

BACKCOUNTRY JOURNAL

Magazine of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers

Fall 2015

PLUS: CARIBOU IN QUEBEC'S UNGAVA PENINSULA, BACKCOUNTRY COOKING ESSENTIALS, TIPS FOR FLOAT HUNTING, RE-WILDING A RIVER AND MORE





SEEK OUTSIDE

LIVE LIFE LIGHTER



ANOTHER MILESTONE

RECENTLY, FOUNDING BHA board member and President Emeritus Mike Beagle stopped by our world headquarters in western Montana.

If you know Mike, you know he wears his heart on his sleeve. As he walked around and reminisced about BHA's humble beginnings, he beamed with pride. Later that afternoon he posted this on Facebook: "What a sublime feeling to see this organization grow from nothing to having a full time professional staff working for fish and wildlife habitat and our public lands hunting and angling heritage!"

What Mike and a handful of others started just over 11 years ago around a campfire has matured into one of the fastest growing sportsmen-conservation organizations in the country. With more than 100,000 members and supporters, BHA is living up to our identity as "the sportsman's voice for our wild public lands, waters and wildlife."

It's not just Mike who is taking notice. In late August, I was honored to be appointed by Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell and Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack to the Wildlife and Hunting Heritage Conservation Council, or WHHCC. Established under the Federal Advisory Committee Act, the WHHCC provides recommendations on a range of issues related to wildlife and habitat conservation, promotes access and opportunities for hunting, and encourages partnerships among the public, sportsmen-conservation organizations, Native American tribes and the federal government.

Gaining a seat on this council enables us to directly influence the two federal agencies most responsible for managing our public lands estate, which BHA was literally formed to support. Those who crave the solitude and challenge only the backcountry can provide are now at the table.

While our role in the WHHCC means a few more days away from home, I couldn't be more honored to bring the ethos of BHA to this influential committee. In early September, I headed to Washington,

D.C., along with BHA Conservation Director John Gale for the council's inaugural meeting. The WHHCC membership roster reads like a who's who of leaders in North American sportsmen-conservation circles. Discussion during the meeting ranged from the public lands divestiture movement and expanding sportsmen's access via the Land and Water Conservation Fund, to the fate of the greater sage grouse and antiquated mining laws – all issues in which BHA has a strong record of engagement. We were welcomed with open arms.

We didn't reach this milestone by accident. Each and every BHA member, volunteer leader and online follower contributed to this moment – to our upstart organization influencing policy decisions made in Washington, D.C., to BHA getting noticed as a sportsmen's group making a difference in conserving our most valuable public lands, to proving that being outspoken advocates for North America's backcountry has its own rewards.

Let's celebrate but not be content. The vision set forth by Beagle and his BHA co-founders was to provide boots-on-the-ground expertise to elected and administrative officials regarding the management of important lands and waters. Our organization relies on one-on-one conversations to grow our tribe of dedicated sportsmen-conservationists.

As we all head out into the woods or waters this fall, I encourage you to advocate for BHA and all we represent. After you read this edition of the Backcountry Journal, pass it on to a fellow hunter or angler. Flag page 30 and directly ask him or her to join our movement. If you want to do more, host a community event such as a backcountry barbeque, inspired by BHA's Idaho chapter and described on page 19. And get involved in your local chapter through hands-on projects, conservation advocacy and membership events.

To Mike Beagle and the rest of those who sat around the original campfire: Your vision is true. It's time to throw another log on the fire. We're just getting started! 🐾



Land brought BHA's boots-on-the-ground ethos in a recent trip to D.C. where he discussed public lands hunting opportunities with top federal officials and conservation leaders.

Joining Land on the WHHCC are Jeff Crane (Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation), Whit Fosburgh (Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership), Wayne Hubbard (Urban American Outdoors), Winifred Kessler (The Wildlife Society), Robert Manes (The Nature Conservancy), Frederick Maulson (Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission), Robert Model (Boone & Crockett Club), Miles Moretti (Mule Deer Foundation), Collin O'Mara (National Wildlife Federation), Joanna Prukop (former New Mexico Secretary of Energy, Minerals & Natural Resources), Stephen Sanetti (National Shooting Sports Foundation), Christine Thomas (College of Natural Resources, University of Wisconsin), George Thornton (National Wildlife Turkey Federation), John Tomke (Ducks Unlimited), Howard Vincent (Pheasants Forever), Larry Voyles (Arizona Department of Fish and Game) and Steve Williams (Wildlife Management Institute).

Onward and Upward,

Land Tawney
President & CEO

BHA NATIONAL STAFF CONTINUES TO GROW

AS OUR ORGANIZATION evolves and expands, so too does our staff and leadership. BHA recently added two contractors to our roster, Toni Ruth and Jarrett Babincsak. We were also saddened by the departures of our membership coordinator, Drew Lefebvre, and our summer intern, Paul Kemper.

Toni, our new High Divide coordinator, will be working on the ground in the important, remote ecosystem running between Yellowstone National Park and the Frank Church Wilderness in Idaho and Montana. She has a Ph.D. in wildlife resources, a M.S. in wildlife and fisheries science, a B.S. in wildlife ecology and has done extensive field work from Patagonia to the Great Smoky Mountains. BHA is asking Toni to foster community awareness of the intersection of wildlife habitat with land use to provide a healthy ecosystem that will also support sustainable agricultural and forestry practices to build a strong local economy.

Jarrett came on as the Southwest chapter coordinator. He holds undergraduate degrees in business marketing and journalism from Indiana University and an MBA from Arizona State University. Currently he is in a certification course with the National Academy of Sports Medicine. Originally from the Hoosier State, Jarrett now resides in New River, Arizona, with his wife Kelly, daughters Savannah and Grace, and a host of animals both domestic and otherwise.

The national board of directors also added Rachel Vandevort to its ranks. Rachel is the trade relations manager for Kimber Manufacturing. Her career in sales and marketing includes stints in the outdoor recreation and organic produce industries, and she has a bachelor's degree in resource conservation from the University of Montana. Born in northwest Montana, she accompanied her father on river trips before she entered preschool, tied flies before she could do long division and worked in the local fly shop in exchange for gear before she was old enough to receive a paycheck. She now lives in Whitefish, Montana with her family.

Paul interned at national headquarters this summer before heading back for his senior year at Penn State. He helped create videos and advertisements for BHA, as well as a host of other tasks. His lasting legacy, however, was the spectacular "Sip 'n Slide" party he organized for the lawn next to the BHA office.

Drew leaves us after a year as the membership coordinator for a job as a teaching naturalist at the Montana Natural History Center. She oversaw and facilitated the largest membership growth in BHA history. We'll miss you, Drew! 🐾



THE SPORTSMEN'S VOICE FOR OUR WILD PUBLIC LANDS, WATERS AND WILDLIFE

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A big, backcountry high-five to the following Legacy Partners who have committed \$500 or more to BHA for the next three years. To find out how you can become a Legacy Partner, please contact grant@backcountryhunters.org.

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Cover photo: Nick Trehearne - Pronghorn, Alberta

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RIO GRANDE DEL NORTE NATIONAL MONUMENT, NM

New Mexico BHA Helps Achieve Monument Protection,
Seeks Wilderness Designation for Cerro del Yuta and Rio San Antonio

BY PETER LUPSHA

THE DAWNING SUNLIGHT grazes the rounded summit of San Antonio Mountain to the west, bringing additional warmth to me hunched over my fire and coffee. I hear George Harrison in my head singing “Sun, sun, sun, here it comes.”

Fifteen miles east, the Rio Grande Rift with its 700-foot gorge, a Wild and Scenic River area, is cloaked in shadows that will remain for several hours more. To the north, among rolling hills and smaller gorges, sits the 8,000 acres that will soon become, if all goes well, the Rio San Antonio Wilderness. A small herd of antelope graze across the plain.

In another hour the sun’s rays will touch the roof of the honeymoon house built by Aldo Leopold for his new bride and lifetime love, Maria Alivara Estella Bergere, Estella to friends, in Tres Piedras. Leopold, then 25, was the new supervisor of the Carson National Forest, established in 1908. Estella, a Santa Fe elite girl, adjusted to his backcountry life, hunting, shooting and cooking cottontails for dinner, while learning to respect the mountain lion that liked to sunbathe behind their house.

Back then Aldo wrote, “There are practically no game in this country. Of course the sheep have run out all the deer; there are a few wild turkeys, and I saw one place with bear-sign. Two elk were seen here two years ago” (letter to his father, 1911). Today, 7,000 elk live in the Carson NF and surrounding areas, along with several thousand antelope and innumerable mule deer and other critters. The Rio Grande del Norte National Monument and the two proposed wilderness areas within it are winter ranges for deer, antelope and elk.

This is one of the few areas I know of in New Mexico where antelope live in pinion-juniper woodlands, washes and gullies.

This allows a traditional bow hunter like me to sometimes get within my 28-yard effective range for an ethical shot. But this morning I only surprise a fellow hunter – a large bobcat who appears to be stalking the same group of ‘lopes that I am.

This future wilderness – Congress and the president agreeing – will be here for future generations of hunters, hikers and backcountry stargazers long after I’ve had my fun and left this side of the grass. Between 1985 and 1990, Ron Gardiner, forest research biologist, mapped birds of prey in the gorge. His work in the community and recognition of the ecosystem helped start a grassroots coalition of local stakeholders including farmers, ranchers, outfitters, fishers, businessmen and politicians. From this roundtable collaborative effort among neighbors, a statewide effort was launched. New Mexico BHA worked with an array of other organizations to protect this landscape. And after many years of hard work, on March 25, 2013, President Obama made a presidential proclamation creating the 242,500-acre Rio Grande del Norte National Monument – a designation that safeguards habitat from large scale development while ensuring that hunting, fishing and state-based wildlife management continue within the monument. While the monument designation provides additional protection to the area, the original landscape conservation proposal backed by BHA and the New Mexico congressional delegation focused more on wilderness areas and recreational opportunities that provide solitude in the backcountry. The Cerro del Yuta (13,420 acres) and Rio San Antonio (8,000 acres) Wilderness Study Areas previously identified in past legislation remain very important to New Mexico BHA, and we are committed to advancing wilderness designation for these two important places that now reside with-

in the national monument. Not only does wilderness afford true backcountry experiences for those who seek the challenge and tranquility of our untrammelled lands, it also provides the best habitat for fish and wildlife and supports robust populations of trophy big game and wild trout.

Thankfully, New Mexico BHA has the support of Sens. Martin Heinrich and Tom Udall who, in July 2015, reintroduced legislation to designate both these areas as wilderness.

The Cerro del Yuta encompasses Ute Mountain, a 10,800-foot volcanic dome rising some 2,500 feet above the plateau. According to BLM park ranger Daniel Bland, Ute Mountain is unique in that it has no roads. Primarily ponderosa forest, it contains aspen, Douglas fir, spruce on the northern and oak and pinion-juniper on the southern slopes.

The second proposed wilderness, Rio San Antonio, is on the far west side of the monument, north of San Antonio Mountain. It is mainly a flat, grassy plain with the 200-foot-deep gorge of Rio San Antonio running through its center, providing a hidden microclimate of riparian vegetation, Douglas fir and spruce.

Polls by the Taos News indicate that 82 percent of the area residents favor wilderness status for these areas. New Mexico BHA chairman Oscar Simpson, who hunts elk on Ute Mountain, said, “It is rugged, near-pristine backcountry and certainly meets the definition of wilderness and deserves that status.” 🐾

Peter, 76, is a retired professor and poet who strongly believes in the mission and values of BHA. He is a life member and legacy partner and loves solo backcountry hunting, fishing and adventures. He lives in Tome, N.M.

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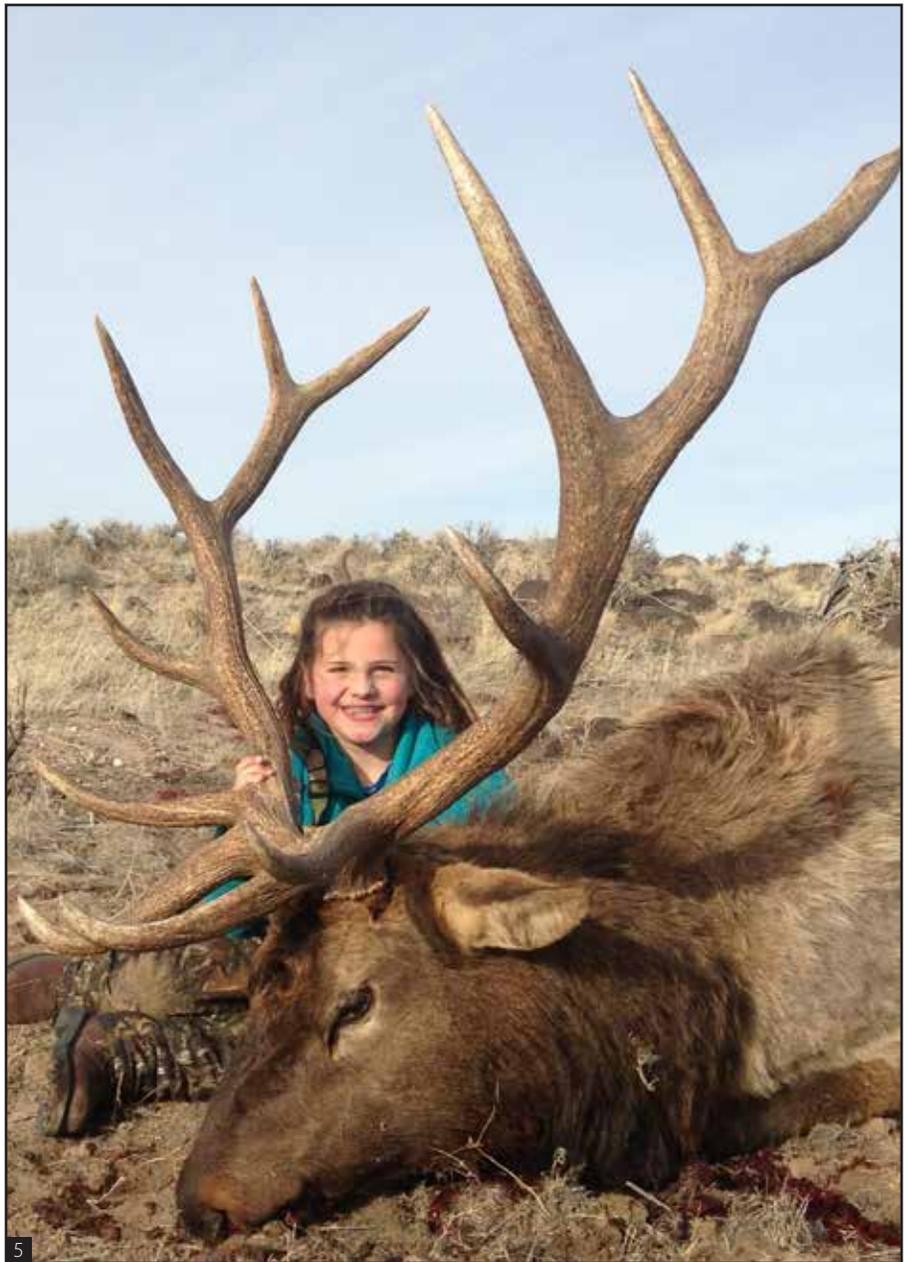
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1 **Hunter:** Biche Rudigoz, BHA Member
Species: Pronghorn **State:** Idaho **Method:** Bow **Distance from nearest road:** Two miles **Transportation:** Foot

2 **Angler:** Allen Crater, BHA Member **Species:** Yellowstone cutthroat **State:** Wyoming **Method:** Fly rod **Distance from nearest road:** 30 miles **Transportation:** Foot

3 **Angler:** Tara Thomas-Gale, BHA Member **Species:** Rainbow trout **State:** Alaska **Method:** Fly rod **Distance from nearest road:** Four miles **Transportation:** Foot/ drift boat

4 **Hunter:** Jason Franklin, BHA Member **Species:** Dall sheep **State:** Alaska **Method:** Rifle **Distance from nearest road:** 19 miles **Transportation:** Foot/backpack

5 **Hunter:** Sage Schiermeier, BHA Member **Species:** Rocky Mountain elk **State:** Idaho **Method:** Rifle **Distance from nearest road:** One mile **Transportation:** Foot

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WELCOME NEW LIFE MEMBERS!

