

OF THE OUTDOORS | GARY HOWEY

# North & West: A 2010 Alaska Hunt

BY GARY HOWEY

Hartington, Neb.

It was late night Scott Ulrich and his hunting partner Randy Thoenne were camped on a small sandbar in the middle of Alaska's Robertson River. Both were sound asleep when Scott was awakened by something "large" prowling just outside their tent. Since they were in bear country and had seen numerous bear tracks around their camp, Scott wasn't about to take any chances.

He quietly unzipped the tent door, slowly slid the barrel of his 338 rifle out the tent and fired off one round. This not only drove away the camp intruder, it also came close to giving his hunting partner a heart attack being rudely awakened at O-Dark-Thirty from deep sleep by gunfire.

It was several years ago, November of 2010 when Team Outdoorsmen Adventures member Scott Ulrich and Randy Thoenne (of Hartington, Neb.) started talking about a fly in self-guided moose hunt in Alaska. Shortly thereafter, Scott started, looking into areas that would give them pretty good odds at tagging a moose on a self-guided hunt.

In an attempt to narrow down the area, he searched Alaska Game & Parks reports on moose populations. Once he decided on an area, he contacted the local big game biologist

in order to get additional information on the area and the moose density. This proved to Scott that it's a small world as the biologist he talked to was a graduate of Wood River, Nebraska.

Armed with this newfound information, he began looking into air transport companies available about the time they planned on hunting. They needed one with that could get the hunters, their gear and raft into the remote area.

Ulrich was no stranger to Alaska since he had served there in the U.S. Air Force from 1996-2004. Since he was an avid outdoorsman, he took advantage of every outdoor opportunity available. While serving in Alaska, he'd met another member in the military who like he had the same passion for the outdoors. Scott spent as much time as possible in the bush. He became very familiar with available game in Alaska and what it took to spend two weeks in the bush.

Since this would be a self-guided hunt, this meant they'd have to bring everything in by air, including a raft. The raft would be used to float them and their gear down river each day to their new campsite. The Robertson River they would be on, wasn't a



Gary  
**HOWEY**



Scott Ulrich of Hartington, Neb., is pictured alongside his cinnamon phase Black Bear taken on their 2010 Alaskan hunt.

large one, at times, becoming narrow and shallow. So, when they said float down the river, it would be a combination of floating, and dragging the raft over the narrows and through the shallows.

Once their camp was set up, they'd load up their packs with everything needed for the day's hunt, a minimum of 50 pounds plus their weapons and head up into the mountainous terrain several miles to spot game.

Another factor adding to the complexities of hunt would be the change in elevation, as the elevation in Hartington, Nebraska is 1387. The area they'd be hunting would be at 4500.

The plane they'd be going out in, a Super Cub, could only bring on each trip would be 250 pounds (gear and hunter), making weight was extremely important, meaning the hunters would need to be lean and mean and their gear needed super light.

The summer before both hunters started getting in shape, losing 50 pounds apiece, hiking long distances. Gradually they worked out to carrying an additional fifty pounds in their backpacks, which would be required once they hit the ground in Alaska.

Their excursion up north to God's Country began on September 4th of this year. They arrived in Fairbanks the 5th, where they obtained any additional gear, including

their non-resident moose, bear, wolf permits and raft. Awakening on the morning of the 6th to 100 MPH wind gusts, they were forced to cancel their flight and lay low and wait out the weather.

On Thursday the 7th there was finally a break in the weather and the pilot decided to try to get them in as quickly as possible. Randy would be the first to be brought in, with minimal equipment, just enough gear to get him through the night in case the weather change. Which could ground the plane yet again. Randy with minimal gear, a sleeping bag, weapon, ammo and dehydrated food was set down on the river, where he'd wait, hoping the weather would allow Scott to come in on the second flight with the tent, the reminder of their gear and provisions.

As the Super Cub took off, the weather in Fairbanks was clear but as it neared the mountains, conditions changed quickly to fog and drizzle. The Cub landed on a rock-strewn sandbar, dropping Randy off and quickly making the return trip to load up Scott. With the weather changing fast, Scott chose to drive 50 miles closer where the pilot brought the plane down on a road, loaded him and the gear, charging back to the river where Randy waited.

Thankfully the fog broke and allowed the plane to land. As the Cub disappeared in the distance, the boys set up camp and were able to see the peaks they'd be hunting from

five miles away. But as they set up camp, rain and colder temperatures moved in.

