

Tracks™ Spring 2011



First Class Missouri Goose Hunting (Bill Thompson - MN)

Going to a place you've never been before can make a person a little anxious. Are the directions going to be right? Will the accommodations resemble the pictures on the website? Will the outfitter honor his word not to mix your small group of three hunters with another group at the lodge? These are a few of the thoughts that ran through my head as I loaded my truck, picked up two longtime hunting buddies, and headed for Sumner, Missouri and the hunting home of Tony Vandemore.

Just a short 6 1/2 hours of windshield time put us at the front door of the lodge. The directions had been perfect...check that off the list of things to worry about. My group was greeted at the front door by Randy, the resident manager of the lodge and purveyor of all things food and drink. We were welcomed into the "boot room" where we were each given an oversized locker for our gear (guns, boots, shells, jackets...you name it, if it was going with you in the morning it would fit in your space). We then got the official tour of the lodge, each receiving our own private bedroom...a nice perk with a group of snoring hunters!

After settling in, we were told of the next days plans...up early as the birds were well south of the lodge (largely due to the very cold weather and above average snowfall this winter). As we sat around the fireplace and heard stories of past years, local history and the large feed Tony had found for the morning shoot I was



(continued on page 2. Want to learn more about hunting in Missouri, contact your Outdoor Connection agent)

Inside

PAGE 2

MISSOURI GEESSE CONT.
TEXAS HOG HUNT

PAGE 3

TEXAS HOG HUNT CONT.

PAGE 4

ONTARIO STEELHEAD



(from page 1)

immediately at ease over any of the previous questions in my head prior to arrival...this was going to be great.

A 4:15 alarm is not something I take lightly...but it was time...and if I was going to grab some coffee and a roll before our 5:00 departure, I knew the snooze button wasn't an option. Up, dressed, coffee in hand, we were out the door at 5:01...Tony and Mark in the first truck, the three of us following in ours. It was a little over an hour to the field where Tony had seen 10,000+ Canadians the afternoon before. 28 degrees, no wind, and dark...time to set the spread and get the layout blinds ready. The good news was this wasn't Tony's first rodeo...within 45 minutes we had over 150 full body honkers set up and were in our blinds...then the wind switched. Not wanting to have us have to shoot into the sun, Tony and Mark immediately sprang out of the blinds, called for us to "drag those over here...quick!"...10 minutes later we had repositioned, Tony and Mark were making goose music with their calls, and there were birds in the air...time to get low and wait for the best two words you can hear..."KILL 'EM". When I looked at my watch, it was 8:30. When I looked at the ground, there was a limit of geese piled in front of us. Mission accomplished...Day 1 in the books.



The next two days were carbon copies. Great steak dinners, organized and professional guides that kept us informed as to what to expect and ran the hunt the "right way". Shooting geese is something I had never done before...and I can say that I'm now probably spoiled for life. The thousands of birds were something to see whether you had a camera or a shotgun in your hand, the amazing 500 yard retrieve that Tony's lab Ruff made was nothing less than amazing, and the laughs and heckling from the blind over missed shots or other fumbles made this a great three days in north central Missouri.

For more information on hunting geese in Missouri (MOH7) contact your local Outdoor Connection agent.

Hog Hunting in Texas (Marc Glades - KS)

It is March 17, 2011. St. Patricks Day. Nothing is green yet here in Kansas so we are heading to Texas to warm ourselves and our rifle barrels which have booth been inside for two months now. Time to go boar hunting and see the sun and some green grass. A quick drive west of Oklahoma City on I-40 toward Amarillo is our route. Jersey Mike's hooks us up with reubens for lunch and a gas/supply stop in Shamrock, Texas both help us keep to the Irish theme for the day.

After heading south to Clarendon, Texas, some fifteen miles or so south of I-40, we meet our outfitter, Derek Lepke. Derek operates on the JA Ranch which lies fifty miles southeast of Amarillo. Twenty four miles of ranch roads leads you to camp. Roads are few and far between in this country so Derek meets all of his clients in Clarendon or Claude to lead them to camp. He will pick up clients who fly into Amarillo as well.

We are here to put some sausage and pork loin in the freezer for the summer months as the grills/smokers are getting ready to come out of hibernation. Nothing better than smoked loin which turns into wonderful pulled pork sandwiches.

