

# BACKCOUNTRY JOURNAL

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## Alaskan Sheep Hunt Adventure



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# Riding the BHA Roller-coaster!



I have been in this job for three months at this writing. It has been a challenging and interesting trip so far, actually kind of a roller-coaster ride! In part, this is because I'm the first executive director of your organization, but it also relates to the complexities of these times and topics that we address. A lot of my focus has been spent getting familiar with the people and projects in the various regions and states.

So far I have met with folks from Alaska, Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, and Oregon. We have talked over project topics ranging from stopping coal mine development in, actually under, a salmon spawning stream (Alaska), gas exploration in critical wildlife habitat roadless-areas (Wyoming), legislative actions for wilderness designation (Idaho), to travel management plan implementation and enforcement in western Montana and eastern Idaho.

One thing for sure, there's no shortage of situations that need addressing in protecting our backcountry habitat!

On the financial front we have been making good progress on our development (fund-raising) plan. I have worked with a development consultant, Barbara Ball-McClure, as she helps us pulls together our fund-raising strategy for the next three years. The plan will continue to depend on individual memberships, larger donations,

fund-raising projects and project grants.

There have been some personnel changes and additions take place recently, besides me starting full-time for BHA. On our Board, Kelly Smith is stepping down as the Treasurer. Kelly has done an outstanding job managing our organization's finances and he will be turning this responsibility over to fellow board member Brian Parker from Lander, Wyoming. Brian and I will work closely to manage the growing BHA budget.

Finally, I have hired on contract Rose Caslar from Joseph, Oregon, to do BHA bookkeeping in the same community where I'm living and working. Rose will be working closely with Brian and myself on tracking our financial activities. She will also be coordinating with Arlene Holmes, who will continue management of the membership flow from Medford, Oregon. All in all things are coming together in keeping BHA running smoothly! As a final note, our revised and rebuilt web site is in the final phase of reconstruction and hopefully you can check it out here very soon.

Enjoy the fall...and fill your freezer with fish and game meat! ~Jim 

*Editors note: On top of trying to ride herd on BHA, Executive Director Jim Akenson drew a highly coveted Idaho bighorn ram permit. Good luck, Jim!*

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*Cover: Packing out a ram in Alaska's Brooks Range. Courtesy Doug Borland.*

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BHA is offering rewards to catch vandals who do habitat damage like this.

## BUSTED! BHA Pays Reward in ORV Abuse

Backcountry Hunters & Anglers paid a reward this September to a western Montana resident for providing information that led to the Forest Service citing riders using ATVs illegally on the Bitterroot National Forest.

BHA's reward program is meant to deter people from abusing public land and water with motor vehicles.

"We all have a right to enjoy our national forests, but no one has the right to abuse them," said Greg Munther, Montana chapter chairman for Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, of Missoula. "Whether you enjoy the forest on foot or riding an ATV, we all lose when people break the law and damage public resources."

For several years, BHA has had a standing reward for people who provide information leading to the conviction of anyone using a motorized vehicle illegally on land open to public hunting or fishing. This was the first time a reward has been issued in Montana.

BHA recently cut a check for \$500 to a Bitterroot Valley resident who witnessed illegal activity on his nearby national forest over 2010. He provided information necessary for Forest Service law enforcement personnel to write several citations and fine the law-breakers. The tipster asked to remain anonymous. We cannot reveal details of the busts, without

### Help Replenish BHA's Reward Fund

BHA's reward fund provides a powerful incentive to deter illegal behavior on national forests, BLM land or lands open to public hunting and fishing. Please contribute to the reward fund, by sending a donation to BHA, P.O. Box 655, Eagle Point, OR 97524. We can't do it without you!

infringing on further investigations.

"Off-road vehicles are powerful and popular machines with legitimate uses," Munther said. "But when they go where they are not appropriate, they steal opportunities from the rest of us." Hunters should note that recent Forest Service research documented that elk within a half mile or more of ATV activity are displaced. This means those ATV-equipped hunters who violate wildlife security habitat areas are ruining the hunting for those who follow the rules.

"Montana's world-class hunting and fishing and generous hunting seasons depend on plentiful secure habitat," Munther said. "We need to work together to conserve this priceless resource for today and tomorrow."



BHA members met with Alaska Sen. Begich in Washington D.C.

MIKE BEAGLE

## BHA Visits DC to Spare Habitat from Oil Leasing

Alaska BHA leader Barry Whitehill represented Backcountry Hunters & Anglers who went to Washington D.C. in June to express concerns over oil and gas development trampling wildlife habitat and clean water on public land. Barry took part in the Sportsmen for Responsible Energy Development Fly-in on Capitol Hill. In this photograph, the sportsmen meet with Sen. Begich, D-Alaska.

Whitehill joined representatives from Trout Unlimited, National Wildlife Federation and the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership. They expressed support for the Department of Interior returning a sense of balance to the exploitation of oil and gas reserves underlying federal public land. In previous administrations, oil and gas was considered the primary purpose of public land. BHA supports some energy development on public land, but it should be compatible with habitat and clean water, not trump it. Certain prime habitats should remain free of energy development.

The oil spill in the Gulf shows the level of environmental risks that were being taken in the push to develop energy from public resources. While the news is currently centered on the environmental issues in the Gulf, we need to ensure that we don't lose sight of the risks and damages that are occurring on public lands because of onshore energy development.

Hunter/anglers were from New Mexico (Toner Mitchell), Colorado (Luke Schafer), Montana (Hal Herring), Alaska (Barry Whitehill), Pennsylvania (Devin DeMario) and Arkansas (Tim Kizer).

# GRANDPA'S ASHES

BY DOUG BORLAND

**T**he raven circled lazily from the bluff near my house, starkly black against the overcast sky. Winter seemed to hang around my neck, stubborn as the heavy snowpack that refused to recede up the mountain.

Mentally, I had difficulty reconciling the inevitability of meeting Father Time on his own terms. Aging bowhunters surely do not appreciate heart issues, knees that talk back and shoulders that will never carry the loads they once did. To shake off these blues, I called my old friend Dick Robertson.

Dick was facing his own mortality. He had just lost his father, who was also his hunting mentor, best friend, and close companion. I conjectured that he needed his own dose of renewal.

I suggested a trip for the two of us and his son Yote — not just any trip, but something epic. It had been 30 years since Jay Massey and I first backpacked into the remotest corner of Alaska's Brooks Range we could find. It was time to go back! The trip would be a tribute to Jay, who we lost to cancer, and to Dick's Dad and Yote's Grandpa.

