

OFFduty

# Packing light & right

Check out this gear for your next wilderness adventure

Stories by Ken Perrotte

Settling on a gear list for a remote hunt is an exercise in thinking light, practical and necessary.

That's especially true when the wilderness is demanding, weather is fickle, game is dangerous and you're miles from civilization — and limited to 60, maybe 70, pounds of stuff.

Figure almost 20 pounds for rifle, scope, ammo, binoculars and knives, plus another 5 to 10 pounds for sleeping bag and boots. Wool shirts, base layers, socks, outerwear, rain gear and incidentals such as cameras and a favored adult beverage pile on the pounds.

A rundown on some of the gear we hauled into "the bush" for a recent moose and bear hunt:

### Adventure Medical Kits Heatsheets Emergency Bivy

At 3.8 ounces, this waterproof, windproof, metalized polyethylene bag reflects up to 90 percent of radiated body heat and could be the key to keeping you alive if you have to spend a night away from the base camp. The company's portable first-aid kits and Fresh Bath Travel Wipes also can be valuable adds to your pack.

**Prices:** \$16 for the bivy; \$4.50 for a pack of eight wipes.  
**Website:** [www.adventuremedicalkits.com](http://www.adventuremedicalkits.com)

### Winchester Supreme 200-grain Nosler E-Tip cartridges

These new lead-free cartridges are available in .338 for the first time this year. The copper-alloy bullets have premium construction, controlled expansion, good penetration and 95 percent weight retention — critical when trying to anchor a grizzly. The bullet has a Lupalox coating and a polycarbonate tip, also featured on other Winchester ammo such as the Accubond-CT and Ballistic Silvertip.

**Price:** About \$60 for a box of 20.  
**Website:** [www.winchester.com](http://www.winchester.com)



### Aquamira Frontier Emergency Water Filter System

It's possible to drink directly from mountain lakes and rivers in northern British Columbia and not get laid low with a gastrointestinal issue, but it's not worth the risk.

We boiled lake water and added it to portable containers. In case water became an issue, though, I always had this emergency system in my pack.

Attach and expand the straw, submerge the filter end into the water source, and drink through the straw. The straw removes contaminants down to 2 microns in size, including pathogens such as giardia, cryptosporidium and large bacteria. It weighs less than an ounce and filters up to 20 gallons of water.

**Price:** \$11.95.  
**Website:** [www.aquamira.com/emergency](http://www.aquamira.com/emergency)

### Trijicon AccuPoint 3x9x40 scope

Our main tool was a custom-built .338 Winchester Magnum rifle topped with this remarkable new scope featuring tritium fiber optics at the center of the reticle.

It's adjustable to changing light conditions. At daybreak and dusk, prime times for encounters with big critters, the scope helps you focus on your aim point and make critical shots.

There are no batteries to worry about. A manual brightness-adjustment override lets you control the light output of the fiber optics during daylight. The scopes are made from aircraft-quality, hard-anodized aluminum and multi-layer coated lenses. The tube is nitrogen-filled to prevent corrosion and eliminate fogging. Water resistant to depths of 10 feet.

**Price:** The 3-by-9-inch power scope with 40mm objective sells for \$815.  
**Website:** [www.trijicon.com](http://www.trijicon.com)

### Base layer clothing with micro-silver fibers

Hunting can be sweaty work, and sweaty often turns to stinky. My Medalist SilverMax and Cabela's MTP base layer clothing countered that with long Johns featuring micro-silver fibers bonded to or woven into the garment.

These silky feeling duds wick moisture and help keep you warm or cool, depending on conditions. Hunter's Specialities is also getting into this market with a new Tek 4 line of base layers that touts 33 percent more silver fibers than current items on the market. They're even incorporating the technology into socks.

Supposedly, silver counters any bacteria your skin grows and neutralizes ammonia and denatured proteins to keep you less smelly.  
**Prices:** A base layer set costs \$60-\$90.  
**Websites:** [www.medalist.com](http://www.medalist.com); [www.cabelas.com](http://www.cabelas.com); [www.hunterspec.com](http://www.hunterspec.com)

# Mooseless — again



Great preparation and gear coming together in an outstanding hunting territory known for record-book Canada moose and big grizzly bears could not overcome what the temperature was registering by noon on almost every day of my British Columbia hunt of a lifetime.

Daytime highs in the foothills of the Canadian Rockies just south of the Yukon border, reached the mid-60s. Wind, rain and fog affected two-thirds of the hunting days. Only two mornings saw a short-lived, light frost.

