Contents

DEPARTMENTS

2  Around the USA
6  Conservation Focus
10  You are the USA
12  This Land is Your Land
14  Made in the U. S. A.
18  USA Events
20  Take Your Best Shot
21  First Harvest

FEATURES

4  Wanted: Hog Hunters  By Doug Howlett
8  Gobblers in the Sunshine State  By Tim Herald
13  Step-By-Step: Stalking Black Bears  By David Draper
16  Tarpon 101  By Bob McNally

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Fishing: It’s the Perfect Therapy for These Challenging Times

In 1776, as the men and women living in Colonial America struggled through the hardships of the American Revolutionary War, famous American patriot and pamphleteer Thomas Paine wrote, “These are the times that try men’s souls.”

For many of our brothers and sisters who remain unemployed following the greatest economic downfall since the Great Depression, Paine’s words remain as meaningful today as when he wrote them in the late 18th century. These times are trying men’s souls, those of their families and everyone who cares about the well-being of our country and its working people.

While the nation struggles to recover from a stubborn recession and high unemployment rates, I hope the recovery steadily continues, especially for our brothers and sisters who are currently looking for work.

Often when a burdensome and seemingly overwhelming problem gets me down, I look for an antidote, something to lift my spirits. Just the other day, with the problems of unemployment and underemployment weighing heavily on my mind, it occurred to me that spring is upon us. Quickly followed by my thoughts of spring came thoughts of fishing on a spectacular spring afternoon. For whatever reason, I’ve always found fishing to be an elixir for my worries.

The thing is, fish don’t care about our problems. I don’t mean that to sound trite or flippant; in fact, I mean it quite the opposite. The fish don’t care if we’re rich, poor, gainfully employed or out of work. They don’t care if we’re skinny or fat, black or white, brown or purple. They don’t care if we’re a fly fisherman, spin fisherman, a cook, baker or candlestick maker. When I think about it, it’s actually pretty refreshing and puts a bit of perspective on things.

Robert Traver, author of Trout Madness and Trout Magic, wrote that he liked fishing for trout, “because trout do not lie or cheat and cannot be bought or bribed or impressed by power, but respond to only quietude and humility and endless patience.”

I enjoy fishing because the sport lies outside the realm of my daily concerns. When I fish, I escape from the world, if only for an hour or a day, and for that I am grateful. Fishing allows me to suspend all concentration on everyday worries and simply enjoy living in the moment – a state of mind that children enjoy naturally and wise men seek.

Traver summed up his thoughts about fishing when he wrote, “And finally, not because I regard fishing as so terribly important, but I suspect that so many other concerns of men are equally unimportant and not nearly so much fun.”

And to that I say—Amen!

Fred Myers
Executive Director, Union Sportsmen’s Alliance
Brotherhood Outdoors TVComing This Summer
Be the Next Union Guest – Apply Today!

Coming this summer to Sportsman Channel is the USA's brand new TV series, *Brotherhood Outdoors*. Just as the name implies, this is your show—featuring your Union brothers and sisters on action-packed hunting and fishing adventures across North America. And it can feature you too because we’re already filming for 2012. Apply today and let the adventure begin!

“The crew came to film an episode of *Brotherhood Outdoors* and man what an experience! Geese were killed, laughs were had and a member of this organization was humbled by the way he was treated by both the USA and the film crew. If you haven’t sent in an application, you’re missing an amazing opportunity to be a part of something truly special.”

– Brett Graham, IAMAW 839

**APPLY TODAY!**

1. Contact Information: Name, Union/Local, Address, Phone, E-mail
2. Describe a challenge, achievement or something unique about yourself.
3. Are you involved in any conservation work (wildlife habitat, trail building, Boyscout leader, etc.)? If yes, describe.
4. Do you do any volunteer/charity work? If yes, please describe.
5. Tell us about your family and home life (marital status, kids and favorite activities together).
6. Tell us about your hunting or fishing background—how you got started, what you love about it, and what species you pursue.
7. How did you get involved with the Union and what does Union membership mean to you?
8. What do you do specifically on the job?
9. In this series, host Tom Ackerman will take Union guests hunting or fishing and sometimes Union guests will invite Tom to participate in the hunting or fishing pursuits they take pride in.
   (a) If you think you have the skills and experience to guide and want to invite Tom to join you on your hunting or fishing adventure, describe the location, species, gear and any other specifics.
   (b) If you’d like Tom to take you hunting or fishing, describe where you’d like to go in North America, and what fish or game you’d like to pursue.

**To Apply—**Mail your answers to the following questions and some photos of yourself to:
USA • Attn: Brotherhood Outdoors
3340 Perimeter Hill Drive • Nashville, TN 37211

Tune in to Sportsman Channel for the premiere of *Brotherhood Outdoors* on Thursday, June 30th at 8 p.m. ET
It's that time of year again—time to stop driving your spouse and children nuts as you practice your purrs, clucks, yelps and gobbles around the house and get in the woods to put your calling to the test. If your practice pays off with a big, old longbeard, you could find yourself the winner of some fancy new gear, thanks to our friends at Mossberg, Primos and Ol’ Tom, in the 2nd Annual USA Turkey Contest. And let’s face it; you can never have too many guns or too much turkey gear.

All USA members who enter their turkey (legally harvested in North America during the spring 2011 season) in the contest will be included in a random drawing for a Mossberg 500 Turkey Thug shotgun, valued at approximately $409.

Additional prizes will be awarded for the top scoring birds in four categories: Eastern, Merriam, Osceola and Rio Grande. First place winners in each category will receive a Primos Crusher Blind worth $399.99, while second place winners will earn an Ol’ Tom Dura-Lite Time & Motion Turkey Vest valued at $85.

And you have plenty more chance to win because the next ten top scorers in each category will earn a Primos Chick Magnet box call, a $44.99 value. Put them all together, and you have 49 chances to win a prize in the USA Turkey Contest. See back cover for prize details.