We'd have to carry everything that we needed for nearly three weeks on our backs. We'd retrace a trail Jay and I pioneered in 1979 — 20 miles on foot to a piece of the Range that no other hunters had penetrated. Thirty years after Jay and I made the same hunt, we'd try to reach the same camp in the same valley with its broken, end-of-the-world cliffs. This time, simply making the journey would be goal enough.

Would our bodies be up to the trek? Would the sheep be there? After 30 years, anything was possible. With more enthusiasm than expectation of killing a sheep, we spilled out



*Alaska's Brooks Range fits anyone's definition of backcountry.*

of the bush plane on the gravel bar in August. The Brooks Range was a huge expanse of virtually uninhabited, pristine mountains. The lonely tundra lay awash in shades of green with splashes of reds, yellows, and oranges from frost-turned berries and willow brush. The river ran clear as a teardrop.

With heavy packs but light spirits, we started toward a drainage that was a mere squiggle on my 30-year-old map. We headed up through a rough and rocky pass where even the caribou trails were hard to follow, stopping short of our intended goal when it started to rain. Then the rain turned to snow as we made camp. The next day snow fell until noon, but we covered seven miles before it was time to camp again. We were still three miles short of our goal, up a narrow side drainage below Observation Mountain.

The evening sun topped the surrounding mountain peaks with gold like the domes and spires of a Russian cathedral. We'd spotted no sheep, except a ram's skull in an avalanche chute.

The peaceful setting and the quiet satisfaction outweighed our pains. We had endured and we relished the solitude of true wilderness.

Late rising is a guilty pleasure in Alaska's far north in August, since the days offer 20 hours of light. I have found evenings offer the best hunting. At mid-morning we split up to scout. Yote headed up the rugged mountain behind camp with the spotting scope, while Dick and I took our bows and made the three miles to the old camp to glass.

The old campsite was more overgrown than I remembered. We found no sign that anyone else had been there. Sheep were there too: ten ewes and two small rams only a quarter mile above the campsite! In spite of our tired legs, we climbed another thousand feet to the top of Observation Mountain, where I cautioned Dick to peek carefully over a knife-edged ridge into a broken canyon where I had killed one of my rams years ago.

Déjà vu! Three rams were bedded just 200 yards across the way. One approached full curl. Satisfied, we returned to the lower camp to meet Yote. He had located a band of eight rams, and although they were far across an entirely different valley, at least two were legal full curl. Tomorrow we would hunt in earnest!

In the morning, I would hunt above the old camp to see if the largest of the three rams there was a legal full-curl. Dick and Yote marched to the high basin to search for the eight rams Yote had discovered.

Events converged as if predestined. Yote's rams were waiting at the top of a hanging basin two miles above the valley floor. Yote made the final stalk. The ending came not quite as scripted — as Yote's first arrow flew harmlessly. But the sheep, a well-placed arrow, and the hunter did come together finally. Dick saw it all and scrambled to join Yote beside the fallen ram. The trip down the mountain was made not so much in triumph as in peace: two bowhunters thankful for the sheep, the mountain and the higher powers that had brought them there.

Since the trip had already exceeded expectations, we felt free to spend our time simply being there. We packed Yote's ram off the mountain and hung the meat from a cliff face in a shady draw to keep it cool and safe. Then we moved our camp below Observation Mountain and replicated the scenic base camp of 30 years previous, enjoying the upgrade from freeze-dried fare to sheep ribs and steaks.

The rams were still there too, although so far away that we could only enjoy watching them through the spotting scope. Once we did see the "king," a buster with 40-inch-plus curls, but when Dick and Yote gave chase he eluded them.

Weather set in: rain, fog, wind, and then snow kept us in camp. After two days of near-zero visibility with snow on the higher slopes, we decided that we should head to lower elevation the next morning. At around 3 pm the fog lifted a bit.

"Let's stay here tomorrow," Dick said, as we sat around the fire. "The wind is dying, and the fog is trying to lift. I have a good feeling and want to give this place another day." Yote and I agreed.

As if on cue, an almost magical change came over our valley. As afternoon evolved into evening, the fog lifted. We could see ridges and hillsides through the feathery mist. Then, something white appeared ghost-like among a jumble of rocks just 400 yards above us.

I reached for my binoculars. "He's a ram and a beauty!"

All this took place casually, for that was the mood around the campfire. Since we were in full view of the sheep



*Montana bowyer Dick Robertson took this exceptional ram with a bow he made himself.*

and really didn't think we could attempt a stalk, we set up the scope, judged the ram to be a full-curl-plus and grinned in amazement.

"Dick, that looks like your ram to me," I said. "But it will be tough to move now, and he isn't really approachable where he is."

Still, Dick took his hunting gear and eased out of sight up the creek bed next to camp. Yote and I remained around the fire. The ram could see us, but evidently didn't feel threatened. He pawed at a rock pile that didn't seem to have any grass. Perhaps a mineral seep kept his attention. Yote and I enjoyed a ringside seat, tension building like a Hitchcock movie.

Dick appeared stage left, out of sight from the ram and ascending. Through my field glasses, I could see that Dick was taking the wrong approach. He would soon lose the cover from the ridge and be in plain sight of the ram, although still a hundred yards away. As if mental telepathy were at work, Dick decided to try another approach — good choice!

Within minutes, he was at the ram's level, out of sight but out of cover 150 yards from his unconcerned quarry. Then the ram decided to move horizontally toward Dick's hide. Out of sight from Dick, the ram stopped to graze while Dick decided to nock an

arrow, get comfortable, and wait.

As the ram closed to 60 yards, Dick still didn't see him coming. From below, Yote and I could see what Dick could not: that if he just waited, the ram had to walk over him to avoid a small cliff, offering a chip shot! But when Dick finally spotted movement, he rose and took a longer quartering shot. The arrow struck the ram. As the ram faltered and then gained speed, extreme stage left, a second arrow arced and it seemed to strike home! How could that be? The ram was 45 yards from Dick by then, and running full speed! But the ram was mortally hit, and soon three exuberant comrades came together on the hillside.

Emotions ran high. We embraced and knelt in wonder and gratitude at the side of the perfect specimen, a rare one-and-a-quarter curl, nine-year-old ram. Quietly, Dick said that he knew that something great was going to happen, because that afternoon on his hike he had seen two ravens (rare birds on the north slope of the Brooks Range), and they had circled him as if to say, "Keep going, the best is yet to come!" As in Alaska Native tradition, Dick had figured that the ravens were more than simply birds.