Scott Acker
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Eric Thomas



BHA life member Mike Miller of Boise harvested this mountain goat with the Kimber Mountain Ascent rifle he received with his life member commitment. He was hunting solo, 50 miles up a dirt road and eight miles by foot into the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness.

CALL OUR MEMBERSHIP COORDINATOR TODAY (406) 370-4325



JANET MARSCHNER, Cheyenne, Wyoming

WY BHA Board Member, Real Estate Developer, Accountant

HOW DID YOU GET INTO HUNTING AND FISHING?

I became friends with a guy who was a big game hunter. His interest in hunting sparked mine, then I took the hunter education class through Wyoming Game & Fish. I loved the class so much I wanted to teach hunter education. And I thought, if I'm going to teach this class to mostly kids under the age of 14, I needed to get out in the field and experience hunting first-hand and speak from my own personal experiences. I needed to start handling guns, I needed to know what it's like to be in the backcountry. I've been teaching [and hunting] since 2012. And I fly fish, that's another passion.

TELL US ABOUT YOUR D.C. FLY-IN TO SUPPORT THE LWCF.

That was in June of '14 and I visited with all three of our delegates, which was really neat. I think they're all supportive of the LWCF, with maybe some enhancements or changes to the way it is. I talked about the local impact and some of the neat projects that have come out of that program. One of the things, I was up in a little town called La Grange, Wyoming and I noticed they have a new playground. On it they have signs that say, "Thanks to the Land and Water Conservation Fund for this playground." It's enabled Wyoming to pick up some properties, and we've seen benefit from some good projects.

WHAT ATTRACTED YOU TO BHA?

Their mission of going back to the old way of doing things, getting out there and hiking and not using motorized vehicles to go everywhere. Their support of fences or whatever to keep illegal motorized vehicles out of the backcountry. That would be why. A lot of it is just that they're really on the ground doing work here in Wyoming. And I hope I can make difference. I think it's a little different than some of the other groups and the work they're doing makes a difference.

YOU'RE ON A FEW OTHER NON-PROFIT BOARDS AS WELL?

I'm on the Wyoming Wildlife Federation board, and also on the Curt Gowdy Trout Unlimited Chapter board. Three very different groups, and that's why I thought I could be on more than one because each group is contributing in a unique way to Wyoming.

WHAT IS THE BIGGEST THREAT TO HUNTING IN WYOMING?

I would say loss of access. I think in Wyoming we have big ranches, and some of them are being bought up by folks who don't live here. And they quit allowing access. And the animals know where to go after hunting season opens. I think that's a big deal. But we have a lot of public lands also. That's what's so wonderful about Wyoming.





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WHY WE HUNT: LEARN THE FACTS OF WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

BY KATIE MCKALIP

“HOW DO YOU KNOW if it’s OK to kill the deer?” Ruby asked me one day toward the end of summer.

Hunting season is on everyone’s minds, even my kid’s, and she’s only 5. You’re probably thinking about it a lot, too. You might not be old enough to shoot a deer, but you could be looking forward to scouting whitetails in the woods with your mom or spending an early morning in a duck blind with your dad.

Ruby still talks about petting the fur of the deer her dad shot last year – and the venison sausage we made in the kitchen over Thanksgiving weekend. But she’s also thinking about why we go hunting, why deer live in the mountains near our house and what it means to be a hunter. All of these things are important parts of how we manage wildlife populations in North America, and if you’re a hunter – or want to start hunting someday – you should think about them, too.

A lot of Ruby’s and my conversations return to a family friend who was a big-game biologist for our state wildlife agency. Stories about Vickie counting elk from a helicopter or treeing mountain lions with houndsmen and their dogs are more exciting than conducting scientific studies, analyzing data or crunching numbers.

But numbers are what’s behind the management of our wildlife populations – including how many mule deer, for example, a certain mountain range in Montana can support and how many hunters can harvest in a year. As a sportsman, you have a responsibility to read the rules and

regulations for the place you want to hunt. If you do, you’ll understand whether you can shoot an antlerless elk or bull elk when you’re on your next trip. Hunting regulations help wildlife biologists manage healthy wildlife populations so you have the opportunity to hunt with your family and friends year after year.

Have you ever heard of the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation? The North American model has guided decisions about managing natural resources – including hunting – in the United States and Canada for more than 100 years. It makes clear that our fish and wildlife are owned by us, members of the public, and are available for us to use, enjoy and harvest as long as we follow specific laws and regulations. The North American model also includes guidelines for biologists and other resource managers so that science is used to achieve the ideal number of fish and game animals, for a particular place, now and into the future.

This can be a complicated issue, but it’s an important one. As citizens as well as sportsmen, we should feel proud of the North American model. What would the places where we live and visit be like without wildlife? What would happen if everyone hunted any animal they wanted to, at any time of year, using a rifle sometimes, a bow another time, and a slingshot some other time? It wouldn’t result in a situation that would be very fun or fair, right?

Sportsmen who came before us – our grandparents and great-grandparents – are the reason we have plenty of critters to chase and plenty of fish to catch today. Sportsmen are also responsible for some-

thing else just as important: conserving the mountain ranges, canyons, forests, rivers, creeks and lakes we like to visit.

Why do we return to certain places to hunt and fish, year after year? And why do deer and elk, grouse and chukar, trout and salmon like those places, too?

It all comes down to habitat. Habitat, as you probably know, is the natural environment where animals live. Habitat provides groceries for fish and wildlife! As hunters, we understand the importance of habitat – enough habitat and healthy habitat – for fish and wildlife. We also understand that we need to take care of critical areas of habitat, including seasonal habitat, if we want to continue to hunt, fish and enjoy the outdoors. Our public lands are especially valuable, providing critters with habitat connectivity and room to roam!

Ruby is just starting to learn about habitat and why it’s important, not only to fish and wildlife but to us as sportsmen. This fall, she’ll be coming along on outings with her dad and me. Spending time with family and friends. Helping put food on the table. Seeing wildlife. Learning to track. All are part of experiencing the hunt.

Remember: it’s not always about pulling the trigger. It’s about the adventure! 🐾

Katie is BHA’s communications director.

ANNOUNCEMENT: DRAWING CONTEST

Show off your artistic skills and send us a drawing of an experience hunting or fishing. Winners will win a prize and be published in an upcoming issue of *Backcountry Journal*. Send a copy to caitlin@backcountryhunters.org by Dec. 1st!

GAME FARMS, FAIR CHASE AND LAND ETHIC

Where do the trails meet in modern hunting culture?



Courtesy of Robert Scheer/The Indianapolis Star

BY DAVE COLAVITO

THE DARK COVER of hemlock and pine wasn't the best deer habitat that time of year, but the sign had been good there all week.

With five minutes of legal light remaining, the only guarantees I had were the only ones I needed: a large swath of public land and its gift of public wildlife.

Peripheral motion just beyond 20 yards drew my attention. A large, wild, whitetail buck silently approached. Stepping clear from a maze of deadfall he paused, head slowly swiveling beneath heavy headgear, scenting for a breeze that wasn't there.

Even if I could move without being seen, it was too dark for a responsible shot. With recurve bow at ease I crouched at the base of a hemlock. Motionless as a stone and confident I could remain unnoticed, I had little hope of seeing him again.

But why bother with any of this? Just two hours away from where I sat, a fenced shooting preserve in Norwich, New York

called Tall Tines Whitetails, guarantees a shot opportunity at the trophy deer of your choice. A 150-inch buck, like the one I was watching, is a steal at \$2,500. Feeling flush? Splurge on a monster over 196 inches for \$7,000, plus \$25 for each additional inch. Their website says, "We have focused on a breeding program and hunting preserve which has utilized artificial insemination from some of the largest whitetail deer in the country which score 250–400 B&C."

Big game "farms" are present in nearly every state, producing whitetails, mule deer, elk and other native, as well as exotic, species. The North American Deer Farmers Association estimates there to be 8,000 operations nationally. Texas and Pennsylvania have the most, in the ballpark of 1,000 farms in each state.

On a typical game farm, deer are habituated to humans through extended bottle-feeding of fawns, regular feeding of adults and other domestic livestock practices. Captive deer are used to produce

meat, urine for scent lures, semen for artificial insemination, and ground antler and velvet for supplements.

But the high-dollar commodity is pay-to-kill shooting. Many game farms raise bucks, genetically modified to produce enormous antlers, for customers to shoot. Prices of \$30,000–\$50,000 are not unheard of for unusually large animals. Some operations provide preview pictures of their animals, like choosing a coat from a catalogue. The Boone & Crockett Club rejects farmed animals for record books, yet the B&C scoring system is ubiquitous throughout the game farm industry.

Game farm enclosures range from less than one acre to several thousand acres surrounded by miles of eight-foot-fence. Larger operations often attempt to imitate an authentic hunting experience. Others concentrate animals at high densities on small parcels.

These densities increase the likelihood for disease. In half of the 22 states where chronic wasting disease has been documented, a game farm was the site of its

discovery. While it is difficult to determine causes for the increasing number of outbreaks, many scientists believe transportation of deer and elk, from one farm to another, plays a large role. Game farms have also been implicated in the spread of bovine tuberculosis, brucellosis, hemorrhagic disease and deadly, exotic deer lice.

All this raises key questions: What costs are ethical hunters and other conservationists willing to pay so others can buy shortcuts to a “trophy”? What costs are they willing to pay when public wildlife is converted to private livestock? Those costs may come due in the form of disease in public wildlife, degraded ethics and, in turn, lost support among the larger non-hunting public for public hunting – with so much conservation funding supported by public hunting dollars, that prospect carries far-reaching consequences.

Game farm advocates might ask: why can't the industry exist alongside our framework of publicly owned wildlife?

The answer, evidence shows, rests on the three-legged stool of 1) whether splitting the legal status of native deer or elk into public wildlife or private livestock, on balance, solves more problems than it creates; 2) whether serious risks to public herds of deer and other wildlife, disease chief among them, are deemed acceptable; and 3) whether hunters need to honor their social contract – the fact that our hunting depends on the support of the larger public, which after all owns the wildlife and may not want to see it privatized.

Take away one leg of the stool and the “get along” argument gets shaky.

Mike Schlegel is a retired biologist from the Idaho Department of Fish & Game, with experience in veterinary parasitology. A big part of the problem is that diseases do not respect the fences around game farms. Game farms and traditional livestock operations are very different, he says.

“You have control over a range of variables with domestic stock, control over none with free-ranging public wildlife,” Schlegel said. “But the likelihood for spreading disease increases with animal density; it comes down to two factors: confinement and density.”

Game farmers insist they can keep private herds separate, but fences are fre-

quently damaged by fallen trees, crushed by snow, vandalized by people and damaged by bears or other wildlife. And state records document animals escaping, frequently without being recovered. Nose-to-nose contact between captive and wild deer through intact fences also isn't uncommon. Wildlife officials have suggested double-fencing, but those suggestions are rejected by game farmers and have been shot down politically.

“SOCIAL SCIENTISTS HAVE LONG DEMONSTRATED THAT PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR HUNTING WILL BE BASED ON WHETHER IT IS PERCEIVED TO BE ETHICAL AND FOR LEGITIMATE PURPOSES.”

“There's no question that bacterial and viral infections continually challenge captive whitetail deer from high animal densities,” said Brian Murphy, biologist and CEO for the Quality Deer Management Association. And as a former wildlife research coordinator at the University of Georgia's Whitetail Deer Research Lab, that's something he knows first-hand. Deer at three animals per acre and higher, as commonly encountered on game farms, constitutes a dramatically higher density than what's typical in free-ranging herds, he said. “High densities in the wild can create similar problems, but at least free-range deer aren't confined.” In confinement, veterinary medicine can be

administered to animals, he continued, but it's challenging to keep up there, especially with no practical live animal test for CWD.

The industry lobbies for transferring regulatory authority for game farms from state wildlife to agricultural agencies. They have succeeded in states like Idaho. This shortchanges wildlife and hunters, according to Schlegel. “Public wildlife agencies are responsible for the public's wildlife, so they need authority over what can affect it,” he said.

Fears over disease already have already stymied efforts to restore wild elk in some areas. The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation's plan to reintroduce elk in New York State was scratched by the state because of CWD concerns, even though there was adequate habitat and social support for the plan.

The Kentucky elk herd is particularly important, explained Blake Henning, vice president of lands and conservation for RMEF. “That herd is the only source herd in the United States for our reintroduction projects. If CWD gets into it, it puts them on hold.”

In 2012 the United States Department of Agriculture issued an interim rule for CWD, which it finalized in 2014. The rule established testing and surveillance protocols for the disease, compliance with which became a requirement for interstate transport of captive deer. Yet in sworn testimony, David Smith, director of the Division of Animal Industry for New York State's Department of Agriculture and Markets, said, “CWD has been discovered



Courtesy of Robert Scheer/The Indianapolis Star

in captive cervid operations that followed state mandated CWD herd certification programs modeled after the USDA Herd Certification Program.” Dr. Justin Brown, wildlife veterinarian for the Pennsylvania Game Commission, corroborated this from findings in his own state.

“In July 2012, CWD was found in an Iowa captive deer facility participating in that state’s certification program for 9 years,” Smith continued. “And in December 2013, CWD was detected in a Wisconsin captive deer herd that claimed to have no outside introductions for 10 years and that was double-fenced.” These facts on the ground support a sobering reality: Fences and regulations are more effective on paper than in the real world.

“Our entire North American model is on the chopping block,” said Keith Balfour, marketing director for the Boone & Crockett Club. “Fair chase transcends the fence.”

Social scientists have long demonstrated that public support for hunting will be based on whether it is perceived to be ethical and for legitimate purposes.

