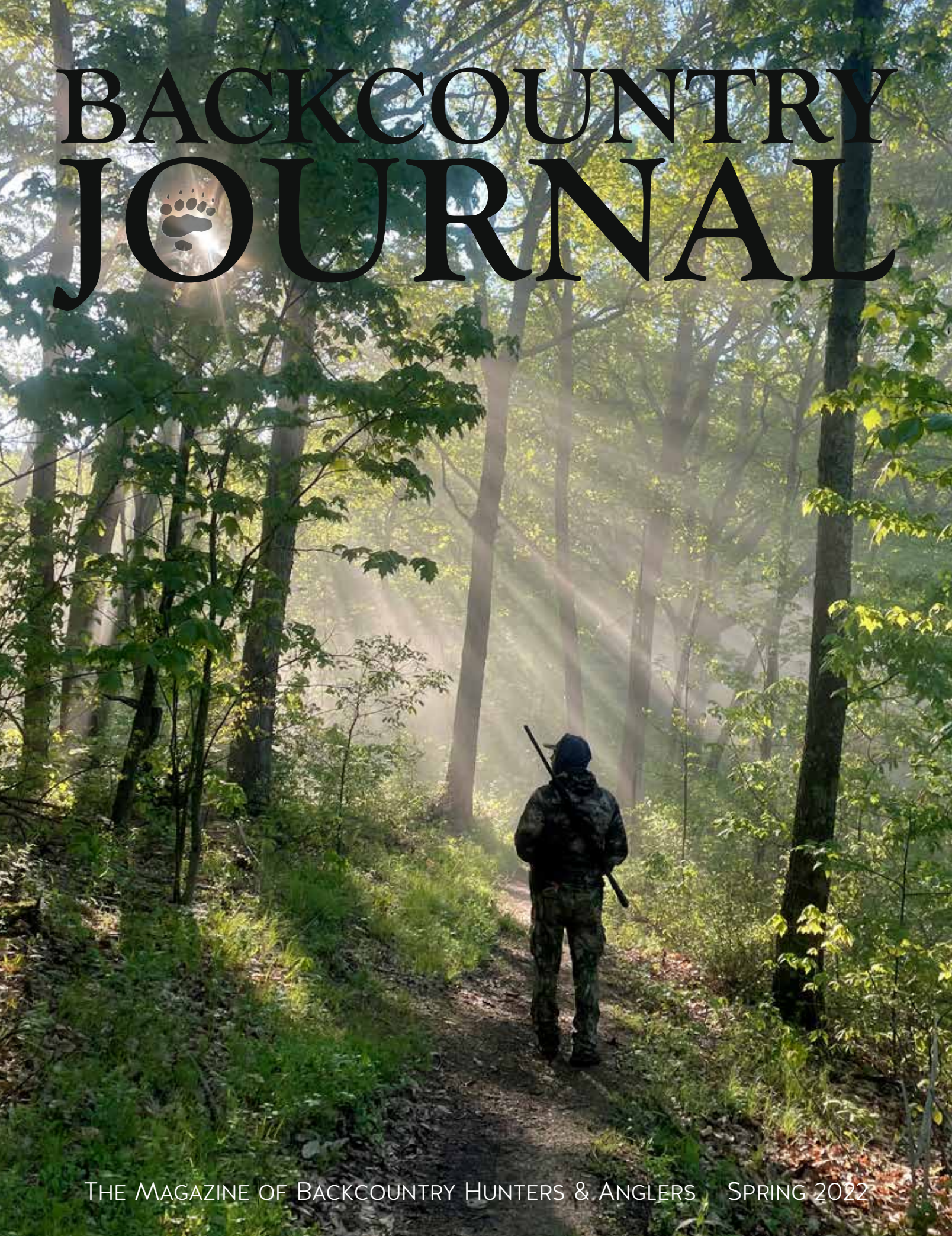
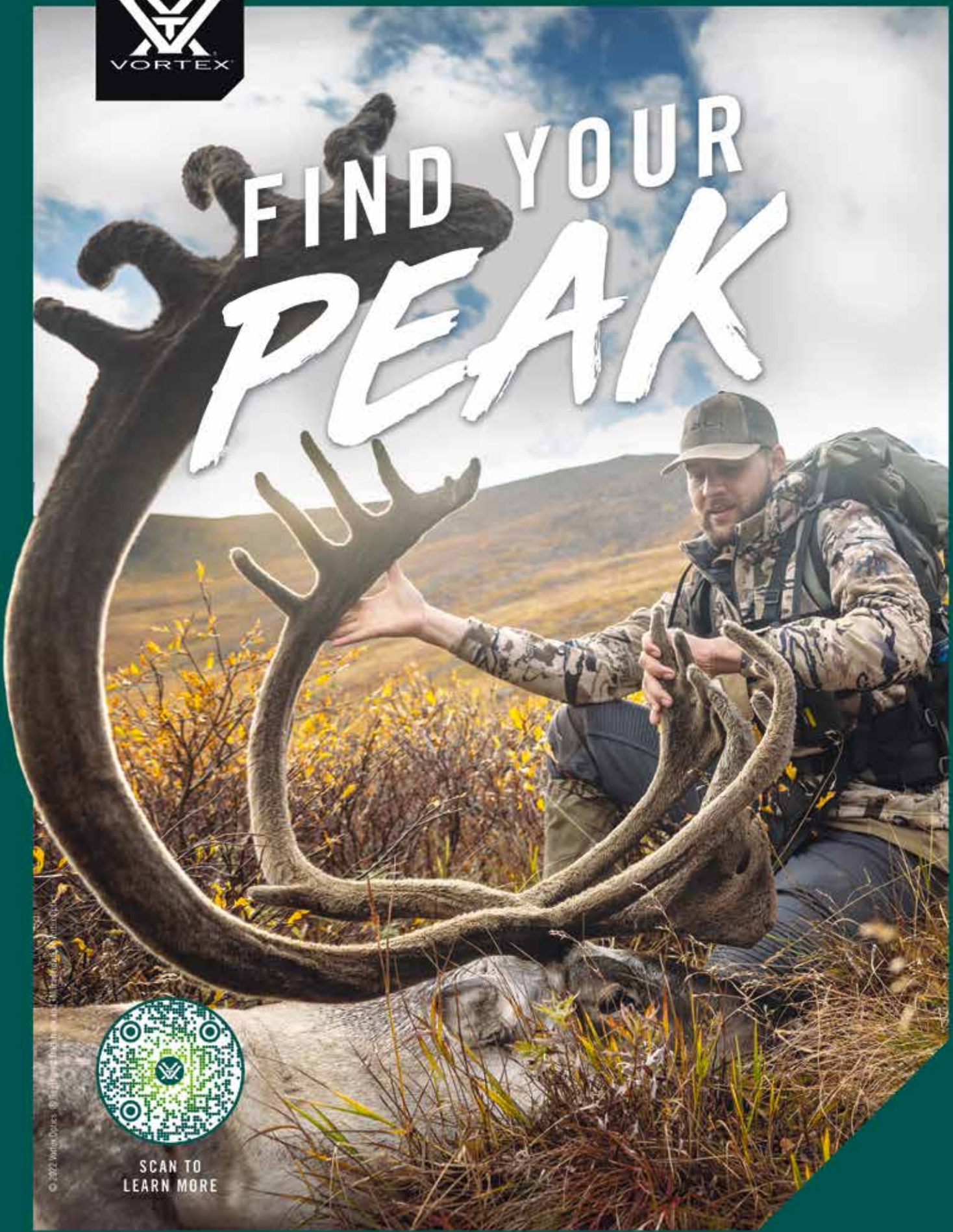
BACKCOUNTRY JOURNAL



