

SUDDENLY QUIET, the bright-orange, one-time Danish Coast Guard boat drifted with the current, water lapping rhythmically at its sides. Glass to eyes, we stared at a massive ridge scattered with boulders of every size and shape. My eyes didn't know what they were seeing, and I couldn't quite comprehend the landscape.

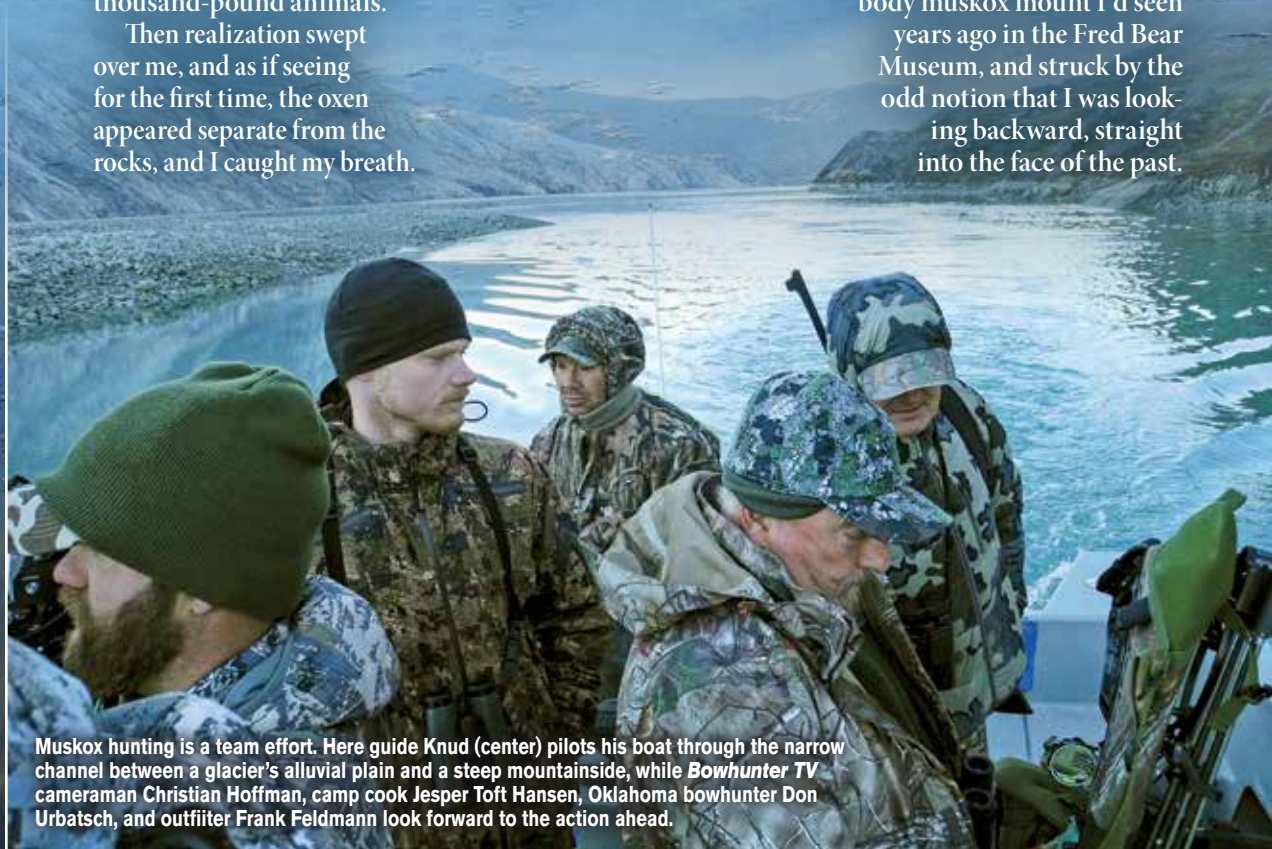
Then outfitter Frank Feldmann spoke in Danish to our guide, Knud, who drifted alongside us in a second boat and nodded in agreement, pointing at a distant spot on the ridge. A dozen or so musk oxen were spread out across the slope, but I could not see one of the thousand-pound animals.

Then realization swept over me, and as if seeing for the first time, the oxen appeared separate from the rocks, and I caught my breath.

