

The Silence Game

Reference: <https://www.sitkagear.com/experience/the-silence-game>

There are two types of whitetail bowhunters: those who consistently get close to mature whitetails, and those who don't. It's that simple.

Tactics vary from hunter to hunter and place to place, but one thing remains the same for all successful bowhunters, and that's the fact that their gear is absolutely silent. Silence isn't just an advantage; it's a necessity when it comes to bowhunting experienced whitetails. Too many noisy bowhunters mistakenly believe they are in the game hunt after hunt and year after year.

The beauty of the mature wild whitetail game is that it's absolutely unforgiving. I've been blessed to have spent decades (almost five now, and most of it guiding) pursuing mature wild whitetails, and I've learned year after year how unforgiving these amazing animals are. When I started this quest almost half a century ago, I deliberately chose an animal that would keep me challenged many years later. The intellect and survival instinct of the mature whitetail does exactly that. Decades later they still make me look foolish here and there, as they should. These well-tuned deer bring emphasis to the point that there are two types of bowhunters: those that are silent, and those that are not.



S I T K A

JIM HOLE JR.

7.12.2022

A trophy deer is a mature deer, a mature deer is an experienced deer, and an experienced deer is a deer that is well-educated and totally avoidant of anything outside the norm—detected by sight, scent, or sound. So as far as sound, there must be none, period. I recognize there are many ways to skin a cat as they say, so I pay my respects to my fellow successful bowhunters and their systems. Although our systems differ, they all have one thing in common, and that is silence.

Any hunter might get lucky on rare occasion with a rutted up traveling buck who's lowered his defenses for a few days, but for consistent success with mature deer, every piece of gear in the entire system matters. It only takes one unnatural noise, one instant of letting the guard down, for the success rate to drop to near zero. If one piece of gear makes noise, it renders the rest of your system pointless. You're either a silent predator, or you aren't.

Here is a breakdown of my system and the thinking behind each piece:



The Bow

Your bow should be easy to handle and carry, and it should shoot well through thick and thin, not just on your good or perfect days. In silencing your bow, consider not only normal use, but also think about

what could go wrong and what could make noise, like an arrow falling off the rest or the stabilizer touching something.



The Stand

For ultimate flexibility, I prefer a small portable stand that can be taken in and out for every hunt to pre-set stand sites with steps or bolts already in place. The stand must be quiet to carry, to climb with, to install, and of course to hunt in. My stand is always completely covered with hockey tape (it takes about four rolls). Hockey tape is key because it's an adhesive cloth tape that stays soft in the coldest of cold. Be sure to tape your stand well ahead of the season, as fresh tape needs time to dry and air out to become scentless.

The Harness

The utility of your harness is key. First and most importantly is safety, period—no exposure and no risk. In a perfect world a hunter arrives at a stand site that's clean like a telephone pole with 12-plus steps/bolts in it, silently ascends using a lineman's rope with the stand hanging from his or her hip,

SITKA

JIM HOLE JR.

7.12.2022

installs the silent portable stand and steps on, then attaches a second line and disconnects the first, all in safety and silence. Like the stand, the harness must be taped to avoid any chance of noise.



The Clothes

For those of us who had spent decades enduring the harsh Canadian elements, trying to achieve silence wearing miscellaneous gear, the Fanatic System is nothing short of a game-changer. It's warm enough for the coldest of the cold and silent enough for close-quarters bowhunting harvests at single-digit yardage. For me, the Fanatic story starts ironically in Key West, Florida, where I sat down with SITKA product developers to go through dozens of different textiles to choose the quietest ones. After extensive product concepting, development, and testing, SITKA arrived at the Fanatic Jacket and Bib you see today.



The Pack

A few years back during the evening of an Alberta whitetail bowhunt, a few of us sat around a heap of cold weather gear. We asked the simple question, what do we need in a cold weather pack capable of completing the system laid out before us. The answer was a combo of perfect functionality and absolute silence. After endless input, design, and testing by the SITKA team, the Fanatic Pack came into existence. While a whitetail bowhunter's pack often becomes an afterthought, the Fanatic Pack truly completes this system, with every piece of it designed for absolute silence.

The final lesson here is that silence is a commitment. It's a commitment to the correct strategy, the correct gear, and the adherence to that strategy 100 percent of the time. That commitment is what it takes to consistently take mature whitetail deer with a bow.

SITKA

JIM HOLE JR.

7.12.2022



Owner of Classic Bowhunts, Jim Hole Jr. is a longtime renowned whitetail guide and outfitter in Alberta's legendary Edmonton Bow Zone, where he's helped an untold number of clients harvest mature whitetail bucks in frigid conditions. Since 1998 he has had a consulting relationship with Gore and then SITKA.

Working alongside Gore and SITKA product developers and team members like Dennis Zuck, Jeff Simpson, Chris Derrick, Richard Siberell, SITKA founder Jonathan Hart and others, Jim has been a key part of developing the quietest, most effective whitetail hunting gear imaginable.