Friday the 8th saw the team awakening to 20-degree temperatures. Because of the rain during the night, their camp and all their gear was soaking wet forcing them to spend that first morning resetting their camp, doing their best to dry things out.

On Saturday, their first full day in the field, when they weren't allowed to hunt, the hunters had to deal with both rain as well as snowy conditions and because of the extreme weather changes, the bears had become less active.

On Saturday afternoon there was a break in the weather allowing them to head out and do some scouting giving them the opportunity to spot 7 bears.

That afternoon, they spotted a bear about a mile away from the river that looked promising. In order to get close enough for a good shot, they'd need to move into the spruce covering the riverbank and follow the numerous bear trails throughout the trees to where the bear had first been spotted. Once within range Randy took aim and tagged his black bear at 125 yards.

The next two days, visibility became poor with temperatures dropping into the teens during the night and in the forties in the day, creating another problem for the hunters. Their water supply, which needed to be purified from the river, was beginning

to freeze.

Tuesday afternoon, the weather cleared and they were able to spot what looked like another good bear a mile from camp. Once again they made their stalk, getting within 200 yards of what appeared to be a cinnamon phase black bear. Because there were also brown bear (Grizzly) in the area, Scott need to verify what they were looking at was indeed a black bear. Because of the recent weather changes, the bears had become lethargic with this bear not standing up. The hunters patiently waited. At 7 p.m., when the bear final rose up, the second bear of the trip a cinnamon was on the ground.

After skinning out and packing their second bear into camp, Thoenne decided to scout for moose. Shortly after leaving camp he spotted one that looked to be legal as any moose taken by non-residents needs to have at least a fifty-inch spread or four brow lines.

Using a grunt while imitating a bull scraping its antlers against the brush, they brought the moose within seventy-five yards. They then spent the next twenty minutes trying to decide if it was a legal moose. After some time, the decision was made to pass on it, as it was just too close a call.

The following two days the visibility in the area was poor due to the rain and foggy condition, limiting the hunting. The hunters packed their gear, started making their way, twenty-four miles downstream where the river crossed under the Alaska Canada Highway.

Once there, Randy would stay with the raft while Scott would try to hitch a ride from one of the many petroleum transports that ran along the highway and after fifteen miles, he was picked up and taken back to where eight days earlier, the pickup had been parked.

As Scott and Randy loaded their gear in the pickup for the 150-mile drive back to Fairbanks, they talked about the hunt and all they'd seen and accomplished.

In eight days they had the opportunity to spend time in the Alaska wild, saw one hundred caribou, seven black bears, three moose and taken two bears, one black and one cinnamon.

Because of all the work they needed to do to get in shape and the fowl weather they'd encountered, I asked them if they'd do it again, both indicated they would, it might be a year or two, but it was an adventure they enjoyed and were looking forward to doing once again.

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](http://www.outdoorsmenadventures.com).

## Bucks

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into the game after the Bucks defense forced a quick three and out.

The offense stalled for over a quarter of play at that point however, as Yankton would not get on the board again until Levi Davis hit the endzone from five yards out with 3:52 left to play in the first half.

Lightner added his second score of the game three minutes later with another short run, this time from five yards away, as the Bucks took a 21-0 halftime lead.

"We didn't play the way we thought we should have the last two games," Hejna added. "This was a big game for us with the ESD title still out there."

Despite being surprised by a successful Mitchell aside kick to open the second half, the Bucks settled down with Hejna's interception and Evan Schroeder followed that with a 57-yard touchdown run where he simply sprinted past the entire Mitchell defense.

Lightner added his third score of the game with a 19-yard fourth-quarter run as the Bucks found the end zone at least once in each period of play.

Yankton had some second-half fun as senior Jase Likness, appearing in his first game of the season after battling injuries, attempted a drop-kick for the PAT after Schroeder's third-quarter score. His first attempt just cleared the crossbar but was nullified by an il-

legal procedure penalty and his second attempt was blocked.

"He's been working on it because he hasn't be able to play all season," Coach Likness said. "I told him if we got up by three touchdowns I'd let him try it. We thought we'd try it and have a little fun."

The attitude for Yankton quickly turns to all business as the Bucks have a short week to prepare for Thursday's regular season finale against the undefeated Brandon Valley Lynx. Yankton will travel to second-ranked Brandon with the ESD title on the line.

