

Of The Outdoors

Calling Predator Can Result In Surprises

BY GARY HOWEY
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There's nothing more exciting than calling predators as you never know what might come calling, as there are all types of predators out there.

That's what we found out a couple of weeks ago when we called predators in the Sandhills near Mullen, Neb.

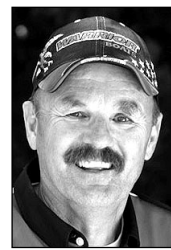
The word predator is defined as: a carnivore, an animal that lives by capturing and eating other animals.

According to that definition, a predator can be any number of things.

When it gets right down to it, we humans are predators as are mountain lions, bobcats, coyotes, fox, badgers and as lions and tigers are well as "OH My".

Depending on the location you're doing the calling from, you might be surprised by what comes to the call.

I've had friends who were calling up north in a mountainous region that called in black bears.



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will come running to investigate, taking advantage of another animals unfortunate situation.

It's not unusual for deer, which

are curious critters to come into a predator call as it has happened to us numerous times, especially when you're in Mule Deer territory.

There are numerous other animals/birds out there that are opportunists and will eat what ever happens to be available.

Raccoons and skunks are a couple of the furry critters that will come in if they're within hearing distance as well as hawks, eagles and owls, so you need to be ready for almost anything.

Another predator that's getting to be more common in the upper Midwest is the Bobcat. It's an elusive critter that's pretty much nocturnal and is rarely spotted by humans, as they'll spot you long before you see them.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Andy Glidden (left) of Ainsworth, Neb. and Gary Howey of Hartington, Neb., pose with the bobcat that came in while they were calling predators near Mullen, Neb.

In the upper Midwest, you're more apt to bring in coyotes, fox, bobcat, raccoons or skunks.

Coyote and fox are the most commonly seen critter when predator calling.

Another predator that's getting to be more common in the upper Midwest is the Bobcat.

They can be fierce hunters, which are able to kill prey much larger than they are, but feed primarily on rabbits, birds, mice, squirrels, and other smaller game animals.

On one of the predator calling trips that we made into South Dakota a few years back, we'd called in several Bobcats, one as close as 8 feet, since the cat season was closed, all we could do was film and take photos of it.

On our last trip to the Sandhills, we called in several coyotes including a pair that almost ran over the top of us.

The second afternoon of that hunt, we decided to

move into another area we'd called coyotes in prior years. The area we'd be hunting, also held cattle, which is one of the primary things that attracts and holds coyotes in an area.

We'd set up a couple of times, giving each spot 25 to 30 minutes and after having no takers, heading off for a different location.

Moving about a mile across the prairie we stashed our pickup in a depression and headed up hill looking for a decent spot to set up.

Over one hill and then another we slowly trekked towards the Dismal River which works its way through the property we were hunting.

Topping one ridge then another, we eventually came to an area where the prairie started to level off into an area with a few scattered cedars over looking the river.

As we moved down the ridge we spotted two-cedar trees that looked to be a good place for a hide, giving us decent filming and shooting lanes.

As we proceeded along the upper side of the cedars, my partner Larry Myhre spotted the tell tale tracks of a cat in the snow. We paused for a second to take footage and pictures of the tracks so we'd have them for future reference.

Our other partner, Andy Glidden (Ainsworth, Neb.) had worked his way around the tree and was setting out the Fox Pro call and decoy below us as we got into position.

As we set up, we talked about the cat tracks along the trail behind us on the hill at which time Andy indicated if a cat did show up, he'd take it as he had the permit needed to shoot it.

He'd set up slightly above us in front of the first cedar while Larry and I would be just below him and off to his right.

I was on the camera with Larry on my right flank armed with his 243.

Because of the rough terrain we were in and the separation that was sometimes needed, we were equipped with Midland radios, which helped us to make sure that the camera was on the predator before one of the shooters fired.

As usual, Andy used a combination call to start with, our Fox Pro wailing out the dying rabbit call while Andy howled with his mouth

call. It didn't take long for Andy to go to his old reliable, the Fox Pro, as it never failed us and if there were a critter that could hear it, it would come in to investigate.

About 10 minutes into it, he switched to the young pup yelp, the way he usually ended his calling scenario.

Just then, I noticed Andy turning to the right and the radio broke squeal with Andy on the other end saying, "there he is."

I moved the camera slowly and whispered to Larry that the coyote was directly in front of him.

It was setting on the ridgeline beside a small cedar, Larry had it in its scope and was trying to figure out just what it was when Andy's 22-250 cracked, putting the critter down like a sack of rocks.

The first words out of Andy's mouth were, "did you get it?" of course my response was "about five seconds!"

When I turned and whispered to Larry, he's thought that I said I had the camera on the critter and fired.

Oh well anyway, he'd made a nice shot hitting it dead center in the chest as it was starting to turn and high-tail it for the river.

Andy indicated that the "Cat" was about to bolt when he shot. My response was "Cat!" as all I could see of the critter was what could be seen over Larry's left shoulder and I'd assumed it was another coyote.

What a way to end a hunt, as we were able to call in another of those predators, a large male Bobcat, that had called Nebraska home.

It had come into the yelping pup call to see what was whipping up on the young coyote and to see if he couldn't get a few licks in himself.

As I said, when calling predators, you best be prepared for almost anything, as you never know what might show up.

Gary Howey is a syndicated columnist from Hartington, Neb. His Outdoorsmen Adventures television series can be seen each week on KTTM/KTTW-TV, Sioux Falls/Huron, SD on Saturday @ 6:30 am and Sunday @ 7:00 am.

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