HOT WINTER HUNTS
TIPS AND TACTICS THAT WILL HELP YOU END THE SEASON ON A HIGH NOTE

BIG-WOODS SQUEEZE
A THREE-MAN STILL-HUNTING DRIVE WILL FLUSH OUT WINTER BUCKS

SET THE BEST GOOSE SPREAD
SPOT-AND-STALK SQUIRRELS
TRAIN BEAGLES FOR RABBITS
GET THE DROP ON BASS

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The season is slowly winding down, but that doesn’t mean you have to wind down as well. Here are the tips and tactics you need to know to hunt and fish when the mercury drops.
Those who have been members of the Union Sportsmen’s Alliance since 2009 may remember that our quarterly publication began as a 12-page tabloid-style newspaper. By the middle of 2010, it evolved into a glossy, 24-page magazine containing more of the content USA members asked for—hunting and fishing tips and techniques, member stories, U.S.-made-gear reviews, informative articles, and the latest news about USA and its activities around the country.

As the USA continued to grow in both members and programs, we expanded the publication by another eight pages to accommodate a mix of USA news, member-provided photos and stories, and articles by experts in the hunting and fishing industry.

This year, we formed a partnership with Field & Stream to produce and distribute the Union Sportsmen’s Journal. Founded in 1895, Field & Stream is considered by many to be the world’s leading outdoors magazine, and we are confident the title’s century of experience in the outdoors publication business will take our magazine to a new level and continue to bring you even greater value as a union sportsman or sportswoman.

We certainly want to continue providing you with a great magazine that you can be proud to call your own, so we’ve developed two options for you to choose from. If you have your valid e-mail address, we will send you the magazine digitally, at no cost to you. And after all, we live in a digital age. If you’re not sure we have your e-mail address, just complete the detachable form on the insert that came in the bag with this magazine or call USA membership services at 1-877-872-2211, and we will sign you up. Better yet, send us an e-mail at membership@UnionSportsmen.org and let us know you want the magazine by e-mail.

Now if you’re a little old-fashioned like me, and you still enjoy having something to hold in your hands, you can make a donation of $37.50 to the USA to receive a two-year subscription to the Union Sportsmen’s Journal and help support USA’s conservation mission. We will even throw in a 12-month subscription to Field & Stream or Outdoor Life magazine, and another valuable gift (see insert), just to say thanks for your donation.

Because we depend on the input of members like you to continue improving our magazine, we’d like to get your feedback. Please feel free to e-mail your thoughts to membership@UnionSportsmen.org.

FRED MYERS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR/CEO

Since being launched in 2009, Union Sportsmen’s Journal has continually moved forward.

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UNION MADE IN THE USA
The Sportsman President

AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka was reelected in September. That’s welcome news for the USA.

After serving as AFL-CIO president for the past four years, Richard Trumka was reelected to the position in September. That’s great news for the Union Sportsmen’s Alliance and all union sportsmen and sportswomen.

Trumka’s path to the top AFL-CIO position began at an early age with the lessons passed down from his father and grandfather, hardworking miners who also engendered his love for hunting as they chased squirrel, rabbits, and birds in Pennsylvania.

Growing up in the 1960s, Trumka saw the challenges mine workers faced, with dangerous working conditions and low pay. When he graduated high school, he followed his father and grandfather into the mines. In facing the hazards of a miner, he learned the true meaning of solidarity. Trumka spent seven years in the mines while working toward a law degree before joining the United Mine Workers of America legal staff.

He rose through the union ranks and was elected the UMWA’s youngest president before being elected as the secretary-treasurer of the AFL-CIO. For nearly 15 years, he served in that position, working to improve workers’ benefits and assisting affiliated unions in collective bargaining, before being elected as AFL-CIO president in 2009.

An avid outdoorsman who recognizes that hunting, fishing, and shooting are a key part of the outdoor lifestyle shared by millions of union members, Trumka helped expand the traditional roles of unions beyond the workplace during his time as secretary-treasurer, and later during his first term as AFL-CIO president.

“My father instilled in me a passion both for unionism and a love of the outdoors. When not fighting for America’s workers, there are few things I’d rather do than hunt, fish, or spend time in the outdoors with my own son,” Trumka says. “Just as I feel driven to help ensure a bright future for American workers, I feel compelled to help protect the outdoor opportunities we treasure today for future generations.”

Trumka helped launch the USA in 2007, and, as its chairman of the board and first member, has worked diligently to help build the organization, enhance its value to outdoorsmen and -women, and increase its impact on conservation.

“I’ve had the pleasure of hunting grouse and pheasants in Montana with Rich, and whitetails in Pennsylvania. The enthusiasm and tenaciousness he showed climbing up and down those Montana hills and waiting out a big buck in the blind is the same commitment he has poured into supporting the USA and its conservation mission,” says USA Executive Director Fred Myers. “We congratulate him on his reelection and are excited about the positive impact he will have on unions and the USA during this term.”

When not fighting for America’s workers, there are few things I’d rather do than hunt, fish, or spend time in the outdoors with my own son.”

USA Executive Director Fred Myers joined AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka in the stadium after Trumka threw the first pitch at a Dodgers game the day of his reelection.
As a sportsman or sportswoman, you've probably spent $10, $20, or more for a single chance to win a gun, right? Well, how does $0.58 per chance at a great firearm sound?

