

OF THE OUTDOORS | GARY HOWEY

Tips For Flagging Geese

BY GARY HOWEY

Hartington, Neb.

I remember it as if it was yesterday, in the distance; the geese were simply a small dot on the horizon, verily visible with my binoculars.

My hunting partners vigorously worked the flags overhead while I watched the flock in the distance. The dots I'd seen on the horizon suddenly made a hard right turn heading our way.

My other hunting partner Tom and I looked at each other in utter amazement.



Gary HOWEY

Dang if it wasn't working just like they'd said it would.

We were hunting near Pierre in early December with several hunters from the Sioux Falls area.

To say that I was hunting with someone who could really make a goose call talk was an understatement as we were hunting with three-time South Dakota State goose calling champion Jim Thompson Jr. He knows geese like a fish knows water and knows what works when it comes to decoying and calling waterfowl.

I'd met him at an Outdoor Show in Sioux Falls several years ago where we were doing seminars.

He was giving a seminar on waterfowl calling and demonstrating several flags he said they used to attract and draw geese from long distances.

Like most hunters, I was from the old school. You know, camouflage has to be just right, camo faces, not looking up until the shot was called; the blind having to blend with the terrain and decoys set up perfectly.

During his seminar he'd demonstrated a huge black flag used to attract geese from long distances. Just didn't make sense to me! These huge flags had to scare the daylights out of any goose that might be passing by.

After talking with him and looking at a video he'd made, it was hard to argue with success. I made plans to hunt with Jim on a hunt next season, to see for myself just how good these flags worked.

I met Jim and the other hunters from Sioux Falls at our motel in Pierre with our hunt tomorrow being the true test of the efficiency of these flags.

The following morning we were awoken from a peaceful night's sleep by the sound of honking geese. What a dream, dreaming about the goose hunt and this dream had really great sound effects.

USD Cross Country Men Place 12th, Women 14th At NCAA Midwest Regional Championships

SPRINGFIELD, Mo. — The South Dakota cross country teams both recorded top-15 finishes at the NCAA Midwest Regional Championships at the Missouri State University Cross Country Course.

Senior Ethan Marquardt finished 38th to lead the men to a 12th-place finish in the 29-team field, while Amber Eickhorn's 56th-place finish lifted the women to a 14th-place finish in the 31-team women's race.

Both teams topped several big name schools in the region. The men bested Iowa (13th), Kansas State (21st), Nebraska (27th) and Creighton (29th). The women

topped Missouri (16th), Kansas State (19th), Nebraska (23rd), and Creighton (29th).

Marquardt finished the 10K with a time of 31:15.12. Jeff Metler was the next finisher for USD, placing 57th in 31:44.98. Mubarik Musa capped off his freshman season with a 66th-place finish in 32:02.52.

Benson Langat finished fourth-best for South Dakota in 109th (33:02.35), while Isaac Allen in 111th (33:04.79) and Alex Hohenhaner (Yankton) in 159th (34:15.43) rounded out the men's effort.

For the women, Eickhorn finished the 6K with a time of

22:01.36. Megan Hilson (Yankton) placed 58th in 22:04.49, and Ali Gress crossed the finish in 72nd at 22:19.96. Both Hilson and Gress had with their best 6K times of the season.

Barring invitations to the NCAA National Championships in Louisville Ky. next weekend, the meet wrapped up the season for both teams. The men will lose only Marquardt to graduation for next season, while the women will graduate Miller, Brandli, Gress, and Sigornie Pfefferle.



Canada geese coming in for a landing after being drawn into the decoy spread by the wise use of flags.

PHOTO: TEAM OUTDOORMEN ADVENTURES

our motel. In a blink of an eye, we were up, quickly getting ready and after a quick cup of coffee we were on our way to the field.

The blind we'd be hunting out of was located north of Pierre, just a short distance from Lake Oahe, a pit blind and has all the comforts of home. It was located in a wheat field, and blended in beautifully looking just like the remaining vegetation in the field around it.

On this trip, we'd be using 120 silhouette decoys, looking like real geese, as they should because they were made with actual photos of a Canada goose and as we were soon to find out, they really worked.