Respected public opinion researcher, Mark Duda, of Responsive Management, has found that some 85 percent of Americans support hunting for meat and 78 percent are in favor of deer hunting in particular. Those are strong numbers. However, Duda also found only 20 percent support hunting within a high fence preserve (*Bugle Magazine*, Sept.-Oct. 2015.)

“If the public doesn’t equate hunting within the context of food, conservation, and wildlife management, it’s over,” Balfour said. “Just look at public outrage over the recent killing of Cecil the Lion.”

In his classic essay, *The Land Ethic*, Aldo Leopold wrote, “A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise.” And although the game farm industry continues to expand, ethical and motivated hunters can take important strides when they organize.

For example, in 2000, Montana voters passed Initiative 143, a game farm reform package championed by the state’s elk hunters. I-143 prohibited the shooting of

game farm animals for any type of fee. It allowed existing game farms to continue, but prohibited the transfer of those licenses to any other party. It also prohibited all new “alternative livestock” ranches, which includes native species of deer and elk. In the 15 years since I-143 became law, it withstood an onslaught of legal challenges. Yet it remains an example of what ethical, motivated hunters can do when they organize.

Eventually, that wild whitetail buck slipped through and around the growing swirls of darkness beyond my ability to see him. And after what seemed like forever, I rose, slowly. Cutting my own way through the blackness, I went off in search of a trail, bloodless arrows never nocked, recurve bow never drawn. To this day he’s never really left me. I knew then as I know now that I’d been given something that Tall Tines Whitetails never could provide. The thought of losing that is unbearable. 🐾

Dave resides in the Catskill Region of New York State and is on BHA’s state chapter board.

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RE-WILDING A RIVER

BHA Members Find Backcountry Gems in New Hampshire and Make the Case for Wild Trout Management



BY DAN WILLIAMS
PHOTOS BY TOVAR CERULLI

TROUT FISHING in many parts of New England is a zero-sum game. High water temperatures and low dissolved oxygen levels often leave streams barren of salmonids – until the stocking trucks show up each spring. When they do, an army of anglers, using every conceivable form of tackle, descends on these waters and proceeds to pull out chunky triploid rainbows, browns and brookies, most destined for the freezer. The “lucky ones” that get away face an increasingly difficult battle for survival as waters warm into the summer. Most will not survive. None will reproduce, leaving rivers empty by fall foliage season. The process repeats itself year after year.

Contrast that with the mid-July day I had on the water recently with two friends and fellow BHA members. Corey Ellis, To-

var Cerulli and I spent the better part of a day in New Hampshire’s White Mountain National Forest fly fishing for native brook trout on the Wildcat River. The experience was a far cry from the put-and-take scenario I described above. After driving several miles of Forest Service road, we parked at a trailhead and hiked in further, crossing two minor brooks, before the surging waters of the Wildcat beckoned us to her banks. What we found was a picture postcard scene of the New Hampshire backcountry. Nestled among a thick tangle of birch-beech-maple forest dotted with spruce and fir of all ages, the Wildcat’s gin-clear water is studded with large granite boulders and riddled with fallen timber, making for prime trout holding water over virtually every yard of stream bed. Its steep gradient and high elevation ensure a year-round, cold water environment for the fish – and made it quite easy to regulate

our body temperatures as we wet-waded through the warm, humid, July day.

“First fish buys the beer afterwards,” yelled Corey above the din of the raging waters as I headed off downstream after rigging up my “minnow pole” – a 6’6” 2-weight with a leader that proved a bit too long to work with. My first cast yielded a violent strike and hearty fight from a 6-inch brookie already beginning to show signs of the vibrant colors these fish exhibit come September spawning season. I imagined how breathtaking a trip to the Wildcat in the fall would be when both the trees and the fish would be dressed in their fall palette of oranges, reds and yellows.

As we continued downstream every boulder, every logjam, every plunge pool presented us with new opportunities. And virtually every pool and run teemed with trout, all more than eager to smack our dry flies without much regard to pattern, size

or color. There were no empty worm containers, tangles of monofilament on tree branches, or cigarette butts. There weren't even any footprints save for those of moose and other wildlife. In this pristine setting, with the trout happy to indulge us, it became clear to me how fragile such a fishery is. It would be far too easy for a few anglers to fish out this small stream if they were to start keeping their catch, even with New Hampshire's rather conservative five fish per day limit.

As we sat on giant granite boulders to eat our lunch, Corey, Tovar and I discussed what the future holds for the Wildcat, and perhaps other streams in this region. Recently, BHA-New England partnered with a local Trout Unlimited chapter and other groups to draft a proposal to designate the Wildcat River as a water "Managed for Wild Trout" (MWT). This would include regulations limiting angling to catch-and-release, fly-fishing only with single, barbless hooks. There is no better candidate for "re-wilding" than the Wildcat. New Hampshire Fish and Game has recorded a biomass of 44 pounds of wild trout per acre – far exceeding the 13 pounds per acre minimum for MWT designation. Jackson Falls, on the lower reaches of the Wildcat, provides a convenient barrier to keep stocked trout in its lower stretch from mixing with wild fish. Currently, hatchery trout are stocked above the falls and are prevented from reaching the upper Wild-

cat only by the area's relative remoteness. Situated in the heart of the White Mountains, the Wildcat benefits from the longest-lasting snowpack anywhere east of the Mississippi and already claims Wild and Scenic River designation from the federal government.

It is somewhat puzzling that although the White Mountain region provides the highest quality wild trout habitat in New Hampshire, none of its rivers and streams are managed for wild trout. This fact seems to contradict a recent angler survey that showed a majority favor more wild trout waters in the state. And there is already precedent for managing certain streams for wild trout, as NH F&G has had success doing elsewhere in the state. Also, because managing for wild trout is more cost-effective than put-and-take, and given the Wildcat's location in the heart of the largest mountain tourist area in the northeast, the economic benefits for an MWT designation are a no-brainer.

After lunch, we explored a little further upstream on "The 'Cat." Then Corey suggested we hike out and drive back downstream to check out its lower reaches. What we found there was more akin to put-and-take. The water was still gin-clear, but quite a bit warmer. The streambed was a bit flatter, with fewer quality holding areas for fish. Footprints and the detritus from previous anglers were easy to spot, and trout were hard to find. We did man-

age a few strikes and one 10-inch brook trout, which, from its appearance, was clearly raised in a hatchery.

New Hampshire has both a robust put-and-take fishery and an effective wild trout program. It makes sense to include the Wildcat – and perhaps other White Mountain streams – in the latter group. One could spend an entire summer in the White Mountain region exploring the many mountain streams and have new water to fish every day. And all this on national forest land fully open to the public. Other wild trout waters from New England to Georgia are proof that you can re-wild a river. If NH F&G were to shift its focus toward re-wilding and away from put-and-take in the White Mountain region, rivers like the Wildcat – and anglers who fish there – would reap the benefits for generations to come. 🐾

Dan is a BHA member, educator and musician hailing from Concord, New Hampshire. In his free time he likes to explore the backcountry of northern New England and is an avid hunter and angler. He served for two years on the board of contributors of the Concord Monitor, where he wrote about topics related to hunting, fishing and the environment.



BHA STATE CHAPTERS:

Raising the Sportsman's Voice



ARIZONA

The Arizona Chapter added 31 members by hosting a BHA booth at the Hunting Film Tour events over two consecutive nights in Phoenix and Flagstaff. Jarrett Babincsak's (Southwest chapter coordinator) initiative to have a BHA booth paid off big in our membership drive.

In addition to Jarrett's enthusiasm, Co-Chair Kurt Bahti's banner display was eye-catching. Jarrett and Co-Chair Ross McCollum set up the table at the entrance of the event inside the theater, so the BHA banner was the first thing that the attendees saw when they walked in. The real carrot to the membership drive, however, was that \$20 purchased not only a one-year membership but also a raffle ticket for a pair of Vortex 10x42 binoculars that were given away at the end of the film.

Kudos to the film hosts, Rob and Adam. BHA was given a lengthy introduction not only highlighting our drawing but also detailing how important BHA's voice is in Washington for protecting our federal lands. Adam gave BHA another plug at the intermission and we signed up six new members during the break. The biggest topic of discussion with the new members was protecting our federal lands. There was total agreement that our federal lands are not for sale. -Ross McCollum



BRITISH COLUMBIA

BC BHA hosted our first general meeting to celebrate our one-year anniversary at the Heid-Out Restaurant in Cranbrook on June 25.

We discussed our chapter conservation priorities for 2016, which include our goals to increase membership to 100, establish BC BHA as a leader in the creation of a wildlife management area or wildlife corridor in the Elk and Flathead valleys, initiate a habitat stewardship project, continue to lobby for an

Access Management Compliance and Enforcement Program for the Cranbrook region, continue as project lead for the Urban Deer Translocation Pilot Project, host our second annual hunting film tour (scheduled for Feb. 27 in Cranbrook) and restructure our chapter administration with a regional representation focus. As a result of this restructuring, we elected new local directors and would like to thank Kyle and Nakita Dalke and Chad Dueck for stepping up to the plate and taking on a leadership role in our chapter. Bill Hanlon remains as chair, Aden Stewart as secretary, Sam Medcalf as treasurer and Corey Phelps as the newly created provincial liaison director. Allen McEwan remains on as a provincial director.

A highlight of the summer was the exciting horse pack trip donated by BC BHA and purchased at the Spokane Rendezvous auction by Brian Jennings of Bend, Oregon. Brian, along with his wife, Karen, Ed Putnam and Karen Boeger enjoyed and endured the four-day horse pack trip into the Hornaday Wilderness in the Elk Valley. We travelled the same trails, camped in the same camp and witnessed the same grandeur that William T. Hornaday described after his hunting trip to this area 110 years ago. Hornaday went on to immortalize his journey in his 1906 classic, "Campfires in the Canadian Rockies." We saw grizzly bears, bighorn sheep and mountain goats and endured thunder showers, fresh snow, hot and freezing temperatures, all in the same day! Bill Hanlon and Sam Medcalf donated their time, 10 horses, tack and camp but owe the quality of the trip to the fine company in true wilderness and especially to Sue Hanlon, the gourmet camp cook. -Bill Hanlon



COLORADO

The Seventh Annual Colorado BHA Chapter Rendezvous (and

Browns Canyon National Monument celebration) was held June 5-7 in the San Isabel NF west of Salida. The weekend was a smorgasbord of great friends, good times and excellent food! We also recognized Colorado BHA Habitat Watchman Paul Vertrees and BHA Life Member Bill Sustrich for their sustained commitment to helping protect big game habitat in Browns Canyon.

On June 11 we held BHA's first Wild Game Cook-Off in Longmont. Squirrel confit, antelope tacos, "22 species gumbo" and wild boar tostadas were just a few of the dishes featured. A big backcountry shout-out to the members that helped make the event such a success: Russell Bassett, George Robinson, Ed Arnett, Nat Paterson, Erik Schmitz, Don Holmstrom and many more!

Habitat Watchman Bob Shettel joined the chapter leadership team as Colorado BHA's first Colorado Parks & Wildlife (CPW) liaison. Mikkel Hylden joined our volunteer habitat watchmen team for the Arapaho National Forest in north-central Colorado. On July 27, Interior Secretary Sally Jewell appointed Colorado BHA Habitat Watchman Craig Grother to the Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area Advisory Council. We also are hosting Hunting Film Tours on Oct. 7 in Gunnison and Oct. 8 in Montrose. -David Lien



MINNESOTA

Minnesota BHA chapter leaders Erik Jensen, Matt Norton and Mark Norquist attended a June 4 "Sportsmen for the Boundary Waters" discussion with Ted Roosevelt IV (TR's great-grandson) about the importance of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness for hunters, anglers and all wildlife enthusiasts, as well as the threat to critical habitat and recreation posed by proposed sulfide-ore copper mines on the wilderness edge. The Third An-

IDAHO

Over the past three months, Idaho BHA has been hosting monthly events we've called "Backcountry in the Backyard." On the third Wednesday of each month, one of our members hosts a potluck style BBQ at their home, and we invite our area members to attend and bring a friend. While the idea is simple, it has allowed us to accomplish important goals for our chapter: Keep our members engaged, keep sportsmen informed on issues and grow our membership. Here are a few tips we've found for making an event successful:

- 1) Keep it casual. The atmosphere is fun because we're meeting likeminded sportsmen and making new friends.
- 2) Educate. The events usually last around three hours, but we only take 15 minutes to talk. Commissioner Blake Fischer spoke on communicating with your fish and game commissioners, John Gale gave us a national update, Coby Tigert shared the Sportsmen Value's Mapping Project and Jeff Barney talked about the illegal ATV use program. We also speak briefly about BHA and issues in our state.
- 3) Make it professional. We have created an email template for people to share, a PDF flyer (see example) and an event on Facebook. →
- 4) Find the non-members, share BHA's message and ask them to join.
- 5) Beer.

Cheers,

Ian Malepeai, Idaho Chapter Co-Chair

nual MN BHA Chapter Rendezvous was held Aug. 14-16 at Whitewater State Park in southeast Minnesota. The weekend included tours of the Crystal Springs State Fish/Trout Hatchery and the Pope & Young Club Museum of Bowhunting, along with a wild game cookout that included duck and elk burgers and brats. MN BHA also will have a table at the Hunting Film Tour in Minneapolis at the Parkway Theater on Sept. 11. -David Lien



MONTANA

The Third Annual Rendezvous was terrific fun and was attended by about 50 members and their families. Outdoor skill games resulted in the coveted Golden Antler Award being claimed by the Old Gang Team over the Young Gang Team. The chapter board was able to gather face-to-face to discuss future chapter goals and activities. Forest Service Biologist Pat Shanley was our after dinner speaker.

After years of MT BHA participation, two travel plans and forest plan elk security amendments important to quality wildlife and hunting opportunities were

released. The Bitterroot National Forest Travel Plan did provide better non-motorized protection for some backcountry, but it left some important ridgetop roads open to motorized use during the archery season, as well as a lot of old timber roads open to ATV use. MT BHA filed formal objection to those portions of the travel plan. Similarly, on the Helena Forest's Divide Travel Plan, ridgetop routes left open during the archery season also forced MT BHA to file formal objections. In addition, both travel plans reduced the quantity of elk security areas required in the past and formulated new amendments to accept the status quo elk security as the new standard. MT BHA was successful in better protection of several important wildlife and backcountry hunting areas on both travel plans.

MT BHA is working with river groups to promote more designated Wild and Scenic River segments in Montana. Our chapter also is working to protect non-motorized stream reaches in Montana as motorized water craft continually evolve to render almost any stream vulnerable to motorized use.

Co-Chairman John Sullivan attended an event to recognize Bitterroot legislator Pat Connell for his effort to protect public lands from takeover or transfer in Montana. -Greg Munther



NEVADA

The Nevada Chapter just finished a long state legislative session and a summer full of highs and lows. On the national level, Nevada made news when President Obama created the Basin and Range National Monument, protecting more than 700,000 acres of pristine wildlands for future generations and preserving some key migratory routes for mule deer and elk. This was a nice counter to the passage of a resolution during the legislative session encouraging the transfer of public lands to state control. Sportsmen were vociferously against this proposal, but it ultimately passed. We're now focused on making sure that our federal delegation understands our concerns and the nightmare that such a proposal would create.