Dick produced a small canister from his pack. With a smile, a look above, and a few hushed words, he tossed a pinch of his Dad's ashes to dust the ram, blow in the wind, and rest forever in the Brooks Range. I snapped the photo, cleared a sudden glaze from my eyes, and jumped into the pleasant job of quartering and packing. Unbelievably, we were only 200 yards above camp.

As an older and wiser man than I had been 30 years ago, I declared the hunt over. We had 20 miles to cover with heavy loads. Yote shuttled loads of meat ahead and returned for more. In spite of Dick's 80-pound pack, the smile never left his face (although I hear his knees are still recovering). Waiting for our airplane, I took a day-hike, just to stretch. When a raven lazily circled me as I sat in the sun on a rocky outcropping, I could not help but smile, say, "Good to see you, Jay," and feel forever young. 🐾

*Note: A longer version of this article appeared in TRADITIONAL BOWHUNTER magazine. We appreciate permission to share it.*

# Middle Fork

By E. Donnell Thomas Jr.

No single cue defines the wilderness experience like the sound of a bush plane's departure. When you've just been dropped off miles from the nearest road, the silence that replaces the receding engine noise can sound as complex as an orchestra. In Alaska, that eerie sensation becomes commonplace. But Montana's Great Bear Wilderness Area is a long way from Alaska.

Two hours of packing rafts and gear from the airstrip to the banks of the Middle Fork of the Flathead River — really a mountain stream this close to its headwaters — left us in the mood to float and fish our way downstream for a few miles before we camped.

Since Lori and I drive across one of Montana's truly great trout streams every time we head up the hill from our central Montana home, we obviously didn't have to invest all this effort just to catch a few fish. But there are trout, and then there are wilderness trout. I have long considered native West Slope cutthroats the most beautiful game fish in North America. None of the dozens we caught that evening exceeded ten inches, but they were the same fish Lewis and Clark encountered two centuries earlier, and that made them good enough for me.

When we'd made our hasty rendezvous with our friends Pete and Neil at Neil's Flathead Valley home early that morning, time constraints prevented the attention to detail I usually invest in planning for wilderness trips. When we finally pitched our tents and turned our attention to dinner, we realized that our food supplies were largely limited to peanut butter, noodles and Spam. In fact, this discovery didn't prove nearly as depressing as it sounds. Spam was standard camp fare back when I was a kid trailing along through the woods after my parents, and Spam fried crisp over an open fire still evokes enough pleasant memories to nullify rational concerns about its composition.

We knew the water level was low when we started, but Neil, a veteran of many Middle Fork floats, assured us we'd have no trouble. And as we wandered through the meadows on that first night, we didn't — only an occasional sweeper required anything more than a casual stroke on the oars. But on the second day, we entered the five-mile stretch of riffles Neil aptly refers to as the Rock Garden. Bobbing along in their lightweight one-man pontoon craft, Neil and Pete made relatively painless progress, but our raft, laden with camp supplies, kept running out of water. At the head of each riffle, I would plot a course as far ahead as I could see and hope for the best.

Unfortunately, the best was seldom good enough. Time after time, Lori and I wound up stranded midstream, at which



*Lori Thomas, of Lewistown, Montana, nets a fat cutthroat in the Middle Fork of the Flathead River in the Great Bear Wilderness Area.*

point there was nothing to do but step into the chilly current and muscle the raft across the rocks. It was tiresome labor, compounded slick, round boulders that left our feet sore and our shins bruised. By the end of the day I concluded that I was too old for this kind of thing. Of course I'd made that observation before. But this time I meant it, after choking down another Spam dinner that didn't feel nearly as satisfying as the first one. Fortunately, nothing invites a change in attitude like a mountain sunrise. As we finished our coffee, I counted our blessings. The damage report was limited to one broken rod and one lost shoe. We'd picked up enough water from tributaries to promise a

relatively easy day ahead. After breaking camp, we began to fish down the river.

The fish grew with the current. The previous day's delicate little trout became chunky, foot-long fish, and soon Lori was catching cutthroats to 17 inches on dry flies. This was brainless fishing in a way — the fish, in typical wilderness cutthroat fashion, seemed happy to hit anything. I'd dug up an ancient fly box before we left and was having a great time catching trout on an assortment of Goofus Bugs and hair-wing Wulffs I'd probably tied 40 years earlier. As the morning progressed, the fish and the flies had turned me into a kid again.

But nature takes away as easily as she gives. That night, we endured a brief but intense mountain thunderstorm from the security of our tents. The rain that fell in camp hadn't been enough to affect the current. But something more dramatic had evidently taken place upstream, and as we ate breakfast the river began to color. By the time we slid the rafts back into the stream, the crystal clear current had turned the color of chocolate. Ever the optimist, Neil expressed confidence that we'd be fishing again by late afternoon, but the water had the look of a major mudslide upstream to me. Sometimes it hurts to be right.

At least we were floating freely. As the current gathered for a long run through a spectacular canyon, Class II water grew to solid Class III and I surrendered to the appeal of technical whitewater rafting. Paradoxically, our inability to fish became an asset. On extended float trips I'm usually too busy with my fly rod or my bow to appreciate the water on its own terms, but not this time. I leaned into the oars and enjoyed the ride, which grew more interesting as the day progressed. Just before noon, I heard a low growling sound ahead that indicated a lot of water surging through a tight spot with plenty of power behind it, and since I couldn't see the current's full course, I pulled to shore for a look. The full force of the river gathered between two sheer rock faces and surged through a complex obstacle course of boulders. I concluded I had a 98% chance of making it without a problem, a 1% chance of swamping the raft, and another 1% chance of a disaster.

While there was certainly a time when I would have taken my chances, my decision reflected the difference between being 21 and being 61. With gear tied down, I broke out a length of rope and lined the raft down through the torrent. We repeated that laborious process two more times before the day was done. I never regretted those decisions.

Because of the unfishable water, we ended the trip after four nights on the river. Although the first sounds of highway traffic invoked an inevitable note of despair after all that solitude, our last mile on the river resonated personally as we floated past the scene of my first encounter with a grizzly bear. That event took place decades earlier, and I hadn't been back to that spot since. The tale still seems worth telling.