With the USA's Gun-A-Week 2014 Calendar, each week brings another chance to win a high-quality shotgun, rifle, or handgun, including Remington firearms proudly made by members of Mine Workers Local 717. That's 52 chances to win a gun for just $30, and your contribution helps support the USA's conservation efforts.

Featuring impressive photos of Union Sportsmen’s Alliance members in the outdoors, USA’s 2014 calendar is one you’ll be proud to hang on your wall. And since everyone needs a calendar, it also makes a great birthday or Christmas gift for your family, friends, co-workers, and union brothers and sisters. Just imagine the brownie points you’ll earn if your gift lands someone a new gun!

Union Internationals, Locals, and District councils can purchase a minimum of 100 calendars at a bulk rate of $2,000 ($20 per calendar) and sell them at the $30 rate to raise up to $1,000, while also earning a union-made Remington 870 Express 12-gauge shotgun for every 100 calendars purchased.

Joe Nigro, President of the International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail, and Transportation Workers (SMART), was thrilled to see one of his guys, Tom Stewart of SMART Local 44, featured in the calendar, and was the first to order 100 copies.

With great photos featuring your union brothers and sisters, and so many chances to win a gun, these calendars are going fast. To order calendars, visit 2014.gunaweek.unionsportsmen.org.

With USA's Gun-A-Week Calendar, each week brings another chance to win a high-quality firearm.
REFUGE REHAB

Wisconsin union volunteers save Mississippi Wildlife Refuge $11,000

BY KATE CYWINSKI

A motto union workers live by, and this summer, a group of 15 Boots on the Ground union volunteers proved that this ethic extends beyond jobs they get paid for.

In 2012, the Upper Mississippi Wildlife Refuge, which runs along the Mississippi River through Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, and Illinois, opened the La Crosse Visitor Center in Onalaska, Wisconsin. Covering 240,000 acres, the refuge encompasses one of the largest blocks of floodplain habitat in the Lower 48 and offers both scenic beauty and productive fish and wildlife habitat. The visitor center serves as a gateway to the refuge and features exhibits, meeting rooms, interpretive presentations, trails, and observation areas.

With the support of the Western Wisconsin Building & Construction Trades Council (BCTC) and Western Wisconsin AFL-CIO, union volunteers laid landscape pavers around the visitor center kiosk on July 31, saving the refuge $11,000 that can now be used for conservation and education programs.

“We are thankful we can give back to the communities that we live and work in,” says Terry Hayden, Business Manager of UA Local 434 and President of the Western WI BCTC. “This project was a great example of what the Union Trades do every day on the jobsite. There was no wandering around. These guys showed up ready to work and knew what to do to get the job done for the customer.”

With a compactor and skid steer donated by Hengel Brothers Inc. of La Crosse and a paver saw donated by Market & Johnson of La Crosse and Eau Claire, the volunteers backfilled gravel, leveled sand, and installed pavers, finishing the entire project, which was expected to take a full day, in just eight hours.

“We want to express our appreciation for all your efforts. ‘Unbelievable’ is the word used by several of our staff,” says James Nissen, La Crosse District Manager for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. “It was a very professional job, completed by a very professional crew. On behalf of our staff and the many thousands of visitors who will benefit from all your hard work, we thank you.”

Blazing a Trail

Union volunteers improve access for Virginia State Park visitors with mobility issues

VIRGINIA’S YORK RIVER State Park encompasses 2,550 acres of coastal forest and wetlands as well as 30 miles of trails. But until recently, one of the most scenic trails wasn’t accessible to all park visitors.

With large pine roots growing through the asphalt, the handicap trail running along the river and through the native plant gardens was in desperate need of repair. As part of the USA’s Adopt-A-Park initiative, volunteers from IBEW Local 666; UA Locals 10, 540, and 110; and the Virginia BCTC gathered at the park throughout August and September to remove the broken asphalt and replace it with concrete to create more accessible walkways for those with limited mobility.

“As a day-use park, our nearly 30 miles of trails are an integral part of York River’s offerings,” says Russell Johnson, York River State Park Manager. “It’s rare to have a project like this one that enhances those offerings for all of our guests, no matter their physical capabilities.”

This project will be the first of many in Virginia. On September 21, the USA hosted its first Annual Conservation Dinner in Richmond to raise funds to implement similar projects in the area. Joe Elton, the Director of Virginia’s State Parks and Founding President of the America’s State Parks Foundation, was instrumental in helping design USA’s Adopt-A-Park program, and he and the USA look forward to continuing the effort both in Virginia and beyond.

To learn more about Adopt-A-Park, visit UnionSportsmen.org/parks.
IN A WORLD where modern technology has become the entertainment of choice for many children, it’s increasingly important to introduce them to the outdoors at a young age. Statistics show that the earlier kids get involved in outdoor activities, the more likely they’ll be to respect and enjoy the outdoors. From June to August, union volunteers in Wisconsin, Illinois, and Minnesota helped get 216 kids engaged in hands-on outdoor activities like fishing and shooting through three USA Boots on the Ground events.

At the start of summer break for schoolchildren, the USA held Take Kids Fishing Day events on June 8 and 9 at Pettibone Beach Park in La Crosse, Wisconsin, and at Braun’s Bay–Carson Park in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. Over the two days, 25 volunteers from the affiliated unions of the Western Wisconsin AFL-CIO, Greater Eau Claire Area CLC, and Western Wisconsin BCTC contributed more than 150 hours to help teach kids to tie their own hooks, cast a line, reel in a fish, and fillet their catch. They also educated the kids on the size and bag limits for keeping fish, and the laws for fishing with a license.