Other national activities included advocating to remove negative provisions from the Defense Authorization Act re-

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lated to sage grouse, as well as to retain FWS jurisdiction over the Desert National Wildlife Refuge. In addition, NV BHA was proud to send Larry McCurtis to D.C. to represent us before federal officials on a fly-in.

NV state legislative activities included sponsoring the Wildlife Luncheon during the session and successfully fighting off efforts to weaken our OHV registration law. We had some fun and gained some newsprint participating in public lands rallies and press conferences. Kyle Davis and Chris Mero gave rousing speeches.

Chapter members continue to attend many boards and commission, including the Nevada Wildlife Coalition, Nevada Wildlife Commission, the OHV Commission and the Sagebrush Ecosystem Council. With the potential of an ESA listing for sage grouse still on the horizon, this continued to be an important issue. To that end, NV BHA made significant comments to the recent Draft Sage Grouse EIS.

On a positive note for Nevada BHA, we're starting to see some new life with the addition of some new members thanks to our informal meet and greet happy hour in August. We'll be hosting more these in the near future, culminating at the end of the year with the Hunting Film Tour, slated for Dec. 11 in Reno. We also participated in the annual Families In The Outdoors event in Carson City. Members Kelly Dean and Randy McNatt provided hands-on experiences in setting up tents and survival kit making. -Chris Mero



NEW ENGLAND

The New England Chapter continues to grow its numbers. The new members are a testament to the quality of the organization as they tend to be those "in the know" including guides, authors and individuals active in conservation.

In Maine, board members Corey Ellis and Michael Verville hosted a BHA table at the Maine Traditional Archers 3D shoot. Although there was poor attendance due to weather and timing, several people were excited to learn that there is an active chapter in New England.

In New Hampshire, baiting bears

with chocolate is now illegal with support from NE BHA. Chocolate has been shown to be toxic to bears as well as other mammals that may consume the bait. The chapter supported this effort via public comment, letters to the editor, social media and an interview in a statewide newspaper.

The NH Fish and Game Department has begun studies on the Wildcat River for "managed for wild trout" designation at the bequest of BHA, TU and NH Trout. NH members will be assisting in electrofishing operations to provide boots-on-the-ground support.

Board member Joe Cresta of Massachusetts had to step down shortly after coming aboard. However, he was able to establish contact with Fish and Game in regards to potential cleanup projects in Massachusetts and reached out to new members. The New England chapter also is expanding its board with possible new members in three states. -Corey Ellis



OREGON

ODFW and The Trust for Public Land recently acquired the 10,000-acre Lower Deschutes River Ranch. The Oregon Chapter of BHA has been working with TPL to promote the purchase, which was made possible in part by a grant from the Land and Water Conservation Fund. ODFW will administer the land to limit motorized travel and enhance habitat for bighorns, mule deer and upland game.

The Oregon Chapter held its third Hunting Film Tour on Aug. 12 at the Volcanic Theater Pub in Bend. The themes of conservation, hunting on foot in difficult conditions and the joy of taking a youngster on his first hunt all played well with the crowd and helped reinforce BHA's message. By the end of the evening the chapter had scooped up 26 new members and raised over \$1500. All in all, a fun time and great success.

The chapter is excited about the proposed Ochoco Mountains National Recreation Area. This proposal would designate approximately 312,000 acres of the Ochoco NF for non-motorized recreation, including hunting and fishing. It would create two new wilderness

areas and expand a third. It also would require the Forest Service and BLM to reduce road redundancies to improve habitat and provide unambiguous signage for motor vehicles. This project was championed by the late, founding BHAer, Tim Lillebo. -Ed Putnam



PENNSYLVANIA

In May, Co-Chairman Jeff Sample represented the Eastern BHA chapters at the annual banquet and membership meeting of the New York Bowhunters, a strong conservation and politically active organization whose membership includes a number of hunters from the Keystone State. Our presence was well accepted at this gathering of dedicated sportsmen and conservationists, and we plan to participate in this event in the future to spread the BHA message and of course to attract new members.

Over a weekend in late June, Co-Chairman John Wedge represented the PA Chapter at the first Eastern BHA Summit meeting, held among the leadership of the three eastern BHA chapters in southwest Vermont. The meeting was also attended by President and CEO Land Tawney. The goal of this summit was to prioritize our efforts and to devise a BHA plan of action to fit the BHA model to the East. We hoped that this will serve as a forerunner to a future annual Eastern BHA Rendezvous.

Also in June, after hearing a radio broadcast of Co-Chairman Jeff Sample discussing the upcoming Clean Water Act ruling and BHA's position on the ruling, the Pennsylvania Council of Trout Unlimited contacted us. They invited BHA to attend a TU-sponsored sportsman's rally at a local brewery in Lebanon, Pennsylvania, to raise awareness among TU members and other sportsmen of the need for their future support of the ruling as it faces challenges. It was agreed that PA BHA and TU would partner on future issues in the region of common concern to our organizations. Also at the rally we were introduced to the efforts of and have since made contact with the Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs, which maintains a strong lobbying presence at the state capitol in Harrisburg and diligently tracks legislation

of interest and concern to PA hunters and anglers. Several contacts were made with regional journalists who strongly support and write or broadcast on issues related to the environment and of interest to sportsmen. Overall, this was a very valuable event in that it significantly increased our ability to network with established groups with missions similar to BHA but that have a much stronger presence in the state. -Jeff Sample



UTAH

Utah BHA is diligently working with numerous NGOs and sportsmen's groups to promote collaborative efforts with a diverse group of stakeholders. The chapter recently joined the Outdoor Retailer's Association in opposing the transfer of federal lands and is fostering relationships with several Utah based retailers. Utah BHA is seeking protections for wildlife within the Mountain Accord (a long-term planning vision for the Central Wasatch). Preserving migration corridors for big game through a checkerboard of land ownership, development and roads is key to the health of big game populations throughout the heavily populated Wasatch Front. Utah BHA continues its efforts with the Public Lands Initiative and is exploring partnerships with the Utah Stream Access Coalition to protect sportsmen's access in Utah. In addition, we are working with BHA National (Jarrett Babincsak) to build membership through film tours and other events. We are hosting a Full Draw Film Tour on Dec. 19 in Park City. -Chris Crockett



WASHINGTON

The chapter commented on the reintroduction of bull trout and grizzly bears in the Cascade Mountains. The banning of drones during hunting seasons is finally getting some traction from other hunter user groups. The initiative is being addressed with the Washington State Fish and Wildlife Advisory Board.

The chapter participated as a panel member with the Umatilla National Forest on forest access in Clarkston, Walla Walla and Richland. The chapter participated in and supported the Hunting Film Tour in Bend, Oregon. We participated in the the North Fork

of the Crooked River initiative for changing the river status from Wild and Scenic to wilderness.

The chapter's new project: Quarterly BHA sponsored mini-seminars on hunting and fishing at a local Sportsman's Warehouse. The chapter also sent letters to Sens. Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell and Rep. Cathy McMorris Rogers concerning the Land Water and Conservation Fund and the transfer of public lands. -Bob Mirasole



WYOMING

Wyoming BHA has been busy this summer. Board members Janet Marschner and Jeff Muratore attended several of the governor's Game and Fish Funding Task Force meetings in Casper. The final outcome of the task force is yet to be determined, but WY BHA has some concerns about where it is headed. We will monitor closely and provide input as this progresses.

Janet and Jeff, along with Buzz Hettick, also attended the Travel Recreation Wildlife Interim Committee meeting in Kemmerer. WY BHA provided testimony on WYGF proposed shed antler seasons and protecting wintering big game. Buzz also attended a meeting in Afton to testify against a proposal to close a

public easement on the Salt River and Christenson Creek that provides public fishing and waterfowl hunting opportunities. It was great to see over 50 Wyoming residents attend the meeting and stand up for retaining public access!

Jerry Egge has been busy dealing with water quality issues with lowering standards for secondary streams.

WY BHA adopted 15 miles of trails from the USFS on the Medicine Bow National Forest, west of Centennial, Wyoming. Emmett Nelson and Trevor Herrman hiked the trails out to clean up trash and take an inventory of the trail signs and their condition. The USFS was extremely happy to have WY BHA adopt the Alpine Lakes trails, and we will continue this effort annually.

WY BHA also hosted two hunting film tours, September 3 in Laramie and Sept. 10 in Cheyenne. Finally, WYBHA would like to formally recognize Jeff Muratore as our newest board member. Jeff calls Casper home and is a very strong advocate for our public lands, wildlife and outdoor heritage. Jeff will be a huge asset to the Wyoming Chapter with his extensive history and knowledge in dealing with hunting, fishing, access and public lands related issues. -Buzz Hettick 🐾

PAT WRAY RECIEVES OWAA JADE OF CHIEFS AWARD

Pat Wray, Oregon BHA member from Corvallis, received the Outdoor Writers Association of America's 2015 Jade of Chiefs Award. This award was first established in 1958 as OWAA's top conservation recognition. Although only members are eligible, it is not presented by OWAA but by past award winners known as the Circle of Chiefs – who are recognized as OWAA's conservation conscience and policy spokesmen.

“He is a champion of our outdoor heritage who stands up for his beliefs and is not afraid of controversy,” said Kris Thoemke, last year's recipient. “Pat's decades of experience in the outdoors where he observed, learned and formulated his views on conservation makes him fearless but fair when tackling controversial issues. It is one of the traits that has defined his career and earned him respect among his peers. With a conservation ethic that is second to none, the Circle of Chiefs made a wise decision by recognizing Pat's accomplishments and his distinguished career as one of the voices of conservation.”

About his appointment, Pat said, “My message to my fellow hunters is let's not be our own worst enemies. Let's set an example. We're asking landowners to do things differently. We're asking ATV riders and government agencies to do things differently. We only have the credibility that we maintain by our own good actions. When we cut fences, when we ignore no trespassing signs, when we leave trash or disobey game laws, then our credibility goes to zero. We then lose the leverage and opportunity we might have otherwise to make good things happen.”

COOKING ESSENTIALS, AWAY FROM THE KITCHEN

Hank's Picks for the Pack

- Salt and pepper. I recommend good sea salt or smoked salt. MSR makes a great little salt/pepper shaker for backpacking.
- A small plastic bottle of cooking oil. You can purchase empty travel size shampoo bottles. These work well, being under three ounces for TSA.
- An onion or three. They store for months and add a lot of texture and flavor.
- Garlic powder. I normally don't love this stuff, but it is very versatile.
- Dried herbs like thyme, oregano, rosemary or sage. Lightweight, lots of flavor.
- Boullion cubes. Not great, but good for sauces. Compact and easy to carry.
- A bit of white or brown sugar. I'm always surprised how much I crave sweetness after a few days in the open.
- Dried chiles and dried mushrooms. They add a lot of texture for the size.
- Brandy in a flask. It gets cold out there!

Tim Romano photo

BY HANK SHAW

YOU HIKE SEVERAL MILES from the truck in search of muleys or moose, grouse or trout. You get one, and you want to eat some of it before returning home. We've all been there.

As a former restaurant cook, I love the comfort of an array of nice pots and pans, with produce, oils, spices and fresh herbs handy. But my kitchen doesn't exactly fit in my backpack!

What I can fit is a light frying pan (I prefer thin steel to aluminum) and a few key ingredients, all of which are light, hardy and tasty. Armed with the items listed above, I can make a damn good meal almost anywhere.

BHA member and author of two wild game cookbooks, Hank runs the award-winning website Hunter-Angler-Gardener-Cook (honest-food.net). He is working on a third cookbook – Buck, Buck, Moose – a comprehensive guide to cooking all kinds of venison. But he needs your help to make it a reality. Hank is working with Kickstarter.com to raise money to pay the publishing costs of the book. You can help out by going to Hank's Kickstarter page: www.kickstarter.com/profile/hankshaw and pledging to buy a copy of the book in advance. Every book gets the project a little closer to reality.

VENISON WITH MUSHROOMS AND BRANDY

- 1 cup water
- A small handful of dried mushrooms
- Venison tenderloins or steaks, grouse breasts, fish fillets, etc.
- 2 tablespoons oil
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- A splash of brandy, about ¼ cup
- ½ a bouillon cube

Crumble the dried mushrooms in the water and let them soak while you chop the onion. Salt the meat well.

When the mushrooms are soft enough

to cut, carefully lift them out of the water, which will have turned brown. Chop the mushrooms small and set aside. Keep the soaking water.

Put the cooking oil in a frying pan and get it nice and hot. If you have paper towels, pat the meat dry before laying it into the pan. Sear the meat hard on one side until a crust forms, and then releases from the pan. This will take about 6 minutes with most meats and poultry, about 4 minutes with fish. Turn the meat and cook until done, about two or three minutes more depending on the meat or fish. Move the meat to a plate.

Add the chopped onion and mushrooms and stir-fry over high heat until the onions brown at the edges. Add the garlic and thyme and cook another minute. Add the brandy, which will likely flame up, so be careful. Carefully pour the mushroom soaking water into the pan, making sure no mushroom debris gets into the pan. Strain through a paper towel if you have one. Add the ½ bouillon cube and boil this down by half. Pour the sauce over the meat and eat! 🐾

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UNGAVA



The Wilderness and Caribou of Northern Quebec

Story and photos by Susan Morse

AS A FORESTER AND WILDLIFE ECOLOGIST I AM DRAWN TO THE WILDEST PLACES TO EXPLORE AND HUNT.

I have hunted mule deer and elk with horses and mules in Wyoming and Montana. I have guided natural history rafting tours down the Colorado River through Grand Canyon, and I have studied and photographed mountain lions, black bears, bobcats, lynx and grizzlies throughout the U.S. and Canada. Given my background, it was natural that I wanted more than just to hunt and harvest a caribou bull. I wanted to fully immerse myself in the experience of the far north, in true wilderness unmarred by humans.

Nine years ago I met outfitter Sammy Cantafo at a French bistro in Montreal. Sammy's operation, Ungava Adventures, for a quarter century has enjoyed a reputation as one of Arctic Quebec's most reputable guide services. An adventurer, bush pilot, hunter and angler, Sammy has the distinction of being the first non-native outfitter to be licensed on the Ungava Peninsula. Just a year before, I was a delighted customer of Sammy and his colleagues, harvesting a fine woodland caribou bull in Newfoundland. Newfoundland's magnificent boreal and muskeg setting, not to mention my superb guide, cooks and support staff, made me want more.

Sammy paused after reviewing the highlights of my trip and quietly said, "Sue, because of your love of wild country you really should come up north to Ungava with us." That following fall, and every fall since, I have returned to Ungava – the land that moves me like no other.

