

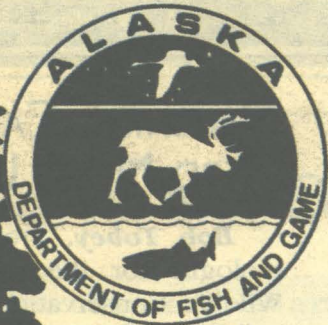


ALASKA HUNTING BULLETIN

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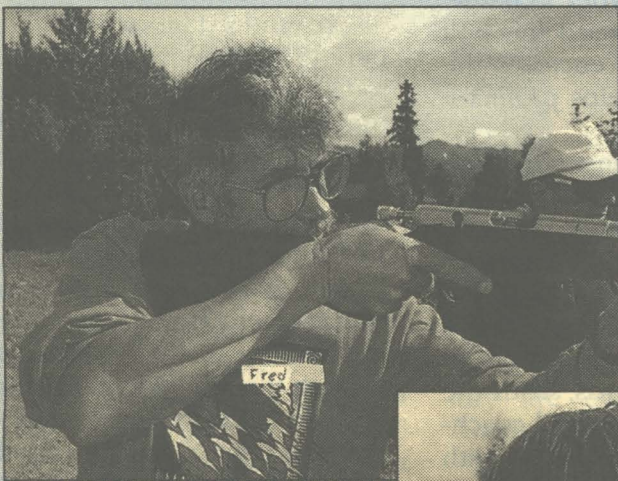
Alaska Hunting Bulletin

A publication of the Alaska Department of Fish & Game

VOLUME 5, No. 1

JANUARY, 2000

BLACKPOWDER CERTIFICATION COURSE AVAILABLE



Blackpowder shooters & hunters of all ages attended the Hunter Information & Training Program's Muzzleloading Hunter Certification Courses during 1999

At the March 1999 meeting the Alaska Board of Game created a new regulation requiring that hunters participating in the Fort Richardson muzzleloader-only moose hunt successfully complete a certification course prior to hunting. The Board passed the new regulation at the urging of many muzzleloading rifle hunters and groups. Everyone agreed that muzzleloader hunters, particularly those new to this traditional hunting tool, should learn the special safety practices needed when using blackpowder, and the range limitations of muzzleloaders when used on Alaska big game.

To prepare for this new certification course, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game Hunter Information and Training Program sponsored a National Muzzle Loading Rifle Association instructor training session during the month of July. Volunteer instructors from Fairbanks to the Kenai Peninsula attended the three-day instructor training course and more than a dozen new instructors were certified.

Alaska's first certification courses were held in July and August for the winners of the coveted

Fort Richardson muzzleloader-only moose permits. Every permit winner was personally contacted by Elaine Larimer, administrative clerk for the HIT Program, and was scheduled to attend one of the new certification courses.

According to Tony Monzingo, co-coordinator of the

HIT program, the new certification program will involve approximately 10 to 12 hours of instruction over two days. The first session of the certification course involves principles of firearm safety, special precautions needed when handling blackpowder, and proper loading and unloading of muzzleloader. Knight Muzzleloading, a partner with the HIT Program in the Mobile Target Sports Trailer, provides a variety of muzzleloaders for the students.

HIT Program instructors recommend that no

SEE, BLACK, PAGE 2

HUNTER EDUCATION IN ALASKA: A BRIEF HISTORY

The history of wildlife agency-administered education courses designed to reduce firearms-related hunting accidents extends back to 1949, when New York became the first state to institute a "hunter safety" course. Over the years course standards were developed cooperatively by the states and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Concurrently, the name of the program evolved from hunter safety to hunter education or outdoor skills or outdoor recreation, reflecting the broadening scope of topics covered in these courses. Alaska's voluntary program started in 1973 and continues today primarily because of the work of hundreds of volunteer instructors. Over time the course became mandatory in many states. In 1997, 49 of the 50 states required the course, with Alaska the lone exception. In February of 1997 the process to change that was begun.

At that time Wildlife Conservation Division Director Wayne Regelin established a citizen advisory group to craft a new program for Alaska. His primary goal was to insure that all groups and affected interests

SEE, ALASKA'S, PAGE 5

YOUTH SHOOTERS ARE CHAMPIONS

Sporting clays is the fastest growing target sport in the United States. Competitors move from station to station to shoot at a wide variety of targets. Some competitors compare sporting clays to golf with a shotgun. Unlike trap and skeet where each target is reasonably predictable, every station in sporting clays is different, requiring the shooter to develop and use a wide variety of techniques and skills. Clays are thrown from almost every angle and even from towers that

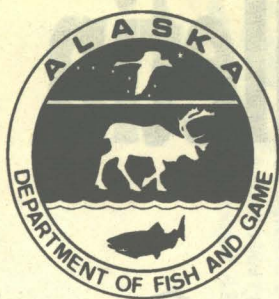
are more than 90 feet above the competitors.

The Youth Target Sports Program, first of its kind in the United States, is supported by the local chapters of the Safari Club International, Ruffed Grouse Society, and National Wild Turkey Federation. These conservation organizations conduct fundraising banquets each year and contribute a significant portion of their proceeds to Alaskan conservation and hunting heritage projects.

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THIS MONTH IN ALASKA HUNTING BULLETIN

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Alaska Hunting Bulletin

The *Alaska Hunting Bulletin* is a publication of the Alaska Department of Fish & Game Hunter Information & Training Program.

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BLACK POWDER FOR ALL AGES

FROM PAGE 1

one use a firearm that does not have a mechanical safety. Almost all of the muzzleloaders that copy designs from the 1700s and 1800s have no safety mechanism at all. These replica designs have a hammer that must be cocked before the rifle is fired. If you see a game animal, cock the rifle, then move for a clear shot; the hammer must be uncocked or you have to move with a fully cocked and loaded firearm.

The MK-85 Knight muzzle-loading rifle used in the certification course are in-line design which means the percussion cap fits directly behind the powder charge. Knight MK-85's have two safety devices. First is a knurled knob, not unlike what many of us remember on single-shot .22s of our youth. This knurled knob must be pulled back until it locks in place. This cocks the bolt but the rifle has a back-up mechanical safety. A small lever on the receiver must be pivoted forward into the fire position. Only after cocking the bolt and moving the safety to fire can the trigger be pulled. Monzingo says that no one should rely on any mechanical safety to replace basic firearm safety principle of keeping the muzzle pointed in a safe direction. Although mechanical devices cannot guarantee safety, the double safety design of the Knight may well make it the safest muzzleloader currently available.

Participants also learn that muzzleloaders are very short range hunting tools and shots at big game animals should be limited to 100 yards or less. Instructors stress the fact by limiting the practical range of hunting tools such as muzzleloaders and bows, can be very important to game managers when trying to preserve hunting opportunity in urban and near-urban areas.

The second session of the certification course is almost entirely hands-on. Every student is encouraged to load and shoot as many rounds as necessary to master the loading sequence and prepare for the shooting proficiency test. Emphasis of this session is on practicing correct, safe loading procedures and marksmanship practice at bull's eye targets. Candidates for certification are provided the opportunity to load and fire both round-ball and conical bullet loads so they can compare their performance and accuracy.

Hunters attending the certification class are given the chance to use Hodgdon Powder Company's Pyrodex®, a blackpowder substitute. Blackpowder is an explosive and subject to rigid shipping requirements. For Alaskan hunters it is easier and less expensive to purchase and use Pyrodex®. Course instructors demonstrate for the class that

Pyrodex® works just as well as traditional blackpowder. Pyrodex® has a higher ignition temperature than blackpowder so hunters are encouraged to use hot percussion caps such as the CCI #11. Knight® also makes two other muzzleloader designs of interest to Alaskan hunters. First is the "Disc" rifle which uses a plastic disc to hold either a shotgun primer or a percussion cap. A shotgun primer helps ignite the Pyrodex® powder in the temperatures of a late moose season. The other Knight® design of interest is the T-Bolt® rifle. The T-Bolt® has a bolt handle that is pulled straight to the rear. When pulled all the way to the rear a hot musket cap can be inserted behind the powder charge. When pushed forward the bolt almost completely encloses the musket cap that helps protect it from rain and snow.

After the demonstration and range practice, everyone takes the shooting proficiency test. This field test requires the muzzleloading student to shoot from a hunting position and hit an 8 inch bull's eye target four out of five times at 50 yards. With the concentrated practice and coaching, almost everyone passes with flying colors. In fact, instructors say "look out moose" as many targets come back with all five bullets in the black bull's eye.

Now everyone takes the written exam. The paper and pencil exam is multiple choice and is not a push-over. However, instructors are careful to emphasize the key points of the course that will be tested so almost everyone passes the first time. Instructors say that if a student does not pass the shooting proficiency or written exam, he or she can try again the next day.

At the present time there are three permit draw hunts limited only to muzzleloaders or muzzleloaders and bowhunters. Hunters interested in hunting with a muzzleloader may apply for one of 25 permits offered for a September-to-November moose hunt on Fort Richardson, near Anchorage. A second drawing permit hunt is offered in Game Management Unit 20A, south of Fairbanks, for a November bull moose hunt. About 75 permits are usually available for this hunt. The third opportunity for muzzleloader hunters is the elk drawing permit hunt in Game Management Unit 3. Approximately 70 permits are awarded for this island hunt in the southeastern rain forest.

If you are interested in becoming a muzzleloader hunter or applying for any of the muzzleloader only hunts call the Hunter Information and Training Program at 267-2534 for information on future certification courses. □

NELCHINA CARIBOU HERD NEWS UPDATE

Bob Tobey, area wildlife biologist for the Division of Wildlife Conservation in Glenallen

Dramatic changes in the condition of the Nelchina caribou herd may mean ADF&G will have to greatly restrict harvest in next year's Tier II hunt.

The 1999 calf crop and calf survival to fall were the lowest observed in more than 25 years for the Nelchina herd. The mortality of radio-collared caribou is nearly twice as high as normal. With these changes, the herd has gone from a highly productive one capable of sustaining relatively high human harvest to one of low productivity unable to sustain much human harvest.

To understand what is happening to the Nelchina herd today and in the coming millennium, we need to look at the history of the herd over the past century. From the beginning of the 20th century through the 1940s, the herd was estimated at 15,000. Wolf numbers in Game Management Unit 13 also were low until the 1940s but increased enough that the federal Fish and Wildlife Service instituted a predator control program for the Unit. Between 1948 and 1953 wolf numbers were reduced dramatically and by 1954 only 12 wolves were believed to remain in GMU 13.

The herd prospered during the 1950s and the early 1960s. Range quality was good and food was abundant. More than 65 percent of GMU 13 had experienced a wildfire in the previous 50 years, mostly caused by humans. The fire helped keep the range productive. The herd peaked in the mid-1960s at about 70,000 caribou.

During the 1950s, human harvests were high and seasons and bag limits liberal. In the late 1960s calf production and survival declined, probably because of food limitations after several years of intense use of the range. After predator control ended, wolves were given complete protection for five years and their numbers rebounded swiftly. By 1965 up to 450 wolves were estimated to be in GMU 13. Caribou survival declined under increased wolf predation. Human harvests also remained high with a reported take of more than 10,000 caribou reported in 1971. In response to the combination of lower productivity, increased wolf mortality and very high human harvest, the herd crashed in just a few years.