Wrapping up National Recreation and Parks Month, volunteers from Laborers Locals 773 and 1197, Laborers LECET, and ULLICO hosted the Southern Illinois Laborers’ Therapy Center Kids Fishing Day on July 26. With bait and tackle provided by the Laborers’ and fishing rods donated by Zebco, 42 youths—some with mental and physical limitations—and their parents or guardians gathered at a public fishing beach in the Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge for a fun day of fishing. Some of the youths had never fished before and others had experienced it for the first time at last year’s event.

“Getting kids involved in the outdoors and making public lands and parks more accessible for everyone is the tip of the iceberg for the Union Sportsmen’s Alliance,” says Claude Sadler, Director of Southern and Central Illinois Laborers’ LECET. “And who better to take on these challenges than the most skilled labor in the world—union labor! I’m proud to be a USA member and can’t wait to see what it has in store for the future.”

On the heels of USA’s 3rd Annual Roofers Twin Cities Sporting Clays Shoot, 10 volunteers from the Roofers International and Locals, Bricklayers Local 1, and Central Minnesota BCTC hosted the 2nd Annual Get Youth Outdoors Day. The 24 youths who attended the event at Wild Marsh Sporting Clays learned about hunter and firearms safety, watched a demo of a dog flushing a pheasant, and practiced shooting shotguns, .22 rifles, and compound bows. As volunteers taught the youths how to hold and position the firearms and bows, the kids gained confidence that left them and their parents with big smiles.

Thanks to our dedicated volunteers and sponsors, these Boots on the Ground events will have a lasting impression on the 216 youths who attended, and, hopefully, inspire a lifelong love of the outdoors and interest in conservation.

Youths enjoyed outdoor activities at Take Kids Fishing Day and Get Youth Outdoors Day events.
My son, Wesley, had never hunted outside Ross County, Ohio. He was familiar with sitting in a treestand without seeing anything, but he wasn’t sure what to expect from a Labor Day weekend early doe/fawn whitetail and antelope hunt in Wyoming.

I found Gerry Miller, a rancher looking for hunters, through the Hunter Assistance Program on the Wyoming Game & Fish website. We didn’t check into our hotel in Buffalo, Wyoming, until 1:45 a.m., but we still rolled out of bed at 5 a.m. to meet Gerry. I had never been able to get Wesley out of bed so easily. Seeing several deer on the way to the ranch only amplified his excitement.

We arrived at daylight to find deer everywhere. Gerry had Wesley shoot at his first deer right away. He didn’t make a great shot, and the deer jumped the fence and was gone. Gerry then led us to our ground blind, and before he left us, Wesley had taken his first Wyoming whitetail. It was a hot weekend, so we took the deer to the processor.

When we arrived back at the field at 11 a.m., there was a small buck antelope lying directly in front of the blind. There was no way to avoid spooking it, so we decided to go straight at him to get him out of there quickly.

“How long do you think it will take for more antelope to come in?” Wesley asked. I looked at my watch and replied, “It’s 11:18. Let’s see.”

A few minutes after we arrived at the blind, a fawn antelope laid down 25 yards in front of us. I asked Wesley if he wanted to shoot it; he decided to wait. Perhaps 30 seconds later, a larger, more mature goat came into the alfalfa field. She covered about 300 yards in what seemed like 10 seconds.

At 11:33 a.m., Wesley shot his first Wyoming antelope with the Sako .270 rifle I was given a few years back as a guest on the USA’s TV show. She ran about 50 yards and piled up—we were taking hero shots at 11:38 a.m.

“It’ll take 15 minutes for more goats to come,” I replied to Wesley’s earlier question, and we both laughed.

As we sat in the blind for a few more minutes, he looked at me and said, “Man, I can’t stop shaking.” I was glad to hear that, and explained the adrenaline rush he was feeling. He doesn’t understand yet, but I was just as excited for him. He’ll know that feeling when he takes his son on his first successful hunt. I look forward to that day.

—Jordan “Gig” Ritenour, Roofers Intl. Director of Market Development

Wesley Ritenour harvested his first antelope in Wyoming.
Ram Tough
Tom Friddle’s dream sheep hunt becomes a reality
By Christopher Cogley

Sometimes, even when you do everything right, hunts don’t turn out the way you hope. When it came to his dream bighorn sheep hunt, Tom Friddle, a retired member of Electrical Workers Local 387 in Phoenix, Arizona, did everything he was supposed to do—yet the opportunity he’d long dreamed of very nearly disappeared forever.

In 2010, after 42 years of applying, Friddle finally drew one of Arizona’s coveted bighorn tags. Along with his friend, Hayward Wilson—an also a retired electrical worker—Fridden spent months scouting the remote high-mountain area for a ram. But when that cold opening morning finally came, it wasn’t one of those familiar rams that Friddle spotted as he glassed the crags and cliffs he had come to know so well.

“I got just a glimpse right before he headed over a ridge, but I knew it wasn’t a ram we had scouted,” Friddle says. “And I was pretty sure he was a big one.” When they finally closed the distance, Friddle’s initial hunch was confirmed.