The animals were big, but this country was much, much bigger than I'd ever expected.

Unfortunately, none of the bulls were old enough — Frank aims to take only mature animals — so we moved westward along the coast, passing great monuments of rock that stirred the imagination.

Surely the native Inuits who have hunted these fjord lands and archipelagos on Greenland's southern tip find great spiritual power in the rocks and ice, and in the amazing array of life that ekes out an existence here. For my part I was spellbound, living a dream first inspired by the full-body muskox mount I'd seen years ago in the Fred Bear Museum, and struck by the odd notion that I was looking backward, straight into the face of the past.



Muskox hunting is a team effort. Here guide Knud (center) pilots his boat through the narrow channel between a glacier's alluvial plain and a steep mountainside, while *Bowhunter* TV cameraman Christian Hoffman, camp cook Jesper Toft Hansen, Oklahoma bowhunter Don Urbatsch, and outfitter Frank Feldmann look forward to the action ahead.

BULLS OF THE FJORDS

BIG GAME
BH
SPECIAL

ADVENTURE & PHOTOGRAPHY BY

JEFF WARING, PUBLISHER

BULLS OF THE FJORDS

Soon we rounded a point heaped with boulders, skirted smoothly between two bare islands where a couple of caribou clattered along the shore before trotting off, and then we made for open water. Now up on plane, the boat buzzed, and the warmth of the motor radiated from beneath us while a cold salt spray arched overhead.

Some minutes later, the hum of the motor altered slightly and the boat banked toward land and entered what appeared to be a long finger of the sea, smooth as a lake but held in check by rock-strewn hills, sheer cliffs, and towering mountains. Frank piloted the boat gently down the center of the waterway, glassing and pointing, and talking with Knud who would ease his boat close. Then we'd part again, both boats gliding down the fjord while we glassed every spot where the roots of grass and brush somehow found a hold.

Then all motion stopped as Frank pointed at the left bank. He and Knud had a quick, broken conversation, and a decision was made. A proper bull had been spotted with a small herd of cows and calves, and the situation was worth a try. Frank quickly anchored his boat, and we all clamored over the side into Knud's boat and headed for shore.

Lane Johnson, a hardcore bowhunter making his living on

the oil and gas fields of North Dakota, drew the first stalk. He was second out of the boat, after Frank, who had leapt into a pile of seaweed left hanging by the receding tide. Lane sloshed over the wet lettuce, and struggled for a foothold on the slimy black rocks. *Bowhunter TV* cameraman Christian Hoffman was next. Bows and camera gear were quickly gathered up and the trio headed up the steep bank, disappearing amid the boulders.

Knud climbed to a grassy promontory where he lay in the sun and kept tabs with his binoculars. Don Urbatsch, a tremendously accomplished bowhunter (and retired drilling fluid engineer) from Oklahoma, waited his turn, patiently watching from the boat. Another serious bowhunter and North Dakota drilling operations supervisor, Rory Sanford, kicked his legs up on the side of the boat and slid his hands behind his head, taking a moment to fight jetlag. And like a true tourist, I grabbed my camera and headed for a better vantage point.

Then it grew still. Very still. The guys were probably only gone for a half-hour or so, but it seemed like hours. Then I noticed that Don and Rory were pointing off down the hillside and Knud was at attention. Several musk oxen rumbled downhill then the bull came into view with the long, flowing hair on his side glistening red. Quickly the hunters emerged from their cover and moved into position for another shot. Lane came to full draw with Christian over his shoulder, and a second arrow



(Clockwise from top left) North Dakota bowhunter Lane Johnson drew first blood. The bosses on his big bull showed lots of wear and tear. Fellow North Dakotan Rory Sanford couldn't wait to haul meat back to the boat. There's no shortage of musk oxen in southwest Greenland, and while their behavior makes them an excellent quarry for bowhunters, it's not easy to spot a mature bull in a vulnerable position.

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flashed through the bull. The big animal turned awkwardly and plunged downhill in our direction, piling up about a hundred yards from us in plain view. We could hear Lane's shouts of joy and saw him holding his bow above his head in that time-honored salute. Don, Rory, and I couldn't wait to share in the celebration and put our hands on a muskox.

