cow and calf soon retreat into the timber, and the bull

and other cow drift out of site around the corner of the slough. Shane decides we should cross the slough and go after them. At this point I should point out that my Danner gore-tex boots were still dry, but Shane's boots had been leaking for a few days, and he was less concerned than I was with walking in water over the tops of our boots. Regardless, we found a place where the water wasn't too deep and we trudged across with the water flowing over the tops of both boots.

We then slipped into the timber and worked our way in the general direction of the bull and cow. After going a few hundred yards we could just make them out on the other side of the slough. As we crept to a point where they were only about 200 feet away, Shane stopped where he could see both the bull and cow through the brush and trees. From where I stopped I could see what I thought was the bull, but couldn't see the cow. The cow was standing closer to us, and was quite nervous. She knew something was wrong, but was still a little uncertain what it was. I was kneeling down and I raised my rifle to the bull, but could not see his antlers. I then crawled ahead on my knees one and a half steps to where I could stick my rifle a little further out through the brush. I had my sights on what I was quite sure was the bull, but just to be sure I swung my scope to its head to confirm that he had horns. At that instant the cow broke her stance, and in a flash they both turned and disappeared into the bush.

I have had numerous opportunities to shoot big game over the last 50 years, and I long ago decided that no shot was better than an uncertain shot. So while I was somewhat disappointed with the missed opportunity, I was by no means discouraged. I'm sure Shane was disgusted with my lack of performance, however, but he was quite diplomatic about it, and assured me we would have another chance in the next few days.

On Thursday September 5th the day again breaks cool and clear and we head up river about 8 AM. We expect Keith to fly in sometime today with more fuel for the boat, so we plan on heading back to camp in the early afternoon. We again stop at the old oxbow slough where we saw the bull yesterday, and Shane and I circle through the timber. As we work our way along in the timber we see a moose in a puddle of water just below us. Eventually it trots across just in front of me, with bell dangling back and forth. Another excellent shooting opportunity, but no antlers. It is great fun, however, to watch her cover the ground in such a short period of time. As we sit at the edge of the slough we see another cow come out of the timber in the vicinity of where we saw the bull yesterday. We watch her for quite some time, but no bull joins her this morning.

On Friday September 6th we are running short of fuel for the boat, and decide to only take a short run up the river. We see one cow moose on a sand bar, but she spooks immediately upon seeing the boat. We briefly hunt our favorite slough in the morning, but see only three otters sunning themselves on an old snag in the water. Keith flies over, and we immediately turn back to the Stikine River to meet with him. He brings us some fuel, and an update of his other hunter's activities. After he flies off, we return to camp for a leisurely lunch, and then head back up the river in the late afternoon. We see no moose in the afternoon, even though we sit until nearly dark. As we head back down stream daylight is fading fast, and we all realize how dangerous it could be to try and navigate the river in total darkness.

One of the dangers along the river is the large trees that are in the process of sliding into the river as it erodes the bank away. Depending on the soil type, the terrain, and the

direction of the current, the riverbank in some places is in a state of perpetual motion as the water's movement undercuts the shoreline. In other places there are spruce and alpine fir that have slid enough that they are positioned at a sharp angle, or nearly horizontal to the water. It was evident that some of these trees have hung out over the river for years, as in some cases the tops of the trees have grown back to a nearly vertical position. As a forester I find great interest in viewing the trees in a location I have not previously visited. For over 40 years it has been my job to visit timber stands, make observations, and be prepared to provide a written summary of my findings. I find it difficult to sway from these old habits, and hunting trips are no exception.

Along the Pitman River area that we are hunting there appears to be five major tree species. Deciduous species include cottonwood and aspen. I am not exactly sure which cottonwood species is present, as it could be the same black cottonwood (*Populus trichocarpa*) we have at home, or it could be balsam poplar (*Populus tacamahaca*), which is a transcontinental species found throughout much of Alaska and Canada. It is locally referred to as "poplar", is generally scattered along the river drainages, and with some trees up to about 24 inches DBH (Diameter Breast High) is the largest tree that I noted.

By far the more common deciduous species is Quaking aspen (*Populus tremuloides*). Also referred to as "poplar" by the locals, it is found in small groves in many locations. Quaking aspen (referred to as "quakies" in some areas of the west) is probably the most widely distributed tree species found in North America. Generally it is fast growing, short lived, and is exceedingly intolerant to shade. When competing with other trees in the stand, it frequently has a tall, slender bole, and a small rounded crown.