“He looked like a really good-size ram,” Friddle says. “But he was getting ready to go over the edge of the bench he was on. I had to make a decision right then and there.”

Forty-two years all came down to this. Friddle made a split-second decision and squeezed off the shot. Then the unthinkable happened: The ram disappeared over the edge.

Fridden and Wilson waited a torturous 45 minutes before going after the ram, then spent two more hours climbing down to the edge of the bench. During that time, Fridden imagined every possible scenario that might have turned his dream hunt into a nightmare, resulting in a wounded animal and a once-in-a-lifetime tag unfilled.

When Fridden looked over the edge, he saw that everything he’d dreamed of all these years was less than two steps away.

“It felt like the weight of the world had been lifted off my shoulders,” Friddle says. The ram scored 180 2/8 points, enough to make the record book and prove to the rest of us that sometimes, when you do everything right, your hunt really can turn out just like you dreamed it would.

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Field & Stream is proud to partner with the Union Sportsmen’s Alliance to promote and educate men, women and children so that the great American traditions of hunting, fishing and conserving can be passed on for generations to come. We are proud to announce our partnership with these two programs.

Go to TotalOutdoorsmanChallenge.com for more information
MADE IN THE USA
Top equipment picks to enjoy in the American outdoors

The Stealth SS crossbow pairs the company’s popular, streamlined XLT bow assembly with the new stock and tactical barrel to create a shorter, lighter, and more powerful version of the award-winning Stealth XLT. The key component is the FSB (Functionally Superior Bullpup) stock and a new black, anodized, 13.5-inch tactical aluminum fluted barrel fitted with a 4-inch bullpup version of the company’s patented PowerTouch trigger. The embedded barrel employs rubber inserts and dual-purpose rubber safety wings to further reduce noise and vibration. The primary function of the patent-pending wings, however, is to keep the shooter’s foregrip hand safely below the flight deck. The Stealth SS’s bow assembly measures 13.5 inches from axle to axle; its machined riser is fitted with 11-inch IsoTaper Limbs, MRX cams, D-75 string and cables, and a detachable, lightweight, coated-aluminum foot stirrup. The combined assemblies produce an ultra-compact 185-pound draw-weight bow—a pleasant打猎—a pleasant hunting experience all in a package. The new Stealth SS is the company’s patented ultra-compact 185-pound draw-weight bow—a pleasant打猎—a pleasant hunting experience all in a package. This bow delivered the goods. Even more impressive is the new Extinguish Dampening System, which keeps the shooter’s hand safely below the flight deck. The Stealth SS measures just 34.4 inches long and weighs only 6.8 pounds, making it the most compact crossbow TenPoint has ever produced.

When you plan the trip of a lifetime, whether it's a Wyoming elk hunt or plains game in South Africa, you’d better make sure the rifle you consign to the baggage hold of the airline comes out the other end in one piece. A new injection-molded waterproof case from SKB is designed to do just that. The interior of the 4909-SR Watertight Injection Molded Single Rifle Case measures 49 x 9 x 5 inches, and features an EPS and convoluted foam base, with more foam in the lid for stable positioning of your rifle. There is plenty of room for such key accessories as a scope mount, scope, and binoculars.

Incorporating the installer’s choice of holding and supporting the weapon, the MagPul Carbine Rail—making an appearance. The Cam has been specifically designed for bow maintenance, the Pump for shotguns, and the Rail for rifles. Features include sight-adjustment tools, a broadhead wrench, and choke tube adjustment tools, all made of 100 percent stainless steel.
COVER STORY

THINK THE SEASON’S OVER? THINK AGAIN. IN SOME WAYS, IT’S REALLY JUST GETTING STARTED.

COLD

HERE ARE THE EXPERT TIPS AND TACTICS YOU NEED TO HUNT AND FISH WHEN THE MERCURY DROPS

TRUTH

PHOTOGRAPH BY DONALD M. JONES
PRIME SPOT

The edges between a hardwood ridge and a conifer swamp can hold big deer.
like a campfire slowly burning down to glowing embers, the season is winding down. But that doesn’t mean you have to wind down as well. The last few days before deer season ends can be the best time to go after the big bucks that eluded you earlier. Yes, they’re harder to find—they’re the ultimate survivors. But that challenge simply makes the results so much sweeter. You’ve also got ducks, geese, rabbits, squirrels, and bass to consider. And icefishing and predator hunting are just coming into prime time.

THE BIG-WOODS SQUEEZE

You’ve been waiting for a few inches of new snow to coincide with a day you can hunt so you can track down a big-woods buck. But here it is, the eve of the season’s final day, and that fresh snowfall isn’t coming. By Dave Hurteau

THE GAME PLAN

“Well, you aren’t going to kill a deer sitting on your butt,” says Randy Flannery of Maine’s Wilderness Escape Outfitters (207-448-3238; wildernessescape.com). “Your best bet is to call a couple of buddies and have them meet you at dawn to try a three-man still-hunting strategy we call triangulation.”

First, pick a good bedding area. “Most big-woods bucks spend late-season days hunkered down on their bellies, and their prime lair is a conifer swamp surrounded by hardwood ridges, where they feed at night.” When your buddies show up before dawn, check the wind. Look at a map of your hunting area to locate a swamp that’s small enough to cover in a day, where you can take advantage of the wind.