"We have a lot of work to do," Hejna added. "We need to keep going forward, especially with a short week coming up."

Thursday's game starts at 7 p.m. at Brandon Valley High School.

MITCHELL (0-8) 0 0 0 0  
YANKTON (6-2) 7 14 12 7 — 0  
First Quarter  
Y — Jordan Lightner, 6-yard run (Brady Hale kick)

|  |          |          |          |
|--|----------|----------|----------|
| <b>Second Quarter</b>  |          |          |          |
| Y — Levi Davis, 5-yard run (Hale kick)   |          |          |          |
| Y — Lightner, 5-yard run (Hale kick)   |          |          |          |
| <b>Third Quarter</b>   |          |          |          |
| Y — J.J. Hejna, 55-yard interception return (2-point conversion failed)  |          |          |          |
| Y — Evan Schroeder, 57-yard run (PAT failed)   |          |          |          |
| <b>Fourth Quarter</b>  |          |          |          |
| Y — Lightner, 19-yard run (Hale kick)  |          |          |          |
|  | <b>Y</b> | <b>B</b> | <b>M</b> |
| First Downs  | 10       | 15       | 6        |
| Rushes/Net   | 36/209   |          | 36/94    |
| Passing Yards  | 80       |          | 76       |
| Passes A/C/I   | 13/8/0   |          | 12/5/2   |
| Total Offense  | 49/289   |          | 48/170   |
| Fumbles/Lost   | 0/0      |          | 0/0      |
| Penalties  | 5/45     |          | 5/39     |
| Sacks By   | 1/5      |          | 2/11     |
| RUSHING — Yankton: Evan Schroeder 10-122, Jordan Lightner 7-42, Levi Davis 7-42, James Hisek 2-11, Tim Cross 2-4, George Hite 1-1, Brady Hale 1-0, Parker Kuchta 2-(-1), Rucker 4-(-12); Mitchell: Matt Larson 12-54, Landon Neugebauer 7-16, Joe Medicine Horn 1-11, Mitch Johnson 9-6, Mitch Berens 2-6, Logan Long 2-5, Chase Harms 1-0, Micah Hettinger 1-(-2), Jacob Cardoso 1-(-2) |          |          |          |
| PASSING — Yankton: Michael Rucker 6-9-0-69, Brady Hale 2-4-0-11; Mitchell: Matt Larson 5-12-2-76   |          |          |          |
| RECEIVING — Yankton: J.J. Hejna 3-64, Troy Hunhoff 1-6, Tim Cross 1-6, Charlie Stephenson 1-5, Kolby LaCroix 1-1, Evan Schroeder 1-(-2); Mitchell: Ethan Jones 2-50, Landon Neugebauer 1-13, Beau Brown 1-9, Evan Mastel 1-4   |          |          |          |

You can follow Chris Riley on Twitter at [twitter.com/ChrisCRiley](http://twitter.com/ChrisCRiley)

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## USD VB

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"The bigger thing you can't quantify is that we really lacked toughness," he added. "We were very uninspired after a really nice game two."

Senior Kim Bulaga led the Coyotes with 10 kills, while sophomore Kendall Krittenbrink added nine and junior Tori Kroll — moved from setter to hitter — had eight kills.

"She can really play about anywhere, plus it's nice to have another hitter," Lupardus said of Kroll. "I definitely don't mind it; I love being out there to help out."

She and her teammates will get another chance Sunday when the

Coyotes host Western Illinois (8-11, 2-6) at 2 p.m.

"Western is tough. They don't have the best record, but they've beaten North Dakota State and Oakland," Houk said. "They have two players we really have to worry about, but we're more worried about ourselves right now."

You can follow Jeremy Hoeck on Twitter at [twitter.com/jhoeck](http://twitter.com/jhoeck)

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November 11, 2012

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**Submission Fee: \$20**

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## Coyotes

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True freshman cornerback Ricky Reeves steps in for previous starter Chris Frierson, who was released. And junior D.J. Wakes — the No. 2 at free safety — is out today because of a team rules violation.

Still, in a matchup of the league's bottom two defenses, the Coyotes are prepared for a battle, Starr said.

"Right now it's a battle for bottom of the conference, and nobody wants that," he said. "I think this will be tougher than most people think, just because both teams have nothing to lose."

You can follow Jeremy Hoeck on Twitter at [twitter.com/jhoeck](http://twitter.com/jhoeck)