

## OUTDOORSUPDATE

OF THE OUTDOORS:

## Calling Predator Can Result In Surprises

BY GARY HOWEY  
Hartington, Neb.

There's nothing more exciting than calling predators as you never know what might come calling, as there are all types of predators out there.

That's what we found out a couple of weeks ago when we called predators in the Sandhills near Mullen, Neb.

The word predator is defined as: a carnivore, an animal that lives by capturing and eating other animals.

According to that definition, a predator can be any number of things.

When it gets right down to it, we humans are predators as are mountain lions, bobcats, coyotes, fox, badgers as well as lions and tigers and bears "OH My".

Depending on the location you're doing the calling from, you might be surprised by what comes to the call.

Of course these aren't the only critters that, once hearing the sound of distressed rabbit, fawn or other animal, will come running to investigate, taking advantage of another animal's unfortunate situation.

It's not unusual for deer, which are curious critters to come into a predator call as it has happened to us numerous times, especially when you're in Mule Deer territory.

There are numerous other animals/birds out there that are opportunists and will eat what ever happens to be available.

Raccoons and skunks are a couple of the furry critters that will come in if they're within hearing distance as well as hawks, eagles and owls, so you need to be ready for almost anything.

I've had friends who were calling up north in a mountainous region that called in black bears.

In the upper Midwest, you're more apt to bring in coyotes, fox, bobcat, raccoons or skunks.

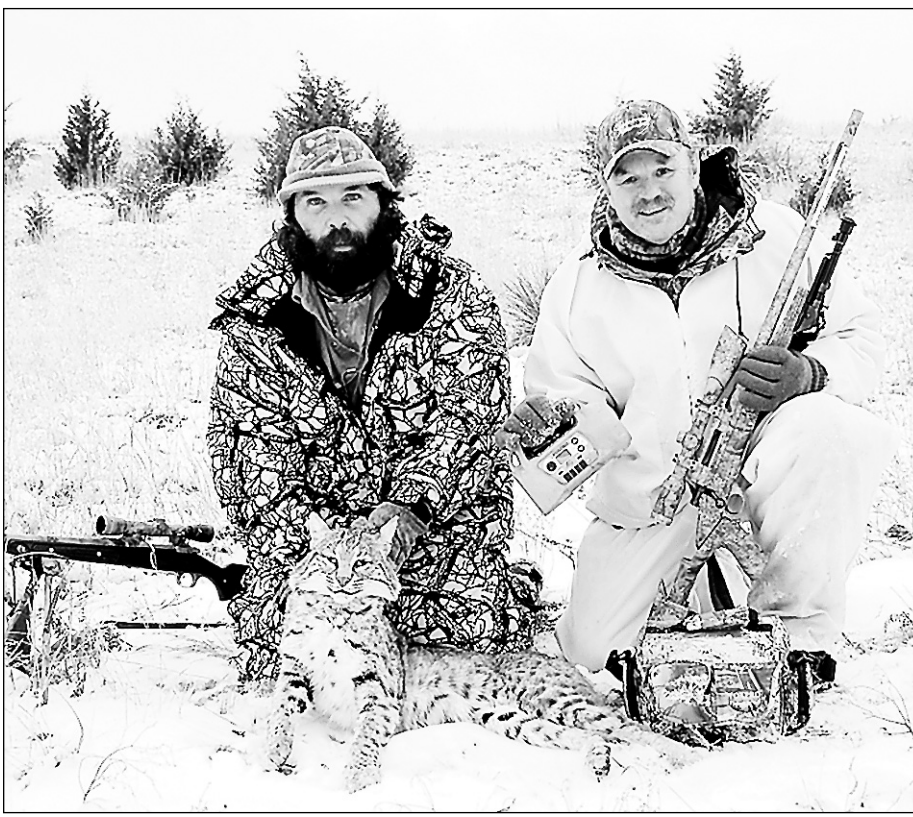
Coyote and fox are the most commonly seen critter when predator calling.

Another predator that's getting to be more common in the upper Midwest is the Bobcat.

It's an elusive critter that's pretty much nocturnal and is rarely spotted by humans, as they'll spot you long before you see them.

Bobcats roam throughout much of North America, like other predators are very adaptable and can live in forests, swamps, along wooded rivers/streams, deserts and even in suburban areas.

Bobcats aren't all that big, weighing in at 11 to 30 pounds or about as twice as



Submitted photo  
Andy Glidden (left) of Ainsworth, Neb. and Gary Howey of Hartington, Neb., pose with the bobcat that came in while they were calling predators near Mullen, Neb.

big as our house cats. They're long legged with very large paws.

Their tracks are easily identifiable, as unlike coyote, fox or other canine, whose claws are exposed when they walk, cat tracks show no claw marks.