Enter your turkey at www.UnionSportsmen.org/turkey.
“What in the world?” I said aloud.

“Hogs,” my host huffed. I was in Alabama for a turkey hunt and the landowner, who was showing me around his property, shook his head in anger. “They tear everything up—the land, the food plots. They run deer off and destroy turkey nests and eat the eggs. You can’t kill enough of them.”

In my two days there, I heard plenty of turkeys but also witnessed no shortage of hog damage—and hogs. In the mornings, you hear them squealing from the bottoms. Alabama is at the epicenter of the southern hog range. The problem has grown so big even mainstream news outlets have taken notice, with NBC’s Today show recently running a segment on feral hogs.

Wild hogs now range from Florida to California, along the eastern seaboard and up through the Midwest all the way to the Great Lakes. They’re found in parts or all of 35 states with an estimated two million pigs in the South alone. Experts predict it is but a matter of time before wild hogs are found in all the lower 48 states. They were introduced to Hawaii long ago and thrive...
there as well. Only Alaska may be spared.

Awesome Opportunity

One landowner’s problem is a sportsman’s opportunity. Just ask Troy Ayer, owner of The Buck and Boar Lodge (boar-hunter.com, 866-799-5585) in Swansea, S.C. Unlike many outfitters, who offer hunts for purely nuisance feral hogs, Ayer has taken advantage of his state’s hog situation and manages his land for boars with trophy potential. Even so, Ayer’s hunts, like most hog hunts, remain one of the most inexpensive adventures a hunter can book. A hunter can expect to spend about $700 for a weekend of hog hunting with meals and lodging included.

“Probably 90 percent of my business is hog hunters,” says Ayer.

What makes the species so great is that seasons run year round in most places, there are seldom bag limits (except on guided hunts) and, with ample animals and their propensity for rapidly multiplying, they typically make for a target-rich environment.

“The days of knocking on doors and getting permission to deer hunt a piece of property are pretty much over,” says Ayer. “But if a guy has hogs on his land, he’s probably happy to have you kill some of them.”

Big Game Adventure

In California, where the game department has recognized the trophy value of wild hogs and requires the purchase of tags to hunt them, the animals have become a sought after adventure.

“Hog hunting is a big part of our business,” says Don Geivet, vice president of ranch operations at the world-famous Tejon Ranch in California (tejonranch.com; 661-248-3000).

The ranch, the largest unbroken piece of land in the Golden State, is an hour from Los Angeles. Of the average 1,500 to 1,800 hunters who book hunts at the ranch each year, half of them journey to Tejon to hunt hogs. Geivet explains that some hogs escape from a fenced yard at the ranch in the early 1990s. Those hogs quickly grew into a population of between 5,000 and 6,000 animals. Combined with the rugged, mountainous terrain of Tejon, hog hunts offer as much adventure as any western-minded thrill seeker could want.

The ranch is located in an area where lead ammunition is restricted to protect the endangered California condor. I joined representatives of Winchester Ammunition to test their lead-free ammo on turkeys, ground squirrels, and of course, Tejon’s growing number of hogs. We expected the hogs to be easy hunting and the Merriam’s to present the real challenge. The turkeys certainly obliged. But the hogs also proved to be a challenge, leading my hunting partner, guide and myself on some near lung-collapsing uphill stalks and presenting shots from precarious mountainous angles.

Golden Age for Hogs

Hog hunting is one of the fastest growing segments of hunting today, says Ayer. In parts of Western Texas and California, they provide excellent spot-and-stalk hunting, regardless of whether you hunt with a bow or gun. However, the prevalent method for hunting hogs is to catch them feeding over bait in the early morning or just before dark. In parts of Florida, they are hunted with pit bulls and knives, though that method is a story unto itself.

Hogs have an excellent sense of smell but poor eyesight, so in addition to modern rifles, they provide great hunting fun with a bow, handgun or muzzleloader. Most of the gear hunters use for other types of hunting will work with hogs, so there are seldom additional expenditures for gear.

Indeed, hog hunting is a true blue collar-budgeted pursuit with followers of all stripes, and as pig populations continue to grow, it’s a sure bet that hog hunting opportunities will continue to grow. It’s time you took advantage of them yourself. USA
USA’s Boots on the Ground—On the Move

By Ken Barrett

In 2010, the Union Sportsmen’s Alliance developed an idea for a one-of-a-kind conservation program that would connect skilled Union volunteers with conservation projects in critical need of manpower in order to help preserve hunting and fishing traditions for future generations of sportsmen and women. That program is called Boots on the Ground (BOTG), and while it’s still very young, it’s expanding quickly.

The initial project, which involved Union members building live-catch deer traps for the Wisconsin DNR’s whitetailed deer study, is completed, and all 100 traps are in the woods. Union members who built the traps now have an opportunity to join DNR scientists this winter and spring as they capture deer and radio collar or ear tag them for tracking purposes. Seven Union locals and more than 100 Union members took part in the project.

We have nearly 15 additional projects in the discussion or planning stages. Most of these will begin between March and May of 2011 and include the following:

- In North and South Dakota, the AFL-CIO Central Labor Councils are taking the lead in coordinating with the Game and Fish Department of both states to have Union members replace or repair existing deer traps.

Open Fields Legislation = More Opportunities

By Ken Barrett

In 2010, we finally saw the first round of funding, totaling $11.76 million, made available for the Voluntary Access and Habitat Incentive Program, commonly called Open Fields. Union officials and rank and file members, along with many other groups and individuals, worked five long years to get Open Fields legislation passed and funded.

Last year, 17 states were awarded funds to expand and enhance public access to private lands. Recently, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack announced the program will get another shot in the arm with an additional $8 million in 2011.

This is very good news for every sportsman and sportswoman and especially for those of us who enjoy the benefits of public access walk-in programs across the country. With access to good hunting and fishing lost every year, Open Fields is bucking the trend by opening up more private lands to everyday hunters and anglers.