Go there and mentally split the swamp into two equilateral triangles, with the bases typically being a road or skidder trail or snowmobile route. “If you have a northwest wind, for example, start on the west side of the swamp, with you and your buddies spread out along the base of the first triangle. All of you will still-hunt toward the apex,” says Flannery. The hunter on the right side hunts straight into the wind. The hunter on the left more or less crosscuts the wind. And the
HOW TO SCORE

REMEMBER, THIS ISN'T a drive. So still-hunt carefully, always scanning ahead and to the sides to spot deer and move in for a shot. In the meantime, this strategy exploits a buck’s tendency to circle downwind when alerted, as well as his desire to stay within the security of the conifer swamp.

“On the first pass, any deer bumped by the hunter on the left will likely move downwind, right to the guy in the middle [1]. Deer bumped by the hunter in the middle or on the right will also move downwind, into the part of the swamp you’ll cover later [2],” explains Flannery. After lunch, on the second pass, bucks are squeezed by the hunter on the left, but also by the swamp’s edge on the right, because they don’t want to leave that sanctuary. “Sometimes nothing happens until you start pinching toward the apex of that second triangle [3], and then it happens all at once. Squeezed bucks can pop up anywhere, and you’d better be ready.”

CUTBACK

Deer often circle downwind to avoid a stalking hunter. Be sure to stay focused.

Rather than sit, bored out of your mind, in a treestand over a food plot, why not hunt the old-fashioned way—by tracking a moving deer in snow? To determine if a track is worth following, lay a .30/06 cartridge across the impression. If it’s a big deer, the cartridge will fit inside the track. The deeper the track, the bigger the deer.

While in pursuit, keep in mind that a big buck that has figured something is on its backtrail will occasionally turn off to the side to see if it can spot the pursuer. This happens a lot at clear-cuts—be ready for that move, and be ready to shoot.

Most shots will be in thick cover, at probably no more than 75 yards, so make sure your scope is set to no higher than 4X. And since you probably won’t have time to get a good rest, before you try this, run through some ammo, focusing on instinctive shooting. —SLATON L. WHITE
It’s 7 a.m. on Lake Guntersville, and I’m in a 20-foot Nitro bass boat thundering along at 50 mph, with the five-time Toyota Tundra BASS Angler of the Year—Kevin VanDam. Minutes after the boat jumps on plane, VanDam’s affinity for the full-speed, fast-action brand of fishing that has made him famous is hard to miss: He makes a beeline for a shelf, kills the engine, jumps on the bow, and starts gunning cast after cast with a lipless crankbait—one of VanDam’s favorite lures for big largemouth bass.

“The main attraction of a lipless crankbait at this time of year is that largemouth bass seem to be especially susceptible to flat-sided baits,” VanDam tells me. “Even though the water is still cold, the bass know their food is in the shallows. If you find them concentrated, and make the right retrieve at the right depth, a lipless bait can dominate now.”

CRANK IT…

“I want my bait to contact cover,” says VanDam. The crankbait should almost rake the vegetation. Try different retrieves and lure weights to find the right depth.

CRANK IT UP
Cover weedy areas with long, rapid-fire casts.

TRANSITION ZONE
Before migrating to spawning flats, bass stage near weedlines in areas with current.

CRANK IT DOWN
“The closer you fish to cover, the better.”

SPawning FLAT

CURRENT

BASS MIGRATION

OUTFIT OF CHOICE
VanDam pairs a 7-foot medium-action Quantum Tour KVD rod with a Quantum Tour Edition 100PT reel. He carries several crankbait-specific rods rigged with different weighted baits and different line sizes to cover any depths—smaller diameters for deeper casts, thicker for shallower casts in cover. For example, in 6 feet of water, he’ll use a ½-ounce Red Eye Shad on 10-pound fluorocarbon. “I like fluoro because it doesn’t stretch as much as mono, and it gets baits deeper. Heavier line rides higher, and it helps to slow my retrieve down, which is important in colder water.”

TARGET ZONE
Focus on edges of spawning flats along ridges and points where fish stage before they move in and spawn. Also look for vegetation like hydrilla and milfoil. “You’ll find fish grouped tightly in small packs. You’re not going to catch one here and there. You find five or six at a time.”

GO-TO LURE
Depending on water depth, VanDam likes to fish a ¼- to ½-ounce Strike King Lipless Red Eye Shad crankbait ($6.49; basspro.com). Matching colors to local forage and water conditions is paramount. “A primary forage in early season at many lakes is crawfish, so I go with browns and tans. In lakes with grass and shad, chromes work well.”

WINNING TACTIC
The No. 1 asset of a good bait, according to VanDam, is the way it drops in the water, ideally without too much erratic flutter or falling on its side. After you cast into the target zone, pump the rod as you retrieve to accentuate the fall. Keep the line tight to maintain contact with your bait after long casts, and mix up your retrieves to cover different depths. “The closer you fish to cover, the better.”

VANDAM FACTS
Best Classic Finish: Winner in 2001 and 2000
Career Winnings: More than $5.5 million
Did You Know? VanDam’s off-season passion is hunting whitetail deer.
THE ULTIMATE ICEFISHING BUCKET

Transform an ordinary 5-gallon plastic pail into your personal hard-water angling station by Kirk Deeter

1. Start with a standard plastic 5-gallon bucket with a lid to haul gear and provide a seat. Decorate it however you like—a flaming skull, an American flag, or an angry-looking walleye.

