

# Scouting, a different approach

Throughout the year, I am always doing something hunting related, whether planning, scouting, or doing work in the field, there is always something. A big part of my hunting preparation is scouting, and this is a yearlong affair. Knowing your hunting area is key, and knowing what areas deer and moose use, at what times of year is vital for success.

As Spring rolls around, it's a great time for hunters to be doing their scouting for the upcoming fall. During the spring, before the woods green up, it's a great time to be out in the woods, as it is similar to fall conditions, and gives you great opportunity to see signs from the past hunting season, as well as recent activity. You can gain valuable information on where animals' bedding and feeding areas, and travel routes are. It is also a great time to be clearing shooting lanes, trails, and setting up stands, blinds or trail cameras, or preparing food plots. Doing this as far away from fall as possible is ideal, limiting disruption in your hunting areas.

As imperative as being in the field scouting is, the use of technology has added another element to scouting for the modern hunter. From Google earth, to GPS and associated software, crown land maps, and topographi-

cal maps, there is a great deal of scouting that can be done from the comforts of your home. There has been many a morning I have sat on the couch with a cup of coffee in hand, pouring over Google earth, maps, and GPS software planning the next hunt.

Google Earth has been an amazing advance for scouting; giving a view from above of your hunting area, and in many areas a high resolution image, allowing you to nearly pick out individual trees. Even the low-resolution areas show enough detail to tell where roads and trails, ponds, cutovers, and wetlands are. If you find something you like on Google earth, it even gives you precise coordinates that you can then plug into a GPS, or use a map to try and locate once in the field.

Another incredibly useful resource for me is the use of my Garmin GPS and the Garmin MapSource software that it can be used with. I use the Garmin Rino, which is a GPS that also has a frs/gmrs radio built into the unit, allowing me to communicate both with hunters with just normal radios, but with other members of my hunting party with Rinos; it allows me to send them brief text messages, avoiding noisy radio chatter, as well as allowing me to see their location on my GPS.

While using the GPS in the field, it records the route I have taken, and allows me to store limitless amounts of waypoints inside it, allowing me to return to the same location later, or with the associated software, to view it all on my computer.

With the Garmin MapSource software, it allows you to download detailed maps from the program into your GPS; I currently have a large part of NW Ontario, including many small bush roads and lakes, as well as topographical info on my GPS. As well, after using your GPS in the field, you can download the data collected onto your computer, and see the route you have taken on the programs maps, and the waypoints you

have saved. You can view this both on the MapSource maps, but it can also be linked to Google Earth, allowing you to view your tracks and waypoints laid overtop of Google Earth's satellite imagery.

Using these programs, can both give you a better idea of the area you're hunting, and

can help you find new hunting locations nearby, new stand sites, or help you find locate more productive areas. Whether it be a new set of maps with back roads and topographical information, using Google earth, or getting a GPS and the accompanying software, have a look at your hunting area from home, and see what you can learn.



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