RUT TRICKS
WHEN TO USE CALLS, SCENTS, MOCK SCRAPES

START SIMPLE FOR STEELHEAD

VENISON FROM FIELD TO TABLE

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Giving Thanks for a Banner Year

FRED MYERS
USA CEO/Executive Director

It’s hard to believe 2015 is rapidly coming to a close. It has been a whirlwind year with many victories for the Union Sportsmen’s Alliance. So during this season of Thanksgiving, I want to reflect on a great year and thank those who made it possible.

Our mission to unite the union community through conservation to preserve North America’s outdoor heritage may sound lofty, but our one-of-a-kind Work Boots on the Ground (WBOTG) program provides tangible proof of our efforts. In 2015, hundreds of USA members supported our WBOTG program by volunteering their time and trade skills to complete conservation projects in communities across America.

I’m very proud to let you know the USA completed our 60th WBOTG project this summer thanks to our diehard volunteers who don’t let heat, cold, bugs or storms stand in their way as they protect wildlife habitat, upgrade park infrastructure, improve public outdoor access and help get kids outside and into nature.

Last year, Department of Interior Secretary Sally Jewell stood with AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka and me at our annual Conservation Gala to announce a joint effort to improve and enhance wild lands in America. Thanks to volunteers from IBEW Local 80, we completed our first DOI project, an elevated boardwalk through a cypress marsh at Virginia’s Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge. Currently more DOI projects are in the works.

Also in 2015, we received our first grant from the American Water Charitable Foundation, a corporate foundation created by the American Water Company—America’s largest publicly traded water and wastewater utility servicing more than 15 million in the U.S. and Canada. The grant enabled us to take on WBOTG projects in Tennessee, Illinois and West Virginia.

Of course, none of the work we do would be possible without the commitment and support of our union partners, and I’m extremely pleased to welcome three new charter union partners to the USA: the United Auto Workers, Utility Workers and Laborers.

We’ve also had a year of record-breaking shoots and conservation dinners, which not only unite union members of all trades but will raise more than $2 million dollars in 2015 to support the USA’s conservation mission and projects. A special thanks to all the unions, contractors and union-friendly companies that sponsored those events.

I also thank our many loyal corporate, national and founding partners for supporting our events, programs and member giveaways throughout the year. We’re thrilled to add our newest national sponsor, Sqwincher, a company providing innovative hydration solutions with a formula designed to meet the demanding needs of hardworking union men and women. Sqwincher goes beyond quenching thirst to deliver rehydration for those in the toughest work conditions, and we’ve been happy to introduce their products at our shoots and dinners.

To properly thank and recognize all our union, corporate, national and founding partners; event sponsors; volunteers; members; and the hardworking USA staff, I would need every page of this magazine, but I think you’d rather get into all the great articles it contains, so I’ll close with one last Thank You for making 2015 a banner year for the USA.
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"When's the rut?" That has to be the most common question hunters ask when they're planning a deer hunting trip or considering a new hunting lease. Hunters plan vacation time each season to make sure to spend as much time in the deer woods as possible during "The Rut."

Another common question hunters ask is, "Do scents and calls really work?"

From a biologist's perspective—and more importantly from a deer's perspective—the rut is actually a drawn-out process that lasts for months and has three distinct phases. There's the pre-rut phase, which is when mature bucks are laying down signs like scrapes and rubs, cruising more during daylight hours and getting agitated at the sight of another buck. During the pre-rut, bucks have breeding on their minds, but few does have actually come into their 24- to 48-hour estrus-cycle window when they breed. The week or two when the majority of does are in estrus is the peak of the rut. That's the period hunters think of when they ask, "When's the rut?" The final phase is the post-rut, which is when the frenzy is over and few does are coming into estrus.

There are distinct differences in the effectiveness of products like scents, calls and decoys during the different phases of the rut. So when is the best time to use scents and mock scrapes, and when does rattling work best? For answers to those questions, we turned to a very experienced deer hunter.