2. Bungee cords wrapped near the rim will secure jigging rods and tip-ups to the side of the bucket. And it never hurts to have a bungee or two handy, should the need arise.

3. To organize nonmetallic items, fasten a small tool belt around the side of the bucket. Now you've got a great place to stash things like hand warmers, tissues, plastic boxes, bobbers, and snacks.

4. Use adhesive-backed Velcro to attach a cushion or a piece of 3-inch foam to the lid. Using Velcro rather than glue allows you to remove the foam easily if it needs to be cleaned or replaced.

5. The handle can also be a storage spot. Get a golf towel (one that comes with an attached clip) and snap it on. Tie on other items that you will use regularly, such as line clippers and a bottle opener.

6. To create handy holders for metal items, buy an assortment of inexpensive magnets. Attach them to the bucket’s sides with an all-purpose glue, such as Gorilla Glue.
THE LIBERTY SPREAD
How a waterfowl expert kills geese all winter with a decoy collection that fits in his SUV

BY PHIL BOURJAILY

Just because you don’t have much room for decoys doesn’t mean you can’t hunt geese. I watched Canadas fly over my house to cornfields beyond city limits until I couldn’t stand it any longer, then put together a packable decoy spread that stores on two shelves in the garage. It’s a mix—what some waterfowl hunters would call a junkyard spread. I prefer to call it the Liberty Spread, because with it, I am free to go where the geese are. Here’s what fits—though just barely—into the back of my Jeep Liberty.

A SPINNING-WING MALLARD
I use a Mojo remote-controlled spinning decoy during duck season. I turn it off when geese approach.

B FULL-BODIES
Lesser is more. I use Greenhead Gear and Final Approach lesser Canada decoys, which take up half the space of regular full-bodies. Twenty-two fit into 4 six-slot Avery decoy bags, which slide into my Jeep like 3-D Tetris blocks.

C SHELLS
Real geese feed on their bellies in cold weather, looking like a shell decoy. Packed tightly, three dozen Avery life-size shells fit in a six-slot bag.

D OVERSIZE SHELLS
I found these oversize sleepers abandoned by a trespasser and added them to my collection.

E FULL-BODY SNOW GOOSE
My good-luck charm rides with the oversize shells in a mesh decoy bag, which is the last thing I cram into the back before I close the rear window.

F SILHOUETTES
What silhouettes lack in depth they make up for in height and visibility. I wedge 36 Real Geese silos behind the rear door.
**SET THE SPREAD:** This approach works both in fields where geese feed and in the traffic fields they fly over on their way to feed elsewhere. In either case, set your spread on the highest point—both for visibility and because geese prefer to land on a high spot. Space the blinds 10 yards apart and 15 yards from the edge of the spread to put geese that sideslip the decoys into shotgun range. —P.B.

On very windy days, I use fewer silhouettes because they move too much. Some motion is good; too much looks unnatural.

Put some silhouettes around the blinds to conceal them.

Decoys should be scattered in random groups of one to five.

My full-body decoys go at the downwind edge in a horseshoe, leaving an open landing zone.

Keep one oversize sleeper in reach of each blind for hiding cameras, bags, thermoses, etc.

The rest. A goose flag, a blind, and my gun all slide on top of the decoy bags.
SHOOTING IN THE STUBBLE
Late-fall mallards call for full-body decoys in the field

BY M.D. JOHNSON

Mallards are tough to hunt in the late season, no matter the state or flyway. Traditional water decoy sets can still work, but many mallards will be spread-savvy by now, particularly north of the Mason-Dixon Line, where the season has been under way for well over a month. This is the time to beat a path to the fields and give those wary greenheads a look at something different: ultrarealistic full-bodies and shells.

THE DECOYS
Ducks, especially mallards, feed heavily in fields. Use more head-down (feeder) dekes than head-up (active or walker) ones. Less-expensive field shells boost decoy numbers, so don’t be afraid to mix them among the full-bodies—the more, the merrier.

THE SPREAD
Arrange walkers and feeders in a W in front of, behind, and between your and your buddies’ blinds. Mix in a few resters and sleepers as well as nonmallards, like pintails. Two to six full-body Canadas off to one side will attract mallards’ attention from a distance: Ducks often key on geese when looking for food. The faux mallards are confidence boosters.

THE BLINDS
A well-camouflaged, low-profile layout blind that can be easily repositioned, such as the Avery Outdoors Power Hunter ($165; averypowerhunters.com), is the ticket for field mallards. Don’t hesitate to reposition once the birds show you where they want to go in relation to the decoys.

THE HUNT
Successful gunning begins with in-depth scouting. Set up as close to the landing spot you’ve scouted as possible, and cover your blinds with stubble. Ground mallards are often noisy, so put three or four good callers to work on rolling feeding chuckles, with the occasional Quack, quacck thrown in. For safety, always have one hunter call the shot.

FIELD GUIDE TO DECOYS

1. Mallard
2. Mallard Hen
3. Goose
4. Pintail

GREENHEAD GEAR FULL-BODY MALLARDS
Six for $105
greenheadgear.com

GEAR TIP:
Greenhead’s full-body decoys and field shells (12 for $125) will grab the attention of late-season mallards, but only if they’re clean. A post-hunt scrub (cold water only; soaps can affect the UV properties of some plastics) with a stiff-bristle brush will keep the birds flying in. —M.D.J.
Jeff Whitson is a world-class cat caller, but not in the sense of whistling at pretty women. Whitson is from the Texas Hill Country, and Texans are brought up with manners. No, he’s a predator hunting guide (325-456-1251), and bobcats are his specialty. Though he lives in a better area than most for predator calling, Whitson says the fundamentals for calling up a bobcat are the same regardless of where you hunt. Here they are.

