

Embracing the Wilderness:

A Conversation with Ray Livingston, Big Horn Armory Brand Ambassador and “Mountain Men” Season 12 Cast Member



The rugged landscapes of "[Mountain Men](#)" have long captured the imagination of viewers, offering a glimpse into the lives of those who thrive in the wild, facing the challenges of the untamed wilderness head-on. Season 12 introduces a new face to the cast, [Ray Livingston](#), an elite hunter and outdoor survivalist who brings a wealth of knowledge and a passion for wildlife conservation to the show. As a [Big Horn Armory](#) Brand Ambassador, Ray Livingston's journey into the wild is amplified by his choice of firearms, particularly the [Big Horn Armory Model 90](#).

In this exclusive interview, we dive deep into Ray's background, his approach to predator and nuisance animal abatement, his partnership with Big Horn Armory, and the vital message he hopes to convey to both seasoned hunters and newcomers to the outdoor lifestyle.

Interviewer: Could you tell us a bit about how your background as an elite hunter and outdoor survivalist led you to become a part of "Mountain Men" Season 12?

Ray Livingston: I was introduced to hunting at about 13 years of age. While my father and I went fishing, hunting wasn't an activity he engaged in. After moving out from inner city Portland, OR to rural Gresham, OR, I met my (still) best friend, Jim Calcagno. I began hunting with him and his family and harvested my first Elk, with a bow, at 14; I've been hooked ever since.

As a world-class athlete, willing to go wherever I thought the animals were, without care for terrain, I found myself hunting alone a lot. So, I decided to teach myself the relevant wilderness skills to try to prevent an untimely demise in the backcountry, if that fate could at all be avoided. I was never really a dedicated primitive survivalist, I was always more of a mountain man, willing to use whatever means necessary to be able to stay out in the forest longer.

Interviewer: Living in an area surrounded by abundant wildlife, including predators like cougars, wolves, bears, and coyotes, must be both exhilarating and challenging. How do you approach predator and nuisance animal abatement without using traditional methods like hunting with dogs or baiting?

RL: For most of my hunting life I've lived in areas where hunting predators with dogs or baiting was prohibited. Until recently, I had very little interest in harvesting predators. I've had many opportunities to take bears, cougars, and coyotes, but passed on them because I didn't think they were good eating and I didn't understand the management needs for harvesting them. Once I understood the management need and that many of them are great table fare, I refocused my hunting effort on predators, mostly on cougars as I think they are the best tasting of all wild game animals.



So, my predator-hunting journey began without ever having the ability to use dogs or bait. I spent a great amount of time researching how best to approach hunting these animals, which are among the hardest animals to harvest, without those tools. Calling with a predator call is my key, basic strategy, but understanding where, when, and how to set up and call was a steep learning curve. I feel I've had an uncommon success due to the research I did as well as lots of time in the field figuring out what works. I can say it's quite exciting when an apex predator comes into your calling setup. Thus far I've called in Cougars, Bears, Coyotes, and Wolves.

Interviewer: Given the restrictions on certain hunting practices in Washington State, you have mentioned relying on your knowledge of creatures' behavioral patterns for non-lethal means of maintaining balance. Could you share some insights into how you have developed this understanding over the years?

RL: Most human/wildlife conflicts tend to come down to human issues. These animals are just out there doing the best they can to survive, we cannot blame them for picking off an easy sheep, goat, chicken, pet, or other domestic animals in their home ranges. What most people who are having significant problems with wildlife are not doing is providing the wildlife living

around them a firm boundary that deters them from approaching human establishments. No, it's not always cheap or easy to do, but I believe it's just the responsibility of those who choose to live in the active ranges of these animals. This may include putting up electric fences meant to keep them out, using different deterrent devices, keeping livestock guardian dogs, and actively dissuading depredation with intentional human presence. It can take a large amount of time, energy, and a good amount of money.

