

# BACKCOUNTRY JOURNAL



Magazine of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers

Winter 2013

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on Chukars**

**Angling in the  
Backcountry**

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## INTERIM DIRECTOR'S NOTE

By Holly Endersby

CASCADE SUNSET/DUANE DUNGANON

### 'The world is run by those who show up'

**D**ecades ago my husband's father told him, when he was complaining about something: "The world is run by those who show up." He was right. Go to any rural coffee shop where the folks hang out and you will find a lot of grouching about the state of our country and the world, but not much action. Frankly, I have never had much patience for griping. But I have a lot of respect for people who turn their concerns into concrete action. This is what BHA is all about. *We show up.*

When President Kennedy addressed the nation about our commitment to put a man on the moon, he said: "We do these things not because they are easy, but because they are hard." In other words, things worth working for are often difficult. My husband thinks this should be a BHA motto: We show up and we work on things that are hard, but worthy of our effort.

But the message I want to relay to each of you is this: it isn't enough to send in your membership money every year. *You* also have to show up.

That means sending comment letters on forest-travel management plans, contacting fish and wildlife officials when you see illegal motorized use, helping young people to know and love the backcountry, and communicating with decision-makers at local, state and federal levels about issues important to BHA. Things such as Land and Water Conservation Fund, potential wilderness legislation and working with agencies to preserve high-quality wildlife habitat from motorized incursion – both on land and water.



*BHA members recently traveled to the nation's Capitol to meet with members of Congress about issues affecting our backcountry.*

Saying you are too busy just doesn't cut it. We're all busy. But what we hope to preserve, wild land and wild water, is deserving of something as small as an hour a month to write or call on issues important to you and BHA. If you want those who come after us to be able to hunt and fish in wild country then we **ALL** have to show up, individually and collectively. By showing up, you become engaged in what the future of wild land will be and don't leave its fate to someone else who may not share your values.

Just as hunting or angling in the backcountry takes effort, so does protecting it. So for a New Year's resolution, let each of us add: "I'll show up." 



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COVER PHOTO BY LISA DENSMORE



# Simple respect is not so simple

I belly-crawled across the northern Montana prairie, hiding behind a pile of rocks that a rancher had pulled from the ground when he dug postholes on his property line.

But that rock pile left me a half-mile from the bedded herd of pronghorn.

“They can’t possibly see me from here,” I thought. I could barely see them, even with binoculars. I was wearing camouflage. If I just moved slowly enough...

I wiggled about three feet beyond the rock pile and a doe stood up. Busted. I crawled back behind the rocks. As I peeked over the rocks with binoculars, they filed over the horizon.

It reminded me of the advice elders of the Koyukon Tribe in Alaska once related to anthropologist Richard K. Nelson.

Every animal knows way more than you do.

It’s ancient advice, but it’s true. Pronghorn evolved on the North American prairie over millions of years; we humans have been here only 15,000 or so. They know the prairie way more than I do. More than I ever will.

In his book *Make Prayers to the Raven*, Nelson relates the complex relationship between the Koyukon and the northern wildlife that comprise their economy. To me, that relationship can be summed up with the words respect and humility. Every animal knows way more than you do.

Even the cagey old whitetail buck that lives in my suburban neighborhood knows his home range better than I do. He sneaks around mostly unseen, avoiding the neighborhood dogs, smelling the weather change and knowing all the secret spots to hide his days away.

Now, I’m a Western thinker, steeped in logic and science, and do not believe



BHA Co-Chairman of the Board Ben Long took this cow elk in northwestern Montana.

in the traditional tenants of animism. But I do believe in respect.

The American sportsman needs a refresher course in respect. Things I read on the blogs make my blood run cold. Advertising copy can even be worse.

I think of Fred Bear, the father of modern bow hunting, who wrote: “I have always tempered my killing with respect for the game pursued. I see the animal not only as a target but as a living creature with more freedom than I will ever have.”

Even some of the modern hunters who sing Bear’s praises would be wise to go back for a booster shot of respect.

Hunters and anglers should be respectful of all wildlife because America’s wildlife belongs to everyone, not just hunters. Why should the public entrust us with this precious resource if we cannot even manage a bit of decorum?

But more than that, we should show respect because it’s the right thing to do. It’s the honorable thing to do. Certainly, we can celebrate the joy, excitement and camaraderie of the outdoors, without

*Hunters and anglers should be respectful of all wildlife because America’s wildlife belongs to everyone, not just hunters. Why should the public entrust us with this precious resource if we cannot even manage a bit of decorum?*

denigrating the fish and wildlife we enjoy and pursue.

Respect – and disrespect – is something we learn from elders, mentors and our fellows. Ignore respect and it will go away.

So whether you’re reading a blog, commenting on a Facebook photo, or just talking among friends, speak up for respect. Showing respect is not enough. Let’s remind our fellow hunters and anglers it’s part of our heritage and our duty. 🐾

# Blood & Guts Made Easy

*A veteran hunter and elk guide shares his technique for fast and efficient field dressing of very large game.*

By David Petersen

**I** killed my first elk in 1981, a 500-pound spike bull that fell to a .30-30 at 30 yards. While I'd grown up bowhunting whitetails in Oklahoma – I killed my first deer there, at age 18, with a recurve bow – I'd never hunted wapiti before a midlife move to Colorado.

In our first years here, my wife and I were truly poor and honestly needed the meat. (We still are and still do.) That need, combined with my total lack of elk hunting experience, led in turn to a lack of confidence in getting the job done with a bow. Thus the rifle. After approaching that first spike and assuring that he was thoroughly dead, I remember thinking, “My God. Now what do I do?”

It was four steep miles down to my camp, where our cabin now stands, and I was alone.

What I did, of course, was what had to be done. I gutted and quartered the pony-sized deer, just as I'd done with hundred-pound whitetails many times before. In my day pack I carried two sheath knives and a Swiss Army folder, all of them top-quality stainless. For re-sharpening, I had an Arkansas stone.

Under a clear sky in bright sunlight it took me nearly four hours to get the guts out, the head off and the carcass divided into five huge parts – four quarters with bones still in and hide still on, plus the neck. Additionally, there were 20 pounds or so of precious backstraps and tender-



*If you have ever wrestled with field dressing a large big game animal and thought ‘there must be a better way,’ you were right.*

loins and another 10 pounds of rib meat. Before I was done, I'd dulled all three knives beyond re-sharpening without a file and seriously stressed my 35-year-old back while horsing the monster carcass around.

In the following days, throughout the pack-out and butchering chores, my inexperience in working with animals that big led to yet more complications, wasted effort and needless exhaustion. But in the end there was all that meat, wrapped and in a rented freezer locker.

My second elk, the following October, was also a spike, again killed from under 30 yards with the same rifle. This time the field dressing, packing and butchering went ... well, no faster or easier at all, really.

After that, having gained a bit of experience and confidence in hunting if not field-dressing elk and knowing I could

get close, I sold the Model 94 and bought an elk-weight (64-pound) recurve bow. And I've stuck with “stick bows” since, killing, on average, one wapiti a year, which nets all the “beef” my wife and I can eat. And across what is now three decades of practice, I've evolved my own time – and labor-saving technique for handling very large animals alone. Nor am I the only one. Like other obviously good ideas, “my” technique or a version of it has likewise occurred to many other hunters, guides and outfitters who do it often and most often do it alone.

And now it's time to share.

My personal best time for field-dressing an elk – as it happened, a five-point bull weighing about 600 pounds – is 90 minutes from warm animal to bagged quarters, hide off but bones still in. It helped that I killed that one with two hours of daylight left and the bull dropped dead right in front of me. It also helped that the weather was fine. Normally, I need two hours or so, working alone on animals I've shot just before dark and which generally seemed to make it to the bottom of the nearest brush-clogged gully to die in the most awkward possible position with rain beginning immediately and flashlights going dead. Except when guiding, I never pull a cape, which doubles the field-dressing time and is meaningless to me.

Boning out the meat requires another hour, but since I generally kill at or near

dusk, I tend to leave that chore for the following morning. My immediate concerns are getting the meat as cool as possible as fast as possible, keeping it clean and protecting it from flies and bears. (For the latter, if the meat must be left overnight, I drag the loaded game bags as far as possible uphill from the carcass and guts, working on the proven theory that a bear crossing below will catch the odor on the down-slope nocturnal breeze and follow its nose to the prize, where, with luck, the guts, bones and scraps will keep it busy all night.)

But first you need a cooperative elk.

