



SPRING 2019 EDITION

Outdoor

R E P O R T E R

NEW MEXICO'S BOOTHEEL COUNTRY UNDER THREAT FROM BORDER WALL PROPOSAL

MONTEZUMA QUAIL ON THE BORDER

KAMILIA ELSISIE

PAGE 15

THE BOOTHEEL

BEN NEARY

PAGE 13



M.H. DUTCH SALMON, 1945-2019

NEW MEXICO CONSERVATIONIST
PAGE 21



DOG DAYS FISHING

M. H. SALMON

PAGE 19



OUTDOOR TUNEUP: GET READY FOR SPRING FISHING AND FALL HUNTING

PAGE 10

www.nmwildlife.org

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PUBLIC LANDS BILL PROTECTS NEW MEXICO WILDERNESS	3
CONGRESS DELIVERS A HUGE WIN FOR N.M. SPORTSMEN, FAMILIES AND WILDLIFE	4
HISTORIC LEGISLATION FOR OUR PUBLIC LANDS	5
PROTECTING CULTURE BY PLANNING FOR WILDLIFE CONNECTIVITY	6
PUBLIC LANDS RALLY HAMMERED ON IMPORTANCE OF PRESERVATION	8
ARCHERY	10
FLY FISHING TIPS FOR SPRING TROUT	11
SWAP PROGRAM INTRODUCES STUDENTS TO CONSERVATION WORK	12
THE BOOTHEEL	13
MONTEZUMA QUAIL ON THE BORDER	15
PREPARATION AND COOPERATION PAY OFF FOR HUNTER ON IBEX HUNT IN NEW MEXICO'S FLORIDA MOUNTAINS	16
HUNTING IS ALL ABOUT APPRECIATION	18
DOG DAYS, DROUGHT, AND BIG FISH	19
DUTCH SALMON	21



The Outdoor Reporter is a bi-annual publication of the New Mexico Wildlife Federation, a nonprofit organization working to protect the rights and traditions of New Mexico hunters and anglers since 1914. For more information or to join us, visit our website at www.nmwildlife.org. To advertise in the Outdoor Reporter, email nmwildlife@nmwildlife.org.

(505) 299-5404 • www.nmwildlife.org
6100 Seagull St. NE Suite B-105, Albuquerque, NM 87109
facebook.com/nmwildlife • [@nmwildlife](https://twitter.com/nmwildlife)

New Mexico sportsmen and women protecting our outdoor way of life since 1914

NEW MEXICO WILDLIFE FEDERATION STAFF

Executive Director	Jesse Deubel
Public Lands Field Director	Andrew Black
Office Manager	Susan Calt
Communications and Education Outreach Coordinator	Kamilia Elsisie
Online Media Director	Thomas Gomez
Conservation Director	Ben Neary
Coordinator of Wildlife Corridors	Jeremy Romero
Development Director	Wendy Sandidge
Southern New Mexico Outreach Coordinator	Ray Trejo

PUBLIC LANDS BILL PROTECTS NEW MEXICO WILDERNESS

President Donald Trump in March signed into law the Natural Resources Management Act, a package that protects new wilderness within the Río Grande del Norte and Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monuments.

Nationwide, the public lands package adds more than 1.3 million acres of public land to the National Wilderness Preservation System, 621 miles of rivers to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, and reauthorizes the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

The legislation, signed into law in March, includes dozens of bipartisan public lands measures to conserve some of our nation's wildest lands and rivers.

"Having this lands package signed into law is a great day for public lands in New Mexico and nationwide," said Jesse Deubel, executive director of the New Mexico Wildlife Federation. "Future generations of New Mexicans will benefit greatly from this action."

The NMWF has been a strong supporter of the bill. Deubel thanked New Mexico's entire congressional delegation for their support.

Legislation to safeguard the wilderness in the Río Grande del Norte and Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monuments was first introduced by former Senator Jeff Bingaman in 2009 and then again by Senators Tom Udall and Martin Heinrich in later sessions.

In 2013 and 2014, President Obama established the Río Grande del Norte and Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monuments.

Both wilderness measures included in the package are decades in the making and are supported by New Mexicans across the state, including hunters and anglers, small business owners, veterans, elected officials, community and faith leaders, ranchers, and conservationists.

The bill will designate roughly 263,094 acres of wilderness within the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks

and Río Grande del Norte national monuments, and roughly 7,000 acres to be known as the Ah-Shi-Sle-Pah Wilderness.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund uses fees from offshore oil and gas revenues to invest in wildlife habitat and outdoor recreation areas. Since its inception in the 1960s, the program has put more than \$18 billion into projects across the country. Congressional inaction last fall caused the fund to expire, depriving conservation projects of more than \$350 million.

"Permanent reauthorization of the Land and Water Conservation Fund is a key element toward protecting critical habitat nationwide," Deubel said. "The fund has played an important role in protecting critical areas in New Mexico and we're thrilled to see it permanently protected."

CONGRESS DELIVERS A HUGE WIN FOR N.M. SPORTSMEN, FAMILIES AND WILDLIFE

BY ANDREW BLACK | NMWF/NWF PUBLIC LANDS FIELD DIRECTOR

If you've ever hunted in New Mexico's National Forests, spotted bighorn sheep scaling the cliffs of the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument, been awed by huge herds of elk migrating across the Valles Caldera, rafted the Rio Chama, fished at Tingley Beach, or simply been awed by the sacred history of Bandelier, Tent Rocks and Petroglyph national monuments, then you are the beneficiary of the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

As one of America's most successful conservation and outdoor recreation programs, over the past 55 years the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) has funded everything from America's national parks and access to public lands to supporting local parks, ball fields and trails in nearly every county in America.

The LWCF is hugely important to sportsmen and women since many of the program's funds are aimed at increasing sportsmen access to public lands, enhancing critical wildlife habitat, restoring rivers and fisheries, and protecting wildlife corridors to ensure that animals can migrate and move across landscapes.

New Mexico has received \$312 million in LWCF funding over the past five decades, including funds to purchase the iconic Valles Caldera National Preserve for public use. All this without using a single taxpayer dollar. With a long track record of success and strong bipartisan support, LWCF has been championed by New Mexico's sportsmen and women, outdoor businesses, recreationists, veterans, private landowners and park advocates.

Permanent Reauthorization of the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which U.S. Congress let expire in September 2018, is just one of the many important pieces of the "Public Lands Package" that Congress passed this spring.

The package has over 100 other bills in it, with protections for millions of acres of wilderness and key wildlife habitat, preservation of hundreds of miles of wild and scenic rivers, and a sportsmen's component that's been over a decade in the making. It's a remarkable bit of conservation in a divisive time, proving yet again that protection of our nation's incredible public lands and wildlife can truly bring people together.

Seeking to protect critical wildlife habitat in New Mexico, the package also includes key provisions protecting wildlife corridors and wilderness areas in the Rio Grande del Norte and Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monuments.

The bill designates 21,500 acres of new wilderness in the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument as part of the Rio San Antonio and Cerro del Yuta Wilderness areas.

According to Jeremy Romero, NMWF Wildlife Corridor Coordinator, "these areas provide critical habitat and are essential wildlife corridors to elk, mule deer, pronghorn, bears and cougars as these animals travel between New Mexico and Colorado."

The bill also designates 10 permanent wilderness areas in the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument making the monument a world-class backcountry destination. As Sen. Tom Udall, D-N.M.,



From left to right: Andrew Black NMWF/NWF, U.S. Sen. Tom Udall, D-N.M., and Jeremy Romero NMWF/NWF

remarked, "this legislation will provide permanent protection to some of the most breathtaking natural landscapes in Doña Ana County and iconic rugged areas of Taos, all while preserving traditional practices, and keeping the land accessible for hunting, fishing and recreation."

The Public Lands package also contains other key sportsmen provisions including expanding access for hunting, fishing and recreational shooting on federal public lands, recruiting and retaining more hunter-conservationists, and allowing the transport of archery equipment through national parks. The package also ensures that even more LWCF funds go toward promoting sportsmen access on public lands.

“The Public Lands Package is an incredible victory

for the sporting community,” said Aaron Kindle, senior manager of western sporting campaigns for the National Wildlife Federation. “It conserves both programs and lands we love and ensures sporting opportunities for years to come.”

In addition to these key sporting provisions and protecting over 1.3 million acres of iconic landscapes, the Public Lands Package also includes the “Every Kid Outdoors Act,” which will allow

every fourth-grader in America to visit our national parks, forests, wildlife refuges, and public lands free of charge and bring their families along with them.

Sen. Martin Heinrich, D-N.M., has been a strong supporter of the Every Kid Outdoors Act. “I am so excited that we are encouraging a new generation of kids to explore the rich natural and cultural history on display in our parks, forests, and monuments,” he said.

