



Daniel Ware's bull scored 353 2/8, making it Kentucky's fourth all-time typical elk.

BRIAN ENGEL PHOTO

Bull Elk of a Lifetime

LAST YEAR, A friend of mine, Chris Fredi, reminded me that it was the last day to put in for Kentucky's elk hunt drawing. Since I was interested in hunting elk and had never put in for a permit, I decided to apply for a firearms permit for a bull. About a week later, I received a letter notifying me that I had been drawn.

My uncle was obviously envious when he congratulated me. He has put in for 10 years and has been only been drawn for a cow permit. He just could not believe I was drawn. This would be my first elk hunt.

I was selected for Elk Hunting Unit 2. I

had to purchase a rifle and practice, practice, practice. I settled on a 7mm Remington Magnum, based on Internet blogs and discussions with my friends who hunt elk in New Mexico and Colorado.

I shot the gun more than 100 times. A few weeks before the hunt, I hit the bull's-eye at 200 yards. I was confident that I could hit the vital areas of an elk at long range.

As the date drew near, I had not had any time to scout. With some help from my uncle, I found a great guide service at a reasonable price. I called a buddy of mine who regularly hunts elk in New Mexico for

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back up. We met Friday night in Breathitt County and fell asleep to the bugles of rutting elk.

In the morning, we came upon a herd so close that we could smell them. We led them in hopes they would cross our path, but a truck came through the area, pulling what seemed like miles of metal fence. The herd changed direction. The wind picked up after the morning hunt and the bulls quit bugling.

We struggled to locate elk over the next three days. We averaged 10-12 miles a day while stalking a big 8x8 known to be in the area. No luck. However, my guide, Matt Bentley, knew of a bull that he and his 5-year-old nephew had seen within bowhunting range. The boy told his family that the elk was mean and had big red eyes.

So, that Monday morning, Oct. 15, we started to look for Red Eye the Destroyer. We heard a bugle as we walked up a road in early morning. We began to stalk. Once closer to the spot, we saw two bull elk fighting. I took aim as they ran off.

We heard a bugle again. We stalked inside of a tree line until Matt stopped and said, "He's a shooter."

I set up, waiting for the cows to move from behind him. When he turned broadside, I took the shot and Red Eye fell. We waited, said a prayer and then called to telecheck him. What an amazing experience – and a bull of a lifetime. ■

Author Daniel Ware is an architect in Lexington. He began hunting in Kentucky five years ago and has been hooked ever since.