



ICEBERGS AND MUSKOX



**CHECK OUT THIS NEW EXPERIENCE
IN A NEW BOWHUNTING LAND!**

Muskox are truly a spectacular and very underrated trophy. Here I am proudly sitting next to my Greenland muskox.

IN LIFE, WE TAKE SOME THINGS FOR GRANTED. BOWHUNTING IS ONE OF THOSE THINGS.

Did you know bowhunting is illegal in many European countries? Imagine if we had to convince our elected officials to make bowhunting legal in all 50 states? That's exactly what the European Bowhunting Federation (EBF) faces in promoting bowhunting across Europe.

Back in the 1980s, Bowhunter Conservation Editor Dr. Dave Samuel traveled to London and Denmark to promote the National Bowhunter Education Foundation (NBEF) course to 13 European countries. One of his students was a Swedish bowhunter named Anders Gejer. Now, 30 years later, Anders is President of EBF and I am on the NBEF's Board of Directors. It is through this association that Anders and I met.

Fast forward to July 2012, when Anders sent me an e-mail with a subject line of, "You interested?" Anders had connected with Frank Feldmann, owner of Bowhunting Greenland and the only outfitter licensed to guide in Greenland, who had been corresponding with wildlife authorities in Greenland about the legalization of bowhunting for muskox. Because the authorities were skeptical about the effectiveness of a bow, they decided that wildlife officials would observe



the hunt. The results would determine whether bowhunting for muskox would remain legal.

Anders wrote that there was one tag left, so I jumped at the opportunity. Although I had less than two months to get ready, the thought of hunting a creature that lived side by side with a woolly mammoth (muskox are one species that survived the mysterious Pleistocene Epoch) was beyond my wildest dreams.

Although the muskox season in Greenland runs from July 1 to October 15, hunting beyond the second week of September is not advisable due to unpredictable weather. Our seven-day hunt, with *Bowhunter TV* cameraman Jim Thompson, was scheduled for the beginning of September.

The travel to Greenland was an adventure in itself. We had to fly from the States to Reykjavik, Iceland, stay overnight, and then fly on to Narsarsuaq, Greenland. That was followed by a five-hour boat ride to Camp Korallhytten. Prior to the boat trip, we met Anders and two bowhunters from Finland, Juha Kylma and Asko Kukkonen. Just the fact we would be the first to ever hunt muskox in Greenland with archery tackle was going to be an overwhelming experience.

You know you're in Greenland when your boat has to navigate icebergs, a vision that can't help but conjure up thoughts of the RMS Titanic. After a long day of travel, we arrived at camp around 10 p.m. and met Frank Feldmann.

We awoke the next morning to picturesque mountains and crystal-clear water. Frank hunts out of a very comfortable cabin located along the coast of Ikka Fjord. It was a remote area with little chance of encountering another human. Like



European Bowhunting Federation President Anders Gejer with his muskox bull.

a mother hen taking care of her chicks, Frank was busy on his satellite phone constantly checking weather conditions.

Frank then offered instructions on exactly where to shoot a muskox. "Because of the long fur, it's very easy to shoot too low," Frank said. "Aim behind the front leg and about 17 inches down from the back." This is more difficult than it seems because of the shoulder hump and long fur on the back as well. Occasionally a muskox's disposition can turn sour, so Frank is required to carry a firearm while guiding.



The scenery outside the camp was incredible. No scribe could ever fully capture the sheer beauty of Greenland.

The hunt strategy is to cruise the coastline and glass the mountains for muskox. Once a quality bull is spotted, Frank takes his hunters out one on one. The other hunters go along as extra sets of eyes, and if the hunter is successful, to help carry out the meat. Frank is an avid bowhunter, so he understood our need to get close.

Our wildlife observers were also in camp, and putting cultural differences aside, the look on their faces said it all. They were professional, but they were obviously skeptical about killing a muskox with a bow. Everyone in camp knew our success or failure would determine the future of bowhunting muskox

in Greenland. We had a job to do, and our experience would have to get us through it.

Juha was the first to shoot a muskox. Although his shot was a good one, the muskox ran 200 yards before it fell. We thought the wildlife observers would be upset, but not so. The Inuits generally shoot muskox with a .30-06, often multiple times, and they run a half-mile before expiring. Because of their limited archery knowledge, the wildlife observers couldn't believe the efficiency of our bows! Their opinions were changing quickly. Next up was Asko, followed by Anders. Both men killed their trophies with perfect shots, and both bulls went less than 40

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(Left to right) Our muskox party included cameraman Jim Thompson, Asko Kukkonen, me, Frank Feldmann, Anders Gejer, and Juha Kylma.



On the bulls, the horn "boss" is very dense and can measure four inches thick and more than 12 inches wide.

Because of the great habitat in Area 11, muskox cows regularly bear two calves, contributing to a healthy population. Unlike other muskox, the southern Greenland herd doesn't migrate to escape the harsh winter conditions, which may even contribute to improved horn growth. Their under-wool, called qiviut (kiv-ee-ute), is said to be eight times warmer than sheep's wool, and the yarn can cost up to \$80 per ounce. Inuit craftsmen and women use qiviut to hand-knit some of the most luxurious garments in the world.

