

# WESTERN Hunting

VOLUME 1 ISSUE 2      WINTER ISSUE      DECEMBER 2000



## 6 BE PREPARED FOR WINTER BLASTS

from the Arctic North combined with the chill of the damp conditions prevalent in winter hunting trips. A little thought and planning makes it much more fun.

## 23 CUBA DUCKS TURNED OUT TO BE

a great experience for this group of duck hunters used to taking their sport in wide open country in winter conditions

## 27 COUGAR HUNT EXCITEMENT STRIKES

all involved, from the hounds to the designated truck driver. This exciting sport is only for those willing to make the commitment to the hard work involved in the conditioning of themselves and the hounds

### DEPARTMENTS

- First Shot
- Game to Cook
- Western Hunting News
- The Gun Room

WINTER HUNTING





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# WESTERN Hunting

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# FIRST SHOT

By Henry L. Frew



Winter has been here for a while now in the North Country. We had our first flurries on the mountain roads in BC in early September and Calgary had a good dump not much later. Ranchers have been breaking the tops of the waterholes for quite a few weeks and any stock spending much of its time outdoors has grown a coat suitable for the occasion.

This means that those who run hounds in the more northerly areas served by this magazine are all excited. Adrenalin is being pumped into their system at a great rate and they are making every effort to extend their aerobic capacity in order to keep as close to their hounds as possible in the next few months.

These are the cat hunters. At least mainly cat hunters, bobcats and cougars, with the occasional foray after housecat or 'coon when things don't go according to plan and the dogs take charge.

Cougars and hounds go together throughout Western North America and so too in this issue of *Western Hunting* as the season opens for many lion hunters. The chances of sighting a cougar, far less getting a shot at it, without hounds is in the millions to one category.

Today, and throughout the last decade or so, hunters have had more cougars to chase than were available in the last half century. The National Park Service stopped killing cougars in 1931. BC put an end to bounties on cougar in 1958 and the whole of Western North America had removed all bounty when Arizona got rid of theirs in 1970. This has allowed cougars to expand and re-inhabit much of the territory they had lost in the past.

Now we are faced with management and social implications that can boggle the mind. Cougars have gone from being a ghost of legend to a nuisance in Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia where every politically correct politico has their own spin on what should be done. Many communities have lost countless family pets; cougars have been seen eyeing schoolyards, stalking cross-country skiers, and taking refuge in basement suites. Wildlife managers are totally frustrated as they are shut out of the equation and wait with bated breath for a human tragedy in their bailiwick.

Those who hunt cougars need an education program for their fellow hunters and the general public. They need to get the message out that trail hound associations and individuals who keep cougar hounds are the sole guardians of the day-to-day survival of the cougar and that the professionals in state and province wildlife management agencies must be left alone to achieve their mandate.

Lion hunters must show people that chasing cougars with dogs can keep the cougars away from towns and subdivisions and in the remoter areas where they belong. These same hunters must show people that they do not kill every cougar they tree. And they must not apologize for every lion they kill.

Chasing cougars is predominately a winter occupation over much of our range and that leads us into the other major topic for this issue of *Western Hunting*. Enjoying winter, especially hunting in winter, requires that we learn a whole new lot of techniques and skills. All of these things are given some serious discussion in the winter section of this issue.

This is our last issue for the year 2000 so all of us who contribute in some way to this magazine wish to wish you and yours a safe and happy Holiday season. In particular may 2001 bring you all the hunts of your dreams and may these same hunts bring, not only good memories of their own, but also great dreams of the great hunts still to come. 🐾

# HUNTING NEWS

## Sportsmen Split Ballot Issues On Election Day

**COLUMBUS** -- When the votes had been tallied for the 2000 general election the Wildlife Legislative Fund of America (WLFA), the nation's leading sportsmen's advocacy group, recognized several important wins and regrets three sportsmen's losses.

Oregon, which has been a target for animal rights groups since passing mountain lion and black bear hunting bans in 1994, sent a powerful message to the national anti-hunting groups on Election Day. Measure 97, a ballot initiative that would have banned trapping, was resoundingly defeated. Results show 39 percent in favor of and 61 percent opposed to the ban.

WLFA President, Bud Pidgeon commented, "Once again, it has been proven that the public will support trapping. We are proud to have been a contributor to Oregon's efforts."

In the state to the North, the results were not good. Voters approved Washington Initiative 713 to ban trapping by a 55 percent to 45 percent margin. Polling in September indicated that sportsmen would receive about 26 percent of the vote. Unfortunately, they were unable to overcome

a massive spending advantage held by the anti's who were financed by the Humane Society of the United States and the Fund for Animals.

"Sportsmen were able to move the voters by nearly 20 percent," noted Pidgeon. "Although we regret the loss, the tightness of the race demonstrates that sportsmen can win in Washington with better organization."

The North Dakota and Virginia state constitutions will now contain language "recognizing the value of hunting to be forever preserved." Modeled after a similar amendment passed in Minnesota in 1998,

voters in North Dakota passed Measure 1 by a whopping 80 percent!

In Virginia, a much more urban state, voters sent an equally strong message. The state's hunting heritage was supported as an impressive 61 percent of the voters approved Question 2.

In Alaska and Arizona people attempted to pass constitutional amendments which would have banned wildlife issues from the ballot (Alaska) and required a two-thirds majority for future ballot issues (Arizona). In both cases, voters resoundingly rejected the measures.

A last minute infusion of financial support by animal rights groups enabled opponents of Measure 1 to flood television airwaves with ads. The influx of money proved to be too much for the proponents. Voters rejected the measure, 36 percent to 64 percent.

In a related issue, voters approved Measure 6, which reinstated a ban

on airborne wolf controls. Voters passed a similar ban in 1996, but sportsmen successfully persuaded legislators to overturn the ban allowing wildlife managers to adequately protect other wildlife from a growing wolf population.

In Arizona, voters rejected Proposition 102 by a 38 percent to 62 percent margin. As in Alaska, the anti's successfully utilized a last minute blitz of television ads to assure the defeat of the issue Pidgeon said, "Regretfully, voters in these states did not realize the benefits of restricting wildlife related ballot initiatives. As it stands, sportsmen must continue to worry about outsiders coming into their states and manipulating wildlife management via the ballot box."

## Deer/Auto Accidents Increase

With the rut, it's no wonder that October, November and December consistently have the most deer-auto collisions. According to the Insurance Information Institute, more than 750,000 deer-vehicle accidents occurred nationally in 1999, up from 500,000 in the prior year. These accidents resulted in 120 deaths and more than \$1.2 billion in property damage.

Safari Club International just canvassed state transportation, wildlife management, and public safety officials nationwide. Their latest data (very conservative due to under-

*Please turn to page 5*

### Winter hunt blessed by grand elk



Alberta hunter Darren Dorge with his fine bull elk at Waterton River in southwestern Alberta. This big-bodied bull was measured at a score of 312 in the field and scored almost 300 on the official measure. Gordon Dorge took the photograph.

## Bad driving from page 4

reporting by motorists) show:

More than 20,000 Americans are injured and more than 144 people die each year as a result of wildlife-related auto accidents.

## Chronic Wasting Disease

With deer season in full swing, several scientists have urged hunters to be careful when handling harvested animals in remote parts of Colorado and Wyoming. Chronic wasting disease — a malady similar to the mad cow disease that ravaged domestic cattle in Britain in the mid-1980s — is estimated to affect one percent of elk and from six to 15 percent of deer along the states' shared border.

Unlike mad cow disease, where consumption of tainted meat led to 77 deaths, no human infections have been linked to the affected elk and deer. In fact, *The New York Times* (Oct. 31, 2000) quotes Dr. Elizabeth Williams, a veterinarian at the University of Wyoming in Laramie and a leading researcher on chronic wasting disease, as saying "the prevalence and incidence of the disease has not changed much over the past several years."

Safari Club International applauds the diligent researchers working to unravel the mystery of chronic wasting disease. SCI also encourages hunters in Colorado and Wyoming to avoid harvesting obviously sick animals; to



**2000 was the year Montana burned** - Above is a scene from Bitterroot National Forest as of August 6, 2000, taken by John McColgan, Fairbanks, AK, a government fire behavior analyst. Taken with a digital camera there is no further record as to the fate of the elk.

use rubber gloves when field dressing carcasses; to avoid coming in contact with brain, spinal cord, eyes, spleen or lymph nodes of any deer or elk they might kill.

## Scrap Firearms Registration Plans

**SURREY, B.C.** -- Ivar Larson, president of the B.C. Wildlife Federation called on Federal Justice Minister Anne McLellan to take a hard look at her government's increasingly expensive firearms legislation.

Larson noted that Alan Rock, McLellan's predecessor, promised that the legislation would only cost \$85 million and that if it went over \$150 million it would be cancelled. Government figures show that costs have already reached \$350 million mark. Government spokespersons derided those who initially predicted that the cost of this misguided legislation would reach the half bil-

lion-dollar mark. It is probable that by the end of this year we will already have reached that prediction. This enormous cost over-run comes two and a half years before the registration of hunters' rifles and shotguns becomes a requirement on January 1, 2003.

As of January 1, 2001 the federal government is also requiring every firearm owner in Canada to be personally licensed. Without this license, on New Years day, a previously law-abiding Canadian citizen will become an instant criminal.

Larson also noted that the federal firearms legislation appears to have become a federal government job creation program with almost 1,800 positions being funded.

An enormous amount of taxpayers dollars are being spent for a program to license legitimate firearm owners and register hunters' rifles and shotguns that no one believes will do anything to reduce crime or curtail violence in this country.

## COMING UP

**Jan.10-13**  
Safari Club International's 29th Hunters Convention Venetian Resort and Sands Expo Center, Las Vegas, NV

**Jan.11-14**  
2001 SHOT Show, New Orleans, LA.

Jan.26-28  
Archery Trade Show, Indianapolis, IA

**Feb. 14-17**  
Foundation for North American Wild Sheep Convention, Reno, NV

**Feb. 15-18**  
National Wild Turkey Federation National Convention, Columbus, OH

**Feb. 16-18**  
National Bowhunting Conference, St.Louis, MO

**Feb. 22-25**  
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation 17th Annual Elk Camp & Exposition, Albuquerque, NM



# Plunging Cold Adds Striking Dimension

*By Wayne Norstrom*

**S**team from the thermos lid of coffee frosted the windshield in spite of the fact the defrost was cranking out on high. The radio gave the weather forecast as I drove through the predawn darkness. "Peace River -37°, High Level - 41°, Grande Prairie -38°. These are tough temperatures during the winter, but this was late November, the last days of the hunting season, this was brutal.

Winter had come early and hard to the Peace River Country and that was having an effect on the feeding pattern of whitetails. Instead of hanging out on second cut alfalfa fields they were keying in on snowed under barley swaths, seeking the nutrient load that barley could provide. I had been hunting a field of barley right on the Peace River breaks.