I’ve hunted some wonderfully productive private properties opened to public access in states like Montana, North Dakota, Kansas, South Dakota, and Nebraska, and none of them cost me a dime.

Last fall, some buddies and I headed to North Dakota to hunt pheasants. Our plan was to hunt on a combination of state Wildlife Management Ar-
try signs on more than 2 million acres of hunter walk-in access lands. Also in North Dakota, Union members will help the department build fenced hay yards on private farms to reduce damage caused by deer.

Unions in Las Vegas, Nevada, have two projects in the iron. One involves cleaning up roadsides on scenic canyon routes in Clark County in conjunction with the Clark County Commissioners. The other project will have Union members assisting the Nevada Department of Wildlife and the Desert National Wildlife Refuge in building a major watering system for wild sheep, mule deer and small game.

Union fire fighters in Iowa and Minnesota will volunteer their time to Pheasants Forever as official monitors for controlled burns on pheasant habitat.

In the Last Frontier, the Building and Construction Trades in Anchorage, Alaska, will help the state Fish and Game Department build a wildlife viewing tower and access trails in the Palmer-Hay Flats Refuge.

Additional projects are in the works in Maine, Michigan, Florida and Washington. For information, contact Jim Klatt at 612-331-0270 or jmk@unionsportsmen.org. Also watch the USA website for a dedicated Boots on the Ground page.

for Sportsmen

eas (WMAs) and the North Dakota Game & Fish Department’s Private Land Open to Sportsmen (PLOTS). We weren’t sure what to expect or what we’d find, especially since the season was well underway. We figured these publically accessible areas had been hit pretty hard by other hunters during the opening days and weeks of the season.

To say we were surprised by the caliber of hunting we experienced would be a gross understatement. Not every parcel was filled with birds, but others were. Hardly a day went by that our gang didn’t get our limit of roosters. Sure, we worked hard for our birds, and at the end of the day, both we and our dogs were tired.

But we didn’t go to North Dakota to just shoot birds; we went to hunt…really Hunt…and to enjoy each other’s company and the kind of free, open-to-anybody, bird hunting once common across our great land.

For more information on North Dakota’s PLOTS program and maps, go to North Dakota Game & Fish at www.gf.nd.gov or call 701-328-6300. USA

Once settled in a hunting spot, get in touch with your surroundings by listening to the sounds around you. Birds, squirrels, chipmunks and insects have their own routine, so listen for interruptions. If a squirrel starts barking, birds stop chirping and crickets and beetles become quiet, listen for footsteps in the leaves and watch for movement. This really helps after a soaking rain, when it’s not as easy to hear game walking.

- Wess Ringgold, UA Local 602

When going into “new” territory, visit the local bookstore and purchase a county plat book. For about $25, you can find who owns what land and quite possibly get to hunt or fish and make new friends.

- Lew Ellingson, CWA District 7

Knife Safety Tips

- Cut away from your body – not towards
- If you drop your knife, let it fall – don’t attempt to catch it
- When walking with a knife, keep the tip pointed at the ground
- When cutting thicker hard material, use several shallow cuts instead of one deep one to reduce the chance of a slip or jump
- Never draw a fixed-blade knife from the sheath with your hand along the path of the blade edge.
Like most turkey hunters, I live where Easterns are the dominant subspecies and hunting is in April. Being a turkey addict, I have packed my bags and headed south to Florida almost every year for the past two decades to get a jump on most of the country’s seasons.

The Osceola turkey is only found in Florida and is considered, by many, the crown jewel of the wild turkey grand slam. This bird looks most like an Eastern but has considerably more black coloration on its primary wing feathers, longer legs and a reputation for not being vocal. Many hunters think the Osceola is much harder to kill than the other birds.

In my opinion, the Osceola is very similar to the Eastern turkey of the Deep South. They live where there’s a lot of foliage, plenty of predators and a long season, so they don’t gobble much and are very wary. That said, I don’t believe they’re harder to kill than their Eastern cousins; hunters just need to modify their tactics to be successful.

Osceolas are generally found in two habitat types: swamps and cattle ranches. Swamp birds can be tough, but a patient hunter can do well on these dark-winged beauties. Cattle ranch birds are hunted most often (thus, we’ll concentrate on them), and though they are a true challenge, success rates should be high anywhere that is well managed and where hunters don’t over-pressure the birds.

In my experience, the two most important tools for taking an Osceola are binoculars and good decoys. In the open cattle country of Florida, turkey hunting can be a very visual game. I’ve hunted a lot with my good friend and Osceola outfitter Mike Tussey over the years, and Tussey believes in scouting from a distance.

“You learn more about the birds by sitting back and glassing from 400 to 600 yards,” Tussey said. “We sit back and watch a lot, and then we make our plans. We glass pastures where we hear birds gobble on the roost to see where they fly down in the morning and where they prefer to strut. Likewise, in midday or the afternoon, you can see what shaded areas the birds prefer to loaf in. Unpressured Osceolas can be pretty predictable, and if you just watch, you will know where to set up with confidence.”

Like Tussey, I do a lot of glassing, especially early. My usual
routine is to listen for roost gobbles. If I can see the birds fly down in a pasture and strut, I jump in the truck and high tail it to another location to find more birds strutting. On certain ranches, I can hit three to five spots in the first hour and usually locate multiple groups of birds.

Once a spot is chosen to setup, proper use of decoys can really improve success rates. I have no scientific data to support my opinion, but I believe Osceolas to be the most aggressive of the subspecies. They fight a lot, and for this reason, I’ve had great success with gobbler decoys.

I really like Primos Killer-B decays. It’s small, so it doesn’t intimidate the Osceolas, and is very realistic. I usually use a jake fan in the decoy to look like a strutting jake. Along with my strutter, I use one to three high-quality hen imposters like the DSD decays. I prefer a couple different body positions to add realism.