I was 8 or 9. My father, brother, and I had hiked a mile or so upstream from US Highway 2 to fish, and despite the highway traffic, as far as I knew we had the water to ourselves. With my father downstream around the nearest bend and my brother somewhere between us, I was busy catching cutthroats on dry flies when I heard gravel tumbling down the bank behind me. I turned around to see a large grizzly sliding down through the rocks on its haunches.

The bear skidded to a stop barely a rod's length away and



*Traveling light comes in handy on wilderness rivers where boats are loaded daily.*

fixed me with a steady stare. I hadn't had a lot of experience, but I knew I was face to face with a grizzly. I also knew that I needed to avoid the temptation to run. After shouting to warn my brother, I retreated slowly downstream.

For the first 50 yards, the bear kept pace with me stride for stride. In retrospect, it's amusing to note how many hundreds of grizzly encounters I had to endure before I experienced another as potentially dicey as that one. But eventually the bear lost interest and began to swim across the river.

And there matters might have ended. Unbeknownst to us, however, another angler fished between my brother and my father, who remained out of sight around the bend. When the new arrival looked up and saw the bear, he took off like a scalded dog. In the process he became tangled up in his own fly line, so he was dragging his rod along across the rocks behind him when he galloped past my father. Intrigued by this sight, Dad asked what was up.

"There's a grizzly chasing two kids upstream!" he shouted as he ran by, never to be seen again.

I can only imagine my father's reaction to this news. Needless to say he dropped everything too, but he headed upstream in our direction as fast as the other adult party had headed down. Fortunately, by the time he found us the bear was halfway across the river.

By then, I was ready to start fishing again, but my father had none of it. He set off down the bank double-time, as determined as I'd ever seen him.

"Why can't we fish until dark?" I protested.

"Because I'm going to find that worthless SOB and have a word with him!" my father snapped back. His tone left no room for negotiation.

And there it was again: the same rocks, the same bank, and the same pool. The sense of déjà vu struck with the force of the strongest current. Nothing had changed except the observer. Therein lies the final appeal of the Middle Fork, a miracle that has remarkably little to do with fishing. Protected by Wilderness designation, the river has been granted the rarest wish our frequently misguided culture can offer: the freedom to stay the same. 🐾

*Editor's Note: A longer version of this article premiered in MONTANA SPORTING JOURNAL. Find more of the author's work at [www.donthomasbooks.com](http://www.donthomasbooks.com).*



# Idaho's Clearwater Basin Collaborative and a dynamic BHA couple

By Jim Akenson, BHA Executive Director



*Holly Endersby enjoys big game hunting throughout the Northwest.*

When I first started my job with Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, Board Member Holly Endersby and her husband, and charter member, Scott Stouder were pivotal in orienting me on the activities and potentials of BHA in Idaho. I was amazed to hear about this large scale planning process they described, involving a wide variety of stakeholders, and spanning a very large area within the Clearwater River Basin.

Thanks to this effort, BHA is helping shape the future for some of America's best backcountry habitat for elk, moose, black bear along with native cutthroat trout and sea-run salmon and steelhead.

This big, wild country spans two National Forests, the Nez Perce and the Clearwater in north-central Idaho. This planning process, known as the Clearwater Basin Collaborative, is really a model effort where representatives from the local community are active participants in directing the area's economic development and natural resource use and protection. I have attended two of the CBC meetings watching Holly and Scott in action. I have been very impressed with this group's cooperation and effectiveness in working through potentially contentious issues. I recently interviewed Holly on how she and Scott got involved in this unique project, and where she sees the connection for BHA.

*Q. How did you and Scott originally get involved in the Clearwater Basin Collaborative planning effort?*

"A fellow named Dale Harris, who is the Executive Director of the Great Burn Study Group and who worked on the Idaho Roadless Rule as part of the national task force, asked Scott and me if we'd be interested in being representatives for a grassroots planning process in the Clearwater country. Harris felt it was very beneficial that BHA was the sportsmen's rep, since our organization isn't focused on just one species in its conservation efforts.

The structure of the CBC involves deliberations made by the full-committee, from recommendations brought forward by representatives of various sub-committees. I serve on two of four sub-committees; one dealing with land allocation issues and I am the chair of the recreation subgroup, which includes negotiating with motorized interests. Scott, who represents Trout Unlimited, serves as two co-chairs, one being land allocation and the other forest health subcommittees. Scott is also on the recreation sub-committee."

*Q. How have you been bringing the Backcountry Hunters and Anglers message into this planning process?*

"BHA is establishing a niche as the voice of the traditional hunter, and is developing a reputation for being good to work with. Actually, our efforts have raised our profile considerably and we have been invited to participate in other collaborative efforts, such as the Payette Forest Plan, and the Governor's Bighorn/Domestic Sheep Collaborative. Our CBC involvement has been very beneficial for BHA.

*Q. What are your and BHA's goals for the outcome of this collaboration?*

"Well that is pretty straightforward. To have robust legislative protection for wild places in the basin, including wilderness, wild and scenic river classification and national recreation area status. Such land and water protection recommendations must be passed by the full-CBC, and not just a sub-committee, in order to go onto the next level of federal legislative consideration. To ensure that roadless areas remain that way, and have no new motorized incursions."

*Q. What will future involvement entail for Scott, you, and BHA?*

"Soon this process will be ramping up with full community interactions. This year Scott and I will be making a December trip to DC to have direct dialogue with congressional staffers to

fortify the sportsmen's interests in the CBC outcome."

*Q. Could you describe some about the funding behind this effort?*

"A joint landscape-wide project of around a million acres from the Clearwater NF and the CBC has been selected to receive funding from the Forest Landscape Restoration Act 2010. This Act requires collaboration on any project presented. We actually had a 2 year head-start with community involvement which gave us a competitive edge in securing the federal grant money. We were selected as one of two model projects in this region, and there were only 10 such grants given out nationally, so we will have over a million dollars to help restore federal forest lands and provide an economic boost to the Basin."

*Q. What do you see as an outcome from CBC 5 years from now?*

"First and foremost I see federally designated protection for Clearwater Basin land and water resources. Hopefully, there will also be a more robust and stable local economy. Finally, there will be more diversified recreational opportunities while still protecting the region's wild character."

*Q. So what do you see as the future for similar collaborations and BHA involvement with them?*

"Nationally the Forest Service has made the decision that a collaborative community based approach will be their mode of operation. This can only be positive for BHA as we will be considered as the best-suited voice for sportsmen who cherish the backcountry experience."