Terry Rohm has worked in the hunting industry his entire life, getting his start after rising to the top as a competition turkey-caller and winning the U.S. Open. He's a regular on outdoor television programs and, for the past 27 years, has been the "resident hunter" for Tink's, the industry leader in deer scents and related products. When asked about tricks and tips for hunting the different phases of the rut, Rohm said hunters should first assess the dynamics of their deer population.

"It's been interesting to see how the whitetail world has changed," Rohm said. "People are managing for whitetails these days and managing specifically for older whitetails."

Two factors will greatly increase the intensity of the rut and the effectiveness of calls, scents and other products: the presence of older bucks on your property and a buck-to-doe ratio that is closer to 1:1 rather than tipping toward way more female deer than male deer.

"Every hunter has to evaluate his or her hunting area. Every state has different rules and regulations that result in different levels of hunting pressure. In the Midwest states where the firearms season is short and shotgun-only, the deer are older, and there are more mature bucks," Rohm said. "I try to tell hunters not to get frustrated. You can't kill a big buck if there aren't any, and you can't use products successfully in areas where there are so many does a buck doesn't have to work at all to find one."

Calls and scents might help, but these products are going to be more effective on property where bucks have to compete for receptive does.

The peak of the rut is the period most hunters dream about, but the pre-rut may be an even better time to kill a mature buck. During that pre-rut, cruising phase, there are certain products and
Combining tactics like rattling while also using an attractant scent, especially doe urine, can increase a hunter's odds of success. A buck that hears a buck fight and then smells the scent of doe may not be able to resist coming closer—or charging in.

Techniques deer hunters would be wise to include in their bag of tricks.

“Mature bucks will start making scrapes during the pre-rut,” Rohm said. “It’s a sign-post marking for does and for other bucks. They’ll rub-urinate, lick and mouth that branch above the scrape.”

Rohm feels the pre-rut is the time when mock scrapes and products like Tink’s Power Scrape, a synthetic buck lure, can be very effective. Look for big, fresh scrapes—several close together—that are near feeding areas like hardwoods where white oak acorns are dropping. Small, random scrapes like you find along the edge of a field are not what you’re looking for.

To create a mock scrape, use a stick to brush away the leaves to expose the dirt, and spray the scent on the dirt. This is also where products that are hung above the scrape that slowly drip scent over a period of time can be effective.

Calls will attract the attention of buck during the pre-rut. Rattle bags or rattling antlers can bring a buck in from a great distance; however, Rohm again said the structure and health of your local deer herd is key.

“We’ve all seen the hunting shows in Texas where a guy rattles and literally these big bucks come running in. That really happens, but you have to realize those are ranches managed to have as many bucks as does,” Rohm said.

Personally, I never head to the woods without a grunt call lanyard around my neck. Especially during the peak of the rut, a grunt call often does the trick.

According to Rohm, the peak of the rut is also when doe-in-heat scents and decoys are most effective. He recommends pure doe estrus scents like Tink’s 69. A mature buck that’s in a frenzy running and searching for a doe during the peak of the rut often can’t resist the visual of a doe decoy combined with the scent of a doe in heat.

The post-rut is a let-down phase, but more so for the bucks than deer hunters. Even mature bucks are still vulnerable, so hunters shouldn’t give up hope during the post-rut—some bucks haven’t given up hope.

Two products that Rohm recommends for hunters every time they go the woods, regardless of whether it’s one of the rut phases, are cover scents and safety devices.

“Human scent will ruin a hunt,” Rohm said. “We are a predator to those deer. If an older, mature buck starts smelling you, you’ll never see him. You really have to watch the wind, use cover scents and use common sense.

