

## 2008 Success Rates

On our 2007-2008 lion season, we had 9 hunters and killed 7 mountain lions.

The first hunt we had one hunter the end of November. I rode the 4 wheeler 400 yards and cut a decent tom track. We turned the dogs loose and 400 yards up the hill, they treed the cat. This was too easy but the next hunter made up for it.

We hunted hard on the second hunt. The wind blew a lot and wiped out the tracks of a big tom the first two days. The third day, I cut two tom tracks and turned loose on the biggest. We wound up treeing him close to the top of the ridge. I waited under the tree for 1.5 hours for the hunter to get there. When the hunter was about 400 yards from the tree, the big tom jumped out, got down into bare ground and got away. This is the first time that a cat has jumped tree and got away from my dogs. It was a very humbling experience. We did not tree another cat and the hunter went home without one.

On the third hunt, my hunter had to cancel out because of a funeral. Luckily, I was able to move two other hunters into his place and he came later. The two hunters killed a female and small tom on the first and third days of their hunts. Conditions were perfect and everything went great.

The fifth hunter wanted two lions. The weather was bad so we did not get into the wilderness on time. We hunted the front range the first day and he killed an old female. The second day we flew in and rode to base camp. I cleared off the runway and the plane flew in with groceries and another hound dog. By noon the plane was gone and we left to go hunting. We rode the horses up a side drainage and found where a large tom had killed a cow elk. It left a drag mark about 300 yards long. The cat had been sitting on the kill and treed about 300 yards up the other side. The cat did not make book but was the longest and heaviest cat I have ever taken. We rode out the next day.

The sixth hunter was the guy who did not make it in earlier. Because of prior commitments and his anniversary, he only had three days to hunt.

We treed a female the first day and he passed it up because he shot a female with me last year. He left without a cat.

The seventh hunter was another return client. We had a lot of wind which made the hunting very tough. For three days, I ran all the roads that I could with the snowmobile and did not cut a cat track. My guide Harry started walking a draw that we figured may have a cat in it and he got lucky and caught a female lion that had just killed a Mule Deer doe.

This cat treed about 500 yards from the highway. The snow was deep and it took us an hour just to get to the tree.

The last two hunters wanted to hunt in the wilderness. The first day they got there, the guides treed a huge cat. Both of these guides have seen hundreds of lions, bobcats and bears in trees. They both claimed that this was the biggest cat they had ever treed. Looking at the pictures of him, I would say that it is the biggest cat to come out of our area since I have been there. The skull measured 15 3/16 green. It should make book easily if the hunter enters it.

I felt very good about our cat hunting this year. We all worked hard and the dogs did really well. I am very pleased with the addition of our new hunting area for our mountain lion hunting.

Our fishing trips were fun. The high mountain lake fishing in the front range area has some amazing Cutthroat Trout fishing. We averaged 25-50 fish per day at the lakes. We took both drop campers and guided fishermen and both groups did well. The stream fishing on Big Creek was also as good as I have ever seen it. With the huge snow pack from last winter, the water stayed cooler and higher longer, helping the trout fishing.

The Cast and Blast hunts did not do so well for Black Bears. We had 7 hunters and did not harvest any bears. Two hunters passed up a bear but we did not see many bears. The hunters did have plenty of opportunities at grouse and fishing.

The Combo elk and deer hunts were great again this year. The first hunt we had 6 hunters and harvested a 5x6, 6x6 that broke his antlers, and

two 4x5s. We also missed a 5x5 and wounded a 300 class bull. The hunters all pulled the trigger and saw lots of other elk.

The second hunt we had 6 hunters and shot 6 bulls and 1 buck. The bulls were a 260 class 6x6, a 265 class 6x6, a 260 6x6 and three 5x5s. The buck scored about 140. The hunters also saw a very large bear but could not get a shot. The weather was extremely warm.

The third hunt we had 5 hunters and killed three 5x6s and a 5x5. The hunter who did not pull the trigger saw a rag horn but did not get a shot. The fourth hunt we had 2 hunters and harvested two 5x5 bulls. We were after a 300 bull but the hunter chose to go after a 5 point that was closer.

It was his first elk hunt and he got excited and missed his first opportunity at 250 yards but made up for it the next day with a 400 yard shot.

The fifth hunt we had 4 elk hunters, 1 deer hunter and 3 non hunters. They shot a 6x6, 5x6, 5x5 and 4x4 bulls. The deer hunter shot a 6 foot boar bear. He said he was happy but did not think his wife would be. We had a good cold snap at the end of hunt.

The sixth hunt we had 5 combo hunters but 2 cancelled out at the last minute and we had 2 deer hunters. Of the 3 combo hunters, we shot a 5x6 and 4x4 bulls. The two deer hunters shot a 145 buck and passed up two others about the same size plus many smaller bucks. The weather was warm and most of the elk went back into the thick timber. We saw a lot of game but not much for larger animals.

The seventh hunt we had 5 hunters and shot 5 bucks and two bulls. The weather was warm still and we did not see several bunches of elk but could not make it work. We did try to run a mountain lion but the kill the cat made was old. We saw a lot of game. My hunters saw two bucks at the end of their hunt that were much bigger than the ones they harvested. My wife also shot a buck with our two sons. They got to practice their skinning with their new knives.

The eighth hunt we had 9 hunters and harvested 4 bucks and no elk. Many of the hunters on this hunt were return clients and chose not to shoot average animals. One of the bucks we shot scored 187. The other bucks we shot were average but the guides saw some good bucks and

two bulls in the 270-280 range but could not find them again when they tried to make the stock. We saw several other bulls on this hunt but nothing big so we let them grow up. It was warm again on this hunt. The last hunt we had 8 hunters but 1 cancelled out at the last minute. We harvested a 6x6 and 5x5 bulls. We also harvested 5 bucks of average size and passed up some other bucks. The guides saw 3 more bucks in the 180-190 category but could not close the deal. This hunt was also warm and stayed warm through pulling the camps and riding the stock out of the backcountry. The hunting was a little tougher late in the season because of the warm weather but I do not remember pulling camps in such an easy manner. We did not have to dry out a single tent or mantee when we got out. Again, I know I have not mentioned some missed shots or close opportunities but it was a successful season with very few complaints.