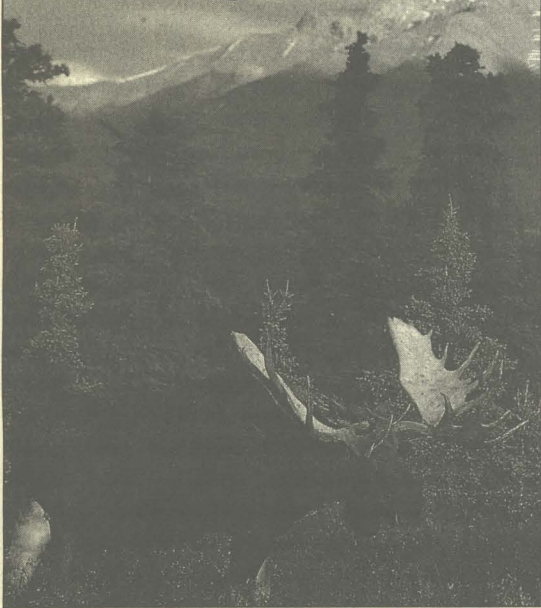
By 1972, it was estimated that fewer than 10,000 Nelchina caribou remained. The harvest plummeted to 550 in 1972 and remained below 1,000 for more

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FIELD CARE OF BIG GAME

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Presents

Field Care of Big Game



The Field Dressing Video is available through the Department of Fish & Game

Field Care of Big Game, title of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game's newest video production, is already a big hit with hunters. Released in August 1999, Field Care is a 53, minute, full-color videotape. In Field Care, an experienced Alaskan game biologist leads a first-time hunter step by step through the process of preparing for a big game hunt and field dressing a moose. One section of the video takes the hunter through a complete list of equipment needed for field dressing. Each piece of equipment is shown and its use in the process of field care clearly explained.

The field dressing sequences in this video were filmed under actual field conditions; there are no simulations. Department producers of Field Care researched more than 20 currently available instructional videos about field dressing big game. According to the producers nearly all of the videos were filmed with 8mm or Hi-8 cameras. As a result the image quality and lighting commonly suffered. Most of the existing videos involved deer or even elk which can be "horsed around" to a better position for field dressing. Some even recommended you hang the animal from a tree limb to remove the internal organs. Without block and tackle you won't go far with a moose, much less up a spindly black spruce!

Field Care was professionally videotaped by Stuart Aull of Moving Images Productions, using the broadcast quality Beta format. The results are bright, clear pictures of detailed knife work.

According to Fish and Game experts, no other field care video on the market demonstrates the technique shown in Field Care of Big Game. The technique used in this video leads the hunter through each step of skinning a large animal such as a moose or caribou, removing large sections of meat such as shoulders, hams, backstrap, and neck without removing the entrails. The video also illustrates how to leave lawful evidence of sex attached to the hindquarter and the final step of opening the body cavity to reach and remove the

highly desirable tenderloins.

Basics of field care, keeping the meat cool, clean, and dry are emphasized in the video. In the video, experts explain how meat can quickly spoil unless it is removed from the carcass and allowed to quickly cool. Cooling the meat retards spoilage and results in great table fare. Meat care experts also caution hunters that the meat must be kept clean. Leaves, grass, soil, and hair as well as bodily fluids, must be removed from the meat. This means taking your time during the field dressing process to pick off foreign matter. Heavy-duty game bags that protect the meat are essential to the field dressing process. Now that the meat is cool and clean is must also be kept dry. Keeping meat dry on a float trip requires keeping the meat lightly covered in the raft and then hung each night so that it can remain dry. When hunting from a base camp erect a tarp over the meat bags to protect from rain or snow.

Insects are often a problem, particularly in the early caribou and moose seasons. According to the experts in Field Care, the best way to deal with pesky flies is to spray the meat with a citric acid solution. Food grade citric acid is readily available at pharmacies and feed stores. A protective film is formed on the meat when citric acid is mixed with water and sprayed on the meat. Apparently flies don't like to lay their eggs on the sharply acidic surface. Another excellent tip is to soak the meat bags in the citric acid solution and let them dry before the hunting trip. Even though the solution has dried it remains effective. □

YOUTH TARGET SPORTS PROGRAM

FROM PAGE 1

Casey Willis (14), Rick Stonke (15), and Kyle Kline (14), members of the Hunter Information and Training Program's Youth Target Sports Team, are winners in 1999 sporting clays state championship competition. Casey, a



Kyle Kline (left), Illinois Sub-junior State Sporting Clays Champion, and Casey Willis, Alaska State Class D & Sub-junior Champion

freshman at Service High, is also a member of his high school diving team and a former Junior Olympic gymnastics champion. Casey finished his hunter education course at Goldenview Middle School and began shooting with the Target Sports competitive team in May 1999. Casey, using his well-honed competitive athletic skills to perfect a come-from-behind victory, captured the sub-junior Alaska State sporting clays championship with a two-day score of 105. A Beretta 390 semi-automatic is Casey's choice for competition. Casey's two-day score was also good enough for him to capture the overall Class D championship against many adult competitors. Casey is the son of Gary and Diane Willis of Anchorage.

Rick began shooting with the Target Sports competitive team in June 1998. Rick, who also plays competitive hockey, won the junior state championship on the national-class sporting clays course at Grouse Ridge Shooting Grounds in Wasilla. Using a Beretta Silver Pigeon (12 gauge over/under) Rick took the second-place trophy in the D class competition, only a single target behind team member Casey Willis. Rick is the son of Richard and Kelley Stonke of Anchorage.

Kyle began shooting competitively in September 1998. A

freshman at Service High School and member of the wrestling team, Kyle came to the attention of team coaches at the Great Alaska Sportsman Show when he won the informal "virtual reality" DART system shooting competition. Kyle, who spent the summer with his dad in Illinois, entered and won the Illinois State subjunior championship using a Beretta 390, semi-automatic 12 gauge. Kyle is the son of Pam Morgan of Anchorage. Other youth competitors who won events during the sporting clays season include Jonathan Hornak and Robert Sipes of Anchorage and C. J. Rue of Fairbanks.

According to coaches and sponsors, the Youth Target Sports Program welcomes new shooters ages 11 to 15. Over 20 shooters participated during the 1998-99 school year. Every young shooter is provided with a safety orientation and hearing and eye protection. Adult coaches are trained and certified in all the shooting disciplines. Youngsters have the opportunity to try their hand at shotgun, .22 rifle, centerfire rifle, and muzzleloaders. Other program activities include instruction and training in survival, wilderness first aid, and land navigation. Program members are also provided the opportunity to participate in conservation activities such as stream cleanups and habitat improvement projects.

In the weekly shotgun league every participant is placed on a six-person squad that shoots 50 clay targets each week, 25 at trap and 25 on a five-stand sporting clays course. League shooting is held each Tuesday evening at Rabbit Creek Range that has a new, lighted shotgun shooting range. Individual and team scores are handicapped, which makes it easy for beginners to compete on an even footing with more experienced shooters. Individual and team awards are presented in May of each year.

If you know of a youngster who has a high interest in learning to shoot safely and would like to be on a team with other young shooters call (907) 267-2241 or (907) 267-2236 in Anchorage for further information. □



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IMPROVEMENTS AT THE RABBIT CREEK RANGE



View of new enclosed rifle shooting range under construction. Project headed by Kirk Lingofelt and Lee Rogers.

The Hunter Information and Training Program announces a series of range improvement projects at the Alaska Department of Fish and Game's Rabbit Creek Range in south Anchorage. Each year the Rabbit Creek

shooters with target frames, target bases, sandbags, and paper targets. Spotting scopes and chronographs are available for a nominal rental fee.

According to Lee Rogers, range-master, the range improvement program is the result of a capital improvement project (CIP) funded by the state legislature during the 1999 session. The CIP, Rogers says, is being used to enclose and provide radiant heaters for the shooting points on the centerfire rifle range. These modifications along with the installation of lighting will provide shooters with a comfortable place to test reloads or practice during the long Alaska winter.

The instructional range, used by Hunter Information and Training Program hunter education classes and hunter clinics will also receive new covered

shooting points, allowing use in our sometimes "misty" weather. Improvements will also be made to the archery range. The Archery Manufacturers Organization and Alaska Bowhunters Association provided the Hunter Information and Training Program grants to install lighting and make other improvements to the existing archery range. The upgrades will allow year-around use of the archery range and also support the Hunter Information and Training Program's Youth

Target Sports Development Program.

John Matthews, program coordinator, tells the Hunting Bulletin that a new trap machine and lighting has been installed on the shotgun range. These developments will provide shotgun shooters with an opportunity to practice their skills with the nontoxic shot required for waterfowl hunting. The new lighting system will allow use of the range during the



The new lighted shotgun and archery range. Funds for the lighting was contributed by Archery Manufacturer's Association, Alaska Bowhunter's Association, and the Alaska Heritage Foundation.

winter months until the 6 p.m. closing time, well after normal darkness. Matthews says that steel shot and clay targets will soon be available for sale at the range house for the convenience of shooters.

For the comfort of shooters and family members accompanying them, the present range house will be remodeled. A lounge area will be constructed with comfortable seating, a TV, video library, ballistics computer, microwave oven, vending machines, and an "endless" coffee pot to warm everyone. ☐

Range use fees at Rabbit Creek are \$5 per day, \$30 for a 7-day pass, or \$40 for an annual pass. Rabbit Creek Range is open Friday through Tuesday each week. Winter hours are 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Summer hours run June 15 through September 15. Summer hours are 11a.m. to 7 p.m. on Friday, Monday, and Tuesday. On Saturday and Sunday, summer hours are 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. For additional information on Rabbit Creek Range call 345-7831.

HAVE GUN WILL TRAVEL

The Hunter Information and Training Program recently unveiled its new and innovative Mobile Target Sports Program for Alaskan hunters and recreational shooters. The state legislature provided the funds to purchase and operate the mobile system through a capital improvement project. The heart of the program is a 36 foot 5th wheel trailer. Two qualified Fish and Game instructor-technicians will travel with the mobile system. When conducting clinics around the state the technicians will be supported by regional fish and game personnel and volunteer hunter education instructors.

The bread and butter of the mobile system is a DART® laser interactive shooting system designed for use with both bows and firearms. The DART® system allows the mobile shooting sports training system to be used at locations where live fire would not be practical. For example, the mobile system will use the DART® training format at the Anchorage and Fairbanks out-

SEE, HAVE, PAGE 14

ALASKA'S BIGFOOT, CREATURE OF LORE OR REALITY

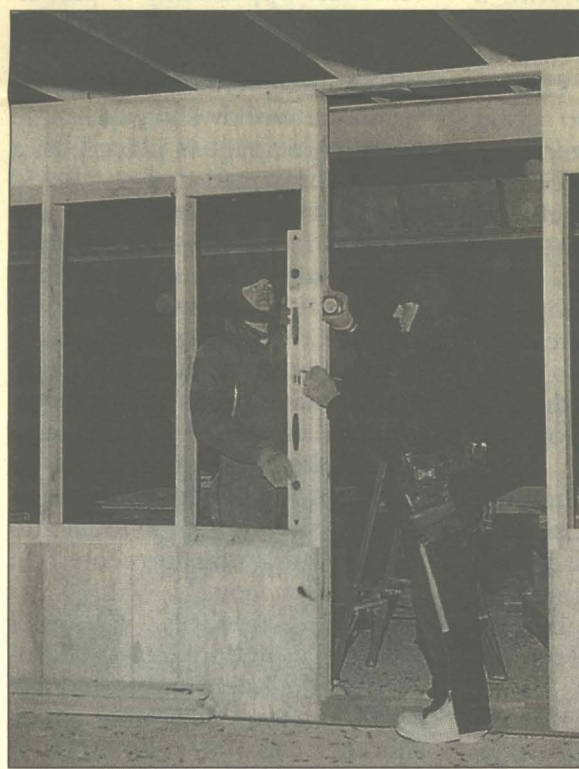
by Steven C. Levi

Let's face it, there is only person with a lower credibility than an Outsider with a bear story, and that's an Alaskan with a Bigfoot story. Bigfoot, of course, is the legendary humanoid that haunts the wilds of North America. So elusive that few scientists believe it exists at all. The evidence is, at best, scanty, contradictory, and largely apocryphal. When it comes to Alaska, legend and lore have become even more convoluted.

While the Pacific Northwest may have Bigfoot — often called Sasquatch—Alaska has a veritable smorgasbord of humanoids. Unlike the Lower 48, there is a substantial history of sightings of these creatures, mostly by Natives. These sightings were not in some by-gone era but recent and consistent enough to be investigated—if mainstream science wants to take a serious look at the phenomenon.

