

# Professional Hunter Spotlight

*PH Bjorn Birgisson Of Icelandic Hunting Club*

Bjorn was raised by his grandparents in a tiny town in West Iceland. He did not come from a family of hunters, but neighbors (father and son) were active hunters. They triggered Bjorn's interest in guns and hunting at the early age of six and it shaped his life. Later his childhood dream to hunt with them was fulfilled. When the son died, he left his and his father's guns to Bjorn.

At the University of Iceland, Bjorn earned a degree in Business Administration. He then worked for the Export Council of Iceland. In 1982 his love of guns and hunting led him to open his own import/distribution company serving Iceland's hunters and sport shooters.

In 1994, one of Bjorn's business partners, Carry-Lite Decoys, asked him to organize a reindeer hunt for one of their best clients. Since he had hunted reindeer in the 1970s, he agreed. The hunters were the owners and top executives of Cabela's. The hunt was successful.

Three weeks later, Cabela's contacted Bjorn, asking permission to sell hunts. He agreed to the proposal and founded the outfitting business in 1994. Prior to that, Bjorn invited business partners to hunt with him. For almost 40 years, Bjorn has been hosting hunters in Iceland.

In Iceland, the big game Bjorn offers is European reindeer and bird hunts, such as puffins/seabirds, geese and ptarmigan. In Greenland, the big game is muskox in the South and combo muskox and caribou in West Greenland. Reindeer are only in East Greenland. Small game such as snow hare and Arctic fox are also offered. In Sweden, Bjorn offers goose and duck hunting.

When afield, Bjorn's favorite guide guns are .300 Win. Mag. and .338 Win. Mag.,

because he says those calibers are flat shooting and can stop most charging animals in their tracks.

The Icelandic Hunting Club is the only fulltime hunting outfitter operating in Iceland. Bjorn explains his services: "We personally look after all our hunters from arrival to departure. We operate a lodge in East Iceland, a 20-minute drive from reindeer country. Every hunter has two guides, the best and most experienced in Iceland, some having been our partners for more than 20 years. Gourmet cuisine is offered on all hunts, with game on the menu. Craig Boddington has (unofficially) stamped our cooking 'world class.' We try to live up to that compliment every time."

"In Greenland, there are two separate hunting areas. South Greenland is a luxury hunt, where hunters stay in hotels and in our own luxury lodge, situated in the middle of the muskox hunting area. Transport is by comfortable boats with a heated cabin. There are no roads in Greenland," he explained.



“In West Greenland we have a tented camp with electricity and hot shower. Using a helicopter between airport and camp enables hunting in more remote areas than other outfitters in this part of Greenland. The area is teeming with wildlife and good trophies are abundant,” he said.

area below us. The herds joined and now there were 600 reindeer in front of us. Suddenly one of the biggest bulls of that enormous herd stood free. The hunter did not hesitate, and the bull was down without taking a step. The herd took off in a frenzy – what a magnificent sight,” he explained.



Every hunt is a unique adventure. Though a skilled guide increases chances for success, luck also plays a part. Bjorn recounts an epic hunt etched in his memory: “In 2006, three Spanish hunters wanted to hunt European reindeer in Iceland. We left the cabin around 5 a.m. for the drive to reindeer country in the mountains. Our group, with three guides, was equipped with two super Jeeps and three six-wheeled ATVs. We planned to start scouting the south part of area 2, just north of the Vatnajökull glacier.”

“Stopping for a lunch break, we had not seen a living creature all morning. My friend and fellow guide, Toti, received a phone call from another guide north of us. His client had just taken a reindeer bull and he said there were at least two more good trophies in that herd. We moved to that place, about 30 miles north, as fast as possible,” he said.

“After an hour drive, we spotted the herd, with one good bull worth taking. Not knowing of any other animals in the area, we waited for the results of the stalk. It was 5 p.m., I did not anticipate any further action, so I prepared to return to our cabin after our hunter had taken his bull. While waiting for our hunter and guide to return, we suddenly noticed a herd of over 300 reindeer approaching us. The two hunters and I moved to a good shooting position where the herd would pass. The plan was successful, and the second hunter took a good bull at about 150 yards. This spooked the herd and it disappeared over the next hill. I decided to follow the herd taking the third hunter with me,” he continued.

“We spotted the herd grazing in an open field and took cover in a ditch. The herd was too tight together to take a shot. Then the unbelievable happened. Another herd of about 300 animals appeared, coming from an

“The herd ran past the second hunter, waiting with his trophy. Having picked up all three reindeer, we headed down from the mountain with a two-hour drive to reach the road. The weary hunters were transported back to the cabin while my guides and I finished field dressing. We returned to the cabin at 6 a.m., concluding a long, successful 25-hour day,” he said.

If hunters want to combine hunting and fishing in one trip, Bjorn works with two fishing outfitters. Photo and sightseeing tours are available.

Game management in Iceland and Greenland is at a highly professional level. Poaching is non-existent. Bjorn explains his involvement in working with the Icelandic hunting society was to motivate and assist the government to establish the current system of allocating reindeer tags to sport hunters on an equal basis for both local and foreign hunters.

Since 1998, Bjorn has been an SCI member and an official measurer since 2006. He motivates his clients to enter their scores in the Record Book. Approximately 50 percent of the European reindeer entered are from his clients.

On his first visit to the SCI Convention in 2006, Bjorn met Alaskan Master Guide Dick Gunlongson. With his help and support, Bjorn became an exhibitor in 2008.

“I am convinced that without Dick Gunlongson and our exhibiting at the SCI Convention, The Icelandic Hunting Club would not have grown into what it is today,” Bjorn said. 🐾