You'll also need four big, heavy-duty, breathable and preferably reusable cloth game bags. I always carry two in my hunting pack and keep two more strapped to my meat pack in the truck. My favorite hunting knife cost a thousand bucks and is worth every penny, having "Elkheart, BHA Life Member" inscribed on it. Its handle is longer than its drop-pointed blade, making it perfect for skinning, boning and separating joints. The trick to keeping any knife sharp throughout the process is to stop working every few minutes to retouch the blade the moment you notice yourself having to apply more pressure, before it gets really dull (at which point you'll need a file). I pack a touch-up tool that employs crossed carbide sharpening blades, as well as a diamond-chip bar for backup. Finally, I carry a miniature hacksaw to make quick work of ribs and leg bones.

To begin, with the animal lying on either side (the way they tend to die), amputate the two top legs, front and rear – separating the knee joints with a knife, or cutting just above the joints with a bone saw. Unless you're pulling a cape or want a skull mount, there is no need for beheading.

At mid-chest, slit the hide to the breastbone, insert your blade cutting-edge facing out and unzip the wrapper down the belly and around the "proof of sex" region, to just above the anus, taking care not to puncture the gut-sack. Now slit the hide up the bottom of the neck, from chest to chin, if you want that marginal meat. (While I'm among the last to waste the flesh of any animal I have killed, frankly, elk neck and rib meat is so marginal that Colorado law no longer



*For big animals, you need four big, heavy-duty, breathable and preferably reusable cloth bags.*

requires hunters to retrieve it.)

Next, slit the hide along the insides of the two top leg stumps, working from knees to the belly centerline cut. Now you're set to skin the top half of the hide off in one big sheet, fleshing from belly and legs toward the spine.

With the freed top half of the hide stretched out behind the animal as a ground cloth on which to place meat, remove the exposed (up-side) backstrap. With a few deft knife strokes, the front shoulder, attached to the body only by muscle, comes right off. The ham is another story and often quite a struggle, requiring precision to avoid nicking the bladder or intestinal pouch, which may bulge and protrude. Probe gently with fingers and blade for the hip joint, cutting the attaching tissue all the way around until the ham twists free. If your state requires it, be sure to leave proof of sex attached to one hind quarter.

With one backstrap, one shoulder and one ham removed – the entire top side of the animal (plus neck and rib meat if you want them) – stash the ham in a game bag of its own. Backstrap and shoulder share a second bag. Cinch the drawstrings to keep out flies and place the bags in the shade.

Now roll the remaining half of your elk (or moose) over onto the stretched-

**My favorite hunting knife cost a thousand bucks and is worth every penny.**



out hide – this is easily managed alone by using the lower legs as handles – and repeat the process exactly, so that all that's left is a legless, hideless, backstrapless torso lying on its own hide. If you want to save the hide, there it waits, all of a piece. (Beware, an average green elk hide will weigh some 80 pounds.) Only now, and only in order to retrieve the tenderloins and any preferred organs, is it necessary to open the body cavity. Rather than dumping the messy beans at this last stage, an alternative method is to saw through several back ribs near their connections to the spine and pry them away from the body sufficiently to facilitate reaching in and liberating the tenderloins, which run along either side of the spine above the body cavity.

If you'll be packing the meat on your back, at some point – immediately if you have the daylight left and the flies aren't

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bad, or first thing in the cool of morning – you’ll want to debone the quarters. Using a game bag as a ground cloth, slice up the inside of each quarter from bottom to top, cutting clean to the bone. Free the bone by cutting carefully around until you can pull it out. Deboned, an average 500-pound cow or young bull elk will reduce to more or less 150 pounds of pure clean meat (minus neck meat and organs). If you have horses or mules, you’ll want to leave the bones in for the pack-out, as they provide rigidity, sturdy lashing points and a far more stable ride in panniers. And that, by George, is that.

With practice, the only persistently difficult part is the first bit – finding a co-operative animal.

David “Elkheart” Petersen is the author of several books on hunting and the natural world. He is a former BHA board member and former Colorado Chapter chairman. Recently, David was honored by the Colorado Wildlife Federation with a Lifetime Achievement Award for his decades of conservation work. For more, visit [www.davidpetersenbooks.com](http://www.davidpetersenbooks.com). 🐾

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# WILD IDEAS

By Matt Scott

**I**s wilderness a bad thing? I have spent my professional life working my tail off trying to put the time and money together to spend as much time as possible in the wild. Wilderness has given me much more than the opportunity to hunt and fish – it has given me and my family a place to reflect and get away from our modern world. It has brought us closer together and was used by my parents, uncles and grandparents as a classroom for life. The opportunity to climb a mountain, get firewood with a crosscut, pack a mule, kill a backcountry bull or buck, and watch the sun come up from out of a wall tent has been part our family's motivation for leading productive lives. This foundation cannot be measured as easily as board feet, ounces of gold, or the number of jobs, but it is there.

The quickest way to describe me: logging contractor, small-business owner and wilderness outfitter/guide. Loggers understand their role in forest health, habitat, jobs and the importance of recreation on our public lands. We also understand firsthand the unbelievable bureaucracy related to harvesting trees on U.S. Forest Service lands. Regulations and misunderstandings for too long have polarized our community and left most of us in the middle without a voice, while preservation groups opt to file lawsuits and call for massive swaths of new wilderness, or restore every acre of public land. Opponents say absolutely no wilderness and refuse to give an inch. It seems we have lost confidence

as a society to define and convert problems into opportunities for the future.

What's wrong with leaving a small percentage of our forest that is remote, natural and managed for public use? Wilderness does not lock out people. It provides an opportunity to remember what our country was once like. Public use is specific in the Wilderness Act; people can argue about the details of what you can and can't do in a wilderness, but there can be common-sense solutions to things like chainsaws for trail clearing, grazing and fire, etc. Leadership is needed to keep the arguments focused on solutions instead of polarizing views.

The Colville National Forest (CNF) in Washington has the potential to provide us with wood products, wildlife to hunt and fish, along with areas of natural habitat. Through the collaborative process we have an opportunity to educate the public and conservation groups about the importance of harvesting timber, grazing, mining and recreation. But before we get backed up into our ideological corners and get ready for another fight, we need to remember what we are fighting over. The proposed wilderness areas in CNF represent a tiny percentage of the landscape. Holding up timber sales is a possibility under our law while education is the only way to solve the public's misconceptions about forestry.

Having clean water, lumber and wildlife to hunt and fish is going to take leaders who are willing to look to the future. 

*Wilderness offers a chance to remember what our country was once like.*



## BHA CHAPTER NEWS

GREAT NORTHERN MOUNTAIN,  
MONTANA/BEN LONG

### COLORADO

Colorado BHA has been working with the newly reformed Colorado Sportsmen Advisory Committee (a coalition of sportsmen organizations) to ensure reauthorization of the Habitat Stamp; a one-time \$10 charge assessed to anyone who buys a hunting or fishing license. The habitat stamp has secured 67,992 acres of public hunting and fishing access and conserved 138,249 acres of habitat since 2006, through easements and limited property acquisitions. BHA is working to ensure this wildly successful program continues. Other legislation that BHA is preparing to work on includes HB 1069, which gives wildlife officers the authority to enforce OHV regulations; and HB 1066, which is an attempt by the OHV community to open county roads to OHV's. CO BHA is also organizing an informal sportsmen roundtable this winter to solicit sportsmen support for habitat protection offered through the Central Mountains Outdoor Heritage Proposal. CO BHA continues to recruit new members at gun shows and events in the state.

### IDAHO

The second annual BHA Rendezvous will be held in Boise this spring. This is a great opportunity for the Idaho Chapter to interact with the national organization and fraternize with the other state chapters. Mark your calendars and plan on joining us in Boise in March. This is shaping up to be twice as big as the first banquet. Idaho BHA members continue to combat illegal ATV use by reporting offenders to local conservation officers around the state. Local officers have been very supportive of this effort. Educational advertisements encouraging others to do the same were placed in the *Teton Valley News* in southern Idaho. Idaho BHA will be represented in Washington, D.C. next month where we will be speaking with lawmakers about conservation funding and trail conditions, as well as other issues.

### MINNESOTA

The Minnesota Chapter is planning its first rendezvous for the late summer of 2013, to be held in the Chippewa National Forest, where BHA members have been involved in a travel management process that led to the creation of non-motorized semi-primitive areas. The chapter will also be starting a petition campaign for more hunter walking trails on state lands, which are very popular with hunters. The chapter is continuing its involvement in the fight against sulfide mining in north-eastern Minnesota, which threatens watersheds in the Superior National Forest and the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness.