They are brown or brownish red in color with an underbelly that's white. They get their name from their short, black-tipped "bobbed" tail.

Bobcats are Mother Nature's stealth fighter, unlike coyotes, that will charge in, bobcats hunt slowly, sliding up on their quarry and then delivering a deathblow by pouncing on it.

They can be fierce hunters, which are able to kill prey much larger than they are, but feed primarily on rabbits, birds, mice, squirrels, and other smaller game animals.

On one of the predator calling trips that we made into South Dakota a few years back, we'd called in several Bobcats, one as close as 8 feet, since the cat season was closed, all we could do was film and take photos of it.

On our last trip to the Sandhills, we called in several coyotes including a pair that almost ran over the top of us.

The second afternoon of that hunt, we decided to move into another area we'd called coyotes in prior years.

The area we'd be hunting, also held cat tracks, which is one of the primary things that attracts and holds coyotes in an area.

We'd set up a couple of times, giving each spot 25 to 30 minutes and after having no takers, heading off for a different location.

Moving about a mile across the prairie we stashed our pickup in a depression and headed up hill looking for a decent spot to set up.

Over one hill and then another we slowly trekked towards the Dismal River which works its way through the property we were hunting.

Topping one ridge then another, we eventually came to an area where the prairie started to level off into an area with a few scattered cedars over looking the river.

As we moved down the ridge we spotted two-cedar trees that looked to be a good place for a hide, giving us decent filming and shooting lanes.

As we proceeded along the upper side of the cedars, my partner Larry Myhre spotted the tell tale tracks of a cat in the snow. We paused for a second to take footage and pictures of the tracks so we'd have them for future reference.

Our other partner, Andy Glidden (Ainsworth, Neb.) had worked his way around the tree and was setting out the Fox Pro call and decoy below us as we got into position.

As we set up, we talked about the cat tracks along the trail behind us on the hill at which time Andy indicated if a cat did

show up, he'd take it as he had the permit needed to shoot it.

He'd set up slightly above us in front of the first cedar while Larry and I would be just below him and off to his right.

I was on the camera with Larry on my right flank armed with his 243.

Because of the rough terrain we were in and the separation that was sometimes needed, we were equipped with Midland radios, which helped us to make sure that the camera was on the predator before one of the shooters fired.

As usual, Andy used a combination call to start with, our Fox Pro wailing out the dying rabbit call while Andy howled with his mouth call.

It didn't take long for Andy to go to his old reliable, the Fox Pro, as it never failed us and if there were a critter that could hear it, it would come in to investigate.

About 10 minutes into it, he switched to the young pup yelp, the way he usually ended his calling scenario.

Just then, I noticed Andy turning to the right and the radio broke squelch with Andy on the other end saying, "there he is."

I moved the camera slowly and whispered to Larry that the coyote was directly in front of him.

It was setting on the ridgeline beside a small cedar, Larry had it in its scope and was trying to figure out just what it was when Andy's 22-250 cracked, putting the critter down like a sack of rocks.

The first words out of Andy's mouth were, "did you get it" of course my response was "about five seconds!"

When I turned and whispered to Larry, he's thought that I said I had the camera on the critter and fired.

Oh well anyway, he'd made a nice shot hitting it dead center in the chest as it was starting to turn and hightail it for the river.

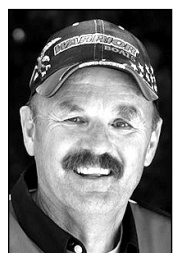
Andy indicated that the "Cat" was about to bolt when he shot. My response was "Cat!" as all I could see of the critter was what could be seen over Larry's left shoulder and I'd assumed it was another coyote.

What a way to end a hunt, as we were able to call in another of those predators, a large male Bobcat, that had called Nebraska home.

It had come into the yelping pup call to see what was whipping up on the young coyote and to see if he couldn't get a few licks in himself.

As I said, when calling predators, you best be prepared for almost anything, as you never know what might show up.

Gary Howey is a syndicated columnist from Hartington, Neb. His *Outdoorsmen Adventures* television series can be seen each week on KTTM/KTTW-TV, Sioux Falls/Huron, SD on Saturday @ 6:30 am and Sunday @ 7:00 am.



Gary Howey

## Snowmobile Trek Through Minn. State Forest Offers Chance Of A Great Ride

BY BRAD DOKKEN

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BELTRAMI ISLAND STATE FOREST, Minn. — I'd almost forgotten how much fun this is.

We're somewhere in the forest now, immersed in a winter wonderland of pine and spruce trees laden with snow. The forest canopy nearly blots out the sky, even though it's the middle of the day.