This is precisely why I established my company, [Apex Wildlife Solutions, LLC](#), to use my experience to help those landowners who don't have the time or experience to set that firm boundary themselves. As for the monetary concern, I recently started a [Patreon profile](#) and hope to get enough monthly subscribers to allow me to provide these services free to the landowners. Subscribers will get exclusive access to my wildlife control project videos as well as some pretty awesome giveaways, including a limited production, signature edition [Big Horn Armory AR500](#).



Funds will also be donated to non-profit organizations with a focus on preserving both our hunting heritage and our firearms rights.

Interviewer: How do you envision integrating the Big Horn Armory Model 90 into your predator and nuisance animal abatement strategies, particularly considering the regulations and limitations you face?

RL: I got “Reaper” my Big Horn Armory Model 90, chambered in 460 Smith and Wesson Magnum, after having first purchased a revolver of the same caliber. I loved the caliber in a revolver and felt it would be even more amazing in a long gun. BHA is the only firearm manufacturer that makes a repeating rifle chambered in this amazingly powerful caliber. The fact that a 460 S&W chambering will also safely chamber and fire 45 long colt and 454 Casull as lower power loads makes it one of the most versatile single projectile firearms on the market. I keep about seven different 460 S&W Magnum loads for Reaper, as well as 45 long Colt rounds, to match the game and conditions I’m hunting in. I’ve harvested seven animals with Reaper, in less than a year, with three different loads, from 30 yards to 280 yards away. All animals harvested expired very quickly, if not immediately.



When hunting apex predators that have the capability of hunting me back, especially when I’m calling them in, or the ability to attack aggressively if injured, I take no chances. I want a rifle with me with the power to hit the “off switch” immediately. In many cases, I’m hunting smaller tracts of private lands, dealing with depredation issues. So, for me, size matters and when size matters, you choose Big Horn Armory.

Interviewer: As someone who spends a lot of time in the wilderness, durability and reliability must be crucial factors in the gear you use. How does

the robust design of the Big Horn Armory Model 90 align with your needs in the field?

RL: When hunting dangerous game, there is no room for error when it comes to having a reliable firearm. On a deer or elk hunt, a firearm failure may mean you miss the opportunity for an animal, maybe even an animal of a lifetime. A firearm failure or a small caliber, not capable of hitting the off switch immediately could mean your death when hunting dangerous game.



Every Big Horn Armory lever gun is essentially a custom, handmade rifle, made to be used. There is a reason that BHA is the only company producing repeating rifles in some of the powerful, large-bore calibers; because those cartridges are different animals requiring a more robust rifle, inside and out.

Big Horn Armory lever guns are not the lightest, nor the cheapest rifles on the market, nor would I have it that way when firing these powerful calibers. But when you need a reliable rifle that will take any animal on the face of this planet, Big Horn Armory firearms are the clear choice.

Interviewer: "Mountain Men" showcases the grit and determination required to live off the grid and thrive in challenging environments. How do you see your partnership with Big Horn Armory and the Model 90 embodying the spirit of self-reliance and preparedness?

RL: While I am a cast member on the "Mountain Men" television show, the mountain man lifestyle is my real life. When one's life and livelihood depend on having quality and reliable gear, especially in situations where I

may not be able to get into town or have anyone available to rescue me, I think my partnership with Big Horn Armory is a perfect match. Big Horn Armory firearms are unique in quality, caliber, and construction. When you lead an atypical life that often leads to atypical situations, your tools and equipment should be uniquely up to the task; that is definitely the case with my Big Horn Armory Model 90.

Interviewer: How do you see this new chapter on “Mountain Men” aligning with your values and goals as a conservationist and protector of both the land and its wildlife?

RL: We are at a very interesting and somewhat disturbing point in the world and American history. There's a lot of political and social unrest, our rights and privileges seem to be being challenged and encroached upon at every turn. As beautiful as the world is, it seems that there is a dark cloud of negativity spreading over it. This feeling is a large part of why I chose the mountain lifestyle. The more I have immersed myself in the forests, watching, considering, and learning lessons from the wild beings of the forest, the less sense this modern world makes to me.