The Magazine of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers Spring 2022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SERENDIPITY

Serendipity (*noun*): the occurrence and development of events by chance in a happy or beneficial way.

As I traversed the rocky point in search of a mule deer buck, I suddenly realized I'd been here before.

I recognized the scree, the scraggly Douglas fir eking out a living on the unforgiving terrain, and the ridgeline – sheer cliff on one side, steep and open on the other. I arrived on the grassy saddle and was abruptly overwhelmed. Time slowed. The wind, for once, was still. In my heart of hearts I knew I was about to encounter my quarry. I'd felt this same feeling before with affirming results.

But I didn't, and at the time I didn't understand why. Maybe that was what was supposed to happen at this spot at that moment in time. But that feeling … it was hard to dismiss the feeling.

Five years earlier on that grassy saddle, something happened that I have never been able to let go. I was hunting with my good friend, former *Backcountry Journal* editor Sam Lungren. I'd drawn a coveted bighorn sheep ram tag in an area I'd been tied to for years. I'd caught a tiger by the tail. (Read the Winter 2017 edition of *Backcountry Journal* or listen to episode 1 of BHA's Podcast & Blast podcast with Hal Herring for that story.)

On the day in question, Sam and I had split up to cover more country. Late in the day we converged on the saddle. Seconds before Sam arrived, I spotted a herd of sheep, about 30 head that included ewes, a handful of rams and the biggest ram I had seen all season … full curl, lots of mass and broomed horns. While any ram would fill the freezer, this was the representative of the species I had been looking for.

The sheep were grazing about 250 yards away. They had seen me but didn't seem to care. Sam arrived, and the excitement between us was palpable. We dipped out of sight to get closer.

This proved to be our first mistake, as sheep like to see you coming. When we crested the knoll, they appeared again, this time at 200 yards, but something had changed. Instead of being lined out grazing, they were bunched up like a school of fish, staring at us.

There was no way I was going to take the shot with them bunched like that, so we waited. The herd's nerves got to them, and they turned tail in a hurry, heading for the scree. I won't ever forget how that looked. For a brief second I had a shot at the big bruiser, but he was moving fast, flanked by ewes, and I decided not to pull the trigger.

We caught up with him right before dark but didn't get another shot – either that night or for the remainder of the season. A week or so later, I ended up shooting a younger ram that was fine table fare. The big bruiser has been a ghost in my mind since. I've never quite been able to let him go.

That moment this past fall felt serendipitous, like it would provide closure. How apropos would it be to shoot a buck in this very spot? Very.

Nothing materialized in that moment, and the feeling left me just as quickly as it had come. But my instincts were on target. I took one more step and looked to my left. Out of nowhere, a mule deer buck was staring at me at 150 yards. I dropped to one knee, steadied my rifle, and squeezed off a round.

I heard the thwack, saw him buck and then watched him disappear downhill into the pines. It took me a moment to realize what had just happened. The inexplicable feeling had produced once again. If you've spent any time in the woods, you know what I'm talking about – it's something unexplainable to those who haven't experienced it. It spawns thoughts of something bigger out there … something that's hard to describe but a rhythm of which we all are a part.