**FELINE COME-ON**

Call in bobcats, day or night by WILL BRANTLEY

> **WILD CAT**
Bobcats live in thick country, so avoid hunting wide-open fields.

**CAT COUNTRY**

“You have to call where cats live,” Whitson says. That means thick, rugged country free of human interference. You won’t catch many bobcats hunting in wide-open fields next to the road. Whitson’s favorite spots are rocky, brushy creek draws. If he can find fresh tracks and scat in such an area, he’s in business. All he needs for a setup is an opening for a shot near that thick cover.

**PRIME TIMES**

Unlike coyotes, bobcats rely on their eyes and ears more than their nose, so the wind doesn’t matter much. Most of Whitson’s hunting is at night with the help of a red-filtered spotlight. Cats can be called up during the day, too, but you’ll need a decoy. One of Whitson’s favorite lures is a turkey feather tied to a string on a stick. Arrange it so it can flutter freely in the breeze.

**CURiosity KILLS**

Whitson uses electronic callers, and a baby cottontail in distress is his favorite sound for predators. “I’ll add frequent pauses to my calling if I’m after bobcats,” he says. “It’s not unusual for a cat to take 45 minutes before it shows itself. With a light at night, you can spot their eyes in the brush. Keep them curious, and eventually they’ll give you a shot.”

**COYOTE CANDY**

Attract more of the predators by pairing your calls with these D.I.Y. decoys by M.D. JOHNSON

Calling in coyotes is an adrenaline rush unmatched, but fooling them isn’t easy. Start by giving them something to hear, then round out your illusion by giving them something to see—like a pelt or plume decoy. These three decoys are highly visible and simple to make. Just tie a 24-inch length of 40- to 80-pound monofilament to each, then hang them 12 to 18 inches off the ground, slightly quartering away from your position at 25 to 50 yards.

1. **FAUX FUR**

   Strips of synthetic fur (available at most craft stores) are rugged and machine washable in scent-killing detergents. A mix of brown and white strips creates an eye-catching strobelike effect.

2. **Wing It**

   A wild turkey primary feather makes an excellent year-round decoy. The white shows up well against early-season foliage, while the black stands out against snow cover in winter.

3. **TAIL SPIN**

   Lightweight and easy to come by, squirrel tails (deboned and cured with salt) pull double duty by attracting both coyotes and bobcats. Timber edges are great locations for this decoy.

FROM TOP: DENVER BRYAN/IMAGES ON THE WILDSIDE; CLIFF GARDINER & JOHN KELLER

USAJ13_Feature.indd 21
WHERE:
With mast gone from the trees, squirrels are now foraging on the ground. Hunt areas where there was mast—underneath black walnut, hickory, or oak trees. Cut cornfields are also good.

WHEN:
Sunny days are best. Start at midmorning and concentrate on south slopes. Look for squirrels to be sunning themselves, lying prone on horizontal limbs in full sun.

GUN:
With little cover left, getting close can be difficult, which means longer shots are the rule. I shoot a Ruger 10/22 with a 3x9–40mm Bushnell scope.

CAMO:
Winter squirrels know they’re visible, so they’re extra wary. Snow camouflage—including hat and gloves—is essential.

TACTICS:
Spot-and-stalk and stump sitting can work as well in the snow as they did in September. Move slowly and with stealth, and use what cover is available. Sit near active food sources—based on clues like tracks and cuttings, nut hulls, or corncobs.
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USA 2013
Following a fresh elk track in the snow requires stealth, savvy, and stamina—not to mention more than a wee bit of woodsmanship and a willingness to dress and pack a big-bodied bull in the bone-numbing cold. Late-season success isn’t measured just in antler inches, but in encounters. Expect adrenaline spikes and a pounding pulse as you close the distance using these tips.

**Bull Elk Snow Trek**

Tracking an elk in the snow is one of winter’s most thrilling hunts—a true challenge, both mentally and physically. Here’s how it’s done. **By David Draper**

**Know Country for Old Bulls**

The better you know the country you’ll be in, the better the odds of punching your tag. Study a good map before you hit the woods, noting parks, saddles, benches, and likely bedding areas. Keep this guide handy to refer to often as you’re following fresh tracks.

**Date the Spoor**

As a general rule, crisp edges mean tracks are likely only a couple of hours old. In falling snow, any tracks not filled with fresh flakes were recently made. To confirm, feel fresh droppings atop the snow. Any not frozen are probably less than 12 hours old; if they’re soft and warm, elk are close.

**Keep Your Chin Up**

Don’t spend all of your time staring at the ground, or before you know it you’ll get busted. Take frequent breaks from tracking to scan the forest ahead of you. You are looking for the flick of an ear, the glint of an antler, or the white rump of an elk moving away from you.

**Beat Them to Bed**

If it looks like the bull is heading toward a known bedding area, you can try to beat him to it. Head uphill a significant distance off the trail, staying as deep in the timber as possible. Make a wide circle around the herd and set up where you’ll have a clear shot when the bull comes into view.