### MONTANA

The 2013 Montana hunting regulation booklets will include a quarter-page BHA advertisement encouraging hunters to report off-road violations. The ad will list information needed to effectively report the violations and highlight the BHA reward for such information. The cost of the ad had a matching grant from the Cinnabar Foundation.

Montana BHA is weighing in on the Helena National Forest proposal to change its Forest Plan elk security standard. Without effective elk security, elk are increasingly driven to private land where public hunters are usually denied access. To keep a component of mature bulls for both breeding success and hunter opportunity, elk must have solid security during both the archery and general seasons. Officials are about to wrap up two travel plans and BHA is concerned that lessening the elk security standard will allow the Forest to numerous motorized routes open to the detriment of elk security.

You can check out both the hunting regulations ad and the entire elk security letter on the Montana Chapter page of the BHA website: [www.backcountryhunters.org](http://www.backcountryhunters.org).

### NEW MEXICO

Wilderness & National Landscape Conservation Legislation update: The 112th session of Congress ended Dec. 31, and legislation not passed and signed by the president will have to be reintroduced in the 113th session. There are 27 pending wilderness bills awaiting congressional action – three of which cover lands in New Mexico. Because of the logjam in Congress, New Mexico's two senators sent a letter to President Obama asking him to consider designating these special areas as National Monuments – as authorized under the Antiquities Act. NMBHA urged our Senators to take this approach.

### UTAH

Utah BHA continues to be involved in efforts to prevent the passage of SkiLink legislation by Congress. This legislation (H.R. 3452; S. 1883) is designed to circumvent Forest Service NEPA planning on a proposed ski tram in the Wasatch Range by selling public domain to a private developer. The House bill has passed and the Senate bill is referred to committee. The chapter prepared a letter of opposition to be submitted if/when the Senate bill receives a hearing. We have also written several op-ed pieces published in the *Salt Lake Tribune*. The first ([www.sltrib.com/sltrib/opinion/54254161-82/elk-skilink-bishop-http.html.csp](http://www.sltrib.com/sltrib/opinion/54254161-82/elk-skilink-bishop-http.html.csp)) describes undesired potential impact of SkiLink on elk and deer habitat. The second compares a relatively benign federal-to-private land sale proposed on the Provo urban-fringe to allow Brigham Young University ownership of its cherished giant white "Y" on the slope above campus with the proposed SkiLink sale and its attendant risks to habitat and hunter access (<http://m.sltrib.com/sltrib/mobile2/55085338-218/skilink-access-bill-forest.html.csp>). Utah Chair Jay Banta attended a three day strategic planning summit in late November that included most Utah organizations working on protection of roadless areas.

*The project serves as a model for how proper travel management planning and implementation can help improve fish and wildlife habitat while also improving hunter success.*

## **BHA helps Forest Service improve Colorado elk habitat**

**By Tim Brass**

TIM BRASS

*With BHA's help, the Forest Service will block and restore 25 miles of illegal, non-system motorized routes in Colorado.*

**T**he Colorado Backcountry Hunters & Anglers has partnered with Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW), the U.S. Forest Service and Trout Unlimited to improve native cutthroat habitat, elk habitat and elk hunter success on federal lands southwest of Yampa, Colo. With BHA's help, the Forest Service will block and restore 25 miles of illegal, non-system motorized routes. The project serves as a model for how proper travel management planning and implementation can help improve fish and wildlife habitat while also improving hunter success.

In the early 2000s Colorado's wildlife managers identified low hunter success on public lands in the area, along with high game damage claims on adjacent private lands, as an issue that needed to be addressed. After careful analysis, staff from the Forest Service determined that illegal motorized vehicle use was a large part of the problem.

Elk were being driven from public lands onto adjacent private lands by ille-

gal off-highway vehicle use during hunting season, as well as during the summer. Some years, the illegal use resulted in game damage claims reaching \$60,000 for a single ranch – money generated through hunting and fishing licenses that could have otherwise been put toward fish and wildlife habitat. And while the area is home to the largest elk herd in North America, hunter success was consistently below the state average.

To address the problem, CPW worked with the Forest Service to devise a Travel Management Plan that would provide habitat security for the area's elk herd. In May 2012, BHA provided comments of support of the plan, which called for decommissioning 25 miles of illegal motorized routes. After the planning process was finalized and the ideal alternative was selected, BHA was invited by the USFS to work as a partner in the project. And in October of 2012, BHA took a field trip to the site to develop a strategy for moving forward.

Along with the USFS, BHA is work-

ing in partnership with Trout Unlimited's Sportsmen Ride Right program and CPW to complete phase one of plan implementation, which will include gating and signing a number of roads. With CPW's guidance, and with funding from Patagonia Co., BHA is designing and installing a sign to help educate public land users about how motorized closures will benefit elk hunting and habitat in the area. Through the second and third phases of plan implementation, BHA will help provide the volunteers and support needed to ensure the remaining illegal routes are closed. Road closures in phase two of the project will greatly improve native cutthroat habitat in Coal Creek by reducing sedimentation.

Colorado BHA has great hope that our efforts will help improve elk and fish habitat in the area. But even more so, we hope that this kind of science-led, habitat-centered and partnership-driven travel management project can be a model for other public lands in Colorado and throughout the country. 🐾



# A FRESH PERSPECTIVE ON ATVS



*Some BHA members own and enjoy ATVs, but wildlife and sportsmen also need quiet backcountry to escape noise that annoys.*

**By Jeff Barney**

**A**s a veteran of 35 Idaho hunting seasons, I'm having difficulty coming to grips with the changing climate surrounding our backcountry hunting experience, particularly how the reliance on ATVs for hunting has gotten out of control. Illegal use of these four-wheeled machines is rampant and altering the big game hunting landscape, especially for hunters on foot like me.

## **Defining the Problem**

Every fall more and more ATVs take to the hills, pushing big game animals farther into seclusion. Recent studies in Montana and Washington have confirmed what many of us have suspected for years: as animals become more pressured they recede into heavier timber – and often onto private land – to escape the motorized masses.

And it's not just the illegal use of these machines causing the problem. The Starkey Research Station in eastern Oregon has studied radio-collared elk and mule deer and has documented that animals are displaced far from legal roadways and trails as the incursions increased. This also results in animals having less time to eat and rest. When combined with illegal off-road use, ungulate displacement becomes further compounded.

Current hunting data show that the largest bulls, bucks and rams (not to mention the longest hunting seasons) are found within large tracts of roadless and wilderness areas. In simple terms, the best hunting opportunities are found where people can't get their machines! Not only do roadless areas provide increased big game security, but more animals live to maturity (e.g. branch antler, trophy size.) Therefore, within roadless areas game managers can often biologically justify liberalized rut hunts and lengthier seasons.

The recent growth of ATV use for hunting has been exponential. Unfortunately, their usage is not limited to the old or infirm. Many younger, healthy hunters ride their machines wherever the terrain (if not the law) allows. I had one such ATV user, upon encountering a Forest Service sign that read "Road Closed to Motorized Vehicles" tell me, "That just means the road is closed. I can still ride behind the gate if I stay off the road..."

To which I wanted to say, "Oh really? So, to you, the sign advocates creating your own off-road trail?"

Many in the motorized crowd see only the physical and mechanical advantage ATVs afford them rather than the impact their use has on big game and their fellow

non-motorized hunters. Every fall we hear more stories of big game stalks ruined by the indiscriminate use of off-road vehicles. Typically the motorized user remains oblivious to the fact that they've ruined someone's hunt or that big game was even in the vicinity!

You can imagine, or have experienced, the frustration as a foot hunter takes two hours hiking up a steep ridge hours before sunrise to hunt a high basin is passed along the ridgeline by a group of illegal ATV hunters intent on hunting the same basin.

Unfortunately, these types of conflicts are fast becoming the norm and increasing with each fall. Many times my bow-hunting friends and I have encountered illegal ATV users who are either ignorant of the motorized travel rules or are ignoring them and, when reminded, often outright hostile. The ill-will toward ATVs escalates each year as more big game calling/stalking opportunities are ruined, peace and solitude are compromised or new illegal trails are punched into previously untrammelled habitat.

Once an illegal ATV trail defiles an area, full-sized vehicles soon follow those new tracks. One problem begets another, thus further compounding the issue.

To paraphrase baseball's Yogi Berra,

“Nobody hunts there anymore, it’s too crowded!”

To avoid ATVs the traditional foot hunter must hike farther into the backcountry and away from roads. Illegal ATV use has become so rampant that my hunting partners and I are now relegated to hunt areas where the terrain is physically impenetrable to ATV use. That’s right – illegal ATV use has made hunting exponentially more difficult for the legal hunter. How is that fair? And that, in a nutshell, defines the gist of the conflict.