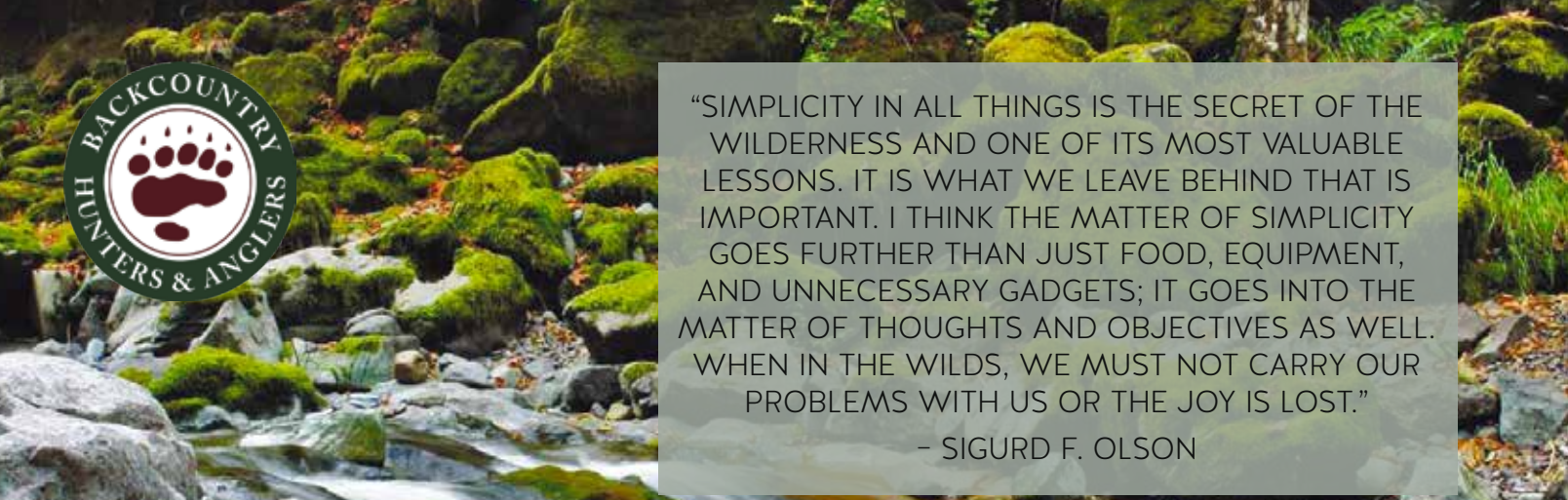
I don't think the ghost image of the bruiser ram will ever leave my mind. Nor do I really want it to. But that day last fall, things came full circle. I finally felt at peace after a half decade. Instead of the angst I associated with this very spot, I had a new memory to add to the quiver.

The pack out in the dark, however? That's a story for another time.

I can't wait to swap stories of serendipity in person at this year's Rendezvous, May 12-14 in Missoula, Montana. People are the most important currency at BHA, and it's high time we fill our souls with human interaction. I look forward to seeing many of you soon.

Onward and upward,

Land Tawney
President and CEO



"SIMPLICITY IN ALL THINGS IS THE SECRET OF THE WILDERNESS AND ONE OF ITS MOST VALUABLE LESSONS. IT IS WHAT WE LEAVE BEHIND THAT IS IMPORTANT. I THINK THE MATTER OF SIMPLICITY GOES FURTHER THAN JUST FOOD, EQUIPMENT, AND UNNECESSARY GADGETS; IT GOES INTO THE MATTER OF THOUGHTS AND OBJECTIVES AS WELL. WHEN IN THE WILDS, WE MUST NOT CARRY OUR PROBLEMS WITH US OR THE JOY IS LOST."

– SIGURD F. OLSON

THE VOICE FOR OUR WILD PUBLIC LANDS, WATERS AND WILDLIFE

Contributors in this Issue

Cover Photo: The sun fights for dominance as morning fog rises above the Appalachian foothills. From a spring turkey hunt with fellow BHA member, Heath Ries, in the Zaleski State Forest, Ohio, by Kyle Iwanicki
Above Image: Katie Howard, 2019 Public Waters Photo Contest

Stacey Ancans, Nicole Bealer, Josh Fortman, Jearred Foruria, Erin Genest, Zoë Havlena, Tristan Henry, Mateen Hessami, Trevor Hubbs, Bryce Levin, Rebekah Lumkes, Adam Miller, Eric Nuse, Morgon Olson, Jon Osborn, Russell Worth Parker, Danielle Prewett, Sarai Ramos, Andy Reed, Daniel Ritz, Ron Rohrbaugh, Jeff Roberts, Mia Sheppard, John Simoneau, M. Mahmood Tajbakhsh, E. Donnall Thomas Jr., Lori Thomas, Brad Tierney, Peter White, Dan Wilson, Wyoming Chapter

Journal Submissions: williams@backcountryhunters.org
Advertising and Partnership Inquiries: mills@backcountryhunters.org
General Inquiries: admin@backcountryhunters.org

BHA HEADQUARTERS

P.O. Box 9257, Missoula, MT 59807
www.backcountryhunters.org
admin@backcountryhunters.org
(406) 926-1908

Backcountry Journal is the quarterly membership publication of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, a North American conservation nonprofit 501(c)(3) with chapters in 48 states and the District of Columbia, two Canadian provinces and one Canadian territory. Become part of the voice for our wild public lands, waters and wildlife. Join us at backcountryhunters.org.

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JOIN THE CONVERSATION


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The Last Best Wild

"Here still survives one of Planet Earth's own works of art. This one symbolizes freedom."
-Lowell Sumner, National Park Service biologist, 1953

BY E. DONNALL THOMAS JR.

As was our tradition, we spent the first night at the Char Hole. Four miles upstream from the gravel bar landing strip, it made a perfect place to end our first day shakedown hike, during which we adjusted the straps on our heavy backpacks, checked our feet for hot spots, and found the rhythm we'd need to maintain during the 20 challenging miles ahead to our sheep hunting base camp.

After gratefully slipping out of my pack and letting it drop onto the tundra, I climbed a boulder and studied the pool below the waterfall. My eyes required some time to adjust to the optical illusions the current created, but then I saw them: a dozen undulating shapes, each representing a char nearly two feet long. I flashed a thumbs-up sign downstream to my hunting partners, confident that we'd soon be enjoying the best evening meal of the next two weeks – unless one of us actually killed a sheep.

Scrambling back down the boulder, I unpacked my backpack fly rod and dug through pockets until I located my minimalist collection of wilderness flies. I didn't really care which one of us caught the fish or who cooked them. It was enough to be camping north of the Arctic Circle again.

Newcomers to the Great North should think of Alaska more as a subcontinent than a state – it's that huge and complicated. The Southeastern Panhandle and the heart of the Interior differ more from population centers around Anchorage than do many foreign countries. Trying to pick a favorite outdoor venue from this smorgasbord of possibilities is probably a fool's errand, but even though I've been lucky enough to spend time in almost every part of Alaska, one location somehow stands out as more majestic than all the rest: the North Slope of the Brooks Range and the adjacent coastal Arctic plain. A surreal world of endless summer days and delicious loneliness, the landscape seems constructed by magic rather than the usual factors of weather and geology. Now, however, it stands threatened by forces no more complex than simple human greed.