I believe decoys are important in these situations; because the terrain is so open, the birds expect to see (not just hear) other birds. In fact, I think in Florida, a patient hunter can kill more birds with decoys and no calls than vice versa.

Using these tactics together has netted me an Osceola longbeard with my bow during the first 45 minutes of opening day for the past four springs. I scout a morning or two and find where a gobbler or gobblers fly down and strut. Midday on the day before the season opener, I set up my Primos Double Bull blind and stick my decoys inside. On opening day, I get to my blind long before daylight, set up my decoys and settle in.

I usually do some calling but nothing too aggressive as I let my position and the decoys do most of the work. If a mature bird or birds has claimed a territory, they usually won’t tolerate a strutting intruder. The dominant bird generally charges in to beat up my decoy and is met with a sharp G5 broadhead.

This is a whole different game than running and gunning—it’s turkey hunting at its best. I think all turkey hunters should, at least once, start their season early and head to South Florida to pursue the mystic Osceola. But I’m willing to bet it won’t be their only trip.
Houdini, a 5-year-old German wirehaired pointer, was clearly smiling as she pointed birds on her second pheasant hunt at Colonial Farms in Chelsea, MI. She was finally doing what she was born to do.

A year ago, her outlook was bleak—caged and in her second week at a kill shelter. Houdini came from a foreclosed home. Her owners gave her away but then discovered she was being abused. That’s when they took her to the Humane Society. A DNR officer happened to see her, took her from the shelter, and spent the next eight weeks trying to find her a home.

That’s when Scott Walsh, a Local 1561 Fire Fighter from Eastpointe, MI, stumbled across her on Petfinder.com. Scott had always wanted a hunting dog but couldn’t afford to spend upwards of $900 on a puppy or a trained bird dog.

At 4-years-old, Houdini was called the “Wild Child” and for good reason. Her unstable history had made her rambunctious. When the DNR officer opened her kennel to introduce her to Scott and his wife, Marta, Houdini took off running.

“I just looked at my wife and said ‘there’s no way. This dog has too much energy,’” Scott said.

But Marta convinced Scott to give Houdini a chance, and three weeks later, they decided to see if she could be trained. After a lot of Internet research, Scott found the right trainer, Bill Murdock. He is a former member of the United Auto Workers, having worked for General Motors for 28 years, and the Union connection solidified Scott’s choice.

Scott was alarmed when Houdini snapped at Murdock during their introduction, but Murdock assured him she just needed a lot of love. So every week for three months, Scott took Houdini to him for training. After six months, Houdini was ready for a preserve hunt at Colonial Farms. When she pointed 20 out of 20 pheasants, it was clear she had just needed love and some extra work to learn to trust people and to hunt birds.

Houdini retrieves ducks as well and has given Scott, who mainly hunted deer, a new passion for bird hunting. And he’s not the only one. While there’s no mistaking the joy Scott and his family have brought into Houdini’s life, she has had a major impact on them as well.

“She actually got our whole family into hunting. My brother-in-law, my nephews, both me and my wife... my sister even wants to buy a shotgun now,” Scott said. “It’s just brought everybody together over this one dog.”

And it’s only a matter of time before Scott’s 2-year-old son, Sean, joins them in the field.

“He already has a little plastic toy gun—he pretends to hide in a blind and starts shooting ducks,” Scott said.

If one dog can bring so many people together, just imagine what two can do. Scott won’t have to imagine very long with the addition of Hobson to the family. A German shorthaired pointer, Hobson also has a “history.” He was sold as a puppy to what turned out to be an abusive home. He had been chained in a garage for a year and was almost 30 pounds underweight with sores on his belly when Scott got a call from Colonial Farms asking if he was interested in taking the dog.

Since getting back to a healthy weight, Hobson has been out for training twice, and it’s obvious that bird hunting comes as naturally to him as it did to Houdini. According to Scott, the dogs get along great, and the trainer hopes to get them in the field together soon.

After the success story of Houdini and Hobson, Scott views rescue dogs as a great option for bird hunters who can’t LOOKING FOR A DOG?
Petfinder.com is a good place to start looking. Many trained dogs are available to good homes because their owners simply couldn’t take care of them in these tough economic times.

afford to spend hundreds of dollars. In fact, Scott is already thinking about setting up a reserve in Michigan and training only rescue dogs when he retires, though that won’t be for at least 10 years. For now, he’ll continue working with Houdini and Hobson. According to Scott, they took some extra work and caution because “you just don’t know what they’ve been exposed to,” but “they are definitely part of our family. There’s no doubt.”

**Left Standing at the Dike**

On a dark night in Minnesota, I got the short straw and headed for the dike. Hunting waterfowl on Thief Lake provides three choices—shooting from boats, from one of the marshy islands or from a spot on the famous dike. The dike separates the refuge from the shooting zone and is the “highway” for ducks and geese. There’s a lot of competition for the dike. Our bunch was generally too lazy to get up at 3 a.m. to secure blinds on the dike, but we did well from the islands.

That year, however, we decided we needed the dike. Over chili and brandy, we drew straws. I got the short one, along with my buddy Jim. At 1 a.m., we climbed out of the RV and hiked two miles to the dike, then 75 yards out in knee-deep water to the edge of the reeds. Our job was to wave off competition with flashlights. The other four guys would bring decoys and dogs by boat around 6 a.m. It was a perfect duck marsh night at 40 degrees with no wind.

For two hours, we waved off upset hunters. At 6 a.m., the boys didn’t show. At 7:30, the first ducks came winging over and, by 7:45, shooting started around the marsh. Still no sign of our flotilla, and we were getting irritated. At 8:45, with few ducks flying, the gang showed up. Nobody admitted to not setting the alarm.

But all was not lost. We had 200 decoys to draw the birds. By 9:45, they were set, but the temperature had dropped to 31 degrees with high wind and freezing rain. No birds. By 10:30, it was down to 25 degrees with heavy, wet snow falling and visibility limited to 20 yards. No birds, no shooting anywhere.

