

Of The Outdoors | Gary Howey

No Deer Down, But Still A Successful Hunt

BY GARY HOWEY

Hartington, Neb.



Gary
HOWEY

Off to our right, several does made their way through the cedars along the creek bottom and moved into the far end of the field. In the distance, I caught the glint of a buck's antler. It was a small buck trailing a doe and small fawn. The buck

was in no hurry, cautiously making his way in the general direction of our ground blind.

As he drew nearer, I felt the deer's keen senses would give away our location. I was doing my best to limit the movement of my hand-held nine-pound camera. Oh how I wished I had brought along one of our tripods. I did my best to steady it as my arms informed me the camera seemed to be closer to 20-pounds than nine. If the deer would turn its back or move behind some brush, I could reposition the camera and get the blood flowing back into my arms. The buck, would occasionally glance in our direction, but had not noticed the shaggy looking blind nestled among the cedar trees. The buck stood there, just a mere 20 yards from us, browsing on acorns scattered on the ground.



PHOTO BY GARY HOWEY

This smaller buck, unaware of our presence, didn't realize it was its lucky day as my hunting partner, Adam Wiese; Wisconsin would let the buck pass during this year's Nebraska muzzleloader season. The buck and a large group of does and fawns spent several minutes prior to sun down browsing on acorns out in front of the blind Adam and I as we sat motionless enjoying the show.

We were hunting northwest of Crofton, Nebraska. The owner of the blind had put a lot of thought into where he positioned the blind. It was placed along the ridgeline where several trails came from the creek bottom and merged in front of the blind. My hunting partner was Whitetails Unlimited (W.T.U.) member, ten-year Army infantryman and a 2005-2006 Iraqi War veteran, Adam Wiese.

Adam, Mike Donovan and W.T.U. National President Jeff Schintken, all from Wisconsin, came to northeast Nebraska at the invitation of Chris Carlson, Wausa, Nebraska, a Northeast Nebraska W.T.U. board member, to take part in our Nebraska muzzle-

loader season.

W.T.U. is one of the national conservation groups doing their part honoring our veterans, which to me, a Viet Nam veteran, is very cool. They recognize veterans at their banquets, presenting them with special edition veterans pins and helping veterans get back into the field to spend quality time with other hunters.

That small buck spent a great deal of time in front of the blind, presenting Adam with numerous shooting opportunities. As I filmed, it was obvious Adam would let the young deer pass, hoping a bigger deer might appear before legal shooting time ended.

With daylight, disappear-

ing quickly, our last hour of legal shooting time was fading fast. A half hour before our hunt would end; more deer filtered out into the field. Over ten does and fawns paraded past the blind, at times within just a few feet from us.

With just a few minutes of legal shooting time left, we stared intently into the fading light, hoping that bigger buck would appear. As the darkness drew in around us, the remaining does and fawns made their way out of the field. Our hopes of that big buck faded away.

All three of the Wisconsin W.T.U. members' had the opportunity to fill their muzzleloader tags, but elected to allow the smaller

Upcoming Events

March 19: Northeast Nebraska Whitetails Unlimited Banquet, Wausa, Neb. Fire Hall, for more information on the event contact either Dan Wamberg at 402-841-9133 or Chris Carlson at 402-640-7053.

memories with some great people while having the opportunity to do and observe so many things. The sunrise, the wildlife, the sunsets are things some of our brothers will never see again, as they paid the ultimate sacrifice. Please keep them and those who are now serving in the military in your thoughts and prayers.

Gary Howey, Hartington, Nebraska, is a former tournament angler, fishing and hunting guide. He is the Producer/Host of the award winning Outdoorsmen Adventures television series, seen locally in Channels 2 and 98 at Saturday at 6:30 pm and Sunday at 7:00 am and on the MDCO Sports Network Thursday at 5:30 pm and Sunday at 10:00 am. The show airs in nine states in the upper Midwest. He and Simon Fuller Co-Host the Outdoor Adventures radio program on Classic Hits 106.3, ESPN Sports Radio 1570 in Southeastern South Dakota, Northeast Nebraska and on KCHE 92.1 FM in Northwest Iowa. Looking for more outdoor information, check out www.outdoorsmenadventures.com and like Gary Howey's Outdoorsmen Adventures on Facebook.

Missouri Man Makes His Own Decoys To Attract Waterfowl

BY BRENT FRAZEE

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(TNS) — Tom Modin was putting his artwork on display.

In the predawn darkness, he tossed his hand-carved wooden duck decoys into the still water of a pond near Missouri's Smithville Lake. Then he tucked into the vegetation with three other hunters and waited for the ultimate critics — the ducks — to judge his work.

"We put out decoys of all the types of ducks I have seen here — redheads, green-winged teal, ringnecks and mallards," Modin said as he used vegetation to camouflage his layout blind. "It looks more natural than putting out a couple dozen mallard decoys."

"They're more likely to come into a spread if they see a decoy that looks like them."

Moments later, a small flock of redheads proved Modin's point. As Modin blew loudly into his duck calls, the birds banked sharply



BRENT FRAZEE/KANSAS CITY STAR/TNS

When Tom Modin of Kearney, Mo., goes duck hunting, he is surrounded by his own artwork — decoys he has carved and hand-painted.

and circled the decoys. Then they cupped their wings and headed straight for a string of redhead decoys Modin had arranged in the marsh.