We arrived at camp at 4:00pm, put away our gear, grabbed a snack and proceeded to head to our blinds by 5:00pm. I was joined on this trip by two of my longtime hunting buddies, Greg Ray and Bill Maas. Bill's wife,



(continued on page 3)

ALBERTA BLACK BEAR (ABH1)

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(from page 2)

Sarah, made the journey as well hoping to take her first hog. Water holes were the blinds of choice on this day as the temperature set a new record reaching 96 degrees. Being as hogs can't sweat, we figured they might be looking to cool off at some point when they started out for their evening feed.

At 7:30pm sharp I had my first group take their place in the pool. A sow with her four piglets. Not two minutes later another sow with her small ones joined in. A third sow made her way into the pool as well and this one had the word "bacon" written all over it. I guessed it at near 125 pounds and that was exactly what I was hoping for. That sow never reached the pool as I put a .270 round on the mark and could already taste the pulled pork sandwich I will be enjoying on the 4th of July.

Back to camp then for some fajitas (always a St. Patty's Day staple) and a couple of cold beverages. The satellite TV came in pretty handy as well, as this was the first day of the NCAA basketball tourney. After a check of our brackets and a slice of chocolate pie, it was off to hit the sack as tomorrow would bring a full day of chasing bacon.

Day two had us up for breakfast at 6:30am and out the door at 7am. Everyone headed for ground blinds spread across the vast landscape. As was expected, the morning after a very hot day was fairly uneventful. Bill and Sarah spotted a couple of pigs but at a distance of over 200 yards. The fact that we didn't shoot a hog left us plenty of midday time to explore the area. The west side of the ranch falls off into the second deepest canyon in the US, the Palo Duro Canyon. We made our way up the outer wall until we broke over the top to find ourselves looking across the vast canyon beneath us.



After our afternoon tour, it was back to the ground blinds for the evening hunt. Greg and I chose to sit together this night while Bill and Sarah headed to a food plot. Thirty minutes into the sit Greg and I had a sow head toward us from the left. As it approached we realized the wind had shifted and if this pig had a nose attached to its head, we were busted. Needless to say this pig's anatomy was intact and as quick as the pig had appeared it disappeared. Another forty five minutes went by and a group of five boars made their way toward us. Greg and I had moved approximately one hundred yards to the south now, thus looking 180 degrees of where we started. As I had already hung one in the freezer, it was Greg's turn. He added to the hanging weight in short order with a hundred pound boar.

Back to camp we headed for another of Suzanne's fabulous dinners. T-bones were on tonight's menu sided by bakers and a salad. The stories rolled over dinner and it was determined that we were only lacking one aspect of wild boar hunting on this trip. Yep, you guessed it, the ol' Buck knife.

Derek's friend from the neighboring ranch is a hog running specialist with four of the best hog dogs this side of the Pecos. Bill, an eleven year veteran lineman of the NFL, had gone head to head with plenty of "hogs" in his day and tonight he was back in his element. It was simple, man versus beast.

We loaded up in a flat bed pickup and headed out on the ranch roads. The bed of the truck was a kennel on wheels. Two catahoulas, a trail hound and a pit bull joined us for the evening excursion. Ten minutes into the drive and the trail hound flew off the flat bed like superman and was hot on the trail. The truck stopped and we took our positions at the side of the truck so we could listen as the hound sent his vocal signals back to us. Five minutes went by before the signal changed tone. Upon the new sound making its way to us, the catahoulas took off the same way and made their way in the direction of the sound. "I am just guessing now boys but they are close to a mile away," said the guide. As soon as the words left his mouth, the catahoulas had reached their mark and their voices sent the pit bull into action and he was now ready to rumble. We were off to the races. The moon was bright and we made our way via a quick walk/jog toward the main event. Once we arrived, we had ring side seats as the boar was spinning round and round taking on all comers. As his attention was firmly planted on the dogs around him, Bill caught his breath and slowly moved in. When the boar was looking the opposite direction, Bill grabbed one of his hind legs, hurled it into the air and the knife was true with a direct puncture to the vitals. What an experience. A wild boar taken down with a Buck knife. Now, that brings a whole new level of excitement to hunting hogs.

Back to camp for a celebration of the hunt and to pack up for our departure the following morning. If you are looking for a budget conscience hunt during the off season of most other hunting, you need to make this hunt in Texas part of your 2012 plans.

For more information on hunting hogs in Texas (TXH12) contact your local Outdoor Connection agent.