Finally, six Canada geese came down the dike high and fast. A couple of our guys shot and clipped one, which sailed 500 yards and fell in another blind. That was the last straw. We started hauling in decoys. At the campground, we discovered that our tent had blown down, and our ammo, clothes and food was soaked. We were soaked; the dogs were soaked. Hardly speaking, we crammed the wet mass into the RV and trailer and headed home.

The Thief Lake bunch never recovered from that year, but I still cherish the memory of the marsh at 2 a.m.

Jim Klatt, USA Boots on the Ground Program Manager

Send your camo calamity story to: USAmembers@unionsportsmen.org.
Trout Fishing is Springtime’s Best Elixir

By Ken Barrett

When melting snows, migrating birds, the first crocuses, and lengthening days tell us spring has arrived, many anglers’ thoughts turn to trout, especially anglers who live in the North. From New England and the Mid-Atlantic states to the Midwest and the Rockies and all the way to the Pacific Northwest, trout fishing serves as a springtime elixir for millions of anglers of all ages.

Lucky for those smitten by springtime trout madness, there is a wealth of public access to good trout fishing in lakes, rivers and streams from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Mention names like Beaverkill, Au Sable, Yellow Breeches, Manistee, Madison, Yellowstone, Rogue, Snake and Deschutes, and trout anglers will start twitching and reaching for their favorite rods.

Trout season, for most anglers, is not just one season but a series of seasons. Like the unfolding of spring itself, trout season progresses in stages, with the action starting off cold and slow but eventually warming up. Late March and April usually mean high, cold, and off-color waters. It’s a great time to take a spinning rod and use bait where it’s legal. Worms, minnows or eggs are sure bets. If bait isn’t legal or you prefer using artificial lures, small spoons, spinners, soft baits and plugs are the order of the day. Mepps spinners in various sizes are among my favorites. In fact, if I had only one spinner to use, it would be a Mepps.

Trout are cold-blooded critters, and they’re not as active when water temperatures are in the 30s and low 40s as they are later in the season. Be patient when the water is cold; work your presentations slowly and near the bottom. If you’re fishing rivers or streams, try fishing the slower waters, backwaters and the inside of seams, where fish don’t have to work as hard against the current. Big pools with eddies and reverse currents can be real hotspots throughout the season but especially in the spring when the water is high. Trout will lay right on the edge of calmer waters and dash out and snatch their food as it passes by in swifter currents. Read the water, think like a trout and present your bait, lure or fly accordingly.

As the temperature rises and the water level on rivers and streams starts falling, spin fisherman should cover more water and pick up the speed of their retrieves as trout become more active and begin haunting new feeding areas. Fly fisherman, who had been using mostly streamers and nymphs in a time honored method called “chuck and duck,” begin experiencing the first significant insect hatches of the season. And for these anglers, it can be the best time of the year.

When the short-lived stone or salmon fly hatch on Montana’s Big Hole River begins in the late spring, anglers from around the country converge to try their luck on the river's hungry rainbows and browns. When word of the Hex hatch, a species of giant mayfly, spreads throughout Wisconsin and Michigan, grown men and women abandon their jobs and families and head to the Manistee, Au Sable and other noted rivers for the chance to catch the biggest trout of their lives.

It matters little whether you’re a spin fisherman, a fly fisherman, use bait or dry flies, because when spring comes, we’re all brothers and sisters of the Sacred Order of the Trout.

Even if there’s still snow on the ground, get out your rods, oil up your reels, put on new lines, sharpen your hooks, and check your waders for holes. Then head to the nearest trout water... it’s time to go fishing and celebrate a new trout season.

USA
Bears have a way of sneaking up on you. There's something about the predator that fires a spark inside the hunter's brain. You may not have even considered hunting them, but one day, there they are, padding quietly into your dreams. Next thing you know, you're reading every article you can find about bear hunting and researching areas and outfitters.

Do enough research and you'll see that baiting bears is, by far, the most popular way to hunt them—and for good reason. It's exciting and, typically, you're guaranteed to see lots of bears, many of them up close and personal. But there's another way to hunt black bears that doesn't get as much play in the media; it's just as, if not more, exciting and puts your woodsmanship and nerves to the ultimate test. Hunting bears on the ground satisfies a primeval urge to test both patience and courage in a ground-level game where predator becomes prey.

Perhaps more than any other place, British Columbia is known for its black bears. Bear densities here are among the highest in the world; it's estimated that nearly one-fifth of North America's black bears, upwards of 160,000, live in Canada's western province. In a day of hunting, it's not unusual to see a dozen different black bears, many of them trophy quality. With these numbers, it's not hard to be picky and hold out for that big boar you've been dreaming about. And since, unlike much of Canada, baiting is illegal in British Columbia, you have to hunt them on the ground.

Coastal British Columbia, including Vancouver Island, is a popular destination, but don't overlook the interior, where you'll see plenty of black bears and large ones at that. There's also a greater chance of taking a color-phase bear here than on the coast, where the black bears are primarily, well, black. I've hunted interior B.C. twice, once with Dennis Smith of Bear Paw Guide and Outfitters in an area bordered by the Omineca and Osilinka Rivers of north-central B.C., where I took a 6'-6" brute with my Browning BLR. I also hunted the area near Prince George with Opatcho Lake Outfitters, where I stalked several bears with my bow but was never able to take a shot. I can't recommend either outfitter highly enough.

In the U.S., several states offer great options for spot-and-stalk bear hunting. While there are outfitters that specialize in bear hunting out West, hunters who want a do-it-yourself experience can find that challenge in Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, Washington and other western states.

"A DIY bear hunt out West is definitely not out of reach for the average guy," said Mark Boardman, marketing manager for Vortex Optics. Boardman planned a successful DIY hunt in northwest Montana, where he tagged a fine black bear with his father.