The three most prevalent conifer species we saw along the river include a true fir, a spruce, and Lodgepole pine. I believe the true fir is Alpine fir (*Abies lasiocarpa*), as it is a true fir that is noted for having a very narrow crown that will successfully shed heavy snows. It is locally called Balsam fir, or just "balsam", but the true Balsam fir is not found west of the Rockies.

The spruce tree we saw I first thought was Englemann Spruce, but is more likely either Black Spruce (*Picea mariana*) or White spruce (*Picea glauca*), as my dendrology book indicates that Englemann spruce does not go that far north. I know nothing of either Black Spruce or White Spruce, and there is the possibility that both are present in the area. They generally grow close to the watercourses, and I did not see one that exceeded 20 inches DBH.

There are large numbers of Lodgepole pine in the area. It is an easy tree to identify as it is a two-needle pine, and the cones always point back to the bole of the tree. I have worked in other parts of the west where Lodgepole is referred to as "jack pine" or "black pine". Most of the trees we saw are less than 16 inches DBH, and as I recall the largest one I saw was about 18 inches DBH.

All up and down the river there was evidence of continuous erosion, and many trees are in the water along the shoreline, or are in logjams on the gravel bars. I particularly noted the bole of one spruce tree that had been washed and rolled along the river to the point where there was absolutely no bark or limbs left, the top had been broken out at about 6 inches in diameter, and every root smaller than about 5 inches in diameter was gone. It reminded me of what a sharp angled rock would look like after a couple of weeks in a rock tumbler.

On Saturday, September 7<sup>th</sup> we again head up river in the morning. It is cloudy today, and Shane predicts that more rain is less than a day away. We again see one cow moose in our favorite slough, and while Pete watches her, Shane and I swing around the corner to the area where we saw the bull a couple of days ago. Far out across the willow flat we watch another cow, and we wade the slough again. By this time the better weather had dropped the water level in the slough, and I crossed without filling my boots with water. We hang around the area for a while, but no bull moose today.

We return to the boat and continue upstream. At every location along the river where the water is not running fast we have noted beavers feverishly pulling green aspen limbs to feet stations that will be used once the river freezes over this winter. As we approach them with the boat, they generally let go of the aspen limb and dive below to deeper water. One beaver, however, was not going to be intimidated by the approaching boat, and when it dove it took the limb right underwater with it. Near every feed station was a place along the shoreline where the beavers had developed a hole in the riverbank, or built a more typical hut of sticks and mud right up against the bank. I assume someone traps this territory during the winter months, but we saw no evidence of such during our hunt.

At one location along the river we stop and Shane takes some coordinates with his GPS, as he feels this location might be a better spot for a more permanent campsite for future hunts. I certainly concur with that, as the current campsite is downstream of a stretch of the river where we saw little game during our hunt. We all understood the advantage of having the camp downstream of the hunting area, just in case the boat broke down, but the potential new site will afford more hunting time in better moose territory for future hunters.

On Sunday September 8<sup>th</sup> we make one last run up the river in the morning. We do not see any moose along the river today, and I realize that I am probably never going to get a shot at that bull we saw a few days ago.

We return to break camp, ditch the wood stove in the bush, and by 2 PM we start downstream towards the highway. We get downstream without incident, and at 5:30 PM we are back to the boat launch. Within a short time we have our stuff loaded into Shane's rig, and we return to Dease Lake and a motel room for the evening.

Early next morning Pete and I are up early, and we are on the road by 5AM. We see two more black bears along the highway today, and by evening time we are back to Prince George. On Tuesday, September 10<sup>th</sup> we again start out a little before daylight. We take the highway down the Fraser River canyon this time, and we get back to Woodinville about 6PM.

So, in summation, I can say that I had a wonderful trip. I saw a lot of country that I hadn't seen before, and I met a lot of nice people that I didn't know before. Sure it would have been nice to have had one more second to shoot that bull moose Shane put me onto, but that is sometimes the way hunting goes. I also think that perhaps we would have had better hunting a little later in the year, when the bulls are in the rut and hanging around where the cows are. But I have seldom hunted anywhere that it wasn't declared, "You should have been here last week", or "too bad you can't stay another week, as that is when the good hunting will start".

Pete was, as always, the perfect companion to travel and hunt with. Always full of optimism, and always anxious and curious to see what's around the next bend. As I said at the beginning of this write up, I am a lucky guy to have him as a friend.