In many parts of Alaska there are humanoids that Natives firmly believe exist. In addition to the "Hairy Man" of Kokhanok and the "Little People" of Noorvik, there is also "Caribou Man," called the TuTu by the Innuipiat.

SEE, BIGFOOT, PAGE 13



Kirk Lingofelt (left), and Lee Rogers work to enclose rifle range at Rabbit Creek. Radiant heaters will be installed over each shooting bench for year round use. Range reopens on February 1, 2000.

Range provides more than 15,000 Alaskan hunters with a safe place to sight in and practice with their firearms. Rabbit Creek is a comprehensive shooting facility that provides a 100-yard range for handgun, a 100-yard range for centerfire rifle, a 100-yard .22 range, a 50-yard instructional range, shotgun, and archery ranges. At the present time the handgun and centerfire ranges have covered shooting points to protect shooters from rain and snow. Rabbit Creek also has a range house that provides

ALASKA'S HUNTER EDUCATION PROGRAM, SINCE 1997

FROM PAGE 1

had a voice in the development of this plan. A total of eight citizens was ultimately selected to serve on the advisory group; Dave Cline-Anchorage, Del Demeritt-Fairbanks, Dan Kittoe-Anchorage, Eddie Grasser-Palmer, Mel Hein-Palmer, Sarah Jones-Soldotna, Orville Lind-King Salmon and Ted Schenck-Sitka. These eight individuals represented: hunters, non-hunters, guides, conservation groups, sportsmen's groups, teachers, private business owners, Alaska Natives, contractors, government agency employees, women, rural and urban life, pilots, advisory committees, and volunteer hunter education instructors. John Matthews and Tony Monzingo, co-coordinators of the Hunter Information and Training Program served as staff to this group and Teri Arnold, staff strategic planning facilitator, kept the group on task.

The group agreed that the primary goal of hunter training was to put "more ethical hunters in the field." Given that goal, the group agreed to develop the best program possible. They spent hours reviewing public surveys and hunting-related accident data. Two reports played a key role in determining the content of the final proposal developed by the group: Factors Related to Hunting, Participation in the United States- Responsive Management, 1995, and the Annual Accident Report - International Hunter Education Association,

1996. After extensive discussion the group felt that hunting and the hunter were best served by a comprehensive course focusing on safety, wildlife conservation, hunter responsibility and behavior and competency.

One of the more contentious elements of the initial proposal included a provision for renewal of certification every 10 years. Based upon accident data they reviewed, they found that the average age of a hunter involved in a fatal hunting accident was 30 years old and had 19 years of hunting experience. It was clear that hunters needed a refresher. When the initial proposal was distributed for review two groups; The Alaska Outdoor Council and The National Rifle Association, voiced strenuous objection to this provision, fearing that such a requirement would place an undue burden on hunters. Concern over such reaction led to the removal of this provision from the plan.

It is important to note, however, that there is good reason to adopt this requirement. Nationwide there are approximately 100 fatal hunting accidents each year (actually in the past few years it has been in the high 90s). Today there are approximately 16 million hunters in the United States. That figures out to be .6 fatalities per 100,000 hunters. Alaska has 100,000 licensed hunters. In the past three years we have had between three and five fatalities per year. That's five to eight times the national average!

Hunters have a responsibility to demand better. It is not in the best interest of hunters and hunting to wait for someone else to make the call.

Some simple arithmetic demonstrates the foolishness of opposing required training: Assume that a person starts hunting at 15 and quits at 55. That is 40 years of hunting. Further assume that a basic hunter education course is 12 to 15 hours in length. That is about 18 to 22.5 minutes per year spent in learning basic skills, hardly an undue burden. Even if the course were doubled or refreshers were required every 10 years as originally proposed, that would be at most a half hour per year over the span of a hunter's active hunting years; less than the time it takes to get a haircut! If the time spent fighting this proposal were instead spent in the course, basic certification could have been obtained; certification which is required in every other state and most provinces in Canada.

In summary, the plan called for mandatory hunter training for everyone 30 years old or younger, phase-in of the requirement over a five-year period on a game management unit basis, and a shooting competency test as part of the certification. The plan also outlined a program of advanced courses that would be available to hunters on a voluntary basis. The group made a conscious effort to limit the number of topics and hence time the course required. Their concern

was to make a course that addressed real issues facing hunters and hunting and was not a barrier to people wanting to go hunting.

In the spring of 1998 the group presented the division director with their final plan. The plan received unanimous support from the 120 plus volunteer instructors at the meeting. At that time, the director asked for additional volunteers to help develop the standards and curriculum for a new course. As of this writing the curriculum is in rough draft form and is being reviewed by division staff. It will next be sent to steering group members for their review, and should be ready for implementation by the end of March will.

The Board of Game has responded to this proposal by passing regulations calling for mandatory hunter training for those hunters born after January 1, 1984 who wish to hunt in GMU's 7, 14 and 15. This requirement begins January 1, 2000. Proposals before the Board to add GMU's 13 and 20 to the requirement. The plan is on schedule.

In today's world a hunter's behavior is his worst enemy. The continued resistance to some basic level of training only confirms what most non-hunters and many hunters, feel about hunters. This proposal is not the first step down a slippery slope to banning hunting. It is the first step up the ladder of responsibility for having and keeping this privilege. □

AMO GRANT TO HUNTER HERITAGE FOUNDATION BOOSTS PROGRAM

Seeking to preserve the sport of bowhunting and to promote the sport of archery, manufacturers of bowhunting and target archery equipment banded together to form the Archery Manufacturers Organization or AMO. In turn the AMO created the "Save our Heritage Fund." The fund provides grants to organizations and agencies for the express purpose of promoting the growth and acceptance of bowhunting and archery. Save our Heritage grants are awarded each year by the AMO board of directors to applicants whose competitive proposals contain detailed plans to meet AMO goals of preserving bowhunting and promoting archery.

In April 1999 the Hunter Heritage Foundation, a cooperative nonprofit foundation formed by the Alaska Fish and Wildlife Conservation Fund and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, applied for a Save our Heritage grant. The Hunter Heritage Foundation provides

financial support to many Department projects. During 1999 the Foundation has supported the Becoming an Outdoor Woman program and the Youth Target Sports programs conducted by the Hunter Information and Training Program. Now the Hunter Heritage Foundation has partnered with Fish and Game's Hunter Information and Training Program to increase the number of Alaskans, and particularly youth, actively participating in recreational archery and bowhunting. In June 1999 the AMO awarded the Hunter Heritage Foundation a Save our Heritage grant in the amount of \$22,385.

Some of the grant funds are being used to produce a public information television ad promoting archery as a recreational and competitive sport for participants of all ages. The new televised ad shows individuals and groups from six to 60 actively learning, participating in, and enjoying archery activities.

According to Hunter Information and Training Program coordinators, the TV ad is now in post-production and should be seen on statewide television beginning in January 2000.

In addition to promoting the sport of archery through broadcast media, grant funds are being used to purchase archery equipment for the Hunter Information and Training Program's Mobile Target Sports Program trailer. Kirk Lingofelt, coordinator of the Mobile Program, says that the new archery equipment will allow his crew to outfit participants with the appropriate bows for use with the interactive DART videodisc interactive shooting program, regardless of age or strength. According to Kirk, the new equipment and the DART system will make an appearance at the Alaska Bowhunters Association banquet that will be held in Anchorage January 29, 2000. The Mobile System will also be a centerpiece attraction at the Alaska Chapter

of the Safari Club International's hunter symposium to be held at the Egan Center in Anchorage on 25 and 26 of February, 2000.

Save our Heritage grant funds are also being used to equip and train young archers and bowhunters ages 9 through 15. Equipment provided by the grant allows certified instructors to provide every youngster with an appropriate weight-of-pull and length bow. Instructors say that having equipment that is designed for all ages and sizes insures that new shooters have a successful first experience with bows and encourages them to become active participants in archery and bowhunting.

Bowhunters are the fastest-growing segment of the hunter population in Alaska. Since the lethal range of a bow is often measured in feet, the bowhunter must have razor-sharp hunting skills. National surveys of hunters show that as they gain

CARTRIDGES OF ALASKA'S HUNTERS - TOO MUCH GUN?

As Southcentral hunters prepared for the 1999 hunting season Lee Rogers, rangemaster at the Alaska Department of Fish and Game's Rabbit Creek Range in Anchorage, conducted a survey of 1,848 Alaskan hunters. Rogers surveyed hunters to find out what cartridges Alaskan hunters are choosing for their big game hunting. According to Lee, hunters sighted in rifles using 70 different cartridges during the July to September survey.

The most popular cartridge with Southcentral hunters is the tried and true .30-06, used by 387 or 21 percent of hunters.

The third most popular caliber proved to be the 7mm. Led by the 7mm Remington Magnum, the 7mm clan had 202 users or about 1 of 10 Southcentral hunters. The 280 Remington, 7X57 Mauser, 7mm-08, and 7mm Shooting Times Westerner were used by a total of 42 hunters.

The classic Alaskan brown bear cartridge, the .375 H&H showed well, being used by 116 or 6.3 percent of all the hunters surveyed. Cartridges with the word "Magnum" in their name accounted for 1086 or 58.7 percent of all cartridges used.

This last statistic is the most

broadside at a distance of 100 yards. The individuals in the study averaged 19 years of hunting experience.

Rogers says that less than one-half (46 percent) of hunters placed all three shots in the 16-inch-by-24-inch vital zone. Twenty-eight percent (28.1 percent) of all shots taken would have wounded rather than immediately killed the moose. Most of the wounding shots are, in the opinion of Rogers, the result of too much gun and too little practice from the basic hunting positions of sitting, kneeling, and off-hand. Only

about one out of ten hunters practices shooting from these hunting positions after sighting in their rifle, states rangemaster Rogers.

This lack of practical practice, compounded by the use of a gun that is simply unpleasant to shoot, is likely to result in wounding and crippling animals. In a Department of Fish and Game telephone survey of Alaskan hunters, 38 percent said they had killed a big game animal that had been previously wounded by another hunter. According to Rogers, the results of this survey seem to confirm what he sees daily.

Do Alaskan hunters need these big-kicking magnums for big game? Not really, say most biologists, hunter educators, and experienced big game hunters. Big game animals are not killed by foot-pounds of kinetic energy or some mystical "knock-down" power. Big game is consistently, quickly, and humanely killed by accurate, precise placement of a well-constructed bullet in the vital heart-lung area. A cartridge loaded with a 180 grain Nosler (partition bullet fired from the 94-year-old 30-06 will almost always pass completely through a moose or caribou, taking out both lungs. Rogers says that hunters find a cartridge and gun they can shoot comfortably enough to fire 30 to 40 rounds during a practice session. After sighting in, all the hunter's practice should be from hunting positions likely to be used in the field.

Furthermore, when hunters chronograph their magnum factory loads they are often surprised they are getting so much

buck and bang and so little gain. For example, during Roger's survey 15 hunters using .300 Winchester Magnum factory ammunition loaded with 180 grain bullets averaged 2,919 feet per second for 45 shots. Twelve different .30-06 rifles using factory ammunition loaded with 180-grain bullets chronographed 2,644 feet per second. See, some say, you get 275 feet per second difference! In the real world of hunting that works out to a gain of about 25 yards in range in exchange for easily one-third more recoil and a hefty increase in muzzle blast!