HISTORIC LEGISLATION FOR OUR PUBLIC LANDS

BY U.S. SENATOR MARTIN HEINRICH

Nearly 100 years ago, a forester working in New Mexico named Aldo Leopold recognized the beauty and irreplaceable value of protecting the untrammeled landscapes that we have grown to treasure as wilderness. More than 50 years ago, New Mexico’s Senator Clinton Anderson led the effort to pass the Wilderness Act into law.

I am so proud to announce that we have successfully passed a landmark package of bipartisan legislation that I championed to build on that legacy. The public lands package that just passed in Congress establishes 13 new wilderness areas in New Mexico on a scale we have not seen since the New Mexico Wilderness Act of 1980.

We advanced community-driven conservation visions for New Mexico’s two newest national monuments: the Río Grande del Norte and Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks. These two monuments protect places New Mexicans have long recognized as national treasures. We are now protecting the most rugged and unique habitats in each monument

as wilderness. We also established the Ah-shi-sle-pah Wilderness and added to the Bisti/De-Na-Zin Wilderness in northwestern New Mexico.

The public lands package also includes my bipartisan bill, the Every Kid Outdoors Act, which will allow every fourth-grader in America to visit our nation’s parks, forests, wildlife refuges, and public lands free of charge-and bring their families along with them. I am so excited that we are encouraging a new generation of youth to explore the rich natural and cultural history on display in our parks, forests, and monuments.

We also permanently reauthorized what I believe has been one of America’s most successful conservation programs: the Land and Water Conservation Fund. In New Mexico, LWCF has protected iconic landscapes like the Valles Caldera, Ute Mountain, and Valle de Oro, without costing taxpayers a single dime. It has also provided for community projects like baseball and soccer fields, playgrounds, and picnic areas. Now

we will no longer need to worry year after year about renewing this clearly successful program.

In a state that proudly calls itself the Land of Enchantment, we all know how much our public lands mean to us. These are the places where generations of families have gone to explore our natural wonders and learn about our rich history and culture. They also fuel a thriving outdoor recreation economy that supports nearly 100,000 jobs in our state. That’s why this legislation is so important.

In a frustrating political time in Washington, when it can be difficult to find any areas of agreement, I am pleased that we have found a way forward on these measures. And I am so thankful to all the New Mexicans who played a role in getting these conservation victories over the finish line. I have no doubt that these measures will go a long way toward ensuring that the outdoor places we all treasure will be protected for future generations of Americans to enjoy.

PROTECTING CULTURE BY PLANNING FOR WILDLIFE CONNECTIVITY

BY JEREMY ROMERO | NMWF/NWF COORDINATOR OF WILDLIFE CORRIDORS

Growing up in New Mexico, hunting, fishing, camping, hiking and cutting firewood were common activities in our communities.

Every year, I look forward to spending days in the forest with family and friends sitting behind binoculars looking for wild game or just taking a moment to listen to the water as I look for rising trout.

Before I took this job, I was unaware of the many state and federal management policies and plans that allow us sportsmen, sportswomen, recreational land users and traditional communities to continue to carry on this heritage on our public lands.

As hunters, anglers, and traditional land users, we now have a unique opportunity. National forests throughout the country are currently undergoing a Forest Plan Revision Process, which lays out the Forest Service's vision and plan for each forest for decades to come.

For most forests, the existing forest plans are extremely outdated since our environment and sustainable management approaches have changed, new science has been developed, and their changing conditions on the landscapes related to drought, fire and climate.

So what does all of this mean for you as a sportsman or sportswoman?

Forest planning is a rare opportunity for us hunters and anglers to work with federal land management agencies to develop a visionary plan driven by sound science where we can help our forests balance multiple-uses, restore water and forest ecosystems, and enhance wildlife habitat and connectivity for the next few decades.

As a hunter who fills his freezer with locally sourced, free-ranging, organic wild game and as an angler who uses the very hide from that harvested elk to tie an elk hair caddis and cast for the native Rio Grande cutthroat trout, I believe we all must do our part to ensure the new forest plans protect the many qualities that make up our diverse recreational and cultural identities and honor our sporting heritage.

Prioritizing and protecting vital watersheds, wildlife habitat, corridors and connectivity for both aquatic and terrestrial species within forest plans creates a pathway for animals like elk, mule deer, Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep, black bear, cougar, native Rio Grande cutthroat trout and many others to survive within the landscape.

With our ever-changing environment, many of the landscapes that provide for the iconic species we love are at risk of becoming increasingly degraded and fragmented by roads, fences, urban development and industrial development. These barriers can severely limit vast amounts of wildlife from completing seasonal migratory movements or prevent them from accessing vital habitat needed to survive and flourish.

The bottom line is wildlife needs connected and protected habitat that allows them the ability to freely move across a landscape and complete important ecological processes. As the science around wildlife monitoring continues to develop and improve, we

will gather more data that will accurately identify where wildlife is moving on the landscape and allow us to better manage these species across jurisdictional boundaries, including between states, agencies and tribal lands.

Currently, we are working with various community leaders and stakeholders in working to protect multiple areas within the Santa Fe National Forest, Carson National Forest and Rio Grande National Forest in Colorado to ensure wildlife have consistent, science-driven management practices when crossing boundaries from agency to agency and from state to state. These proposed areas listed below provide key habitat that promotes wildlife connectivity for many species in the Upper Rio Grande and we want to encourage you to contact the Carson, Santa Fe and Rio Grande Forests and tell them to include support for these areas in their final plans:

CARSON NATIONAL FOREST IN NEW MEXICO:

San Antonio Management Area:

The San Antonio Management Area is approximately 148,000 acres of rolling grassland surrounded by conifers, ponderosa pines, and aspen stands in the northern portion of the Tres Piedras Ranger District and portions of the Questa Ranger District. This area is also adjacent to the BLM Rio Grande del Norte

National Monument and Rio Grande National Forest and is critical to wildlife movement and connectivity. This site is proposed as a Special Management Area in the Carson National Forest Preliminary Draft Plan and is an important migration corridor for mule deer and pronghorn antelope. It is also important to wintering/calving elk herds.

Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout Management Area (RGCTMA):

This area is proposed as a Special Management Area in the Carson National Forest Plan Preliminary Draft Plan and is comprised of three high value areas for the Rio Grande cutthroat trout: (1) north of Cruces Basin; (2) in the Comanche Creek Basin; and (3) the Rio Grande del Rancho and nearby streams. As the New Mexico state fish, management for the recovery of Rio Grande cutthroat trout is important to New Mexico's culture, history, and sporting heritage.

Valle Vidal Management Area (VVMA):

Valle Vidal ("Valley of Life") Management Area is approximately 100,000 acres of rolling, grassland meadows surrounded by conifers, bristlecone pines, and aspen stands in the northern portion of the Questa Ranger District. It is proposed as a Special Management Area in the Carson National Forest Preliminary Draft Plan and is home to one of New Mexico's largest elk herds. The VVMA focuses on promoting habitat and wildlife connectivity to protect migrating species like elk with seasonal closures during wintering and calving months.

SANTA FE NATIONAL FOREST:

Caja del Rio Wildlife and Cultural Interpretive Management Area:

Bordering Bandelier National Monument and connecting various western mountain ranges, the Caja del Rio Wildlife and Cultural Interpretive Management Area is an area of profound cultural and historical significance as well as is critical to wildlife habitat and connectivity. As one of the most ecologically rich habitats in North America, the proposed Caja del Rio Wildlife and Cultural Interpretive Management Area

connects a vital wildlife corridor from the state of Colorado to Mexico. The proposed Management Area is home to herds of mule deer and elk and a variety of unique and sensitive plant and animal species, including black bear, cougar, western burrowing owl and golden eagle. The area has also been designated as an Important Bird Area (IBA) with a river corridor critical for waterfowl and non-game species migration.

RIO GRANDE NATIONAL FOREST IN COLORADO:

Spruce Hole/Osier/Toltec Special Interest Area:

This 36,000-acre area is critical for big game movement from southern Colorado into northern New Mexico and is included in the Draft Rio Grande Forest Plan as a potential Special Interest Area.

Protecting this wildlife movement corridor in the forest plan will ensure key roadless habitat in Colorado that is connected to core habitat in New Mexico. This area is also of critical economic and cultural importance to local communities within Rio Grande, Mineral, Alamosa and Conejos Counties.

Chama Basin Watershed Protection Special Interest Area:

This 17,790-acre area encompasses the headwaters of the Rio Chama providing critical habitat for migrating elk, mule deer and many other species and is included in the Draft Rio Grande Forest Plan as a potential Special Interest Area. This area is of critical importance due to the close proximity and cross border collaboration of the Rio Grande National Forest and Colorado Parks and Wildlife and with the Carson National Forest, New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, and various tribal communities.

Jim Creek Special Interest Area:

This 9,500-acre tract has native Rio Grande cutthroat trout and is included in the Draft Rio Grande Forest Plan as a potential Special Interest Area.