Over the next three days we became increasingly comfortable with life in Frank's little cabin on the rocks and the muskox-hunting routine, rising at first light to camp cook Jesper's amazing breakfasts with scrambled eggs, bacon and various smoked and cured meats and fish, fried potatoes, crusty brown bread with butter, jams, or soft cheeses, and plenty of hot coffee and chocolate. For lunch there'd be meats, cheeses, fruit and snacks, which we'd stuff into our packs to eat later. Then we'd head out onto the water, where we were greeted by the shrill sounds of gulls and the occasional distant barking of seals. We'd spend our days on long, winding trips into the fjords, glassing for hours for stalking opportunities, and sometimes taking a break to fish for cod, char, or salmon. At the end of the day we'd return to a grill smoking with ox, caribou, or Greenland lamb chops.

Each of us had our opportunity to stalk into bow range of a trophy-class muskox. And each of us had our own unique

hunting experience. I was second, as Frank had located a mature bull bedded on a rocky peninsula jutting into the fjord and opposite a glacier. The spot was breathtaking in more ways than one. The quick climb over the rocks had my heart pounding. Following Frank's lead, Christian and I crept to within 30 yards of the bedded bull. As he rose, I came to full draw but was distracted by the bright sunlight flooding my peep. As the bull began to move, I punched the release and sent my arrow slicing through the bull, but a bit back. Unsure of the first arrow, I quickly nocked and released a second arrow, and a third, and then put a fourth arrow into the big animal from above.

Amazingly, the big shaggy beast rumbled through a boulder gateway and Frank hustled to keep an eye on him. To our relief the bull did not go far, but the lesson is: Do not take these big-chested, heavy-boned animals lightly.

The next morning, Oklahoman Don Urbatsch caught a herd by the water at the end of a fjord. Don, Frank, and Christian planned a long stalk up and around the musk oxen to get the wind right and come down from above. The three hunters were out of view for a very long time, but then they appeared suddenly, eased around a hill and into the willows with the oxen. Don showed us all how to do it the right way, stalking to within 30 yards and then — with Frank's help — balancing on a boulder to shoot down into a big herd bull that had separated from the



(Clockwise from top left) We caught my dream bull bedded alone on a steep, rocky hillside. Lane Johnson helped keep us in fresh fish, in this case a nice cod. Outfitter Frank Feldmann was very proud of Don Urbatsch's big bull. Life was very good back at Frank's little cabin on the rocks.



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rest of the animals. Don hit the bull just right, and it quickly collapsed in a woolly heap. It was an exciting hunt to watch, but it was only the first of the amazing stalks we'd see that day. Later, as we were on our way back to camp, Rory spotted a tremendous caribou, and the hunt for that bull was one of the best I've ever witnessed (see sidebar, "One More Stalk," below).

The following day, still on an emotional high from our previous day's successes, we entered the same great

fjord and located a grizzled old muskox for Rory. He and Frank and Christian headed off to stalk the bull, while the rest of us got comfortable on the hillside and watched an Inuit cull hunt for cows and calves take place on the opposite shore. It was fun to watch what appeared to be entire family units, including our guide Knud's family, carefully determine their quarry and then skillfully close the distance and harvest the animals with rifles that sounded like pop guns from across the water. We watched as teams of young and old gathered around the kills and

pieced out the animals before hauling them off on plastic sleds.

We were an hour or so into the hunt when Frank returned and told us that Rory had the old bull down in a steep-sided creekbed choked with willow brush. We loaded up once more to boat closer and give Rory a hand with the recovery. Upon seeing Rory's bull, it was clear that he'd done it again, as his gray-faced bull probably had the most character of the bulls we'd taken.

With four musk oxen down, we could now focus entirely on caribou. We knew

ONE MORE STALK By Rory Sanford

It was late in the day, but we still had enough time for one more stalk, so we headed toward the glacier where Jeff had killed his muskox. The glacier and runoff into the fjord was an unreal sight to see, but we were in search of another muskox. That's when we spotted a magnificent caribou bull and his cows over a thousand yards up the rocky ridge before us. While outfitter Frank Feldmann and guide Knud talked things over in Danish, my hunting partners and I excitedly tried to figure out how best to get on that big, tall-antlered bull.

