

WANDRÉ VAN HILTEN'S WILLOW CREEK OUTFITTERS

ALBERTA, CANADA



403-549-0111
info@willowcreekoutfitters.com

"Fair Chase Hunting At It's Finest"

2010 Hunting Report



Kent Green



Curt Wells



Chris Green



Steve Whisler



Brad Gray



Lee Gorud



We just finished another successful fall here in the foothills of southwestern Alberta. This was our 10th season of providing clients with quality, fair chase hunts. Where does the time go! Even though times have still been tough with a slow economy it does not dim the hunting spirit amongst us hunters and we had a full slate of clients eager to experience an adventure with us.

Spring marked the time for us to go out and hunt for black bear. This is a really unique hunt that lets the hunter enjoy the true beauty of this country as it comes to life with greening vegetation and sightings of a number of different species of animals. We only take six bear hunters each spring and we are the only outfitter in the area offering this hunt. All our hunters this spring had shooting opportunities. **Ted Linde** had taken mule deer and whitetail with us in the past but was not sure if he would be able to physically do this hunt due to some health issues but he came mentally prepared and made an awesome shot to harvest his first bear, a gorgeous chocolate color. Father and son, **Kent and Chris Green**, who have hunted with us numerous times in the past mostly for archery mule deer were also successful. Chris took his first bear, a real nice cinnamon boar and Kent, holding out for the big one, had to wait until the last day of his hunt before he connected with a huge black boar.

As spring turned into summer we received a lot of rain which produced excellent growth of grass and crops which in turn was key in producing good antler growth. Once again I started my search for trophy quality bucks in late July and have found that the countless hours that I invested in scouting before our first fall hunt even starts, gives me the opportunity to find these animals core living areas. This knowledge really benefits us throughout both the archery and rifle season because even though hunting pressure and later on, rutting activity, changes an animal's normal habits, we still know the general area that they feel comfortable in. Being persistent in checking these areas throughout the fall will quite often pay off with a stalking or shooting opportunity for our clients at one of these animals that we have patterned. The last few years I have tried to photograph many of the deer in the summer months and put some of the pictures in the photo gallery of our website.

The bow season arrived and we had a number of great bucks to pursue with our archery hunters. This spot and stalk mule deer bow hunt by far is the most exciting hunt for me as a guide as it is an awesome challenge to match our true hunting abilities against the wits of a mature, trophy mule deer. This hunt is a very challenging hunt and there are a lot more variables to deal with compared to a bow hunt from either a treestand or ground blind, but when it all comes together the reward is great! In the end, 7 bucks were shot for 13 hunters and another 10 shots were taken that were clean misses. When I added up the yardage of all the shots taken, hits and misses, on the mule deer bow hunts, the average was 32 yards. I was a little disappointed in the overall success of the harvesting of bucks because usually for most of us serious bow hunters a shot in that 30 yard range is a slam dunk when shooting at a target. It just goes to show you that consistent practice year round and developing that sequence of setting up every shot the same way so it can be done by the subconscious mind is imperative on this kind of hunt. When that trophy buck stands up from his bed and you are faced with the rush of adrenaline as it courses through your veins, I know I have a tough time keeping it together and hope the subconscious mind takes over to get the job done! The highlight for me this bow season was seeing **Curt Wells from Bowhunter Magazine** successfully harvest a 30" wide muley at 22 yards! This was the fifth time throughout the bow season that we had clients within 40 yards of this buck. **This hunt will be a featured article in Bowhunter Magazine and on Bowhunter Magazine's TV show this coming summer.** I will keep you posted on when it will appear. **John Albert** and **Wayne Crouch** booked the only two elk hunts we have and John took an awesome 304" bull with a well placed shot at 15 yards! We have now sold our elk tags and in their place, purchased a couple more rifle mule deer tags. We still have options to lease elk tags from another outfitter if someone is interested in this bow hunt.

As late October rolled around our first hunters arrived for the rifle season. Over half of our deer hunters that came this rifle season had hunted with us at some point in the past. Conditions were good for the most part until the last hunt of the season when winter really hit us by surprise with temperatures dropping down to -20F! Snow, a bitter wind and limited visibility made it tough on both deer and us hunters. All our mule deer hunters were successful in getting their buck and the highlight of the rifle season was seeing **Lee Gorud**, here on his first mule deer hunt take the best scoring buck of the season, a 193" non-typical. I had watched this buck during the summer and then like big bucks often do, he became very reclusive once the bow season arrived. We found him a couple of times during the bow season and had one bowhunter shave the hair off his back on a 40 yard shot. It wasn't until the beginning of the rut that he showed himself again when Lee and I were fortunate enough to cross paths with him! We took a few clients for whitetails, one of which was **Ron Spomer**, who had hunted with us a few years ago for whitetail and mule deer. **Ron came up with us this year to film an episode for the first season of the new TV show he will host, "Winchester's World of Whitetails"** which will air this coming season. We had limited time to hunt and were trying for a few days to close the distance on a mature buck with huge split brow tines but on the last day of the hunt he was nowhere to be found. That afternoon we located another buck that was chasing does in a thick willow patch and Ron made a great 411 yard shot to get his buck.

Now that winter has arrived we will be heading to a few trade shows in the new year. You can find us at the **Dallas Safari Club, January 6-9 at booth # 2555** as well as at the **Wild Sheep Foundation, February 10-12 at booth # 806**. At this time of year we will also be hunting coyotes, so if you would like to join us on this exciting hunt or any other one of our quality fair chase hunts, give us a call and we can get you some detailed information and dates available for the hunt you are interested in.

I would like to sincerely thank all of the clients from this year and also ones from past seasons. Also thanks to all the guides, cooks and cleaners for all your hard work to make it all happen and doing your part in making our client's dreams become a reality! Best wishes to all for the holiday season and hope to see you for a hunt here in 2011!

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email: info@willowcreekoutfitters.com