I am not wealthy, and trips like this require sacrifice, penny-pinching and hours of extra jobs bringing in the extra income needed for such an annual excursion. Fortunately, I now can professionally justify the non-hunting portion of these trips, as I have taken it upon myself to photo-document the flora and fauna of Ungava, as well as write and speak about both its biological riches and the potential ecological disaster at hand. Since my first trip to Ungava I have photographed caribou in the wide diversity of their habitats – from Manitoba's boreal forest and the Northwest Territory's MacKenzie Mountains, to the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and its Beaufort Sea edge calving grounds. Every year, however, I must return to Ungava.



Wilderness is what defines us as hunter-angler members and supporters of BHA. Ungava is perhaps the wildest of wilderness areas and more than 200,000 square miles in size. As part of a first nation's territory called "Nunavik" this vast and inviolate peninsula, north of the 55th parallel, forms the northernmost tip of Quebec. It is bordered by Labrador and the Atlantic Ocean to the east, Hudson Bay to the west and Hudson Strait to the north. Only along the coastlines are there any permanent human settlements. No roads, railroad tracks or permanent human intrusions of any kind mar the pristine interior of Ungava. To the south, the James Bay region offers Nunavik's migratory caribou wintering range within its "taiga" (stunted tree habitats), lichen woodlands and closed crown boreal forest cover. First nation residents of the region are the Inuit, the Naskapi and the Cree.

In Inuit language "nuna" means "the land" – but not in our simple, utilitarian meaning. Nuna means much more than that, a meaning as vast as all of Nunavik and Nunavut combined. (Nunavut territory, on the other side of Hudson Bay, extends north and west all the way to the Northwest Territories.) In the Inuit vision nuna is the land that includes the caribou, the birds and all other animals, as well as The People, all sustained and intertwined physically and spiritually as equal partners in life's journey. Caribou roam the whole of this land, seeking summer and winter range, safe calving grounds, nutritious forage and relief from insects and predators – over thousands of miles and thousands of years. The name *Rangifer tarandus* means "to range" and "wild and untamed," indeed the very essence of this great cervid. To sit for hours or days watching and waiting for caribou, observing countless birds fly south, and not see a single caribou... then to suddenly discover thousands of them trotting along a distant ridge is one of the most profound and moving experiences of my life.

In my nine years visiting them, Sammy and his staff, guides, camp managers, cooks and office managers worked to make my hunt fun and successful, despite the often austere weather conditions. We use motor boats or large cargo canoes to access the vast tundra all around us. We land in opportune places that Sammy's veteran guides know intimately. We walk, glass and eventually stalk. "This is hunting," Sammy never fails to remind us. "In eastern Inuit language these animals are called Tuktu, which means the deer that disappears." Some days you may only see a handful of caribou, some days dozens, and on other occasions you will see hundreds or even thousands. Ungava Adventures has the advantage of working out of their own camps, with guides who know the country and know where caribou will likely

"THE NAME *RANGIFER TARANDUS* MEANS 'TO RANGE' AND 'WILD AND UNTAMED,' INDEED THE VERY ESSENCE OF THIS GREAT CERVID."

pass through, if they are in the area. If not, we move by boat to another location and may walk for miles. Or, we may only need to go for a short scramble up to a ridgeline or plateau overlooking many thousands of acres. Here, we search for caribou moving along their habitual crossings across lakes, streams and rivers.

One hunt out of North Camp on Lake Guenyveau is still my favorite today, largely due to a discovery which imbued the experience with powerful significance. Accompanied by my guide Jason Biledeau, I ventured into an area I hadn't yet explored. We climbed to a high vantage point overlooking the barrens and a prominent caribou travel route that the guides

respectfully refer to as "Jimmy's Gate." It was sensory overload for me. First, there was the beauty of a primal and timeless landscape. Then there were the fall colors of the tundra and the multitude of fresh caribou tracks along the game trail that we were following. I realized that tracks like these, over centuries, have etched this and other trails upon the rugged terrain. I paid attention to tracks and sign, even the faintest hints of animal passage. What I saw next, however, was not subtle. There, glistening with dew, was a black chert spear point. No one at camp, not even Inuit guide Moses Partridge had ever seen one. We were moved by the ancient hunter's artifact, most likely of the pre-Inuit Thule culture, a people that resided in western Ungava around the 13th century. Later that day, after a long stalk, I killed a fine bull. Though our weapons were very different, the outcome was the same – two hunters, seven centuries apart, brought home treasured meat and hide.

Many caribou herds across North America and all of the circumpolar north have been declining in recent years. In fact, 34 of the world's 43 major herds are in steep decline. Some, like the George River herd just east of Ungava in Labrador, are in a disturbing free fall that scientists cannot explain, much less manage. Caribou population ecology has always featured dramatic ups and downs. The George River herd, for example, dwindled to an estimated low of 15,000 animals in 1955, yet it expanded phenomenally to more than 600,000 animals in just three decades. At its peak, the George River herd was the largest caribou herd on the planet with 800,000 to 900,000 animals. Today, the population has dwindled to some 25,000.

"When there were 800,000 caribou, the habitat just couldn't support them. There were too many mouths to feed," longtime Quebec caribou biologist Serge Couturi-



er said. “So you start seeing calves being born undersized, weak, and they wouldn’t survive.” To curtail the overpopulation crisis, the government issued more hunting licenses and introduced a winter hunting season in northern Quebec. There was even an attempt to commercially harvest caribou meat and sell it in supermarkets across the province. Despite the new measures, the caribou population underwent a downward spiral in the 1980s. “When they started noticing the crash, I kept warning my bosses at the ministry, but it often fell on deaf ears,” Couturier said. “They would keep saying ‘let’s wait for the next population study,’ but those would come once every decade or so. Meanwhile, the situation quickly began reaching crisis levels.”

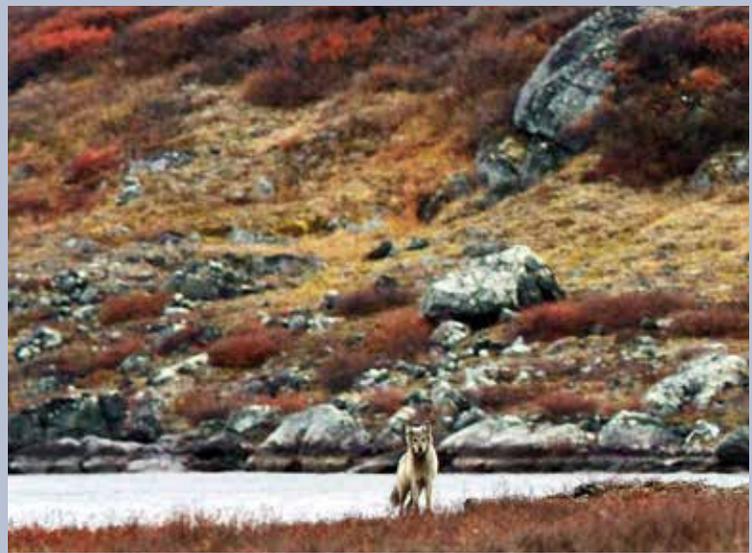
Despite the eventual five-year moratorium on hunting the George River herd, the population continues to dwindle, even though individual animals are in better physical condition. Climate change is certainly implicated as part of the problem because warming weather and changing snow depths and consistency increase the energetic demands for caribou as they travel and dig for food. Predators, including gray wolves and black bears, benefit from warmer temperatures and now are able to pursue caribou further north. Parasites also benefit from a warming climate, which extends their feeding season. A single caribou may lose a quart of blood in a week to mosquitoes. Warble flies and botflies also torment caribou and limit their feeding and resting time, causing weight loss as a consequence of constant running, twitching and jumping about. These insect stressors and poor weather always have plagued

caribou, but climate change has increased their frequency and severity. Furthermore, the dramatic increase of human intrusion may have combined with natural stresses to create a tipping point for many herds.

A new science called cumulative effects assessment should oblige us to acknowledge and measure the combined and often interacting human-caused perturbations that negatively impact wildlife and their habitat. These effects combine to lower the reproductive rate of cows and the successful recruitment of young animals, ultimately leading to population declines. Large scale habitat loss and stresses associated with climate change, energy exploration and production, the bio-magnification of toxins from pollution, mining, forest removal, pipelines, seismic lines, motorized vehicles including air traffic and even backcountry recreation stress wildlife and compromise the remoteness and security of their necessary habitat. Over time and across vast landscapes, the cumulative effects of a multitude of stresses causes wildlife to experience behavioral and physiological changes that result in reduced fitness, unnecessary and costly energy expenditures and avoidance of preferred habitats.

Caribou declines notwithstanding, the herd we hunt in Nunavik is stable and numbers between 400,000 and 460,000 animals. Known as the Leaf River Herd,

these caribou utilize a vast north-south swath of tundra and taiga comprising the western and central parts of Nunavik. It is puzzling. How could the Leaf River Herd be doing fine while its larger companion herd to the east, the George River Herd, is plummeting? One study recently concluded that the annual size and location of the Leaf River Herd’s protected critical calving habitats have remained secure while the George Riv-



er Herd’s protected calving habitats have been reduced by 85 percent. One thing appears to be certain: secure calving grounds are essential for the well-being of birthing caribou cows and their offspring. Human disturbance within these habitats should be very limited.

In all appropriate humility, I am inspired to visit Ungava each year and hunt a still-healthy caribou herd for the wild meat my family and I savor all year – much as hunters have done for thousands of years. I feel a kinship with the wolves, foxes and bears that also are hunting on this vast landscape. I am deeply troubled by a lack of coordinated and effective conservation planning across the whole of North America – and the circumpolar north for that matter. In just a handful of decades we have dramatically changed the Arctic. In a warming world, the “opening” of arctic environments everywhere threatens the ecological integrity of land and marine ecosystems. There will not just be the watery flooding we are warned about. There will be an unregulated deluge of damaging human activity across this pristine region.

We hunters must be prepared to defend these arctic and boreal wilderness habitats. Renowned biologist E.O. Wilson implores us to take immediate steps to secure biodiversity and health of the community of life by committing one half of the earth to the rest of life, excluding humans. At our best, we may humbly serve as guardians of these wildest places. For the Inuit, the caribou is one of those animals that engenders the best in the hunter – respect for the whole of life. The caribou embodies the raw, snow-filled and dazzling purity of another time, a time before our ruinous enterprise.



Member and supporter of BHA, Susan is a professional forester, wildlife ecologist and founder of Keeping Track (www.keepingtrack.org), a nonprofit organization devoted to teaching field-based wildlife monitoring skills to professional biologists and citizen scientists alike for the purpose of identifying and conserving wildlife habitat. She is also a contributing member of the following organizations: Alaska Wilderness League, Arizona Antelope Foundation, the Cougar Fund, the Mountain Lion Foundation, the Mule Deer Foundation, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and the Xerces Society.



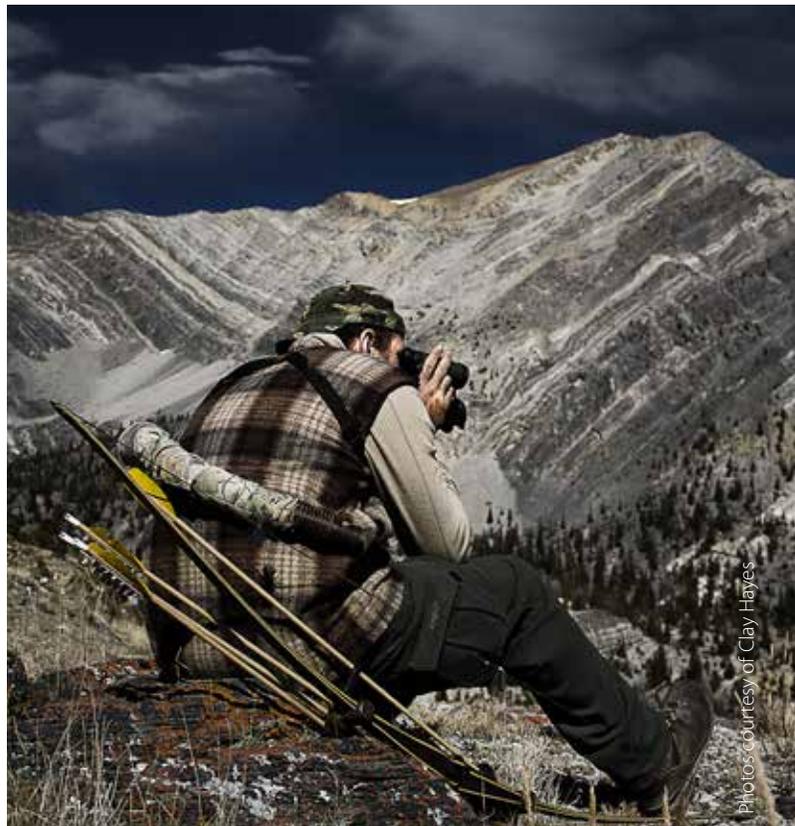
Five of Earth's great trout rivers flow through our mountain town. It's why our first, second and third love are fishing, fishing and, well, fishing.



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A composite image for Kryptek. On the left, a soldier in full combat gear is in a trench. On the right, a soldier in camouflage gear with a large backpack and rifle stands on a rocky mountain peak overlooking a valley. The text "BATTLEFIELD TO BACKCOUNTRY" is at the top, "KRYPTEK" is in large letters across the bottom, and "WWW.KRYPTEK.COM" is at the very bottom. A red arrow graphic points from the trench towards the mountain peak. Small text in the bottom right corner reads "KRYPTEK PROSTAFF JIM KINSEY".

CLAY HAYES: PROFESSOR OF “BACKCOUNTRY COLLEGE”



Photos courtesy of Clay Hayes

BY SAM LUNGREN

CLAY HAYES DOES things the hard way. Not only does he hunt with a wooden longbow he made himself – requiring an intimate distance from his quarry to make a kill – but he often does it while filming himself.

“The hunting is intentionally hard, but the filming is just inherently hard,” he said. “You’re trying to film something that doesn’t occur very often: killing something with a homemade bow.”

Maybe that’s why it took Clay two years to complete “The Untamed,” his first feature film, which premiered at the 2014 BHA National Rendezvous in Denver. But his hard work and painstaking attention to detail shines through on the screen. The product is more wildlife picture-book than action-adventure.

“I knew what I wanted to say, what I wanted to show and represent. What I never expected was the level of interest from both hunter and non-hunters alike for what I’d always felt was a minority interest – the simple, honest and ethical hunt,” Clay said. “The kind of hunt where

things like woodsmanship, effort and wildness – as opposed to record book status and mechanical advantage – take center stage. I wanted to show what hunting really is, or can be. I wanted this film to be the antitheses of mainstream hook-and-bullet media.”

Indeed, “The Untamed” is unlike most other hunting films out there. But, and perhaps because of that, it has been very well received in the hunting community, touring around the U.S. and Canada with the Hunting Film Tour and the Outdoor Film Tour & Festival. It was translated into French for showing at Arc Aventure, a bowhunting film festival in France. Clay also received the Pope & Young award for best bowhunting film of 2014.

