

MORE

Montana Outdoor Recreation Exposition

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Elk expert talks at MORE show

In the world of elk hunting, few hunters have compiled the record of Don Laubach.

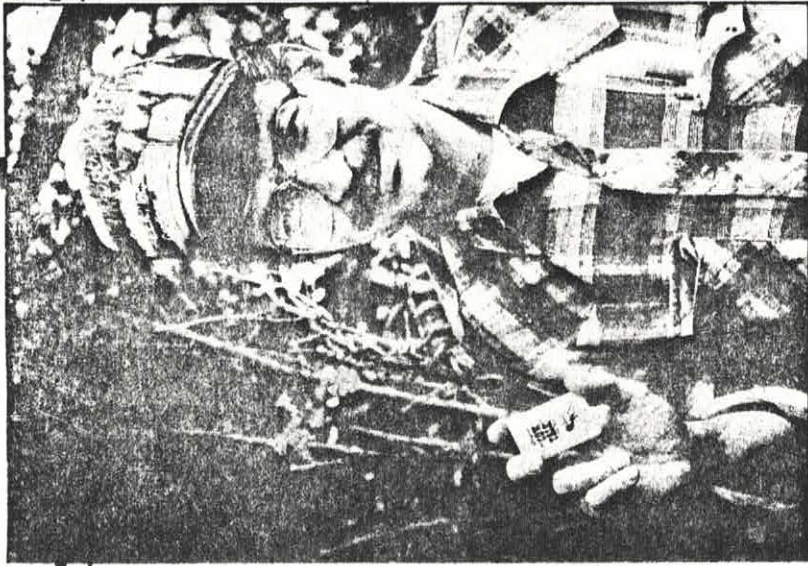
Laubach, of Gardiner, took 13 elk in 13 years with a bow and has shot countless others with a rifle over an elk hunting career that has spanned nearly four decades.

He broke into national prominence when he developed the Cow Talk call which imitates the sounds of cows and calves and has been an effective tool for the elk hunter during the bow season, gun season and even the late hunts.

Since then, he has been featured on elk hunting videos through Eastman's Outdoor World and has co-authored the book "Elk Talk" with Billings Gazette Outdoor Editor Mark Henckel.

Laubach will talk about elk calling, elk hunting in all seasons and will be one of the judges for the elk calling competition at the MORE show.

He will talk about elk hunting in the speaker's theater at 3 p.m. Saturday and Sunday.



Don Laubach made cow call famous.

To Take A Bull, Talk Like A Cow

By Scott Morrison

Each season, that old saying rings true for the sportsman who returns home from elk hunting empty-handed. And while the elk hunter is beginning to see the necessity for some new invention, to say that the elk themselves haven't invented new ways to slip away isn't necessarily so.

What elk have done is learn to an ever-advancing tide of development, an increase in hunting pressure, and a decrease in grazing availability. With this in mind, the hunter who thought elk were smart 50 years ago should realize that they have PhDs in hunter avoidance now.

Crafty, quick and elusive, the phantom of the woods is gaining more respect these days — and the old hunting grounds aren't producing as they once did for the hunters who come home with vague expressions and sighs about the scarcity of game.

Hunters have reconciled themselves to the idea that the big herds of yesterday and the massive racks like those that sit amongst the cobwebs and soot of old hunting lodges have all but left

ridge, the young inventor may have picked up his empty cartridge and whistled a curse to the old bull in his own language...and the bull wheeled at the sound, returning to killing range.

challenge is limited to a short period of time when bull elk are pumped to the gills with hormones in preparation for the rut. The bugle cannot be underestimated, though, in its ability to help locate

have begun to recognize the imitation. Truly, the effectiveness of the bugle has dwindled in recent years as a steady increase in hunters float their poorly-tuned melodies across the hills. Sometimes, the only harmony is with another hunter. A growing number of hunters are finding themselves lulling one another as the elk retreat to their soundproof thickets.

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Many hunters may not be aware that elk, a herd animal by nature, have a means of communicating which once imitated can be an incredible advantage to those who know about it. Even more, these sounds are made year round and are therefore not limited to a short period of time which can be difficult to predict.

the country; but this excuse is unfounded. The big bulls are there, yet a bit further back in the hills, maybe slightly better hidden, and maybe just a little less vocal.

In answer to the need, first came the bugle. That distinctive challenging call was probably the result of a missed shot and a remaining spent cartridge. As an unscathed elk topped the far

That may have been the scenario but who knows? At any rate, bugles began flooding the outdoor marketplace and hungry hunters ate them up as a sure edge.

The bugle did work and continues to work today, although somewhat confined to a specific circumstance. A hunter's chance at calling in a bull with a bugle

elk for the hunter who has mastered the call. Unfortunately, the bugling season will have ended by the opening day of the rifle season for most hunters in many areas.

Even so, to the hunter's disadvantage, more and more sportsmen have picked up a spare bugle or two in hopes of luring a bull from its hiding place but elk

The most common sound in the

elk herd is a high-pitched "ee-

ow", uttered by cows, bulls and

calves alike. The cow's has a

slightly longer duration. This par-

ticular call is mainly used by elk

as a means of communicating

location. Elk on the move through

timber often "talk" in much the

same way a group of kittens "me-

ows" after the mom cat as they

stroll down a sidewalk. For the

hunting public, though, these

sounds were a part of a void yet to

be filled in the retail call market.

It was about six years ago that

the Gardiner, Montana hunter,

Don Laubach, realized the need

for such a call to improve his own

hunting success. Laubach began experimenting with a number of homemade devices and finally hit upon a design that was not only compact and easy to use, but the call could be adjusted to imitate both cow and calf sounds.

At about the same time, Gordon Eastman, an outdoor video maker and friend of Laubach's, decided to get together to do a video on calling elk.

In the end, the success of the call and sales of the video itself prompted Laubach to begin manufacturing the call at his hometown Gardiner location. What better place for an elk call to come from than the heart of elk country at the edge of Yellowstone National Park?

Laubach dubbed the new invention "Cow Talk." It is nothing more than a piece of molded, hinged and slotted plastic with a rubber band. It is nothing less than a simple design with the capability of making a variety of sounds that can imitate the original so well the elk find it difficult to differentiate.

That was 2½ years ago. Today, "Cow Talk" is retailed in more than 7,000 stores across the West.

"My file drawer containing success letters from hunters just keeps on growing," Laubach said. Among the letters is a testimonial from a Washington man who has used the call to lure two Pope and

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