**Hunting in real winter conditions requires a whole rethink of the entire process and it is not an occupation for the faint of heart**



WINTER HUNTING

## WINTER HUNTING



It is rare that a big bear (previous page) such as this one is out so late into the winter. On the day that author Wayne Norstrom killed this black it was  $-32^{\circ}\text{C}$  outside, a temperature at which you would expect all sensible bears to be well installed in a den. Norstrom tracked the bear for some considerable time and shot him finally at a distance of 30-feet. On this page Norstrom “undressed” for the photo.op. and while the deer is not for the record book it is a nice, heavy, Peace River whitetail

### *Plunging cold . . . from page 6*

The last star was hanging in the sky and a coyote was arguing possession with a farm dog as I left the truck for the mile walk to the field. The old snow squeaked under foot and each breath could be tasted like a drink of water. It was dead calm.

There was a bit of hill on the near side of the field and I peeked over the top to check things out. Way down the field was one lone deer, dark in the early light, I knew it was a buck and my binoculars told me he was huge just before they iced up. He was feeding off the field and I knew I had to get close in a hurry, however, until he fed into a little draw I wasn't going anywhere. Excitement and brutal cold had iced up my binoculars making them useless, however pure adrenalin kept me warm. After a couple of ice ages the deer fed into the draw, which lead off the field, and I was able to get over along the field edge and squeak (old snow can be noisy in extreme cold) my way over to him as best I could.

I peeked over the last little knoll and

there he was rucked up with cold, tired and mean from the rut. He was just off the edge of the brush, forcing me to shoot off hand. I'm not much of an off hand shot, but at less than 100 yards, I can do all right. I shot him through the chest. He scored 178 Boone and Crockett before deductions.

When hunters think of cold, brutal weather they usually think north, however some of my worst experiences were not north, they were high, about 8,000 feet high.

On one occasion I was hunting big-horns, just off the Jasper Park boundary west of Cadomin. It was late October and down in the Whitehorse Creek valley there were four to five inches of snow. The high country had a lot more. It was freezing at night, however it normally crawled above freezing during the day. The rut was coming and the rams were moving, it was a great time to be out.

It was better than three miles in and several thousand feet up to get to the basin I wanted to hunt. It wasn't the best sheep basin in that world famous sheep county, however I was pretty sure I would have it all to myself.

## WINTER HUNTING



A cold November morning in Alberta, chilly enough for Norstrom to be wearing gloves to have his picture taken, or is the photograph just to show off this respectable elk which, when measured, reached a Boone & Crocket score of 188?

### *Plunging cold . . . from page 7*

My first problem occurred when I tried to cross Whitehorse Creek. No matter how I searched there wasn't a crossing available that was less than boot deep. Ever wade across freezing water in your bare feet? The pain hits the knees, however the numbness in the feet eliminates the pain of stubbed toes on the slippery rocks. The snow on the bank actually feels warm. That done I started climbing.

The higher I climbed the deeper the

snow. By the time I hit timberline the drifts were over my knees. Up on the ridge I hit crotch deep drifts of the worse sort. They would support me for two or three steps, and then drop me down. I sweat and swore and soldiered on, reflecting poorly on my own intelligence. Then I topped out to a howling wind.

I didn't glass very long before I spotted four tracks crossing into the basin and disappearing into a small cirque. I figured they were fresh, because the wind would have drifted them over in short order. All I had to do was wait until they came into view and see if there was a legal ram in the bunch. Easy enough except the howling wind and low temperature were having their way with my sweat soaked body.

I found some cover behind a small cliff and there I spent the day, alternating between freezing, eating my sardine, cheese and chocolate bar lunch and crawling up into the wind to glass. Across the creek a billy goat owned a nice patch of cliff, his pantaloons blowing in the wind. Down in the valley a couple of

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## WINTER HUNTING



### Plunging cold . . . from page 8

sheep hunters rode horseback toward the valley head. A Clark's nutcracker flew past, and a few ravens rode the wind currents, but the sheep stayed in that little cirque.

The sheep fed into sight late in the afternoon. The spotting scope suggested two were legal and one of them was a dandy. They were in a tough place for a stalk, I would have to lose a lot of elevation and then fight my way back up thru the drifts. Maybe I could do it, however I would have to overnight under a spruce. They wouldn't go far I figured. I'll get them tomorrow.

## On a winter hunt one of the key points of survival is to know when to quit

Going down wasn't any better than going up and the creek was just as cold. The two horseback guys had a nice little camp set up and after they got over their surprise of having a stranger wobble into camp from the dark of night they poured me a tea. I was pretty well beat when I crawled into my tent.

The morning dawned badly. Low clouds and a few flakes of snow riding a mean west wind. Up high, snow drifted off the peaks like a prairie dust storm. I thought of those rams and I thought of that cold water, deep drifts and howling wind. I rolled up my tent and went home.

Mother Nature treats everything equally, hunter and hunted alike. She can send you home happy or she can send you home. The secret is getting out there and trying, because you never know what may blow your way.

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# Getting About

You may think snow is your friend enabling you to track your quarry. It is not - it is your enemy - it is out to get you if it can

Just so you know, I live in one of the snowiest towns in all of North America, a place that averages 365 inches a year – in my driveway! I also hunt a lot after the snow flies, in weather ranging from a sub-zero musk ox hunt in the far reaches of Northwest Territories, to the mountains of Alaska, to late-season mountain hunts across the Rocky Mountain West.

Years of winter hunting have taught me two things – generally speaking, except for the fact that deep snow can move game to areas of easy human access, snow is your enemy, not your friend; and traveling in areas of deep

snow can tax the body badly.

Be that as it may, winter hunting can be both fun and quite productive. However, you have to plan diligently for any emergency that may arise, and be prepared to take care of it quickly and efficiently to avoid dangerous situations. Here are some tips.

The easiest way, and most efficient, to access snowbound country is with power. That means snow machines, tracked rigs, and other similar machines designed to flow effortless across deep snow. Not only will these machines enable you to cover a massive amount of country in a day's time, they will also let

WINTER HUNTING



*By Bob Robb*

## WINTER HUNTING



### *Getting about . . . from page 10*

you pack along some luxuries, and are a godsend when it comes time to pack game back to civilization.

There are two problems with these devices. First, they are not legal in all areas during hunting season. Many places have laws severely restricting how they can, and cannot, be used by hunters. Be sure to check state and province regulations, as well as contact public land offices, to make sure you know the rules.

Second, they can, and will, break down, and when they do, it is always at the wrong time. Always make sure your machines are in tip-top mechanical con-

dition before going hunting. Take along basic tools and spare parts (and some extra fuel), and know how to make basic repairs.

And always have survival gear aboard – including shelter, warm clothes, and a way to make a fire – in case something goes wrong and you are stuck out overnight.

On the above-mentioned muskox hunt, our native guides led us six hours from Coppermine in temperatures ranging from minus-30 to minus-50 degrees F. When we reached the area we were to camp, we found that one of the machines was in need of major attention.

Horses can be quite valuable when hunting in snow. The snow can get too deep for them, though, and you have to take care that you do not run them in areas where they will get overly tired or are in danger of floundering.

Horses that are working hard in snow and cold need to eat a lot to keep their energy level up. Because browse will be covered over by snow, that means packing in plenty of high-energy food – grain and oats - for them.

One year in Alaska I was on a horse-back moose hunt when we were hit with unseasonably subzero cold and deep snow two days from the lodge. The outfitter was forced to use his super cub to fly over us and drop sack after sack of grain to keep the horses from starving. Did I mention we shot three big bulls, and had to pack them back, too? It was quite the winter rodeo, I can assure you.

When riding in snow and cold, make sure the horses do not over-exert themselves and get too sweaty, which will force them to get too cold and, maybe, ill. The last thing you need on a trip like this is a sick, weak horse.

Snowshoes are a valuable snow-country hunting tool. They allow you to walk just about anywhere, and make packing heavy loads possible without you falling through the snow's crust.

There are several different types of snowshoes. For hunting, Sherpas are a great design. They are relatively short, making maneuvering easy, and take little effort when hiking. Regardless of the type of shoes you buy, make sure to add a very aggressive ("toothy") grip with

**Using horses on a hunting trip can be a mixed blessing (previous page).**

**Horses will reduce the effort of getting about, but when the snow flies things can start to become difficult. Horses in snow condition need much more fuel than mechanical rigs, such as the one below, and hauling large quantities of grain and fodder requires long range planning**



## WINTER HUNTING



Good snowshoes can save the day in many winter hunting situations. It is often remarkable how heavy a load you can carry and yet good snowshoes will keep you from breaking through the crust and have to start the laborious process of extricating yourself, load and all.



### Getting about . . . from page 11

your bindings. This will make it possible to climb steep hills and keep from skiing down inclines.

Most snowshoes come with a very non-aggressive binding designed more for recreational flat-trail walking. I've learned the hard way – from spring black

I'd rather snowshoe.

Layering properly is the key to active winter hunting. The secret to comfort is to manage moisture; that is, keep the body as dry as possible by wearing clothing designed to wick moisture away from the body. Begin with a wicking layer of Capilene, Thermax, or a similar synthetic fiber, and add addi-

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**In the middle of a winter hunt is no time or place to field test new equipment and deep snow does not forgive errors**

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bear hunts to winter hunts for ptarmigan – that aggressive bindings in hill or mountain terrain are absolutely essential.

Some hunters use cross-country skis to access back-country areas, but I have found their use limited to areas that have a lot of the flat, smooth terrain conducive to easy skiing. Personally,

tional layers as conditions dictate.

Deep snow creates challenges for hunters unlike those experienced before the white stuff falls. Because of the dangers of the cold, it is imperative you head out prepared for the worst. This is no time to field-test new equipment, or head out with gear not checked and repaired.

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# Reading Lessons

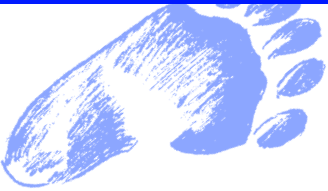
Using the benefits of a winter landscape to aid in hunting time and effort

By Wayne Norstrom



## BLACK BEAR

- Track is similar to a human footprint
- May or may not show claw marks





**S**now, fresh snow, just the thought causes a hunter's eyes to light up. With fresh snow mother nature's secrets are out in the open for everyone to read. Unfortunately not everyone reads that well.

A lifetime of living and hunting in the frozen north has given me ample reading lessons. I may not have been an honor student but over time I've learned the basics and maybe even graduated to a higher level.



Four or five inches of fresh snow makes for easy reading. The deer tracks along the edge of the field tell a lot. One big track and two dainty tracks tell of a doe and two fawns. The wandering tracks suggest feeding and it's easy to see where they pawed up some green clover and nipped off a few saskatoon twigs.

Traveling across the field is a larger track, taking longer steps and dragging




his toes, typical evidence of a buck. Along the field edge he beat up a big willow (leaving bark all over the snow) and further on he made a scrape, nipping an overhanging limb, as they always seem to do. Later he joins the family group, finds nothing there to his liking and wanders into a willow patch. This is easy reading, but try it with a strong wind.

