



BY GEORGE LATHAM MYERS, II

**M**y quest for a Kuban tur continued when Lou Rupp and I met at Washington's Dulles International Airport for our flight to Moscow. There we met and were accompanied on the rest of our trip by Vladimir Koshcheev, a professional hunter for ProfiHunt. We spent the night in Moscow, and the next day flew to Mineralnye Vody. From there we drove to Cherkessk, the capital city of the Karachay-Cherkess Republic, where we stayed at a nice hotel, and the next morning drove to our base camp near the Georgian border, along the Aksant River. We met the other members of our team, guides Aliy Kochkarov and Ivan Yufkin, and our cook, Vladimir Shevchuk.

The following morning, we loaded our gear onto five horses, headed west, and immediately started to climb the foothills of the Caucasus. We gained altitude quickly and soon enjoyed stupendous views all around. We rode for three hours, and made a spike camp at about 8,000 feet, just above a small turquoise tarn. After lunch, we hiked up the ridge above camp, and soon discovered how steep and rocky those portions of the Caucasus really are. We made it back to camp before a thunderstorm, had a bite to eat, and that evening I enjoyed the rain's staccato rhythm hitting the nylon tent.

The next day, we headed up the rock scree and glaciers to the west of camp. We must have gone



three miles to a notch where we spotted five rams on the skyline. Aliy was pushing the tur our way, so Vladimir and Lou set up on the ridge at the notch, while Ivan and I posted up on a ridge a little further to the northwest. Later, three shots rang out from Lou's direction. We continued to watch the backside of the mountain for another hour and a half, but never saw another tur. We met back at the notch, and discovered Lou had connected on a 330-yard moving shot on a very nice ram. After pictures and caping, we returned to spike camp, just before a rainstorm brought a premature end to our celebrations.

The following morning, Vladimir and Lou rode down to base camp to take care of his trophy, while Aliy, Ivan and I hiked up to the main ridge above camp to the south, gaining 2,000 feet of elevation in an hour and a half. From there, we split up, and Ivan and I gained another 1,000 feet of elevation before setting up on a dominant ridge, just as a severe lightning and thunderstorm erupted. We had been sitting for an hour, getting colder by the minute, when a nice tur came trotting over a sub-ridge below us. I made the mistake of taking my eyes off the ram for a second, and when I looked back down the mountain, all I saw was the rear end of the ram disappearing over the ridge. Soon the fog enveloped us, and we frustratingly made our way back to spike camp. It had been one of the most disconcerting days of hunting I have experienced. A moment of hesitation had cost me a shot at a very nice tur, and I was sorely disappointed in myself.

It rained most of the night, and was still raining the next morning. During a break in the rain, we got out of the tent and soon spotted a Eurasian brown bear and two cubs across the canyon. It started to rain again, however, and we made a decision not to hunt that day. It was a good decision. I had plenty of time in the tent to replay in my mind the opportunity I had missed. All I could do now was try to stay positive, and hope that I would have another opportunity in the two days of hunting I had left. After all, mountain hunting is not like going to the grocery store and



grabbing what you want; and hunting is hunting.

We needed a break in the weather and the next morning we got it. I started up the ridge above camp by myself, knowing I would be slower than the guides. Having topped out on the ridge, I sat down and started glassing. Immediately I spotted two tur on the horizon on the dominant south ridge. One was small, but one looked like a shooter. When my guides caught up with me, we continued up the glacier west of camp and set up on the notch, close to where Lou had killed his ram. With the radios, Vladimir and Aliy devised a plan to try to push the tur in our direction. Aliy came off the high ridge towards our position, and soon had the two tur I had spotted above camp running our way. We had to move 30 yards to another position immediately. I didn't have time to range them, but I anchored the ram. The Kuban tur was down in the Caucasus! He was a mature 9 1/2-year-old ram, and I was thankful to have had another opportunity. After a brief lunch, pictures and caping, we headed back to spike camp, arriving around 2 p.m. Vladimir then decided to break spike camp and return to base camp, where we arrived just before dark.

That evening, we enjoyed a nice tur soup, fresh tomatoes and garlic, bread, cheese and vodka toasts to our success. A lot of work, preparation and coordination went into this hunt, and that had paid off.

The following day, we had delightful weather, and Vladimir worked on our trophies, salted the hides, and boiled the horns off the skull plate. We decided to stay in base camp that day to allow the hides to dry properly. That afternoon, the military came into camp to check our paperwork and gun permits. The border area there is politically and geographically sensitive and a permit is required to camp there. They were friendly and curious to look through my rifle scope, but stayed for only 10 minutes. We had a nice party that evening, and the next day returned to Cherkessk, a hot shower and civilization.

I happened to be awake the next morning when I heard the melodious call to prayer for the Muslim faithful. I realized full well that another hunt was ending, and my long trip home beginning, but I hoped that one day I would return to Russia once more. 🐾