"Before the hunt, I did a lot research, both online and by calling outfitters, state biologists and experts like Eric Pawlak at Cabela's T.A.G.S.,” said Boardman. “With all that information in front of me, I poured over Montana maps, found a likely spot and went for it.”

Boardman said the key to his successful hunt was finding an area that offered access to large tracts of wilderness via gated logging roads. He spent a lot of time scouting these, and after finding fresh sign, returned the next day to find his bear. He also stressed that timing is everything.

"It was a late spring that year" said Boardman. “A lot of the hunters we talked to said their traditional hunting hotspots were still under a foot or more of snow. Instead of glassing the slopes, we spent a lot of time and effort to get way back into the country.”

Boardman's strategy paid off and yours will too if you spend some time traveling logging roads, glassing clear cuts and scouting for fresh sign. Good optics are a must. Bears fresh out of hibernation love the new green growth and what's remaining of last year's berries, and you'll find many of them feeding on south-facing hillsides and along roads.

Spring bear hunts, especially the DIY variety, can be time consuming, but are well worth it when you press your hands in the thick fur of that bear of your dreams.
As the oldest family-owned firearms manufacturer in America and the largest pump-action shotgun manufacturer in the world, you can bet Mossberg knows a thing or two about guns. And now, just in time for spring turkey season, they’ve introduced four high-performance Turkey THUG shotgun models. As the exclusive shotguns used in Mossy Oak’s new Turkey Thug TV show, each gun has “Turkey THUG Series” engraved on the receiver. They also come complete with Mossberg’s revolutionary Lightning Pump Action, user-adjustable, creep-free trigger system—and adjustable fiber optics sights. Two models come with a bore-sighted 30mm TRUGLO red-dot sight and a back-up fiber optic system that allows the hunter to look under the red-dot sight to utilize the fiber optic sights. Plus, you can choose between a classic and a full-length pistol grip. All these great features combined, the Turkey THUG means business…turkeys be forewarned!

www.mossberg.com

PEET Boot Dryers

Soggy boots are like soggy bread – never good. Wet feet can put a real damper on your hunting, fishing, hiking or any outdoor experience and make your day on the job seem a whole lot longer. Thankfully, there’s an easy and effective solution called the PEET Dryer. Made in Idaho since 1968, the PEET Dryer uses gentle air circulation to remove wetness caused by Mother Nature or perspiration from footwear overnight, while neutralizing odor-causing bacteria and preventing the growth of damaging mold and mildew. Not only does the PEET Dryer provide you with odor-free comfort to tackle a day on the job or a weekend adventure, it also extends the life of your boots, which means more money in your pocket. In addition to footwear, The PEET Dryer can be used on gloves, gun safes, hydration systems and other gear made from leather, canvas, rubber, vinyl, cloth, plastic and all modern fabrics.

So get dry and get back outside. USA members receive a **30% discount** on all purchases.

Visit [www.unionsportsmen.org/deals](http://www.unionsportsmen.org/deals) for your special code.

Primos Chick Magnet

Primos, the premier game call manufacturer, and well-known TV hosts Lee & Tiffany have teamed up to produce a new twist on the traditional and still very effective box call. Named the Chick Magnet, it’s really a gobbler magnet. With two instantly interchangeable paddles, one made of Purple Heart Wood and the other Maple, held in place by strong magnets, the Chick Magnet is capable of making realistic cutting sounds, yelps and purrs. The Chick Magnet’s box is carved out of African Padauk wood. These different woods grains make for a beautiful call and one that can produce very accurate and dissimilar turkey pitches. Without doubt, the Chick Magnet is destined to become a family heirloom and the one cherished as, “the call daddy and grandpa always used to get their turkey.” In this high-tech age filled with plastics, graphite and the latest laboratory polymer, it’s nice to see that wood still works…and works well.

[www.Primos.com](http://www.Primos.com)
St. Croix Bank Robber Fly Rods

More than 60 years ago, two brothers cut-up cane poles, fitted them with brass ferrules and made the earliest travel rods. Ever since, St. Croix has been a leader and innovator in the fishing rod business—manufacturing travel, telescopic, musky, ice-fishing and other quality rods at affordable prices.

Their latest fly rod is called the Bank Robber, designed with the help of famed Madison River, Montana outfitter, Kelly Galloup. This may be the ultimate rod for chucking big streamer flies tight up against the bank in stiff wind. And with wind being a major factor more times than not, that’s something big western river anglers will appreciate. Using state of the art technology, St Croix has built more power and strength into these 6 and 7 weight rods without adding weight or compromising the rod’s action.

The 4-piece Bank Robber rod, with a suggested retail price of $400, may not seem cheap, but it costs far less than many rods on the market. And if you’re headed west or are lucky enough to live there, a rod that can get the job done in the wind, like this one can, is well, priceless!

www.StCroixRods.com
No fish are more game than tarpon. They jump like crazed banshees; are remarkably strong; readily strike bass-size plugs, flies and bait; are abundant in many places; and grow to an enormous size. Fish in the 80 to 100 pound class are common, ones more than 150 pounds are caught regularly, and “baby” tarpon under 25 pounds often spend more time in the air than in the water once hooked.

Best of all, you don’t need a passport for great tarpon fishing. Much of the world’s best silver king angling is available in the good ol’ U.S. of A.

By Bob McNally

Boca Grande Pass, Florida

Located at the mouth of Charlotte Harbor near Fort Myers, Florida, Boca Grande Pass has the largest known concentration of tarpon in the world. Historically, May and June are tops, but in recent years, outstanding fishing has gotten underway as early as late April.

There are a variety of ways to fish for silver kings. Fly fishermen can sight cast for fish on the beach flats or offshore for rolling fish. In the pass, dozens of boats vertical jig or fish live crabs deep for tarpon. It’s crowded, but fishing is superb and crossed lines are surprisingly rare.