The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge – often referred to simply as ANWR or "the Arctic Refuge" – lies tucked up against Canada to the east and the Arctic Ocean to the north. Today it is impossible to appreciate this remarkable wilderness and the challenges it faces without understanding its recent history.

Most of us know that our National Wildlife Refuge System began with Theodore Roosevelt. With the stroke of a pen in 1903, Roosevelt created the Pelican Island NWR in Florida to protect its vulnerable birdlife from exploitation by commercial plume hunters. NWRs have played a vital role in the preservation of American wildlife (and hunting and fishing opportunity) ever since.

Remote even by Alaska standards, the Arctic Refuge is not a place one visits casually. Save for a scattered indigenous Native population, no one knew much about the area prior to Alaska statehood. In the early 1950s, National Park Service planner George Collins and biologist Lowell Sumner explored the area and drew attention to it with a study titled "Northeast Alaska: The Last Great Wilderness."

In 1956, Wilderness Society President Olaus Murie and his wife, Margaret, made an extended expedition into

Photo: Don and Lori Thomas

the Sheenjek River valley on the south side of the Brooks Range, accompanied by Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas and several young biologists including the later world-renowned George Schaller. Upon their return, this group lobbied Congress for permanent protection of the area. In 1960, President Dwight Eisenhower created the Arctic National Wildlife Range there, including nearly 9 million acres of designated wilderness, the federal government's highest level of habitat protection.

In order to address longstanding Alaska Native land claims and allot land management responsibilities among state and federal agencies, Congress passed the Alaska National Interest Land Conservation Act in 1980. None of the stakeholders got everything they wanted, but the Eisenhower-era Arctic National Wildlife Range was folded into the newly created 19 million-acre ANWR. While most of the additional land did not receive wilderness designation, ANILCA specifically required formal congressional approval prior to any oil and gas development within ANWR.

NOW, HOWEVER, IT STANDS THREATENED BY FORCES NO MORE COMPLEX THAN SIMPLE HUMAN GREED.

No one shot a ram the year Doug and I went on our marathon pursuit of the big arctic grizzly.

Weather had haunted that trip right from the start, delaying the last leg of our flight to the gravel bar beside the river and obscuring the peaks in fog and snow every day we hunted from our upstream base camp. We had only seen one borderline legal ram in 10 days of hunting, and the best to be said about the long hike back to the strip was that our packs were light and it was downhill all the way. We were still exhausted when we finally reached the gravel bar, but the bears hadn't found the extra food we'd cached there, and the six-pack of beer we'd left in the creek proved every bit as cold and delicious as I'd imagined.

We were out of sheep country by then, but I wasn't quite ready to stop hunting yet. As Doug started a coffee-boiling fire out of willow twigs the following morning, I walked down the bar to glass for a bear. I hadn't even sat down before I saw a large blonde grizzly digging pikas out of a rock pile on the opposite riverbank.

Thirty minutes later, we were cautiously paddling our tiny inflatable raft across the current. Although Doug was way ahead of me in the Dall sheep column, he had never killed a grizzly with his bow. That fact had made him the designated hitter that morning, so he sat up front clutching his longbow while I paddled and wondered how, absent a firearm, I'd back him up if it came to that.

The bear had disappeared by the time we beached the raft, but after climbing the bank we relocated him easily as he ambled across the open tundra a quarter-mile ahead of us.

Although arctic grizzlies and coastal brown bears are members of the same species – Ursus arctos – they are very different animals. While brown bears are living the good life and gorging on salmon, their Brooks Range counterparts have to spend their brief arctic summers extracting a whole year's worth of nutrition from painfully lean habitat. The bear we were following had already entered the period of pre-hibernation hyperphagia, and he wasn't going to stop walking until he found something to eat.

His pace may have appeared casual, but it was all we could do to keep up with him, and we certainly weren't gaining any ground. We needed him to find another pika colony, a berry patch, a dead caribou calf or something … but he never did. We followed him for miles before we finally gave up and turned back.

Perhaps that was just as well. When last I saw the bear, the

Photos: Don and Lori Thomas

breeze was puffing his backlit fur into a golden halo that made him look like a creature in a Renaissance painting. I tipped my hat to him and wished him the best for the winter ahead.

By the time ANWR was created, it was common knowledge that the coastal plain adjacent to the Arctic Ocean contained substantial oil reserves. To the west, the Prudhoe Bay oil field had been actively producing since 1977. The terms of ANILCA identified a 1.5 million-acre parcel of the Arctic Coastal Plain within ANWR boundaries as the "1002 area" and designated it as suitable for oil and gas exploration, although congressional approval would still be required prior to further development.

Over the next four decades, the issue of drilling (or not) on the coastal plain became a prototypical political football. The details rapidly grow monotonous, so I'll stick to the highlights. In 1986, as chair of the House Interior Committee, Morris Udall successfully acted to kill a bill that would have authorized drilling. In 1989, a similar bill was making its way through the Senate when the Exxon Mobil disaster in Prince William Sound made support for drilling toxic. In 1996, President Bill Clinton vetoed a bill that would have authorized exploratory drilling in the Refuge. In 2000 and 2002, the House and Senate took turns passing drilling authorizations that were rejected by the other congressional body. In 2005, the House added a clause to an energy bill that would have cleared the way for drilling, but it was removed during the reconciliation conference with the Senate. That same year, Alaska Senator Ted Stevens added a similar clause to the defense bill, but it died by filibuster. A 2015 Obama administration effort to grant permanent wilderness level protection to most of the Refuge went nowhere. Whew.

Proponents of drilling invariably cited the potential to create new jobs and the country's need for oil independence, the latter consideration despite studies showing that even if all the known oil in the 1002 area could be extracted and delivered to market, it would barely satisfy U.S. energy needs for a year.

Drilling opponents cited the intrinsic value of the country's largest remaining true wilderness as championed by the Muries a generation earlier. They also emphasized the biological value of the Arctic Coastal Plain as a nesting area for nearly 200 species of birds that migrated throughout the country and as critical habitat for recently endangered species such as polar bears. Then there is the complex matter of the Porcupine caribou herd, in which Canadians just across the border also have a vested interest.