Wind really alters wild life sign in snow, a lesson learned years ago. From the high, open sheep basins, to the exposed elk ridges to the bald headed prairie, wind is the enemy of tracking. Take a look at your own tracks the next time you are out in the wind and note how quickly they drift in. It happens fast. If you see a track in windy conditions, follow it until it's out of the wind and then form an opinion. Soft snow and freezing conditions does the opposite, it preserves a track. Poke the track and see if it's frozen. Look for ice crystals along the edge. Both indicate age.



## WHITETAIL DEER (bounding)

- Note spread toes and imprint of dewclaws



Often I strike off on a track without knowing if it's a male or female. This particularly applies to moose. Some hunters claim to be able to tell the sex from the track. I can't, however, the first time they urinate I can. Think of anat-

### SKUNK

- Hind footprint is similar to an infant human print
- Front feet leave claw prints
  - A running skunk leaves a set of prints in a diagonal line (see first two sets below)



### RACCOON

- A walking raccoon leaves overlapping tracks
- If the animal is running, front and hind prints are distinguishable

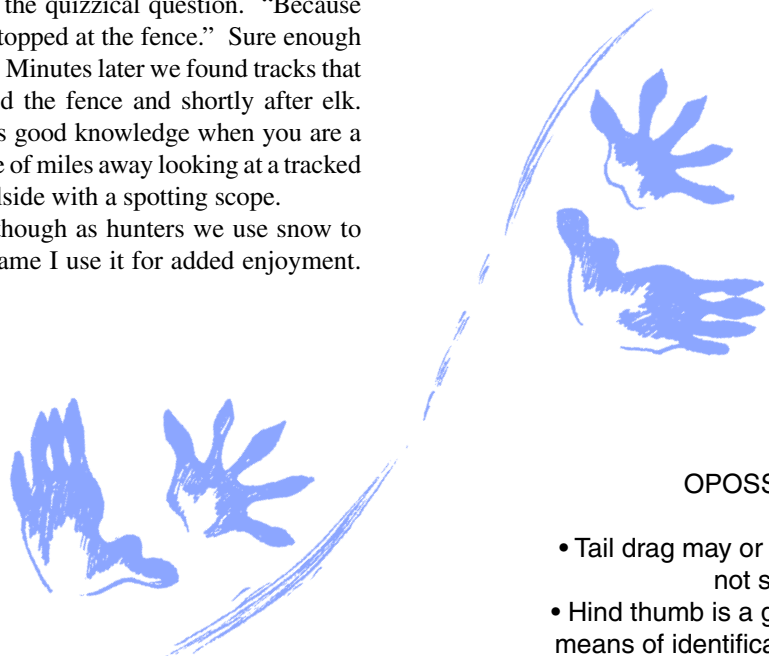
omy and it becomes clear. By design a male pees straight down while a female pees parallel to the ground. In the snow a male will leave a hole while a female will leave a line. If in doubt, study where the hole is in relationship to the tracks (they usually stop to pee). Now you know if you should continue tracking.

There are other little tricks to consider. Buck deer drag their feet leaving a drag mark pointing away from the direction they are traveling, however a moose steps more or less straight down and leaves a drag mark as he steps forward indicating his direction of travel. This is important in deep snow when loose snow falls into the track hiding the print.

Once while doing an elk survey from a helicopter in an area that was predominately ranch land, we came across an

area that had contained a lot of tracks of something. "I wonder if that's elk or cows?" came the question. "Cows," I replied. "How do you know Norstrom?" Came the quizzical question. "Because they stopped at the fence." Sure enough cows. Minutes later we found tracks that crossed the fence and shortly after elk. This is good knowledge when you are a couple of miles away looking at a tracked up hillside with a spotting scope.

Although as hunters we use snow to find game I use it for added enjoyment.



### OPOSSUM

- Tail drag may or may not show
- Hind thumb is a good means of identification



**HOUSECAT (left)**

- Similar to bobcat though much smaller and rarely found in remote areas

**BOBCAT (center)**

- Footprints larger and not as rounded as those of a house cat
- Never found near civilization

**COUGAR (right, not to scale)**

- Largest North American cat with 20-inches between strides
- If walking slowly, front and hind prints overlap (top)
  - If running, hind feet over reach front feet (see lower right)


I like seeing where the track of a mouse ends in a puff mark of snow with wing marks on either side. I like watching the wandering tracks of a hunting weasel or seeing the spot where a coyote bedded on a big round bale.

Mother Nature will always write a true story in the snow. We just have to learn how to read.

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# Wet and Cold - a deadly combination

Hunting in winter conditions requires extra-special preparation; clothing is one factor needing close attention; wicking moisture away from the skin is one key aspect of choice of material for underwear but there are others

*By Richard Thomas Wright*

Staying warm in winter hunting situations depends on two factors; insulation and fuel. To this we might add preparation, venting and moisture.

Fuel is simple. When leaving camp for a day's hunt eat a good breakfast, take a lunch packed with energy-based foods, a few extra snacks such as a chocolate bar or energy bars, a hot drink and maybe some rations in case you are stuck out longer than expected.

With your body producing heat and energy your next consideration becomes how to conserve heat while at rest and how to release excess heat when active. Insulation depends on moisture control so we need to consider venting, the release of excess heat that makes you sweat and quickly chills the body when you rest.

The traditional method of keeping warm was to put on wool or cotton long-johns, and then pile on the wool layers, perhaps ending up with a heavy wool jacket like a navy pea jacket. This made for a heavy outfit susceptible to moisture. Wet wool has little insulation. For years we turned to down-filled parkas, light clothing with incredible warmth, but again wet down is useless.

Today we have remarkable clothing that allows any outdoors person from the hunter to the cross-country skier to easily regulate body temperature.

WINTER HUNTING





## WINTER HUNTING



Keep out the wind and wet (previous page) when glassing, have an extra waterproof layer under your bum when calling, and use gaiters when you have to get about in fluffy snow

### *Wet and cold . . . from page 16*

The key is layering with plastic-based fibers, commonly called polyprop, fleece, plush or pile, perhaps supplemented with cotton, wool and down. The first layer must be material that will wick away body moisture, the sweat produced struggling up a hill. Various manufacturers make polyester briefs or long underwear that have high-wicking capabilities. Carefully check out your body's reaction to these materials with perhaps a pair of briefs before investing in more expensive long-johns. Comfort and durability vary. This first layer will depend on the temperature. Likely somewhere around  $-5\text{ C}$  you will want to start considering long underwear.

Silk is another option. It is strong and offers good insulation. Stay away from cotton which is quick to gather moisture and slow to dry. Wool is very slow to dry, retains 80 per cent water and does not wick.

This first layer wicks moisture outwards to the second layer of clothing. The lightest, warmest, least susceptible to moisture material you can wear is again polyester or polypropylene clothing. Shirts, pants, jackets and even socks are all available in this material in various weights.

The big advantage of poly is that it absorbs little water, dries quickly and even when wet offers insulation. Should you fall in a creek, or get soaked in a rainstorm, poly can be wrung out by

hand. It will retain approximately 10 per cent moisture, will still be comfortable to wear, will keep you warm, and will continue drying from body heat.

Consider wearing two light shirts or light jackets rather than one heavy one. Leave some room for air to insulate and circulate moisture. Don't make the clothing too tight.

The closer to the top layer you get, the more important venting becomes. It is much easier to open some zippers or buttons than to start taking clothes off.

Venting includes zippers at the neck, down the front, at the wrists, under the armpits, and even down pant legs. As the day warms and your exertion increases it

will now be easy to reach for appropriate zippers and let some hot air out, reducing moisture and the chance of becoming wet from the inside out.

Depending on the temperature and your activity you may opt for a third or fourth layer before the final outer protective cover. Hunters who plan on sitting and watching will need additional clothing, though everyone should have such clothing in their backpacks. A reflective sitting pad or chunk of foam will also help when you sit on the frozen ground for any length of time.

This third or even fourth layer may again be poly, though some traditionalists may opt for wool or down. This

## WINTER HUNTING



to leak. Check out this factor carefully before purchasing. These materials are expensive and you will want to keep it for some years. Waterproofing is also dependent on cleanliness so keep the coat or pants clean.

That leaves hands, head and feet. Gloves can be found in poly materials and wool is usually fine if you stay out of water. An excellent choice in cold weather is silk liner gloves then a glove or mitt insulated with poly covered with nylon or Gore-Tex. Silk liners will keep your hands warm even if the outer glove is removed.

You lose a lot of heat from your head so a good warm and waterproof head cover is a must. Poly is available and of course the good old wool toque with a nylon cover works.

By the time the temperature drops to  $-20$  or  $-30^{\circ}\text{C}$  it is time to consider a face covering, a snowmobile mask, a ski mask or balaclava. At  $-30$  with a breeze your face will freeze quickly. Keep a

### Wet and cold . . . from page 17

layer could be kept in your backpack for those long stops - or on the off chance you are stuck out overnight.

It is not unusual to have even five to six layers: Underwear, a light shirt, a vest of poly or down, a light shirt/

**Some simple planning in advance will keep you comfortable in the bush in winter and, after safety, comfort ranks high among the things needed for long time enjoyment**

jacket, a light jacket and a protective covering.

The final layer should be protective—windproof, waterproof, and tough enough to withstand snags on branches or fences. While nylon or rubberized material may seem like the first choice, remember neither will breath and chilling moisture will build up. It may work if it is loose fitting and you are standing still, but it is a poor choice except in specific instances or for an emergency bivouac.

The best choice is breathable, waterproof rainwear. While usually referred by the brand name Gore-Tex there are other variations that perform equally well. These materials do not perform well with pressure. In other words if you sit down and squeeze the fabric, or it is tight on shoulders where a rifle sling or pack straps cross it is more likely

silk balaclava in your pack or pocket.

A double pair of socks with leather boots will work until about  $-15$  or  $-20^{\circ}\text{C}$ , if you are walking. Gaiters will help keep snow out of your boots and will add lower leg insulation. Below that you will need felt-packs or snowmobile boots with good insulation and socks that wick moisture. Avoid boots with steel safety toes or steel sole shanks. They conduct cold quickly. If you stop for a while and get cold feet you could be in trouble. All of the new high-tec boots using the new technologies in materials and construction should be checked out for the conditions you expect to hunt in.

Remember that most of the frostbite we see is feet, hands and face. Keep them warm and covered. Plan ahead.

Energy, insulation, venting, moisture. Consider these four and you will be warm and safe during any hunting trip.



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# Winter Dangers

- can be avoided

*By Cody Beers*

Be Aware - winter can exact a heavy price from those who are not prepared to meet the season on its own terms

**M**aintaining a positive mental attitude is crucial in a winter survival situation. The ability to keep self-confidence when the situation seems dire is extremely important, but it's also worth being prepared for what might happen in the woods in winter.

One other thing is crucial, too. If possible, tell someone who cares where you are going and when you plan to return. That way, someone will look for you if you are not home on schedule.