Full and new moon phases offer best pass tarpon fishing. During a good falling tide, jig fishermen can jump a dozen fish. Tarpon run big, with 80 to 130 pounders not uncommon. This is no place for a swim, either, as huge sharks mass to feed on tarpon. And it takes quite a shark to munch a 100-pound fish.

One late April, I had a banner day on Boca tarpon with guide Phil O’Bannon. We caught 13 fish ranging from 60 to 150 pounds and lost many others, including some to sharks. In the process, the fish broke lines, hooks, two rods, and we were exhausted at the end of the day.
While this fishing can be done on-your-own, it’s smart to hire a guide, at least to learn the ropes. For fly rodders, one of the best is Captain Phil O’Bannon (941-964-0359). For jiggers, Captain Dave Markett (813-962-1435) and Captain Joel Brandenburg (813-645-8795) are good choices.

Motels and restaurants abound, but during the height of the season, it’s crowded. One of the most unique and beautiful places to headquarter is Cabbage Key. It’s a private island offering on-the-water cottages with docks for visitor boats and a unique restaurant in an old Florida setting. It also has vast unspoiled beaches nearby and jungle-like mangrove creeks full of fish and bird life.

**Marathon/Islamorada, FL Keys**

February and March is the time tarpon begin to show in good numbers in the Middle Keys, most notably near the towns of Marathon and Islamorada. When water temperature reaches 74 degrees, anglers using live silver mullet work around Seven-Mile Bridge, south of Marathon. They anchor or drift in channels around the bridge early and late in the day and, on a good outing, can “jump” 10 to 12 fish. This is the best time to hook a truly big tarpon in the 150-pound class, though most weigh 80-to-100 pounds.

In April, tarpon swarm around the bridge connecting Bahia Honda Key with West Summerland Key. Anglers fishing in the channel with mullet enjoy peak fishing from mid-May to mid-June. During the full moon in May and the first full moon in June, there’s a unique event that concentrates tarpon (plus grouper, snapper, sharks, cudas and other fish) around the west side of the Bahia Honda Bridge channel. There’s a run of small 1 1/2-inch palolo worms, and tarpon by the thousands mass to feed on them. The worms are red with a small white head, and anything that looks even remotely alike draws strikes. It’s an excellent opportunity to catch tarpon on red-colored flies.

Tarpol fishing remains good throughout the Middle Keys to the end of July. Through summer and early fall, plenty of “resident” tarpon in the 30-to-60 pound class can be found around bridges, passes and in canals.

Flats fishing is done primarily by fly rodders who stalk fish from poled boats or by “staking out” and ambushing them as they parade by with a tide. Fishing is prime in May and June, but excellent flats action can be had a few weeks before and after those two famed Middle Keys months, depending on weather and water conditions.

Many gifted tarpon guides work the Middle Keys. Some of the best are Lenny Moffo (305-872-4683), Bus Bergman (305-743-3436), Dave Denkert (305-852-1425), Tadd Van Demark (305-522-5576) and Rich Tudor (305-393-3461). Figure about $600 per day for a charter handling two or three anglers.

Banana Bay Resort is a relaxing family spot, with boat rentals and a marina at Marathon that’s close to great tarpon action.

**USA**
USA Event Season Kicks Off in the Sunshine State

While much of the country was still thawing from yet another winter blast, the USA was way down south on February 12 for our Southern Florida Sporting Clays Shoot, hosted by IBEW Locals 728 and 349 and the S. FL Chapter of NECA. This was the first USA event of 2011, and though the morning began with a cold rain, the Sunshine State held true to its name; the sun came out by the time shooters spread out on the 14 station course and busted their first clays.

Representing Mills Electric Service, an IBEW Local 728 signatory contractor, shooters Joe Loitz, Mike King, Justin King and Aaron King placed Lewis Class A with the top team score of the day. Joe Loitz achieved the highest individual score, busting 64 of 100 clays.

“I wanted to extend my appreciation for this past weekend’s event. Speaking for myself, my boys and my buddy Joe, we had a great time. You guys were terrific hosts and organizers,” said Mike King. “We really appreciate the trophies as well as the raffle gifts. Food and drinks were great too.”

Phil Trucks of UA Local 519 took home a different kind of trophy as the winner of a Beretta 3901 shotgun, and Steve Schott of CapTrust drew the winning ticket for a Remington 870 shotgun.

Everyone had a great time, and we didn’t lose a single shooter to alligators. A great shoot to start a year chock-full of USA events!

USA Events Are Rolling On . . . Literally

Nothing is more quintessentially American than hitting the open road. Now, thanks to the support of the AFL-CIO Investment Trust, Buck Knives, Chevrolet, Lincoln Electric, Sportsman Channel, ULLICO and Union Insurance Group, the USA events program will soon hit the road in state-of-the-art style with a brand new Chevy 3500 pick-up and tricked out 30-foot trailer that would make even a country music star look twice.

The custom built and decorated trailer—a rolling billboard for the USA and its union and corporate sponsors—will house guns, ammunition, prizes, USA merchandise and all manner of items needed to make USA shooting events a great success. And before every event, the rock-stylin’ truck and trailer will be parked in front of Union Locals for the world to see. Watch for the USA rolling your way.
**UPCOMING EVENTS**

