

Of The Outdoors | Gary Howey

Predator Calling A Fun Sport

BY GARY HOWEY

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In our area and throughout the upper Midwest, the predator population has skyrocketed. The coyote, fox, raccoon and skunk population seems to have increased greatly over the last several years. This increase has caused problems for both domesticated animals and wild game.

Domesticated animals such as chickens, ducks, cats and small dogs rank high on the coyote and fox menu, as do wild animals such as pheasants, quail and rabbits.

When the pheasants are nesting, predators such as raccoons and skunks are out looking for the nests while the larger predators, coyote and fox are raising their young, when they need additional food to feed the extra mouths.

With the limited habitat in the upper Midwest, the predators do not need to look far for a meal. Our limited habitat, the few fence lines that are left, road ditches that are not baled up, creeks and shelterbelts that are not grazed and along the edges of alfalfa fields make it easy for the predators to locate the nesting birds.

With their acute sense of smell, it is not hard for them to locate the nests and destroy the eggs or the hens.

It looks like the high fur prices of last year are around again this year

Over the last few years, hunters and trappers were able to put a dent in the predator population as fur prices were on the rise.

Once the weather turns cold, coons and other furbearers will hole up, causing many trappers and hunters to call it quits.

Once there is less activity out there from coon hunters and coyote chaser, is when I like to head out predator calling.

Once it gets cold and we have snow on the ground, predator calling can be very productive!

During cold weather, predators need more food to keep warm and the snow on the ground; it is harder for them to locate food.

Calling predators can be a great sport, giving shooters the opportunity to get outdoors when no other outdoor shooting sports are available.

It is one of those things you need to experience, in order to believe it. I know I was skeptical when I first heard about it.

I found it hard to believe that an animal as smart and cunning as a coyote or fox, equipped with super hearing and an acute sense of smell would come running into a hunter that is making a noise sounding much like a crying baby.

The idea behind predator calling is to sound like an easy meal to the predators. The cry of a wounded animal is a sound predators became familiar with at an early age and generally is the way to an easy meal.

I have called predators both day and night and have found both to be an exciting experience.

You can call predators all year long, but the best calling in the upper Midwest happens when it is cold with snow on the ground.

When the grounds covered with snow, the coyote needs to look farther and hunt harder for his next meal. The snow on the ground allows the hunter to spot them much easier.

Because of the coyote's, keen sense of smell, callers, hunt with the wind in their face, making it harder for them to detect you.

If a coyote or other predator is the least bit suspicious, they will circle around and use the wind to their advantage.

This is why I use Hunter's Specialties Cedar Scent Wafers. By clipping them on your clothing, cap or hanging from a branch, it will help cover the human scent.

In my area, Cedar County, there are numerous cedar trees, with scent of cedar a natural scent and does not alarm predators.

Predators have excellent eyesight with the ability to detect movement at great distances. By using some sort of decoy, the coyote will focus its attention on it and not the location the call is coming from. The decoy movement attracts the coyote where he is not looking directly at the caller, giving the hunter a chance to get into shooting position.

I use the Advanced Decoy Research Mini Supreme Extreme Decoy, which resembles a squirrel that allows me to choose the amount of movement to use. I can choose from a quick panic movement to a slower random movement.

The choice of weapons is up to the individual, depending where you are hunting if you are calling during the night or during the day.

During the day, I use a 243 or 22-250 rifle with a good scope and a 40 or 55-gr. bullet. Other rifles such as the 22-250 and the 223 also work well.

When hunting at night, I prefer a full moon with snow cover, allowing me to spot the coyotes coming into the call. Since the shots you get at night are much closer, I use a 12-gauge shotgun loaded with number four buckshot for close shots and my 22-250 for



PHOTO: LARRY MYHRE

A bobcat called in is pictured during a hunt on the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota. It was called in two days after the bobcat season had closed.

longer shots.

When hunting in snow cover, I wear snow camo, or something white, if you do not have snow camo, a white sheet pulled over you will help blend the caller into the terrain.

There are numerous predator calls on the market and I use both mouth and electronic calls.

One of our team members has started using a call designed by Dakota Yote Varmint Calls out of Rapid City. They have five calls available that will work in any calling situation. Their calls are easy to use, with great sound, range and do not freeze up in cold weather. More information on their calls is found at <http://dakotayote.com/>

I also use electronic calls and find the ICOTec Digital electronic calls are a good bet. They are easy to use, run by remote and have worked well for me over the years.

They have numerous calls that when used either by themselves or together will bring in most coyotes, including the dying cottontail/jackrabbit call, the howler/yipper and the squeaker. Check out their products at www.icotec.com

During the day, I start with

a dying rabbit call, generally beginning with a long drawn out medium volume call.

The first calls should not be too loud as they may spook a coyote close by. If I don't see any movement after a few minutes, I follow it up with four or five shorter but louder calls.

It's a good idea to glass the area with your binoculars while you wait before calling again. If nothing shows, resume your calling. Coyotes prefer to stay in the cover using it to cover their approach; every so often, I will use my mouse squeaker just in

case one is coming in that I may have not seen.

When I spot a coyote coming in or one that is hesitant, I will go to my howler/yipper and howl at him. Many times, this will cause them to run in thinking another coyote is about to beat them to a meal.

I spend about 30 minutes in each spot. Before getting up to leave, once again, I'll glass the area one more time as coyotes are sneaky critters and can slip in without being detected. This final glassing makes sure I didn't miss anything.

Most shots during the day-

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OUTDOORS DIGEST

Funding Available For S.D. Trails

PIERRE — South Dakota State Parks Director Doug Hofer announced today that applications are being accepted for grants from the Recreation Trails Program (RTP). The grants will be available for trail projects sponsored by municipalities, counties, state parks, federal land management agencies or tribal governments.

"When it comes to promoting healthy communities, recreational trails are key," Hofer said. "As safe corridors for exercise and recreation, trails give families the opportunity to spend quality time together and enjoy the natural beauty of our state."

The Recreational Trails Program provides partial reimbursement for approved trail projects. Eligible projects include construction of new public trails, rehabilitation of existing public trails, development of trail-related facilities and educational programs that relate to recreational trails.

The application deadline is Friday, April 11, 2014.

RTP funds come to the state through the Federal Highway Administration and are apportioned to states by Congress to fund both motorized and non-motorized public recreation trail projects. The amount of funds available is based upon the number of recreational vehicles licensed in each state.

Application packets are available online at the Game, Fish and Parks website. For more information, contact Grants Coordinator Randy Kittle at 605.773.5490 or by e-mail at randy.kittle@state.sd.us.

Commission Meeting To Discuss Elk Permits

LINCOLN, Neb. — The Nebraska Game and Parks Commissioners will consider a bonus point system for general bull elk permits when they meet Jan. 17 in Lincoln.

If passed, the system would give people who have applied for a bull elk permit and been unsuccessful one or more years a better chance of drawing a permit. Beginning in 2014, a person would receive a bonus point each time he or she applies for but does not receive a permit. In subsequent years, applicants would get an additional entry into the draw for each bonus point accrued. Landowner permits would

be excluded from this system.

The meeting is at 8 a.m. in the third-floor conference room of Game and Parks headquarters, 2200 N. 33rd St.

Also on the agenda are recommendations to:

— create a Commission order for rules regarding season dates, bag limits, hunt-

ing zones and conservation orders for coots, ducks, geese and crow;

— amend camping and rental fees at state parks, recreation areas and historical parks;

— approve four outdoor trail projects for federal funding through the Recreational Trails Program.

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