The geese I mentioned earlier were still heading our way and as they moved closer and closer Jim said, "call." Both Jim and his partner pulled out their calls and begin calling at a feverish pitch, with each sounding different, but sounds that had the geese looking us over very carefully.

The next thing I heard was "Take 'em" and as the blinds lid shot upward, I shouldered my Winchester, taking aim at one of the flaring Canada's. All four guns roared in succession with four geese banking hard before tumbling earthward.

What a deal I shouted as I raced from the pit to pick up the geese, "lets do it again", which we did over and over again until we had our limits. The combination of the flags and calling really worked and as we headed for town we talked about the following day hunt where we'd be joined by a couple of hunters from northeast South Dakota an area I knew well as I grew up

there. One thing you learn when you hunt waterfowl is that the weekdays are much better hunting than the weekend. The reason is simple, you're apt to find there can be up to three times as many hunters out on the weekend and as the sun started to rise on Saturday, it was obvious that we'd have neighbors on this hunt.

Off to our left were three hunters, to our right, two more and across the road another three. They were all far enough away, but if he geese we were calling swung wide, they might take a pop at them. As luck would have it, the birds were a bit more skittish, but it was easy to see why, as every ditch and field had goose hunters in them.

Peering through my binoculars at the huge flock of geese out in front of us, I wondered what type of day we might have, as one group of geese seemed to be meandering in our direction. Then it happened, out came the two larger flags. Jim was working one, with my hunting partner working hard on the other. As the geese moved closer, when we were able to see them with the naked eye it was time to close down the blind and get ready for the action that was about to happen.

Out came the smaller landing flags and just like clockwork the geese zeroed in on us, ignoring the three other decoy spread around us. The next thing I heard was "Lets jam 'em" as Jim started to work his call and as the rest of us joined in, it sounded like a whole gaggle of geese calling to the flock overhead.

Wow, we sounded pretty impressive, but would this mixture of different tones do the trick? It didn't take long for my question to be answered. With eyes fixed on the decoys and wings set the whole flock dropped into our decoys. Guns blazing, we rose from the blind as the geese back peddled, scrambling to gain altitude. Five giant Canada's came down hard and our day was

off to a great start.

As the day wore on, the birds became scarcer and scarcer, we did see hundreds even thousands, but they had the wind at their back and knew where they were going. The weather was about to change and they were getting ready for a cold blast. When we did manage to bring a flock into sight, our neighbors to the right would bang at them, scaring the daylight out of them, as they were too high to shoot at and moving quickly.

With any hunt there's a lull between the flights, with our group passing the time reminiscing and telling tales and a few jokes. I guess this was the camaraderie you hear outdoorsmen and women talk about.

During the time we were in Pierre, it was estimated that there were over 400,000 geese in the area. Had to be, as we saw the sky turn black several times while were in the blind.

It's trips like this that makes it all worthwhile, with a lot of birds, excellent calling, and decoying and of course good friends.

The key to our group filling their limit while others around us simply watched the geese fly by was the flagging and of course Jim's excellent calling.

From that day on, flags have been a huge part of each and every waterfowl-hunting trip I go on.

Perhaps this will be one of those trips we'll reminisce about on future hunts! No perhaps about it, I know it will be!

Gary Howey, Hartington, Neb., is a former tournament angler, hunting and fishing guide. His award winning television series Outdoorsmen Adventures can be seen throughout the upper Midwest on Fox affiliates. He and Simon Fuller co-host the Outdoor Adventures radio program on KVHT 106.3 FM and ESPN Radio 1570 AM Monday-Friday. More information on the shows and the outdoors check out www.outdoorsmenadventures.com.

OUTDOORS DIGEST

Neb. Bull Elk Harvest, Success Rate Highest Ever

LINCOLN, Neb. — A record 105 bull elk were harvested in Nebraska in 2012. The 91 percent success rate is also a record, according to the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission.

The bull elk season was Sept. 29-Oct. 28. Thirty-one cows were harvested in the first half of the cow elk season, Sept. 29-Oct. 28. That season resumes Dec. 1-31.