Protecting this area in the forest plan will ensure preservation and restoration of the native Rio Grande

cutthroat trout, which is a management priority.

Carnero Creek Special Interest Area:

This 42,800-acre area has a high-quality population of native Rio Grande cutthroat trout and is included in the Draft Rio Grande Forest Plan as a potential Special Interest Area. Designating this area in the forest plan will improve native Rio Grande cutthroat trout habitat and ensure that species conservation is the management priority for the area.

Whether you are a hunter, angler, hiker, or camper, you can play an important role in the forest planning process. Through giving a public comment, attending a meeting or join us at one of our events you can help with the protection of wildlife connectivity and corridors, protect the special places above and promote ecosystem integrity. Prioritizing this work helps ensure protection of vital watersheds, wildlife, their habitat and our way of life for future generations.

To get more involved in this important work contact us at: nmwildlife@nmwildlife.org



PUBLIC LANDS RALLY HAMMERED ON IMPORTANCE OF PRESERVATION

SANTA FE — Speakers from around the state traveled to the state Capitol in February to emphasize the importance of preserving public lands and wildlife for future generations.

The New Mexico Wildlife Federation organized the 2019 Public Lands Rally, held Feb. 20 at the state Capitol. Many speakers, including several from the Navajo Nation, expressed concern about the threat that drilling for energy poses to the Greater Chaco region in northwestern New Mexico.

Jesse Deubel, director of the NMWF, told a crowd outside the Capitol that the public collectively owns 640 million acres of land in the United States. Unlike most other countries where only the wealthy have access, he said everyone here has a right to use them.

“There are a lot of threats to the earth and to human beings and to other animals on the landscape,” Deubel said. “And one of the things that is critical to preventing those threats from causing catastrophic effects is public lands.”

Daniel Tso, a member of the Protect Greater Chaco Coalition, has served on the Navajo Nation Council.

“What we’re seeing is the destruction of the landscape, the destruction of the public lands, all in the name of money,” Tso said.

Hazel James, with the San Juan Collaborative for Health Equity, said she loves Chaco. “As indigenous as our ancestors are, as as we are, we are one with the earth,” she said.

“The children that are coming from the next generation, those are the ones that are going to be hurt from what is going to take place,” James said.

Despite receiving thousands of public comments in opposition, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management has pushed ahead with plans to lease over 10,000 acres for energy development in the Greater Chaco region.

Francesca Di Palma, a staffer with the office of U.S. Sen. Tom Udall, D-N.M., read a statement from the senator.

“New Mexico’s public lands help define our state, our heritage and our future,” he stated.

Udall’s statement also emphasized the importance of permanently reauthorizing the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund.

Just days after the rally, the U.S. House of Representatives endorsed a sweeping lands package that already had passed the Senate that included the reauthorization. President Donald Trump signed the measure into law in March.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund was established in the 1960s. It collects money from offshore energy production that has gone to purchase public lands. In New Mexico, proceeds from the fund have gone to purchase the Valles Caldera in the Jemez Mountains, among other properties.



Stephanie Garcia Richard,
New Mexico Commissioner of Public Lands

“We must continue to safeguard the greater Chaco Canyon area,” Udall stated. He said he intends to push legislation to specify that only Congress has the authority to reduce the size of designated national monuments.

Eric Castillo, a staffer with Sen. Martin Heinrich, D-N.M., read a statement from the senator. Heinrich said he intends to introduce a bill this year that would change Bandelier National Monument and White Sands National Monument into full-fledged national parks.



Jesse Deubel, executive director of the New Mexico Wildlife Federation, addressing a crowd at the state Capitol in Santa Fe.

Stephanie Garcia Richard, New Mexico commissioner of public lands, addressed the rally in the Capitol Rotunda.

She drew applause saying she had been successful in getting state regulators to reconsider a decision to double the number of wells in the San Juan Basin, in northwestern New Mexico.

Garcia Richard said she intended to issue an order imposing a moratorium on all new oil and gas activity on state trust land in the Chaco area.

In addition to the New Mexico Wildlife Federation, the following organizations sponsored the rally: WildEarth Guardians, Food and Water Watch, Frack Free Four Corners, Frack Off Greater Chaco, National Parks Conservation Alliance, New Mexico Wilderness Alliance, San Juan Citizens Alliance, Sierra Club Northern Rio Grande Chapter, The Wilderness Society and Trout Unlimited.



ALBUQUERQUE'S PREMIER CUSTOM
DESIGN HOME BUILDERS

505.281.1082

OUTDOOR TUNEUP:

GET READY FOR SPRING FISHING AND FALL HUNTING

ARCHERY

BY JESSE DEUBEL | NMWF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I'm writing this after just submitting my hunting license applications.

We are incredibly fortunate in New Mexico to have more wild, free-ranging big game species than any other state in the country. My eight applications have me dreaming of chasing some combination of ten different species: elk, oryx, ibex, barbary sheep, mule deer, coues whitetail deer, javelina, pronghorn, desert bighorn sheep and rocky mountain bighorn sheep.

As I do every year, I will eagerly and optimistically await the release of our draw results. Regardless of my luck in this year's draw, I already know I can pursue black bear, wild turkey, barbary sheep and an array of small game, upland birds and waterfowl as licenses for these species can be purchased "over the counter." I plan to do all of my big game hunting on public land.

There is much to do in preparation for this year's adventures. Winter's short days seem to help contribute to my body's tendency to build fat reserves. The majority of the hunts I apply for each year are archery hunts. Proper physical conditioning can often be the difference between earning a shot opportunity and spending the season sitting on a

log trying to catch one's breath. Because our hunting opportunities in New Mexico are so plentiful, I prefer to incorporate those as part of my fitness regimen. I'll use the remainder of March attempting to fill my OTC barbary sheep tag. Barbary sheep live in steep, difficult terrain. This is an excellent excuse to spend my weekends engaged in physically challenging, multi-mile hikes.

In April I'll backpack deep into the Aldo Leopold Wilderness for my annual spring turkey hunt. It's certainly not necessary to saddle a 60-pound backpack and hike a double-digit number of miles into the wilderness to find a gobbler. This is however a terrific way to test my condition and my gear.

May, June and July are months dedicated to 3D archery tournaments. If you haven't experienced the excitement and frustration of shooting arrows at styrofoam animals through tight, natural shooting lanes from unknown distances, you owe it to yourself to give it a try. You can find a 3D shoot somewhere in the state on just about any weekend during these three months. Sandia Crest Bowhunters Association does a great job of posting 3D opportunities on their event schedule, which can be found at www.scbaarchery.org.

If you live in central New Mexico, a membership with the SCBA also provides access to their incredible outdoor archery range located just east of Albuquerque.

In addition to outdoor shooting, many archery pro-shops host indoor shooting leagues throughout the year. Take advantage of these opportunities to hone your skills long before your next hunt begins.

Every archery pro-shop in the state employs knowledgeable professionals who are eager to help.



After the draw results are posted and the days again start to become shorter, these shops get increasingly busy. Don't be the person who shows up at a pro-shop the week before a hunt starts looking to buy a new bow or asking which broadheads are best. The time to become painstakingly proficient is right now.

It is critical to be replicating hunting situations during these pre-season preparations. Practice shooting while wearing your backpack and binocular harness. Purposely go out and practice in inclement weather while wearing your rain gear. Ensure your bow/arrow/broadhead combination is perfectly tuned with the exact combination you will use for hunting. Exercise between shots so you can shoot while your heart rate is elevated.

Pre-season hunting preparation is a great way to enjoy your summer. Besides being fun, it is our responsibility as hunters to ensure we are properly trained to deliver a well placed shot when that time comes.



OUTDOOR TUNEUP:

GET READY FOR SPRING FISHING AND FALL HUNTING

FLY FISHING TIPS FOR SPRING TROUT

BY THOMAS GOMEZ | NMWF ONLINE MEDIA DIRECTOR

After a long cold winter, spring is finally here. New Mexico and neighboring Colorado were fortunate to get a lot of snow, which means we should have a good fishing season. Here are five tips to have a successful and safe spring outing.

ACCOUNT FOR THE ELEMENTS

Springtime in New Mexico can be just as wet and snowy as wintertime. I have experienced snowfall, hail, and freezing conditions in the middle of June while chasing trout in the Pecos. Watch the weather and plan accordingly. A layer that can keep you dry is crucial, as is an extra layer for insulation. I recommend wool, not cotton. Wool is hydrophobic, or water repelling, while cotton is hydrophilic, water-loving. Cotton soaks up moisture and sweat and is difficult to dry in the field. Mind your feet if you are wading, and have a plan to warm yourself if you get wet. A trekking pole or wading stick can assist with stability in the water. Keeping a small kit to make fire is not a bad idea.