Most survival situations last a relatively short time— usually less than 24 hours— according to Helen McCracken, outdoor skills and hunter education coordinator for the Wyoming Game and Fish Department.

"In order to survive, there are certain things we must provide for," she says. "We can live without oxygen for three minutes. We can live three hours in severe situations without shelter. We can live three days without water, and we can go three weeks without food. In a

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## WINTER HUNTING



Bob Robb photos

### Winter dangers . . . from page 20

survival situation, people need to be prepared to care for these areas— air, shelter, water and food."

Oxygen isn't usually something that preparation can handle in the woods, unless portable oxygen is carried into the back-country. Shelter, water and food are natural parts of any gear taken into the woods, McCracken says.

"The importance of shelter is to maintain our body's core temperature, which is 98 degrees," she says. "When our body core temperature drops below 98 degrees, we begin falling into different degrees of hypothermia."

"Shelter must provide a way to get out of the moisture and wet conditions.

It must provide a way to get out of the wind, which will drop our body core temperature. And, hopefully, shelter will provide a way for us to stay dry and warm."

McCracken suggests natural shelter— big rocks, caves or large canopy-sized trees— can help. "In deep winter, with proper knowledge, a snow cave can be built, too."

She suggests carrying a couple of black garbage bags - useful in so many ways. "It can be a raincoat. Cut three holes in a plastic bag, and it will stop rain, wind, sleet and snow. It'll conserve your body heat by trapping it inside the bag. It's black, and it'll collect solar energy which keeps us warm."

"You can also purchase space blankets, tube tents, ponchos, or you can use what you have in your own house like a black garbage bag," the outdoor survival instructor says. "You can even cut it open, run a string down through it and make a shelter or even a tent."

To return safely, without injury or ailment, from a hunt which results in a trophy such as the muskox shown on the previous page requires all the planning and skillful use of gear shown in the picture above

McCracken says black garbage bags are also handy, because they can be placed on the ground and sat on. "The garbage bag makes a nice vapor barrier," she says.

In a survival situation, it's important to know how to use space blankets.

"People have been found wrapped up in these blankets and frozen solid," she cautions. "Space blankets have a side that's silver, and that's to reflect heat. To use one, build a small fire and then open

level. In a place over 6,000 feet above sea level, you'd want to round up to 7,000 feet. Then, you'd boil the water for 10 minutes to make the water drinkable," she says.

Iodine tablets are another method. "Until recently, the tablets make the water distasteful. Now a neutralizing tablet can be added. It makes water easy to drink," McCracken says. "You can also carry a small amount of household chlorine bleach. With a commercial

All the various trials face you when you venture far from home in winter. Yet there is no need to get cold, wet, catch frostbite or other dread condition - just think about it.

the blanket so the heat can radiate off it and around you. That's how they work."

Water is extremely important in a survival situation. "It's important to carry water, but if you can't carry it with you, you need to take a way to purify the water," McCracken says.

In the year 2000, most fresh water contains Giardia, a microscopic parasite that attaches itself to the walls of human intestines if it's ingested. "It makes you sick, but it's curable," McCracken says.

A commercial water filter is a common method of purifying water, but there are other tried-and-true ways that have been used for years. "The oldest method is boiling. The formula for boiling water to make it safe for drinking is: Boil it three minutes at sea level and one minute for every 1,000 feet above sea

filter, be sure the filter is small enough to filter out Giardia."

Food is important in a survival situation, as long as it's high in calories.

"Carry something that will last indefinitely so it doesn't spoil. Calories are what fuels our internal furnace and keeps us warm. Hard candy is good for the sugar content, and some people carry powdered jello. They mix it with warm liquid, and with its high sugar content, it tends to warm up a person and give him or her energy."

"People who take care of these survival rules—the survival rules of three—tend to live to tell about it," McCracken says.

McCracken recommends carrying materials to start a fire two different ways in the woods. "I carry wooden

## WINTER HUNTING



### Winter dangers . . . from page 21

matches, and I carry a butane lighter in a pocket next to my chest so the butane won't gel," she says. "Wind-proof butane lighters work in areas with high wind and cold temperatures. Even if the flame goes out, the burner is still hot. These lighters are becoming more popular and more affordable."

Magnesium fire starters are also an option. "Magnesium burns very fast and very hot," McCracken says.

"I also usually carry fire-starting material, for example, commercially-

produced fire sticks, ground sawdust, cardboard mixed with candle wax, or cotton balls dipped in Vaseline petroleum jelly. I usually carry five or six cotton balls dipped in petroleum jelly in a 35 mm film container. They burn really well," she adds.

McCracken believes people should carry signaling materials into the woods.

"The universal signal for 'help' is three of anything, whether it's three fires or three shots or three of anything."

"The universal signal for 'I am coming' is two of anything," she adds.

"If you're using fire as a signal, use flame at night and smoke during the day. In the day, build three fires and place green foliage over them to make the smoke," McCracken says. "Signal mirrors can be handy, but they have limits to their value. If you're signaling from on top of a mountain and down, they might be useful. They are mostly useful in signaling aircraft."

A whistle is handy in the woods, too. "Your voice will only last for so long when you're calling for help," McCracken says. "A whistle will carry

farther, and you can blow it almost indefinitely. Carry a plastic whistle, because metal will freeze to your lips in the winter. Plastic won't."

In the outdoors, it's very important to dress in layers. See the article on page 14 of this issue of Western Hunting.

"I teach people to carry what'll keep them safe in the out-of-doors," she says. "What I carry won't keep me comfortable in the outdoors, but it'll keep me alive until I can be rescued."

First-aid materials should be carried in the winter, including adhesive bandages, first aid cream and aspirin. "It's important to carry a survival book, and one that's small enough to carry in your survival pack," McCracken says. "One of the first things that happens in a survival situation is that the person panics and gets confused. If that person can sit down and look at his or her survival manual, their thought process will get going, and they're going to be better off."

"The most important survival tool you've got is your brain. If you use your head and common sense, you will survive most emergency situations," she says.

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# CUBA: Sun, Sand—and Ducks?

*By Bill Otway*



**W**e had heard all these stories, tall tales perhaps, about the bird hunting available in Cuba. Then came the opportunity to check it out for ourselves.

With two of my buddies, Doug Michie and Don Heller, we left Vancouver for Toronto to connect on to Cuba for a duck hunt. Chuck Cronmiller arranged the trip for us, missed the flight from Vancouver and joined us later that night in Toronto. Our Cuban airlines flight left Toronto on time the next day and we arrived in Veradero on time. Representatives from the Gaviota Tour company met us in Veradero and helped us through customs and immigration. The whole pro-

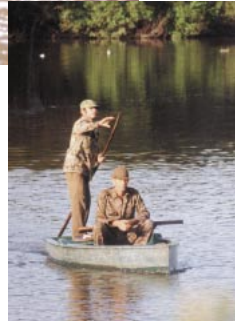
cess including baggage took less than an hour and moving the guns through took less than five minutes. We overnighted in Veradero, heading out to the hunting lodge in the morning.

At the hotel we met the balance of our hunting party, Ron and Patricia Potter and Bill and Dian Morris, all from Toronto. They had been in Cuba for the previous week doing the normal tourist thing of touring Havana and sunning on the beach.

The next morning after breakfast, and marvelously fresh squeezed orange juice, a short trip back to the airport and we boarded helicopters. The one and a half hour flight to our first hunting camp was a treat we



Climbing up from a boat into the blinds was a new experience for many shooters, as was shooting down on ducks as they flew past. Most of the bag was Bahamian pintail, blue winged teal and shovellers.



The blind in this case was another new experience, it was situated in the middle of a small group of mangrove trees in the center of a pond and you actually had to climb up into it from the boat. I found myself in the unique position of shooting down on many of the birds as they came past and for those that have never done this, believe me, it is different from the normal duck hunt.

had not expected and it provided us with a first class view of a good portion of Cuba. We flew to the hunting resort El Taje (pronounced El Tawhee) just outside the city of Trinidad.

On arrival, after a tour of the facility, assignments to our comfortable rooms and introductions to the staff we sat down to a great lunch. Each of us was assigned his or her own personal guide, none of whom spoke English. We had an official translator who spoke excellent English and was of great assistance to us throughout the trip. In truth however, we had no problem communicating with our guides whom we spent a great deal of time alone with. It is amazing what you can communicate with the odd Spanish word, the odd English word and sign language.

After lunch, those of us who had not brought ammunition made arrangements to purchase it at the lodge. At that time, our first trip, all that was available was Cuban ammunition and some Spanish made stuff. Both proved more than adequate. On my last trip there were good supplies of Flocchi ammunition available also.

At 4 PM. we all headed out into the fields adjoining the lodge for a hunt that was a first for all of us. A Guinea fowl hunt. It was very much like pheasant hunting in a cornfield where you line up all the hunters in a row and then walk through the field and have the birds all break at the end.

These Guinea fowl fly like pheasants and, as we discovered, they run like pheasants also. It was a great experience and we ended up with 24 birds for the exercise, and to their credit, the ladies got their share and then some. Much time taking photos and examining the birds which, as noted, were new to most of us, at least as a wild bird to hunt. Great sport and as we found out the next day, great eating as well.

Throughout the trip we were pleased to note that a portion of our bag ended up on the next days menu which meant we all got to taste the fruits of the hunt. All the meals at the camps rivaled or were superior to that seen at the best hotels.

We were up at four the next morning ready for the first duck hunt, a 30-minute drive from the lodge. Then came what I considered, and still consider, the highlight of the trip, the guide poling the boat out in the pitch black through the mangrove tunnels to the blinds.

You are moving quietly through this wonderful mangrove marsh, pitch dark, and around you are the sounds of birds and other marsh creatures the likes of what we never hear at home in Canada. It creates an experience long to be remembered.

At our blind and throughout this trip, I never ceased to marvel at the skill of our guides finding our hunting spot in the pitch black, through, what to me in the daylight, was a total maze. They never missed however.

The primary species available throughout the hunt were blue winged teal, shovellers and Bahamian pintail. These latter are like a miniature Pintail with a white cheek patch. Daily limits were 15 per day. In addition you were allowed a further 15 Fulvous or Mexican tree ducks. Both species were in the area but unfortunately I never had a shot at one.

Following the morning shoot, a hearty lunch and short siesta, it was back to the Guinea Fowl shoot. We shot ducks again the next morning and then loaded up for the trip by van over to the next hunting camp of Manate' (Manatee).

We took time out for a tour of the city of Trinidad and visited a cigar factory where they were hand rolling the famous Cuban cigars; had a drink of fresh squeezed sugar cane juice (too sweet for me); and visited the local cathedral. This latter was especially interesting in that instead of the marble you see in most cathedrals, everything here was made of wood. Exquisitely carved and polished wood. A sight well worth seeing.

We had a most pleasant three-hour drive through the countryside of the province of Sancti Spiritus and a real good look at rural Cuba. We arrived at Manate' in the late afternoon, another first class facility and after settling in, headed out for an afternoon dove shoot. The doves came in the thousands, and



my shells went in the same way. It has long been my feeling that Doves were created specifically for the benefit of the ammunition companies. The other guys and gals could shoot so we ended up with more than enough for the next days dinner. The limit was 50 a day and try as I might I could not get them to reduce it to 5 so I could at least have a shot at getting my limit.