What about bears, hunters ask? Shouldn't Alaskan hunters have a magnum in case I have a run-in with 'ol fuzzy? Bear experts say that alertness in the field and keen observation skills are better protection than a magnum rifle. Analysis of bear encounters reveals the fact that most surprise encounters with a bear are just that, a surprise. Fortunately for bear and man, the bear usually swaps ends and runs away. In the rare event of a genuine charge the distance is typically measured in feet, and the hunter most likely carrying his rifle slung over the shoulder or in one hand. Under these circumstances he has no real chance to gather himself, ram a cartridge in the chamber and make an accurate, aimed shot at any vital area. In the even more unlikely event that the hunter is carrying his rifle "at-the-ready" and is able to take an aimed shot, a well-placed .30-06 will do more good than a poorly placed .300 or even .375 magnum. Most of us are simply better off hunting with a partner, remaining alert to bear sign, avoiding dense thickets where visibility is virtually zip, and quickly moving game meat away from the gut pile.

Hunters are responsible for wise use of our wildlife resource and using too much gun that results in wounded and crippled animals is not what we should aim for when we hunt. □



Southcentral Alaska's five most popular rifle cartridges for big game: 7mm Rem Mag, .30-06, 300 Win Mag, 338 Win Mag, 375 H&H Mag.

The .30-06 was closely followed by the .300 Winchester Magnum with 342, and the .338 Winchester Magnum with 339. Lee says these three cartridges combined are used by almost six out of ten Southcentral hunters. There was a huge drop from the .338 Winchester to the next most popular cartridge, the 7mm Remington Magnum with 157 users.

Lee also looked at cartridges by caliber. The 30 caliber, for almost 60 years the choice of the U.S. military, boasted 912 users or almost exactly one-half of all hunters surveyed. The highly popular .30-06 and .300 Winchester Magnum are joined in this group by the .308 Winchester, .30-30, .307 Winchester, .300 Savage, .300 Weatherby Magnum, and the new .300 Remington Ultra Magnum.

Taking a distant second place were the cartridges using .338 diameter bullets. The increasingly popular .338 Winchester was joined in this group by the wildcat .338-06 and the .340 Weatherby Magnum. Almost one out of five hunters are using these medium-bore rifles for their big game hunting.

interesting according to Lee Rogers who talks with and watches over 15,000 shooters each year. Many hunters, says Rogers, are uncomfortable with their loud, hard-recoiling magnums. Lee says that when a hunter is shooting a hard-kicking "slobber-knocker" magnum, he or she often sights-in the rifle from a bench rest as quickly as possible and then packs up and leaves the range. Sometimes the hunter may even have to quit before the rifle is fully ready for the hunting fields.

To confirm his theory that too much gun frequently results in too little practice, Rogers conducted a short study on hunters' ability to shoot their rifles from hunting positions at game-sized targets. During the summer of 1999 Lee asked more than 80 hunters to chronograph their hunting loads to determine the actual velocity. Hunters sighted in their rifles under Lee's expert supervision on a secure, stable bench rest. After sighting in, hunters were asked to shoot three shots at the vital, heart-lung zone of a full-sized moose silhouette, standing

ALASKA TOP TEN CARTRIDGES		
Cartridge	Number of Hunters	%
.30-06	387	20.9
.300 Win. Mag	342	18.5
.338 Win. Mag	339	18.4
7mm Rem. Mag	157	8.5
.375 H&H Mag.	116	6.3
.270 Win.	108	5.8
.308 Win.	65	3.5
.300 Weath. Mag.	64	3.5
45-70 Gov.	25	1.4
.280 Rem.	20	1.1

WHAT DO BOARS AND BILLIES HAVE IN COMMON?

by Ace Sommerfeld

Plenty. In fact, boars and billies share similarities a goat hunter can put to good use. Thinking like a bear hunter on



A bear with horns? It sure looks like it from the backside.

your next goat hunt can swing the odds of collecting a top-notch trophy in your favor.

Unfortunately "next" for most goat hunters means first and last. The matter of doing it right the first time carries the same importance as being physically and mentally prepared for the challenge of successful goat hunting. Stacking all the odds in your favor is still not enough at times.

A true mountain goat trophy should fit three basic elements: a mature billy, with fresh winter hair, with no damage to horns or cape.

There are no guarantees in hunting bears or goats that you'll harvest a mature male, but more than twenty years of goat hunting have taught me to watch for a few important points. Getting in shape and having good gear don't mean much if you don't know what animal on the mountain to pursue.

Perhaps the most common mistake inexperienced mountain goat hunters make is not doing enough glassing before heading up the mountain. My 1999 hunt was typical. I chose not to hunt, but got a call from a friend's co-worker who drew, and asked if I'd tag along, "for the fun of it" I recall him saying. I wasn't sure about the fun part, but I learn something new on every hunt. Besides, the permit was in an area new to me so away we went.

Goats showed up before the binoculars were put to use. Two herds occupied opposite ends of a long mountain. My partner was

ready to make a B-line for the nearest bunch.

"With 13 animals in a herd, I can tell they are nannies and kids," I said. "There's seven in the other, I'll bet they're nannies too."

Many goat hunters fail to realize old billies, like mature boars require solitude and lots of space. I remember a hunt out of Homer a few years ago in which I counted eight billies, each with its own mountain. We worked a different mountain every day and three hunters took three nice billies.

The long term assurance of old boars existing as long as sows are roaming around is a law restricting the harvest of sows and their cubs. A limited attempt at the concept is made for goats in some areas, but it could be expanded. Studies indicate kids average the shortest distance between themselves and their nanny compared to other North American game species, making them easy to pair up even in a crowd.

The biggest advantage of restricting nannies/kids is the tendency of hunters to ignore herds and concentrate on loners. You'll get a better trophy and a nanny that would've left the mountain in a sack has another chance to perpetuate her kind. My field notes indicate there is an 85 percent chance a single animal is a billy. I will stalk an unidentified loner as if I know it's a big billy until I can judge its size and gender.

I made the typical mistakes of an inexperienced goat hunter the first few years of my career. Most of the billies we harvested were the 3 to 5 year old variety. Gary McCarthy took an impressive six-year old once, but in the end, I realized I was hunting in areas accessible to every hunter. If you can't hunt permit only areas, or get away from other hunters, the challenge of harvesting an old billy is taken to another level. Hunter-wise billies

often find an impossible slope and hole-up until the commotion below dies down.

Getting away from walk-in hunts on the Kenai Peninsula was a giant step for consistently harvesting old billies, but it wasn't enough. I'd find three or four young billies together and harvest the largest one. When the smoke cleared I'd catch a lone animal sneaking out the back door from some secretive section of the mountain. These were the billies I should've been concentrating on. As time passed their habits began to make sense, and locating them became easier. It generally just requires more patience in glassing. A once over with a rifle scope works for nannies, but not old billies.

The rugged terrain billies choose to reside in can be used against them, and may play a major role in keeping the cape in prime shape. After a billy has been spotted it is often possible to stalk into very close range. An archer told me goats are the easiest animals in Alaska to harvest with a bow. Many of my stalks have ended inside 40 yards, so I understand his point.

Getting close to a big billy has several advantages. Your naked eye will tell you in a flash if you have a mature billy in front of you. Exact bullet placement is more likely at 30 yards instead of 300. Determining if a billy will drop in a safe and accessible spot is easier at close range. Proper stocking is an element of goat hunting you learn with experience, and often separates a good hunt from a bad one.

Horns alone are not the full measure of a mountain goat trophy. It takes a large head and fresh winter hair to complete the package. Horn size has little to do with the age of a billy. Ted Spraker, a mountain goat biologist with Alaska's department of Fish and Game says, "A three-year old billy

from a healthy nanny that experiences mild winters can obtain ten-inch horns." On the other hand I have harvested eight-year old billies with eight-inch horns. The advantage older horns have over younger horns is character. Age rings and battle scars chronicle the life and times of tough hombre.

Hair condition on billies is just as important as on bears, so timing your hunt is crucial for trophy quality. "The hair on old billies begins to mat up almost immediately," says Joe Romero, a taxidermist who has worked with many goats. "Late October to late November is the best time to harvest a billy."

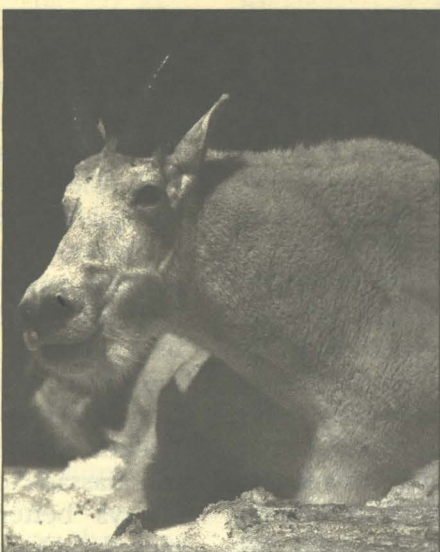
Late October in most goat country means dealing with snow, but it won't keep you from locating animals. It requires more glassing (there's that word again) but goats' cream-colored coat stands out against a snowy backdrop. Mountain winds whip a ridge top clear of snow in a couple days after a storm, and goats quickly settle on the clear spots. Fresh winter hair on a brown hillside is a dead giveaway.

Throughout goat season time on a mountain is a serious concern. In late October, days are short and nights are endless. Getting off the mountain before dark can be the difference between life and death. Many times the snowline has coaxed billies below it giving us the pleasure of a quick day on the mountain.

Knowing when to say when in late season is also important.



Note the sweeping angle indicating a billy. Short, round face gives away young age, a real fooler.



Early season billies lack proper hair length.



Even the horns of a small billy cannot be mistaken for those of a nanny when your up close.

If you spot a billy late in the day don't worry about putting the stalk off until first light. In 1989, I drew a Kenai permit and kept

SEE, BOARS, PAGE 13

FLY-OUT HUNTING FROM THE AIR TAXI'S VIEW

By Don Bowers

Thousands of hunters take advantage of unguided fly-in hunts every year. Hiring an air taxi to fly out and drop you off can be the experience of a lifetime, or it can be a nightmare. The more you know, the better your hunt will be.

This article is intended to give you a better idea of what to expect when you call an air taxi operator for a drop-off unguided

grain of salt. The areas we have access to can usually be accessed by anyone else with a plane, and undoubtedly have been for years, and trophies are few and far between even though the overall hunting may be good. In any case, don't expect us to try to stick a Cessna 185 into a 400-foot Super Cub strip on the side of a mountain, even if there's a 70-inch bull munching shrubs at the end of the runway. If you want a trophy, go with a licensed

185 can safely take about 700 pounds of passengers and their gear into a typical remote lake or bush strip, sometimes more, sometimes less. A 206 may haul a hundred pounds more, a Beaver several hundred more. Our limitation is usually bulk—a Cessna 185 or even a 206 will normally fill up before it gets too heavy. (Beavers are better on the bulk end of things.)

When you plan your departure date, try to allow leeway for weather. Alaska is notorious for foul weather during hunting season, and almost no air taxi aircraft are certified for instrument capability. Besides, the drop-off location probably doesn't even have so much as a windsock for an instrument approach anyway. The bottom line is that safe pilots won't push it. Usually a three-day window, or an alternate date several days later, will do nicely.

Establishing the pickup is critical. We will do our best to be where you say you will be, when you say you will be there. Don't worry if we're not there exactly on time. We may be delayed by weather or other factors beyond our control, but we guarantee we'll be trying to get there. In the worst case, remember that any reputable air taxi will make sure someone else knows you're there. And of course you will have notified someone to check with us if you're not back on time.

In some cases we may be early. Sometimes we can fly by and check on you while you're in the field. The universal signal for an early pickup is to spread a tarp out in a prominent place. We can also be early if we know the weather is going to get really bad and there's a risk you'd be in the field too long. Late in the season, we will also want to get you out before the first big snowfall.

It's nice if you have some way to communicate with us from the field, but it's not required. We sometimes have no way of knowing what the weather is like at your camp, and any information will help us. We can also let you know if we're having problems. Cell phones work in many areas, and the new satellite phones are usually effective. You can rent satellite phones at a reasonable rate. An aircraft radio is sometimes useful for short-range work, and a simple handheld CB can be a lifesaver (our planes all have CBs installed).

