

## MY WYOMING MOOSE "SUPER TAG"



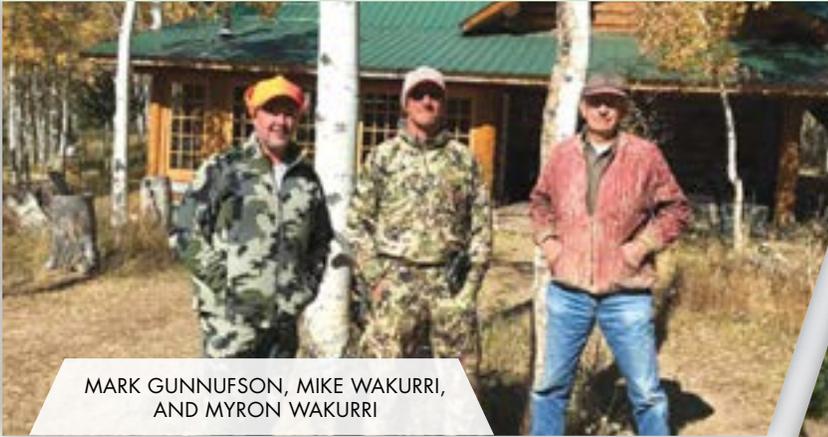
HUNTER: MARK GUNNUFSON  
SPECIES: SHIRAS MOOSE  
LOCATION: WYOMING

It was July 13<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup> when I noticed a missed call from a 307 area code. A quick check of the voicemail indicated that it was from someone from the Wyoming Game & Fish Department. Curiosity met with quick concern as I almost immediately returned the call. The gentleman, Glenn Pauley, the Outreach Specialist who is responsible for contacting Super Tag winners and providing additional support information as needed, introduced himself and asked if I had applied for any hunting licenses in Wyoming this fall. I replied with brief detail on how my son and I had used our max preference points to draw a great late season elk hunt just west of Cody. Concern grew from me, thinking there might be some sort of problem or something significant may have happened, such as an extreme wildfire. Glenn asked if I had applied for anything else, upon which I shared that we had also applied for moose and mountain goat and also mule deer points.

After another pause, he said, "Well, Mark, do you also recall applying for any of our Super Tag licenses?" Since I had, my heart began to jump a beat while he continued to inform me that I had drawn the Super Tag for moose! Excitement grew with immediate concern over now having two trips combined with also providing support for my father who was currently in the hospital battling unknown complications after a recent fall.

Fortunately, after a couple of weeks, things got better on our personal front and I resumed preparations and was able to focus on setting up this unique opportunity. Quick research through several recommendations found that most outfitters were booked up, yet they were willing to work me in. Mike Wakkuri at Elk Mountain Outfitters operates in the area I wanted to be in, and with a solid track record and having guided last year's tag winner, he quickly became my guy.

After meeting Mike in the town of Elk Mountain and grabbing a grocery resupply, we began a short trip south to their beautiful lodge on the northern fringes of the Medicine Bow National



MARK GUNNUFSON, MIKE WAKURRI,  
AND MYRON WAKURRI



Forest. The first late afternoon was spent getting settled in while he attended to a few of his clients and two guides who were nearing the latter half of their elk hunts. This gave me a nice opportunity to visit with Mike's mother, Karma, who is an amazing cook and is also an extremely accomplished hunter. Karma shared with me that she has actually accounted for the personal harvest of some five bighorn sheep, including one NWT Stone sheep. Mike is also an extremely accomplished guide and is said to have guided friends, family, and clients to over 100 successful sheep hunts. Before dark, Mike rolled back in and we quickly headed out for a short evening look around. We didn't have much time, but we did see a bedded cow moose near a hanging pond and then two more on our ride back to camp.

Day one had us headed out in the convenience of a Polaris Ranger to reach glassing points and strike out on several short hikes. We saw two moose in the morning darkness while riding out and another smaller bull in a creek bed while heading to our primary area. Two elk hunters, Tom and Dillon from Wisconsin, road with us as Tom's son, Dillon, still needed an elk. That day,

we glassed from vantage points, called and stalked around scrapes, and sat over a past burn during the evening. Right at dark, we had a bull grunting just down the ridge from us but were never able to get him to respond to our calls.

Day two found us back at the burn in the morning where we saw one cow moose, several deer, and one spike elk. After a short break back at the lodge, we went out on a glassing point where one of the other guides had reported seeing a monster moose earlier that morning. We weren't able to turn up the monster, but we did have a very respectable bull appear while he worked up an adjacent ridge some 400 yards away.





Day three found us back at the same glassing point in hopes of seeing the monster bull. This produced one cow with a calf at some 300 yards and a handful of deer, but no Mr. Big. In the afternoon, we walked and called around a meadow with no sightings and then headed back towards the lodge's direction. En route, we spotted a very nice bull on a high ridge (which we later relocated on day seven and I harvested) and then another bull which walked past us and crossed the road. Later in the evening, we saw a cow and calf plus another cow being followed by a nice but not shooter bull. Most of the remaining hunters had departed camp that afternoon, and all three guides were working in my favor to assist in my success.

Day four had us in a newer area just up the creek a few miles from where Mr. Big was seen two days earlier. We walked and called in a low creek bottom for the morning, and the evening had us up higher in a one of Mike's favorite moose meadows. Late in the evening and just before dark, this produced a rut fest of moose activity, which we believed had more than six animals in it. In close, tight cover, one of the cow moose drank water from a seep some 10 steps in front of us while another bull came in close behind but no shooters.

On day five, we awoke to five inches of fresh snow and light winds. On this day, we shifted our focus on a new area where one of the guides reported seeing a great bull several days before while being with his elk hunters. We glassed from several vantage points, stalked and called a couple of drainages, and sat the evening over a known good area. We saw three moose, including one very old thin-palmed bull and another cow and calf, but we only found sign of the bull we thought might be there.

On day six, we hunted back up high and to our east in efforts to find this bull. The 40 mph winds and cold 10 degree blowing snow made it difficult to glass, but we did see the thin-palmed bull again and another cow and calf. In the afternoon, we went back to the high meadow of day four and saw a terrific 360" bull elk on our walk in. Noticing that our wind wouldn't be right, we bailed out and headed back towards one of our more active



areas. Just before dark, we saw four more moose, including one average bull.

On day seven with our initially agreed upon hunt period drawing to a close, we headed back to the high-east area of days four and five. We glassed and walked without producing much, so we planned on covering an area with the benefit of the ongoing fresh snow. As luck would have it, we relocated the bull I had passed on day three in a small roadside meadow some four miles from where we left him, and I was graced with the opportunity for a short stalk and hunt-ending harvest.

The bull's deep black coat and beautiful rack represented all I could have hoped for with the tag and this unique opportunity. I would like to thank the WG&F Department and Mike, Karma, and Myron Wakkuri and crew of Elk Mountain Outfitters for an incredible experience! I would be remiss if I didn't also include a note of thank you to Patrick Mayer at KUIU for providing me with a \$1,000+ clothing "gift package" as part of drawing the Super Tag. **EF**



MIKE AND KARMA WAKURRI