Mostly poor hunting weather makes for mostly uncooperative animals, especially deer during the rut — and a moose is a big deer. We needed cold mornings and cool days every day as we hunted not far from Watson Lake, Yukon Territories.

I returned home without firing a shot from my .338.

Not that I didn't see several moose, including one big bull that passed within 100 yards of precisely where I had been sitting at dusk a day earlier, the first day of the hunt.

Coal River Outfitters honcho Shawn Raymond and I were high above our base camp, a wall tent on "Moose Lake," when we spotted him. A vantage point I dubbed "The Hill of Sweat" let us glass 10 small lakes nearly 1,000 feet below.

The rutting beast was moving through a swamp about 2.5 miles distant in late afternoon. Getting down the hill across the obstacle course of downed spruce and jack pine would've been a stretch.

Plus, we really had no way of knowing for certain where he was headed once he hit the timber, although our abundant calling the day before may have helped pinpoint his route.

On other mornings, smaller "satellite" bulls responded to within shooting distance of our calls. The big bulls were likely not too far, hidden in the timber, tending harems of cows, Raymond surmised. Bulls nonresponsive to call-

ing are extremely difficult to hunt.

At daybreak on the final morning, I walked to the far end of our base camp lake. The de Havilland Beaver float plane would soon arrive to carry us back to civilization.

My cow moose calls echoed around the hillsides, seemingly with no result. We loaded the 1954-vintage Beaver. Our pilot applied the power, and we lifted from the water.

As we climbed, Raymond frantically pointed below. A small bull moose stood on the lakeshore, obviously looking for the cows he had heard calling shortly before. Ten seconds later, I pointed to a massive bull moose in the timber just a short mile above the lake.

There was no doubt we were surrounded by moose and that big bull surely heard our calls. He and his Bullwinkle fraternity brothers ignored them all week. Maybe it was the unseasonably warm weather, the intermittent rain squalls, thunderstorms or high winds. Maybe the real cows were too sexy.

Raymond was also frustrated. This was the very camp where a few years ago professional hunter Jim Shockey had taken the second-largest Canada moose ever recorded.

Hunting in any fair chase situation is never a sure thing. Knowing that, though, only lessens minimally the sting of traveling so far, hunting so hard and not closing the deal. □

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### Bushnell Backtrack Point-5 GPS

To enable straight, point-to-point navigation we carried this idiot-proof tool that always points toward the position marked as a base.

The altitude and digital thermometer capabilities were used daily. The clock was invaluable after our wristwatch broke on Day 6. We marked key waypoints that included the base camp and an ambush point along the edge of a lake.

The unit also gives your latitude and longitude coordinates and has a digital compass.

Unlike other higher-speed GPS units, it's not a battery hog. The lightweight device easily ran all week on the initial two AAA batteries. The one feature that would be a great add to any revised Backtrack product would be a barometer to enable hunters to predict when weather may be changing.

**Price:** About \$90.  
**Website:** www.bushnell.com

### Bushnell Legend 1200 Arc rangefinder

With 6x magnification, ranging capability to 1,200 yards and lightweight design, this was a must-have in a day pack.

The built-in inclinometer reported the true distance based on the angle of the shot, uphill or downhill. This is also a superb feature for bowhunters.

With a built-in ballistics calculator, the Legend 1200 Arc also tells how much holdover is needed on long-range shots. My .338, zeroed 1.5 inches high at 100 yards, would see bullet-drop by as much as 10 inches at 330 yards. You still have to estimate left-right drift based on wind, and that's where practice at the range under windy conditions can really help performance in the field.

**Price:** About \$515.  
**Website:** www.bushnell.com

### Battenfeld Technologies Lead Sled FCX (below right)

We got ready using this brand-new, indispensable product for zeroing heavy-caliber firearms. It reduces recoil to next to nothing, enabling sure shot groups and eliminating "flinch" factors.

The .338 is a potent caliber with considerable recoil. The sled captured recoil energy from the rifle and transferred it through the frame to weights in the weight tray, eliminating up to 95 percent of the felt recoil.

The new and improved Lead Sled FCX (Fire Control Extreme) features a control arm adjustable to 360 degrees to enable precise alignment with your scope's cross hairs. You can squeeze the trigger in a completely relaxed shooting posture.

**Price:** About \$360.  
**Website:** www.battenfeldtechnologies.com