We hope that efforts by Scott and Holly in the Clearwater Basin will serve to inspire BHA members to get involved when similar opportunities present themselves in the lower 48 and Alaska. Nice work, Holly and Scott!



# TROUBLE IN TOY LAND

By Ben Long

Scent-Lok clothing manufacturers long claimed their product blocks human scent from reaching the sensitive noses of big game – but a judge recently ruled the claims smelled fishy.

The case implicated some of the leading outdoor retailers in consumer fraud. But even more, the case speaks volumes about the state of hunting ethics.

Here's the background: Scent-Lok is name-brand fabric inlaid with charcoal marketed primarily to whitetail deer hunters. The manufacturers claim the layer of charcoal in the fabric absorbs human scent. For about a decade, Scent-Lok sales have brisk, to the tune of \$100 million gross sales a year.

Hunters have always known the nose is the ultimate defensive sense organ for deer and elk. It's hard for humans to even imagine how sensitive the noses of big game animals are – or how animals interpret their world by waves of microscopic particles wafting through the air.

Hunters, myself included, are suckers for new gadgets. We seem always to be looking for something to give us an edge over the literally superhuman senses of big game. And the "outdoor industry" is happy to exploit this tendency by offering an array of products claiming to be the only thing between you and a trophy bull or buck.

A judge ruled that Scent-Lok crossed the line. Promoters claimed that the fabric stopped human scent, all the time. The claims were beyond the pale. Scientists found that trailing dogs could find people who wore charcoal fabric about as readily as they found people who wore regular clothing.

A group of Minnesota hunters sued for fraud and the judge ruled in their favor. It was shocking if only because it was the first time in living memory a gear



Jim Ward

*Scent-proofing technology is causing a big stink in our great outdoors.*

retailer was called on his own BS.

I've never owned a piece of Scent-Lok clothing. I prefer wool to charcoal to keep me comfortable in bad weather and keep hypothermia at bay.

I do worry about the wind. I own gadgets that help me cope with the vagaries of the breeze. One is a squeeze bottle of talcum powder. It cost 99 cents. I also have a piece of frayed thread tied around my rifle barrel. These allow me to plan my sneaks and stalks so the wind is in my face.

No other practice has so increased the amount of game I see in a given day than learning to hunt into the wind. The best hunters I know develop a sixth sense for keeping track of the wind. That's also why predators like cougars and bobcats have those long whiskers – so they always have the wind in their favor.

To me, that's what hunting is all about: Learning about Nature, then finding ways to use the subtle ways of Nature in my favor in a level playing field. To me, that is where the satisfaction of the hunt comes from.

When we reach for technology to "beat" nature simply to provide a short cut to a kill, there is a different kind of fraud involved. We are defrauding ourselves.

## Maui Madness Membership Drive Extended

BHA's Maui Madness membership drive has been EXTENDED to Feb. 1, 2011! Get involved today to recruit new BHA members and you'll earn a chance to soak away your hunting season aches and pains on the beaches of Maui. Maybe try a little off-shore fishing besides.

BHA will be providing a member with airfare along with a one week stay in a beautiful condo on the island of Maui in Hawaii. Participation is easy and contributes to the mission of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers: Passing on our outdoor traditions.

### How You Can Win:

For every two new BHA members you recruit, you get one chance to win \$800 for travel and a weeks stay at the Maui condo. Recruit four new members and get two chances to win, recruit six members and get three chances and so on (no limit on chances). Use the attached sign up sheets to sign up your hunter/angler friends, family, and colleagues.

- **Maui Bonus Drive - Earn Extra Chances!**
- **Recruit 10 new members and get an extra five chances to win!**
- **Recruit 25 new members and get an extra 15 chances to win!**
- **Recruit 50 new members and get an extra 40 chances to win!**

Accommodations come fully furnished. Very nearby fishing opportunities, tennis courts, three golf courses, incredible snorkeling and restaurants at every price range.

**Drawing to be held Feb. 15, 2011.** Make copies of the sign up sheet found on the back cover of BACKCOUNTRY JOURNAL or request more from [ruggedcountry@gmail.com](mailto:ruggedcountry@gmail.com).

## BHA Stands up for Fair Chase for Alaska Black Bear

By Mark Richards, AK BHA Chapter Chairman

Alaska's Department of Fish & Game continues to be heavily politicized, and as we feared, our very own Division of Wildlife Conservation recently recommended to the Board of Game to allow the trapping of bears (with foot snares) in some areas of the state outside the process of a formal bear control implementation plan.

BHA believes that black bears are a valuable big game species and should be hunted by fair chase standards. BHA also has strong doubts about the scientific foundation behind the push to trap black bears, ostensibly to "grow" ungulate numbers.

This new policy is being pushed from the leadership level, via the governor's office, with regional managers and staff being forced to go along with it even though they do not agree with or support this recommendation.

Labeled as "black bear" trapping, the reality is that any general black bear trapping season open to the public essentially would legalize both black and grizzly bear trapping because it is impossible not to also catch some grizzly bears in foot snares set for black bears.

These new bear trapping regulations were announced during prime caribou hunting season and not open to public proposals. AK BHA sent in a counter-proposal but it was rejected, and through an "agenda change request" is being heard at an out-of-schedule Board of Game meeting that was ostensibly only to discuss a caribou allocation issue. The public comment period will happen during the short window in September when most sportsmen and women are in the field moose hunting and when F&G Advisory committees aren't able to meet.

AK BHA is very concerned that the public process of wildlife management in Alaska is being subverted. We will



*BHA believes that black bears should be hunted by fair chase standards.*

strongly oppose any bear trapping and plan on having a strong presence at the October Board of Game meeting in Anchorage. Check the Alaska chapter website for more info and updates: <http://www.alaskabackcountryhunters.org> 🐾

## BHA Helps Land \$1 Million for Habitat Work in Central Idaho

By Holly Endersby, Idaho BHA Chapter Chairwoman

Idaho BHA's main emphasis this summer has been on issues surrounding the Clearwater Basin Collaborative. This is a group of local stakeholders in the Clearwater River Basin, helping set priorities and guide management of this prime piece of big game habitat and fishery.

The Collaborative along with the USFS were successful in submitting a Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Act proposal. The proposal was selected as one of ten across the nation for funding. The purpose of the \$1 million in funding is to benefit habitat and healthy forest conditions across a large landscape in the Clearwater National Forest. Not only will this benefit land, water and native plants and animals, it will provide employment for Basin residents. It is truly a win-win proposal.