Transportation can include some antique vehicles which are of great interest to many visitors.

The next morning it was off to the ocean mangrove marsh and added to the other early morning ingredients was a marvelous display of fireflies seemingly lining the mangrove tunnels as we moved out into the marsh. This is a far bigger area than the lake at El Taje' so we were well scattered around. Shooting was superb for the three days we shot here and we shot a different blind every day. When the flight slowed down, the guides poled us around and we jump shot birds from the boat.

We shot doves every afternoon (well I shot at doves every afternoon). On one day we took off right after lunch and drove over to Lake Zaza, one of the largest lakes in Cuba. A couple of us tried our hand at fishing.

While we did not do any damage we did talk to one angler who had a stringer of 12 bass all in the 5 to 6 LB bracket. The guides traded a case of beer to another fisherman for 4 bass, one which weighed 8lbs and which went down well at supper that evening.

One point of note is that the guides not only acted as guides but they were our bird dogs as well. They had an

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uncanny ability to spot where a bird went down and then find it. Over the whole trip, I lost only one bird and that one hung up in the top of a tree. We dropped doves into some places I would have been surprised to see a successful dog retrieve, but these Cuban guides got every one.



One of the famous hand rolled Cuban cigars in the course of construction (top) and squeezing the juice out of sugar cane.

Friday evening, our final evening in camp, the crew roasted a pig on an open spit, brought in a local band and we had a farewell party. It made for a perfect end to a perfect trip.

I brought a cooler down with me and took a bunch of the birds back. They were well taken care of by the people in Cuba, kept well chilled for the last day at camp and put in the freezer for the last night in Veradero. There was no problem in bringing them back into Canada and they arrived home in great condition.

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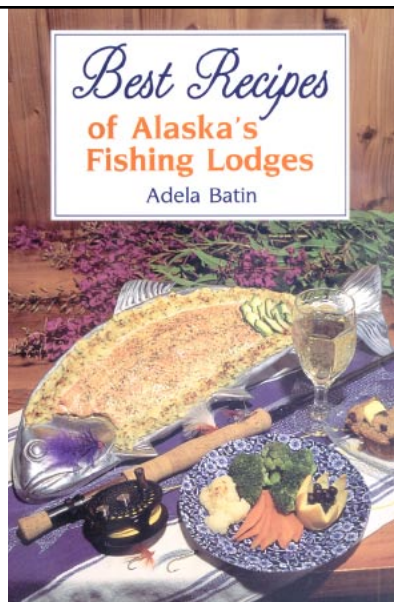
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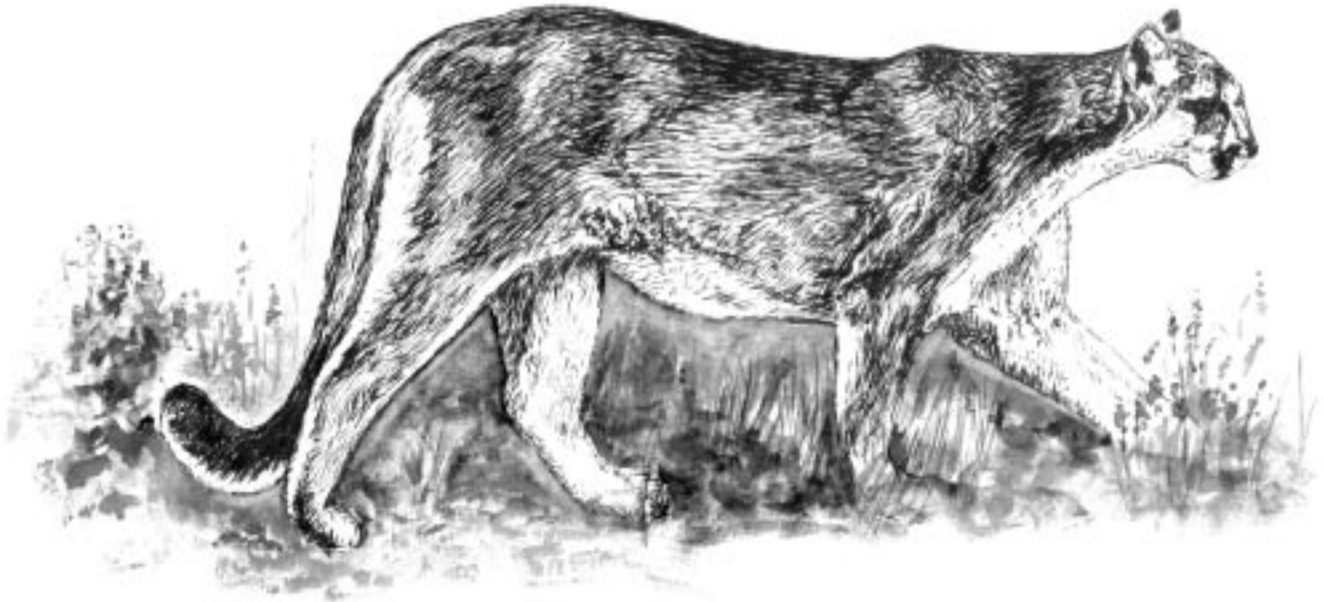
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# PREDATOR



Yet a source of outdoor magic and wonder

By Henry L. Frew



cougar country

Only the big bears loom any larger on the predator landscape than cougars in North America. Our cougar is found only in the Western Hemisphere, from Patagonia in southern Argentina to northern British Columbia, leaving the rest of the planet to other breeds of big cats.

Historically the cougar inhabited North America from the Atlantic to the Pacific and once had one of the most extensive ranges of all our land animals. Today it is gone from much of the eastern half of the continent, but is doing well in many parts of the west. In some places it is doing very well. Taxonomists recognize some 13 sub-species north of

Mexico, with many of them believed to be extinct today.

All of the cat family (*Felidae*) are the most specialized of the carnivores and our mountain lion *Felis concolor* is no exception. Cats in general vary in size from the domestic house cat to the lions and tigers of Africa and Asia. But they all have similar structure and habits.

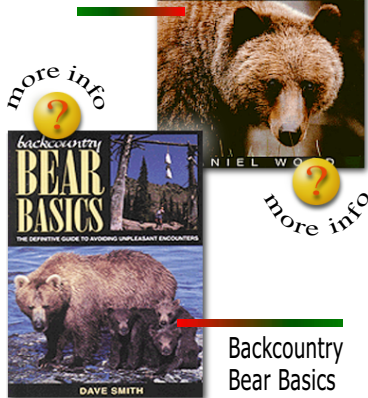
They all have short, broad heads; they have short muzzles and a distinct chin; they have specialized teeth for biting, shearing, and bolting their meat. Their eyes look forward, have large pupils enabling them to see well in low light conditions and hunt at night.

Cougars have quite distinctive feet and legs. With the hind legs longer than

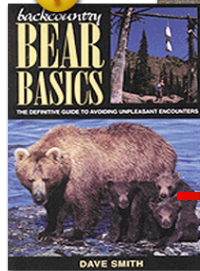


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Bears **BEARS**

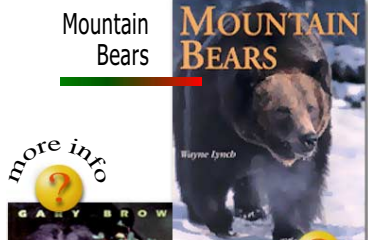


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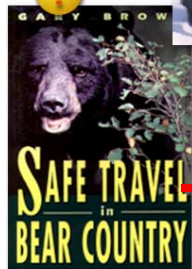


Backcountry Bear Basics

Mountain Bears **MOUNTAIN BEARS**

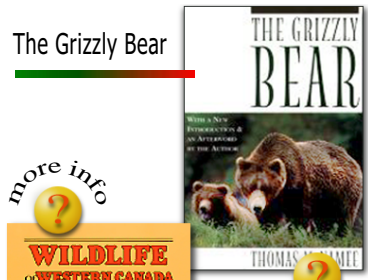


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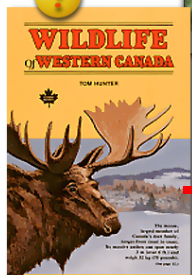


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## cougar country

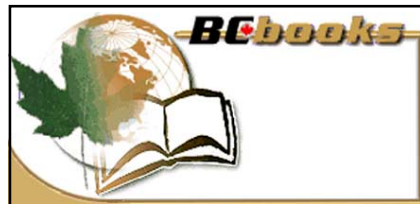
the forelegs the hindquarters stick up above the height of the shoulders, creating a distinctive silhouette. The paws are distinctive with five digits in the forepaw and four in the hind. The claws are retractable and used for holding prey, and when climbing, not for locomotion.

With a massive skull, relative to the overall size, the cougar is one of the most specialized carnivores. The mouth contains 30-teeth, 16 on top and 14 on the lower jaw. The powerful canine teeth are compressed when compared to other similar animals, but immensely strong.

Size of cougars is a variable with one Arizona cougar weighing in at some 276-pounds. At the northern end of the range there have been a number of cougars killed in British Columbia weighing in over 200-pounds. But, in British Columbia, the average male weighs in more at some 125-pounds and the average female at 100-pounds. This size variation throughout its range is one of the arguments used for the establishment of sub-species.

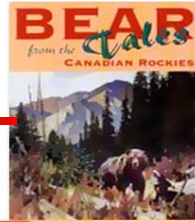
Throughout the cougar range there is also a great variation in coat color. Animals can be seen which are slate gray (blue), through brown-brown, reddish-brown to a rufous brown (red). All have light colored underparts ranging from a dark cream to almost white. The upper lip, the ear-tips and tip of the tail are dark. Kittens have black or brown spots and dark rings on the tail, all of which fade out by the end of their first year.

There is no indication of a general molt of the short, and coarse, fur on a cougar. Rather, there is a gradual loss of individual hairs, and a regrowth of new. In summer the coat overall indicates a brightness and shine often missing from the winter coat which appears longer and darker.



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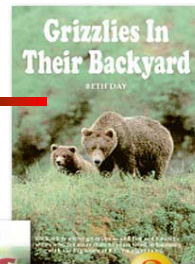


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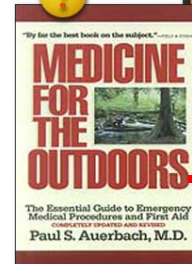


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# V I D E O P O R T A L



## Of Cougars & Hounds - Interviews with Dan Lay

- What to look for in a good cougar hound
- A typical cougar hunt using hounds
- Why cougars are hunted with hounds
- Cougar populations in North America
- Raising and training cougar hounds
- The dangers of hunting cougars
- Confronting a cougar
- Cougars in residential areas
- Dealing with problem cats
- The "hazing" technique
- Hunting cougar - a family tradition





# Cat Characteristics



cougar country

Cougar - family life is polygamous and female tends young alone

Individual cougars occupy a home range of some five square miles and upward for females. A female with kits to feed needs a larger territory (with big kittens this could be over 25-square miles) than a lone female, so there is a certain fluctuation of female territories over a period of years. The territory of a male is much larger than that of an individual female and overlaps the territories of a number of females.