Make no mistake, the principle conflict is about fairness. Part of a game management agency’s responsibility to all hunters is to ensure equal access to the resources it manages – namely big game.

Recently in Idaho we’ve seen a push-back from ATV users and their motorized industry-backed supporters wanting to eliminate Fish and Game’s ability to regulate off-road hunting on non-state lands. In fact, historically state game agencies have always regulated hunting and hunters on lands they don’t own. Realize that the Idaho Fish and Game is statutorily required to perform this function; a mandate enacted through public initiative and led by hunters across the state! Eliminating off-road regulations would only make a bad problem worse.

While we all use motorized access in some fashion, the fair access issue has become skewed toward ATVs once a hunter leaves the main road. When one group’s motorized use disrupts and displaces the animals, it deprives others of their fair shake. Sometimes that disruption lasts for a few hours, but in most cases the animals are displaced several days.

Recent radio telemetry studies (radio collared elk, for example) confirm this. It’s an unequivocal, biological fact that motorized traffic disturbs big game, plain and simple. Therefore, it only makes sense to place reasonable limits on off-road use. The painful alternative is to curtail hunting opportunities for everyone (shorter seasons, lottery-only hunts, loss of either-sex hunts, etc.). These are unpalatable alternatives to be sure.

BHA national Co-Chair Ben Long recently noted, “The recent influx of ATVs represents a new, disruptive force of change upon the hunting landscape equation. Recall that only a generation ago we

all hunted the traditional way – on foot or by horseback.” To help balance that equation, sensible restrictions on ATV use are necessary.

The ATV issues aren’t limited to public lands. Many private landowners have become increasingly frustrated by unmitigated ATV use across their properties. Fences are being cut, livestock harassed and wet spring areas churned into mud. Landowners continue posting their land, thus locking up more private property from all hunters. Blame rests squarely upon the unscrupulous ethics of a few and that includes illegal motorized use.



**It only makes sense to place reasonable limits on off-road use. The painful alternative is to curtail hunting opportunities for everyone.**



### **Possible Solutions**

We (the hunting public) have paid for numerous glossy brochures in hopes of educating ATV users. We’ve paid for billboards to inform the masses. We’ve clearly stated the rules and posted ATV ethical guidelines on myriad websites. We’ve participated in focus groups in hopes of resolving motorized conflicts. We, the non-motorized hunters, are at wits end. We’ve arrived at a crossroads, folks. The foot hunters have already made far too many concessions. Our quality hunting has taken enough hits; now it’s the ATV hunters’ turn to own up.

Some have suggested that more enforcement is needed. Perhaps that would offer a partial solution, were it not for the stringent enforcement budgets in place during these fiscally austere times. Then again, even if enforcement budgets were tripled, is that really the hunting future we aspire to?

The solution must come from a groundswell of support from the “tra-

ditional” foot and horse hunters for reformed ATV regulations. We must first insist that ATVs operating on public lands be limited to designated trails or roads only. Period. That’s both practical and fair.

Second, land management agencies must designate more public areas as “closed to motorized travel unless posted otherwise.” Therefore, if a trail isn’t designated as open it becomes legally closed to motorized travel. This slight alteration would likely reduce the rate of vandalism of trail management signs we currently experience. Likewise, it would provide regulatory clarity for both motorized and non-motorized hunters. By extension, these solutions would provide more equitable access to wild game for on-foot and horseback hunters.

Finally, there is a real need for full-sized automobile license plates on all ATVs. This measure alone would help the ATV crowd police itself as well as make the job of our enforcement officers easier. We would quickly realize improved off-road use compliance if this one measure were enacted.

In the meantime ATV users can help their cause. First, ATV hunters must insist on legal, ethical riding among the hunters in their group prior to and during hunting season. It’s called accountability – a cultural norm we seem to have strayed from for some time. Second, when a hunter sees a vehicle parked at “his spot,” assume they’re hunting and drive to another area to avoid disturbing their hunt. Third, ATV users must discipline themselves to only use their machine to drop off a foot hunter for the day’s hunt. Better still, leave the ATV on the trailer using it only to retrieve game between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. to avoid conflicts with other hunters during prime hunting hours.

BHA continues to work with other conservation organizations and agencies to ensure that fair access to our hunting resources be restored and improved. Fairness and fair chase ethics guide our organization to help ensure that a quality hunting experience remains on our public lands for all to enjoy. 🐾

*Jeff Barney is a Boise-based hunter and flyfisherman and the Idaho BHA Chapter secretary. He can be reached at [jeff\\_flyfisher@yahoo.com](mailto:jeff_flyfisher@yahoo.com).*

# Rendezvous with BHA This Spring



**KEYNOTE SPEAKER**  
**JASON HAIRSTON**  
**OF KUIU**

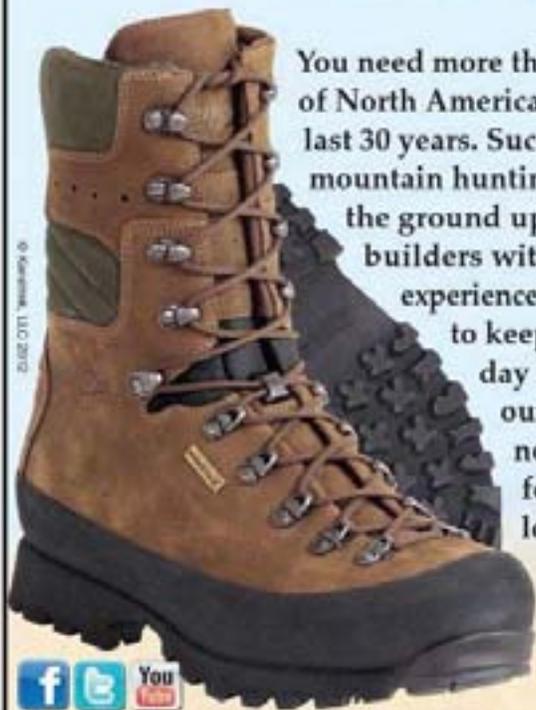
**J**oin us for our second annual gathering of BHA members and bring the family! We'll be in Boise, Idaho, March 22- 24, at the Boise Hotel and Conference Center.

Our keynote speaker is Jason Hairston of Kuiu, a passionate backcountry outdoorsman and founder of Sitka and Kuiu technical outdoor clothing.

See the conference schedule on page 22; we're planning another weekend rich in how-to and DIY backcountry hunting and fishing seminars, information on advocating for your favorite piece of backcountry, excellent food, exciting auction and raffle items, and of course, time to visit with other members. There will also be kid activities and a babysitting services available on Saturday night during the dinner, speaker and auction.

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# Gatebusters? Who ya gonna call?

## *BHA pays out \$500 reward to Idaho bear hunter who helps bust illegal ATV users*

By Ben Long

**B**ackcountry Hunters & Anglers paid a \$500 reward to an Idaho bear hunter who provided the information game wardens needed to cite unethical hunters using all-terrain vehicles in habitat protected from motorized traffic.

The case dates back to spring 2011, when Ted Koch and two friends were hunting for black bears on the Nez Perce National Forest. They planned to hike into an area where roads had been closed to vehicles, but walk-in hunting is allowed.

As they hiked in, they observed hunters driving around the gate with all-terrain vehicles. They also found bait stations the hunters had left behind.

“We planned to enjoy a quiet evening looking for bears,” Koch said. “Instead, the evening was shattered by noise and exhaust where it did not belong.”

Koch lived in Boise at the time of the hunt, but has since moved to Reno, Nev. He pointed out that he and his hunting partners own dirt bikes or all-terrain vehicles, but stay within the bounds of the law.

“Hunters and wildlife alike need some places entirely apart from the noise and disturbance of motor traffic,” Koch said. “Owning an ATV does not mean you can re-write the rule book.”

