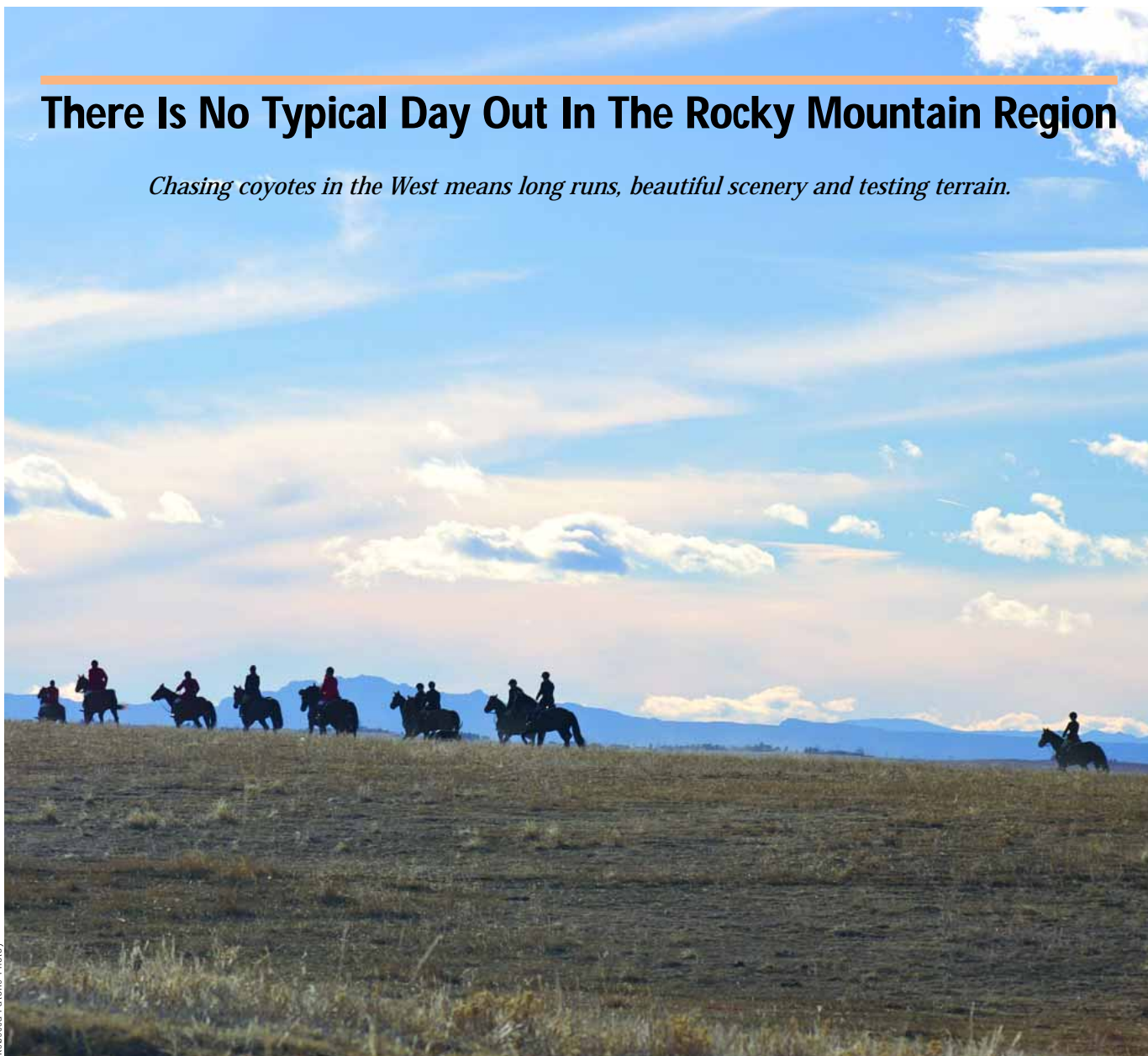


There Is No Typical Day Out In The Rocky Mountain Region

Chasing coyotes in the West means long runs, beautiful scenery and testing terrain.



(Rebecca Patoile Photo)

Marc C. Patoile

With more than 1,000 linear miles and the Continental Divide separating the nine hunts in the Rocky Mountain region, you cannot make many generalizations about the region, hunting terrain, typical days or common challenges, as the area is so diverse.

The region boasts six of the earth's seven climatic zones, with altitudes ranging from the deserts of New Mexico to the Rocky Mountain tundra in Colorado, and everything in between. There really is no "typical" day riding to hounds in the Rocky Mountain region—the only real constants are an abundance of land to hunt and coyotes to chase.