What should you take in with you? We see a staggering range of loads going out to the field. Some people take everything, while others take so little we worry

they'll have enough. The rule of thumb is to pack as lightly as you possibly can, especially if you're going to have to pack it someplace after you get off the plane. On the other hand, remember that the weather during hunting season can get abominable very quickly and can stay that way for days. Don't leave yourself short.

There are some things you should NOT plan on taking. It is absolutely against the law to carry bulk propane bottles with passengers. The only acceptable propane is the small disposable cylinders. (Note: On a float plane, small bulk propane bottles MAY be carried externally or in the floats.) You can take quite a bit of gasoline or Coleman fuel inside the cabin, though—up to 20 gallons per load.

Under NO circumstances can you carry any kind of incapacitating agent inside the airplane—pepper spray, bear spray, mace, tear gas, or whatever. It doesn't matter if it's hermetically sealed in a fireproof safe—it can't go in the cabin. However, these MAY be carried externally, even on wheel planes, by taping the canisters to the strut or gear leg.

Naturally, your guns must be unloaded to go in the plane. The ammunition must be separate from the gun (i.e., not in the case). Don't plan to wear your pistol in the plane, loaded or not. If nothing else, it gets in the way of the seat belts. You can fly your guns in hard cases if you want, but it's a lot of extra weight and bulk. Soft cases generally do fine and are a lot less trouble. Any air taxi will be glad to hold your hard cases until you get back.

Big bulky items are a headache. Large coolers are bad—please don't show up with 150-quart monsters. Small coolers are better if you need them. In general, anything big and bulky that won't stuff or fold is going to be a problem. Long things—say, longer than 6 or 7 feet—can also be awkward. Space is at a premium and small items or things we can massage to fit odd spaces are always better—and you'll get more load for your money. If you have to take something outside, please talk it over with us before you surprise us on the ramp.

We expect you to get all your permits and licenses and tags and harvest tickets. Most air taxis don't sell these items. We usually take you at your word when you say you're legal to go to a specific game management unit. Some of our locations may require permits from Native corporations or other landholders. If we think one of these areas may be good for you, we'll let you know well ahead of time what you need and you can decide if



A Cessna 185 waits for a pick up at a remote "sheep strip" in the Talkeetna Mountains. The oversize tires are standard equipment for many bush operators.

hunt. In some cases we can do more than you think, but in other areas we're only human, and in any case we still have to obey the laws of physics and the Federal Aviation Administration

Your first call to us is usually (Don is chief pilot for Hudson Air Service in Talkeetna), "Where can I go to get a moose (or sheep or caribou or bear or whatever)?" Our answer will always be, "It depends." Yes, we do try to keep an eye on likely areas where we can put our customers, but in many cases we can't fine-tune things until just before the season. Some places are generally good every year, but others can vary widely. In any case, please don't ask us to get specific and give up our trade secrets.

We will do our best to drop you where you'll have a good chance to get what you're after. We won't put you on top of any of our other clients hunting for the same species. Of course, we can't guarantee there won't be other hunters there—but there won't be anybody there who flew in with us. And if we know a location is going to be crowded with other hunters, we'll try to avoid it because it wouldn't be a good hunt for you.

Likewise, we won't even begin to guarantee a trophy hunt, and any air taxi operator who does should be taken with a large

guide—and be prepared to pay handsomely for the privilege.

This leads to the next question—price. Our hunting rates may be somewhat different from our normal charter rates simply because hunters often involve more work and more risk than other customers. When we agree to fly you out and bring you back, we become responsible for you, and that can translate directly into extra cost on our part with additional trips and more wear and tear on the airplane.

That said, most air taxis offer the whole airplane (in our case, usually a Cessna 185 on floats or wheels) for a fixed hourly rate. This includes the entire flying time for the pilot and airplane, even when you're not on it, multiplied by as many trips as are necessary to get everything safely out and back. As with most prices, it may be open to some negotiation, but don't expect anybody to give away the farm. For many locations we have a price already listed to save time when you call, but it's still based on flying time. Some operators may offer flat rates or per-person rates; check these out carefully—you may be going with someone else and you may end up someplace you're not thrilled about with a couple of dozen of your closest friends.

As a rule, we figure a Cessna

FLY-OUT HUNTING FROM THE HUNTERS POINT OF VIEW

by Tom Reale

Alaska is one of the world's premier hunting and fishing destinations. However, some prospective visitors are a bit unclear on just how vast the hunting areas are, and how roadless the state is. Unfortunately,



A busy day at Brooks Range International Airport.

there's isn't a moose behind every tree or a caribou over every hill, and roadside streams aren't (usually) bursting with fish just waiting to be caught. Getting to prime areas usually involves flying into an area that's off the road system. As some folks have observed, getting from their homes to a good hunting area involves a series of trips in smaller and smaller airplanes.

Once you've decided what you want to hunt, get a copy of *The Alaska Atlas and Gazetteer*. This handy book has large-scale topographic maps of the entire state, showing prominent geographic features, contour lines, bodies of water, etc. Looking over these maps will give you a general idea of what the terrain is like, how far it is from the road system or nearest town to your hunting area, etc.

Finding a Flight Service

Your next assignment is to find a pilot or flight service that serves your prospective hunting area. There's no substitute for talking to someone who has been there and done that, and it's almost a dead certainty that you know someone who knows someone who has used an Alaska flight service. However, should that avenue fail you, read the ads in sporting magazines and a copy of the guide and transporter roster from the State of Alaska and start making calls and asking questions. You want information such as: How long has the operation been in business under the current ownership? Who flies for you and for how long? How much flying time in Alaska do their pilots have? Can you get the names of recent clients for reference purposes? Does the flight service transport

hunters routinely, or just as a sideline? A series of such questions will enable you to get a feel for the operation. If the person on the other end of the phone gets huffy or defensive, move on. Early warning signs should never be ignored.

Another consideration is whether you want to fly with a large, multi-plane outfit or a small one- or two-plane operation. On the one hand, the smaller outfit can give you personal



Results from successful Caribou Hunts. The de Havilland Otter can carry an enormous payload.

attention and tailor its operation more closely to your requirements. Conversely, a bigger company will have a greater variety of plane types at its disposal. They'll have more planes operating in your area to provide mid-hunt checks and opportunities to change locations if you're unhappy with your first choice. They can usually offer an optimal fit between the size of your party and the size of the airplane.

Rates are set a couple of different ways. Larger operations that fly frequently to certain destinations often charge a seat fare—a fixed rate per seat, just like a scheduled airline. For example, if Ketchum Air Service takes you caribou hunting to the Mulchatna herd from Anchorage, it's going to cost about \$1,295.00 per person. That covers just about everything—meat hauls, mid-hunt checks, additional flying time if weather forces a detour of flight routes, etc.

The more common method with smaller outfits is to charge a per-hour charter rate where you pay for every hour the engine is running to get you out to your hunting spot and back, as well as the time the plane is deadheading. If your destination is an hour away from the airfield, your round-trip cost is going to be four hours at the per-hour rate—an hour out to drop you off, an hour for the plane to return home, then repeat for the pickup. This total is divided up among the passengers.

Ask about airplane sizes and capacities. Sometimes paying

more for a larger plane can save money if it means fewer trips. For example, if the flight service charges charter rates and flies a smaller plane such as a Cessna 180 and you've got three people in your party, chances are that multiple trips will be made to ferry you, your gear, and your animals back and forth. However, a larger plane such as a de Havilland Beaver might be able to do it all in one trip each way. Likewise, if you're a two-person party with minimal gear, the \$350 plus per hour rate of a Beaver might be overkill.

Once you've tentatively settled on a flight service, you can check with the National Transportation Safety Board web site for the flight service's accident history. As one pilot said, "Everybody gets a ding once in a while, but if you're looking at an outfit that has accidents every year, you might want to reconsider."

Ask questions! Don't assume that your pilot or dispatcher knows what you want to do or how you want to do it. Clarify everything before you leave base. Is there a chance you'll either want to come out early or stay later than your intended pickup time? Do you want a flyover to see if

again. Should any meat that's flown out early go to the local processor? If so, what specific instructions do you have for the processor? Does the flight service have your home contact info, and do you want them notified if you're going to be late coming out? Do you have an airline connection to make at the end of your trip, and if so, how important is it for you to make it? Many questions go unasked and unanswered because the clients don't know enough to ask the proper questions or because the operators are so used to the day-to-day details of their business that it doesn't occur to them that anyone might not know the answers already.

Ask about scouting—usually you can arrange for a short session of flying over the hunt area to give you the lay of the land. This is time and money well spent since your viewpoint changes radically once you're on the ground and your plane has disappeared over the horizon. You're left standing in a strange and very quiet place with a mound of gear and only a dim idea of what's where. Beware of a pilot's description of how easy it'll be to get from point A to point B unless he's actually been on the ground and done it himself. Pilots can be a bit cavalier about trekking over area that look easy enough from the air



The de Havilland Beaver is the work horse of many Bush Flying services.

you've got meat to come out? Ask if you'll have to pay extra for meat hauls, and if so, how much. Policies vary between different outfits. Find out if boning out the meat is legal in the area you'll be hunting, and if the flight service recommends doing so to reduce weight.

Do you want the option of moving camp in case your first choice doesn't pan out, and how much extra will a move cost? Remember that you can't hunt the same day airborne, so moving camp involves at least one day of lost hunting possibilities, more if it takes time to strike, move, and set up your camp

but prove to be problematic once you're confronted with hard realities.

Ask about other fishing and hunting possibilities in the area beforehand. You can probably fish or hunt birds, and if you don't take the necessary gear, you could miss out on some exceptional sporting potential.

Finally, realize that a flight service is a mode of transportation. They're prohibited by law from aiding hunters in the field—they can't set up camp, haul meat, or as one pilot was requested to do, haul a dead caribou out of a lake with a rope

A HOW TO GUIDE TO FLY-IN HUNTING IN ALASKA

FROM PAGE 9

attached to his airplane. Nor can they spot game from the air and report back to you. They usually know some of the better locations and can put you close to good spots, but after that, you're on your own. If you want a fully guided hunt, make arrangements with a licensed guide and be prepared to pay lots more for your hunting trip.

Pre-Hunt Preparations

Get a copy of the current game regulations from Fish and Game, and order the appropriate topographic maps. The maps in the Gazetteer aren't detailed enough for use in the field—you'll need to purchase more detailed maps from the USGS. The flight serv-

ice can supply the names of the maps you're most likely to need. The large "section" maps, (1:250,000 scale) will suffice, but if you can pin down your location well enough to get the smaller quadrangle maps, (1:63,360), you'll have more and better detail.

Alaska is divided into 26 game management units and numerous subunits with differing season dates, species restrictions, etc. It's your responsibility to know where you are, and know the regulations for that unit. Have with you and know how to use a topo map, the hunting regulations, and a GPS receiver, if possible. Crossing a stream or a ridgeline can put you into a different unit, and you need to know with precision where you are. The maps of the GMUs and physical descriptions of each unit in the regulations book are rudimentary and no substitute for a topo map. Outline the GMU boundaries on your topo maps before you leave home so you're sure of your location relative to the boundary lines when you get on the ground. Gear choice and packing is an art. When flying in to a remote camp, you have to balance two very different ideas. On the one hand, you're going to be cut off from civilization for a while, so you need to be completely self-sufficient during your time afield—no hopping into the truck for a quick run to the store for matches, stove fuel, or food. On the other hand, you have to be weight-conscious—the kitchen sink is going to have to stay in the kitchen. Large coolers packed with ice and beer, hard-sided luggage, and comfortable camp furniture are, for the most part, out of the question. Pilots prefer several small, soft-sided duffels to one large, ungainly package.

Alaska real estate is often soggy, even in wide open, apparently dry tundra, so hip waders are essential. If you limit your mobility by wearing only ankle- or calf-high hunting boots, you're likely to miss out on some opportunities. There are streams, ponds, and boggy patches everywhere, and your once-in-a-lifetime trophy is very likely to be on the other side of one. Some outfits rent waders and other camping gear, but you're usually better off bringing your own so you can be sure of availability, quality and fit.

