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Hunting with Tyson Mackin, owner of Mackin Outfitting, inspires confidence in success. He knows what he is doing. From my first discussion with him about his approach to mule deer hunting with bow and arrow, I was impressed with his knowledge of them and their habits. For example, when we discussed stalking them in their beds, he made sense when he said it was possible to get too close. They have a sixth sense that inexplicably tells them when danger lurks nearby and Tyson thinks that if you get much closer than 30 yards from where they are bedded, they can pick you off with just that sixth sense, especially the mature bucks that just seem to just *know* that something is amiss.

I had hunted mule deer several times before and experienced the same thing, so I was confident that he knew what he was talking about. Tyson told me to practice shooting out to 40 yards so that I would be confident shooting a buck at 30 yards. We agreed in advance that we weren't going to try to get within 15 or 20 yards and take a chance on activating that sixth sense or that an errant puff of wind would swirl our scent to a buck's extremely keen nose.

Another example that affirmed to me that he knew what he was doing was when he said that we should wait until they stand naturally, don't try to get them to stand by throwing rocks or bleating at them. I have been on hunts where the guide tried this and the bucks invariably jumped up and ran without me being able to get off a shot. Tyson knows better than to try those things and told me ahead of time that we would get in range and then may need to wait for hours until the buck stood up naturally.

The above are just a couple samples from the conversations I had with him before I booked the hunt. During the hunt, he showed a tremendous amount of experience and patience. We stalked several bucks but backed out because something just wasn't right; such as, they were bedded with too many other bucks and there was no way to get closer with so many pairs of eyes. Tyson's philosophy is, don't spook them and they'll be there for a hunt the next day. Be patient and don't force the situation. On the day when I killed my buck, we spotted him with two other bucks just after daylight. I shot him around 1:00 PM. They had bedded twice and got up and moved a substantial distance both times before bedding for the final time around mid-day. That's when Tyson knew it was time to move and he expertly guided me to within bow range, stalking the last 50 or so yards in our stocking feet. By the way, there isn't any cactus where we hunted.

We saw bucks every day, and I mean some big bucks too. The ranches Tyson hunts are excellent for spot and stalk hunting and he knows them like the back of his hand. There was no time wasted doing general scouting. He knew where to find certain groups of bucks that he had already scouted before the season. From years of hunting the same ranches, he knows the patterns of the deer on certain properties which helps not only in finding them but in planning a stalk too. One morning we watched a group of nine bucks walking single file. We knew they were headed to their beds. They went over a ridge and out of sight. We got in the truck and drove several miles to get to the back side of the ranch because Tyson said he knew where they were probably headed. Not long after we got in place so that we could see the other side of that ridge they came out of a draw and went into an aspen thicket and bedded. A less experienced guide might have tried to follow them over that ridge, but Tyson knew where to go so that we were ahead of them not behind them. As a result, we were in position to watch them bed and then make the stalk. However, the two biggest bucks had left the herd and bedded somewhere else so we chose to try to find them rather than stalk the seven remaining bucks. But that's another story.

All in all, Tyson is an outstanding guide and a sincere and friendly man. There was not one time that I thought he was being evasive with an answer or not giving the hunt a 100% effort. To be clear, there is down time when you'll be sitting on a hillside waiting for bucks to bed or glassing for bucks from the truck. Those times are necessary. But Tyson knows when it is time to move and how to do it when that time comes.

When you hunt with Mackin Outfitting you are hunting with the Mackin family. Tyson's attractive and charming wife Angie is the cook and shares in the business decisions too. You will stay in their home in Claresholme, a modern new house with a beautiful view of the Canadian Rockies. You will have your breakfast and dinner in their dining room, and lunches can be made to take with you if Tyson plans to keep you out in the field all day. Angie is an excellent cook and the food is plentiful. The hunter's bedrooms are in the fully finished basement and are clean and furnished with queen size beds and comfortable linens. There is a bathroom in the basement for the privacy of their hunters. You'll enjoy seeing the mounts of animals that Tyson and Angie have shot. Angie holds the family record for the biggest elk, a true giant that hangs on the wall in the basement, which by the way has ten-foot ceilings to accommodate their taxidermy display. There is a couch, chairs, and a TV in the basement too, but after a long day out in the field I didn't put in any time in front of the TV.

My hunt was the first week of September 2011. My goal was to take a Pope and Young class mule deer with my bow. This was a life-long dream for me. I had hunted mule deer several times in Wyoming, New Mexico, and Montana and had killed three bucks with my bow but none of them was a record book buck. Hunting with Tyson, I saw many bigger bucks than the one I ultimately shot, which was a beautiful 5X5 that met my objective and had the added characteristic of being in full velvet. We had seen him two nights in a row with several other bucks in the same alfalfa field. Tyson thought we could find him on the morning of the third day. We drove a ranch road to high ground overlooking the field from about a mile away. As I said earlier, we spotted three of them just after daybreak making their way to the shade of a vegetation-filled drainage. After the long wait we were able to stalk within range and make my dream come true. I can't recall another recent time when I have been so excited.

If you want a first-class hunt, I highly recommend Mackin Outfitters. I have been on hunts with bigger outfitters and although many of those hunts have been successful, none of them has given me the feeling of personal, dedicated, friendly service that I felt with Tyson and Angie. Dinner with the Mackin family was like being at home with my own family. It was a great way to wind down from a day of hunting. Hunting with Tyson is like hunting with one of your buddies. You can book a hunt with him and trust that it will be an outstanding experience. I have already booked my next hunt with him for 2013.