With abundant cougar numbers individuals will mark the boundaries of their home range diligently and regularly; this is done mainly by scraping bundles of leaves and twigs together then urinating or defecating on the bundles. When cougar numbers are low this practice is not so well applied and one instance of a male cougar living on a small island was noted where this animal never marked his territory at all as there were no other cougars present.

Female cougars first breed between two and three years of age. If they are born during the summer, they are most likely to breed for the first time during the winter following their second birthday. Breeding takes place in any month of the year and successful litters have been recorded from every month of the year.

A gestation period of some 82-98 days is usual and litters of one to six kittens have been recorded. The six-kitten litter was recorded in Utah and it is usual that one to four kittens is a normal litter.

For a den to house her kittens a female may choose little more than an indentation in a rock, often protected by tree roots or windfalls. The kittens are born with their eyes shut, but the eyes will open some 10-14 days after birth. Kittens nurse for a minimum of six-weeks, if they are to survive, while at six-weeks they are capable of eating meat and being weaned. Pre-natal mortality is considered to be in the 15% range. On average kittens are weaned during the two-three month-of-age period.

Most family groups of mother and kittens stay together for two years, meaning that those females breed every two years. But females can breed every year and, when circumstances are right, do so. As soon as the kittens are large enough to be led out by the mother she takes them to her kills. While the family is feeding



## cougar country

### Cougar politics - management in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Starvation may well be the most important mortality figure in overall cougar management. Often it is starving, thin and weakened cougar that come into conflict with humans, plus it is unknown what the actual mortality rate from starvation is. The only measurable population loss is the number killed by hunters.

Between the two mortality extremes falls everything from kitten mortality to one cougar killing another. Cougar management today requires the professionals to have their professionalism rode over roughshod in the search for political correctness while social, political, and administrative considerations often carry more weight than scientific, ecological and economic concerns.

Data based management proposals are barely listened to in the face of emotional posturing from those who wish to impose their form of ethical standards on the community as a whole.

Many jurisdictions have discussed, and some have mistakenly enacted, legislation to ban cougar hunting on the

grounds of the species being endangered. In fact the cougar is more endangered by the expansion of human settlement and the fragmentation of habitat that it is by hunting.

There is considerable anecdotal evidence to suggest that where there are active trail hound groups operating cougar are less of a threat to human activities. This evidence suggests that cougars which would otherwise be close in to human habitation stay well out when they are chased at regular intervals by those who run hounds - a group of the original practitioners of catch and release.

Those who oppose scientific, best use, management regimes fail to acknowledge that the cougar is a superb predator, a killer. As such an animal, if we want it around for the next millennium, it will have to be managed if for no other reason than to keep its conflicts with humans to a minimum. The most economic method of management control is for management agencies to make use of recreational hunters with all the built in safeguards inherent in modern game management.

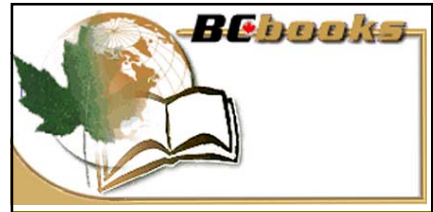
on that kill they find somewhere close by to provide temporary shelter.

When females are ready to mate evidence suggests they go looking for the male whose territory crosses their own. If a second male becomes involved there is likely to be a fight which can end in the death of one of the males. After a short period of living with the male the female will return to her own territory and maintain a solitary existence until her next litter is born.

Males have been known to kill, and on occasion eat, litters of cougar kittens. Such action brings the female back into the breeding cycle giving increased opportunity for the male to pass on his genes.

Young males do not enter the breeding population before three years of age. This means there is a block of time between two and four years when the young male is traveling on the lookout for a permanent home range. This is the most vulnerable period, before old age, in the life of the male cougar.

During this wandering time the young male is in unknown territory, running into clashes with humans and others who would prefer him elsewhere. If he is in the home range of a dominant male he will be lucky to get out alive, but if he lands in the territory of an old dying male he might get lucky and succeed to his own home range.



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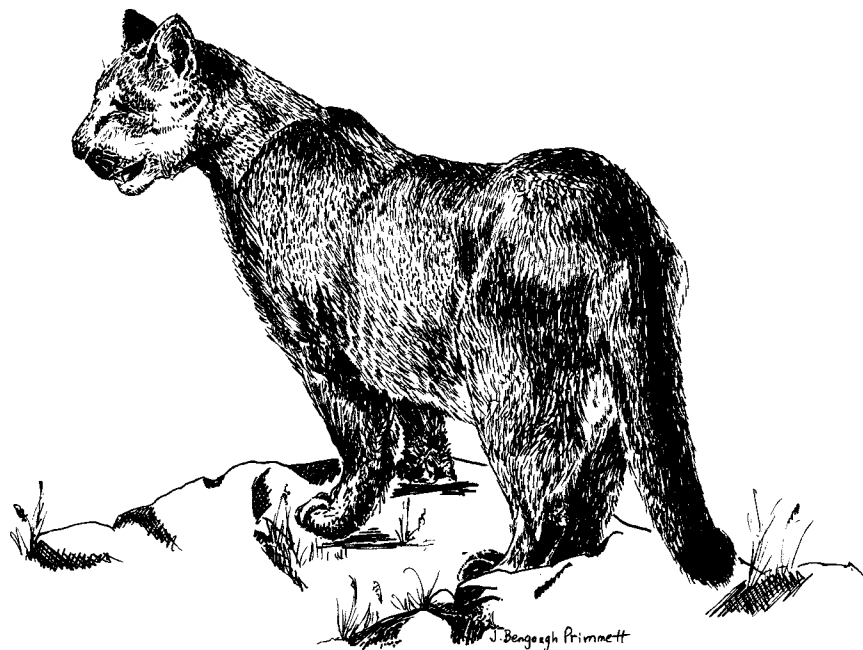
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# Cougar habits and habitat



Above all else a cougar needs a resident food supply if it is to claim territory as its home range



cougar country

Throughout its range cougar territories and populations are governed by the abundance of the major prey species of the area - usually deer. Cougars have been noted from sea level to heights of some 10,000-feet. These height variations are predominately seasonal as they come down to the valley bottoms in the winter as the snow covers the deer browse forcing the deer from the mountain slopes. When spring arrives and the snow melts the deer move back up the mountain and the cougar go with them.

So cougar is a resident where there is a deer population, cover, whether this cover is forest, swampland, mountain terrain, or a mixture of terrain. While deer figure prominently in the cougar lifestyle the cougar is a predator of predators and lives its life at the peak of the food chain - the only place for such an opportunistic feeder.

Despite popular misconceptions cougar rarely if ever lie in wait beside a trail for potential prey to come along. The normal kill takes place after a stealthy stalk with a final rush of from 20 to 30-feet and a jump onto the shoulders of the intended victim. Once mounted on the shoulders and neck the cougar will attempt to hold the head with a fore-paw while biting down into the vertebrae close to the join of head and neck.

It is not unheard of for the larger prey species to either escape such an

attack, albeit damaged, or to injure the cougar severely during the struggle. If the cougar misses in its first strike it rarely will continue with a pursuit and rather start a whole new stalk on a new intended victim.

Porcupines are prime cougar targets with the cat rolling them over and eating from the underpants. Quills and bits of quills seem to make little difference and cougars seem capable of digesting these but do suffer from quills stuck in their face as the result of meeting a porcupine. One study showed mule deer, porcupines and grass formed 86-100% of the cougar diet in that area.

In various areas the following results have been obtained on cougar diet: In Oregon elk made up some 11%, while it was 9% in Washington, 2% in Utah and Nevada, and a whopping 24% in Idaho. In some parts of B.C. moose can be a considerable part of the cat diet. In high snowshoe hare years they can play a significant role. All other small animals are taken as the opportunity occurs.

Old cougars losing their edge, and young males in search of a home range, are most often the animals causing problems for humans. Both categories will become semi-resident where the pickings are easy and good. Chickens, calves, sheep, household pets, are all easy meat for a cougar that will stay as long as the supply lasts.



**T**alk with the anti-hunters about mountain lion hunting, and they'll fill you full of Toro poo-poo. "It's not fair, chasing them with dogs and running them up trees," they'll scream. "You cruelly kill them just for fun, and never eat them. Besides, they help the deer and elk herds by killing only the sick and weak."

The truth is that mountain lion numbers are rapidly increasing throughout the cat's western range. Modern sport hunting, conducted under strict guidelines with specific harvest quotas set for both males and females, does not adversely affect cat populations. In states where lion hunting has been eliminated, like California, or where the use of hounds has been banned, like Washington did in 1996, lion numbers are booming. When that happens, big game species suffer. And it's not just the weak and sick that are killed, but old bucks and rams, as well as does, cows, and ewes, and new-born fawns and calves, too. And that baloney that cougar meat is not fit to eat? It is some of the finest eating meat I've ever tasted.

I took my first cat – but not my first cat hunt -- in December 1999, in western Montana, with wildlife outfitter Rick Wemple, Jack and Shirley Wemple just sold the business to son Rick and retired after 32 years in the outfitter business in the same location. The outfit also runs superb wilderness hunts for elk, mule deer, and black bear in Idaho and western Montana, antelope in eastern Montana, and the accredited Northwestern Outfitter Guide and Cook School in



## **COUGAR HUNT- snow is not necessary but it sure helps for success**

*Western lion hunters have never had the opportunities  
for successful lion hunting that they have today*



*cougar country*

*By Bob Robb*



summer. Their observations on mountain lions in their area is a mirror of what I hear throughout the West.

“In the late 1970’s and early 1980’s, the cat populations in our area were down somewhat,” Jack said. “Today, we have an extremely high cat population, as well as more cat hunters. The hunting has never been better.”

“We’ve noticed that deer numbers have dropped in our hunting area as the cat numbers have increased,” Rick said. “The rule of thumb is that a mature cat will take a deer a week, and that seems to be about right, from what I can see.” Rick has annually spent over 200 days in the field in his area for over 20 years, which gives him a unique perspective on game population fluctuations.

In most states, lion seasons are open for several months, from early winter through early spring. Some states have application deadlines to obtain a lion license – in Montana; the application deadline is Aug. 31 – while others will sell you a license right up until you begin hunting. Idaho, for example, requires only that you purchase your lion license at least two days before your



cougar country

Three hours hard work in a snowstorm was needed to get this 120-pound cougar out to the truck

With the exception of southern-tier states like Arizona, New Mexico, and portions of southern Utah – where guides have hounds trained to trail cats on dry ground – the hunting is dictated by snow conditions. You need enough snow to be able to locate a fresh track the dogs can

## Hounds are essential for the successful lion hunter to reach his quarry

hunt begins. Outfitters you are considering can help sort all this out. Guided lion hunts generally cost between \$2500 and \$3500, and success rates are usually 90% or more. If you don’t get a cat on your scheduled hunt, some outfitters will have you back at no charge to try again later that season.

follow to be able to catch a cat, but not so much that it is impossible to navigate the terrain on foot.

