

# WYOGA HUNTING STORY CONTEST WINNER TROPHY MOUNTAIN LION HUNT IN WYOMING

BY HAROLD WISER, WITH NICOLETTA CHERRY AND GARY MOHR

BIG GAME HUNTING

## I AM A FARMER IN NORTHWEST

PENNSYLVANIA, and I have hunted my entire life. Recently I decided to do some adventure hunting, I took a large buck and a trophy bull elk on the same hunt in Hillside, Colorado. I later shot a bull moose in Alaska and that is when I decided I wanted to try something even more exciting, the mountain lion.

I found Great Plains Outfitters online and made arrangements to hunt with them near Ten Sleep, Wyoming.

In January, Nicoletta Cherry, a friend and employee, and I drove 30 hours to Wyoming. Dirk Jenkins, Jennifer Dewey and Tyler O'Brien welcomed us into their gorgeous hunting lodge in Great Plains.

Sunday, we rested to prepare for our Monday hunt.

We had ideal weather conditions; the temperature ranged from 10 degrees at night to 40's during the day. Fresh snow every night made for perfect tracking conditions.

We left at 4 a.m. for the two-hour ride in pickup trucks to the 40-mile-long canyon, this day we only saw one small cat.

Every night Dirk made sure that his precious dogs were fed and watered before anyone else, those dogs were amazing, they wanted those mountain lions. Dirk uses radio collars to tell him where the dogs are at all times, he can even tell if they are running or standing up, presumably with a cat treed above them.

The next day was almost full of too much action the five dogs were chasing five different cats; the dogs got too confused with this much going on.

Wednesday, I started tracking with Dirk and Nicoletta with Tyler. We didn't see anything on the way into the canyon but found prints of a large lion in our tire tracks on the way back out. Nicoletta was on a side by side with Tyler and they hunted that cat and took him down! Nicolett's mountain lion was about 150 pounds.

Dirk said that about 50 percent of their tags get filled, I suddenly realized that I was likely to become the 50 percent that doesn't make the kill.

Three hours later Dirk spotted an anaconda trail over a ridge with his binoculars.



A large tom had killed a mule deer and drug it through the snow, but it was too late to pursue the cat, we packed up the dogs and headed back.

Dirk was certain the cat would be in the same location the next day, sometimes they gorge themselves with up to 30 pounds of meat and don't travel far, so we got the snowmobiles and carts ready for the next day.

Thursday morning at about 8:30 a.m. Dirk radioed me that we were about 4 miles from a big tom, he told me to have the rifle ready; the dogs had treed the cat.

I had told him earlier that I was in good health so it was odd that he would ask me again, he said, "are you lying about your health?" I said "no, I have a separated shoulder but otherwise I am healthy" and he didn't say anything else.

While I drove the snowmobile 4 miles to find Dirk, I kept wondering why he had asked me about my health, I am lean and fit and work hard all year.

Dirk said, "this is one of the biggest mountain lions I have ever seen but it is so far away we can forget it".

I didn't drive 1600 miles to go home empty-handed! I told him that I wanted that cat!

Looking into the deep canyon I suddenly realized why Dirk was concerned with my health, he was at the bottom of the canyon, 3000 feet down, through a foot and a half of snow.

I slid and slipped down that canyon for a half an hour to get to the bottom, Tyler was there with the dogs and they had trapped a big tom in a tree.

I wondered if I would have enough wind left to hold my rifle steady after all that exertion, I couldn't get a clean shot I had to back up into an open field to get clear aim, it wasn't going to be easy to get this cat.

I carried a 6 mm Remington Mohawk with an 18-1/2" inch barrel with custom loads. I had been shooting about 2 inches to the right and Dirk knew it, so I compensated and took my first shot at the cat 40 feet up a tree.

Dirk yelled, "You missed it!"

The cat jumped 4 feet straight up in the air, I hit him, when it came back down, I took my second shot. I hit him again, he fell out of that tree and almost onto the dogs! He rolled down another 500 feet to the river bottom of the canyon, like I said it wasn't going to be easy to get this cat.

Unfortunately, we didn't have a field scale to weigh him, but our guess was that he probably weighed about 200 pounds. Nose to tail he was over nine feet and part of the tail had even been lost, more than likely in a fight. It was a huge cat in anyone's estimation, everyone was excited about taking such a large cat.

On most hunts there is a brief period of excitement just before the shooting, but this hunt was exciting for the entire week. Feeling very satisfied, Nicoletta and I left Wyoming for Colorado to visit family and take the cats to Gary Bohochik at G.B. Taxidermy in Swissvale for mounting. Gary said this was easily a 200-pound cat, he ordered the large foam mount and it fit perfectly. The Game Warden estimated the cat to be seven years old.

A year later I picked up the mounts and made the drive back to Pennsylvania.

This year (2019) I received a letter from the Wyoming Outfitters and Guides Association announcing that I had won third place in the Mountain Lion Riffle category. Nicoletta and I will be attending WYOGA's 2020 Annual Awards Convention and Big Game Awards Banquet. 🐾