We've come here by snowmobile, 10 of us, to ride through the forest, and we're winding through the trees at 35 mph on a trail groomed so smooth it's like a highway of snow. On this day, at least, the trip isn't so much about reaching a destination as it is about enjoying the ride, and there's a lot to enjoy here in one of northern Minnesota's great forests. At more than 700,000 acres, Beltrami is Minnesota's second-largest state forest behind adjacent 900,000-acre Pine Island State Forest.

It's wintertime and the living's easy on this perfect February afternoon.

Most of the riders on this winter adventure either work in the industry or are active members of snowmobile and sportsmen's clubs that groom and maintain nearly 1,000 miles of grant-in-aid trails in this part of northwestern Minnesota.

There's Jack Nelson, Thief River Falls, who works for Arctic Cat and is president of the Fourn-town-Grygla Sportsmen's Club. The club maintains some 240 miles of trails through southern portions of the forest east to Waskish, Minn.

There's Mark Karl, director of operations at Polaris in Roseau, Minn., and member of the Roseau County Trailblazers, which grooms about 300 miles of trails in the county.

And Carter Hontvet, Williams, Minn., a farmer and avid snowmobiler, who is president of the Lake of the Woods Drifters snowmobile club. The Drifters support the grooming and maintenance of more than 400 miles of land and lake trails in Lake of the Woods and Koochiching counties.

Before day's end, we'll enjoy the benefits of all three clubs' labors. And with ample snowfall this year, riding conditions are nearly perfect.

"It's a good snow winter,"



BRAD DOKKEN/GRAND FORKS HERALD/MCT  
Mark Karl, director of operations for Polaris in Roseau, Minn., said the work of snowmobile clubs in grooming and maintaining trails is invaluable to the industry. "It gives you connectivity to everywhere you want to go," Karl said.

Nelson said. "It's good all over the place."

The work of the clubs has a lot to do with that. Nelson said the Fourn-town-Grygla club receives about \$350 per mile from the state each winter for the trails it signs and maintains. Other clubs in northwestern Minnesota receive a similar amount. The Department of Natural Resources allocates the money through its grant-in-aid program, which is mostly funded by snowmobile registration fees.

Statewide, Minnesota offers more than 20,000 miles of groomed snowmobile trails, DNR statistics show, with local club volunteers maintaining more than 18,000 miles of those trails.

Without the efforts of club volunteers, whether it's in northwestern Minnesota, northeastern North Dakota or anywhere else in snowmobile country, most trail systems wouldn't exist.

"It's invaluable what it does for the industry," Karl said. "The grassroots clubs like that make such a huge difference. You could go ditch banging or what have you, but how would you know where you can ride?"

"The trail system importance and what the clubs bring to the table is just that whole network and ability. It gives you connecti-

ty to everywhere you want to go."

And it's the clubs, Karl said, that offer most of the training courses that are required of young riders and make the sport safer.

"That's hugely important," he said.

The ride begins  
We hit the trail at the front door of the Polaris plant in Roseau, traveling south on a groomed trail adjacent to state Highway 89 about 15 miles to Wannaska, Minn. There's no sun to start the morning, no contrast, and here in open country that's about as flat as prairie gets, everything looks the same buried under a blanket of white.

I keep close watch on Karl, who rides in front of me and gives the occasional hand signal alerting me

to field crossings or other rough spots on the trail that are difficult to see.

It will get easier when we hit the forest, I'm assured.

I grew up on snowmobiles, but there's still a feeling-out period as I acquaint myself with the sleek package of power I ride to start the trip. The Polaris Switchback has an 800 cc engine and looks as if it could take me into orbit. I resist the temptation to hit the throttle and find out for myself.

Still, 50 mph is nothing on this sled, and we're soon at the D&S Store east of Wannaska, the western gateway to Beltrami Forest near Hayes Lake State Park. There are lots of miles between gas stations in the forest, so most of the crew opts to top off their tanks.

Besides reacquainting myself with Beltrami Forest, I get to experience how far snowmobiles have come since I rode my first sled in the 1970s. During the course of the ride, I also drive a Polaris Rush, an aptly named sled that looks like a cross between a snowmobile and a dirt bike, and Nelson's four-stroke Arctic Cat Z1, an 1,100 cc powerhouse that is every bit as fast as it is quiet.

To say snowmobiles have changed a bit since the early days would be like saying there's quite a difference between a paper airplane and a rocket. Today's sleds, Karl said, offer suspensions that can be fine-tuned to the size of the rider.

"It's really about changing up the suspension and the geometry of the machine for a smoother ride," he said.

I don't know much about suspensions and geometry, but I'll attest to the smooth ride.

Less traffic  
Ask just about anyone who rides in Beltrami Forest, and they'll

say the attraction, besides the miles of groomed and tree-lined trails, is the lack of traffic that's the norm closer to major population centers.

"You'll rarely see another person," said Tony Moe of Grygla, a sportsmen's club member and Polaris employee along for the ride. "Even when it's busy, you won't have trouble on the trails."

