

# Matt Lux wins state elk calling competition

**Tribal member headed to world championships on March 18**

By Bethany Bea  
*Smoke Signals Intern*

Grand Ronde Tribal member Matt Lux is the best elk caller in Oregon for the third time.

On Saturday, March 18, he'll see if he's the best in the world.

Lux won the Oregon State Elk Calling Championship on Feb. 25 and is headed to Salt Lake City, Utah, to participate in the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation World Elk Calling Championships.

Lux, 34, has been elk calling since he was 6 years old when his father brought home elk calls and left them on a windowsill while he went to take a nap.

"Don't touch those," his father said.

"Well, soon as that door shut I pushed a chair over and grabbed the elk calls," said Lux. He got one to make a noise and went right in to tell his father, who briefly scolded him for not following instructions.

"But then he started working with me on it," Lux said.

He went to the World Championships in Seattle that same year. It was 1989 and the youth division still encompassed youths up to 17 years of age, he said. Now, there is a peewee division for children 10 and younger.

"So for the first few years I called with a lot of kids that were twice my age," he said.

Lux used his newfound skills to call in an elk for his father while hunting that year, but he said it was awhile before he bagged an elk of his own.

"I had a very rough learning curve



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

**Matt Lux recently won the Oregon State Elk Calling Championships and will be competing in the 2017 World Elk Calling Championships in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, March 18.**

when I was younger, because I'm stubborn and I have to learn things my way," he said. "My dad died when I was 11, so a lot of the hunting stuff I kind of had to do on my own."

Eventually, he got a job at Sportsman's Warehouse and a co-worker taught him the rights and wrongs of hunting. Now, hunting is his way of life.

Lux lives on a farm outside of Sheridan, but spends most of the year as a hunting guide for Mangas Outfitters in the high desert of New Mexico.

"I've seen all walks of life come out and elk hunt," he said. "There's guys that have to save five, six years to be able to afford to come out and hunt. And then I have clients who come out every year. We have guys that come out, and they own their own planes and they have

their own pilots."

Depending on whether the hunter buys or draws a tag and where they want to hunt, the fee for a guided hunt can range anywhere from \$4,600 to \$10,000. This buys five or six days, Lux said, but he's usually done in three.

While his elk calling skills certainly help with his work, he said it's not necessary to be a competition-quality caller while hunting.

"There's a huge difference between competition calling and calling out in the woods," Lux said. The elk won't notice if you make a mistake or your reed cracks, he said, but competition judges will.

There are different types of calls for different sounds, from small discs, called diaphragms, no bigger than a 50-cent piece, to "grunt tubes" the shape of a small plastic

baseball bat.

He said a cracked reed or an error is the difference between placing in the finals and coming in dead last at competitions.

In addition to practice and dedication, some competitors have the natural advantage of a large chest, which allows for stronger calls.

Lux said when he competes, he tries to make up his points in other ways to compensate for competitors who are bigger.

"In order to make up that difference, I have to make sure my routine is extremely clean and as life-like as I can get," he said.

When he's not working or competing, Lux spends time in the woods with his 5-year-old son.

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"We have designated his own grunt tube," Lux said. "He does not like it if dad grabs his grunt tube."

His son won't go with him to the World Championships, he said. It's going to be too much time in the car. Thirteen hours to Salt Lake City on Friday if weather doesn't slow him down, then competition on Saturday followed by the long ride home on Sunday. The competition consists of morning preliminaries followed by finals at noon, if everything stays on schedule, he said.

He'll be joined at the competition by Higher Education Manager Bryan Langley and four of his children, all of whom are competing.

"I'll just have to keep my fingers crossed that I make the finals, because there's going to be some really stiff competition," Lux said. ■

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Application is available online at [grandronde.org](http://grandronde.org)  
Please contact Travis Stewart for further information at: [travis.stewart@grandronde.org](mailto:travis.stewart@grandronde.org)

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