“Nothing is more important than safety,” he added. “If you’re hunting from any kind of elevated stand, use one of the new harness systems like a Hunter Safety System. Invest the money and buy a harness that locks you in up there. Most accidents happen when you’re getting in and out of treestands. Be careful. And identify that target for heaven’s sake.”
Unions Put USA Calendar Funds to Work for Communities

The Union Sportsmen’s Alliance’s Gun-A-Week calendar is back by popular demand for 2016. Not only does it feature union member photos and provide an opportunity to win a gun every week; it can be used to raise money for worthy union causes.

Exactly how does it do that? Simple. When unions donate $2,000 to support the USA and its conservation mission, they receive 100 USA calendars. Unions can sell the calendars for a reasonable $30 each (if you’re into math, that’s $0.58 per chance to win a gun) to make their donation back plus an additional $1,000. Not only that, they receive a Remington 870 Express shotgun, which can be raffled to raise additional funds.

Last year, the Electrical Workers Minority Caucus (EWMC) of IBEW LU 716 raffled the 870 shotgun they received through their USA calendar donation to raise more than $1,600 to help send delegates to the national EWMC conference and support community service projects.

EWMC members are typically community service project leaders in the Houston area. One project they recently completed was building a handicap ramp to the front porch for an elderly woman living on social security income. The EWMC also partnered with IBEW LU 716, Rebuild Houston and Channel 11 to refurbish the home of an elderly grandmother who had been on a waiting list for nearly two years. Thirty volunteers came together over two days to replace rotten siding, paint the house and trim, build steps to a side door, build hand rails for both the front and side doors and much more.

Visit www.ibew716.net/rebuild-together.

“We are proud to be members of USA and allow the EWMC and IBEW LU 716 to be a positive force in our community,” said Fred Ellis, IBEW LU 716 assistant business manager.

Like the EWMC, the Atomic Trades and Labor Council in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, used the money it earned through the USA’s calendar program to better its community. They put both the money they earned through calendar sales and by raffling the shotguns they received into their Community Action Fund, which makes donations to various local charities.

“We have found this to be an excellent fundraising tool for our Council,” said Steve Jones, Atomic Trades and Labor Council president.

Learn more about USA’s 2016 calendar program at http://52guns.unionsportsmen.org.
Head to a USA shoot, conservation dinner or Work Boots on the Ground conservation project, and there’s a good chance you’ll run into a proud member of the Laborers International Union of North America (LIUNA). Flip on the USA’s Brotherhood Outdoors TV show, and you might catch an episode featuring a LIUNA member.

Many LIUNA members love to hunt, fish, shoot and support conservation, so it’s no surprise we have Laborers among our USA family. Recognizing that so many of its members enjoy spending time outdoors, the Laborers International has joined the USA as its 15th charter union partner.

Charter unions provide valuable support and resources to help the USA fulfill its mission. They also, through their sponsorship, provide their members with the added benefit of a no-cost USA membership, which means active and retired LIUNA members can now join the USA for free and get access to the USA’s digital magazine, members-only discounts, contests and more.

“We’re thrilled to have the support of the LIUNA International and encourage all LIUNA members to take advantage of the benefit their union is providing them and join their brothers and sisters, who have already become members of this union-dedicated, outdoor community,” said USA CEO & Executive Director Fred Myers.

Members of LIUNA Local 477 achieved the High Over All team award at USA’s 2015 IAMAW St. Louis Sporting Clays Shoot by busting 430 out of 500 clays.

In 2013, members of LIUNA Locals 268 and 140 joined other volunteers to install pavers around an outdoor information kiosk at the Upper Mississippi Wildlife Refuge in Onalaska as part of USA’s Work Boots on the Ground program.

(L-R) Larry Lucco and Dustin Ramage of LIUNA Local 100 were featured on a Brotherhood Outdoors Illinois waterfowl hunt in 2013.

Jason Delgado of LIUNA Local 79 (center) appeared on an episode of USA’s Brotherhood Outdoors where he guided co-hosts Daniel Lee Martin (L) and Julie McQueen (R) on a New York striped fishing trip.

