

Of The Outdoors

Tales From a Midwinter Coyote Hunt

BY GARY HOWEY
Hartington, Neb.

It was well after noon when we arrived at the Sandhills Motel in Mullen, Neb. (www.gliddenco-noerental.com) which would be our headquarters for our first Midwinter predator of 2010.

After unloading our extra gear and changing into our snow camo, we pointed the pickup south out into the Sandhills where we'd look for areas the cattle were using as cattle always attract coyotes.

As we turned off the blacktop, proceeding through the Sandhills, I spotted something working its way across the alfalfa field to our left.

Through our binoculars, we spotted the first coyote of the trip hunting his way through the meadow.

He headed west into the hills, so we tried to figure out how far ahead of it we'd have to be in order to set up and call.

A gate 1/2 mile down the road was the only entry into the field, so we drove in, parked the pickup and proceeded to hike off across the hills looking for a spot suitable for calling.

Calling coyotes is not all that difficult; it all depends on the terrain you're hunting and the number of individuals you need to hide.

In the Sandhills of Nebraska, the majority of the areas you set up in won't have a large expanse of flat land out in front of you, as no matter where you look it's one hill right rolling into another.

After hiking about a 1/2 mile, we finally came to an area where the hills came down into another hay meadow.

In order to make this set work, we needed to find a place where two shooters and a cameraman could blend in and not be spotted by the keen eyes/nose of the coyote.

We set up with the wind coming into us off to our left, the direction the coyote should be coming in from.

Since there was a little snow on the ground, we were all dressed in snow camo, as was our camera.

Our Fox Pro Fury call (www.foxpro.com) would be placed below us along with a fuzzy decoy while Team Outdoorsmen Adventures member Larry Myhre (Sioux City, Iowa) and Andy Glidden (Ainsworth, Neb.) would be stationed on the hill above.

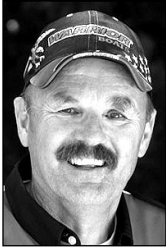
I'd be running the camera on the first set up so I was hunkered down below a Yucca in a small depression above them.

Since we could be separated from quite a distance or out of view of each other, we'd choose to use Midland GXT Radios (www.midlandradio.com) with earpieces, letting the shooters communicate with the cameraman.

Andy started calling with a combination of a coyote howl and dying jackrabbit, he then proceeded to back off to the dying rabbit call and after 20 minutes or so to the hurt coyote pup yelp.

About 10 minutes into the hunt, my radio clicked, indicating that the shooters had spotted something.

Off to my left making its way across the meadow



Gary Howey

came a lone coyote heading west, as it tried to get downwind to wind what ever was making that mournful sound.

At about 140

yards, Andy barked at the coyote, it stopped dead in his tracks, giving Larry a good broadside shot.

His Howa 1500 barked and the 243 round dropped the coyote like a sack of rocks.

Our first coyote was on the ground as the sunset and at supper that night, plans were laid out for our next day hunt.

Day two started early as most days do when you're calling predators, as it's ideal to be set up before sunrise.

Unfortunately for us, a heavy fog had rolled in along with a fresh dusting of snow. The snow was good as it allowed us to spot coyotes coming in, but it did us little good as the fog only allowed us to see out to about 30 yards in front of us.

There were coyote tracks all around the bales we were propped up against, but not a critter did we see.

Our second set up was different, as the fog had lifted with overcast skies, which would help keep any reflection off our gear to a minimum.

Once again we headed out across the Sandhills, looking for a good location to set up.

The area we chose didn't give us the best view to the right or directly in front of us, but off to the right, in the direction we'd aim the call, there would be a good shooting lane coming in between several hills.

I was on the right flank with my Howa/Axiom Varminter (www.legacysports.com) 243 while Andy, shooting his 22-250 set up slightly above me and off to the left.

Larry, manning the camera was position above and off to the left of Andy.

The call had just started when I suddenly noticed movement 20 yards off to my left.

A pair of coyotes had charged in over the rise, where the female immediately sat down to look the situation over while the larger male continued down over the rise trying to get downwind of us.

I knew it would be a matter of seconds before the game was over, so I had no time to use the radio to let Larry know the coyote had come in.

As slowly as possibly, I attempted to move my bipod and rifle in the direction of the coyote perched just a few feet in front of me; it was not to be, as at that short of a distance, a high power scope just doesn't cut it.

As I slid to the left, the female suddenly realized that the snow pile directly in front of her was not what it seemed to be, bolting over the crest as my 22-250 round flew harmlessly over her head.

The shot startled Larry & Andy at which time, the male who was sneaking in on the decoy made a mad dash for safety, heading west, attempting to put as much distance between itself and the gunfire.

Andy, unaware of the coyote that had been perched in front of me thought the coyote beating feet west was one I'd missed, quickly dropped to the prone position trying to get a bead on the fleeing predator.

At 320 yards, as the fleeing coyote crested the hill he caught it in his scope and fired.

After a brief "conversation" thanking me for alerting the cameraman on the radio,

I explained that there were two coyotes and how a shotgun, which was left in the pickup, would have worked best in this situation.

That was my story and I was sticking to it!

After Andy had fired, it sounded as if Andy's bullet may have hit home, so he headed out to see where the coyote had gone while Larry and I headed back to retrieve my pickup.

Heading west with the pickup searching for Andy, he called on the radio, indicating that he'd found the tracks and a couple of spots where it tumbled and a small amount of blood so he was going to track it.

A minute or two later, he called back as he'd found the coyote, giving us a good start for the second day, a day that would work out well for us.

We set up several more times, calling in another coyote, giving us a total four coyotes called in and three on the ground.

Around 2 p.m., we decided to head down along the Dismal River to see what we might call there later that day.

But that's a whole different story, which will go into next week.

Gary Howey, Hartington, Neb., is the producer/host of the Outdoorsmen Adventures television series that can be seen Saturday at 6:30 am & Sunday at 7:00 am on KTTM/KTTW-TV (Fox) Sioux Falls/Huron, SD. For more information on the outdoors, check out www.outdoorsmenadventures.com.

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5					6	1	3	2
1				4	7		8	3
	7						9	
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