Generally speaking, you travel back roads by truck or snow machine until a fresh track is cut, then dogs are turned loose and the chase begins. And don’t think it will be a cakewalk. Be prepared



## cougar country

to hike a lot, in steep country, in snow. "A chase can last from as short as 15 minutes (highly unusual) to all day," Rick said. "It depends on the cat. A hungry lion will run a lot further than a full cat, for example. And we don't tree them all." Chase is a great word for cat hunting," Rick said. "The older, mature cats have more tricks than you can shake a stick at to lose the dogs. They'll back-track you, jump off short cliffs, walk logs across rivers, hide in caves, and do all sorts of tricks. They're really pretty amazing. The only reason they go up the tree is because they're a shorter-winded animal than the dogs, so when they get too tired to keep running they bay up."

Our hunt was typical. In late morning of day four, guide Tom Worthington cut the track while I was with Rick on another track that we eventually lost. After Tom cut the dogs loose guide Tjaden Mallory joined him. As they trailed the dogs over steep, snow-covered ridges and down into deep draws, I paralleled them on the road. When I could hear the dogs barking treed at the bottom of a river canyon, guide Dan Wiediger and I took off to the sound. When we got there Tom, Tjaden and two dogs had the lion treed. Unfortunately, the cat was in a spruce so thick I couldn't get a bow shot at it. It was getting late, so the guides beat on the tree with big sticks to get the cat to move. He did, jumping clean out of the tree. We turned the hounds loose and followed as fast as we could over the slippery rocks and blow-downs, across a partially-frozen creek, and up the other side before finding the lion treed once again. In the fading light I was able to find some decent footing and an open shooting lane.

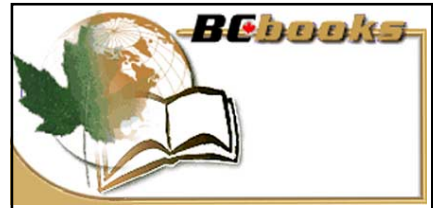
When it was all over, it was slap dark. We then struggled for three hours in a spitting snow storm to haul 120 lbs. of lion, our gear, the dogs, and ourselves along one of the nastiest, brushiest creek bottoms I've hiked through in a long time. The fresh, slick as motor oil snow made the footing treacherous. I fell several times, breaking my bow in the process.

Mountain lion hunting is exciting, fun, and a lot tougher than most people think. With numbers booming, and urban human/lion conflicts rapidly increasing, there's never been a better time to run to the sound of the hounds.

### Get in Shape for Cat Hunting

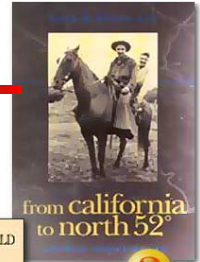
As I quickly discovered, cat hunting can be very hard work. Sure, you might spend days driving backcountry roads looking for a track, but when you find one and the chase is on, you simply cannot be in too good a shape. That means a pre-hunt physical conditioning program centered on increasing your aerobic capacity, and strengthening your legs. Jogging and hiking/running up hills or stadium steps is excellent. The stair machine at the gym is also good. Try and do things that emulate what you'll be doing on the hunt – climbing and hiking. When it is all said and done with, you'll be glad you did.

Wildlife Outfitters: Rick Wemple,  
1765 Pleasant View Dr., Victor, MT  
59875; 1-888/642-1010;  
406/642-3262; 642-3462 fax;  
e-mail: HYPERLINK  
mailto:SelwayI@AOL.com.

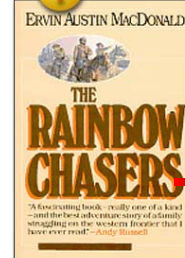


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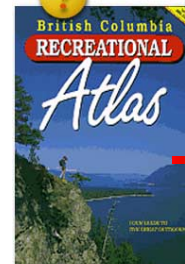


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Alberta Recreational Atlas



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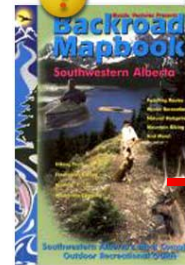


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# GAME TO COOK

By Adela Batin



In my search for cougar recipes, I've realized a simple fact: there aren't many published recipes for cougar.

Probably for two reasons: the meat is quite a delicacy, and cougar are quick on their feet! Here's a wonderful recipe shared by my good friend, outdoor writer and hunter, Bob Robb.

## Jack Wemple's Mountain Lion Steak Surprise

- 2 Mountain Lion Steaks (1 lb), cut 1-inch thick
- 1 cup milk
- 2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
- Garlic powder
- Johnny's Seasoning Salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$  can of beer
- Flour
- Vegetable oil

In a 9x9" flat glass baking pan, combine mixture of milk, Worcestershire sauce, garlic powder and Johnny's Seasoning Salt to taste, and a half can of beer. Lay mountain lion steaks in mixture and marinade for 2 hours.

Roll steaks in seasoned flour, and fry slowly in vegetable oil until just done in the center (don't overcook!)

Serve with green salad, garlic bread, and a baked potato or scalloped potatoes for one of the most incredible meals you've ever eaten!

Serves 2



Lawry's makes a wonderful assortment of liquid marinades, which I love to use on game. I keep a selection on hand, because they make meal preparation quick and easy. My favorite is the mesquite, which is perfectly suited for cougar.

## Mesquite Mountain Lion Steaks

- 2 Mountain Lion Steaks (1 lb), cut 1-inch thick
- 1 bottle Lawry's Mesquite Liquid Marinade
- Flour
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 teaspoon bacon fat

Marinate steaks in liquid marinade for 2-3 hours. Dry steaks and flour both sides of meat. Fry in skillet with oil and bacon fat over medium heat just until done, don't overcook! Serve with Togiak Twice-Baked Potatoes.

Serves 2

## Togiak Twice-Baked Potatoes

- 3 large baker potatoes
- $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. salt
- $\frac{1}{8}$  tsp. pepper
- 2 T. butter
- 2 T. milk
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup sour cream
- 2 T. Parmesan cheese
- 2 slices cooked bacon, crumbled
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup grated Cheddar cheese

Bake potatoes in 400 degree oven for 1 hour or until done. Cut potatoes in half lengthwise and scoop out insides, leaving shell. Prepare as for mashed potatoes. Whip potatoes with salt, pepper, butter and milk. Stir in sour cream and beat until well-mixed and smooth.

Refill potato shells. When all the shells are filled, sprinkle tops with a little parmesan cheese, crumbled bacon pieces and cheddar cheese. Bake at 350 degrees until hot and cheese melts.

Serves 6

... from page 36

If you have a bit more time to prepare your meal, and more folks to share that precious cougar meat with, try this recipe:

### Cougar Swiss Steak

- 1½ pounds Mountain Lion Steak, cut 1¾-inch thick
- 3 tablespoons flour
- 2 teaspoons onion salt
- 1 tablespoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon pepper
- 2 tablespoons shortening
- 1 16-ounce can tomatoes, cut up or stewed
- 2 6-ounce can tomato paste
- 3 medium onions, sliced
- 3 bell peppers, red and green, chopped
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tablespoon beef base
- ½ cup water
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch

Cut meat into six serving-size pieces; pound with meat tenderizer.

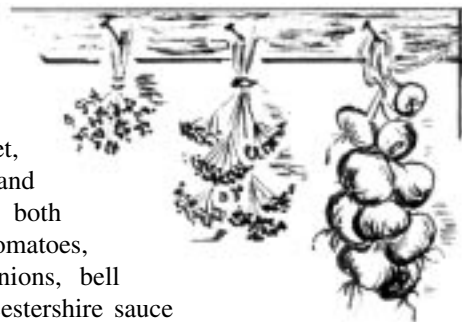
Combine flour, onion salt, garlic powder and pepper. Dredge meat on both sides through mixture.

In a deep skillet, heat shortening and brown meat on both sides. Add tomatoes, tomato paste, onions, bell pepper and Worcestershire sauce over the top of the meat. Cover and let simmer 1 to 1½ hours until tender.

Mix beef base with water and cornstarch, stirring until dissolved. Add mixture to skillet, let simmer, stirring occasionally, until gravy thickens.

Serve with mashed potatoes or Togiak Twice-Baked Potatoes.

Serves 6



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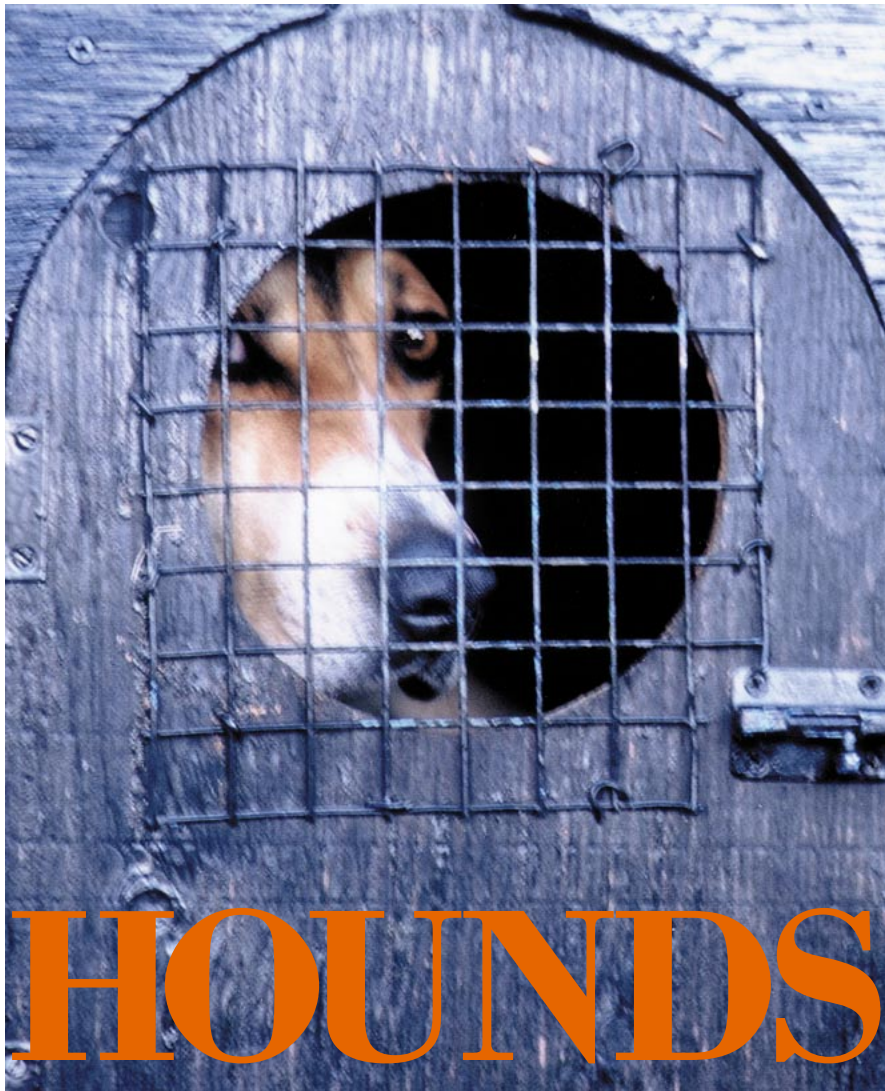
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cougar country

## St. Hubert would still recognize the breeding in our cougar hounds

*By Hamish Farquharson*

**D**ogs, one branch of the beasts of prey, according to best scientific estimates have been with us for some 60 million years. From these primeval animals came the family we call *Canidae*, canines, which includes all the dogs and wolves. Scientific conjecture has it that the first canines were closely related to the prehistoric *Cynodictis* despite it being an animal of short legs and long tail.