Good Friends and Niagara Steelhead (Mark Reinert - ON)

Sitting on a deck overlooking a Namibian sunset and a successful hunting day, enjoying a few sundowners last August as a guest of Onduri Hunting Safaris, a conversation lead to an open invitation to reciprocate the generosity of the Boshoff's for them to come and visit Canada and our homes in Ontario. My good friends Stewart and Denise Ray and my wife Cheryl and I shared the exclusive resort during the seven days. In a time where the world is spinning a little differently, it's refreshing to know you can fly half way around this globe and still find friendship, no different than those made with neighbors' on the same road you live on.

How does fishing enter into this scenario? The invitation to Chris and Anita was to include Canada and more specifically Ontario in their travel plans as they visited several cities in the northern US states in mid January 2011 in support of OC agents interested in Africa and their operation and the recent inclusion into the OC fold of inspected lodges.

Over the several months leading up to Christmas, plans were etched out to fly into Ottawa where I would pick them up and travel the 170kms back to our home.

Arrival day, welcomed friendship and a good supper after the two days of flying, they found themselves on one of the coldest evenings this winter that was touching a numbing -30 degrees. Chris's comments were of +40 degrees some 48 hours previous leaving Windhoek their capital city. Over the next five days we had them dog sledding, a visit to a local maple syrup bush and a couple group get-together's before leaving for Toronto some five hours away with good friends Dave and Sharon Armstrong and myself. Niagara on the lake and it's more senior world recognized destination Niagara Falls is only a small 70 minute drive from there. Our goal was a two day African Safari Show in Mississauga (a "suburb" of Toronto) several days later, so naturally let's do something absolutely characteristic of outdoors people, an adventure!

After a quick stop at Bass Pro in Vaughan, Ontario, I had organized a few stop over's. The first was Kittling Ridge Winery and Distillery. After a private tour of the facilities, naturally a number of tastings ensued! All three male's appreciation for a great whiskey followed by the ladies appreciation for good wine had us leaving with several purchases.



Checking into our hotel and dusting off the days travel, we had wine tasting and dinner lined up that evening at Peller Estates Winery as a highlight to a forthcoming fishing day to arrive. What a fantastic way to enjoy good company, celebrate great food and talk over expectations of fishing trip anticipation, that a five hour, five course meal!

My good friend and longtime boat Captain Aldo of Niagara Fishing Adventures (another approved OC outfitter) had booked us in for a one day Niagara River steelhead/brown trout debut!

Our morning arrived with -12 degrees and holding low atmosphere as we met Aldo at the frozen boat ramp. The open 18' boat was readied as we donned our chosen winter gear, packed hand warmers and some munchies food into pockets. Entering the icy waters of the Niagara with the US shore only several hundred yards away and the falls tailrace within eyesight, a number of other hardy soles were either already on the river and pulling in the parking behind us. Minutes later, all four of us, already a few body degrees cooler than we wished, manned bottom bouncers and roe sacs of yellow and orange off the rocky bottom. For the next three hours, Chris, Dave and I fished intently while noticing the absolutely stunning winter shorelines of two great countries. One fish boated! A nice 12 lb steelhead! Holy cow...we've only been on the water

(continued on page 4)



NEW MEXICO ANTELOPE (NMH8)

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LODGE, GUIDE SERVICE, BOAT, MOTOR, GAS AND LICENSE.



(continued from page 3)

20 minutes and that first silver was an envious delight to the other three of us as Chris smiled. Over the next two hours, all of us shared jokes, took pictures of others fish, re-added hand warmers as temperatures moved up and down as the morning unfolded. Talk of a return trip to Africa by me in 2012 started a bucket list explanation of trophies to be hunted. I, mentioning a crocodile as one such goal had Chris excited to chat about his other area on the Namibian Skeleton coast where these resided along with bronze sharks in the areas historical waters, which anchored my confirmation of them on the list! It was at that moment that wind, and the temperature present and moist spray in the air prompted Chris to mention his freezing!@#\$%% and that he'd be taking me crocodile hunting without a gun...hmm, only a comment appreciated by a good friend!!

Our two fish limit was solidified within minutes of Chris catching the largest steely at 17 lbs. and then by me, the last fish, a terrific 10 lb. Between the free forming ice, the small ice burgs flowing by and requiring the boat and rods to cut our lines through the ice, those fish gave way to a few handshakes and smiling faces in many pictures to remember this day on the shore. What a fantastic way to share this great globe's treasures, feel alive with success and forever have memories to reminisce over a few sundowners sitting on a deck, overlooking.....

For more information on hunting in Africa (AFH6), contact your local Outdoor Connection agent.

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