SELECT YOUR WATER CAREFULLY AND FISH DEEP

Due to spring runoff, creeks and rivers will run high and fast. In order to conserve energy, fish seek out soft (less turbulent) water in which to feed.

Fish deep behind boulders, or at the edges of the run or pool. Fly fishermen, use a dry-dropper combination or an indicator to figure out what depth the fish are holding. For spin rods, cast into the headwater and reel a shiny lure through the water. For either style, split shot and weight will be your friend.

If you are lake fishing, cast out, let your line sink for 10 seconds, then start reeling or

stripping in. Adjust the sink time until you find what level the fish are holding.

Fishing after a storm or a melt can be non-productive, due to fluctuations in stream velocity. Trout will be looking for a slow place to hold and save energy, and not necessarily concerned about looking for food. If your favorite mountain stream is surging, look at tailwaters like the Chama or the San Juan, where flows are more consistent. Freshly iced out lakes can also be very productive.

CARRY A THERMOMETER

The optimal temperature for most species of trout is 56 - 65 degrees Fahrenheit. The lower limit for trout is around 44 degrees Fahrenheit. If the water temperature is below 44 degrees, then there is a good chance trout will be sluggish and not feeding. Carry a thermometer to get a temperature. If the water is too cold, go for a

hike, get a cup of coffee, read a book, or scout for deer. Wait until it warms up, then cast your line.

GO BIG AND FLASHY

With snow comes silty, muddy water, which is not necessarily a bad thing. If you use the right lure, you can catch fish that are usually spooky. My recommendation? Go big, and go flashy. Black, white, red, purple, and chartreuse nymphs and streamers, augmented with flash, will attract fish and lead to a successful day. Use a large terrestrial, such as a Chernobyl ant, and hang a flashy caddis. Cover all parts of the stream until you figure out where the trout are holding, and the depth at which they are feeding. When working a stream or a pool, I will cast at least 20 times before I move to a different spot. When you move into a fresh area, always take a new temperature of the water.



FISH A CADDIS AND A SAN JUAN WORM

With the exception of a few tailwaters, spring is prime time for caddis flies. Caddises can be dual-rigged and fished under an indicator, or tied under a large dry fly like a Chernobyl ant, as suggested above. When the water warms in the afternoon, a dry fly such as an elk hair or Goddard caddis can be productive. Carry a box of caddis flies, both dry and wet, that vary in size and color.

Spring runoff disturbs boulders and silt, so expect

worms to get stirred up. A San Juan worm pattern is an excellent fly to keep in your fly-box. Tie on a San Juan worm, then use a 12- to 18-inch length of tippet to attach a small caddis pattern. Adjust your strike indicator for the appropriate depth and start fishing.

USE SPLIT SHOT TO SINK YOUR FLIES.

Have a spin rod? No worries! Tie on a caddis nymph pattern, add a small split shot 12 inches above your fly, and cast into the headwater of the pool you are fishing.

Slowly reel in your line and get ready for a nice fish. This technique also works well on a lake. A good friend of mine uses this setup for his young daughters, and they often outfish those of us with fly rods.

Be careful and be safe!

Feel free to email me if you have any questions or need fishing advice.

thomas@nmwildlife.org

SWAP PROGRAM INTRODUCES STUDENTS TO CONSERVATION WORK

A biologist's boast about New Mexico's natural beauty and abundant wildlife has led to a growing exchange program that's seen dozens of students travel between here and Tennessee.

The Student Wildlife Adventure Program (SWAP) will be bringing about 15 students from around Tennessee to New Mexico this summer, its third year in operation.

Daryl Ratajczak, a wildlife biologist on the Santa Fe National Forest, said he founded the program with his friend Robert Brewer, a wildlife professor at Cleveland State Community College in Tennessee.

Ratajczak said he used to hunt with Brewer in Tennessee. Ratajczak said that after he moved to New Mexico, he started teasing the professor about how much his new home state had to offer.

"One day, I texted him a couple of years ago and said, 'man, Robert, you've got to figure out how to get you and your students out here.' And he said, 'let's do it.'"

Three years ago, the first group of students from Tennessee came to New Mexico. Last year, a group from New Mexico went there.

This July, Ratajczak said, plans call for about 15 students

from around Tennessee to come to New Mexico to retrace the footsteps of pioneering conservationist Aldo Leopold.

Among his many accomplishments, Leopold was founder of the New Mexico Wildlife Federation.

"These are mostly undergraduate college students that are just trying to figure out whether natural resources and wildlife is the career choice for them, and so we want to show them," Ratajczak said.

"It's literally a once in a lifetime experience for them," Ratajczak said. "Because we want them walking away from this program saying, 'man, this is what I want to do for the rest of my life,' which most of them do. Or say, 'hey, you know what, I'm not cut out for this.'"

Although dates are tentative, Ratajczak said plans call for the students to be in New Mexico from July 18-28. He said they will first head to the Gila National Forest, where they will visit the Aldo Leopold Wilderness.

After that, the group will head north to the Carson National Forest, where Leopold worked as a district ranger.

Ratajczak said they will look at big-game management and connectivity issues.

"It will be an amazing event for these students," Ratajczak said. He said he expects some of the New Mexico students who went to Tennessee last year will join the group.

"One of the key focuses of this program is we're really trying to target those students from underserved communities," Ratajczak said. He said many of the students from New Mexico who have participated in the program are from land grant- and American Indian communities.

Students from both states have been deeply impressed by the experience of seeing conservation projects in new areas, Ratajczak said. "We have testimonials from those students who said, 'man, this changed my life. There's no way I going to do anything else,'" he said.

Ratajczak said he's aware of one New Mexico student who participated in the program who has said she intends to attend graduate school in Tennessee as a result.

"To say that we're impacting the lives of these students is an understatement because it's truly changing the course of what they would be doing if they have not attended this program," Ratajczak said.

The SWAP program is seeking financial support for its programs. Monies for SWAP are collected and dispersed through the Cleveland State Foundation (CSF), 3535 Adkisson Drive, Cleveland TN 37320. CSF is a 501(c)3 organization.

THE BOOTHEEL

BY BEN NEARY | NMWF CONSERVATION DIRECTOR

The Bootheel in winter is a quiet place, rich with wildlife and captivating in its beauty. And it's here that President Donald Trump wants to build a great wall.



Sitting around a campfire after a day's hunting in New Mexico's Bootheel country, Ray Trejo gestured a sweeping motion to take in the wild, unoccupied country around him.

"Do you feel safe here?" Trejo asked rhetorically. "Does this place seem dangerous to you?"

Trejo's camp, on the southwestern tip of New Mexico, was far from any intrusive city lights and brilliant stars burned across the night sky. The dirt road running past the camp hadn't seen a vehicle for hours. The night was quiet.

The other hunters huddling around the fire with Trejo recounted their day's adventures while keeping themselves supplied with plenty of hot food and cold beer.

They laughed at the idea that they should be afraid to be where they were, camping on public lands.

Most hunters who know a place where their dogs could reliably rustle up covey after covey of quail on public lands would keep it a secret. They'd know that if they talked it up, the next time they went out they likely would find more hunters than birds.

But Trejo is an exception. As southern New Mexico outreach coordinator for the New Mexico Wildlife Federation, Trejo has been doing his best to drag journalists, politicians and anyone else who will listen down to his cherished hunting spot in the state's rugged Bootheel country -- just a few miles north of the Mexican border.

Trejo has escorted journalists from Field & Stream Magazine, New Mexico Magazine and other publications here to hunt the rare Montezuma quail in recent years.

Most of the birds -- also called Mearns quail -- live in Mexico but their range extends north into slivers of New Mexico and other states.

Watching Trejo hunt here is to see a man in his element.

As Trejo walked the land on a clear February morning, he balanced his well-worn Ithaca 20 gauge over his shoulder.

His dogs streaked across the rough country, often hundreds of yards ahead of him. The other hunters trailed along.

The dogs wore collars that signaled Trejo whenever they froze on point, motionless except for the excited trembling of their hams. When Trejo and the others approached the dogs, the quail held tight until they

finally seemed to flush nearly underfoot. Their wings stirred a throbbing sound in the air before the bark of the shotguns snuffed it out.

The hunting was good, but the land offered even more. Overhead, hawks spun effortlessly in the wind. Occasionally, startled Coues deer raised their huge, white tails and sprinted across the dried grass plains away from the hunting party.

The rocky canyon bottoms held pools of water fringed with ice. In places, the rocks bore the marks of being worked perhaps thousands of years ago by Native Americans, the first hunters to know this land.

Jagged mountain ranges rose on the horizons, their unforgiving crags and valleys likely to hold wild sheep, cougars and perhaps even an occasional jaguar visiting from its usual haunts deep in Mexico.

The Bootheel in winter is a quiet place, rich with wildlife and captivating in its beauty. And it's here that President Donald Trump wants to build a great wall.