By the time we reach the Nite Hawk in Roseau, Minn., for a late afternoon lunch, we've seen maybe four other snowmobiles. The sun has also peeked out from behind the clouds, making the forest appear even more stunning.

"It doesn't get any better than this," Nelson, the Fourn-town-Grygla club president, said. "We've got our own little paradise here."

Karl has to be back for a late afternoon meeting so he skips lunch and hits the trail for Roseau. Hontvet, who's planning another ride later in the weekend, heads for his home near Long Point on Lake of the Woods after lunch. He has only been a member of the Lake of the Woods club for a year, and already he's president, a lofty position he didn't necessarily seek.

"I missed a meeting and got voted president," Hontvet said. "You've got to watch that stuff."

For the rest of us, more scenery awaits as we steer the sleds back through the forest for the return trip to Roseau. At times, it seems as if the sleds are driving us instead of the other way around.

"We couldn't have picked a nicer day," Nelson said.

It's nearly dark when we pull up to the front doors of the Polaris plant in Roseau. We've ridden 150 miles through some of the prettiest country northwestern Minnesota has to offer.

I feel as if I could ride another 150 miles. Easy.

## OUTDOOR REPORT

## Archery Antelope Hunters Report Success

PIERRE — One of South Dakota's first fall hunts is archery antelope, and through surveys from the 2009 season submitted by hunters, the state Game, Fish and Parks Department begins planning the 2010 seasons.

About 2,400 archery antelope licenses were issued in 2009. Hunters had a 16 percent success rate, taking 516 bucks and 189 does. Overall harvest was down from the previous two years. Details of the survey report may be found on the GFP Web site at [www.sdftp.info/Wildlife/hunting/Harvest/Projections.htm](http://www.sdftp.info/Wildlife/hunting/Harvest/Projections.htm)

The 2010 archery antelope season will be proposed by the GFP Commission at its April meeting and finalized at the May meeting. The application process for the 2010 season will open in mid-summer.

## Bald Eagle Awareness Week February 22-27

PIERRE — Gov. Mike Rounds has proclaimed February 22-27 as Bald Eagle Awareness Week in South Dakota.

To celebrate, the public is invited to attend free demonstrations featuring live birds of prey on Saturday, Feb. 27 in Pierre. The programs begin at 10:30 a.m., 12:30 p.m. and 2 p.m. CST at the Ramkota Hotel, in conjunction with the KCCFR Farm, Home and Sports Show.

A bald eagle, red-tailed hawk, western screech-owl and barn owl are featured in the demonstrations. Educators from Wildlife Experiences of Rapid City will share information about these species and the unique traits of raptors. Activities will be held throughout the day to help children better understand these birds of prey.

Additional Bald Eagle Awareness Days activities include presentations on Friday, Feb. 26 for students in Huron. Winners of the Bald Eagle Awareness Days Bookmark Art Contest will be announced on Feb. 25. Winning entries will be displayed at the Pierre Ramkota Hotel on Feb. 27.

The annual Bald Eagle Awareness Days is a joint effort by local organizations, merchants and conservation agencies to increase public involvement and awareness about bald eagles and other birds of prey. All are encouraged to attend.

For more information about Bald Eagle Awareness Days, visit The Game, Fish and Parks Department Web site at: <http://www.sdftp.info/Wildlife/Diversity/BEAD/index.htm> or contact GFP's Eileen Dowd Stukel at (605) 773-4229.

## Mountain Lion Shot NW Of Rushville

LINCOLN, Neb. — A mountain lion was shot and killed by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission at a ranch northwest of Rushville on Sunday, Feb. 21.

Commission law enforcement personnel were notified early Sunday morning of a mountain lion hiding under a livestock trailer near the ranch house. Because of the proximity of the cat to the house and the people on site, the situation was determined to be a safety risk by the responding conservation officer.

The mountain lion was a female, weighing approximately 100 pounds. It did not appear to have been nursing kittens. It was the 96th confirmed mountain lion sighting in Nebraska since 1991 and the 68th in the Pine Ridge.

## Beyond BOW Shotgunning Event Scheduled

LINCOLN, Neb. — Shotgunning skills will be tested at a Beyond BOW event March 27 at the One Box Shooting Complex near Broken Bow, according to the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission.

The day will include a round of trap, round of sporting clays and five planted pheasants per participant. A \$250 fee also includes lodging and a meal.

Contact Julia Plugge at [julia.plugge@nebraska.gov](mailto:julia.plugge@nebraska.gov) or (402) 471-6009 for a registration form.

Beyond BOW events are for women who have been introduced to specific outdoor skills through the Becoming an Outdoors-Woman program and now want to further their skills in Beyond BOW.

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