Pack a couple of sizes of blue tarps—they're handy for keeping meat dry, they're the standard pickup signal for pilots, and they'll double as emergency shelters if things get nasty. Bring pack frames, stout cord and a pack saw so you can construct a meat pole, and extra food and stove fuel in case you get weathered in.

Before leaving, find out approximately where you'll be, and leave that information, along with the flight service's contact info, with someone at home, along with your expected time of return. It's a good idea to allow a day or two before you fly in to buy last-minute items, licenses, etc., and a day or three at the end to allow for time lost due to weather in getting out of the field.

Don't ask your pilot to break any

rules, push the weather, or compromise his or her judgment. That weather front moving in doesn't care a bit about how important you are at your place of business or how much money you'll lose if you don't make your airline connection.

There are a couple of areas of misunderstanding with first-time fly-in hunters. The first is the amount of gear you're going to need in the field. According to one flight service owner, moose hunters seem especially prone toward over packing with canned and frozen food and comfort items. This presents problems in getting it all into the airplane and getting the airplane into a good spot for you to hunt. Mike Bowers, chief pilot for Ketchum's, said, "The performance of the plane is to a great extent determined by its weight. If there's a small lake where the hunting is good, I might not be able to get in there if the plane is too heavy. If we're light, it increases my choices on where to put you." A maximum of 125 pounds per hunter is allowed by many outfits, and if you can carry less, so much the better. Bring dried foods and go over gear lists with the other members of your party to avoid duplication.

Finally, Paul Englund, owner of Susitna Air Service near Willow, says the most common complaint he hears from hunters coming out of the field, is, "I didn't think it'd be that hard!" Big game country is usually either thick and wet, steep and wet, or wide open, hummocky and wet. Alaska real estate seldom makes for easy hiking, and when you add the size of the animal, there's lots of hard work involved. Be prepared to expend serious effort to make the most of your Alaska hunting experience.

If you do your homework, communicate clearly with your prospective flight service, and keep your expectations reasonable, your hunting trip is sure to be an enjoyable and successful venture. □

HOW WILL YOUR CHILDREN HUNT TOMORROW?

The Hunter Heritage Foundation of Alaska was established to provide private resources for the effort of training new hunters and educating the public about the benefits hunting brings to wildlife conservation.

Endorsed by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, the HHFA has been an active partner in the Alaska Hunting Clinic Series since its beginning in 1995. Long term plans include educational projects promoting hunting's important role in wildlife management and the cultural heritage of Alaskans.

All contributions to the HHFA are tax deductible and will be used entirely for projects that benefit hunting's future. Please send your contribution to:

Hunter Heritage Foundation of Alaska
PO Box 73902
Fairbanks, AK 99707

Hunter education: it's not just for kids. Adults can learn valuable skills too!!



For more information, call your local ADF&G Wildlife Conservation office or:

(907) 459-7211 • Fairbanks
(907) 267-2373 • Anchorage
(907) 465-4265 • Juneau

Most classes are taught winter and spring. Training includes firearms and outdoor safety, wildlife conservation, and hunting ethics and responsibility. Graduates receive an Alaska Hunter Education card which is accepted in other states and provinces that require hunter education training.

Information Sources

Check the National Transportation Safety Board (<http://www.ntsb.gov/NTSB/Query.htm>) for accident reports on flight services and pilots.

Write to the Department of Community and Economic Development, Division of Occupational Licensing, Box 110806, Juneau 99811, include a check for \$5, and ask for the guide roster. This lists all the licensed guides, outfitters, and transporters in the state.

Call the Alaska Department of Fish and Game at 907-267-2347 to order copies of the current hunting regulations.

For the Alaska Atlas and Gazetteer, contact DeLorme Mapping at <http://www.delorme.com> or call 800-227-1656, ext. 7000, \$19.95 + shipping.

USGS topographic maps are available from local dealers, or order on the web from <http://mapping.usgs.gov/> or call 1-888-ASK-USGS (275-8747).

WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN LOOKING FOR AN AIR TAXI

FROM PAGE 8

it's what you want.

When it's time to come home, remember that the load capability coming out may not be as heavy as that going in—sometimes much less. When possible, we try to limit the outbound load to whatever we can get out of the remote location in one load, unless you agree that two or more return loads will be needed. If you get a moose, you can definitely count on paying for an extra load, but we can often fit in a sheep or caribou (or even a couple) without an extra flight. Regardless, PLEASE trust your pilot's judgment when he says enough is enough. Two trips is a lot better than a trip to the hospital via a medevac helicopter.

Please remember that most pilots are hunters, too. We have a pretty good idea how much meat should be coming out from a moose or caribou (boned or otherwise), or if something isn't quite kosher. If we do find out you're not playing by the rules, we will notify Fish and Wildlife Protection. When we bring out your animal, we will check for tags and tickets, and if necessary, a transfer of possession form. And please don't forget that the rack can't come out until the meat is moved.

A note on racks: With a Cessna or a Beaver on wheels, ALL racks must go inside the airplane. Big caribou racks are notoriously difficult to fit inside Cessna cabins and may require an extra flight just because of the space they take. Super Cubs or aircraft on floats may be able to carry racks outside. However, external loads can be very tricky and can significantly cut into the total load.

Lots of people ask us if we can fly around the area so they can see what's there. We will normally try to give you as much extra look-see time as we can, but if it's more than five or ten minutes we'll probably charge you for it. We'll be happy to set up a separate scouting trip ahead of time if you like, or we can plan to add extra time to your trip out. Nothing makes us happier than to land you within shouting distance of a legal animal—but please don't abuse your advantage and hunt on the same day that we fly you in.


Finally, float hunts—where you raft down a river to a pickup point—are increasingly popular, and Alaska is full of floatable, huntable rivers, many of which are accessible by air. However, float hunts can be very tricky to plan, especially if you haven't done one before. There are several rafting companies that will help you plan or rent equipment or even provide a guide. For the flying part, expect one 185 or 206

load for each raft, including one person and some gear, and one or more flights for the rest of the people, usually up to three per plane. A Beaver, of course, can take more. By the way, many float trips are flown in on wheel planes to nearby strips or sandbars. And for some rivers, we



may insist that you use a guide before we'll take the responsibility for flying you in and putting you in harm's way.


All of what I've discussed isn't meant to put you off. An unguided fly-in trip is arguably the cheapest way to get into some superior hunting if you don't

have your own airplane (or a friend with one). The average air taxi operator—including our company—will bend over backward to help you out. But it's a two-way street, and the more you help yourself, the more we can help you. □




LEAVE NO TRACE!








⊕ Travel and camp in areas where vegetation is absent or durable.




⊕ Keep the area wild and natural. Don't build structures or blaze trees. Remove any flagging, rope, etc.



⊕ Camp, wash and bury human waste at least 200 feet from water and trails.



⊕ Pack out ALL food and trash (used shells, cigarette butts, foil, etc.).



⊕ A lightweight stove is practical, easy and does not leave a fire scar.

For additional information on Leave No Trace skills and ethics, contact your nearest Bureau of Land Management or Forest Service Office. Additional information may be found on the world wide web at <http://www.lnt.org>.

BRINGING HUNTER EDUCATION TO THE STATE



Alaska Department of Fish & Game's Mobile Target Sports System appeared at the State Fair in Palmer. The Mobile System is scheduled to make several appearances in Southeast Alaska this spring.

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH & GAME WILDLIFE INFORMATION CENTERS

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Wildlife Conservation maintains several public information centers around the state. The largest of these centers are located in Fairbanks and Anchorage. The Anchorage Information Center is located at 333 Raspberry Road and is part of the Anchorage Fish and Game office. Information Center hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. The Anchorage Information Center serves more than 30,000 visitors annually and offers a wide array of materials related to hunting and wildlife viewing.

Centers are staffed with knowledgeable personnel who are more than happy to assist the public. Staffers help local and out of state hunters with all aspects of hunt planning. They are very up to date on hunting regulations, game populations, methods, previous harvest information, equipment, fly-in hunts etc. They also have handouts for the public with information ranging from birdhouse building to handling problem moose in your neighborhood.

During hunting seasons the Information Centers stay busy assisting hunters in interpreting game regulations, sealing bears, measuring antlers and horns, and answering a variety of questions related to hunting. Information Center staffers assist in filling out permit applications, proxy forms, senior and disabled license applications, harvest reports, and many other hunting related documents.

In addition, our Information Centers have large map displays for public viewing and many free publications and brochures. The Anchorage Information Center sells hunting and fishing licenses and big game tags. The Division also recently acquired several hunting related videos which can be bought or rented through the Information Center. Another service provided is information on wildlife viewing around the state.

Centers are stocked with maps and brochures to assist the public in finding locations where wildlife may be viewed and photographed. Staff members also keep very informed on wildlife habits and viewing areas and enjoy sharing this information with the public. The Anchorage Information Center can be contacted at (907) 267-2347 or fax (907) 267-2433. The Fairbanks Information Center number is (907) 459-7213 □

CHANGING VIEWS ON BROWN BEARS IN ALASKA

Exterminate Brown Bears!

Brown bears serve no good purpose. They are essentially killers—The bear ought to be exterminated—and the extermination ought to begin at once.

"Exterminate Brown Bears," *Daily Alaska Empire*, 21 October 1929.

Our perspectives on brown bears have certainly changed since the publication of this editorial, following the attack and subsequent death of US Forest Service timber cruiser Jack Thayer. Pick up a copy of *Alaska Bear Tales*, and it's clear that bear attacks—however rare or sensationalized—still grab us just as sure as Bart the Bear grabs unsuspecting hikers in popular movies like *The Edge*.

Most of us have bear tales of our own. And while every bit as

exciting as *Alaska Bear Tales*, most bear-human encounters are brief, tense and over often before one gets a good look at the other. The Stan Price State Wildlife Sanctuary, located at the mouth of Pack Creek on northeast Admiralty Island, offers a very different kind of experience.

One of several bear viewing areas statewide, Pack Creek has a long history of use. Chosen as a viewing area by the USFS in the 1930s, the immediate drainage was closed to bear hunting in 1935, and extended to include neighboring Swan Cove and Windfall Harbor in 1984. The sanctuary itself, named for long-time homesteader Stan Price and "bear man of Pack Creek," was created by the State Legislature in 1990 and managed cooperatively by the USFS and ADFG.

Each summer, up to 25 bears take advantage of the estuary and tide flat, feeding on sedge and spawning salmon. After nearly 70 years of human presence, Pack Creek bears have grown accustomed or "habituated" to people.

This provides an unique opportunity to watch them feed, fish, and interact with one another while paying very little attention to people. However, habituated bears are still wild and comfort levels vary. To minimize our impacts to bear behavior, visitors are limited to one of three areas—viewing spit, observation tower, or food cache.

Though best known for its bears, Pack Creek is home to a variety of other wildlife as well. Be sure to look for bald eagles, ravens, and gulls scavenging salmon along the creek. Listen for hermit thrushes, winter wrens, and fox sparrows. Watch for Sitka blacktailed deer along the forest edge and harbor seals making their way up the creek at high tide.