In addition, we provided significant input to IDFG on Landowner

Appreciation tags and Access – working to return these two programs to their original intents rather than the money-making programs for landowners they have morphed into.

BHA believes that wildlife is a public trust to be managed for the public good. Policies that privatize or commercialize wildlife are a threat to our proven North American model of wildlife management.

Our continued membership in Idaho Sportsmen's Caucus Advisory Council also allowed us to weigh-in on more stringent rules for elk farms in the state and greater security for bighorns. 🐾

## BHA Organizes for Quiet Montana Rivers

Montana BHA has organized Missoula-area fishing, homeowners and conservation groups to voice their concerns about increased jet-boat and jet ski traffic on the lower Bitterroot and Clark Fork Rivers.

The Parks Division of FWP has plans to install a new boat ramp and huge parking area for up to 36 boats at Harper's Bridge without addressing the effects of more motorized river use on area natural quiet, traditional users, safety, adjacent landowners, migratory and nesting waterfowl and shoreline erosion.

BHA will continue to engage with the agency to make sure these concerns are addressed. 🐾

## Montana BHA Works to enhance Montana Forest Service habitat, law enforcement

Montana BHA organized an August meeting with Bitterroot Forest Supervisor Julie King to discuss the upcoming final Forest Travel Plan decision, which is expected to be finalized this fall.

MT BHA pressed issues such as protecting roadless areas for elk and mountain goat security habitat, the erosive nature of sensitive granitic soils and adjusting hunting season habitat protections to include archery season.

Other participants included Ravalli Fish and Wildlife, Hellgate Hunters and Anglers, and Trout Unlimited.

MT BHA also met with Forest Service Northern Regional Law Enforcement Commander and other lead law enforcement officers, urging swift and effective prosecution of all off road violations where evidence is sufficient. BHA cited one instance where a videotape and name of the violator was furnished to law enforcement a year ago without a citation yet being issued. We also formally requested a summary of off road incidents for each Ranger District and the number of resulting number of citations issued to the violators.

MT BHA and the Forest Service Regional Office will continue discussions about how BHA can help the agency be more effective in enforcing responsibility and accountability on national forests.

MT BHA is now incorporated and has its own bank account. Our new treasurer is Chad Silvertsen, who lives near Thompson Falls. 🐾

## **BHA Volunteers document ATV abuse on the Colville National Forest**

**By Joe Mirasole, Washington Chapter Chairman**

Washington State Chapter BHA leaders took a road trip to look at the damage caused by ATV abuse in the Colville National Forest, near Spokane. We wanted to put our boots on the ground before commenting on the South End Project proposed by the Forest Service.

In collaboration with the Northeast Washington Forestry Coalition, we asked the Washington State Governor to support putting 215,000 acres into the Wilderness act. We worked also with members of the Northeast Washington Forestry Coalition, creating [www.WaOrvAbuse.org](http://www.WaOrvAbuse.org), a web site for us to collect pictures and stories of ATV abuse to take to legislators.

WA BHA held an hour-and-a-half meeting with one of our state representatives to strategize the introduction of a bill that will increase enforcement and fines for illegal ORV/ATV use. WA BHA is organizing a field trip where we will bring various

representatives out to the habitats impacted by ORV/ATV abuse. The purpose of this field trip was to help garner support for our bill. If things go as planned the bill will be introduced in the next legislative session. 🐾

## **CO BHA Speaks for Habitat** **By Ben Long**

Colorado BHA chapter chairman David Lien is an accomplished trekker and mountaineer, but also no slouch with a pen. Here's a sampling of some of his writing lately about the Great Outdoors in Colorado and Minnesota. Also, CO BHAers Paul Vertrees, Bob Marion and Tom Skyles are making waves in the Heart of the Rockies!

Congratulations, fellows and keep up the great work!

Here are some quotes from the Colorado press:

"Part of keeping good, healthy big game herds (in particular, elk) on national forests and other public lands is to make sure they have ample secure habitat — big wild country with large blocks of land without motorized disturbance. In fact, closing or decommissioning roads has been found to increase elk survival and the number of bulls, extend the age structure, increase hunter success, and allow elk to remain in preferred habitat longer. Studies have also recommended closing entire areas to motorized use — as opposed to individual roads — to best promote healthy elk populations."

—David Lien, *Summit Daily News*

"Studies show that when disturbed by a hiker, mountain biker or a person on horseback, elk move from 500 to 1,000 yards. When disturbed by an ATV, elk move an average of 2,000 yards! So what do elk think of ATVs? They don't like 'em, for good reason. Elk are more likely to die young in areas where they are disturbed by ATVs. On heavily roaded landscapes, which most Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management lands are (in Colorado, for example, only 8 percent of Forest Service lands lie more than a mile from a road and only 4 percent for BLM lands), elk find themselves lethally sandwiched between aggressive harassment by motorized invaders and decreased hiding cover."

—David Lien, *Vail Daily*

"In Colorado, the State Parks Board

has the opportunity to support real, meaningful OHV management reform through "sticker funds" reallocation, which would result in more funds being allocated to OHV law enforcement and remediation activities. Hunters and anglers pay for our own law enforcement through license fees. Why should the most damaging and disruptive group of public-land users be allowed to escape the responsibility of self-policing?"

—David Lien, *Colorado Springs Gazette*

"The Colorado Wilderness Act of 2009 taps 34 areas totaling 850,000 acres for protection, and the Hidden Gems proposal calls for wilderness designation of 342,000 acres, mostly in White River National Forest. Elk and other wildlife (and all of us) have precious little untrammled land left in this state. Currently, wilderness designation protects only 5 percent of Colorado's landmass, mostly high-elevation mountaintops. These proposed wilderness bills are generally lower-elevation wildlands (i.e., winter range) that comprise the most vital habitats for big game and other wildlife, yet receive the most pressure from high-impact industry and motorized recreation."

—David Lien, *Colorado Springs*

*Independent*

"Our public lands are every hunter's, angler's, and citizen's gift, and it is our civic duty to take care of them for current and future generations."

—David Lien, *The (Grand Junction)*

*Daily Sentinel*

Thanks to the OHV Grant Program reforms adopted by the State Parks Board, OHV'ers will now be contributing funds to their own law enforcement. As an OHV user myself, I understand the attraction of these vehicles, but their misuse is widespread, and these reforms are long overdue.