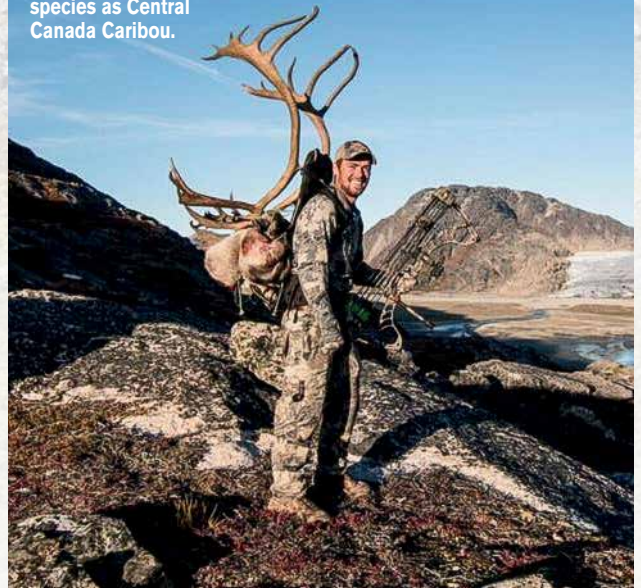
After a few moments, Frank calmly turned, stowed his binoculars in the boat's console, and announced that it was time to head back to camp for dinner. My mind raced as I frantically questioned him about the caribou bull on the ridge. "What bull?" was his reply. Realizing that Frank and Knud had been focused on something else and had not seen the bull, we quickly pointed out the white-chested animal. "Let's go!" Frank nearly shouted, eyes wide with excitement.

Frank, cameraman Christian Hoffman, and I quickly got into Knud's boat to head for shore. The hike up the ridge was almost straight vertical, but at about 300 yards we reached the first of several benches. We were racing time with the sun getting lower in the sky, and we closed the distance as fast as we could. As we reached the wide bench where we'd last seen the herd, we crept over the edge for a quick look. As luck would have it, the bull caught our movement and was staring right at us. We could do nothing but stand still, hoping the wandering cows would soon demand his full attention.

We froze in amazement as the big bull whirled, looking at his cows and then back at us, all the while snorting and grunting. After about 15 minutes, the bull followed his herd away from us and around a big point of rocks where the cows were grazing. We quickly moved to get on the same level, and then belly-crawled to within 70 yards. When we reached a rock pile at 62 yards, Frank asked me if I was comfortable with a shot at that distance, but I was not because I had my bow set up with heavy Easton FMJ Dangerous Game shafts intended for muskox, and I'd only shot out to 50 yards. So, we settled in and waited for the perfect shot.

Christian had crept into a better position for filming, and we were just enjoying the show when Frank whispered excitedly, "Here they come, right at us!" A small satellite bull had split the herd and then headed right down the bench toward us, bringing a few cows with him. I drew back as the caribou

This scene is burned into my memory! Likely one of the biggest bow-killed Greenland bulls in modern history, my caribou measured 394% SCI-style inches. The P&Y Club classifies the species as Central Canada Caribou.



came running by, and my heart was pounding with anticipation. I could hear the big bull roaring behind the herd, and then suddenly he charged onto the scene and paused just long enough for me to settle my top pin on him and release. Immediately a flood of red signaled a double-lung hit, and the bull turned and raced off, crashing down about 80 yards straight away from us.

That's when buck fever took over and I shook as I realized that I'd just taken the trophy of a lifetime, and Christian had filmed it all. But we still had no idea how special this bull was. As we headed over to take a look at the bull, Frank got more and more excited. In fact, he seemed to be more excited than I was, which I didn't think was possible. When I finally grasped the bull's antlers, Frank confided that I'd likely just shot one of the biggest Greenland caribou ever taken with bow and arrow. Christian and I looked at each other in total disbelief, like Frank was playing a joke on us! But it was no joke.

A smiling Knud soon met us at the kill site, and we raced against the fading daylight to get the animal to the boat. As we headed down the ridge, I looked over at the glacier and, despite the heavy pack, I cannot recall an easier, more beautiful hike. It truly was one of the best days of my life.

BULLS OF THE FJORDS



Rory Sanford certainly made the most of his time in Greenland, not only taking an incredible caribou bull but also this big, gray-faced muskox.



I was thrilled to take this old Greenland caribou! But I know there are much bigger bulls where he came from...

the hunt just got a lot more difficult, but we also looked forward to the challenge. Don and Lane split off with Jesper and Knud, respectively, and Christian and I headed off with Frank. We climbed high into the mountains above the fjord where both Don and Rory had taken their big musk oxen. Once over the top, we glassed for caribou in great, rocky basins with lakes fed by crystal-clear snowmelt. This was another world entirely...