Originally from northern Florida, Clay went to grad school in Mississippi, then continued his progress west, eventually landing in Idaho, outside of Lewiston to work as a wildlife habitat biologist for IDFG. He lives there with his wife, Liz, and sons Coye and Fen, 6 and 3 respectively, who are both already hard-core archers according to Clay.

Clay also produces the popular “Back-

country College” video series for BHA’s YouTube channel, teaching woodsmanship skills such as setting up a lean-to tarp and starting a fire in the cold. He is now underway with his second film, “Ascent,” which will center around a backcountry mule deer hunt with three of his friends this fall. Though he won’t be filming himself this time, he wants to keep the focus on traditional hunting values.

“As hunters, we seek out challenge and spend time in some of the most beautiful yet unforgiving landscapes around. We wear out boots, endure wind and rain, cold nights and long hikes, and travel to remote wilderness all in an attempt to feel like we’ve accomplished something,” Clay wrote. “In es-

sence, we create our own mountains, and it is the difficulty of the ascent that defines us. This

Check out Clay’s video series **BACKCOUNTRY COLLEGE** at backcountryhunters.org/index.php/skills/backcountry-college. Subscribe to BHA’s YouTube channel to catch new episodes!

film is about those mountains of our own creation, the self-inflicted hardship, struggle, and the climb to overcome them.”

“Ascent” will premiere next April at the 2016 BHA National Rendezvous in Missoula. Clay donated a sponsorship spot to BHA in both films. He is presently running a crowdfunding campaign to finance “Ascent.” Go to his website

twistedstave.com to contribute and watch “The Untamed” for free.

“I guess the best that we can hope for is that people judge us on how we hunt,” Clay narrates to conclude his first film. “On the effort that we put into it and our commitment to keep it that way. Wild, full of mystery, and untamed.” 🐾



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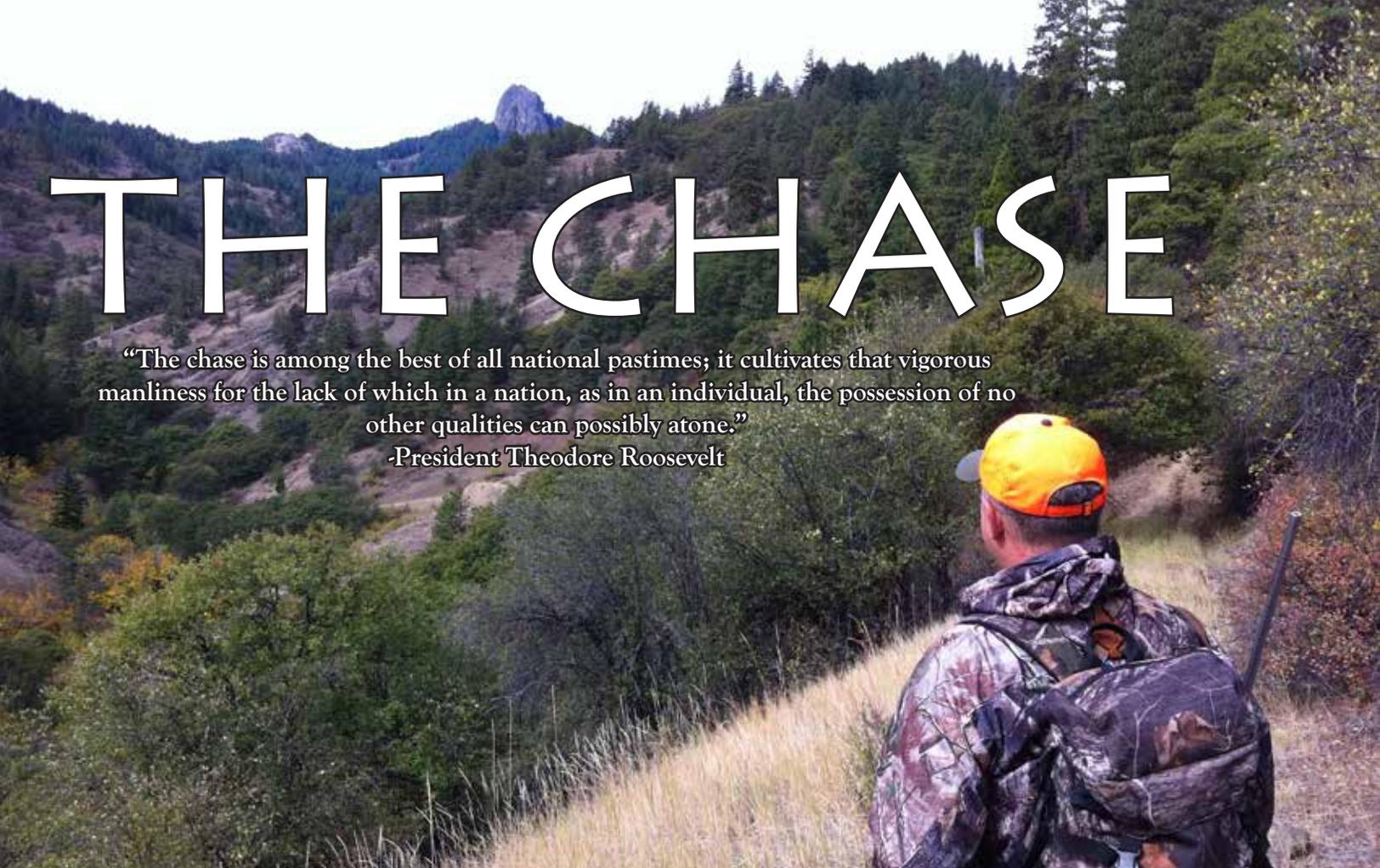
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-President Theodore Roosevelt



STORY AND PHOTOS BY IAN REID

BHA's President Emeritus Mike Beagle scans for blacktails in southern Oregon.

THE MIST STARTED SOFTLY, lightly tickling our faces as we trudged uphill in the dark on an old roadbed choked with manzanita. My headlamp fought to cut through the fog like a lighthouse perched on a craggy cape. Soon a steady downpour began drumming off our packs, each loaded down with half a blacktail buck. It was late October 2013, and we had a four-mile climb up and out of southern Oregon's Soda Mountain Wilderness ahead of us. Mike Beagle was my hunting partner turned pack mule.

Our night capped an interesting turn of events regarding the oak- and brush-studded canyons around Soda Mountain. Mike had gotten lost deer hunting those mountains one fall day after college football practice 30 years ago. Fifteen years later, I was playing football for the same university while Mike was sitting around a campfire helping create Backcountry Hunters & Anglers. Mike and his fellow founders fought to protect those same hunting grounds, subsequently designated as the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument with a hefty chunk of wilderness added in 2009. In 2012, Mike and I, along with several other BHA members, volunteered to clear trail in that area with crosscut saws. Naturally we threw in a little scouting for good measure, especially into the canyon where I shot this buck. Now I was reaping the fruits of those labors. But it did not feel like easy picking at the time, as we shuffled, huffed and snorted the soggy 1,800 vertical feet back to the rig.

If you've ever hunted blacktails, you know they rarely move into the open during the daylight hours of general rifle season. But there, deep in the wilderness, I watched a stocky 3-point strut

through the blooming rabbitbrush and casually browse on mountain mahogany for 10 minutes before I placed a copper bullet between his glossy ribs. That mature buck looked relaxed in his natural environment and for good reason: We had hunted hard all day and never once cut another tire or boot track in the moist clay. In my college days, that spot would have been loaded with hunters in pickups and ATVs. Last fall, the loudest sounds echoing through that now-wilderness canyon were the chatterings of mountain quail, jays and gray squirrels as they looted the golden oaks of their sun-ripened booty.

As I closed my eyes and caught my breath on the pack out I felt that familiar bittersweet feeling of another hunting season coming to an end, another year closer to my own mortality. That season was a special one for me. In hunting only eight days I was able to take three big game animals. I did it with over-the-counter general season tags; without outfitter, guides, rangefinders, trail cams, bait, private ranch access, tree stands or turrets. What were my secrets? Keeping the wind in my face, using all of my senses, moving slowly and quietly, and getting into the wilderness. In addition to that buck, I packed a bull elk out of the Mt. Thielsen Wilderness and an 8-year-old black bear out of a roadless chunk a couple drainages away from the Red Buttes Wilderness. Did I mention I never saw another hunter in those eight days?

Given the abundant solitude and wonderful memories created, my season would have been a solid success even if I had come up empty handed. As backcountry enthusiast Theodore Roosevelt proclaimed over a century ago, "In hunting, the finding and kill-

ing of game is after all but a part of the whole. The free, self-reliant, adventurous life, with its rugged and stalwart democracy; the wild surroundings, the grand beauty of the scenery, the chance to study the ways and habits of the woodland creatures – all these unite to give to the career of the wilderness hunter its particular charm. The chase is among the best of all National pastimes; it cultivates that vigorous manliness for the lack of which in a nation, as in an individual, the possession of no other qualities can possibly atone.”

It is that chase that drives many of us deep into the backcountry each year to pursue the self-reliant and adventurous life, if only for a couple days or weeks. For even with all of our technological advances, wilderness is a place where we accept risk and uncertainty, which creates suspense and excitement. When I think of the places that have challenged and inspired me the most, leading to the greatest self-discovery, enlightenment and adrenaline, I think of Wilderness.

As I pen these words exactly 50 years from the day the Wilderness Act was signed, I reflect on my own wilderness experiences: my wife’s first backpacking trip with me 15 years ago to a wilderness tarn called Lonesome Lake that was anything but. A family of black bears surrounded our tent for most of that night, curious about our backpacks and the water sampling equipment we had packed in. My wife was frozen in fear and sick to her stomach until the sun came up. We shared a more comfortable night several years later in the Eagle Cap Wilderness, watching a bugling bull and his harem feed under a full moon. The first time I rowed Class 4+ rapids down the Wild Rogue Wilderness, I certainly did not feel overcome by “vigorous manliness.” The beginning of the trip found me frequenting the groover, trembling in trepidation of piloting passengers through the infamous Blossom Bar rapids. My first overnight solo hunt had me sleeping on the dirt in the Sky Lakes Wilderness in heavy timber on the edge of a meadow. No moon, no tent, the wind howling through the trees all night and animals crashing through the deadfall kept my heart in my throat. I barely slept a wink. Summiting a fourteener, ice ax in hand, in the Mount Shasta Wilderness was my celebration for beating an eight-year addiction to chewing tobacco. A solo deer hunt in the Red Buttes Wilderness led to a pack out in the rain and darkness. I twisted my knee by getting lost and nearly falling off a cliff in the darkness. I think fondly of rafting, kayaking and snorkeling with silvery steelhead in the isolated gorges, raging rapids, and vodka-clear rivers of the Kalmiopsis Wilderness. I was pelted by hail and nearly struck by lightning on a scraggy ridgetop in the Strawberry Mountain Wilderness. When the thunderheads rolled on by, I looked out to a million stars and not one sign of city lights. I cherish those memories and many others, and believe they all have contributed to my core values and appreciation for nature.

That pack out with Mike Beagle in 2013 among 300-year-old ponderosa pines was another one of those special moments. I owed that quality hunt in part to Mike and the others who bent the ears of legislators and bureaucrats, persuading them that this rugged chunk of southern Oregon would still have value even if folks couldn’t drive right up to the best hunting spots. It was a grassroots effort that ultimately worked its way up to presidential proclamations and congressional designations.

It’s up to all of us to tell our stories, like the ones I shared above,

every time someone plays the “Wilderness – land of no use” card. Social gadfly Edward Abbey penned, “Wilderness is not a luxury but a necessity of the human spirit, and as vital to our lives as water and good bread.” Or, in our cases, as vital as good, healthy meat in the form of wild elk and trout. Conservation champion Aldo Leopold wrote, “Wilderness is a resource which can shrink but not grow ... creation of new wilderness in the full sense of the word is impossible.” Perhaps it is. But on that drizzly October night, muscles cramping and nearly hypothermic, stumbling through a newly designated wilderness area, I felt honored to be a part of the chase. 🐾

Ian is BHA member #26 and a contributor to Backcountry Journal, Forest and Bugle magazines. He is also a district ranger for the U.S. Forest Service in eastern Oregon where he manages some of the finest backcountry public lands in the Lower 48. He lives in Ukiah with his wife Annie and their two daughters.



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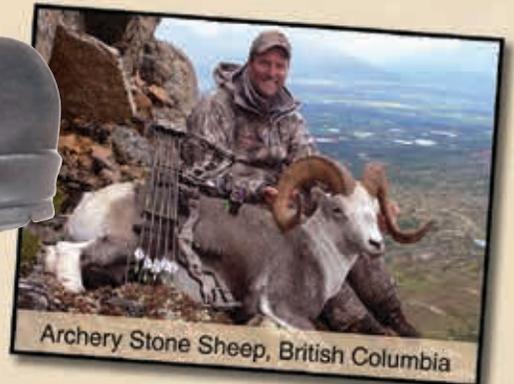


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WAPITI WOES

Story and photos by Preston Taylor



MY HAMSTRINGS WERE CRAMPING, my knees ached and my feet had fallen asleep. Some voice inside me secretly wished the wind would swirl and the elk would smell me so I could stand up to stretch out the cramps in my legs. Caught in the open during a stalk on two bedded bulls, I'd been crouching for close to 10 minutes. Slowly shifting my gaze to the older bull, I realized he had stood up and was walking in my direction.

Deep in eastern Oregon, within a pocket of Rocky Mountain ecology rising from the high desert below, the expansive wilderness provided me isolation from other hunters. Dawn found me on the west side of a large basin formed by two ridgelines falling thousands of steep feet down to the creek. The head of the drainage was a matrix of meadow, dead snags from a recent fire, and clumps of whitebark pine, lodgepole pine and subalpine fir. The intoxicating scent of pine needles, crisp air and the subtle aroma of wapiti drifted on the breeze. I sat in at an ideal vantage to watch the whole scene. Flocks of Clark's nutcrackers heralded the encroaching light, and alone from the sounds of civilization I waited in anticipation for what the day would bring.

Shortly after the sun had risen but yet not crested the mountains to the east, I spotted two elk on the other side of the drainage. They were feeding too far away to see with the naked eye. Through binoculars I could sometimes make out antlers on one. The other was clearly smaller, but that was all I could tell from that distance. I had a private discussion with myself.

"Should I get up and go after them right now?" wondered my younger, more eager side.

"Or maybe I should just sit and watch what they do? That could give me some idea how to formulate a plan," interjected my wiser side. "Yeah, good idea. Better wait this out to see where they go."

I watched the elk feed until the sun was touching half the drainage with its warming glow. The chattering of red squirrels and chucking of chipmunks rang from the trees as they competed with nutcrackers for pine nuts. And I, like the elk, was feeling the calming effect of sunshine after a cold night. The larger animal suddenly turned and trotted downhill 200 yards, then cut into the timber. Soon the smaller elk walked down and out of view. Interestingly, both elk had moved downwind; they had been feeding almost at the top of the ridge, and the only way to their beds was to descend elevation with the thermals. I marked a mental map of where I could find their trail and the last place I had seen them at the edge of thick woods, then gathered my gear to go.