It's the threat of seeing that wall cut across this land that spurs Trejo and many others who know the Bootheel country to try to inform the public that both



sides of the border are critically important wildlife habitat. They want people to know that -- to them and future generations who would never know this place in its unspoiled state -- building a wall would be a crime against nature.

Trejo and other opponents of the wall fear its construction would have devastating effects. It would not merely block land animals, but also change the plants, the flow of water and the landscape. And ultimately, they warn that building the wall could damage the delicate balance of international relations on which survival of wildlife depends.

Trejo, a retired educator from Deming and a former president of the New Mexico Wildlife Federation Board, emphasizes that he's been hunting in the Bootheel area all his life.

Trejo said it bothers him to have people in Washington make decisions about a place he regards as his backyard.

"I think a wall honestly is basically saying that we've failed as a nation to figure out what we really need to do," Trejo said. "Our policies obviously have not

been where they need to be. But a wall, it's like we're throwing in the towel."

Fernando Clemente, a member of the board of the New Mexico Wildlife Federation, works as a consulting biologist helping ranchers in the Bootheel region to improve habitat for wildlife. He's worked with both the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish and the state parks.

A resident of Santa Teresa, N.M., Clemente is originally from Mexico and said he understands the importance of homeland security. However, he said he believes the costs of building a wall at the border would exceed any benefit.

"It's a lot of things that are involved in the management of all the wildlife species," Clemente said. "That is the problem. You impact one species, guess what? You're going to have a chain reaction."

The wildlife corridor between Mexico and the United States through the Bootheel is one of the most important in North America because of the many different species there, Clemente said.

Clemente noted that the state of New Mexico has spent a lot of time and money in recent years to restore desert bighorn sheep. As long as they're able to migrate back and forth into Mexico, he said the population likely will stay healthy.

"Put in that wall, and guess what? You just stopped what is naturally supposed to happen," Clemente said of the sheep migration. "You can reintroduce as many as you want but all you're going to do is it's going to be like a zoo. Put them in captivity. Once you get one disease, they could die."

The wall also would hurt other species including the jaguar, Gould's turkey and Montezuma quail that come into the United States from Mexico, Clemente said.

"Without migration, all those species will decline," he said.

"You make roads, maintain the wall, bring in the equipment that you need to create the barrier, there will be destruction," Clemente said. "If you put in that wall, it will change wind patterns. It will change the water runoff. It will change the watershed -- all of that

it would have an effect on it. So it would have a huge impact to what is habitat."

Clemente also said he's concerned that many animal species won't come near a wall once it's built, meaning that it will not only block migration but leave wildlife with substantially less usable habitat on both sides of the border.

Beyond the physical impact of building a wall, Clemente said he's also concerned about the political fallout. Indeed, the prospect of building a wall on the border already has strained relations between the United States and Mexico.

Trump in 2015 launched his presidential campaign with a blistering attack on Mexico. He disparaged Mexican immigrants, saying, "they're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people."

Clemente pointed out that the United States is merely a fly-over territory for ducks and other migratory birds that winter in Mexico and summer in Canada. He noted the three nations have a long history of coordinated waterfowl management that sets harvest limits in all three countries.

"If we put that wall, what if Mexico gets upset and doesn't want to deal with us anymore?" Clemente said. "Mexico has a lot more birds to harvest than what we do. They can harvest their ducks, they can harvest 100 a day per hunter and they don't have a problem. But if they do that, how much is going to return to us?"

Gabe Vasquez, a Las Cruces city councilor and founder of the Nuestra Tierra Conservation Project, is another opponent of the prospect of building a border wall.

Formerly a staffer with the New Mexico Wildlife Federation, Vasquez has family in Mexico and has hunted extensively in the Bootheel country.

"This corridor for wildlife has existed long before us, and I think we should honor that," Vasquez said. "And I think we should give our children, our grandchildren, three or four generations from now, an opportunity to chase pronghorn in this valley, to look at the mule deer and the Coues deer hopping up these hills in the morning."

**SUPPORT THE NEW MEXICO
WILDLIFE FEDERATION!
CHECK OUT OUR WEB STORE.**



NMWILDLIFE.ORG

MONTEZUMA QUAIL ON THE BORDER

BY KAMILIA ELSISIE

NMWF COMMUNICATIONS AND EDUCATION OUTREACH COORDINATOR

Montezuma quail inhabit the southern part of the United States and parts of Mexico. They range from Oaxaca in the south, north through the interior of Mexico, and to the mountains of central and southeastern Arizona, central and southwestern New Mexico, and west Texas.

Montezuma quail habitat consists of both grasslands and oak, pine, and juniper forest. Hills and canyons that feature water and cover are especially favorable. These beautiful game birds are prized by upland hunters.

Until recently, I never had the opportunity to hunt Montezuma Quail. Ray Trejo, New Mexico Wildlife Federation's Southern Outreach Coordinator, invited me to join him on a hunt for these unique birds on

the border of New Mexico, Arizona, and Mexico. I jumped on the opportunity to participate. After I wrapped up an elk hunt in the Four-Corners Region, I turned around and drove 7 hours south to the Coronado National Forest, approximately 4 miles north of the Mexican border and 6 miles east of the Arizona border.

When I arrived at camp the morning of the hunt, a pack of bird dogs greeted me, decked out in tracking collars, eager to hunt. I was nervous because I had never met any of the people I would be hunting and camping with for the next few days. When I parked and jumped down from my truck, however, warm welcomes and firm handshakes set me at ease.

We wasted no time getting into the field. As we pushed through the mountain grass, the dogs out front working back and forth, we talked about the terrain and wildlife present in this area. Some rare animals can only be found in this region, such as Ibex, Gould's turkey, and Coues deer.

In no time the dogs were on a scent and pointing. As we worked closer, a covey of eight birds took flight. Shots rang out, bringing down one female.

She was a perfect specimen: tan and light brown with fine black shafts along her body.

She was the first one I had ever seen.

As the day wore on, we bumped multiple coveys. Yet it wasn't until mid-afternoon that I got my first opportunity at a male. As the group walked up a stream, the dogs grew agitated, so we prepared for a covey. Looking around I spied him. A beautiful, full color, full-size male stood drinking from the stream, in the afternoon sun.

With the dog on point, I worked into position and waited for the bird to flush. Once he popped, I shouldered my pump-action 20 gauge shotgun and fired. He fell into brush about 10 yards from me and I made quick work of finding him. As I reached down to grab him he flew off -- not far, but enough to require one of the dogs to retrieve him. As the dog returned, excited, bird in mouth, I felt a sense of relief and excitement. It is the feeling every hunter experiences following a successful harvest.

I high fived Ray and thanked him profusely for the invite and opportunity.

I tucked my bird into the back of my upland game vest, and we continued to hunt the remainder of the afternoon.

As the day came to a close, we found ourselves around a nice warm campfire, eating, drinking, and telling stories, reliving the hunt. It is in moments like these that I treasure the right to hunt, camp, and hike on public land. I love my public lands and want to ensure everyone can enjoy them as I do, now and for generations to come.



PREPARATION AND COOPERATION PAY OFF FOR HUNTER ON IBEX HUNT IN NEW MEXICO'S FLORIDA MOUNTAINS

BY CAMERON MUNGER

THE FLORIDA MOUNTAINS -- Hunting Ibex is the stuff that dreams are made of. When you hike to top of some of the tallest and most treacherous features of New Mexico's Florida Mountains, like South Peak and Gym Peak, you're among the terrain of titans.

It is a display of defiance to go hunt these goats in the country they've mastered and where we, as humans, do not belong. It makes for an epic adventure.

I grew up on the west coast of California with very little hunting opportunity. I knew that when I moved to New Mexico to pursue a doctoral degree in exercise physiology that hunting was going to be something I wanted to try since the opportunity is much greater.

Just over one year ago I killed an Aoudad sheep with my buddy Steven, and I dove in head first into all things hunting immediately after. I put in for every species for the draw for this season and found that my plate was pretty full between cow elk, deer with muzzleloader, over-the-counter aoudad, javelina, and the coveted archery ibex tag.

Currently, I am a graduate assistant at New Mexico State University. I teach exercise physiology lab courses and an introduction to exercise science course at the university.

I knew the ibex hunt was my biggest challenge for the year so preparation started a couple days after I drew the tag. It would be my first bow hunt and I knew I had to rely on my research skills as a way to make up for being inexperienced.

I listened to every podcast and watched every Youtube video that I could find on this particular hunt, but my buddy Steven's advice was always in the back of my mind. Essentially, he told me, *"be prepared, but remember to be yourself and enjoy it."* I created fitness

programs for Steven and me for the nine months leading up to the hunt.

THE HUNT

It is impossible to convey through words the experience of bow-hunting ibex in the Florida Mountains. I typically hunt areas of public land where I can find space away from roads and other hunters. I cherish the time away from daily life, the peace, and simplicity of it all as I direct my own adventure.