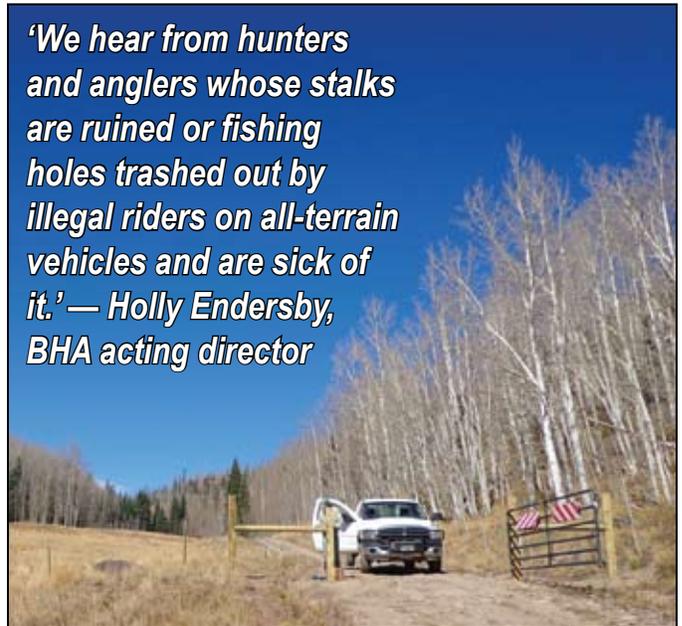
Koch noted the license plate numbers of the hunters’ vehicles, took GPS readings, recorded the date and time and wrote detailed descriptions of the riders. He reported the incident to Roy Kinner, a senior conservation officer from Idaho Department of Fish and Game in Grangeville.

“Mr. Koch gave us exactly the kind of information we needed to launch a successful investigation,” Kinner said. “I don’t usually get that kind of high quality information. It was just priceless.”

In the end, three hunters pleaded guilty to the road closure violations and were fined \$500 each. Other charges of leaving bear bait too close to a stream were dismissed.

“Across the country, we hear from hunters and anglers whose stalks are ruined or fishing holes trashed out by illegal riders on all-terrain vehicles and are sick of it,” said Holly Endersby, BHA acting director, of Pollock, Idaho. “We thank hunters like Ted Koch and the Idaho Department of Fish & Game for protecting the rights of all law-abiding hunters.” Endersby said the incident was the first time the reward has been given in Idaho, although it has been given elsewhere. 🐾

*‘We hear from hunters and anglers whose stalks are ruined or fishing holes trashed out by illegal riders on all-terrain vehicles and are sick of it.’ — Holly Endersby, BHA acting director*



TIM BRASS

*BHA thanks alert witnesses and resource management and enforcement agencies for protecting the rights of all law-abiding hunters.*

**Hunters:** Don’t let the illegal riders and gate-busters degrade big game habitat and steal our hunting opportunities.



**Report all illegal off-road abuse!**

Contact your game warden or local law enforcement

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- ▶ Photograph vehicle, tracks or other evidence, with identifiable landmarks
- ▶ GPS or map location of violation
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# BACKCOUNTRY PHOTO CONTEST

SKY LAKES SUNSET,  
DUANE DUNGANNON

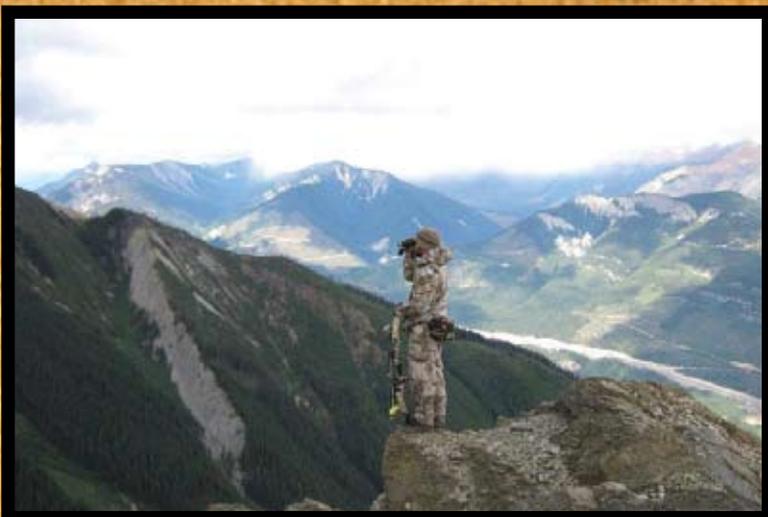


1st Place: Aaron Foster  
“Pops and I packing out a bull in  
Idaho’s Selway-Bitterroot”

2nd Place: Mackenzie Jeffress  
“My first mule deer (Northern  
Nevada, 2012)”



3rd Place: Kim Blaskowski  
“My hubby on a mountain goat  
hunt in Alberta”



Backcountry Hunters & Anglers is proud to announce the winners of its first Backcountry Hunting Photo Contest. We received many great hunting submissions that ranged from Dall sheep in the Alaska backcountry, to chukars in the hills of Idaho, to squirrels on a Midwestern farm. We even received one engagement photo from a gal whose husband proposed to her while packing out an elk.

Agreeing on winners was as difficult as getting a good night of sleep on the eve of opening day, yet somehow we managed to choose a few. Here are our picks. Thanks to everyone who shared images with Backcountry Hunters & Anglers. You can view all of the images submitted on our Facebook page: [www.facebook.com/backcountryhabitat](http://www.facebook.com/backcountryhabitat)



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# Elk & Morels

By Rick Bass

I take off one afternoon to run up on one of the mountains above my home to look for the morels that sometimes grow in the burned forests up there. It's one of the mountains that feeds my family, one of the mountains on which we are fortunate enough some years to take a deer or an elk. And this one day, strolling through the maze of standing fire-gutted black spars, and also among the living trees that survived the fire, I'm fortunate enough to find a patch of morels, which will be delicious when cooked in the same skillet as the elk itself, which also came from this mountain: the decomposing rock, the soil itself, bringing to springing life both the elk and the morel, as well as me, so that if we are not mountains ourselves, moving and gifted briefly with life, we are always a part of those mountains, the arms and legs of those mountains, wandering here and there though returning always to the base of these mountains, which feed our bodies and our imaginations.

The last time I was up here, there weren't any morels, though the spars were blackened, seeming even blacker then, in the snow, than they do now – although still, they leap out amidst all the emerging, amazing green. I was following the tracks of a herd of elk through that new wet snow, the previous November, ash and slippery clay just beneath the snow gumming up on my boots, mixed in with all that snow, and I moved carefully, slowly, walking then stopping, trying to appear – if glimpsed stationary by elk-eyes – as vertical as any of the hundreds or I suppose thousands of spars through which the elk and I were passing.

The trail passed on through the burn and into the old forest where the burn had petered out, and then over a ridge, where the fire appeared to have stopped completely. The elk were on the other side of that ridge, a north slope, and the breeze was coming toward me. If I live to be a hundred, I hope never to tire of the thrill one gets, when that current of scent first drifts your way. 🐾

## Morels Give Your Steak Sizzle

There is a certain recipe for preparing an elk, when one is fortunate enough to take not just an elk in autumn, but roughly six months later, in May, morels. You lay the slice of elk meat in the heated iron skillet, with some melted butter and a little salt and pepper, and slice in those morels, sautéing them with the elk meat; and after only a short while, you shut the flame off and let the elk's muscle, warmed in that skillet as if back into life, continue cooking on its own.

Because there's no fat in the meat, the elk-meat muscle conducts heat quickly, as copper wire conducts the galvanic twitchings and shudderings and pulsings of electricity; and the flavor of the morels is absorbed into that warming meat, as the elk in life once browsed on the same terrain, the same soil, upon which those morels were growing, yesterday: and in that manner, once again the meat is suffused with the flavor of the mountain, so that you are eating the mountain, eating the mountain straight from the black skillet, so delicious is it; and timing this last wave of skillet-heat, knowing when to turn the flame off and simply let the heat of the meat cook itself, is like catching a wave, a surge, and riding it on in to shore: and the deliciousness of such a meal is no less a miracle than a blackened field turning to green life almost overnight. The low fire beneath the skillet glimmering out, reminding the hunter, perhaps, of the July or August fires that birthed or at least fed the elk, and birthed the morels, and fed the hunter.

The elk roaming through our chests and arms, the elk galloping in our legs, the mountain sleeping in our hearts, present always, whether we are waking or sleeping: rhythms within rhythms within rhythms, which we will never know, but can always honor.

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# Backcountry Angling a World of its Own

By E. Donnall Thomas, Jr.

Some years ago, I was flying down a turbid glacial river toward Alaska's Cook Inlet after delivering supplies for a spring bear hunting camp. Something caught my eye in a short stretch of clear water where a feeder creek had pushed away the silt, and I banked hard for a better look. Fish were cruising below the mouth of the little stream, but what kind of fish were they? It was early for any salmon species, but they looked too big for trout or char.

Curiosity aroused, I turned again and studied the nearest gravel bar. The rocks looked big and they were, but my tundra tires handled them and I eventually bounced to a stop. Since I always carried a fly rod in the tube specially built into the back of the Cub for just that purpose, I was fully armed when I set off down the bank toward the mouth of the little stream.