The hike around the basin to find the elk trail took 45 minutes. I crossed lots of old sign, but the fresh tracks were clear: crisp, dark prints; green-moist droppings; urine soaked dirt. When I found their trail the thermals were still flowing downhill. The time was 9 a.m. I waited half an hour for the thermals to turn uphill, then removed my boots and socks and strapped them to my pack. Assuming the elk had gone to cud beds, I didn't want to blow yet another stalk from grinding boot soles.

I started down the trail to where the elk had been feeding. They were foraging on aster leaves, meandering among clumps. When I came across where they had urinated, I rubbed a handful of wet, aromatic dirt on my pants and pack to mask my scent. Then I found where they trotted downhill and turned to go into the woods. Walking their trail through the trees I noticed old elk beds and slowed down to scan ahead for the animals. Coming around a jumble of boulders I saw a patch of tan fur behind a tree. Binoc-

ulars confirmed the rounded form of a bedded elk. I backed out, dropped my pack, and moved above the rocks for a stalk.

Sneaking in from above I had a good look at the resting animal, a spike bull. His neck and head were stretched out flat on the ground. As I snuck down inside 30 yards movement caught my eye to the left. I could see the tips of antlers behind the trunk and branches of a fallen tree. It was the other, bigger elk. Also a young bull, with small tines off his main antler beam, his neck was not yet rut-swollen, but he had shed the velvet covering the headgear. His antlers rocked slightly as he chewed cud in bed. I was at the same elevation as the older animal and above the spike bull. The thermals were flowing consistently, so I elected to move on the upper elk.

I had to cross an open bit of ground to get behind a blowdown. As I crawled painstakingly slowly across a slanting rock, the spike lifted his head. I was stuck in plain sight. The yearling elk sat chewing his cud for an immeasurable amount of time, eyes poised to catch any movement I might make. My legs began to cramp, my feet fell asleep, my knees ached. The sun shifted from behind some trees and now shone directly on my rock, spotlighting my presence and heating me up. A Cooper's hawk dove through the trees after some juncos feeding on the ground in front of the spike. Almost hit in the face by the raptor, the spike reared up on his front legs, but settled down when the bird veered sharply to the side. My legs were really beginning to shriek from squatting by that point. Then I shifted my gaze back to the older bull.

Now standing, he was feeding broadside to me, 30 yards away, with his head behind a bush. Amazingly, the bull turned and began to walk right towards me. He came around the blowdown and stopped to mouth some fir needles, close enough to hear him fart and listen to the sound of his scat plopping on the forest floor. Again he walked straight at me, then turned slightly to take a trail running below my rock.

At this moment I was almost stunned to realize he would walk past me and present a shot. However, I was still tangled in a most awkward shooting position, crouched on my heels and rear end with my bow canted horizontally with the hillside. And here came the bull. A gorgeous creature, his tan hide and dark mane shone smooth as silk, his antlers chocolate brown. On he sauntered, with an air of superiority. He stopped at seven yards and looked in my direction. I focused on a spot in his vitals. His head turned and, as he moved, I tried to draw. In such a difficult position I lurched pulling the string. The bull saw me, jumped and ran.

After the opportunity passed I noticed my shaking uncontrollably. More than an hour later I still hadn't come down from the high of being so close to realizing the dream of a lifetime. Yet, these memories are fuel for my fire. They will keep me going until next elk season, which holds the prospect of another opportunity to intimately observe the majestic wapiti. An unexplored pocket of timber beckoned me deeper into the wilderness. Next year I will return for more close encounters, for the solitude found in wild places, and for the memories. 🐾

Preston owns Marble Mountain Adventures, a tracker training, ecotourism and outfitting business in northwestern California, where he lives with his wife, Heather. He is a proud member of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers.



TEN & TWO

BY HAILEY MALEPEAI

TEN AND TWO. For many of us these numbers evoke memories of driver's education. While this phrase does muster memories of my nervous, early driving days, it summons a much richer memory – one that acts as a gentle reminder even today.

As a young child, I remember watching my dad elegantly cast his line back and forward as I awkwardly heaved my Charlie Brown fishing rod. I recognized at a young age that fly fishing involved much more than catching fish. Fly fishing was an art that required patience, grace and practice.

The foundation of my fly fishing edu-

cation took place in the front yard of our house. We had a long strip of grass next to the driveway where my dad would place a hula hoop several yards in front of me. He would tie a few inches of red yarn to the end of my line and demonstrate how to maneuver the rod, landing the line effortlessly into the center of the hoop.

"Ten o'clock and two o'clock," he would say as he paused the rod, his line creating a perfect loop behind him. "Your turn," he'd say, enthusiastically passing the rod to me. "Don't whip it," he'd say. "Be patient and let the rod do the work for you." A hair band wrapped around my wrist and the

butt of the rod functioned as a reminder to "not break my wrist." These phrases still resonate in my ears, nearly 30 years later.

Eventually, I managed to float that red yarn into the desired bull's eye, and my dad would scoot the hula hoop a few feet farther away. We repeated this process in the front yard until I was ready for the football field at the high school behind our house – the yardage lines allowing us to accurately trace my casting progress. I cast standing up, I parked myself on the grass, I sat in a lawn chair, all to reflect the eventual real fishing scenarios I would be presented with as an angler (we did a fair



Bryan Huskey photo

Hailey, Ian and six-month-old Malia Malepeai share the intergenerational bonds of fly fishing on Oregon's Owyhee River. Bryan Huskey photo

amount of stillwater, float tube fishing). Looking back, it's too bad he couldn't have emulated a strong head wind.

Soon the lawn was replaced with water, and I was catching trout instead of the back of my head and blades of grass. Most of my early fishing days were spent in a float tube, aimlessly kicking around stillwater reservoirs. In retrospect, my dad must have realized the independence afforded by flat water. He also saved a lot of money on tree-snagged flies. Those days in my float tube I learned how to tie my own knots, untie my own tangles and release my own fish.

The extra special days were those when we fished as an entire family, my parents, my two younger sisters and me. One of my favorite family Christmas cards captures all five of us standing at the bank of a southern Idaho reservoir dressed in waders and flippers, all clutching a fly rod. My youngest sister Julia was no older than 4. Despite life growing busier with soccer games, boys and school events, spending time with my dad on the water trumped any Saturday afternoon at the mall with my girlfriends.

When I think about fishing with my dad, some of the most vivid memories don't actually involve fishing at all. He offered me my first cup of black coffee in the lid of his thermos. As a 10 year old I remember feeling like such a grownup, willing myself to enjoy the pitch-black brew. Coffee seemed to propel me from his little girl to his legitimate fishing buddy.

Fishing with my dad exposed me not only to spectacularly beautiful rivers, spring creeks, lakes and reservoirs around the West; it also introduced to me to a community of people who shared our affection for the peace and calm found in a float tube, or the thrill of standing in the middle of a green drake hatch with bugs landing on our eyelashes, or the ecstasy of landing and releasing a fish – no matter the size. I know I made a few eyebrows rise whenever I jumped out of his truck at a boat launch, a mouth full of braces and a body I had yet to grow into. I looked like a little girl playing dress up in her dad's too-big clothes, my Hodgman waders hanging off me.

Over the years I grew into the waders, I learned a variety of casts and some days, I caught more fish than my dad. Our fishing buddies (once my dad's friends and now mine, too) threatened to stop bringing me along on trips if I continued to land more

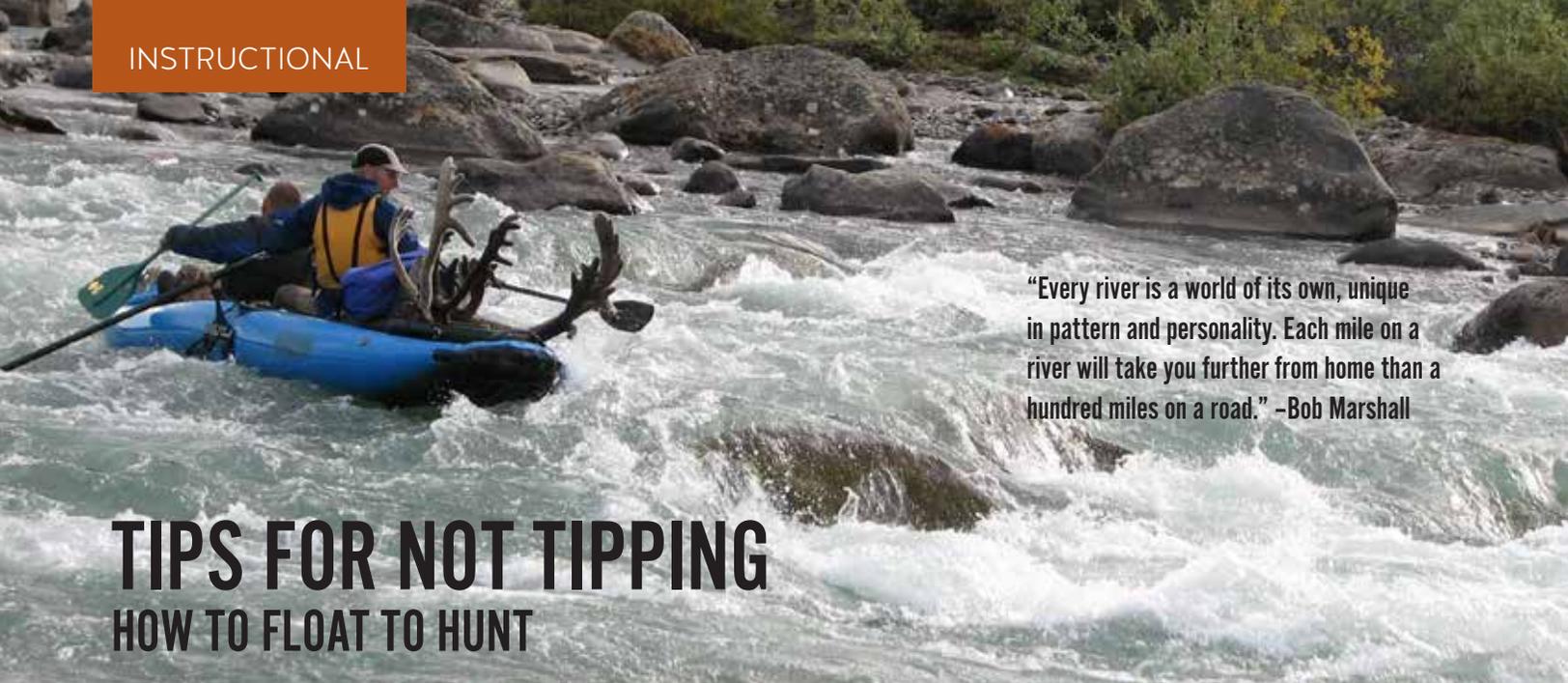
fish than them. Being the only girl in a crowd of men tends to grab attention, especially when you are the only one catching fish.

My favorite fishing buddy these days is still my dad. He doesn't get out as often as he would like, nor do we fish together enough, but on those special occasions when we do, I still feel like his little girl, feeling the need to ask for help with my line or fly selection. I wonder if his feelings are hurt that most of my time spent on the river is now occupied by another man. I wonder if he gets jealous that my weekends no longer involve drinking black coffee with him. I wonder if he is proud that I have found a man who loves to fly fish as much as he does.

The adage that girls marry someone like their fathers seems to be true for me. I have found a man whose cast is as graceful as my father's. I have found a man who revels in watching me land a fish as much as my father. Best of all, I have found a man who loves me almost as much as my father.

At 7 years old I never would have fathomed the profound influence fly fishing would have on my life. Not only did my dad instill in me a passion for the outdoors and fly fishing, but this pastime, our father-daughter outings, helped lead me to the man who I know will someday teach our daughter to cast a fly rod in the front yard – their rod tips swinging between ten and two. 🐾

Hailey is a BHA member, freelance writer and blogger (hushedmoments.com) based in Boise, Idaho. She can be found chasing her husband, toddler and Hungarian Vizsla through Idaho's rivers and mountains.



“Every river is a world of its own, unique in pattern and personality. Each mile on a river will take you further from home than a hundred miles on a road.” –Bob Marshall

TIPS FOR NOT TIPPING

HOW TO FLOAT TO HUNT

BY BARRY WHITEHILL

FLOAT HUNTING IN THE ARCTIC makes me feel like I’ve been transported back to the Pleistocene. The expansive, unmarred landscapes look like what I imagine Lewis and Clark saw upon first entering the Upper Missouri River country.

This particular float on the Killik River in the central Brooks Range was no different. I could see for miles in all directions. Unfortunately, not an animal stirred the first day. During the second day, a rush of excitement started buzzing in camp when a large, brown animal appeared on the horizon heading directly towards us. I was catching a nap in the tent but was urged to quickly come out and help fend off a potential grizzly attack. A quick assessment of the animal made the Pleistocene connection that much stronger. It was a lone muskox bull, following a straight line that our camp happened to be close to. Passing at 30 yards, he briefly stopped, slowly turned his head to look at us, and plodded on. No other animals appeared that day.

On the third day we saw our first caribou. As the day grew, so did the small bands of animals. By the fourth day we were in the midst of the migration. I figured during each hour at least 1,000

animals passed camp on either side. That continued non-stop for two days. By the seventh day, there wasn’t a caribou to be found.

These are the dynamics of a wild ecosystem. Floating is the vehicle I have found that matches the pace and terms of this landscape and many others. Here is what I have learned in more than 20 years of doing it.

Barry is a life member and legacy partner for BHA who lives in Fairbanks, Alaska. He still counts the quality of a year by the number of nights camped out. In 2014 it approached 70 nights, a very good year indeed.

Want to learn more useful skills? Check out our video series **BACKCOUNTRY COLLEGE** with Clay Hayes at backcountryhunters.org/index.php/skills/backcountry-college. Subscribe to BHA’s YouTube channel to catch new episodes!

1

PACK LIKE IT’S BACKPACKING

Go light, light, light. Hunting success often is related to finding opportunities on rivers that are extremely shallow or have major portages. Select the highest quality lightweight, waterproof gear you can afford. Often these are items that are not designed for the hunting market but for serious mountaineering or river running. Eliminate glass and canned packaging for food items.

PRACTICE SAFETY

Join your local paddling club to hone river running skills. Take Swiftwater Rescue and wilderness medicine courses. Eventually, if you float long enough, you will use lessons from both trainings. Test your gear before your float. Practice using bear spray. Practice shooting while wearing your PFD. Practice using your satellite phone, DeLorme tracker, SPOT, etc. before going into the field. Build a safety plan and share it with responsible people, along with instructions on how it is to be used. You do as you train.