A permit is required to visit Pack Creek from June 1 to September 10. Access is limited to 24 permits per day during Peak Season (July 5 – August 24); however, an unlimited number of permits are issued during the Shoulder Season (June 1 – July 4 and August 25 – September 10). Contact the Forest Service (907-586-8751) for a permit application. Applications should be postmarked no sooner than February 20, with permits awarded on a first-come, first-served basis beginning March 1. Permit application packets also include a list of charter operators and commercial outfitter/guides. □

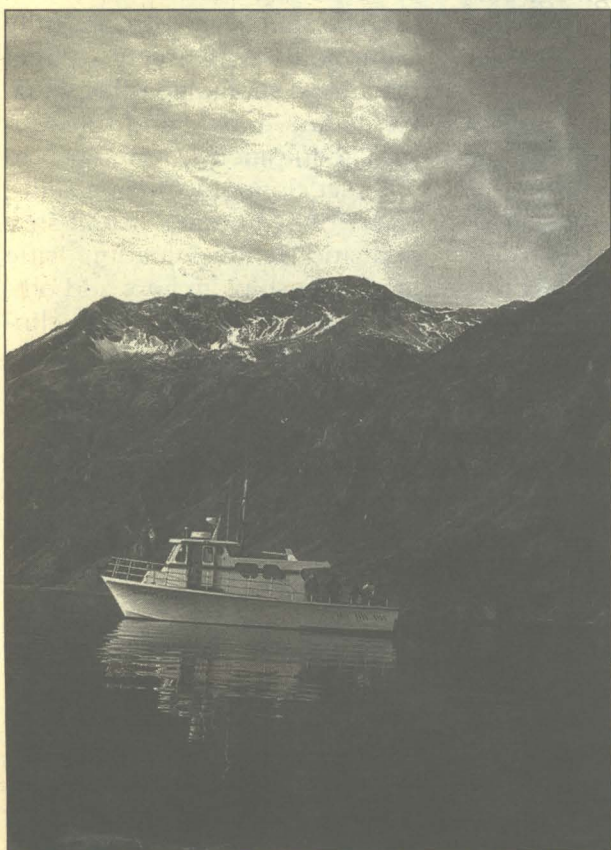


Pack Creek has a long history of use. Chosen as a viewing area by the USFS in the 1930s, the immediate drainage was closed to bear hunting in 1935, and extended to include neighboring Swan Cove and Windfall Harbor in 1984. (photo ©Nonna Shtipelman)

BOARS & BILLIES, TELLING THEM APART

FROM PAGE 7

tabs on a billy for the entire month of September. It remained in the same basin, and I harvested it on the final day of season. The basin overlooked the Seward Highway, and any per-



Fishbustler with a backdrop of typical coastal goat country.

mit holder could've looked up there and spotted it. Don't neglect the obvious places in your permit area. Limited permits allow billies to grow old, and they show up anywhere.

Every time I hunt the coast I am impressed with how much better the weather is compared to mountains a few miles inland. Mountains hugging the ocean stay free of snow for most of the goat hunting season. Goats know it, and are not shy about living above a pounding surf. The hair will be as long as inland goats, and I have carried out stalks in less than two hours from the beach.

Transportation to remote goat country was always a problem until I started hiring off-season fishermen to get me there. A few flight services are still willing to work that time of year, but don't have the carrying capacity to accommodate a comfortable coastal hunt which should include a raft and outboard.

If dollars get in the way of hiring a boat, or insufficient time can be found, then perhaps you should postpone the hunt. This should be the most important hunt of the year. Set aside at least a week. Most of my hunts are over in a few days, but weird things happen along the coast. Bad weather, rugged terrain, or billies holed up in spots where damage to the cape is likely can slow things down.

The third element of a top-

notch billy, keeping the horns and hair in good shape, has several parallels to a bear hunt. Everyone knows the worst situation a bear hunter faces is not putting a big boar down for keeps immediately.

Stopping a billy in its tracks is equally important. It's hard to imagine the thoughts flowing through your mind as a billy does a nose dive onto rock far below. What should've been a happy ending to a challenging endeavor could easily go south because you picked the wrong caliber.

Knowing when not to shoot, and using the right weapon are the two most important considerations for getting the cape and horns to the taxidermist in good shape. A good round for bears will also work well for billies. The object is to stop the billy from going

anywhere after being hit. Even on gentle terrain cliffs are never far away, and wounded goats head for them like magnets.

Stopping power is more important than flat trajectory. My .300 Magnum loaded with .220 grain slugs does well, but gets out-performed by slightly larger calibers such as the .338 Magnum. Round to stay from are the barrel burning streamers that work on antelope.

My long-time hunting partner, Thor Prestegaard, has spent equal time hunting boars and billies. He cautions hunters not to take a big billy lightly. He uses the same heavy caliber rifle for brown bears and billy goats.

Waiting for a billy to get into a spot where falling is unlikely could take a minute or a week. It starts with the general area you picked to hunt. A mature billy in lightly hunted country has as much confidence as a boar, and will venture from cliffs to enjoy a meal. That's when you should be in position to shoot.

From keeping goat numbers healthy to adding a true goat trophy to your collection, harvesting an old billy makes sense. Mr. Spraker says, "If fewer nannies were harvested more goats would be roaming around, and permits would increase."

Putting a big billy with long hair and roughed up horns in your trophy room could be the most challenging and rewarding hunt you'll ever make. □

BIG FOOT, LORE OR REALITY

FROM PAGE 4

In the forests of the Interior there is the Nakhani, and in Kotzebue Sound there is the Nuyaqpalik or "long hair." A mermaid of sorts, she has extremely long hair and drags solitary fishermen out of their boats to a watery grave.

The Alaskan humanoid perhaps best known by non-Natives is the Kushtacah or "water devil" of Southeast Alaska. The Kushtacah leapt from lore to literature during the Alaska Gold Rush when encounters between man and beast began to be recorded. This, however, is not a passive, shy beast but one of violence. Perhaps the most graphic description of Kushtacah and its alleged violence was included in the 1953 self-published Alaskan classic *THE STRANGEST STORY EVER TOLD* by Harry D. Colp. Historians, it should be added, have had trouble verifying Colp's claims.

On the other hand, W. R. Abercrombie, a reputable historical source, added a new twist to the story of the Kushtacah. That was in 1898 as the disastrous Valdez Stampede was drawing to a close. Several thousand miners had stampeded across the treacherous Valdez Glacier hoping to find gold nuggets the "size of goose eggs" in the Copper River watershed. They were to be worse than disappointed. Hundreds never made it over the glacier and as many as a thousand were starving to death along the Copper River. The few who were lucky enough to make it back to Valdez were living in decrepit mining shelters "packed like sardines in a box." Abercrombie wrote that he believed that "70 percent (of the derelict miners) were mentally deranged."

But he did record one conversation of interest. One Swede had talked about a "glacial demon" which had attacked him and his son twice. During the second attack, the boy had been strangled to death. "When I heard this story there were some ten or twelve other than me in the cabin," Abercrombie recalled, "and at that time, it would not have been safe to dispute the theory of the existence of this demon on the Valdez Glacier, as every man in there firmly believed it to be a reality."

Although the white man has always had trouble linking the Bigfoot to reality, Natives have had no such difficulty. Sometimes the disparity of opinion led to comical results. In the early 1900s, a ship went down outside Katella. Because the water was only 15 feet deep and the ship

submerged close to shore, the insurance company decided to salvage the wreck and sent a deep-sea diver north to inspect the wreck. Soon after he had submerged for the first time a group of Natives paddled alongside the scow handling the air hoses and asked what the whites were doing. As a joke, the whites said that a Kushtacah had capsized a boat and they were fishing for the water devil. If they caught him, they would kill him. The Natives hovered around the scow so the whites decided to pull a practical joke. As soon as the diver indicated he was coming up, the whites went into a frenzy explaining to the Natives that they had caught the

Kushtacah. As soon as the diver's hardhat broke the surface of the water, the Natives "all jumped overboard and swam to shore."

Back in the present, an unscientific survey of hunters showed them to be as divided as the scientific community. Although no hunter surveyed admitted to ever having seen a Bigfoot, many of them did report seeing other aspects of nature equally perplexing, including a cheechako trying to catch ducks with a king salmon net, a mid-air collision involving a plane and a fish, UFOs, and very close encounters of the large, hairy, hungry, brown kind. Those who did not believe in Bigfoot stated that with so many hunters in so many parts of Alaska, it was hard to believe that hide nor hair of the beast has been found. Not to be outdone, true believers pointed out that it was rare for a hunter to find the remains of bear in the wild. Considering that the Bigfoot population was substantially smaller than that of the bear, it was thus not reasonable to expect that hide, hair, bones, or teeth of the elusive beast would be found even with all of the hunters all over

Alaska. Native sightings were discounted by some hunters as "unreliable" although true believers state that it is reasonable for Natives to see the humanoid because, after all, the Natives have been living in the Alaskan bush a lot longer than any professional hunter. Thus the debate rages. Is there a Bigfoot in Alaska? According to the lore of the region, absolutely. With regard to established scientific standards of proof, no. But then again, as Alaskan humorist Warren Sitka notes lyrically,

*Myth and legend often find
Truth and fiction intertwined
And oft the truth is stranger still
Than fantasy with all its frills. □*



**VISIT THE ALASKA DEPARTMENT
OF FISH & GAME AT:**

<http://www.state.ak.us/local/akpages/FISH.GAME/wildlife/region1/rgn1.htm>

UPDATE OF THE NELCHINA HERD

FROM PAGE 2

than a decade. In 1977 the hunt went to drawing permits and in 1990 to Tier II subsistence permits.

The herd began a gradual recovery that eventually peaked at 50,000 in 1995. Lower harvest, improved range conditions and less wolf predation contributed to the recovery. High fur prices during the 1970s and 1980s provided public incentive to trap wolves. Over the past decade, there have been increased restrictions on wolf harvests and a decline in fur prices. As a result, wolf numbers have more than doubled, increasing from about 150 to more than 300 wolves in the annual spring counts. Fall estimates in 1998 and 1999 of over 500 wolves were obtained, compared with estimates ranging from 250 to 350 during the 1980s and early 1990s.

Hunter harvests were limited to 8 to 10 percent of the herd annually and permit numbers were adjusted accordingly. When the herd reached 50,000 in 1995, the range was once again showing signs of significant degradation so harvest quotas were increased to try to reduce the herd to 35,000 to 40,000 caribou.

A reduction in the herd was achieved and in 1998, the harvest quota went back to a percentage of the annual production to stabilize the herd. But the summer range had again been damaged when the herd hit

50,000. As a result of less food available, calf production declined with only 32 per 100 cows in 1999, compared to more than 50 per 100 when the herd was increasing. Four-month-old calves from the Nelchina herd weighed less than calves in other interior herds, another indication of range problems.

Compounding the nutrition problem has been a large jump in the mortality rate of radio-collared cows from less than 10 percent a year from the 1970s until the mid-1990s to 15 to 20 percent as wolf numbers increased. In October and November 1999, wolf predation was so high that, if the rate observed continued, the yearly mortality rate for 1999-2000 on radio-collared animals would exceed percent.

The dilemma facing managers is that with low productivity in the face of high wolf mortality, there is almost no allowable human harvest. The Nelchina herd will decline unless productivity increases or wolf predation decreases. Although caribou numbers are now near the management objective of 35,000, any human harvest will accelerate the decline already occurring.

Under current conditions, the Nelchina herd can support a harvest of 2 to 3 percent, if most of the take is bulls. The federal subsistence hunt in GMU 13 may consume all of the allowable harvest in the year 2000, necessitating sharp reduction in the state Tier II hunt.

If productivity remains low and wolf predation high, harvest rates for the near future will remain around 2 to 3 percent or 500 to 800 animals. If mortality declines to 10 percent (less than half of what it is now), the allowable harvest again will reach the 2,000 to 3,000 figure of recent years. □



**Yes! I want to receive
the Alaska Hunting Bulletin.**

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Return this form to
Alaska Department of Fish & Game
Division of Wildlife Conservation/Hunter Information & Training
333 Raspberry Road.
Anchorage, AK 99518-1599

HAVE GUN WILL TRAVEL

FROM PAGE 4

door sports shows, various fairs, and at schools. The Texas Parks and Wildlife department used such a system to introduce more than 100,000 junior-high-age students to the safe and proper use of firearms during the 1997-98 school year.