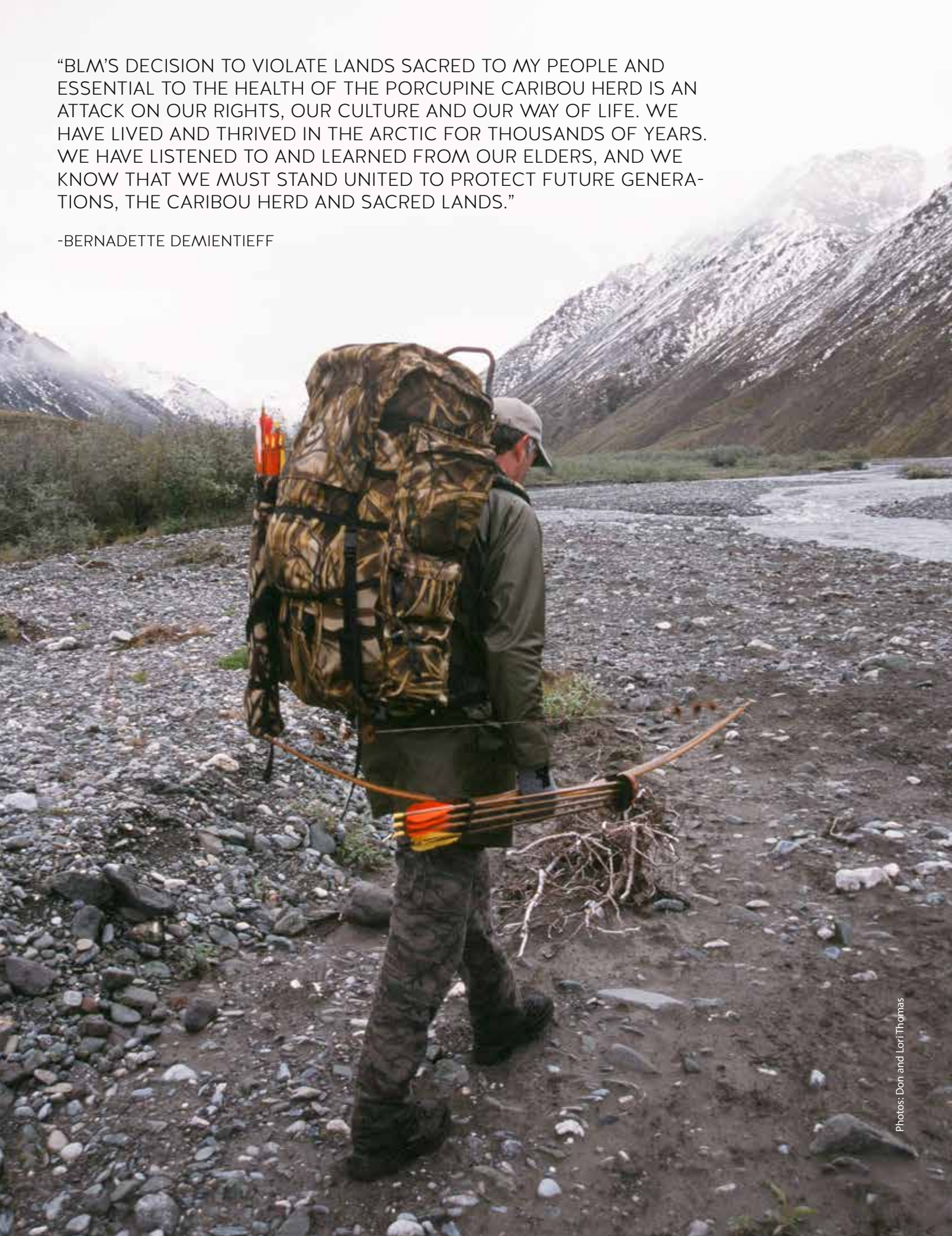
By the time I made my second trip to ANWR, I had learned that one of the surest ways to ruin a good sheep hunt was to shoot something bigger than a sheep. The obligation to care responsibly for the meat from a caribou or a moose meant the end of most sheep hunts. However, when I saw a band of caribou bedded on a rocky ridge a thousand feet above the valley floor, I had a variation on the usual theme in mind.

I'd already killed a number of big bulls with my bow and didn't need more antlers on my wall. I could plan on losing a pound per day on our usual sheep hunting menu of freeze-dried backpack food, hopefully supplemented by occasional char and ptarmigan. What I wanted was a caribou calf small enough so I could cut it all up and get it back to camp that night but large enough to feed four of us for the next week. Since the wind direction excluded the possibility of a direct approach, I circled around to the back side of the ridge, re-checked a few landmarks and started to climb.

Numbering around 200,000 animals, the Porcupine caribou herd is one of the continent's largest. For millennia, gravid cows have delivered their calves during late spring on the Arctic Coastal Plain, right in the heart of the contested 1002 area. From there, they begin a 2,000-mile clockwise circle by traveling east into Canada before moving south and west again to winter in the southern part of the Arctic Refuge before returning to the point of beginning. Along the way, they nourish an entire population of predators ranging from bears and wolves to raptors and

"BLM'S DECISION TO VIOLATE LANDS SACRED TO MY PEOPLE AND ESSENTIAL TO THE HEALTH OF THE PORCUPINE CARIBOU HERD IS AN ATTACK ON OUR RIGHTS, OUR CULTURE AND OUR WAY OF LIFE. WE HAVE LIVED AND THRIVED IN THE ARCTIC FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS. WE HAVE LISTENED TO AND LEARNED FROM OUR ELDERS, AND WE KNOW THAT WE MUST STAND UNITED TO PROTECT FUTURE GENERATIONS, THE CARIBOU HERD AND SACRED LANDS."

-BERNADETTE DEMIENTIEFF



Photos: Don and Lori Thomas

wolverines. The indigenous Gwich'in people, who inhabit much of ANWR south of the Brooks Range crest, depend on caribou as a source of food and hides as heavily as our Plains tribes once depended on bison.