The fish turned out to be far harder to see from ground level than from the air. While I could see wakes pushing across the surface, I still couldn't identify what made them. Perplexed, I tied a streamer to my tippet and let fly. After a dozen casts my rod suddenly bent double and moments later I was watching the backing on my reel disappear downstream into the glacial current, a development from which there was no recovery.

Ten minutes later I hooked another fish and managed to land it. As I'd started to suspect after that first punishing encounter, it proved to be a king salmon, still bright after its upstream run from the nearby salt. Over the course of the morning I landed a half dozen more, releasing all but one small specimen I kept for dinner. Those fish represented but a fraction of the salmon I caught before the snow began to fly that year. But none meant more to me including some twice their size, simply because I'd taken those fish from previously unknown water in the genuine middle of nowhere, without another boot track in sight.

Like most of us I began chasing anadromous fish in road-accessible streams, in my case on Washington state rivers like the Skykomish and the Sauk. With plenty of drift boats on the water those outings hardly represented wilderness experiences, but I was too busy trying to catch a steelhead to care. Then one day I actually caught one, after my girlfriend and I hiked way up the Queets and camped out in the Olympic Peninsula rain forest. The fish was a dazzling summer run hen, but in retrospect I realized that the excitement of the event derived from the wilderness setting every bit as much as from the fish.

That principle has served me well ever since, through nearly five more decades of salmon and steelhead. It's not that I have anything against fishing water near roads – far from it. When I lived on the Kenai, I'd drive to the river after work, jump in my boat, and start fishing – sometimes staying on the water through the middle of those northern summer nights when the largest salmon in the world were coursing upstream beneath me. I enjoyed every fish I caught there despite the traffic jam of boats on the river, but I also learned that I derived more satisfaction from 15-pound fish taken in the solitude across Cook Inlet than

*Backcountry habitat will face ever-increasing threats in the decades ahead as the insatiable demand for fossil fuels forces us to make hard choices between energy and wilderness.*



from 50-pounders taken from the mighty Kenai.

My enduring fascination with wilderness water reached its fullest expression in two other corners of the Great Land: the Bristol Bay drainages of southwestern Alaska and the remote streams of the state's southeastern Panhandle. While Bristol Bay waters support the strongest salmon runs in the world, my angling time there is devoted all but exclusively to the region's spectacular rainbows. But in southeast Alaska wild steelhead provide the main attraction and there's no place on earth I'd rather fish for them.

The limited road systems surrounding the Panhandle's small communities do provide access to good steelhead fishing, but for me the feel of the experience on those waters just can't rival the appeal of remote streams reached only by boat, seaplane or arduous hike through the rainforest, even when the fishing isn't any better. Wild fish should be enjoyed in wild places and I've never been able to divorce the sum of any angling experience from the ambience of the setting that produced it. This may be a hard principle to keep in mind when curtains of rain are lashing the tent or you're battling high seas in a skiff, but somehow it always works out in the end.

Backcountry habitat for fish (and game, as well as everything else) will face ever increasing threats in the decades ahead as the insatiable demand for fossil fuels forces our society to make hard choices between energy and wilderness. It's a contest in which wilderness seldom fares well without the concerted effort of those who recognize its value. This should concern everyone who fishes for salmon and steelhead, even those who never wet a line more than a mile from a road. Our great sea-run fish require secure habitat all the way from the middle of the Pacific to the remote headwater streams in which they spawn. Most of us only encounter them along a tiny segment of their journey, but a breakdown anywhere along the way can spell disaster. No artificial hatchery program in the world could ever replace what might be lost.

No doubt the day will come when I'll no longer be physically able to fish the kind of water I love the most. But hopefully I'll be able to enjoy the satisfaction of knowing it's still there for other anglers – and above all, for the fish. 🐾

# DRESSING FOR WINTER IN BACKCOUNTRY

**Bad weather makes for good hunting,  
but only if you're prepared for it.**

**By Ben Long**

Bill Lange

*Choose carefully your clothing for winter hunting in the backcountry. Your life may depend on it.*

**I**n the backcountry, clothing choice is not only a matter of comfort, it can be a matter of life and death. But at very least, poor clothing will drive you back to town when the hunting is heating up.

I'm no expert on the latest technological innovations when it comes to outdoor clothing, but here is what I've learned from more than three decades of toughing out squalls in the northern Rockies.

**Dress in layers.** Your clothing needs will change over the day as the temperature rises and falls, winds kick in, and depending on whether you are climbing a mountain, or waiting patiently along a game trail. Don't pack a big, bulky coat. Instead, wear layers. Then, change your clothes to fit conditions. Cotton kills. Cotton is great in the right place and time – in the summer or the desert when odds are nil of getting more precipitation than a rain shower. Cotton is cool, protects you from the sun, and dries quickly. Unfortunately, it retains nearly zero of its insulation value when wet. When the weather dips below 50 degrees and rain or snow is even the slightest possibility, I won't even use cotton socks and underwear. Hypothermia is the greatest threat in the mountains, and cotton has contributed to many deaths.

**Wool rules.** If not cotton, what? It used to be a simple, one-word answer: wool. Wool has withstood the test of time. It's durable, warm, it breathes and retains its insulation value when wet. It's also quiet when sneaking through the brush and doesn't hold your body odor. Wool does have some down sides: it can itch, it holds moisture and becomes heavier when wet and takes longer to dry. As for the itch, try some of the finer Merino wool fabrics. They are well worth the premium price.

**Synthetics:** Some of the new synthetics are great too. Fabrics like pile (Polarfleece is a popular brand) are good insula-

tors, even when wet, and don't weigh down like wet wool does. Synthetic underwear fabrics, like Capeline, are a world better than cotton and better for folks with sensitive skin that dislikes wool. A warning about synthetics and fire, however. These fabrics are petrochemicals and burn easily. Sitting close to a fire can leave your pricey new duds pockmarked with spark holes.

**Shell:** A shell is your outer layer, such as a parka and maybe rain pants. Great advances have been made in the shell layer. If you are hunting above timberline, when wind is a constant thief of warmth and energy, invest in a good shell. The down side is shells can be noisy. Plus, in spite of advances in design and fabric, you can still get as wet or even wetter from sweating inside a shell than you might get from the rain or wet brush. I quit wearing rain gear years ago when still-hunting in timber. I simply wear wool and get wet. But that's a matter of taste and the climate in which you hunt. A good, lightweight and high quality shell can be worth its weight in gold.

**Hat:** Your brain uses an enormous quantity of blood and energy, so the head is key to maintaining a healthy body temperature. I pack two stocking caps: one is a thin nylon layer that athletes wear when exercising outside. The other is thicker, made of Polarfleece. One is for hiking, the other for sitting. And when it gets really cold, I wear them both. A scarf or neck gaiter is important for keeping your neck and head warm.

**Gloves:** it's hard to nock an arrow or flip the safety if your fingers are frozen stiff, so gloves are important. I've played around with mittens and muffs, but go back to two layers of gloves unless it's bitterly cold. One is a thin, nylon "liner" gloves and the others are form-fitting wool and nylon blend, with plastic on the palms and fingers to improve grip. Both insulate fairly well when wet and I can wear both pairs in deep cold. Forget cotton gloves. 🐾



Pat Wray

# Take a Chance on Chukars

By Holly Endersby

“Shoot!” yells my hunting partner, Pat Wray, as a covey of chukars takes to the air. Swinging my shotgun ahead of one of the birds, I fire.

Gravity takes care of the rest. My precarious footing on the icy slope dislodges and I find myself on my back sliding downhill, cradling my shotgun like a newborn baby.

Such are the challenges of chukar hunting: it's not for the unfit or the faint of heart. These beautiful birds inhabit steep, rocky ground and the length and lateness of the season almost guarantees you'll be tip-toeing gingerly over icy slopes. If you're lucky and bag enough chukars to eat after a day's hunt, you'll have earned every tender morsel.

## CHUKAR COUNTRY

Chukars are most often found in the rimrocked desert and deep canyon country of the West, with Idaho and eastern Oregon among some of the best habitat. This lonesome land is mostly covered with sagebrush and, unfortunately, invasive, non-native cheat grass, the seeds of which are gourmet chukar food. The birds live where neighbors are miles apart and “town” is a café with a gas pump and a six-room motel. In my favorite, a sign in every room reads, “No cleaning birds in the sink! \$5 extra for dogs on bed!” You gotta love a place like that.

The chukar is native to Eurasia and came to North America in the early part of the 20th Century. It now lives in all the western states and Canada, with the largest populations found in Idaho, Oregon and Nevada. However, the bird's numbers are growing in other Western states that boast the arid lands these birds prefer. Despite their increasing numbers on public land, chukars are not a heavily hunted bird, mostly because of the effort required for success. But a little advanced planning can get you birds without risking life and limb in the process.