Photos courtesy of Diego R. Molinar
While strong, acrobatic steelhead attract expert anglers using specialized techniques, knowing some simple basics will help an angler’s odds of success.

Casting a lure such as a Bomber Long A is a good way to get strikes from steelhead hugging close to cover.
Many Great Lakes tributaries offer terrific fishing for steelhead from mid-summer through winter and into spring, and many anglers who could be cashing in on the fun don’t realize what they’re missing.

Steelheads are Pacific Ocean, sea-run rainbow trout that, through stocking and natural reproduction, have become permanent residents of all five Great Lakes. Born or stocked in streams, they eventually head to the big water to feed and grow before returning to rivers to spawn. Unlike salmon, which die after they spawn, steelhead spawn and then return to the lake to feed. Steelhead then run the rivers to spawn again, repeating the cycle.

They are a beautiful, rainbow-trout-colored species that deliver a spectacular tussle that includes awe-inspiring jumps when hooked in any body of water, especially shallower streams and rivers, and they can grow to 20 pounds and bigger.

Different strains of the species come into the rivers from mid-summer to late winter, but all spawn in the spring. Unfortunately, they have taken on an almost mythical reputation of needing specialized equipment and finely tuned presentations, but chances are, if you fish for bass and panfish, you have enough gear to hook and land some stream and river steelhead, too.

When targeting steelhead in moving water, success comes from one of two basic approaches: you put something big (and usually colorful) in the fish’s face and provoke a reaction strike, or you present a smaller, more natural bait the steelhead wants to eat.

**REACTION STRIKES**

Any bass angler who understands where smallmouth hang out of the current will be able to use that knowledge to hook up with steelies. They like staying in the same kinds of places out of the current.

Most Great Lakes steelhead are conditioned to eat long, slim baitfish such as shiners and alewines on the big water, and they will often hit slim, hard-plastic stickbaits cast while wading or from a boat. Lures such as Smithwick Rogues, Normark Floating Rapalas and Storm Thundersticks are all good choices. Simply cast them into little pockets of slack water behind logs and rocks and in eddies along the shoreline.

Crankbaits such as Storm Wiggle Warts and Hot-N-Tots, the Yakima Mag Lip and Luhr-Jensen Kwikfish can all get a steelhead to strike, especially when trolled in the current or let out from an anchored boat, allowed to wiggle slowly, backwards, downstream.

These lures target fish that have found small depressions on the bottom where they don’t have to expend a lot of energy fighting currents. To perform the “anchored drop-back,” the angler simply stands at the back of the anchored boat and lets out line until the lure is ticking bottom. Then, either more line is let out from the reel, or more anchor rope is let out from the boat. The idea is to put a wiggling lure right in front of a fish that’s on the bottom, facing upstream.

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**EGG CARE**

- Possibly the most reliable bait for steelhead are steelhead eggs, and the best place to get eggs is from a hen steelhead that you harvest.

- To gather your own eggs, bleed the fish by cutting its gills—keep the fish in the water. This quickly dispatches the fish and removes excess blood from the eggs as blood can make them spoil more quickly and add a scent that steelhead don't like.

- Harvest the eggs and put them in a Ziploc bag, keeping them cold until you can treat them with one of the brine powders available on the market. Treating them is an easy, though slightly involved process. A good resource is scent and cure manufacturer Pro-Cure, which offers great advice on its pro-cure.com website.

- Properly cured eggs stay on your hook better, they have added fish-attracting scent, and they can last a month in your refrigerator and a year in your freezer.
NATURAL FINESSE

The other side of the steelhead coin is catching them with bait: mayfly nymphs (aka “wigglers”), waxworms, minnows and prepared salmon and steelhead eggs are among the natural baits with proven track records. Here, the object is to mimic natural foods that the current carries into the fish’s lair. The easiest way to do this is with a bobber, bait suspended below, allowing it to drift close to the same speed as the current. A key is to peg the bobber just far enough above the bait to keep the presentation drifting within a few inches of the bottom, as the quarry will usually be hugging the streambed.

