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WYOMING RURAL ELECTRIC NEWS

WREN

★
ERIC WILHELM

Passion for Hunting

Weatherby Comes to Wyoming

‘We can’t all take the
month of October off!’

ERIC WILHELM



Outfitter Shares Passion for Hunting

BY RACHEL GIRT

PHOTO BY RACHEL GIRT

Eric Wilhelm
scouts for mule
deer near Ucross.



“There is a difference between being able to get yourself into a position to harvest an animal and getting someone else in that position.”

After spotting a few bucks, he encouraged his client to belly crawl through sagebrush to the crest of a nearby hill and wait. A shot rang out, and the animal dropped.

Every day is a “good day” as an outfitter, but some are just better than others, Wilhelm said.

“When I can watch the beautiful sun rise and the same sun set with my clients, surrounded by the beauty and the animals that God has blessed us with, when everyone is back to camp safe, sitting around reliving the day’s stories and enjoying the camaraderie and bond that hunters have, that is a good day,” Wilhelm explained.

Wilhelm, along with his wife Vickie, run Ucross Outfitters 1, which provides hunting related services to a diverse clientele hailing from around the nation.

The couple also manages the Ranch at Ucross, a guest ranch located 20 miles northeast of Buffalo in the foothills of the Bighorn Mountains in Powder River Energy Corporation’s service area. The Ranch at Ucross is home to the Wyoming Women’s Antelope Hunt, which Wilhelm serves as the outfitter on record, coordinating the guides and all the hunts.

Shifting his cowboy hat, outfitter Eric Wilhelm peered through binoculars, looking for a mule deer moving among the golden brown hues of the hills surrounding Ucross.

Eric Wilhelm hunts birds with his dogs in the Ucross area.

Katie, Vicki and Eric Wilhelm pose with their dogs, Amy and Loki.



PHOTO BY STEVEN GIRT

“We personalize every hunt as much as we can,” Wilhelm said, describing the outfitting business. “I put a lot of thought into the area our client will hunt, who his or her guide should be, and what is their physical ability, hunting knowledge and how they can be most successful.”

Clients stay in deluxe accommodations at the guest ranch or sometimes in a wall tent, depending upon the type and location of the hunt. Options include hunting elk, deer, antelope, turkeys, prairie dogs and black bear on horseback, on ATVs or hiking.

Although Wyoming has an abundance of wildlife and a large amount of public lands, not all of that land is easily accessible, Wilhelm said.

“Outfitters live here every day, see the changes that may affect the hunting that fall, and know the land, the weather and the habits of the animals they wish to pursue,” Wilhelm said, explaining the benefits of hiring an outfitter.

Most people from other states don’t have the time to come out and research the hunt areas in Wyoming so they turn to an outfitter to help, Wilhelm explained. He also assists clients with navigating the state’s license and preference point system.

With most public lands tending to be overcrowded, outfitters like Wilhelm can gain access to private property. Wilhelm praised landowners’ willingness to work with them during hunting season.

“We have built relationships founded on respect with landowners,” Wilhelm explained. “We help the landowners who we partner with achieve their wildlife management goals like trimming down their whitetail herd while maintaining the integrity of their property.”

A Lifetime Spent Outdoors

Ever since boyhood, fishing and hunting naturally flowed in Wilhelm’s veins, as well as a serious passion for German shorthaired pointers, gregarious hunting dogs which he raises.

Growing up above Central City, Colorado, Wilhelm developed an ingrained love of everything outdoors. He and his sister ran wild through the mountains surrounding the family’s small Colorado ranch, exploring every nook and cranny. “Every opportunity I had, I was outdoors,” he said.

“I read every outdoor magazine and book I could get my hands on, watched ‘Jeremiah Johnson’ a thousand times and waited anxiously for the fall and hunting season to arrive when we would hunt deer, antelope and elk,” Wilhelm said.

Wilhelm’s love of the outdoors continued to grow with his family’s move to eastern Colorado. When his grandfather visited, they would chase rabbits or doves, trap ground squirrels or go fishing at the pond. He spent every Thanksgiving break with his friends on the Kansas border hunting birds.

“My one buddy got an early Christmas present of a German shorthaired pointer, and from that day on, I was hooked on both birds and shorthairs,” Wilhelm said.

“When I was 22, I followed a job to Wyoming and knew I had found my heaven on earth,” Wilhelm said.

Wilhelm wound up managing a ranch in northwestern Wyoming for a private family who he took hunting. “It was during this time that I realized I had a talent not only to be a successful hunter myself but also to be able to help others become successful.”

Not every hunter can be a good guide, Wilhelm explained. “There is a difference between being able to get yourself into a position to harvest an animal and getting someone else in that position.”

In the early 2000s, Wilhelm and his wife Vickie moved to Ucross, located a few miles east of Buffalo, to manage the Ranch at Ucross. In 2010, the couple started the outfitting business, which partners with the guest ranch on hunting and accommodations.

Over the years, many of the Wilhelms’ clients have become good friends and return to the ranch, he said.

“I have watched several young men and women grow up that have harvested their first animal with us; that is special and is one of my favorite parts of this job,” Wilhelm added. **W**

Rachel Girt is a freelance writer and owner of Girt Communications based in Cheyenne.