## IT'S EASIER WITH A DOG

While you can hunt chukar without a dog, a good pointer or retriever will increase your odds of success. Pat Wray, BHA member and author of *A Chukar Hunter's Companion, a Complete Guide to Chukar Hunting*, uses English pointers, English setters and German shorthairs in the field. I've hunted behind Pat's dogs and have seen how the success rate of finding and retrieving birds increases enormously with canine help. A good dog will lock onto a hidden covey, allowing time to get in position. The birds are small and blend in with their surroundings, making them difficult to find without a dog. When the birds are flushed, they almost always scatter and fly rapidly downhill, making a good retriever invaluable.

Hunting without a dog demands extra attention. Hunters need

to look closely at the landscape, Wray says, evaluating feed and cover and the presence of water. Depending on the weather, you'll know the birds are looking either for sun or shade and if they'll be high or low on the slope. A good chukar hunter has to factor in snow and ice, which often dictates if the birds will run or fly when flushed. Then, Wray says, the hunter without a dog has to break the landscape down into even smaller pieces.

“You look for small level spots, little benches where chukars often hold, because even a tough mountain bird appreciates a little bit of horizontal earth once in a while.”

Hunters without a dog must learn the subtle signs chukar leave in order to be successful.

“A single track in the sand between rocks, fresh droppings on a lookout rock, a dusting area, can all tell a dog-less hunter that a practice swing with his shotgun might be in order,” Wray says.

Snow makes tracking easier, of course, but you still need to be able to judge the age of a track or droppings to avoid a fruitless pursuit.

Without a dog, Wray says the only ethical approach to chukar hunting is to shoot a single bird and follow its flight into the ground. Be sure to mark the spot with two or three nearby landmarks.

“Doing it any other way invites the loss of the bird you should have in hand,” he explains.

Wray says dog-less hunters sometimes lose half or more of the birds they kill and they stand almost no chance of finding cripples. There's no point in shooting if you can't find the birds to bring home. The self discipline of shooting

and marking one bird will actually increase hunting success for hunters without dogs. Once you've experienced the effort demanded in chukar hunting, you'll be loath to lose any bird.

Dogs used on chukar have to be tough. The country these birds inhabit is merciless on canines with little stamina or tender feet. While your favorite Lab might find birds, he'll never keep up with a pointing dog. On the other hand, dedicated upland bird dogs like pointers have their own problems. These dogs are bred so deeply for hunting that they'll work to the point of exhaustion or until their paws bleed.

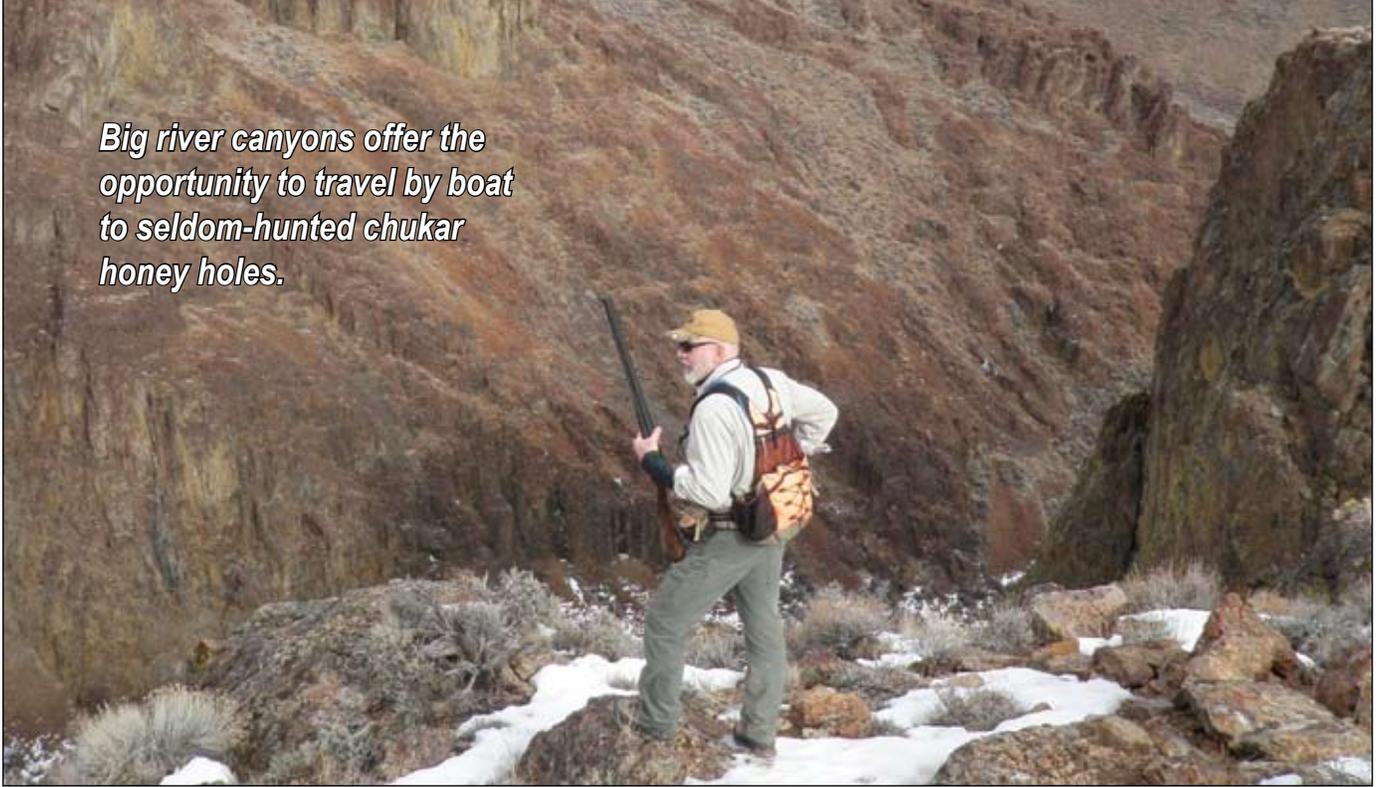
“A savvy owner watches his dogs carefully for signs of stress,” Wray says. “Every hour or so it's good practice to call the dog in, give it some water and conduct a quick examination.”

In this way, Wray explains, you can find burs, cuts, thorns and other problems before they become serious. He also recommends running your dog regularly on gravel to toughen its feet for all-day chukar hunting.

“The best way to prepare your dog for that sharp, abrasive,

**The birds live where neighbors are miles apart and ‘town’ is a café with a gas pump and a six-room motel.**

*Big river canyons offer the opportunity to travel by boat to seldom-hunted chukar honey holes.*



Pat Wray

*Chukars thrive in the rim rock desert and deep canyon country of the West, with Idaho and eastern Oregon among some of the best habitat.*

rocky ground is to let it run on rocky ground prior to and during hunting season.”

Chukar hunting is often a matter of endurance, and the more fit your dog and you are, the longer and better you’ll both be able to hunt.

#### **PLANNING YOUR HUNT**

To even the odds, get a detailed map of the area you plan to hunt and then call the office of the nearest wildlife agency for your selected area. Ask to speak with an upland game bird biologist who can provide harvest statistics from several years past. Those numbers will steer you to places that historically have been ripe with chukars.

Then, make another call to the nearest U.S. Bureau of Land Management office. Speak with either a wildlife biologist or range manager. Both should know the area intimately and can help you find likely hunting spots. Once in the general area, look for sites that offer the food and cover chukars like.

Idaho and Oregon’s big river canyons offer the opportunity to travel by boat to seldom-hunted chukar honey holes. The Salmon River canyon, Hells Canyon and the Owyhee River canyon often echo with the chukk, chukk, chukkerrrr of coveys on benches just off the river. But other areas around the state with the right kind of terrain and food choice have healthy bird populations as well. Brownlee Reservoir in Idaho, for example, or the expansive landscapes near Fields and Juntura, Ore., almost always have a good crop of birds. Much of this is BLM and National Forest land. Hunters should have a detailed map and never hunt on private property without permission. Hunting chukar is hard work, so don’t overdress. Wear lightweight long underwear, light or medium weight wool pants, wool socks, lightly insulated boots, a wool shirt, wool hat and wool or polypropylene gloves. Carry a lightweight rain jacket, a wool or synthetic vest and a silk balaclava. After the first couple ridge climbs, hat and gloves will most likely be stowed in your pack,

ready to put on again when you take a break. In the early season, synthetic pants and shirt would be a better choice.