2

3

CONSIDER BOAT SPACE

Boats (and bush planes) are limited by weight *and* bulk. Think compression. Select boats and gear that can be compressed, like soft coolers to efficiently fill space. I construct

part of my raft frame from cut trees to reduce weight flying in. Consider dressing in quick drying clothes and lightweight footwear with knee-high, 3mm neoprene river socks that can be quickly changed into dry replacements instead of using bulky hip boots or chest waders that always seem to remain damp after use, plus take up valuable space. Load your boat with the weight evenly distributed. Everything needs to be secured to a place on the boat with at least two snug lash points. However, ensure accessibility to items that might be needed quickly, like emergency gear and firearms. Also, I try to secure kitchen items, coolers and food boxes so they can be left on the boat but can be opened and “shopped” with a light nylon grocery sack for what is needed. This way the boat doesn’t need to be unloaded at each camp.



5

PATIENCE, GRASSHOPPER

Don’t force it. Days can go by before an animal presents itself. Many a hunt has started with nothing seemingly for miles only to be “flooded by animals” beside the

river after you have traveled far from the river to shoot something. Waiting for water levels to drop or portaging around rapids might take time, but in the long run it is the prudent thing to do.

SEEK OUT ADVICE

My Alaskan rivers are wild and dynamic. Their character changes with the water level and season. Every hunt experience is different. Consider reaching out to the non-hunting community like paddle clubs and experienced land management agency personnel who are river runners. Always ask a source if they know additional people who have experience on that river you can contact. Check U.S. Geological Survey water gauges and compare to time periods you have information for. Every bit of input helps build a general understanding that will prepare you for your actual experience, which will be unique.

4

SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

This applies to safety and success, including driving, floating, flying, camping and hunting. Prevent bad things before they happen. Be engaged and alert as extra eyes for the pilot, driver and boat captain. Always wear your life jacket and secure it tightly whenever floating. Tie your boat securely at each stop. Mark the waterline at camp to monitor rises and falling water and adjust your float plan accordingly. At the other end of the scale increase your chances of being successful by listening to what other animals tell you. Squirrel alarm calls, beaver tail slaps, raven concentrations, etc. will alert you to the presence of other large animals, including your quarry.

6



7

LET ANIMALS COME TO YOU

I like to call and scrape right before dark then go to bed. In the morning I am often rewarded with a bull moose by camp at first light. Terrain features that will funnel

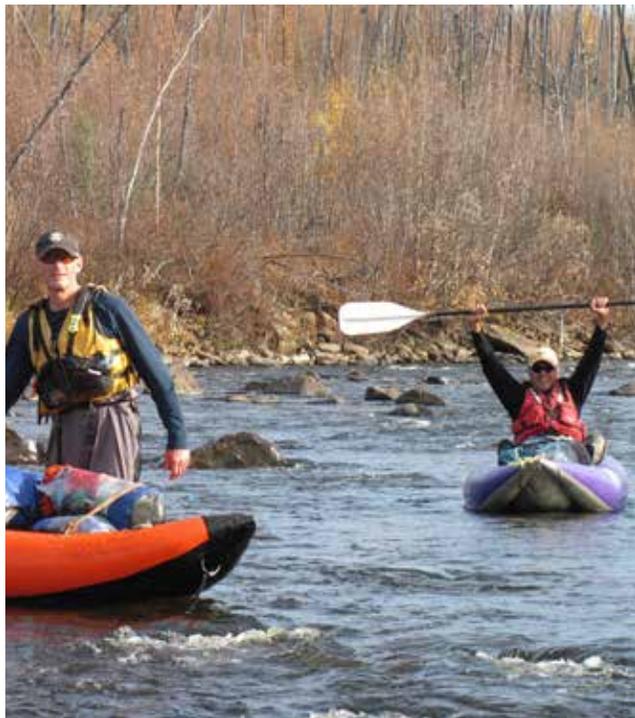
caribou and historic crossings are good places to camp. Park boats upstream from prominent scouting points so the boats don't have to be lined back upstream if you are successful.

8

KNOW WHEN TO SAY WHEN

Plan for trip "A" but be flexible to adapt to Plan "Z." Changes can be due to weather, river conditions, hunter concentrations, animal movements, etc. Don't try to force

pilots or boating members to do something they feel uncomfortable with, especially just to make a scheduled flight home or to save on paying for an extra bush flight. Bad things happen when pushing the envelope. Remember to convey changes to whoever is monitoring your safety plan.



HANDLING MEAT

9

Cool, clean, dry and defended. Know the game regulations for meat salvage in the unit you are hunting. Often evidence of sex is required to be left naturally attached.

Make sure you know which game bag that is in and have it accessible if checked. Take a photo of bloodshot trimmings and what is not salvaged. Use quality game bags and cover while floating to keep cool. Put meat into dry bags if you're in a whitewater stretch. Meat should be pulled out at each camp to monitor and continue cooling. Always keep meat shaded with airflow around it, even if it just means lying on a lattice of branches to support the meat off the ground. Place brush in trails leading into your camp to deflect large animals and to help inform you of their presence. Lastly, I sleep next to the meat in Alaska. I use a bivy sack under a siltarp in order to be able to just raise my head to quickly assess threats so the meat can be defended if necessary.

GO WITH THE FLOW

10

At some point you have to play the cards dealt you. It might mean not harvesting an animal. However, savor what unfolds. Don't overlook the small things. These corridors are

the pathways for hunters, past and present. Rivers can guide you to wonderful memories if you stay receptive to them. 🐾

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BY WHATEVER MEANS NECESSARY

For many, being born paraplegic would mean never hunting elk in the backcountry. One father wouldn't let that happen to his son.

By Bryce Fauskee

ONE OF MY FIRST MEMORIES as a kid was looking up and seeing Dad's shoulder-mounted bighorn sheep. The awe it inspired set me down the road to a lifetime of hunting with my dad, even before I was old enough to actually have a license and carry a gun. In grade school, I remember being jealous when my older brother got to go up to hunting camp with dad in the Absaroka Mountains. But soon I was old enough to join the hunting party, and, even though the mornings were early and the days were cold, I was hooked by those experiences. Finally old enough to get a license of my own, I went on the first of many elk hunting trips and was blessed to have my dad along for every one of them.

Many years and many great elk hunts later, Dad and I drew elk tags in an area that we had hunted in the past and I had come to love from previous pack trips and summer trail cleaning excursions with the Shoshone Backcountry Horsemen. We both had tags for this area, but we would only be hunting for me on this trip. I was born with spina bifida and use a wheelchair. Wyoming Game & Fish regulations permit disabled hunters to hunt five days early.

Late September found us riding with two pack horses into a camp Dad had set up before the season. It was a pleasant fall day

cruising into camp. At one of the creek crossings, Dad stopped short in front of me just out of the trees and pointed ahead. I looked and saw a raghorn bull giving a willow the what for. We sat and watched him for several seconds before he realized we were there, stopped and looked at us for a few seconds before dashing off into the timber. The gurgle of the creek must have covered the noise of our approach. It was very cool to watch the bull from 50 yards away, but we were here after a cow when my season started the next day. I began to get pretty saddle sore, but soon enough we reached camp, unpacked and set up. As the sun started to set we finished dinner and headed for the tent. So it is in the early-to-bed, early-to-rise game of big game hunting.

In the predawn dark the next morning we finished breakfast and threw lunches in our saddle bags. We rode up to a spot where a friend had taken a bull a few years prior. The plan was for me to set up there and wait for elk to wander by. This is the ideal scenario. For me to find a herd of elk and get off the saddle and prone for a shot before the animals have left the county isn't likely to happen.

Dad helped me and my essential gear off the horse for the day. He is too ambitious to be comfortable sitting still for long, so he



left right away, taking the horses and hoping to spot some elk for me. At daybreak, bulls started screaming and didn't cease all day. I had barely got my gear set up and range estimations found when I heard the click of horse hooves quickly returning. Sure enough, dad had spotted some cows farther up the canyon. We loaded back up and slipped into the trees, planning to use the cover as we attempted to get ahead of the herd. Dad stopped and helped me get off the horse and set up. We paused and looked up and down the canyon. No elk to be seen, but the bulls were still bugling in the distance. We decided the horses were making too much noise so Dad carried me on his back. After a few hundred yards he set me down with no elk emerging. He carried me a bit farther, but it just wasn't sustainable since I'm a solid 150 pounds and Dad is well in to his 60s. He went back and got the horses. We mounted up again, though for a short time.

Suddenly, Dad bailed off his horse and I followed suit as he tied up the horses, and grabbed my rifle from the scabbard. We had cows 40 yards away in the trees. Dad was just ahead of me with my gun and crouched between me and the elk. Dad gave me the hand signals of when to come ahead or when to stop. Using him as visual cover, I started army crawling forward. With all the dry

branches on the ground I felt about as stealthy as a Mac truck. At one point, I saw one of the cows looking right at me. I finally reached Dad and touched his hand to signal that I'd made it. Looking through the scope all I could see was her blonde ribs. Without knowing where the vitals were I had no shot, so I let them go. As we rode out of the trees and across the clearing, a 6-point bull busted out of the trees. It never fails: a cow tag in my pocket and a nice bull right in front of me.

Always the game spotter, Dad soon saw a herd a couple hundred yards up the hill, but by the time I got off and saw them, there was only the bull left in the clearing – again. I kept my scope on him for a while, just admiring the animal until he slipped into the trees. As soon as the herd moved on, we snuck to some more trees 100 yards closer to where the elk had been. Then Dad spotted some cows just 200 yards to my right. I had to move out a bit to get a good look at them, one last big dry twig to stumble over to get into position. I started scanning the herd in my scope, but they were all quartering away really hard or facing away from us entirely. At one point, I started to take first tension on the trigger, but then I just barely made out some movement behind the cow I was about to take.

Easing off the trigger I kept scanning – a bit more frantically at this point, worried that the cows were going to bust any minute now and I still didn't have a shot. Then, inexplicably, Dad whispered, "Don't shoot." Just as I was questioning his sanity he signaled to our left. Another 10 cows emerged from the trees and stopped, looking right at us at 75 yards. I moved the shooting sticks into position. I knew I had to take the shot quickly, and that is not my strong suit, as this morning had shown. We had plenty of timber behind us but nothing taller than grass between us and the elk. I scanned the herd and picked the last cow, with only her front half visible. I squeezed the trigger. Nothing. In all the excitement, I forgot to take the safety off. Come on man, get it together! I squeezed again. The whole herd exploded up the hill as one.

At first, it's always tough to figure out which elk has been hit. Within 50 yards one of the cows started falling behind the herd. She stumbled, fell and began to roll back down the hill. She slid back into the area they came from, out of sight from our vantage. A close shot like that is hard to mess up, and the way she reacted to the impact seemed promising, but it was still a bit nerve-wracking not being able to see her anymore.

There was plenty of excited back slapping and high-fives while we ate a snack and gave her time just in case. The bulls hadn't stopped bugling the whole time. After 30 minutes, Dad walked over to confirm that she was down for the count. Later, as he quartered the elk we had two nice bulls come out into the meadow and check us out. After stashing the quarters in the shade, we made the three-mile trek back to camp to grab pack horses. We briefly considered breaking for lunch in camp but decided to head right back to get the meat to camp.

The next morning we still were flying high, reminiscing about the whirlwind hunt the day before. Riding out to the trailhead and on the drive home, I kept thinking of how awesome it was to go on this hunt where we actively pursued the elk, adjusted to the curveballs the situation threw us and blew several stalks before finally coming out with meat. The weather and camp food were better than could be expected, but the best part of the whole

thing was having my dad as my guide. Without his help, I never would have mounted a horse, never would have harvested an elk and never would have seen the Wyoming backcountry I love so much.



Bryce, 31, was born and raised in Powell, Wyoming, and has been hunting and riding horseback since he can remember, without the use of his legs. He works for Wyoming Services for Independent Living. He and his dad, Bruce, are BHA members.



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DIPLOMATS OF THE OUTDOORS

THE COMMUNITY where I grew up included many vocal and vicious anti-hunters. In grade school, I vividly remember trying so hard to explain how hunting the local duck swamps on weekends with my dad wasn't wrong. The class discussion escalated until I had tears in my eyes. I can't, however, remember exactly how many times in high school I got the cops called on me while legally hunting on public land after school.

Our local game warden, a friend of my dad's, always tells the story of getting paged while out hunting blacktail deer. There's been illegal hunting reported, the dispatcher told him. The street name she read off was the one he lived on. Oh, that's me, he replied. Apparently some members of our community were ignorant enough to report the very man entrusted with enforcing such laws, for hunting deer during deer season on his own land. Many people tend to assume hunting is illegal on Whidbey Island, or would prefer it to be. As in many parts of the country, hunting isn't part of the cultural landscape anymore.

I am convinced that in the absence of contact with actual hunters, many Americans form their opinions on hunting through the only lens available: their television screens. I recently came to this conclusion over the course of several hours cooking, drinking beer, tying flies, filing film footage and other such things one does at a fishing lodge. One of those things was watching a cable channel dedicated to some activity wherein a "celebrity" with a big gun and bigger ego goes into a pen and blasts an animal. Then he goes up to it yelling and fist pumping and dragging the dead beast around a bit for a better camera angle. Then it cuts to sponsor logos.

In a vacuum, if a person was shown that display of live animal target practice and was told it is called "hunting," I could hardly blame them for being turned off. These shows are unrecognizable to the reverent, patient pursuit my dad taught me in the salt marshes of Puget Sound.

I gritted my teeth through a few more shows like the one I mentioned, including one shot in New Zealand with easily visible fences behind the red deer. After a commercial break, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation logo appeared, followed by RMEF spokesman and friend of BHA, Randy Newberg. In a wild departure from the previous programming, Randy gave a rousing account of the landscape, the wild elk he was about to hunt, the measures taken to protect them and the difficulties presented by the never-ending assaults on the public lands elk occupy. The program was as much glorious footage of rutting bulls bugling their hearts out as it was actual hunting, and he didn't tag out. Commercial break, then back to fast, flashy, low-angle images intended to portray a godlike aura upon some guy who talked at length about his broadhead design and training regimen, and then went to sit in a tree stand all day.

To all you BHAers and readers of *Backcountry Journal*: Portray yourselves well as hunters this season. Be the example that changes people's minds. Be the conservationist adventurer who provides healthy meat for his or her family. Pick up your trash and any you find. If you shoot a lion, don't shoot one that has a cute name. BHA has the rare opportunity to be a leader in the efforts to conserve, protect and improve our nation's wild public lands, waters and wildlife. To that end, each of us as members must be a diplomat. That can be as simple as being polite and following the rules. I've seen this ability in every single BHA member I've met thus far. There are factions on both sides of the political spectrum that would see hunting diminished, through legal means or loss of opportunity and access. Let's convince the non-hunting public of the incredible merits, pleasures and spirituality our pursuit holds. 🐾

-Sam Lungren, editor



Sam Lungren photo

BHA Life Member Chris Grove works diligently to start a warming fire on a cold, damp morning high in the backcountry of Montana's Sapphire Range. Chris joined BHA after receiving a copy of *Backcountry Journal* at the trailhead after this hunt. Please pass your copy along to someone who would enjoy it.



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