**Get Off Track**

Big tracks in a straight line signify a bull with a destination in mind. Follow in his footsteps, moving quickly and quietly. The second they start to wander, you need to slow down and still-hunt. Move 15 to 20 feet off the tracks, on the uphill side if possible, and get ready for a shot. The elk is probably looking to bed down.

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W. Alan Wright, a member of Plumbers & Pipefitters Local 234 from Jacksonville, FL, harvested this warthog in Limpopo Province South Africa in May.

Kurt Spiegel, a member of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees Council 28, caught this nice albacore tuna out of Westport, WA. Yum!

Doug Ewell, a member of Boilermakers Local 374 from Indiana, shot this 210-lb. razorback with a Marlin 45-70 Govt. lever-action while on vacation in Magnolia, AR, in Aug. 2013. It was his first hunt of any kind.

Keith Darcy, a member of Electrical Workers Local 3 from New York City, reeled in this 28-in., 8-lb. brown trout from the Ramapo River in New York.

Jaxson Kaiser, 4-year-old son of Steel Workers Local 104 member Andy Kaiser, with his first bluegill of the day.
Evie Turney, 11, daughter of Erica Turney of the Boilermakers International, participated in a hunter-education clinic put on by the Fraternal Order of Police. She got her license and was the No. 1 shooter out of all the females, both youth and adult.

John Smith, a retired 50-year member of Plumbers & Pipefitters Local 9 from Hamilton, NJ, caught this 28-lb. king salmon in the Rouge River in Aug. 2013 after a hard 20-minute fight.

Evie Turney, 11, daughter of Erica Turney of the Boilermakers International, participated in a hunter-education clinic put on by the Fraternal Order of Police. She got her license and was the No. 1 shooter out of all the females, both youth and adult.

Mitch Huckeba, a member of Elevator Constructors Local 18 from Henderson, NV, harvested this mule deer in Nevada in Nov. 2010, and was proud to share the experience with his granddaughter, Allison.

John Smith, a retired 50-year member of Plumbers & Pipefitters Local 9 from Hamilton, NJ, caught this 28-lb. king salmon in the Rouge River in Aug. 2013 after a hard 20-minute fight.

Paul McKenzie, a member of Operating Engineers Local 3 from Reno, NV, harvested this antelope in Nevada in Aug. 2011. Despite the heat, his grandchildren joined him for every hike.

John Smith, a retired 50-year member of Plumbers & Pipefitters Local 9 from Hamilton, NJ, caught this 28-lb. king salmon in the Rouge River in Aug. 2013 after a hard 20-minute fight.

Paul McKenzie, a member of Operating Engineers Local 3 from Reno, NV, harvested this antelope in Nevada in Aug. 2011. Despite the heat, his grandchildren joined him for every hike.

Jim Wood Jr., a member of Laborers Local 1130 from Modesto, CA, caught this giant lingcod while fishing in Glacier Bay near Gustavas, AK.

Steve Cleinmark, a lineman out of Electrical Workers Local 196, caught this monster 52-in. muskie on his fourth day of fishing the Canada side of Lake St. Clair. It was his biggest muskie ever.
USA IS ALL IN

By Kate Cywinski

USA’s first committee-run shoot in Reno proves to be a big success

During 2012, the USA Shoot Tour brought together nearly 2,000 union members, partners, and guests in support of labor and the great outdoors, and we surpassed that number in September. Our goal over the next five years is to host enough shoots around the country that every USA member has the opportunity to attend, and last August, we took the first big step in that direction.

Knowing the deck was stacked in our favor (with three committed USA members who were experienced in running trap shoots), we were “all in” on our very first committee-run USA shoot in Reno, Nevada, and hit the jackpot when the event exceeded the expected revenue by more than $8,500.

Organized by BCTC Northern Nevada Executive Secretary-Treasurer Paul McKenzie, IUPAT DC 16 Regional Director Todd Koch, and UA Local 350 Business Manager Kres Bishop, the successful event brought together more than 50 avid shooters, while raising money to support the USA’s efforts to enhance public access to the outdoors, conserve wildlife habitat, and pass on our incredible outdoors heritage to the next generation.

The USA had previously hosted Reno Sporting Clays Shoots in 2010 and 2011, but in order to expand to new markets in 2012, we hadn’t planned a third annual event in 2012. According to McKenzie, “The members who participated in the USA-run shoots in previous years kept asking us when we were going to have another one. It’s all about the people we represent, and this event allowed us to do something good for our members while helping the USA, so it was a no-brainer to host the shoot this year.”

When asked what he learned from being part of a USA shoot committee, McKenzie explained that while a small committee can be good in many ways, it’s nice to have a large committee the day of the event, so the duties can be split up. He added that having committee members who don’t want to shoot—although that wasn’t the case with the Reno Shoot—would be beneficial.

“We have things we can improve upon, but I think we’re all in for doing it again next year,” McKenzie says.

“The committee approach will allow the USA to expand to new markets while providing local union leadership with an opportunity to connect with their members in an energizing and entertaining environment,” says Director of USA Events and Fundraising Nate Whiteman. “We can’t thank our Reno Shoot committee enough for hosting a great event and serving as our guinea pigs to teach us how we can prepare and assist future committees in organizing shoots on behalf of the USA.”

Anyone interested being part of a USA shoot committee should contact Nate Whiteman at natew@unionsportsmen.org or 440-867-8229.
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