



WYOMING OUTFITTERS & GUIDES ASSOCIATION 2025 EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR | ETTA NELSON



I was born and raised on Kodiak Island, Alaska. I am one of seven children. I would like to thank my parents for putting up with me through my childhood; they are saints. I grew up on, in, or by the ocean. Most of my family worked in the commercial fishing industry, so at 17, naturally,

that's the career I pursued (lemonade stands sort of have an age cap). I worked on boats, tendering for salmon, herring, and cod, and fished for salmon in Bristol Bay for eight years. I also did two seasons of fall pot cod fishing. After that, I realized I did not want to end up in a rocking chair by 40, so I signed up for AVTEC in Seward to become a refrigeration technician.

In the Fall of 2020, my sister and I decided to go to horseshoeing school in Oklahoma, and my journey to the lower 48 began. I loaded my horse, Sunday and my dog, The Dog, and headed over and down the Alcan Hwy in mid-October. Let me tell you, Canada can be quite chilly that time of year. By the grace of God and the real tornadoes in a Chevrolet Vortec engine, we made it. In the Spring of 2021, I decided I didn't want to shoe horses for a living, so I started looking for work somewhere new and exciting, and that ended up being Wyoming. I didn't know at the time that outfitting was a job, but I found Boulder Basin Outfitters and made my way to Cody.



My first season with Boulder Basin Outfitters involved wrangling and cooking on summer pack trips, as well as camp jack duties for hunting season. I returned for a second season and wrangled. I fell head over heels for the mountains, the people, and the spirit of Wyoming. The following year, I began guiding summer pack trips, and I just finished my third season as a guide. I truly enjoy my job. In the fall, I wrangle in hunting camp, run the trail a bit, and sometimes draw the short straw to cook. Don't get me wrong, I like cooking, but it sure is hard to beat crawling up the ridge on a good horse, watching the sun come up over a fresh dusting of snow, listening for bells, and hearing a bugle cut through the crisp morning air.

There are many ways to pack and run an outfit, but I think that Carl and Marisa run one of the best operations around. From my first day on the job, they took me in, taught me so much, and treated me with exceptional kindness and consideration of being part of their family. I don't typically stay in one place for very long; I get antsy doing the

same job repetitively. I enjoy learning new skills and seeing different places. However, each season at BBO continues to bring new experiences, challenges, and learning opportunities, all while working in one of the most beautiful places in the world. I am so thankful for the support of my family and friends through my wild adventures and endeavors. Thank you to the good crew I work with; they continuously work hard to get the job done...and thanks to the amazing stock that get us down the trail; I couldn't do my job without them. 🐾