Since most of the herd has already passed into Canada by the time sheep season opens in Alaska, I have never personally witnessed the peak of the migration. Friends have assured me that the event is as spectacular as anything seen on Africa's Serengeti. Perhaps it's just capricious fate that placed all that oil beneath the most crucial habitat the Porcupine herd crosses during its travels. Most knowledgeable observers agree that disruption of the coastal plain would be a disaster, for the caribou, the Gwich'in, and ultimately the whole arctic ecosystem.

Fortunately for the Gwich'in, they must be better caribou hunters than I am. After picking my way up through the rocks for nearly an hour, I peeked over the top and saw all the caribou grazing back down on the valley floor, right where I had started.

As much as I hesitate to insert politics into the discussion, the fact remains that much of the pressure to authorize oil and gas drilling on the coastal plain has come from Alaska's congressional delegation. Elected in 2018, Alaska Gov. Mike Dunleavy has also been an outspoken drilling advocate. In 2017, the House and Senate passed authorizing language in President Trump's tax bill to mandate the sale of oil and gas leases in the Refuge.

In August 2020, Interior Secretary David Bernhardt announced that the department would begin accepting bids for oil leases on the Refuge and predicted lease sales by the end of the year despite a world oversupply of oil and limited interest from big oil companies. (A former oil industry lobbyist, Bernhardt and his department faced multiple accusations of ethics violations during his tenure.)

Within the month, a consortium including the Gwich'in, National Wildlife Federation, the Canadian Parks and Wildlife Society and the Wilderness Society had filed suit against Bernhardt and the Bureau of Land Management, charging them with violating the terms of ANILCA, the National Environmental Policy Act, the National Wildlife Refuge System Act and the Endangered Species Act.

In announcing the suit, Bernadette Demientieff, executive director of the Gwich'in Steering Committee, said: "BLM's decision to violate lands sacred to my people and essential to the health of the Porcupine caribou herd is an attack on our rights, our culture and our way of life. We have lived and thrived in the Arctic for thousands of years. We have listened to and learned from our elders, and we know that we must stand united to protect future generations, the caribou herd and sacred lands."

Bidding on the ANWR oil and gas leases didn't occur until January of 2021 and drew remarkably little attention from private oil companies, probably reflecting political uncertainty and the high cost of energy development in the Arctic. Less than 1% of promised revenues were raised from the sale and a total of nine leases were awarded, only two of which went to private oil companies. The remaining leases went to entities established and governed by the state of Alaska.

Upon day one of assuming office, newly elected President Biden announced a moratorium on the Arctic Refuge leasing program, and in May of 2021 the Department of the Interior suspended the existing leases. Lawsuits contesting this action remain pending at the time of this writing. Later that same year, in August, DOI began the process of a supplemental Environmental Impact Statement to address deficiencies in the 2019 review.

The Biden administration's massive Build Back Better Act passed by the House includes several provisions intended to reform energy development on federal lands, including a suspension of the ANWR lease program authorized in 2017 along with a buyback of existing leases. After hitting a wall in the Senate, the White House and congressional leadership are now advocating plans to pursue a scaled back version of the original bill, which is likely to still include the previous language regarding the Arctic Refuge leasing program. The future of this legislative proposal is uncertain; however, as long as a repeal of the leasing program remains viable in the short term, Congress will likely not move forward with the Arctic Refuge Protection Act, which would designate the nearly 1.6 million acre coastal plain as wilderness.

The final chapters of this complex story – if there ever are any – remain to be written.

Despite its size, ANWR is one of the country's least frequently visited. Friend, neighbor, Fish and Wildlife Service veteran and frequent hunting partner Glenn Elison served as director of ANWR for ten years beginning in 1983. During that time, he estimates that fewer than 1200 people visited the refuge annually. Chalk that up to logistics. There are no roads to or within the refuge, save for the immediate area around scattered Native villages. Getting there requires a bush flight, usually from Barter Island or Arctic Village. The area's inaccessibility reflects the essential paradox of wilderness. If ANWR received tourists like Yellowstone National Park, it would no longer be wilderness.

Why bother going to all that trouble, or even caring about ANWR's future? I spent some time considering that question the evening before we were due to fly out on my last trip to the refuge. Despite the amount of time I've spent far from the nearest road all over Alaska, the country, and the world, ANWR affects me in a qualitatively different way. Earlier during that trip, for example, I started to reach for my bear spray when I spotted a brown, furry hump approaching me above the top of the streamside willows. I stood pat and soon found myself surrounded by a herd of musk ox, one of the few North American big game animals I'd never encountered in the wild.

These primitive Ice Age relics co-exist poorly with humans, which is why their U.S. population is limited to the North Slope of the Brooks Range and a few remote islands in the Bering Sea. Yet there they were, standing before me like characters in a dream.

In the future, I'd like to be able to share that dream with family and friends. That will mean leaving the Arctic Refuge the way it is and always has been.

BHA members Don Thomas and his wife Lori live in central Montana with their dogs. They both enjoy wing-shooting, bowhunting and fly-fishing and together have covered these topics for numerous publications. Don and Lori were the recipients of BHA's 2021 Ted Trueblood Award for their exceptional communications work informing and inspiring people for the benefit of public lands, waters and wildlife.

