
Point Blank Hunts

A Greenland experience with Joe Jakab

Written By Jeff Strong

Most of us have seen it from the air at one point or another, whether on a business trip or a vacation to Europe, on a clear day it is a beautiful harsh and intimidating sight even from 35,000 feet. I clearly remember the first time I flew over it on a trip to Holland, there is an absolute stillness to it, like a giant jagged iceberg floating in the Atlantic. I didn't know much about Greenland then, and would have never imagined that there was much worth chasing on that big block of ice, but I will say; even then I thought it would be an interesting place to see from the ground. I was both right and wrong, it is most definitely an interesting place, but there is also plenty worth chasing, and it is far from one big block of ice. I guess it shouldn't be too surprising that I eventually ended up in Greenland, there is something enticing to most of us that hunt about being in an area and knowing you can walk for miles in every direction without seeing another person, an area essentially untouched by modern day man, a place rich with game that makes you feel like you stepped back in time 100 years.

Before we step back in time 100 years Let's step back in time to 2016 MN/WI wild-sheep auction, that should make both you and I happy as that makes us at least a couple years younger ☺ The next name I am going to mention should not really be of too much surprise to anyone, and I don't think he needs much introduction: Mr. Joe Jakab, Owner of Point Blank Hunts, a gentleman who does an awful lot for this industry, an awful lot for the Sheep foundation and has been donating hunts to this organization and many others for as long as I can remember, however although I had seen Joe around at the banquets every year, I really didn't know him before that auction. I had reviewed the auction list prior to attending the banquet and knew Joe had donated a trip to Greenland; in all honesty I think I had decided that I was going before I ever showed up at the banquet, but after I was able to chat a bit with the guy who had taken the trip the previous year, it was decided. After a bit of going back and forth in the auction with several others who had also decided they were going to Greenland, I won the trip. Joe was busy talking to others, and while I talked to him briefly, we didn't have a lot of time to chat, however somewhere during that conversation I must have mentioned I liked to fly fish.

Fast forward to spring of 2017 – I guess I should have seen the flash in Joe's eyes when I mentioned fly fishing. I called Joe in the spring just prior to the WI Brule river opener, and asked about upgrading the Musk OX hunt to include a Caribou, as well as adding several other guys I knew that wanted to go, during that conversation we somehow started to talk about fly fishing. Joe told me he had never caught a wild steelhead on a fly rod, but it was on his bucket list. I quickly discovered that Joe is certifiably "trout crazy" which is something we both have in common. It certainly didn't take much convincing to get Joe along with a couple of friends on the river where we made a very short mission of getting Joe his first Steelhead on a fly rod, after that first trip We spent several more weekends chasing steelhead on

both the Brule and North shore rivers of Minnesota and Wisconsin, with some very productive days as well as some not so productive days- but if your fishing for steelhead to catch fish, you are doing it for the wrong reasons; at least in my opinion. I will say that I got to know Joe pretty well during all those steelhead runs, and am truly glad that I did, Joe is a great guy and a hell of a lot of fun.

As September got closer we added several other friends to the trip, 4 in total: Myself, John Livingston, Chad Latvaho and Steve Theoney. Time seems to go so slow before hunting season or before any hunting trip, there were multiple trips to the local tavern to discuss our plans and the upcoming adventure: equipment discussions, what to bring, what not to bring, and to be honest September always seemed like it was forever away, but finally the day was here, we were going to Greenland.

Getting to Greenland in itself is an interesting experience. If you go in August you have the option and easy flight to Iceland and then a 4 hour flight into Greenland, via Iceland air, if you go in September as we did, Iceland Air no longer fly's to Kangerlussq (Greenland's Main Hub) so your only alternative is Greenland Air, which means you must fly to Copenhagen Denmark and then back to the west side of Greenland. This sounds like a pain but really isn't, and I would highly recommend doing the latter as Copenhagen is a beautiful city and well worth a couple day stay on its own. After spending several days in Copenhagen we left for Greenland where we were greeted at the Kangerlussq airport by Joe and Karsten Lings who runs the Greenland Camp, we took a short car ride to the beach of a glacial river which feeds the longest feord in the world, and then an hour ride by jet boat into camp – Camp is just off the river and was made up of several wall tents a main kitchen tent, as well as a smaller supply tent. The setting was absolutely breathtaking, and Karsten his wife Hanne as well as our guides Jan and Itonlock were all exceptional hosts during the entirety of our stay. The first night was spent getting settled, and meeting several other hunters who were on their way out in the morning, after a few adult beverages, a bit of caribou fat, some storytelling and a spectacular show of northern lights, sleep came quickly- and so did sunrise.

We awoke to a very cold but beautiful morning, waited a bit for the ice to subside from the river and headed toward the icecap. After reaching our destination just short of a small hunting cabin, we unloaded the boats and headed up into the hills- we did not go far! Karsten spotted a good bull Caribou just across the other side of a small lake and also several good Musk Ox. Chad and Steve were up first with one stalking around the lake to the Caribou, and the other headed toward a large group of Musk Ox to the south. I think Jon and I were just content to watch the whole thing through binoculars, as both stalks were taking place simultaneously. Steve connected first with a beautiful bull Caribou and Chad followed shortly after taking a giant old musk ox with his bow. Day 2 concluded with several more animals taken, too say we were all having a great time would be an understatement, every evening was ended by great food great, great conversation and at least a couple nights a great show of northern lights. By day 3 Chad had filled out, Steve needed a Musk Ox, I was looking for a Caribou and Jon still had both tags open. We were all seeing a ton of animals, but being very selective about the maturity of the animals being taken. There were also several blown stalks in those first couple days, and honestly the hunting was moderately easy, I will only say it was a nice way to ease into what was coming. The nights were getting increasingly colder, by day 4 the river had decreased in flow and was down almost a foot. The boats were no longer able to get up the river as far, and getting up and hiking into the animals became our best option. The hunt quickly changed in difficulty and became equivalent to that of a northern Montana elk hunt. We would start at 150 feet sea level and hike to 2800 to 3000 feet each morning, stopping to glass the surrounding hillsides for 20 min and then moving on. It was a lot more

work, but afforded us the opportunity to really see the country we were hunting and also see a lot more animals. By day 5 and 6 we were hiking 10-14 miles a day – I honestly would not have had it any other way, there were several times when we belly crawled over the top of a ridge to see a sight that looked like something out of dances with wolves, but instead of buffalo, it was musk ox and caribou herds as far as the eye could see. This truly is a land where you have the ability to hunt as hard as you want too, if you want to walk 20 miles a day and look at every caribou or musk ox in that 20 miles before you take one; that is it a very viable option, alternatively if you are unable to do so Joe, Karsten and guides Jan and Itonlock will do everything in their power to make sure you have a successful trip and Hanne will make sure you don't go hungry!!! In the end we all ended up taking spectacular animals with several making P&Y and a musk ox that could be very well one of the largest ever taken (score still pending)

I can only say in closing, thank you so much to our hosts Karsten his wife Hanne and both guides Jan and Itonlock for giving us the opportunity to hunt such a great land, additionally a very special thanks to Joe Jakab for providing such a quality hunt and giving back so much every year to many different organizations –his passion for what he does and the wildlife around the world truly speaks for itself.

Jeff Strong