All of the meat from our hunt was donated to the Inuits in a nearby village. With the limited amount of red meat in this part of the world, we all felt good about our charitable giving.

As I contemplated whether to go on this hunt, I asked myself why would I want to hunt in -40 degree weather? For me, hunting muskox on the frozen tundra really didn't have any appeal. Pursuing this special animal, on a true spot-and-stalk hunt in September, sounded much better. And hunting with Frank Feldmann of Bowhunting Greenland was incredible. He took care of all the details and paperwork on the Greenland end, and while the travel is complex, that's all part of the adventure of experiencing a new culture.

Muskox live all across the Arctic Circle in Canada, Alaska, Greenland and Siberia. Although some believe there are two subspecies (Greenland and Barren Ground), new genetic information has determined little to no difference. Muskox are the largest herbivore in the Arctic, with a life expectancy of 12 to 20 years.

I mailed the bottom front incisors from my bull to Wildlife Analytical Laboratories (www.DeerAge.com) for aging. They used the *cementum annuli* method to determine my bull was seven years old. Anders' muskox was two years old, which he took on purpose so he could have a tanned, flat rug done. Bear and buffalo hides are cool, but a muskox rug is incredible!

Although muskox in northern Greenland must deal with wolves and polar bears, Area 11, where Frank hunts, experiences very minimal predation. Both sexes of muskox have horns, and the curved, pointed tips help them defend against predators.

yards before they collapsed! Without a doubt, we were making a lasting impression on everyone involved with this hunt.

Back at camp, everyone was pumped except for me. I was having a full-blown hissy fit! Why? Did I mention my bow case did not arrive in Iceland with the rest of my luggage? After waiting three full days for my bow to arrive, and helping Anders, Juha and Asko take three good bulls, my bow finally arrived at camp. Frank told us it took the boat operator 12 hours to deliver my bow at a cost to the airline of \$6,000!

The next morning I jumped out of bed and shot my bow. Everything was right on target. Now it was my turn. We headed out to the area where Juha had taken his bull the first day, and it didn't take long before Frank spotted a herd along the

far coastline. As I glassed the 25 or more muskox in the herd, I couldn't see any big bulls. But Frank assured me he'd seen a big bull slip into the Arctic willows, just out of sight. He suggested we beach the boat and make a mile-wide stalk around the grazing muskox.

Our plan was to go completely around a large patch of the willows and come up on the herd from the backside. The four-foot-tall willows were just dense enough to be the perfect stalking cover. As I checked the wind, Jim said, "C.J., you're going to tip over a muskox today!" I appreciated his words of encouragement, but remember, in addition to myself and Jim, we had Frank and two Inuit wildlife observers on this stalk. That is a lot of humanity to keep hidden.

As Frank guided us through the willows, he suddenly stopped. About 100 yards in front of us was a cow and a calf. We diverted along a well-used muskox trail that led directly toward the shoreline. As we crept closer to the edge, Frank whispered, "C.J., get ready, quickly! The good bull is coming off the rocky beach directly toward us."

I got my bow ready, but I still hadn't seen the bull yet. When

the bull cleared an opening, I saw he was huge and anxiety started to surface, mostly because there was no time to use my rangefinder. The bull was starting to walk away and it was a now or never shot opportunity. I stood up above the willows and released my arrow. What I quickly estimated to be a 25-yard shot was actually 35 yards, and my arrow struck the muskox low.

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My estimated 700-plus pound bull, shown here being protected by the rest of the herd, fell within 25 yards of the seashore, making it way too easy to quarter and haul the meat back to camp on the boat.

The bull ran about 100 yards and stopped. Then, in a defensive behavior that's uncommon in the rest of the animal kingdom, the other muskox huddled around the bull to protect him. Once again, we used the willows as cover and stalked to within 20 yards of the group. After waiting for him to clear the other animals, I placed another arrow through both lungs. The bull took off, but this time he didn't go far.

As I knelt beside the fallen bull, I thought about all the things that had led up to this opportunity: the trip Dr. Dave Samuel made 30 years ago to help spark bowhunting in Europe, the efforts of both the EBF and NBEF, and the work Frank had done to make this particular hunt happen. And, as bowhunters, we had done our part too, because ultimately bowhunting for muskox was approved for 2013, and as of this writing, the bowhunting of reindeer (considered central Canada barren ground caribou) in Greenland is about to be approved.

It was a bowhunting experience of a lifetime and I learned one very important lesson: I will never again take bowhunting for granted. ««

AUTHOR'S NOTES: On this trip I used a Hoyt Carbon Matrix RKT set at 83 pounds, Easton Full Metal Jacket arrows with Bohning Blazer Vanes, Muzzy Phantom broadheads, Spot-Hogg sight, and clothing from Cabela's.

If you're interested in booking an incredible adventure hunt with Bowhunting Greenland Outfitters, contact Frank Feldmann on his cell at 00299 284851 or by e-mail at mail@greenlandoutfitters.com, or visit www.bowhunting-greenland.com.

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