This hunt is an entirely different and will pull things out of you that you didn't know you had. It is a hunt that is filled with highs and lows that you'll never forget.

I experienced equipment failure, competition with other hunters, illness, and exhaustion. It will test your fitness, proficiency with a bow, your experience, your strategy, and your grit. It will expose your flaws as a hunter, undermine the prep-work you've done, and poke holes in your plans. If you're like me, you find that challenge alluring, bringing out the best in you.

More than that, it's a hunt that forged relationships with new friends and reinforced bonds to existing ones. I met a pair of selfless hunters that are good to the core during this hunt.

We met when my spotter, Steven, and I were chasing the same group of Ibex that they were. Steven made me aware that a spotter pulled up next to him and another hunter was close to me as I was putting a stalk on the group. I had been burned by hunters previously, so my reaction was to make an aggressive approach and disregard his presence. He was actually pinching the goats from the opposite side and below me.

When they busted me they crashed to the bottom of the hill, but were startled by him and started flying back up. It was complete chaos of goats flying up and

down the mountain and rocks crashing down the mountain side. A tumbling boulder almost killed the other hunter and we both failed to get shots off.

We all met back at the truck and that's when I was formally introduced to Jeremy, the other spotter, and Cubby, the hunter that was up there with me. We had a blast recounting four different viewpoints of what just unfolded.

That particular stalk revitalized my enthusiasm for the hunt.

After we talked for a bit, Steven had to head back to work, but Jeremy and Cubby invited me to hunt with them the next day.

I took them up on the invite thinking I would be a spotter, just tagging along.

It was bone-chilling cold that morning. Jer spotted the most beautiful silver-caped billie I had ever seen within the first thirty minutes of daylight. I was baffled by the looks of that billie in Jer's spotting scope as he was feeding on a saddle with six to seven other goats with him. Soon after I had my look through his scope, he uttered the words, *"Go get him, Cam."*

I couldn't believe what I had just heard considering I had known these guys for about twelve hours. I remember asking why in the hell they would pass up on it and let me have an attempt at the stalk. I wondered if the stalk was poorly setup for success, but we quickly discussed a possible stalking route up the mountain.

I frantically got my gear ready; hydration bladder, bino harness, pack, threw in a few snacks, and made sure my bow was ready to go. Nothing else mattered at that point except getting two-thirds up the mountain; right above the billies to be in position. Cubby fired up

the quad and drove me to the base of the mountain.

Before I left Cubby for good, we reviewed the plan for the stalk. I previously had seen goats up and leave, turn in the opposite direction they were heading, and scale to the tops of cliffs for what seemed like no apparent reason. I just wanted to get up there as fast as humanly possible before they got spooked by their own shadow.

I side-hilled up the steep drainage to the left of the saddle they were on. I had to use all fours to grip the side of the hill and scale a couple rock faces, knowing a false move could result in some pain and injury. I had to stop every forty yards or so to catch some gasping breaths.

The wind was blowing right to left (south to north), so I knew the wind and the sidewall of the saddle were helping to dampen my sounds and scent. I climbed to the same elevation as the group and knew the stalk was transitioning from getting into position to trying to get an arrow off, so I left my pack in the drainage.

I knocked an arrow, held my bow in my left hand, held my rangefinder in my right hand, and started moving across the high part of the saddle, looking down to where they were feeding earlier.

Jer shot me a message on the Garmin Inreach saying that the animals were two-hundred yards from where I was, but I received the message twenty minutes late, thus I knew they were likely to be close by. I moved another twenty yards across the saddle and out of my periphery I saw three goats move up a little draw into the space between two dead trees.

From left to right, it was nannie, billie, and smaller billie in a tight cluster. They were looking directly at me, but were probably having a hard time differentiating between the country and myself since they stayed completely still and did not spook. I also had camoflauged up to my eyes and my hat brim down low to hide my face.

Instantly, thought processes ceased and instinct took over. I slowly raised my right hand and got a true

ballistic range of eighty-one yards down the hill. I drew my bow smooth, slow, and with ease like never before.

The accumulated fatigue from previous days disappeared in that instant. I realized I didn't have the best sight on my bow since the pin was covering the whole body of the goat at that distance. It took me a couple seconds to ensure my pin was on the billie I wanted to take, not the other two.

WHAP! My arrow let out a loud crack as it hit the rock behind the billie. I thought to myself, *"I shot high, but my release felt good."*

The rest of the goats emerged out of the draw and followed the nannie that lead them directly away



from me. The silver billie I was chasing initially looked magnificent as he brought up the rear. They all crested the next saddle and were out of my sight in about ten seconds flat.

With doubt in my mind I went directly to the rock to look for a bone dry arrow with a busted mechanical broadhead, but found blood, drops of it, EVERYWHERE. I must have had the stupidest look on my face when I saw that the arrow had cleanly passed through the billie.

I took a moment to myself to embrace the mixed bag of emotions that hit. I needed those couple minutes to digest what just happened and think about what

needed to happen next.

I tracked blood for about fifty yards from where I shot, but was having difficulty since it was my first time. It was around noon and it started to get hot by the time Jer and Cubby made it up.

I was thirsty since I left my pack, so they gave me some water. They convinced me to go get my pack even though I was hell-bent on finding that billie. It wouldn't be the first or the last time a billie was shot and not recovered in the Floridas.

I looked for my pack for over an hour but thirst and nausea were starting to set in again so I went back to the boys who were still tracking. They covered

another seventy-five yards by the time I got there but hadn't found him yet. Cubby, the talented tracker that he is, found him another fifty yards away in a drainage.

"Can I touch him?" he hollered to me.

"Hell yeah, you can!" I shouted back.

I held the billie, ran my hands through his fur and along his horns, examined his teeth and his shock-absorbent feet, and thanked him for his life. Then we tagged him, gutted him, and proceeded down the mountain.

After a brief celebration, I went home to take care of the meat. I had obligations at work and school the next day that I could not get out of, so I returned a few days later to help those guys by spotting and to

retrieve my pack. I brought back some ibex backstrap to make fajitas and we shared a very rewarding meal together on one of the last nights of the hunt.

Nothing beats bringing home unadulterated, free-range meat for my wife and close friends to consume after an adventure like that.

Sure, success on one of the most difficult hunts in the lower forty-eight is an accomplishment, but what means more are the memories I made with the best people I know. In the seasons to come, I hope to be the one paying it forward and passing on the hunting traditions that have brought me so much happiness in my life.

HUNTING IS ALL ABOUT APPRECIATION

ALBUQUERQUE - Ryan Callaghan, a nationally known hunter and conservationist, traveled to New Mexico recently to share an important realization: Hunting is journey of self-discovery that requires appreciation - not only of wildlife and the natural world, but also of ourselves.

Callaghan, of Montana, is a frequent contributor to the popular Netflix hunting show “MeatEater” and also serves on the national board of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers.

Callaghan was keynote speaker Feb. 16 at the Governor’s Special Hunt Auction and Banquet in Albuquerque, sponsored by the New Mexico Wildlife Federation.

Addressing the sold-out room at Expo New Mexico, Callaghan said he’s worked as a bartender, carpenter and fishing and hunting guide.

“I’ve been called a lot of things, but a recent one is an advocate,” Callaghan said. He said he realizes the term means somebody who cares about something so

much, “that they really can’t shut up about it.”

The future of hunting depends not only on having more hunters, but on having more appreciators, Callaghan said.

Callaghan related a recent trip into Idaho’s Frank Church - River of No Return Wilderness. He said he and a couple of friends hunted a steep mountain for several days, killing three mule deer bucks and a bull elk in sub-freezing conditions.

Callaghan said he was aware as he hunted in the area that people have been hunting there for thousands of years before him. “There’s not a place we walked that somebody hadn’t hunted before,” he said, adding that he remembered the accounts of the first white hunters who came to the area and went with American Indians on big hunts.

“And they stayed up all night around a fire, and they would depict at the end of the night, all you could see at the end was the grease from the firelight, the grease shining off everybody’s faces and stomachs, because they would sit there and eat and recount the tales of the hunt,” Callaghan said.

On their last night in the wilderness, Callaghan said he and his friends sat around a campfire of their own and cooked choice chunks of their game meat in fat.

“Right before I went to bed, I realized that all I could see of my two friends there was the grease shining in the campfire light off their faces,” Callaghan said. “And it kind of hit me like a ton of bricks, like all of a sudden I was like ‘Oh my god, I know what hunting is, I now appreciate what hunting is.’”

The number of hunters is sliding down a bit nationwide, Callaghan said. While that trend isn’t likely to change, he said the important thing is to make more people



appreciate hunting, even if they themselves don’t hunt.

“I do believe that we can grow the right amount of appreciators for what we do, how we get our food, how we have interaction with people on the trail,” Callaghan said.