► Old Country And Rough Country

The Arapahoe Hunt (Colo.) is the oldest of the hunts in the region and was founded in 1907 in Denver, Colo. Its kennels were then located on what is now the eighth green of the Denver Country Club golf course.

The Arapahoe Hunt went dormant during World War I, but Lawrence C. Phipps, Jr. reactivated it in 1929.

Mr. Phipps located the kennels on his ranch, the "Diamond K," which was known as Kistler Ranch, then became known as Highlands Ranch, located in northern Douglas County, about 10 miles south of Denver. The old country consisted of about 28,000 acres, all part of the Highlands Ranch, plus 6,000 additional acres on the adjacent Cherokee Ranch and Daniels Park, a buffalo preserve. About half was heavily forested with pine, spruce, cottonwood and scrub oak.

Since 1988, the Arapahoe hunts new country and occasionally hunts in the Plum Creek Valley area near Larkspur, Colo.; on the Monaghan Ranch near Laramie, Wyo.; the Phipps and Younglund Ranches near Kiowa, Colo.; and ranches near Colorado Springs and Limon.

The only real constants are an abundance of land to hunt and coyotes to chase.

Each fixture is a different test for the Arapahoe's pack of English foxhounds, from rolling plains and hilly contours to hay fields with open irrigation ditches testing your mettle, to mountainous rugged country. But many of the members love the old country the best.

Jt.-MFH Lawrence C. Phipps, III, when asked about the hairiest hunt on the old country, said, "We had some fun ones. I have a mask above my chimney, where we found a coyote north of the old kennels and he ran it all the way south to the Cherokee Ranch. And we [accounted for him] 9 miles north of there. Unless you have hunted there, it's difficult to imagine how far this was. It was snowing when we got home. I'd say it was approaching 20 miles and hounds gave chase for more than three hours on this coyote."

The Arapahoe still hunts a portion of this country on special occasions. Upon riding here, you'll hear the senior hunt members who hunted this country advise, "don't wear your new breeches in the old country," as you are sure to tear them on the scrub oak and many trees. Their scarred boots bear testament to this fact.

There is a particularly uninviting portion of the country in which hounds frequently are led by wily coyotes into the aptly named "Hell's Hole," as it drops hundreds of feet from the surrounding rocky cliffs. A sure-footed horse is a necessity.

► The Deserts And Surrounding Grasslands

After hunting in New Mexico, I affectionately dubbed their members the "Rough Riders." Hunting coyotes in this desert home of Roosevelt's Rough Riders seems fitting.

Guy McElvain, jt.-MFH, a well-known grand prix rider and Holsteiner breeder, supplies horses to the staff of the Caza Ladron hunt (N.M.).

While many hunts throughout the nation are struggling to keep enough territory to hunt, Caza Ladron has more acreage than they can effectively hunt, with 12 different fixtures. One of their fixtures, Mount Taylor, is 1 million acres. In total, Brian Gonzales, jt.-MFH, estimates that, "We have access to hunt more than 2 to 3 million acres, but we probably only hunt 500,000 acres in an average year."

I could almost hear a coyote howling, as I wondered how long humans had heard their songs from this very ridge.

"Without a doubt scenting is always our biggest challenge," Gonzalez said. "Our hounds have gotten better and better, so we don't have many problems with the prolific deer or cattle in these parts anymore. But, trying to get enough moisture in the air for good scenting is a real challenge."

We hunted the Buckman fixture under threats of snow in the forecast. This fixture is approximately 100,000 acres with a combination of BLM, National Forest and scattered private property. The hunt has access to another million acres on the other side of the Rio Grande, which they don't currently hunt.

This country is a high desert mesa and river valleys thick with brush, cholla cactus and yucca. Hounds work twisting and turning across arroyos and ditches. There are a few paneled fences, but barbed wire is not com-

mon at this fixture, so jumping is not often necessary. However, the drop banks and rocky hills at a gallop proved to be more than enough challenge.

The Juan Tomás Hounds (N.M.) hunt was established in the late 1960s in the Albuquerque area, but they also have many fixtures throughout the state. Each of their hunts is followed by an outdoor tailgate breakfast hosted by the members, often gathering around a bonfire.

"We are fortunate in having permission from landowners to hunt on ranches located between Albuquerque and Santa Fe, as well as on undeveloped west mesa land near Albuquerque," said Huntsman and Jt.-MFH Jim Nance.