TACKLE

I caught my first steelhead one November afternoon more than three decades ago in a golf course creek, armed with my dad’s 7-foot fiberglass spinning rod that he favored for bass fishing. The bait was a spawn bag on a No. 4 hook, suspended below a wooden bobber that had seen use for bluegills the previous summer. The reel was my dad’s classic Garcia-Mitchell 300, spooled with inexpensive 10-pound test monofilament. That sort of set-up works fine for casting or trolling too. It really doesn’t take much of anything fancy to get started.

Be forewarned, though: Steelhead can become a powerful obsession, and after you catch a few, you might find yourself—credit card next to your computer—online and browsing such things as center-pin reels and the outrageously expensive rods that go with them. Even worse for your savings account, you might end up in a boat dealership, shopping for jet-drive aluminum boats to ply some of the magnificent rivers steelhead make their winter homes.

That’s okay. Most anglers inducted into the society of steelhead fanatics agree: Steelhead are quite worth it.

When steelhead make a run up a river, they take on a common characteristic of fish that live year-round in rivers. They spend as much time as possible out of the current, and anglers who concentrate their fishing efforts around current breaks will catch more steelies. Focus on eddy sections of a river where the current is obstructed by submerged rocks, islands, downed trees and brush. Steelhead and other river fish also concentrate in deeper holes and sections just below shallow riffles, where they don’t have to fight as much of the current. Steelhead staging in breaks will be facing into the current, waiting on a meal to flow to them.

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Contacts

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Heather Tazelaar
heathert@unionsportsmen.org
(719) 368-6317

USA Dinners
Kevin Grubbs
keving@unionsportsmen.org
(757) 615-7815

NORTHEAST

On Aug. 1, the 5th Annual IUEC Baltimore Shoot set a new record for the highest percentage of shooters for a single union, with more than 67 percent of total event participants representing the IUEC, including members from Locals as far away as Texas and Nevada.

At the end of August, the USA held its 1st Annual Richard L. Trumka Sporting Clays Shoot in Eastern Pennsylvania. The inaugural event had 93 shooters and more than 100 guests at the unique shooting course built on an old gravel quarry.

Just down the road in Philadelphia, Insulators Local 14 hosted the 4th Annual Tri-State Conservation Dinner on Sept. 11. A lively crowd enjoyed a night of solidarity at the Insulator’s Philadelphia Ball Room.

SOUTH

The Arkansas AFL-CIO hosted its second Conservation Dinner on September 12th at the Teamsters Local 878 in Little Rock and welcomed the largest crowd to date to raise money and support the USA’s mission.

IBEW Local 666 hosted its 3rd Annual Greater Richmond Conservation Dinner on Sept. 19 at its hall in Virginia. Business Manager Jim Underwood led the event and ensured everyone had a great time while continuing to raise needed funds for local projects.

Though these events will have passed by the time this magazine comes out, we look forward to a great turnout at our 4th Annual Greater Atlanta Conservation Dinner hosted by IBEW Local 613 on Oct. 8 and 4th Annual Texas Gulf Coast BCTD Conservation Dinner hosted by IBEW Local 26 and our very first Mine Workers Conservation Dinner in Fairmont, West Virginia, both held on Oct. 17.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Dec. 3 1st Annual Alabama AFL-CIO & BCTC Conservation Dinner | Trussville, AL
Jan. TBD 5th Annual Central Florida Sporting Clays Shoot | Lithia, FL
Feb. TBD 7th Annual Houston Area Sporting Clays Shoot | Houston, TX
March TBD 6th Annual Nashville Area Sporting Clays Shoot | Nashville, TN
April TBD 5th Annual Dallas/Ft. Worth Sporting Clays Shoot | Dallas, TX

USA’s Arkansas AFL-CIO Conservation Dinner welcomed a crowd of more than 100 on September 12.