As the ducks started to

land, the hunters — Modin and his friends, Bill Atkinson, Chris Wolfenbarger and Lee Clark — reclined in their lay-out blinds and waited for the right moment. So did Modin's

black lab, Rex, as he whimpered with excitement in his camouflaged dog hut.

When the ducks started to drift down, Modin shouted, "Take 'em!" and several shot-

gun blasts rang out. Two redheads fell, and Rex bounded out to do his job.

"They came right in to those redhead decoys," Modin said with excitement. "That was so pretty."

"It's just so much fun to shoot ducks over decoys that you have made."

That fun lasted throughout the morning. The hunters shot two other redheads and one goldeneye, in addition to nine Canada geese that were lured by standard decoys. All of this, Modin said, during an "old-fashioned hunt."

"We hunted the way people did years ago," said Modin, 41, of Kearney, Mo. "We hunted over hand-carved, hand-painted decoys. "We didn't use (battery-powered) motion-wing decoys or anything like that. I've hunted with nothing but these carved decoys for the last three years, and I've taken a lot of ducks with them."

Modin got his start in 2005 when he bought an L.L. Bean decoy and set out to imitate it through his carving. He

went on to buy a carving kit that provided step-by-step instructions. His first decoy was a goldeneye — a carving that he still hunts over.

Today, he has refined his technique. He carves his decoys out of basswood and uses oil paint to make them stand out. He carves the duck imitations in different poses to add realism to his decoy spread.

It takes Modin six to 10 hours to carve and paint each decoy. He sells his artwork for \$150 to \$225 per duck. Some are sold to collectors, who merely want to display Modin's work in their house. But just as often, Modin adds his carvings to his own string of working decoys.

He hunts with nothing but decoys he and other carvers have made by hand.

"I don't have an art background," said Modin, who works as a nurse. "I don't have formal training."

"It's still just a hobby for me, but I've had a lot of fun with it."

Paul A. Smith: Proper Preparation Results In Sure Goose Hunting

BY PAUL A. SMITH

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OZAUKEE COUNTY, Wis. (TNS) — A school bus groaned up the county road to our east, making its 7:30 a.m. pickups.

A few minutes later a milk tanker pulled into the adjacent farm, also on its appointed rounds.

"Should be any time now," said Jerry Solsrud of Oconomowoc, my hunting partner. "I'm going to get in place."

The arrival we hoped for wasn't on wheels, but on wings. It also wasn't held to any man-made schedule, but was wild.

Still we had a high degree of confidence the sky above this Ozaukee County cornfield would soon be alive.

We suspended our upright human behavior and commenced a period of prone goose impersonation.

We sat down on modified chaise lounges and flipped plastic lids painted like Canada geese over our upper bodies.

The so-called "goose chairs" are not widely sold these days but are still plenty effective.

And since this cutover cornfield had been used heavily in recent days by flocks of geese, the setup was just the ticket for harvesting a Christmas goose or two.

Solsrud and I pulled tan burlap sheets over our lower bodies and tossed a couple corn stalks and leaves on top to complete the camouflage.

Ten minutes later, the first

"her-onk!" drifted in from the southeast. We lowered the ventilated goose lids and waited.

Solsrud, 76, has been an avid waterfowl hunter for more than 50 years. He helped found and later served as president of the Wisconsin Waterfowl Association in the 1980s.

He has a particular interest in goose hunting, and pursues various species from the early September goose season in Wisconsin through an annual trip to Canada for snow and Ross' geese before finishing out the year seeking honkers in Jefferson, Ozaukee, Washington and Waukesha counties.

Solsrud has been witness to a decades-long improvement in the Canada goose population and hunting opportunities in the state's exterior zone.

Whereas the Horicon

zone had been the focus of goose hunting and numbers from the 1940s to the '80s, the state now has a widely distributed resident population of geese, according to the Department of Natural Resources.

When combined with honkers that nest in Canada and migrate through Wisconsin, exterior zone hunters in the Badger State have rich goosing opportunities from Sept. 1 to Dec. 21 this year. The daily bag limit was five geese during the early season and two for the final 92 days.

For comparison, in 1998 the exterior zone had a 21-day season and a daily bag limit of one goose.

In 2015, 226,000 birds were estimated in the breeding population of the Mississippi Valley Population of geese in Ontario and 119,212 were in the Wisconsin breeding population of resident honk-

ers, also called giants or the Temperate Breeding Population.

The DNR has a goal of a statewide breeding population of 125,000 geese.

Last year hunters in Wisconsin killed 56,691 geese, according to the DNR. Sixty percent of the harvest was birds from Canada, and about 40 percent were resident geese.

Canada goose hunting in Wisconsin enjoys two distinct advantages over duck hunting, in my opinion. First, honkers don't require a 0-dark thirty setup as is traditional for duck hunters.

The big black-and-white birds typically fly after sunrise, sometimes even at 8 or 9 a.m. Once the geese have been scouted, they usually allow a civilized meeting time.

Second, my goose hunting

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