Hunting chukars requires top physical condition. A half hour workout on the treadmill just won’t cut it. The best way to get in shape for this kind of hunting is to hike hills wearing a weighted backpack. Doing this in advance of season will also tell you if your boots are right for downhill terrain. Too small boots coupled with hours of up and down translate into bloody toes and semi-crippled hunters. When you first start hunting chukars, a non-stop day is probably too much. Hunt for several hours in the morning, take a break, and then head out again in mid-afternoon.

Chukar hunting takes it out of you, no matter how fit you are, so plan on bringing plenty of water (for your dog as well) and high energy food such as jerky, energy bars or dried fruits and nuts. Don’t forget food for your dog. Take breaks and stretch tight calves, hamstrings and quadriceps throughout the day. A major muscle spasm can be disabling for a hunter miles from his or her vehicle.

#### **TIPS FROM THE EXPERT**

Chukars have long, powerful legs and often run from danger rather than fly, Wray says.

“Before you charge across open country, listen for their call. Often the birds will be uphill near outcroppings or watering holes,” he explains.

The same country that makes chukars so hard to approach also makes them difficult to shoot. To be successful, hunters must position for a line of fire, see the covey flush and shoot before the birds scatter.

Chukars have an annoying tendency to fly away and downhill in a rapidly expanding pattern of birds, curving right and left as they follow the contour of the land. Seasoned chukar hunters say this is not a shot that can be learned on a skeet course, which may be why flatland pheasant and quail hunters



Pat Wray

While you can hunt chukars without a dog, a good pointer or retriever will increase your odds of success.

are often frustrated their first time out.

“Pick a bird and kill it,” Wray advises. “If it does not fall the first time, adjust your lead and kill it with a second shot if you have the time. But don’t pick a new target until you’ve gotten your bird or it is out of range.”

The key is to lead the bird down, keeping it visible over the gun barrel as it moves away and downhill. If you kill a bird, mark where it falls and commit that spot to memory. If you have a dog, the retrieval should be easy, but dog-less hunters will need to be absolutely sure of where the bird went down.

After you’ve spent a day hunting chukars, you’re sure to have aches and pains from the strenuous exercise. But, the chance to walk wild country with a good hunting dog, and, hopefully, a pack full of birds by days end more than compensates your efforts. If you’ve never hunted these elusive birds before, take a chance on chukars.

*A Chukar Hunter’s Companion* is available in many bookstores or from [www.patwray.com](http://www.patwray.com). 

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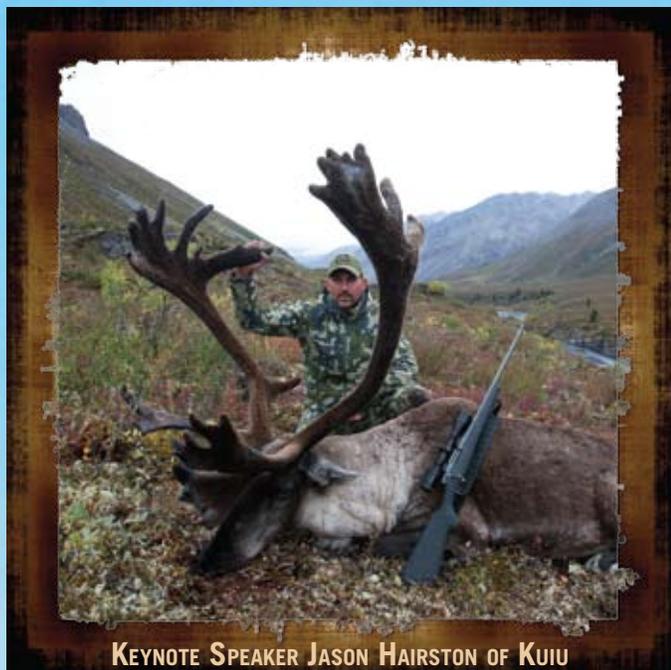
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# Backcountry Hunters & Anglers 2013 North American Rendezvous



March 22-24, 2013 • Boise Hotel and Conference Center, Boise, Idaho

- **Keynote Speaker:**  
**Jason Hairston of Kuiu**
- **Hunting & Fishing Seminars**
- **Dinner Banquet & Auction**
- **Great Food & Family Fun**



KEYNOTE SPEAKER JASON HAIRSTON OF KUIU

**Come join our annual celebration of backcountry as we enjoy a fun-filled spring weekend in the Great Northwest! See you in camp!**

[www.backcountryhunters.org](http://www.backcountryhunters.org)

## RENDEZVOUS SCHEDULE

### Friday, March 22nd:

4pm: Social, Drinks, Family Pool Party

5pm: Opening Remarks: Executive Director

5:30-9pm: Basque Themed Dinner, BHA Slide Show, Family Pool Party

### Saturday, March 23rd:

8am: Coffee, Opening Remarks

8:20am-9am: Choice of Seminars:

- Seminar #1A "Making it Cool! Introducing Youth to Backcountry"

- Seminar #1B "Game Bird Calling, and Other Tips"

9:20am-10am: Seminar #2 "Speak up for Habitat! How to Make a Difference for Our Hunting and Fishing Legacy"

10:20am-11am: Seminar #3 Traditional Archery Seminar, Nancy Doran of Archery Past with Help from Idaho Traditional Bowhunters.

11:20-Noon: Seminar #4 "How to Load and Balance Your Pack for Mountain Hunting"

Lunch Noon-1pm Round Tables with authors Lily Raff McCallou, Tom Reed, David Lien and Pat Wray, and Scott Hed, Director, Sportsman's Alliance for AK

TBD: Kids Casting Practice in the Pool!

TBD: Spey Casting (possible carpool to river).

Other outdoor activities will include Idaho Fish and Game's Airgun and Fishing Trailers and Crosscut Demo!

1pm-1:40pm: Choice of Seminars:

- Seminar #4A "Challenges & Rewards of Owning a Bird Dog" Lonk Kuck, Elk Run Kennels, Home of Braque Du Bourbonnais Pointing Dogs

- Seminar #4B Amateur Taxidermy: Dwight Curtis

2pm-2:40pm: Choice of Seminars:

- Seminar #5A "Small Stream Fishing and Tenkara"

- Seminar #5B "Traditional Bowbuilding"

2pm: For Hunter Education Instructors Only: "The Classroom and Beyond: Introducing Youth to Backcountry Hunting"

3-3:40pm: Seminar #6 "Llama Packing"

Break

5pm: Social, Drinks

5:30pm: Awards, Banquet Dinner

6:30pm: Speaker Jason Hairston of Kuiu

7:30pm: Auction Begins

### Sunday, March 24th:

9am: National Meeting Plus States' Updates by Chapter Leaders

10:30am: Closing Remarks

Schedule subject to change

**Backcountry Hunters & Anglers 2013 North American Rendezvous**  
**March 22 - 24, 2013, Boise Hotel and Conference Center, Boise, ID**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Deadline to Register: March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2013**

I have a: (Check One): Regular Membership \_\_\_\_\_ Family Membership \_\_\_\_\_ Life Membership \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse/Guest's Name (if attending) \_\_\_\_\_

Children's Names (if attending) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Day Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Evening Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

**Individual:**

**Includes** Friday Basque Buffet Dinner by the Pool w/Movie for Kids \$95 X \_\_\_\_\_ = \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Saturday Seminars and Activities, Lunch Provided  
Saturday Banquet Dinner with Speaker Jason Hairston of Kuiu, and Auction  
(Breakfasts Not Included: Hotel will have special breakfast rate with room)

**Family:**

**Includes Same for Two Adults, One Child under 18 (Child's age: \_\_\_\_\_)** \$155 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Additional Children:** \$25 X \_\_\_\_\_ = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Children's ages: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

**I will need childcare on Saturday night (FREE):** Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

**TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED:** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**TOTAL NUMBER OF PEOPLE ATTENDING** \_\_\_\_\_

**Lodging (Not Included, Please Book Independently):**

**The Boise Hotel & Conference Center**

3300 Vista Ave, Boise, ID 83705

Ph: 1.855.611.1199

Website: www.theboisehotel.com

**Special Rendezvous Rates Available: \$59 (Mention Backcountry Hunters & Anglers.)**

**For an added bonus, send in registration by December 31, 2012 and receive 10 free "General" raffle tickets!**

**Please make all checks payable to Backcountry Hunters & Anglers and mail to:**

**BHA, P. O. Box 126, Joseph, OR 97846**

Canadian members must send International Cashiers Checks or Money Orders payable in US funds.

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**Receipts will be mailed. Check in starting 4pm, Friday March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2013.**



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