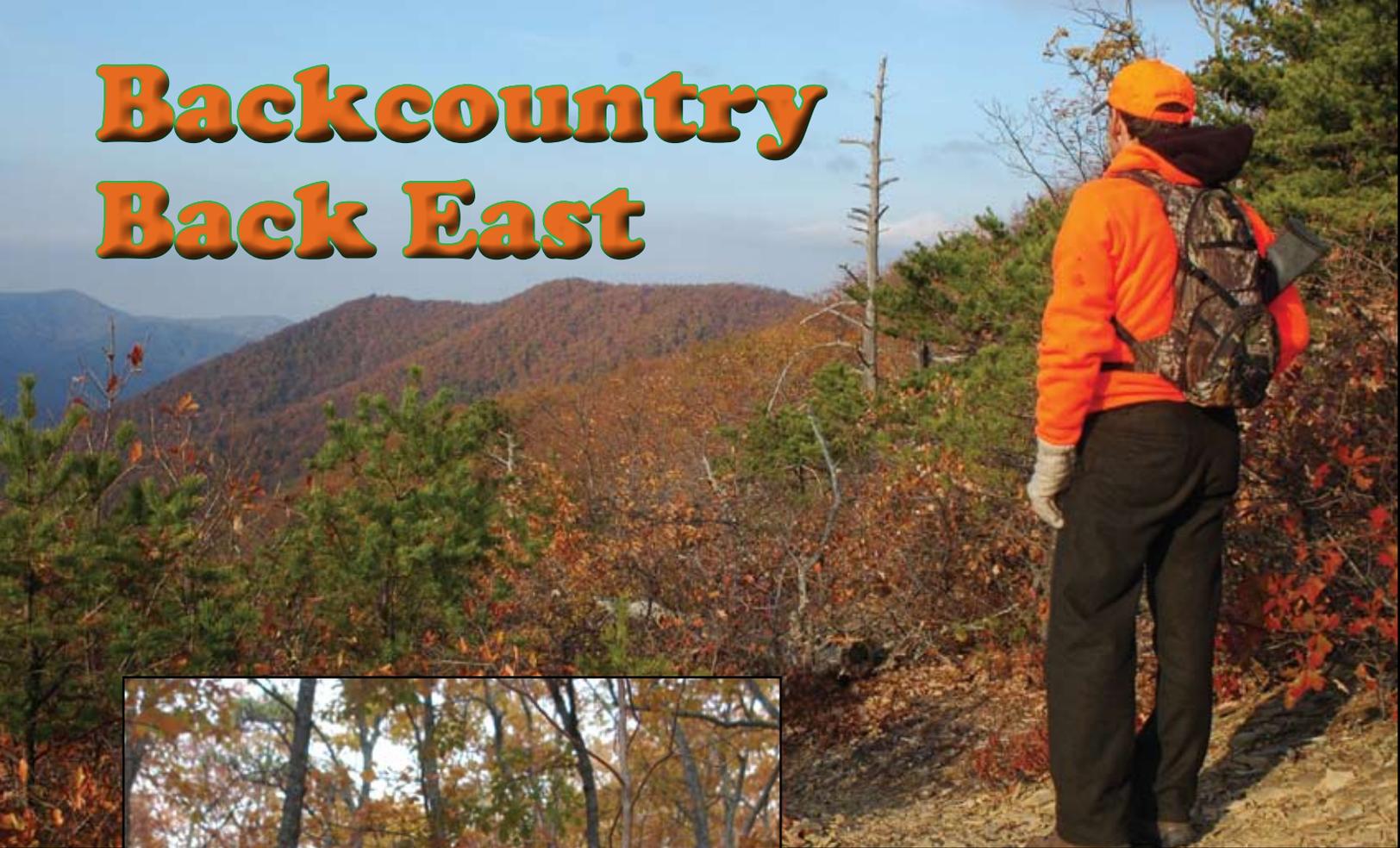
—David Lien, *Summit Daily News*

Federal officials need to comply with the law instead of finding excuses not to. When they consciously flout the laws and authorities they are bound to protect, they come to behave as if they are the authority and ignore the law. This same type of attitude led to the failure of the Department of Interior's (former) Mineral Management Service to properly regulate deep-water oil drilling in the Gulf of Mexico."

—Bob Marion, *Cortez Journal*



# Backcountry Back East



*BHA member and prolific outdoor writer Jack Ballard shared these images from a solo muzzle-loader hunt for whitetail deer. Jack was hunting the St. Mary Wilderness in Virginia. The 35,000-acre wilderness area is on the George Washington and Jefferson national forests.*



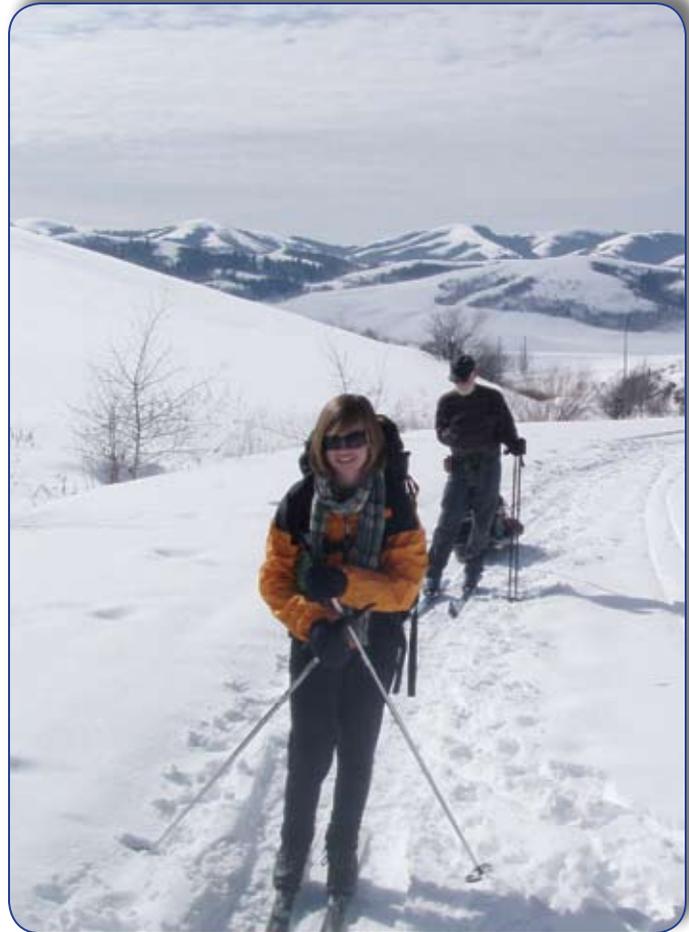
# Backcountry Kids

## The Wanderer

By Cara Loftin

The Wanderer with eyes the color of a misted blue, the Wanderer with hair hardly visible, a silvery gray, the Wanderer with the smile that is never straight, a naturalist who lives in a world of his own. A world with no war and a world with no hate. No global warming or gas-using machines. A world with no pollutants. A world where he lives off the land and hunts wild creatures. A perfect world. His perfect world. The Wanderer whose best friend is his dog, who is worst enemy to the deer or elk in the hunted forest, who cares and forgets. The Wanderer who loves nothing more than to be in the woods with his tent and his dog.