More than 100 shooters and guests came together at Lehigh Valley Sporting Clays in Coplay, Pennsylvania, for the 1st Annual Richard L. Trumka shoot.
MIDWEST

On June 24, the Greater Kansas City BCTC hosted its 2nd Annual Conservation Dinner at the IBEW Local 124 Union Hall. Greater Kansas City BCTC Business Manager Alise Martiny led the event to record attendance and a strong fundraising effort.

A month later, the 4th Annual Illinois State Shoot – hosted by the Illinois AFL-CIO, Chicago Labor Federation and Chicago and Cook County Building Trades – set a new record with 158 shooters and crushed its fundraising record with $97,000 raised!

August was hot, hot, hot – and not just the weather! As part of the UA Joint Apprenticeship Training Committee annual meeting, 322 UA members, supporters and leaders packed the house at USA’s 2nd Annual Ann Arbor Conservation Dinner on Aug. 11 and raised $82,000 for conservation.

Continuing the trend, the 3rd Annual Michigan State BCTC and Insulators & Allied Trades of Michigan Shoot set new records in participation with 132 shooters and fundraising with more than $63,000 raised on Aug. 16.

The 3rd Annual Madison Area Conservation Dinner on Aug. 21 in Madison, Wisconsin, brought together a record crowd, including Dave Branson of the Southern Wisconsin BCTC and many of the other volunteers who have put dinner funds from previous years to work in the community through Work Boots on the Ground projects.

As the temperature began to fall in September, the momentum of USA’s events did not. The 5th Annual Roofers & Waterproofers Twin Cities Shoot on Sept. 12 set a new milestone with more than $100,000 raised. Hats off to the United Union of Roofers, Waterproofers and Allied Workers and all the unions and sponsors who helped us achieve this landmark success!

On Sept. 19, the 4th Semi-Annual IAMAW St. Louis Area Shoot in Brighton, Illinois, brought together 660, IAMAW International President Tom Buffenbarger, NFL legend Dave Butz, IAMAW Midwest Territory General Vice President Phil Gruber, and IAMAW Local 387 member Joe Gruber at USA’s IAMAW St. Louis Shoot.

64 shooters, including NFL Super Bowl champion Dave Butz, who achieved the HOA award and provided pointers to first-time shooters.

Ending the month strong, the 7th Annual Boilermakers Kansas City Sporting Clays Shoot on Sept. 26 was an onslaught of record smashing with more than $130,000 raised and 220 shooters.

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WEST

The USA returned to beautiful Alaska on Aug. 29 for its 6th Annual Anchorage Area Sporting Clays Shoot at Birchwood Recreation & Shooting Park in Chugiak.

Back in the Lower 48, the USA shooting truck and trailer is heading West (at the time of this writing) to wrap up what has been a wildly successful season. On Oct. 3, the Southern Nevada Committee will host its 6th Annual USA So. Nevada Trap Shoot at Clark County Shooting Park in Las Vegas, and the 2nd Annual SMART & Cigna Colorado Sporting Clays Shoot, to be held on Oct. 17 at Colorado Clays in Brighton, is shaping up to be a highly successful event having already broken its fundraising and shooter registration records.

This year, the USA’s 7th Annual Puget Sound Sporting Clays Shoot will be held at Sumner Sportsmen’s Association in Puyallup, Washington, to accommodate its Oct. 24 weekend event date. Heading down the coast, the USA’s 5th Annual Portland/Salem Shoot at Mid-Valley Clays in Gervais, Oregon, is sure to be a great event full of fellowship even if it rains, as it so often does.

Last but not least, the USA will make its way to Corona on Nov. 14 for its 6th Annual IBEW So. California Sporting Clays Shoot.