We hunted the Diamond Tail Ranch, just south of Santa Fe, with the Juan Tomás hounds. This country is wide-open high desert with varied terrain—from rocky foothills to sandy brush-covered mesas—and only a few man-made jumps, but many ditches and banks.

One check included looking at Indian pottery shards and knives on the top of a ridge line, which Nance explained was an old Indian site. I could almost hear a coyote howling, as I wondered how long humans had heard their songs from this very ridge.

Trying to describe the typical terrain or a typical day hunting with Juan Tomás or Caza Ladron is like trying to describe the state of New Mexico itself. They hunt country ranging from the high desert typical of central New Mexico (Albuquerque), to the tall pine and arroyos in the higher elevations (Santa Fe) all the way up to aspen trees (the Rocky Mountains).



(Rebecca Patola/Photo)

Arapahoe Hunt's "old country" provides many challenges but excellent sport.



(Rebecca Patole Photo)

Daniel Woods hunts the Caza Ladron (N.M.) hounds in their Buckman fixture, which is a high desert mesa with dense brush and challenging terrain. The Caza Ladron hunt has access to millions of acres of land.

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▶ The High Country Plains

The Bijou Springs Hunt (Colo.) began in 1984 when the Rivers Divide Hunt was dissolved. The founding members of the new hunt drafted hounds from several hunts in Colorado and Nebraska.

They began their season with four couple, in a portion of the Bijou Springs Ranch in the incomparable Bijou Basin. In 1993, the hunt was recognized. Bijou Springs currently hunts in several fixtures, primarily at the King's Lazy K 11 Ranch, located northeast of Kiowa, Colo.

Nancy Mitchell, huntsman, loves this new country.

"After a six-year hiatus, it is most gratifying to be back hunting in the Bijou Basin. Like so many other hunts, our hunt was unable to continue hunting Bijou Springs Ranch after it was sold. With the purchase of the Lazy K 11 Ranch in the north end of the same large basin by Nancy King, MFH, and her husband Paul, the Bijou Springs Hunt is once again hunting in the country that gave them their name."

The hunt country includes several surrounding ranches through permission by many of the landowners. Following two summers of work by the membership, there are gates and log panels in many of the fence lines. This is good galloping country and, as with all new countries, the only real difficulty is staying with hounds in the areas that are not yet well paneled or gated.

With Paul King's acquisition of a new

The Hunts Of The Rocky Mountain Region

Arapahoe Hunt	Denver, Colo.
Bijou Springs Hunt	Kiowa, Colo.
Caza Ladron	Albuquerque and Santa Fe, N.M.
Grand Canyon Hounds	Flagstaff, Ariz.
Fort Carson Hounds	Colorado Springs, Colo.
High Country Hounds	Flagstaff, Ariz.
Juan Tomás Hounds	Albuquerque and Santa Fe, N.M.
Knoxville Hunt	Manville, Wyo.
Roaring Fork Hounds	Carbondale and Steamboat Springs, Colo.

ranch to the north and west, Bijou Spring's territory has expanded to nearly 20,000 acres. In addition to wide-open plains, there are hills and arroyos. In addition, the canyon wall of the Basin itself is very steep in places.

Mitchell recalled, "Probably one of the most exciting and scary days in the new country came when a coyote hopped out of one of the arroyos, directly in front of the pack and headed due east.

The hunts are concluded by a radio broadcast, "Range Control, this is Foxhunt, mission completed and exiting the range."

"The chase began in the middle of the Lazy K. The coyote ran right out of the country, across a major country road and through a large area of open range with the whole pack in hot pursuit. Staff found themselves left behind at a fence line hunting for a gate, which appeared nearly a mile south. Asking the horses for all they had, and leaving the field in the distance, the first whipper-in finally caught up with hounds in totally unfamiliar country, as they were taking a break in a stock pond.

"As staff moved to the edge of the stock pond between hounds and further pursuit, I-70 appeared in the near distance, with traffic barreling along toward the small town of Agate. This run was somewhere between 20 and 30 miles. It made for a very long walk home."

Bombing Ranges

"In 1988, the Arapahoe Hunt built kennels and a staff horse barn on the Lowry Bombing Range," said Donald O'Connor, jr.-MFH of the Arapahoe.

"The Colorado State Land Board had

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acquired the Range from the U.S. Air Force after the Korean War. We have a lease on the property where the kennels, barn and horse pasture are located, together with 35 square miles [22,400 acres] and access to 6,400 acres of adjacent private land.”

This country is wide-open range featuring hills, ravines and a few creek bottoms. It is well paneled and gated for riders. The Front Range of the Rocky Mountains looms over this country in the distance.

