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For Big Game Hunters

(20 Pages This Month!)

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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“SERVING THE HUNTER WHO TRAVELS”

DATELINE: BRITISH COLUMBIA

News... News... News...

New Operator Moves Into Sleeper Deer Area

(Editor Note: Senior Western Correspondent Lance Stapleton has dug up a new operator that should put clients onto some big deer this season. Here's what he found out.)

British Columbia is best known for its sheep hunting, although it offers hunting for more big game species than any other province in Canada. One of BC's best kept secrets is its deer hunting. You can hunt three species of deer there, with a decent chance of killing an outstanding mule deer and whitetail! For those willing to forgo the lure of better-known destinations, such as Saskatchewan, Iowa or Kansas, they will find that the deer hunting in a relatively small area of BC rivals any of those places in quality, especially for whitetails.

The small hunting area I am referring to is located in the Peace Region near Fort Saint John. In addition to the outstanding trophy potential you'll find there, you can kill two deer (one mule deer and one whitetail) during an extended general season running through Novem-



ber 30 in most of the best hunting areas. This extended season allows hunting during the rut and when the big bucks are leaving the bush and high country because of deep snow and lack of feed.

The reason why this area is not

well known is that there are only a few outfitters there, and they host only a handful of hunters annually. I have reported on two of those outfitters in the past. Ray Jackson of Horseshoe Creek Outfitters (250-783-5220; www.horseshoecreekoutfitters.com) hunts near Fort Saint John and along the Peace River breaks. He is best known for his mule deer but has guided clients to some outstanding whitetails. Jackson's area lies to the north of the second outfitter, Tracks BC (250-788-2115; www.hpoutfitters.com). This outfit is owned by Gary Drinkall and Blaine Trenholm, and is best known for whitetails but also has claimed some trophy mule deer. I've reported on a number of 200-class whitetails that this outfit has produced over the last several years.

Now another outfit started operating here last season. **Rafter DL Ranch Outfitters** (250-780-6807; drlagreca@netkaster.ca) is owned by Danny and Roxanne La Greca. He has guided off and on for 25 years, including several seasons for Tracks BC, and has hunted and trapped all his life. Their 3,000-square-mile concession lies south of Jackson's area and east of Tracks BC. It is over 100 miles long (from Fort Saint John to Tumbler Ridge) and lies east of the Pine and Murray Rivers, while Tracks BC's area is west of these rivers. The Rafter DL's hunting area includes not only their main ranch, but also a comfortable 18 x 36 foot hunting camp, as well as several other smaller cabins.

The cost for Rafter DL's 1 x 1,

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the Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont moose lotteries and auction processes get underway, and we'll also look at some other, more reliable options for you to hunt Eastern Canada moose. Stay tuned.)

□

■ Subscriber Rod Fogle has good things to say about a hunt he took in **Argentina** this past April/May with Gonzalo Llambi of Cerro Indio Safaris (011-54-9-2293-60-4000; www.cerroindio.com). Fogle says he hunted four different areas with Cerro Indio (there's an excellent map under "location" on the company's web site) and took 12 different animals. While Fogle reports hunting free-range red deer and water buffalo among other species with Cerro Indio, he also describes a fascinating hunt for wild boar using horses and dogs. He reports doing this twice on the luxurious family *estancia* Acelain, located about four hours south of Buenos Aires.

The *estancia* is a European manor-style property that has been awarded a five star rating and was featured in the 2003 book *1,000 Places to See Before You Die: A Traveler's Life List* by Patricia Schultz. Comprised of 27,000 acres, the property features a 600-acre tract of planted trees that were originally brought from Europe and are now approaching 100 years of age. The manor is a castle brought from Spain by outfitter Llambi's great grandfather. The grounds are manicured in the Old World tradition.

Fogle says the wild boar hunts took place in the 600-acre forest on Acelain. "This was very exciting hunting," he says. "The *estancia* keeps polo ponies, which are ridden using sheepskin saddles that are very cushioned but unlike Western saddles, as they do not have a saddle horn. We had six trained dogs that cast and struck a scent like bear dogs. When the dogs open up on a pig, the excitement starts with you riding as fast as you can

through the thick, 100-year-old woods. The dogs bay the pig, grabbing it by the ears and tail and hold it for the hunters, who get off the horses and kill the pig with a knife." Cerro Indio also offers more conventional boar hunting, but Fogle recommends adventure-loving hunters give the horseback hunt a try.

In addition to the wild boar, red deer and water buffalo, Fogle also reports taking fallow deer, axis deer, capabayra, blackbuck and mouflon sheep, which he says were all of good quality and present in abundance. He also mentions several species of sheep that are available. Be aware that not all of these species are free-range, as Fogle says that one of the properties offered gold medal stags in a fenced area. He says hunters should be able to take high sil-



ver quality animals free-range.

Fogle notes that not all of the hunts with Cerro Indio are physically challenging. "The hunting can be custom-designed to your ability and desires, from hiking great distances to sitting on stands," he says. "You do not have to be in great shape to hunt there, but, as always, it does help. Gonzalo and his staff provided everything I could possibly want on a trip."

In summary, he says he recommends Cerro Indio because game is abundant, the hunting is very good, and it shouldn't be difficult for hunters of any ability level to take quality trophies. Fogle gives the total cost of his hunt as \$25,000, including all trophy fees, prep, licenses and other incidentals.

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■ Subscriber Matthew Hoffman says his September 2008 backpack and spike-camp hunt in the **North-west Territories** is the best hunt he has ever experienced. He hunted with Jim Lancaster of Nahanni Butte Outfitters (250-846-5309; www.jancasterfamilyhunting.com/nahanni.html) and reports taking five different species, including a Dall sheep that grossed 164 7/8 (14½-inch bases and 38½ inches on the curl), a mountain goat with 9 7/8-inch horns, and a 392-gross (382 net) mountain caribou, each on the first day of hunting for each species.

Hoffman hunted in the Nahanni Butte area of the Mackenzie Mountains, where the well-known Lancaster family controls 9,700 square miles of roadless wilderness. Access is by airplane, helicopter and boat. Hoffman says his hunt almost didn't happen because of a plane crash that happened just one week before the start of his hunt. Cam Lancaster, one of the owners of Nahanni Butte, died in the crash, which occurred near one of their wilderness landing strips. (See Article ID 2172.) Friends had advised Hoffman to cancel, but Clay Lancaster (Cam's brother) urged him to make the trip. Hoffman says that despite the terrible personal tragedy, the Lancasters were incredibly professional and absolutely dedicated to making sure that he got what he was after.

According to Hoffman, the game in the Nahanni Butte area was quite abundant. In addition to the other animals previously mentioned, he also took a 13-point Yukon moose. He notes that he was "too picky," and it took him over a week to get it, passing up on several bulls he says he should have shot. Also, although Hoffman had been told that no nonresident hunter had taken a black bear in the Mackenzies in the past 10 years, he killed one on the last day of his hunt. With only five minutes of daylight left, he took a large, old, boar black bear with a