After locating several small herds with potential shooters, we made our way toward the basin closest to us. One lone,

bedded bull seemed destined for a stalk, and amazingly Frank and I belly-crawled — sometimes slid, in my case — to within about 50 yards. But as I moved into position for a shot the wind swirled, and the bull got up out of his bed and began to move away. I launched an errant arrow and the bull, head held high, simply turned and jaunted off. We considered another attempt, but as the bull moved rapidly away, Frank suggested that we make better use of our time and hustle over to the next basin where the animals were not aware, and the wind was more favorable.

Knowing we were several miles into the backcountry and the clock was ticking, Frank kept us moving along briskly. As we sidehilled over the boulders toward the next basin, which was currently obscured from view by a large rockslide, we stumbled upon a gnarly old bull that was fast asleep.

Just as the bull climbed to his feet, Frank said firmly, “Big bull! Shoot him!” As out of sorts as I’d sometimes felt during the trip, I suddenly focused on each step of the process and calmly pulled an arrow from my quiver, knocked it, hooked

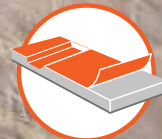


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onto my D-loop, turned and drew, setting my top pin on the bull's opposite front leg, then pulled through the release as if on autopilot.

The bull charged headlong downhill and crashed about 50 yards straight away. I couldn't help but shock Frank with a big hug. I just felt so thankful!

There's more to the story. As Frank and Christian worked their way around the rockslide to get a view of what was happening in the near basin. I tucked in beside



(Left to right) Getting my gnarly old bull off the mountain was quite a task, but it was even more rewarding to find that Lane and Don had also scored on great bulls the same day!

GROW FOOD PLOTS JUST ABOUT ANYWHERE

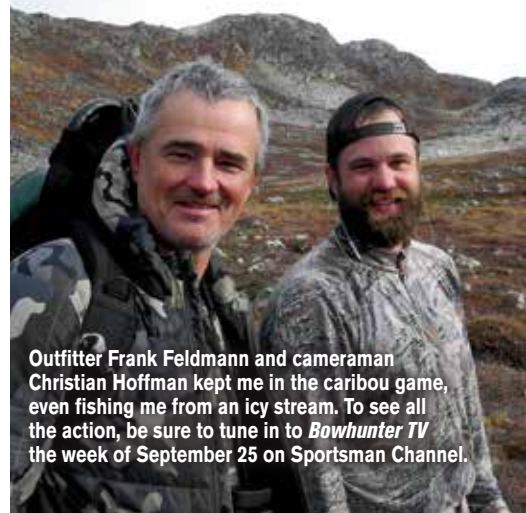
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my downed bull and had a front-row seat for some of the most amazing caribou rutting action I've ever seen. Several big bulls chased cows in a great swirling circle, and eventually the herd worked its way right by me. I'm quite confident that a couple of those bulls could rewrite the record books.

Packing out took its toll on me, and the boat ride back was cold and wet, but Frank's little cabin on the rocks never appeared more welcoming. We were greeted by two other very happy hunters — both Don and Lane had taken good bulls as well. That evening we celebrated under an amazing display of dancing Northern Lights, shared stories, planned the next day's fishing trip, and wondered aloud how we'd ever top this Greenland adventure. **BH**

AUTHOR'S NOTES: My hunting gear included a Hoyt Nitrum with accessories from Spot-Hogg and Tight-Spot; Muzzy Trocar-tipped Easton shafts with Bohning Blazer Vanes; Cabela's MTO50 clothing in Mossy Oak Break-Up Country, Kenetrek Mountain Extreme boots, and Nikon optics and rangefinder. To plan your own Greenland adventure, contact Frank Feldmann at mail@greenlandoutfitters.com, or visit his website at bowhuntinggreenland.com. Frank is a bowhunter, and one of the hardest-working individuals you'll have the pleasure to know. He will take excellent care of you.



Outfitter Frank Feldmann and cameraman Christian Hoffman kept me in the caribou game, even fishing me from an icy stream. To see all the action, be sure to tune in to *Bowhunter TV* the week of September 25 on Sportsman Channel.