The DART® is the premier laser-activated, interactive firearms and archery training system in the United States. The DART® system consists of a laser disc player and projector, a computer operating system, and a sensitized screen which reflects the laser beam into a special camera attached to the projector. While technically complicated, the system is easy to use. More than 20 special training laser discs are provided with the system. Some of the video laser discs are made from videos of entirely Alaska big game animals. Other discs allow one to "hunt" Lower 48 game such as whitetail deer, mule deer, antelope, and turkey. Some discs are primarily for entertainment, the targets consisting of inanimate objects like the old shooting gallery games for rifle shooters or clay targets for shotgun shooters.

According to state Hunter Information and Training coordinators, one of the best uses of the DART® system is to help hunters practice precise shot placement and knowledge of big game anatomy without the noise, expense, or recoil of firing actual big-bore rifles, handguns, or arrows. After the "hunter" takes a shot at a video animal the action freezes and a red or blue vital target area is illuminated. The hunter can tell immediately if the practice shot would have quickly taken the animal. In some accessible and heavily hunted areas, the combination of animals dying from wounding loss and poaching

exceeds the legal take. It is imperative that Alaskan hunters minimize wounding loss of big game. Fewer animals lost to wounding could mean an increase in hunting opportunity or larger bag limits.

The trailer will also be fully equipped with clay target machines, shotguns, rifles, muzzleloaders, bows, and the support equipment necessary to conduct clinics in shotgun skills, waterfowl hunting, steel-shot education, muzzleloading, rifle marksmanship, archery and other advanced hunting skills clinics. Present plans call for the mobile system to be available for use by March, 1999 and on the road beginning in May. The first summer tour of the mobile system will be to Southeast Alaska. Traveling between communities by the state marine highway system the mobile unit is tentatively scheduled to visit the Southeast communities of Ketchikan, Wrangell, Petersburg, Juneau, Sitka, and Haines as well as Tok, Valdez, and Glennallen. Clinic topics in each area will be determined by the interests expressed by local hunters and recreational shooters.

According to program coordinator John Matthews, the summer season will culminate with an appearance of the mobile system at the Palmer State Fair. If pilot program results from the Great Alaska Sports Show in Anchorage and the Fairbanks Outdoor Show are any indication, the system will be used by thousands of Alaskans, shooters and not-yet-shooters alike.

In subsequent years the mobile system will be scheduled to tour the remainder of the state road system including the Kenai Peninsula, Southcentral and interior areas of Alaska. Watch future editions of the Alaska Hunter Bulletin for a schedule of the mobile system's activities in your area. □

HERITAGE FOUNDATION BOOSTS PROGRAM

FROM PAGE 5

experience they increasingly feel it is not necessary to kill an animal to have a great hunt. Other qualities of the hunt become more important, including honing skills such as animal sign identification and stalking. Hunters seeking to increase the challenge of hunting, and tilt the odds more in favor of the game animal, often take up the bow. Because bows can be more safely used near population centers, the Alaska Board of Game has instituted a number of archery-only hunts. Hunters interested in the archery-only hunts should consult the current hunting regulations.

Bowhunters who wish to hunt in the archery-only hunts must complete an approved bowhunter education course. This course focuses on safety, knowledge of game anatomy, and proficiency with the bow. The Hunter Information and Training Program offers the classroom portion of the bowhunter education courses during the winter months. As spring arrives, aspiring bowhunters return to take a field shooting test to complete their certification. If you are interested in registering for an upcoming bowhunter education course call your local Fish and Game office for times and dates. □

WHERE TO FIND INFORMATION ON ALASKA HUNTING

PRIVATE SOURCES

The following businesses provide information about hunting in Alaska, either in their publications or on a consulting basis.

Alaska Guide Report: Publishes the quarterly Alaska Guide Report. Hunting consultation available on a fee basis. PO Box 202520, Anchorage, AK 99520-2520. Tel. (907) 338-5797 E-mail: agr1@ptialaska.net Web URL: www.ptialaska.net/~agr1

Alaska Hunter Publications: Publishes Alaska hunting books and bi-monthly journal, The Alaska Hunter. Provides consultation on Alaska hunting on a fee basis. Free catalog. PO Box 83550, Fairbanks, AK 99708-3550. Tel (907) 455-8000. E-mail: chrisbatin@alaska-hunter.com Web URL: www.alaskahunter.com

Alaska Outdoors: Publishes Alaska Outdoors magazine and books on Alaska outdoor activities. Free catalog. 7617 Highlander, Anchorage, AK 99518. Phone (907) 349-2424. E-mail: alaskaod@alaska.net Web URL: www.alaskaconnect.com/sub.htm

Fishing and Hunting News-Alaska: Publishes twice-monthly newspaper with information about Alaska hunting and fishing opportunities and results. PO Box 19000, Seattle, WA 98109. Phone (800) 488-2827. Web URL: www.fhnews.com

DeLorme Mapping: Sells the Alaska Atlas & Gazetteer, a large-format book of topographic maps and other information covering the entire state. PO Box 298, Freeport, ME 04032. Phone (800) 452-5931. Web URL: www.delorme.com

Outdoors America Communications: Publishes the 144-page Outdoors Alaska Directory of Hunting and Fishing and a world wide website with Alaska fishing and hunting information. PO Box 609-HB, Delta Junction, AK 99737-0696. Phone (800) 561-5880. E-mail: akhb@outdoorsdirectory.com Web URL: www.outdoorsdirectory.com

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH & GAME (ADF&G/Division of Wildlife Conservation)

Southeast Alaska
PO Box 240020
Douglas, AK 99824-0020
Tel. (907) 465-4265
FAX (907) 465-4272
Web URL: <http://www.state.ak.us/local/akpages/FISH.GAME/wildlife/region1/rgn1home.htm>

Southcentral Alaska
333 Raspberry Rd
Anchorage, AK 99518-1599
Tel. (907) 267-2182
FAX (907) 267-2433
email: wcinfctr@fishgame.state.ak.us
Web URL: <http://www.state.ak.us/local/akpages/FISH.GAME/wildlife/region2/rgn2home.htm>

Telephone numbers:
(907) 267-2347 General hunting information (recordings and staff)
(907) 267-2373 Hunter education
(907) 267-2182 Wildlife Conservation regional office staff
(907) 566-0130 Rabbit Creek Rifle Range (recording only)
(907) 267-2304 Nelchina caribou herd information (recording only)
(907) 267-230 Mulchatna caribou herd information (recording only)
(907) 267-2310 Fortymile caribou herd information (recording only)

Interior Alaska region
1300 College Road
Fairbanks, AK 99701-1599
FAX (907) 452-6410
Web URL: <http://www.state.ak.us/local/akpages/FISH.GAME/wildlife/region3/rgn3home.htm>

Telephone numbers:
(907) 459-7206 and 459-7306
General hunting information
(907) 459-7313 Wildlife conservation staff
(907) 459-7211 Hunter education
(907) 459-7386 Recorded hunting information
(907) 267-2310 Fortymile caribou herd information (recording only - Anchorage number)
(907) 267-2304 Nelchina caribou herd information (recording only - Anchorage number)

Northwest Region
Pouch 1148
Nome, AK 99762
Tel. (907) 443-2271
FAX (907) 443-5893
Web URL: <http://www.state.ak.us/local/akpages/FISH.GAME/wildlife/region5/rgn5home.htm>

ALASKA PUBLIC LANDS INFORMATION CENTERS (APLICS)

The Alaska Public Lands Information Centers (APLICS) in Anchorage, Fairbanks, Ketchikan and Tok are a joint project of the Alaska Departments of Commerce & Economic Development (Division of Tourism), Fish and Game, and Natural Resources, and the US Departments of Agriculture (Forest Service) and Interior (Bureau of Land Management, Fish & Wildlife Service, Geological Survey, and National Park Service). The APLICS have a wide variety of information about recreational uses of public lands in Alaska. Web URL: <http://www.nps.gov/aplic/center/>

Anchorage office
605 W 4th Ave Ste 105
Anchorage, AK 99501
(907) 271-2737

Fairbanks office
250 Cushman St #1A
Fairbanks, AK 99701
(907) 456-0527

Ketchikan office
50 Main St
Ketchikan, AK 99901
(907) 228-6220

Tok office
PO Box 359
Tok, AK 99780
(907) 883-5667

While most species may be hunted on national forest, refuge, or BLM lands in Alaska, hunting may be closed or restricted on some federal lands. Please consult the Federal Subsistence Hunting regulations or the federal land management agency below if you plan to hunt on federal land.

National Park Service

Hunting is permitted in some units of the national park system in Alaska. National preserves generally are open to hunting. Hunting is prohibited in Denali, Katmai and Glacier Bay national parks. Only persons living in certain areas of Alaska may hunt in other park units.

For additional information on hunting in lands managed by the National Park Service, contact one of the Alaska Public Lands Information Centers (above) in Anchorage, Fairbanks, Ketchikan or Tok. Web URL: www.nps.gov

US Fish & Wildlife Service

Hunting is permitted in most areas of the national wildlife refuge system. Hunting regulations are shown in the Alaska hunting regulations. For additional information about hunting on lands administered by the USFWS, please direct questions and comments to:

USFWS, AK.
1011 E. Tudor Rd
Anchorage, AK 99503
Phone: (907) 786-3309
FAX: (907) 786-3495
Email: chuck_young@fws.gov
Web URL: <http://www.r7.fws.gov/contac.html>

US Forest Service

Virtually the entire national forest system in Alaska is open to hunting. For details of hunting seasons, bag limits, and areas on the national forests, consult the Alaska hunting regulations. For other information about hunting in national forests, the web URL for the Alaska Region is <http://www.fs.fed.us/r10/> or contact one of the following offices:

USDA Forest Service, Alaska Region (for general, region-wide information)
PO Box 21628,
Juneau, AK 99802-1628
Tel. (907) 586-8806
FAX (907) 586-7840

Chugach National Forest
(Prince William Sound, eastern Kenai)
3301 C. Street Suite 300,
Anchorage,
AK 99503
Tel. (907) 271-2500
FAX (907) 271-3992

Tongass National Forest
(Southeast AK)
Chatham Area (northern panhandle)
204 Sigana Way, Sitka, AK 99835

Tel. (907) 747-6671
FAX (907) 747-4331

Stikine Area (central panhandle)
PO Box 309, Petersburg, AK 99833
Tel. (907) 772-3841 FAX (907) 772-5895

Ketchikan Area (southern panhandle)
Federal Building, Ketchikan, AK 99901
Tel. (907) 228-6202 FAX (907) 228-6215

Bureau of Land Management

The BLM manages most federal lands not administered by NPS, USFWS, and USFS — some 87 million acres. Virtually all of this land is open to hunting. There are some federal restrictions to use of motorized vehicles in certain areas. Additional information on hunting uses of BLM-administered lands may be obtained from:

BLM Alaska — External Affairs
222 W 7th #13
Anchorage, AK 99513
Tel. (907) 271-5555 FAX (907) 272-3430 per call 12/12/97

Where to obtain USGS maps

US Geological Survey topographic and other maps can be obtained by mail order or over the counter in several Alaska locations. Some Alaska sporting goods or outdoor stores stock high demand maps. There are retail stores in larger Alaskan communities that specialize in maps. The USGS maintains a map distribution office at Alaska Pacific University in Anchorage that can provide fast service over the counter or by mail or telephone for people out of state. In Fairbanks, hunters may obtain maps at the Geophysical Institute's map office.

US Geological Survey

Earth Science Information Center
4230 University Drive Room 101
Anchorage, AK 99508-4664
Tel. (907) 786-7011
FAX (907) 786-7050

Map Office, GeoData Center
Geophysical Institute-UAF
903 Koyukuk Drive
Fairbanks, AK 99775
Tel. (907) 474-6960

NOTE: We intend to occasionally publish this information in future editions. Please forward your suggestions for additional Alaska hunting information resources to Editor, Alaska Hunting Bulletin, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Wildlife Conservation, PO Box 25526, Juneau, AK 99802-5526 or e-mail: marthak@fishgame.state.ak.us Mention in this publication of commercial goods or services does not constitute an endorsement by the State of Alaska or the Alaska Department of Fish & Game.



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