Some time later wolves were the predominant dog type but by the time of the Stone Age, men had selectively bred dogs for their own uses. Remains of dogs found in the encampments of stone-age

hunters indicates animals well removed from the wolf and similar to those semi-wild pariah dogs of some Oriental countries of today.

During those early breeding efforts no value was placed on breed standards, pedigrees and pure breeding as we do today. At that time a dog was valued for ability alone and that ability alone decided whether it was fit to pass on its genes to the next generation.

Scenthounds have been with us in some form for thousands of years, as evidenced by available artifacts from the Phoenicians of the 2<sup>nd</sup>. Millennium BC. The modern cougar hound has arguably

the most melodious voice in the dog world; a strength and courage the equal of any; yet an ancestry disappearing into our hidden past, but with none of the more modern faults created by the standardizing of breeding for the dog show circuit.

More than 3,000 years ago scent-hounds were selected from the old mastiff stock. They were chosen for the power of their nose and the tenacity they applied to remaining on the scent and seeing it through to the end.

Over years the ferocity of the mastiff was bred out of those chosen for scent-hound work resulting in the kinder



cougar country

Working hounds need to be well fed on a nutritious diet if they are to give of their best in a long chase in winter conditions

## Your own cougar hound

So you think you might like to keep a cougar hound? Give it a bit more thought. Good cougar hounds are big dogs; they take a lot of keeping.

If you live anywhere near suburbia then the general recommendation is that you don't keep a working hound. Why? Well it is usual to want to remain on reasonably friendly terms with your neighbors. If your neighbors are not into big, noisy, rambunctious dogs, baying at the moon, baying at anything using a siren, baying at a passing cat, baying at a passing pedestrian - get the picture?

Working hounds need lots of exercise. They need large runs, bigger than a city lot. They need walked, and run, regularly. That means more than a quick walk round the block once a week.

Cougar hounds need a big investment in time and money. In our society, time is money. This just compounds your investment.

A decent pup from working parents, which indicates that the pup should have potential, will cost you some \$500.00. The other alternative is to go to a recognized trainer and buy a started dog that has been given all the basics, that will cost you in the region of some \$5,000.00. Why the big increase? Every \$500.00 pup does not make the grade, is not suitable for a family pet, as are some failed retrievers, and so has to be put down. Then we have the cost of keeping and growing the pup. Then we have that "time is money" thing, and your hound has had all his basic training. All that basic training eats up time.

Add on all the extras: transporting crates, dog shelters, dishes and brushes, all these little bits add up, then the vet bills. If you have a multi-thousand dollar investment in a hound what's another thousand or two in vet bills? And accidents do happen, just ask a cougar hound owner.

temperament seen in modern scent-hounds. This selective breeding for desired traits included such benefits as hunter control of the dogs while hunting.

As with other things the scent-hounds of Europe originate with Celtic breeding. Mastiffs of the Alaunt type were bred by the Celtic clans prior to the time of the Roman Empire, mainly for use in warfare. Today only the Celtic tribes of Brittany, Ireland and Britain have survived to give us their legacy of language, culture and magnificent hounds.

Prior to the invention and use of gun-powder hounds were used to search out and chase game until the hunter could come up and kill the game with arrow or spear. Other than that, the dogs themselves had been trained to pull down and kill the game.

Modern hounds go back to the product of the patron saint of hunting, St. Hubert. He was born in what is called France today around 656 AD, son of the Duke of Guienne, became the Bishop of



cougar country

Liege, and was dedicated to hunting in all its forms.

St.Hubert hounds were the original black and tan, medium sized animals, with a heavy body which was longer than it was high, and with heavy heads. They were slow and methodical in their work and noted for a beautiful voice and extraordinary scenting ability, these animals were the direct ancestors of today's bloodhound.

ing on horseback was stopped, further reducing the need for hounds. Few hound breeds ever developed as family pets, the bloodhound being one exception.

In North America the old lines from Europe were further specialized over the last 400-years to produce the varieties we have today. There can be considerable debate as to what is the best cougar hound but certainly the breed which become known as the Majestic

**In Europe the large frame working hounds are in serious decline, let us try to keep them in North America**

A variety of variations on the St.Hubert hound had appeared by the 8<sup>th</sup> Century all intended for specific, special, often localized, uses. A number of types of hounds were developed to hunt in packs and were kenneled together in groups. These particular types were selected for their non-quarrelsome behavior as a major trait. Regions developed their own types to suit their own conditions.

France is still the predominant country for scenthounds and boasts most of the recognized breeds today. This is natural as the vast variety of woodland which extended across what is France today was the type of terrain which made scenthounds a necessity for the hunter.

In more recent times the larger European hounds have slowly declined as hunting lands were divided into smaller and smaller parcels. In some areas hunt-

Tree Hound is right up there.

The Majestic stands some 24 1/2-30-inches at the shoulder and weighed in at some 75-110-pounds. The males are never under 100-lbs. and more often will go well over this weight.

With a short, thick, dense coat the majestic can come in almost any color or color combination. The National Majestic Tree Hound Association was formed in 1980 and they registered the first accepted hounds in that year.

A big, strong frame is a prime requirement of the Majestic. It covers rugged terrain with ease and in addition to bringing cougar to tree it is required to equally tackle bear, bobcat and jaguar depending in the part of the continent where it is required to work. But its first requirement is its ability to drive big cats from hiding and hold them in a tree until the hunter comes up.

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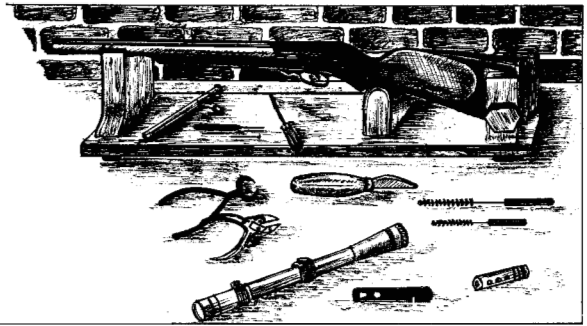
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# THE GUNROOM

By Adela Batin



My trusty hunting companion for the past fifteen years has been a 7mm magnum Remington rifle. Its faithful accuracy has enabled me to down numerous Alaska moose and caribou, most taken with one or two shots at 100 yards or more.

Last summer at an Outdoor Writer's Conference, I had the pleasure of shooting a Markesbery .50 caliber muzzleloader. This muzzleloader design avoids federal and state restrictions, while still delivering the efficiency and sure-fire reliability of an in-line. Russ Markesbery, inventor of the rifle, was eager to explain the advantages and simplicity of his "outer-line" muzzleloader. "The design of our rifles is a modernized version of a percussion ignition system, which saw use during the Civil War," states Markesbery, president of the company, Markesbery Muzzle Loaders. "The slight angle of the nipple at the rear of the "side-hammer" design, and the exposed hammer which swings in an arc makes this rifle legal where regulations prohibit the use of an in-line system."

I was a bit overwhelmed by all the paraphernalia needed to prepare to shoot and clean the gun, but a bit intrigued by the process. When I first shot the muzzleloader, I was surprised it didn't have any more kick than my 7 mm. Shooting a muzzle loader is really no different than shooting any other rifle. It's loading and cleaning that requires some attention.

Before loading a muzzleloader, the barrel must be thoroughly cleaned of any black powder residue and free from all oil. Pyrodex is a powder designed as a propellant for muzzle loading firearms. Pyrodex relates to black powder on a volume-to-volume basis. In measured amounts, black powder is heavier: a measure of 70-grains of black powder, in comparison to an equivalent measure of pyrodex which will weigh 56-grains.

Pyrodex is more bulky, although ballistically they are similar. Though pyrodex does not ignite as easily as black powder, its premeasured tablets makes loading of the powder easy and quick. First, drop your pyrodex tablets into the barrel of the rifle.

Next, place the bullet in a plastic sabot or holder and using a ramrod, push

With a 24-inch barrel, it was the perfect size for my 5'2" petite frame. I added a silver Nikon Monarch 3-9x40 scope, and with the camouflaged wood-grained stock and stainless steel barrel, it was a beautiful combination. Another exciting feature of the rifle is the interchangeable barrel system for .36, .45, .50 and .54 caliber.



**Modern muzzleloaders, such as the Markesbery Polar bear shown above, have many features not available when muzzleloaders were the only thing on the block, for example, the Polar bear is available with four interchangeable barrels in .36, .45, .50, and .54 caliber**

the bullet down the barrel, on the powder with one smooth and steady push. Last, the small ignitor cap is placed in the nipple. The sure-fire performance of the Markesbery rifle is enhanced even more when the standard No.11 percussion cap nipple is replaced with the optional 400 SRP (small rifle primer) Magnum Ignition System. This is a two-piece stainless steel arrangement that can be quickly and easily threaded right into the same threads as for the nipple. When the hammer strikes the floating firing pin, upwards of ten times the fire of a No.11 cap shoots into the powder charge for ignition.

Modern day muzzleloaders are accurate, safe, and offer the hunter more options in terms of hunting seasons. I learned from Russ that the record books are wide open for women hunting with muzzleloaders. He loaned me the "Polar Bear" .50 caliber to use on a sheep hunt in Healy, Alaska.

Every sheep hunter I talked to this season had a tough time fighting the weather. It was a wet, miserable August in Alaska. On our first hunt, we got rained out. So my hunting partner, Larry Jackson and I headed up Dragonfly Creek on a beautiful September morning. After a 2,500-foot climb, we came to a saddle and spotted over 30 sheep, all ewes and lambs. We glassed and waited in anticipation as darkness fell. That night the winds moved in, and the weight of our bodies was the only thing that kept the tent from being blown off the side of the mountain. We broke camp and packed our gear, and headed up to our spot to glass. Walking along the ridge top in 75 mph winds proved a challenge we couldn't beat. The wind literally knocked me over, and it was impossible to stand. As we looked south, a storm front was moving in, and we decided it was in our best interests to quickly get off the mountain. ■