Dr. G. Marvin Beeman, huntsman and jt.-MFH said, “It’s real pleasure to hunt this open country where the field have full view of hounds in this spectacular setting.”

The relatively newly formed and unrecognized Fort Carson Hounds also hunts a bombing range. Huntsman Gary Worrall, jt.-MFH, led us over a portion of the 300,000 acres available at their Turkey Creek fixture.

This country features some of the sandy arroyos of the New Mexico fixtures, as well as wide-open pastures and galloping country. We were lead by Field Master, CWO Doug Bell, who is active-duty U.S. Army Special Forces. He carried a radio, not for purposes of keeping with hounds, but for informing the Army Range Control of our locations. The hunts are concluded by a radio broadcast, “Range Control, this is Foxhunt, mission completed and exiting the range.”

► High Country Hounds

Variety is the spice of life at the High Country Hounds (Ariz.). Hon. Sec. Mrs. John Rodgers explained that they try to offer something for everyone.

The Knoxville Hunt boasts access to about one-half of the state of Wyoming, thanks to its ability to hunt public lands.

“We hunt eight different fixtures,” she said. “These fixtures encompass a territory approximately 50 miles by 50 miles on the east side of Flagstaff. My favorite fixture is the Ranch House because there is always water there for the hounds, and we have had some really great hunting there.

“This is high country—plateaus with piñon and ponderosa. A lot of the times we are dashing in and out of the piñons. Some of the country is fairly flat with some cinder hills. We’ve also had some foxes moving back in, which is very odd. But the hounds would rather chase coyote.”

Grand Canyon Hounds (Ariz.) also hunts country outside of Scottsdale. Jt.-MFH

Stephania Williams said, “We have two fixtures with a couple 100,000 acres at each one. So we hunt from eight different starting points. We have seen a couple of bobcat and a mountain lion, but we hunt coyote exclusively.”

She retold a particularly exciting moment, “when our huntsman, Peter Wilson, and I were going into a canyon. Up came another horse, scaring my horse, and my horse fell back into a canyon. I stepped off of him just in time to step onto the side of the cliff. He fell quite a way, but came up unhurt. Other riders had cuts and slices on their faces and dirt on their breeches, but I had the worst fall and was clean.”

The Knoxville Hunt (Wyo.) boasts access to about one-half of the state of Wyoming, thanks to its ability to hunt public lands.

“We hunt one fixture that is over 400,000 acres, our fixture at the kennels is 15,000 acres, we hunt another with 8,000 acres, and another one is 12,000 acres. We hunt a lot of rolling hills and open prairie,” said Jennifer Phipps, honorary secretary and whipper-in, noted.

Her favorite fixture is “at the foot of the Laramie Mountains, which is rocky and steep country together with plains filled with cactus and sagebrush.

“We rode 55 miles to get found after getting lost near the Sweetwater Station fixture in the red desert,” Phipps recalled. “For



Hunting in New Mexico requires navigating rocky canyons.



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those not familiar with this country, this is where the wild horse herds live. Our GPS ran out of batteries, and the car was parked down in a draw. Nobody lives out there, and every hill looks the same as the last.

"A rancher let us cut across his road, and we had to cross the Sweetwater River to get back to the truck. This was a hard lesson learned. We ran out of water, the hounds were tired and thirsty, it had rained on us, and I couldn't move for two days, so I had to call in sick to work."

► **The Rocky Mountaintops**

Jt.-MFH of the Roaring Fork Hounds (Colo.), Michael L. Strang, said that his Strang Ranch at Carbondale is their principal fixture "But we also hunt down by Silt and occasionally up by Steamboat Springs. We'll hunt anyplace they let us," he said. And they seem to have no shortage for country.

"One time we were hunting on the Missouri Heights Reservoir, which is a 3½ mile-long lake, which was partially frozen over, and all hell broke loose as we got into five coyotes at once. The one that hounds elected to run ran out onto the ice. We weren't going to take horses out on the frozen ice, so we came home several hours later, as it took a long time to collect the hounds. It was a very lively time.

"We have had runs where we left the



(Jeremy Blackburn Photo)

The Manville hunt country of the Knoxville Hunt encompasses the open prairie, rolling hills and sagebrush typical of Wyoming.

kennels at 9:30 a.m., and we didn't get back until after dark. When that happens, you don't have any field left," Strang remarked. The terrain around Carbondale is rolling hay

country and the meadows go up into the high mountains. Toward Steamboat Springs, the Roaring Fork Hounds hunt some really high country.

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