BACKCOUNTRY JOURNAL

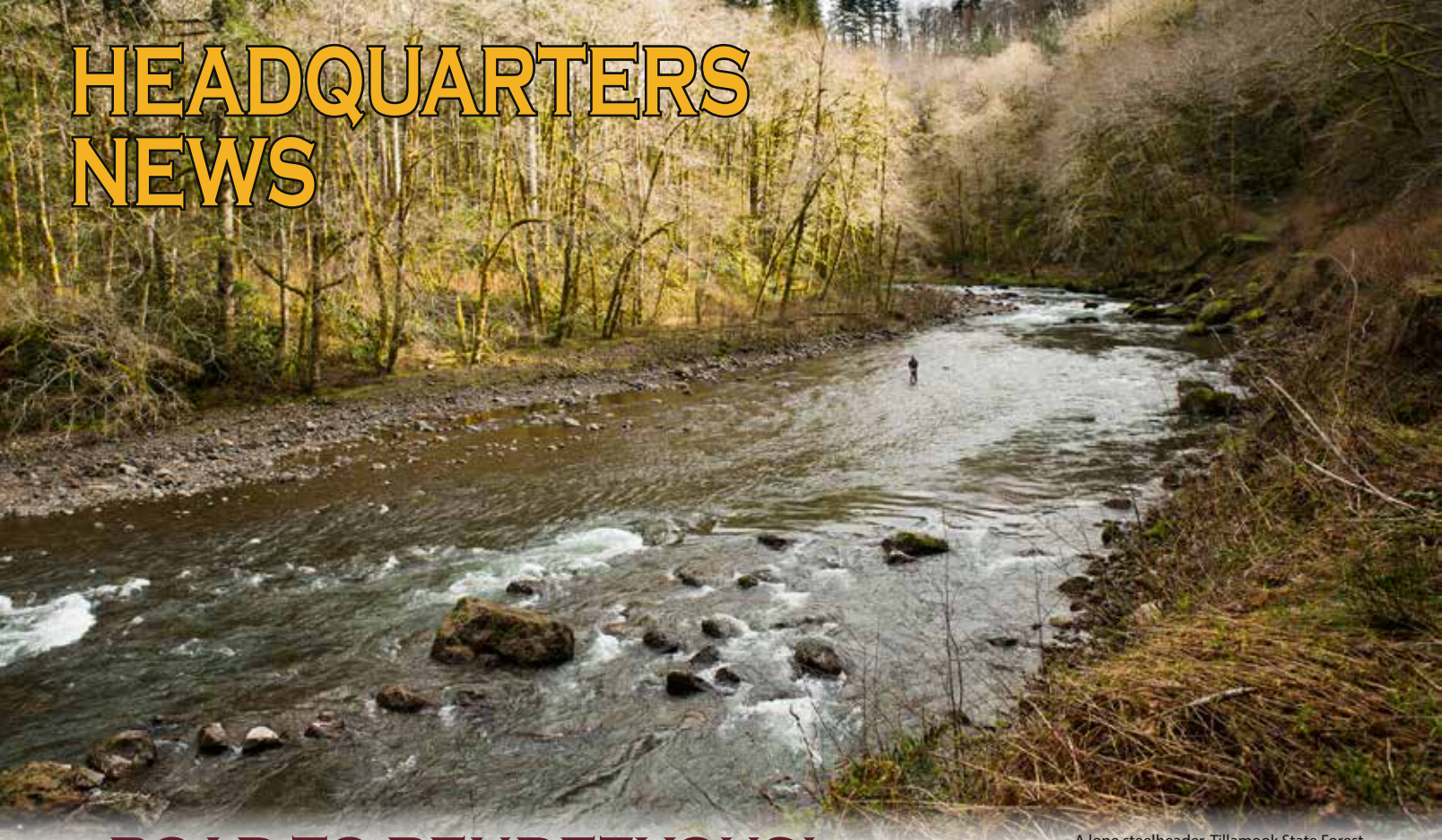
SPRING 2022 | VOLUME XVII, ISSUE II

FEATURES

BHA member Nels Iverson crosses the Rio Grande in New Mexico with a public land Rio Grande tom. Photo: Zoë Havlena

DEPARTMENTS

HEADQUARTERS NEWS



A lone steelheader, Tillamook State Forest, Oregon. Photo by William Smith, 2021 Public Lands and Waters Photo Contest

ROAD TO RENDEZVOUS!

In one of the biggest giveaways we have ever dreamt up, BHA is teaming up with longtime partner Mountain Top Motor Co., of Troy, Missouri, for the epic Road To Rendezvous Sweepstakes.

Starting in early April, BHA members will have the opportunity to enter to win a 1998 Chevy Silverado, but it won't be just any run of the mill 24-year-old truck. The after-market experts at Mountain Top Motor Co. will have gone through the low mileage truck with a fine-tooth comb and added a plethora of mountain ready add-ons like custom wheels and tires, lift, solar system for external power, roof racks, winch and so much more, along with a new custom wrap that will make this the best backcountry truck you can dream of. Along with a one-year warranty, the winner of this truck will have more outdoor gear coming from BHA North American sponsors like First Lite, FHF Gear, NRS, Grayl, Costa, Gunner Kennels, Traeger, Stone Glacier, Sport Dog, Vortex, Danner, Fishpond and more. The Road to Rendezvous Sweepstakes will run from early April up to Rendezvous in Missoula, May 12-14, with a lucky winner chosen a week after Rendezvous. Be on the lookout as this outdoor lover's dream rig will be on the road, stopping off at BHA events and public lands and waters en route to Rendezvous. Good luck!

AWARDS NOMINATIONS PORTAL

Do you know an individual who deserves to be recognized for their outstanding contributions to conservation or our organization? This is your chance to help us honor their work with one of our 2022 Awards! Award recipients are announced annually at the North American Rendezvous, set this year for May 12-14 in Missoula, Montana!

- **The Jim Posewitz Award** for advancing ethical, responsible behavior in the hunting and fishing fields by example, leadership or education
- **The Rachel L. Carson Award** for an outstanding emerging leader
- **The Aldo Leopold Award** for outstanding effort conserving terrestrial wildlife habitat
- **The Sigurd F. Olson Award** for outstanding effort conserving rivers, lakes or wetland habitat
- **The Ted Trueblood Award** for outstanding communication on behalf of backcountry habitat and values
- **The Larry Fischer Award** for outstanding corporate contribution to BHA's mission
- **The George Bird Grinnell Award** for the outstanding BHA chapter of the year
- **The Mike Beagle-Chairman's Award** for outstanding effort on behalf of BHA

Nominate individuals and chapters at backcountryhunters.org/2022_awards_nomination_portal. The final deadline for nominations is Friday, April 1.

BHA ADVANCES SUNDAY HUNTING

Following grassroots successes in **North Carolina** and in **Pennsylvania**, where Sunday hunting is now allowed on three Sundays, other states are making progress in repealing antiquated laws to now allow Sunday hunting, thanks in large part to the efforts of BHA chapters.

