

The Region's First Hunting & Safari Magazine

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Bearhunting in the Mountains

Got to Let the Dogs Lose!

An Interview with
Danene van de Westhuyzen

A Lady Professional Hunter
of Renown

Hunting in Romania

Quail, Duck, Pigeon and Dove, all are on the Menu

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Bearhunting in the Mountains Got to Let the Dogs Lose!

by Evelina Aslund



The social life is important when hunting together. We often make a bonfire in the middle of the day and cook over an open fire

I have been on a bear hunt in Sweden on three occasions in the past, but only as a posted hunter. This year I was able to be with the dog handler, who happens to be my partner, Roger and I felt incredibly excited...

I also got a new rifle this year a, Sako Blackbear in .308 calibre, that I trained a lot with and shot at every opportunity before the bear hunt. I have always hunted with a rifle scope before but when bear

hunting the bear can be shot at very close range so I decided to learn to shoot very well with open sights. It is very important to feel completely confident with your weapon.

We had a few rainy days on the hunt and the temperature was about 10 degrees during the day dropping to 3 or 4 degrees at night. It was the 21st of August when we started the hunt and the weather was perfect for hunting bear!

Me and Roger had the privilege to hunt with a team of hunters who live in a village nearby the mountains, which meant we had access to hunting area in the mountains. With them we had more than 12,000 hectares of land to hunt over. When hunting bear over such a large area it is necessary to hunt with dogs as the dogs will scent them out and when they find one they let you know by barking excitedly. When we hunt this region we hunt in the mountains and in the mountains there are no roads so the going is not easy but the scenery is magnificent.

In late August the bears like to be on the mountain sides and edges where the berries are most plentiful because their diet consists almost exclusively of blueberries. They are preparing for the winter when they build their ide/house for hibernation and need to eat large quantities of berries to survive until spring.

When you hunt bear with loose barking dogs' it is important to use experienced dogs that do not locate the tracks and flush the bear too early frightening it off before the hunter has time to catch up. Sometimes the hunts can go on for several days ... then it is vital that the dogs are very well trained to cope with this situation.

We hunt with our two dogs, Raio and Blixen, and as they know one another very

well they hunt together perfectly as a pair. Raio is a Plott Dog and Blixen is a Karelian Bear Dog. Raio is an excellent tracker who hunts carefully and can follow scent trails that are up to 15 hours old. Once he has latched onto a scent he will not leave it even if he has to be on it for the whole day. His hunting method is to drive forward with Blixen in the groove.

Blixen on the other hand chases differently. He is a dog capable of working to bring an end to the bear and barks only when he gets visual contact. Blixen hang on to Raio in his tracks and when he gets visual contact with the bear that's when he starts to bark. That's the time we know that the dogs are where the bear is and has it at bay. When hunting bear off the beaten track it is vital that you are pretty fit as it can mean many miles of walking and running in order to keep up with the dogs and you have to be in the right place when the time comes.

I was hunting for four days and had several really exciting hunts with the dogs but unfortunately I had to "lift my hat to the Bears" during the days I joined. They won this time.



Sako Blackbear cal .308



Good to see them but it's not allowed to shoot in August ...



Two days after I left the bear hunt to go and take care of my hunting guests, who had come to hunt grouse, my partner, Roger, shoot a nice bear on a "barking stand" for Raio and Blixen. He shot the bear from the cover of thick undergrowth and small bushes from just 8 meters away!

A successful day for a brave hunter.

E.A.