The Wanderer who is determined to make even the slightest difference in the economy. Who waits for the fall and waits for the spring. Unknowing of what luck the seasons will bring. Hoping for big fish and big game. The Wanderer who is delighted by a campfire in the rain. The Wanderer who has taught me all that I know about wildlife and adventure. A Wanderer who takes me on trips into the backcountry with him, and who brings me home safely. A Wanderer whom I love and I see every day. The Wanderer. My dad.



*Cara Loftin and her family enjoy the backcountry in her home state of Idaho.*



*J. C. Pollard shows off a dandy rainbow trout he caught in Montana's Bitterroot River in the summer of 2010.*

*Tyler Jacobson landed this fat brookie on a hike into the Cloud Peak Wilderness in Wyoming in summer 2010.*

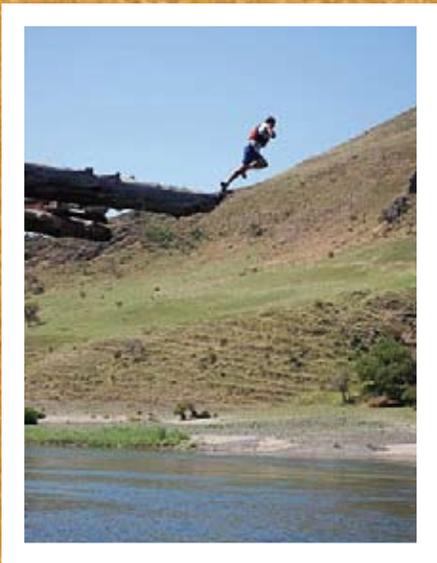
## B.H.A. MEMBER PHOTOS



*Bart George from Pend Oreille County in Washington pauses to take in the view during a hound hunt with his horse Credo and his two hounds Tana (blackmouth cur) and Whisper (black and tan).*

*Don Patch of Tucson poses with a Coues whitetail he took last January east of Tucson. He backpacked into the Galiuro Wilderness and shot the buck with his long-bow at 20 yards. He had to bone him out and pack him out quite a few miles. Don says for a traditional bow-hunter like him, this is a once-in-a-lifetime buck.*

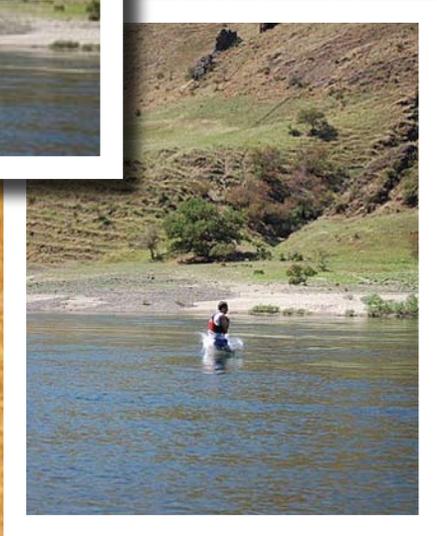




*Bill Peabody from Spokane took this series of photos of his son Jack, age 10 at the time, making a big splash on Idaho's Salmon River just above Green Canyon during a float trip.*



*Greg Mladenka took this photo of his friend Lynn packing out an elk quarter last fall.*



*Mike Rogers shows off a red salmon he took on Alaska's Copper River Delta near Chitna using a dipnet.*



*BHA members, send your favorite backcountry photos to: [editor@backcountryhunters.org](mailto:editor@backcountryhunters.org)*



# Backcountry Hunters & Anglers Maui Madness Membership Drive

**Enjoy a Hawaiian vacation ... On us!**

**This great offer has been extended to February 1st!**



**Offer Ends February 1, 2011**

**Get a chance to win a free vacation every time you recruit two new members!**

When next hunting season is done and the hills are snowed in, why not recover in the white sands of Maui? Get involved today to recruit new BHA members and perhaps try your hand at off-shore fishing. **BHA will be providing a member with airfare along with a one week stay in a beautiful condo on the island of Maui in Hawaii. Participation is easy and contributes to the future of our outdoor traditions.**

### **The Way to Win :**

For every two new BHA members you recruit, you get one chance to win \$800 for travel and a weeks stay at the Maui condo. Recruit four new members and get two chances to win and so on (no limit on chances). Use the below sign up sheets. Drawing held Feb. 15, 2011.

### **Maui Bonus Drive - Earn Extra Chances!**

- Recruit 10 new members and get an extra five chances to win!
- Recruit 25 new members and get an extra 15 chances to win!
- Recruit 50 new members and get an extra 40 chances to win!

**Send New memberships to:**  
Backcountry Hunters & Anglers  
Maui Madness Membership Promotion  
PO Box 655—Eagle Point, OR 97525

Accommodations come fully furnished. Very nearby fishing opportunities, tennis courts, three golf courses, incredible snorkeling and restaurants at every price range. Make copies of the below sign up sheets or request more from [ruggedcountry@gmail.com](mailto:ruggedcountry@gmail.com)!

### **BHA New Membership Form**

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address** \_\_\_\_\_

**City** \_\_\_\_\_ **Zip** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone** \_\_\_\_\_

**Sign me up—Enclosed is \$20**

**Recruited by (name, city, state):**  
\_\_\_\_\_

### **BHA New Membership Form**

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address** \_\_\_\_\_

**City** \_\_\_\_\_ **Zip** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone** \_\_\_\_\_

**Sign me up—Enclosed is \$20**

**Recruited by (name, city, state):**  
\_\_\_\_\_

Must be 18 or older. Offer good for the recruitment of new members only. For exact details on the condo go to [VRBO.com](http://VRBO.com) and enter #51420. New member sign ups must be received by Feb. 1, 2011. More info? contact Joel Webster at [ruggedcountry@gmail.com](mailto:ruggedcountry@gmail.com)