In **Massachusetts**, the New England chapter has been hard at work speaking in support of a number of Sunday hunting bills. The state is now among only a handful of states that has yet to repeal Blue Laws pertaining to Sunday hunting. For hardworking resident sportsmen and women, the ban on Sunday hunting severely limits opportunities to be in the field and share outdoor traditions with family and friends.

Massachusetts Gov. Baker included provisions for Sunday archery deer hunting as well as decreased setbacks for archery hunting in his Fiscal Year 2023 Budget. Encouraging lawmakers in the House and Senate Ways and Means committees to leave these items in the budget is another chance for these opportunities to come into fruition for Massachusetts hunters.

Hunters remain barred from hunting public lands on Sundays in **South Carolina** despite widespread support for Sunday hunting among the outdoors community. Thankfully, a coalition of sporting groups have joined a large bipartisan group of legislators to sponsor a bill (H 4614) that would provide a simple and needed fix to give hunters the opportunity to head afield on Wildlife Management Areas in the state on both days of the weekend.

The South Carolina chapter has been engaging in multiple public forums on this issue leading up to this point. BHA members from South Carolina can let legislators know where you stand when it comes to on Sunday hunting on public lands.

Visit BHA's Action Center to speak up for Sunday hunting in Massachusetts and South Carolina and to further efforts in Pennsylvania.

FIELD TO TABLE BLOG

We'd love to share your favorite wild game and fish recipes on BHA's Field to Table blog! Email us a short introduction about the recipe, a nice photo, the recipe and simple cooking instructions to see your work alongside many of the best wild game chefs in the business. Submissions can be sent to williams@backcountryhunters.org.

Antelope bulgogi by North Dakota BHA member Jeff Benda. Find the recipes at backcountryhunters.org/field_to_table

BHA MEAT BAGS

BHA has teamed up with Walton's – Everything but the Meat! to package and store your next wild game grind with these one pound poly-meat bags. Whether you hunt public land, private land or a mix of both, BHA believes we should build a community of hunters and conservation advocates that celebrates wild food.

Each bag quotes author, founder of Orion: the Hunters Institute and conservationist Jim Posewitz from his book *Beyond Fair Chase*: "Hunting is one of the last ways we have to exercise our passion to belong to the earth, to be part of the natural world, to participate in the ecological drama, and to nurture the ember of wildness within ourselves."

LATEST ON THE PODCAST & BLAST

Eduardo Garcia, one of the greatest wild game chefs of our time and the co-founder of Montana Mex, returns to the Podcast & Blast to talk, as always, about life – family, work, cooking, hunting, gardening, foraging, the discipline of awareness and the glories and struggles of the every day. His new TV series, Zest for Life, is available now. Listen to Hal's 2019 interview with Eduardo if you don't know his story and then listen to this one, a conversation with a man who was struck down by an unimaginable accident while hunting and who worked his way forward: from the edge of death and the reality of loss, to a life more abundant.

In episode 124, **Andrew McKean and Randy Newberg** join Hal for a spirited and sobering look at elk hunting in Montana – a place where politics and privatization meet the future of our hunting – and how we might affect that future if we have the knowledge and the courage to act. Montana's private land elk numbers are booming, hunting pressure on public lands is skyrocketing and landownership patterns are changing. What is happening? Where are we going? What does this mean, not just for Montana but for the future of hunting in the fast-growing and fast-changing West?

Find these episodes and more at backcountryhunters.org/bha_podcast or wherever you get your podcasts.

COLORING CONTEST WINNERS!

Thanks to all who participated in the winter issue's coloring contest!

First Place: Bethany Johnson, age 12

Second Place: Piper Gibboney, age 7

Third Place: Owen Lammert, age 8

WELCOME NEW BHA STAFF!

Chris Hager

Washington and Oregon Chapter Coordinator

Born and raised on the East Coast, Chris got his love and passion for the outdoors fishing the coastal and inland waters of Maine and New Hampshire. Fishing has been a gateway into his passion for conservation, where he has committed his career and personal endeavors.

Now settled in the Pacific Northwest, Chris spends most of his time backcountry hunting, fishing and camping in Oregon's and Washingtons' coast, high desert and temperate rainforests.

Chris Hunt

Digital Media Coordinator

Longtime Western journalist and conservation communicator Chris Hunt comes to BHA after more than 16 years working in various media capacities for Trout Unlimited. In 2004, he won the prestigious Dolly Connelly Award for Excellence in Environmental Journalism, and he has collected numerous awards from the likes of the Society of Professional Journalism, the Associated Press, the Pacific Northwest Newspaper Association, the Idaho Press Club and the Outdoor Writers Association of America.

He's an avid fly fisher and has traveled the world to chase everything from bonefish and permit to pike, bass and trout. Since 2005, he's worked to communicate the efforts to protect great American landscapes, from the Roan Plateau in Colorado to Bristol Bay in Alaska. In his home state of Idaho, he helped push the Idaho Roadless Rule across the finish line and worked to protect the Wyoming Range from future oil and gas drilling. He lives and works in Idaho Falls, Idaho.

Trevor Hubbs

Armed Forces Initiative Coordinator

Trevor Hubbs grew up near the confluence of the Mississippi, Missouri and Ohio rivers. His father and two uncles taught him about their particular brand of hunting starting when he was 7. His father was a waterfowler, one uncle a houndsman, and another uncle the last quail hunter in southern Illinois. He grew up chasing raccoons and coyotes behind hounds and running a muskrat trapline starting at 7 years old. In high school, Trevor guided for game farm pheasants and public land ducks. Today, he follows his Irish setters looking for native game birds on public land.

Erin Nuzzo

Grants and Annual Giving Coordinator

Growing up in Western Montana, Erin has been fishing the Blackfoot and the Bitterroot rivers when you'd be hard-pressed to see another human being all day! She is still an avid angler, paddleboarder, hiker, runner and snowboarder ... anything that gets her outside! Erin has worked in the nonprofit sector for many years both as a volunteer and as a professional, with experience ranging from fundraising, volunteer management and event planning to marketing and advocacy work.

She brings these skills to good use as the grants and annual giving coordinator, helping BHA achieve our mission and empowering our membership to conserve the lands and waters we all cherish.