He said that if hunters meet people deep in the woods, the odds are good that they’re prepared to appreciate hunting because they already appreciate being outside.

“They’re probably not going to bump into you in your hunting spot if they don’t want to get a little bit closer to nature,” Callaghan said. “Spread appreciation, spread the reasons you do what you do. And not everybody needs to be a hunter, everybody just needs to appreciate what hunting is.”



DOG DAYS, DROUGHT, AND BIG FISH

BY M. H. SALMON

Editor's Note: Dutch Salmon was a longtime contributor to the Outdoor Reporter, often writing about his beloved Gila River. He put the finishing touches on this article from his hospital bed in Las Cruces shortly before he died in February. He was many things, among them a professional journalist who took deadlines seriously and a man who knew the importance of fishing and wilderness.

For the angler, there is a temptation during the hottest part of summer to shelve the rod, stay indoors and employ the “AC” at full blast, drink beer, watch the ball game, and just sort of putter about the place. In times past I, too, often succumbed to this temptation not to go fishing. But the excuse was lame and I knew it. So mid-summer a few years back I accosted my “young-adult” son, Bud, and said, “Buddy, Let’s go fishing,”

And he said, “Why would we go fishing when it’s so hot?”

“Dog-days,” I said.

“Dog-days?”

“You’ll see.”

We descended into the canyon, all downhill, but it was already hot and that old familiar sweat patch began to form underneath our backpacks. The hound, Archie, a mixture of saluki, staghound and what-not, panted profusely, though he’s tough as a boot and was not over-stressed. At the confluence, the river was almost painfully low. And the water was so clear it looked like you could touch the bottom without getting your hand wet. We stood there, knee deep, in slow current while Archie swam in slow circles around us, shade provided by a jungle of huge cottonwoods. We were off in the Wilderness of the Gila for four days of fishing and camping in the dog days of summer.

Dog days? The phrase I discovered goes back to Roman times. They identified and named the two dog constellations, Canis major and Canis minor. Canis major includes Sirius, a star so bright in the night sky the Romans thought it helped the sun heat the

earth (not so according to modern astronomy). Sirius is readily visible in the cooler months but “rises” with our sun in summer and during this period “disappears”; the sun “brights” it out. But the Romans believed the 20 days either side of the conjunction of Sirius and the sun contributed to the peak of mid-summer heat; thus the “dog days” of summer, roughly July 3rd to August 11th.

Bud and I have decided the Romans may have been on to something. We went in July 6th, stayed four days, and each day was hotter than the last. We hiked downstream a couple of miles. The holiday weekend had passed and we would see no one else throughout this outing. Of course, that was part of the plan for selecting the dog days; we could have gone further downstream and I wish now we had but by noon that sweat patch under my pack had drenched my whole shirt. When we arrived under a big sycamore with shade, a flat sandy patch for the tent, and a fishing hole nearby, I said, “Camp!”

We each had a 4-wt fly rod and Bud had a spinning rod, too. This was a run of water where bronze bass and several kinds of trout might be found. But we had been fly fishing for trout and bass all summer. And we’d been catching some. Between us we had hardly caught a catfish or carp, a sucker or a chub this season. As we set up camp we both decided we’d focus on bait and trying to catch fish 20” long, or better.

“There’s got to be a big flathead in one of these pools” I said.

“Channel cats too,” Bud said. “And I saw some big carp on the way in. How long will our worms last?”



“If we keep them in the shade, a couple of days,” I said.

“We can always catch some hellgrammites when the worms run out, Dad.”

“Yeah, and if necessary, we can stoop to using flies.”

The irony of two fly fishers opting for bait on a fishing trip, and “stooping” to using flies only as a last choice that they might keep fishing, well, it was not lost even on a 13-year-old kid. “I don’t think we’ll get that desperate,” he said.

This showed experience and confidence a father likes to see. The bait-fisher camping out in the wilderness

needs to know not only how to catch fish but how to catch the bait that will catch fish. Bud was familiar with both artificials like wooly worms and garden hackle and, like me, liked a variety of fishing. By the time the tent went up we were both itching to try something live in those pools that, despite the near-record low flows, remained a dark green and deep enough to hide fish – even big ones – from our Polarized lenses.

We deferred to the heat however, until the pool too was shaded, and then after a supper of grilled pork steaks Bud caught a 21" Sonora sucker. We had a measuring tape this time – no estimating with our hands – and as we crawled into the tent that night I said, "That's pretty good, Buddy, when you can get a fish over twenty inches in the pool right by camp."

"I'll bet there's some bigger ones just upstream," he said.

The next morning we went up there, a nice backwash pool that was large enough for a big catfish or carp. We might have camped there had there been any shade. By now we had caught a few hellgrammites and it was fun to speculate as to which would produce a trophy, the natural bait from the river, or the "Canadian" night-crawlers from the outdoor store in town.

There wasn't much to choose from as he caught a 24-inch flathead on a hellgrammite and I got a 25-inch carp on a worm. We saved his for supper, more than enough

for us and the pack dog. Buddy's was the thicker, heavier fish, though it took a while to wear both fish down. Those were the best though not the only fish of the day and again we gave the afternoon to the sun and the heat and hid out in the shade with a nap.



The next morning, downriver, we found a pool that would "float a battleship," according to Buddy. I wish we could have fished it at night and I thought we'd do better but we each managed a 20-inch catfish, Bud a channel cat and me another flathead. On the way back, from a small pocket of water, I got another 22-inch flathead, just right for supper, and I said, "We'll stringer him and haul him out tomorrow for a family meal."

That evening Bud rounded out his game list with a 14-

inch roundtail chub, and a 17-inch smallmouth, again right at camp. It was the largest of perhaps a half dozen bass on the trip along with three trout. And okay, maybe some of them – like the chub and Bud's bass at camp – were caught on flies. We're not bragging on it; we are eclectic and versatile in our fishing and throwing a few

flies at smallmouth bass and trout is ok, even on a catfish trip. And come to think of it, one of those trout was a brown, nicely colored with the bright markings of that species. Brown trout have not been stocked in the Gila drainage in something like forty years. So this was a wild trout and I got him on a black wooly bugger that did a good job of looking like a real, live hellgrammite and out of the same pool where I had caught a 22-inch flathead catfish two days before. Needless to say, the flathead wasn't a hatchery stocker, either. There may be another stretch of water where these two species of gamefish co-habit but I can't name it.

The next morning we hiked out, three hours in the heat and dodging two big harmless rattlesnakes along the way...harmless because we dodged them. We hadn't beaten the heat of the dog days of summer. Nor had we added any water to a stream in drought. But we'd learned to live with it all, as is, with memories of a rare distribution coefficient of habitat and species, a handful of fish that went twenty inches, or better, and the mysterious pull of the dog-days of summer that got us there.

8TH ANNUAL ALDO LEOPOLD KID'S FISHING DERBY

Conservation is a state of harmony between men and land.

ALDO LEOPOLD

Summer is getting near and so is the **8th Annual Aldo Leopold Kids' Fishing Derby** on **Saturday, June 1st** at **Lake Roberts, north of Silver City, NM**. The derby will coincide with New Mexico's Free Fishing Day, so bring the whole family for **FREE** fishing fun. There will be display booths, demonstrations, prizes and tons of interactive fun for the kids. The event will run from 7am to noon, with an awards ceremony to follow.

Mora National Fish Hatchery is planning on stocking

retired Gila trout for the event. This may be the year for a world record Gila trout on the end of your line!! Certified scales will be on site to officially weigh your trophy.

The event is sponsored by the Wilderness District of the Gila National Forest, in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Mora National Fish Hatchery, and New Mexico Department of Game and Fish. Co-sponsors of the event include Trout Unlimited, New Mexico Wildlife Federation, Mesilla

Valley Fly Fishers, Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, New Mexico Wilderness Alliance, Morningstar Sports, 1st New Mexico Bank, Chavez Construction, National Wild Turkey Federation, and other local businesses.

Let's go fishing!!!

For information on the Gila National Forest, check out our website at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/gila> or join the conversation on Facebook at www.facebook.com/GilaNForest/ or follow us on Twitter @GilaNForest. 8

DUTCH SALMON

BY BEN NEARY | NMWF CONSERVATION DIRECTOR

New Mexico lost a great conservationist and outdoorsman when M.H. Dutch Salmon died March 10.

Salmon, 73, was a passionate defender of the Gila River, spending decades opposing various schemes to dam it up or divert water from it.

Salmon co-founded the Gila Conservation Coalition and served as its chairman for more than 35 years. The group is dedicated to protecting the free flow of the Gila and San Francisco Rivers as well as to protecting the Gila and Aldo Leopold Wilderness areas.

And Salmon also was an accomplished author, publishing 10 books and countless articles for outdoor magazines including the Outdoor Reporter. With his wife Cherie, he operated the publishing company High-Lonesome Books.