For more event details, visit: www.UnionSportsmen.org/events

**March 26**
Saturday  
Nashville Area Sporting Clays Shoot  
Nashville, TN

**April 17**
Sunday  
S. Illinois  
Sporting Clays Shoot  
Sparta, IL

**May 14**
Saturday  
Pittsburgh Area  
Sporting Clays Shoot  
Pittsburgh, PA

**May 21**
Saturday  
Baltimore Area  
Sporting Clays Shoot  
Baltimore, MD

**June 10**
Friday  
Capital Area  
Sporting Clays Shoot  
Queenstown, MD

**June 25**
Saturday  
Philadelphia Area  
Sporting Clays Shoot  
Philadelphia, PA

**July 9**
NYC Area

**July 16**
Saturday  
New England  
Sporting Clays Shoot  
Location TBD

**July 23**
Saturday  
N. Illinois  
Sporting Clays Shoot  
Hainesville, IL

**Aug. 6**
Saturday  
Minneapolis Area  
Sporting Clays Shoot  
Clear Lake, MN

**Aug. 23**
Tuesday  
Juneau Trap Shoot  
Juneau, AK

**Aug. 27**
Saturday  
Anchorage Area  
Sporting Clays Shoot  
Wasilla, AK

**Sept. 24**
Saturday  
St. Louis Area  
Sporting Clays Shoot  
St. Louis, MO

**Oct. 8**
Saturday  
Kansas City Area  
Sporting Clays Shoot  
Lenexa, KS

**Oct. 13**
Thursday  
Puget Sound Area  
Sporting Clays Shoot  
Puyallup, WA

**Oct. 15**
Saturday  
Portland Area  
Sporting Clays Shoot  
Gervais, OR

**Oct. 29**
Saturday  
Reno Area  
Sporting Clays Shoot  
Reno, NV

**Nov. 5**
Las Vegas Area Shoot

**Nov. 12**
N. California Shoot

**Nov. 18**
Northeast Ohio Dinner

**Dec. 10**
S. California Shoot

Interested in sponsoring or helping organize a USA event near you, contact:

Nate Whiteman  
440-867-8229  •  440-867-2732  
natew@unionsportsmen.org

Tim Bindl  
608-397-1023  
timb@unionsportsmen.org
The USA Photo Contest Has Gone Weekly! Share your best shots with your brothers and sisters of the USA, and you could win a Buck knife engraved with the USA logo.

Visit www.unionsportsmen.org/photos to check out additional photos and submit your own for a chance to win.

Bob Barteeck, a member of Fire Fighters Local 425 from Wisconsin Rapids, WI, and his dad had a great hunt in Ontario. He shot his biggest buck ever and his dad shot his second best.

Doug Bachman, a member of Sheet Metal Workers Local 19 from Robesonia, PA, went on a Missouri waterfowl hunt on USA’s Brotherhood Outdoors TV show. Check it out on Sportsman Channel.

Matthew Michel, a member of Electrical Workers Local 364 from South Beloit, IL, caught a 58 lb. King Salmon out of the Smith River in Crescent City, CA.

Jeff Anderson, a member of Fire Fighters Local 215 from Milwaukee, WI, harvested this 13-pt whitetail with a bow in Southeast, IA, in Nov. 2010 with a 25 yard shot.

Jody Anderson of Union Plus caught this 48” and nearly 40 lb. musky in late October 2005 in Hayward, WI.

Leah Higgins Scott of the Maine Nurses Union harvested this 9-point buck in 2010. She’s pictured with father George Higgins, a retired Electrical Worker, and brother Michael Higgins, of Steel Workers Local 449.

Gary Green, a member of Fire Fighters Local 321 from Melrose, WI, harvested this Gould’s turkey in Sierra Madres, Mexico, and achieved the World Slam.

Members of the State, County and Municipal Employees Union had a great day walleye fishing. (L-R) Danny Homan, Iowa Council 61 president, Kenton Cole, Council 61 organizer, and Dan Varner, AFSCME Intl. retiree.

Matthew Michel, a member of Electrical Workers Local 364 from South Beloit, IL, caught a 58 lb. King Salmon out of the Smith River in Crescent City, CA.

Richard Butts, a member of Plumbers and Pipefitters Local 85 from Saginaw, MI, harvested this trophy moose outside of Jackson Hole, WY, with outfitter Clarence Beck.
USA Kids Quiz

How much do you know about conservation? Find out by taking this quiz. Write your answers on the form and mail it in by April 15, 2011, and you’ll be entered in a drawing for a USA prize package that includes a Knight & Hale turkey call, Buck knife and more. Contest open to youths ages 5-16.

1. What is the name of the bear who says “only you can prevent forest fires?”
   a. Sammy        b. Teddy   c. Smokey

2. Which predator was reintroduced into Yellowstone National Park in the 1990’s?
   a. Mountain lions  b. Coyotes  c. Wolves

3. Which is the only state that doesn’t have a turkey hunting season?

4. Wetlands are important for what?
   a. Clean water b. Flood prevention      c. Duck breeding      d. All of the above

5. If you find a fawn, an elk calf, a baby bird or another young animal in the wild, you should?
   a. Keep your distance, it’s mother is probably nearby    b. Take it home     c. Try to feed it

6. What law uses a tax on guns and ammunition to fund wildlife management, hunter education programs and other conservation projects?
   a. Lacy Act  b. Pittman-Robertson Act c. Yellowstone Protection Act

7. What is the most common litter found on the world’s beaches?

8. When practicing catch-and-release fishing, you can improve a fish’s chance of survival by releasing it into the water:
   a. Tail fist b. With a net   c. Head first d. By tossing it

9. Which bird is not extinct?
   a. Passenger pigeon b. Ptarmigan c. Heath hen

10. What is the goal of the USA’s Boots on the Ground program (see page 6)?
    a. To encourage hiking  b. To recycle old boots  c. To get Union members involved in conservation

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Congratulations Cole!

Nine-year-old Cole McShane spent last year working on hunter’s safety and learning about partridges and their habitat with his dad, Michael McShane, a member of Fire Fighters Local 1312. Last October, they went on a hunting trip in Moosehead Lake, ME, and Cole shot his first two birds on his first hunting trip.

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Union Sportsmen’s Alliance
3340 Perimeter Hill Drive
Nashville, TN 37211
www.UnionSportsmen.org

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SECOND PRIZE
Ol’ Tom Time & Motion Vest
4 Winners

THIRD PRIZE
Primos Chick Magnet
40 Winners

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EASTERN, MERRIAM, RIO GRANDE, OSCEOLA
March 15TH – June 1ST

USA TURKEY CONTEST

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