This new chapter on Mountain Men, for me, is about sharing this life in a manner that highlights the importance of our natural world. In native cultures, it's said, “If we use something responsibly, it will stay with us, if we ignore it, it will go away.” There is a balance to be kept and found in both the natural world and within ourselves. By immersing myself in nature, it's clear to me that a strong connection with the natural world that provides a real perspective of what it means to live a good life is severely missing from this society. I hope the audience gets that we can be both protectors and lovers of wildlife and harvest from our forests. I hope they see that while it's a harder life, all of one's efforts are going directly toward their personal well-being, as opposed to the 9-5 working model. I want to show folk what the quote, “If you love what you're doing, you'll never work a day in your life” actually means. I'm not sure what forces came into play to put me in front of the world on television, but I know it's not really about me, I believe

it's to be one example of a different life, to help others find their own rewarding and peaceful lives, whatever that means to them.

Interviewer: Viewers are undoubtedly curious about the practical applications of the Big Horn Armory Model 90 on your homestead. Can you share some examples of what you foresee using this firearm to address potential wildlife challenges?

RL: In my line of work, I think of firearms like a golfer looks at their golf clubs. While you can get through a golf course with just a 5 iron, there is the best golf club for every situation. Because of its versatility, my Big Horn Armory Model 90 is the equivalent of all my irons and smaller woods, in a golf sense. Loaded with 45 long Colt, it's a nice putter, and pitching wedge capable of harvesting small to medium game and dispatching animals at close range. Loaded with 454 Casull or 460 S&W Magnum it becomes an extraordinary medium to moderate range option with any projectile.

My fastest projectile is a 200-grain Hornady FTX bullet that leaves the barrel at a staggering 2875 feet per second. I'd push that round out to about 600 yards with a good range and a solid rest, making it also my small woods in a golf sense. That's already further than most people are willing to shoot a game animal at. The only box it doesn't cover is true long-range precision shooting, but that's not what it was designed for either.



Interviewer: Finally, Ray, as a respected figure in the hunting and outdoor community, your involvement with Big Horn Armory carries significant weight. What message do you hope to convey to both seasoned hunters and newcomers to the outdoor lifestyle through your partnership?

RL: As a brand ambassador for Big Horn Armory, the National Forgotten Rites Program Director for the [First Hunt Foundation](#), a Wildlife Control Operator, and a hunting and firearms rights activist, I'd like to remind sportsmen and women that hunting is an important part of all of our heritages. If you exist in this world today, regardless of any other factors or how you identify, it is because your ancestors were proficient at hunting, fishing, and foraging. You'd not be here otherwise. These methods of providing for ourselves explain how humanity has survived for around 96 percent of the time we've existed on Earth. Our departure from this direct dependence, as individuals, on the natural world is a very recent change in the history of humanity. It's also a very recent development that we've stopped living in harmony with the natural world as well. I believe the two things are strongly linked.

To embrace a hunting, fishing, and foraging lifestyle is to embrace ourselves and one of the most critical, natural activities that allowed humanity to flourish. There is much to be learned when one reconnects with the natural world while engaging in one or more of these activities.

Our ability to engage in them and pass this heritage down to subsequent generations may prove to be of exponential importance to future generations as well. I urge anyone reading this to actively look for ways to support organizations that have missions to preserve and pass down this heritage and to embark on a journey to reconnect themselves to these ancient rites of passage.

Ray's journey into the wild, as showcased in "Mountain Men" Season 12, offers a unique perspective on the symbiotic relationship between humanity and the natural world. His partnership with Big Horn Armory and the Model 90 exemplifies the importance of reliable equipment when living off the grid, where self-reliance and preparedness are paramount. Through his experiences, Ray encourages us to reconnect with our ancestral roots by embracing the hunting, fishing, and foraging lifestyle, and by supporting organizations that preserve and pass down this heritage. In a world that often feels disconnected from nature, Ray reminds us that there is much to be learned and gained from the wild beings of the forest and that a balance between the natural world and ourselves is essential for our well-being and the preservation of our planet.



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