Salmon, of Silver City, had a long record of public service in the name of conservation. He served on the State Game Commission, the Interstate Stream Commission and on the boards of many conservation groups, including the New Mexico Wildlife Federation. “He’s a true pioneer in what we’re doing. He was a mentor to a lot of us, a role model to a lot of us who have subsequently gotten into the world of conservation and advocacy for the Gila River,” said Jason Amaro, a neighbor of Salmon’s who runs The New Mexico Sportsman website.

Amaro said it was always clear that Salmon’s heart was in the right place. “He hunted and fished like all of us,” he said. “He had a passion for his coursing hounds like nothing I’ve ever seen before. Just a good guy.”



Before moving to New Mexico, Salmon lived in Texas, Minnesota and elsewhere. In his book “Gazehounds and Coursing: the History, Art and Sport of Hunting with Sighthounds,” he explained why he settled in the Gila country.

“Southwest New Mexico offers climate I like, food and culture I like, fishing I like, people I like, the best pure jackrabbit coursing I’ve ever known, and generally just a good life,” Salmon wrote.

Salmon’s obituary, prepared by his wife, states, “He loved to chase jackrabbits and coyotes with his own special breed of sighthounds in the winter months. And when

it got too hot to take the dogs out, he’d grab his fishing rods and backpack and take to the Gila and wild places near and far, fly fishing and bait fishing in rivers and lakes. And in the spring when the Gila and other southwestern rivers were ‘just right,’ out would come the old Coleman canoe for yet another adventure. Luckily for us, he wrote about it all.”

Salmon, in his book, “Gila Descending,” recounted a trip he took in the early 1980s, backpacking and canoeing the length of the Gila River from its headwaters in New Mexico down into Arizona, where the river typically dries up long before its historic confluence with the Colorado River. He documented the condition of the river out of concern that a dam project that was pending at the time threatened to change it forever.

In a 2016 interview Salmon recorded with the New Mexico Wildlife Federation, he described coming to the Gila River in 1982 and being delighted to find smallmouth bass. “To be able to catch the greatest fish that swims, on a flyrod, in the nation’s first wilderness area is a triple plus,” he said.

Salmon said discovering the river provided him with something essential, filling a void in his life.

“It kind of bailed me out, I think, I needed a home ground,” Salmon said of his discovery of the Gila River. “What do they call it, that Spanish bullfighting term? Querencia. I needed a querencia -- a place to make my stand. It was the Gila that did it, the Gila Forest in general and the Gila River in particular.”

Salmon published an essay in November 2018 in High Country News that revealed more of what he might have been seeking on the water.

In the essay, Salmon stated that his father had died by suicide. John Pomeroy Salmon, who had served as an officer in the U.S. Marine Corps, killed himself in 1966, some 20 years after coming home from combat service in the Pacific in World War II.

“And I can tell you that you do not ever recover from something like that,” Salmon wrote of his father’s death.

“You don’t get over it, but you can get through it. I did so eventually, with the help of fishing.”

Many years after his father’s death, Salmon received his father’s bamboo fly rod from a family member.

“My father truly understood the healing power of seeking wild fish in a wild stream. He fished a lot in his life — but, in the end, he didn’t fish enough. If he had, he might still be casting that cane rod — and I might be casting with him,” Salmon wrote. “What’s left now is a son who was taught to fish wisely and to love it well, one Silver Star, two Bronze Stars, two Purple Hearts, and a legacy of bass and bamboo.”

Allyson Siwik, is executive director of the Gila Resources Information Project. Salmon served on the organization’s board of directors.

“Dutch was someone who was deeply committed to protecting the Gila River and I think that commitment just gave him a long-term perspective,” Siwik said. “He knew that you could never give up the fight. Never, ever. He certainly knew that firsthand.”

Over Salmon’s 35 years of defending the Gila, Siwik said he spoke out against four different proposals to dam the river or divert water from it.

The latest, a current proposal to divert water from the Gila for irrigation, is the subject of a pending environmental study but faces increasing political opposition. Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham stated in a policy paper last year that she opposes the project, instead supporting using available federal funds for other water projects in southwestern New Mexico.

Former Gov. Susana Martinez removed Salmon from the State Game Commission in 2011 along with two others who had been appointed by former Gov. Bill Richardson.

“I was trying to give the resident hunter and fisherman an even break on licenses and tags and so forth,” Salmon told reporter Christine Steele of the Silver City Sun-News of his service on the game commission. “I think, generally speaking, too high a percentage of licenses have gone to non-residents and we need to favor our native New Mexicans a little more.”

Salmon referred to himself as a “redneck environmentalist.”

In a 2009 interview with Richard Mahler, published in *Desert Exposure*, an arts and leisure magazine that focuses on southern New Mexico, Salmon said he saw his environmental ethic as derivative of the Theodore Roosevelt and Aldo Leopold traditions of the early 20th century, in which people went hunting and fishing as a way of being outdoors.

“Then you began to see threats [to game animals and their habitats]. So you realized the need to preserve

species -- and not just the species for which you hunted and fished,” Salmon told Mahler. “Yet you still sent yourself out there with hook or bullet --and that’s the redneck part.”

Salmon told Mahler he saw the proposals to take water from the Gila as part of an obsolete mindset that holds the belief men should take from nature everything they can.

“To be able to look at a river like that and say, ‘Well, that 14,000-acre-feet (of water) in question really does us more good in the stream than it does diverted out, both aesthetically and economically.’ This new paradigm hasn’t yet caught up with the old one in the minds of the powers that be,” Salmon said.

While Salmon gave much of himself to protecting the Gila River, in his book “Gila Descending,” Salmon reveals something of what the river gave him in return.

“Yet one can always find solace in a living river,” Salmon wrote. “It is never still, never staid; hiding its prizes, providing glimpses, it holds a continual promise of things to come. One need never fear therein the final offering. There would always be another. Surely there would be another.”

Salmon is survived by his wife of 27 years, Cherie Salmon, their son, John Salmon, his brother Jeff Salmon and wife, Mary Anne of Alexandria, Virginia, and his two nephews, Paul Salmon and Will Salmon, and numerous adult cousins and their families.

The family suggests memorial contributions in Dutch’s name may be made to the Gila Conservation Coalition, 305A North Cooper Street, Silver City, NM, 88061

UPGRADE
YOUR TIKKA T3 RIFLE



WWW.HIGHDESERTRIFLEWORKS.COM

HUNTING IN NEW MEXICO TEE SHIRTS

Mahting Putelis traveled to Albuquerque in February to kick off the release of his company's latest tee shirt -- this one specific to hunting in New Mexico.

Putelis and his brother Janis founded the Hunt to Eat company five years ago, making Colorado-themed tee shirts. The company continues to issue more state-specific hunting shirts

"We wanted to wear something different so we started making cool tee shirts," Mahting Putelis told a crowd Feb. 15 at Marble Brewery's Northeast Heights location.



Hunt to Eat is donating 15 percent of the proceeds from the sale of the New Mexico shirts to the New Mexico Wildlife Federation. The federation sponsored the brewery event with Mahting Putelis and Ryan Callaghan, of the Netflix show "MeatEater."

Putelis said his shirts generally prompt a conversation about conservation. "It's a good way for us to bring a new life into hunting," he said.

The shirts are available through Hunt to Eat at:

hunttoeat.com/collections/new-products.

They're also available through the New Mexico Wildlife Federation.

**WE HAVE THE SHIRTS
YOU'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR!**



**GET HOOKED ON INTERIOR
FEDERAL CREDIT UNION**

Your Natural Resource for Financial Services

At Interior Federal Credit Union, we're always looking out for you. We provide our members with a wide variety of financial services that fit their lifestyles.

- Loans for Every Purpose
- Savings & Investment Options
- Some of the Best Rates in the Country
- 24 Hour Availability
- 5,600 Shared Branches
- 55,000 Surcharge-Free ATMs

BECOME A MEMBER AND ENJOY BANKING ON THE GO!

Scan the QR code to learn about our Nickel Back Rewards Program!



INTERIOR FEDERAL CREDIT UNION
www.interiorfcu.org

YES! I want to support New Mexico Wildlife Federation's continued work to protect our public lands and the rights and traditions of hunters, anglers and outdoor enthusiasts. Enclosed is my contribution of:



☐ \$25 Basic ☐ \$50 Supporting ☐ \$100 Sponsoring ☐ Special gift \$ _____

Please mail contributions to:

New Mexico Wildlife Federation
6100 Seagull Street NE, Suite B105
Albuquerque, NM 87109

☐ Sign me up for NMWF's email alerts and newsletters

My email address is:

Make your check payable to New Mexico Wildlife Federation. For credit card donations, please contact the NMWF.

To donate online, go to www.nmwildlife.org. NMWF is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization. Donations are tax-deductible to the full extent of the law.