There were 303 elk permits sold, but refunds were given on 19 (seven bull and 12 cow) permits because of concerns about access due to the Pine Ridge wildfires, which occurred just before the season opener.

Elk harvest by management unit was: Ash Creek — 14 bulls, two cows; Bordeaux — 26 bulls, nine cows; Box Elder — six bulls, three cows; Boyd — none; Hat Creek — 27 bulls, 10 cows; Niobrara — seven bulls, three cows; North Platte — 22 bulls, four cows.

Bulls also were harvested by the two auction permit holders and the one lottery permit holder. Successful elk hunters are reminded to send in elk tooth collection envelopes to Game and Parks.

S.D. Outdoor Recreation Projects Funded

PIERRE — Gov. Dennis Daugaard has awarded a total of \$358,310 in Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) money to several communities. The federal assistance program provides up to 50 percent reimbursement for outdoor recreation projects.

The following local sponsors were awarded LWCF grants for outdoor recreation projects:

- Beresford - Burling Park playground equipment, \$18,310
• Box Elder - playground equipment safety remediation project, \$50,000
• Brandon - Aspen Park land acquisition, \$50,000
• Brookings - Valley View Park development, \$45,000
• Dell Rapids - city park playground project, \$38,000
• Gettysburg - Little Angels Playground improvements, \$20,000
• Gregory - Memorial Sports Park playground project, \$27,000
• Groton - park equipment replacement project, \$12,000
• Lennox - pool and bathhouse improvements, \$46,000
• Pierre - Fourth Street Park playground and shelter, \$24,000
• Sturgis - Starline Park, \$28,000

Land and Water Conservation Funds come from the National Park Service and are administered in South Dakota by the state Department of Game, Fish and Parks.

For more information on the LWCF program, contact grants coordinator Randy Kittle by calling 605-773-5490 or e-mail him at: randy.kittle@state.sd.us.

Official: Six Tips for Neb. Firearm Deer Season

LINCOLN, Neb. — The nine-day November firearm deer season opens Nov. 10. Nebraska Hunter Education Coordinator Mike Streeter has six tips to keep deer hunters safe and responsible during the season.

Muzzle Control - Know where the muzzle of your firearm is pointed and never allow it to be pointed at anything you do not intend to shoot. Keep the firearm unloaded until you are ready to shoot, and always treat it as if it is loaded.

Know Your Target and What Is Behind It - Never shoot at sound or movement. Identify your intended target and then check again before you shoot, making sure you have a safe shooting background.

Wear Blaze Orange - It is required by law for all deer hunters to wear at least 400 square inches of blaze orange on their head, chest and back while hunting during the November firearm deer season. Carry a flashlight or light stick for identification in the darkness or at dawn and dusk. Red or green works best and will not spook game.

Get Permission - A hunter should never go onto private property without the owner's permission.

Your MBA The USF Way
Flexible and affordable MBA classes take place one night a week on campus.
Classes begin January 2013
mba@usioxfalls.edu
605-331-6680
usioxfalls.edu/mba
University of Sioux Falls

Hear for the Holidays
Dr. Matt Rumsey and Kendra Neugebauer, Doctor of Audiology Candidate, of Avera Medical Group ENT Yankton, will provide a free "To Be Well..." community forum on how we hear and how to hear better.
Tuesday, November 13
12 - 1 p.m.
Avera Professional Office Pavilion
A light lunch will be served.
The forum is free and open to the public.
Please make reservations by calling (605) 665-6820 as space is limited.
Avera Medical Group Ear, Nose & Throat Yankton

Thanksgiving Day Deadlines
The Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan will be closed Thursday, November 22, for the Thanksgiving holiday.
The following deadlines will apply:
Friday, November 23 newspaper - Monday, November 19, 5 p.m.
Out On The Town - Wednesday, November 21, 5 p.m.
Saturday, November 24 and Monday, November 26 newspapers - Tuesday, November 20, 5 p.m.
Tuesday, November 27 newspaper - Wednesday, November 21, 3 p.m.
There will be no newspaper on Thursday, November 22, 2012.
PRESS&DAKOTAN