The USA is expanding its presence and activities in the western U.S. In recent months, the USA staff has attended meetings in Oregon, Washington and Idaho with the Building & Construction Trades Councils and State Federations of Labor in these states. Stay tuned for upcoming events and activities in the great Northwest region in 2016.

From left: Chris Kahl, representing IAMAW Local 660, IAMAW International President Tom Buffenbarger, NFL legend Dave Butz, IAMAW Midwest Territory General Vice President Phil Gruber, and IAMAW Local 387 member Joe Gruber at USA’s IAMAW St. Louis Shoot.

USA Union Development Manager Walt Ingram, left, and Gordon McLeary and Gordon McLeary, USA Labor Outreach consultant and retired OPCMIA vice president, met lots of union sportsmen and women while manning the USA booth at the Washington State BCTD Convention.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

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© 2015 FALL/WINTER 2015 13
On Sept. 5, officials from Tennessee American Water and the USA, joined by a handful of Chattanooga-area community leaders, cut the ribbon at Harrison Bay State Park to open a volunteer-built boat shed, signifying the first completed joint project between the USA and the American Water Charitable Foundation (AWCF).

“We’re thrilled to celebrate the completion of our first project with American Water,” said USA CEO and Executive Director Fred Myers. “This is our first charitable foundation grant, and it is instrumental in helping us take our conservation efforts to the next level.”

Using funds and support from the AWCF and TN American Water, Building Trades volunteers from Iron Workers Local 704, Utility Workers Local 121, Carpenters Local 74, Insulators Local 46 and Electrical Workers Local 175, as well as volunteers from Communication Workers Local 3802, constructed a boat shed on the park’s waterfront to house kayaks, canoes and paddle boards that the park obtained through a Spirit of America Grant. Volunteers from the Friends of Harrison Bay put the finishing touches on the project with help from a family that visits the park so often, they decided to lend a hand.

“My kids have been using these boats all summer, so we felt it was right to volunteer to help finish the shed,” said local resident and mother of eight, Stephanie Pyles. “Me and the kids helped stain (the shed) and spread gravel.”

After the ribbon cutting, Myers and TN American Water Director of Operations Kevin Rogers fixed a commemorative plaque to the shed's wall. The project then paid immediate dividends as five Pyles children took to the water in kayaks, canoes and on paddleboards.

“Both American Water and the USA encourage and support outdoor activities as well as the proper use and protection of the environment for future generations,” said TN American Water President Deron Allen.

The Harrison Bay project is the first of three joint efforts between the USA’s Work Boots on the Ground conservation program and the AWCF’s Building Better Communities initiative, which awarded the USA a $25,000 grant to support projects that improve public access to water-based recreation activities in 2015.

“Having union volunteers donate their time and skills to build this shed is really, really valuable with our limited manpower and resources, especially toward the end of our budget year,” said Harrison Bay State Park Manager Donald Campbell. “We wouldn’t be able to even attempt something like this.”

The AWCF Building Better Communities funding and the USA’s skilled, volunteer work combine to benefit both organizations by maximizing project success.

“By pairing the grant with Work Boots on the Ground, project funding from the AWCF has a greater impact,” said Myers. “The high quality, no-cost labor we provide allows funds to go directly toward project expenses such as materials and equipment.”

The USA’s mission to unite the union community through conservation to preserve North America’s outdoor heritage goes hand-in-hand with AWCF’s ongoing commitment to being a good neighbor.

“American Water employees are proud members of the communities we serve. That’s why we’re committed to not only delivering the highest quality water and wastewater service possible, but also participating and investing in programs that benefit these communities through the American Water Charitable Foundation,” said AWCF President Darlene Williams. “Our employees in union-represented jobs are among the most talented and skilled professionals in the nation, and we’re very excited to provide support to Work Boots on the Ground projects that will enhance the outdoor experience of our customers, our employees and their families.”
Flood Waters Couldn’t Dampen Volunteers’ Spirits in Texas  | BY KATE NATION

As they say, when it rains, it pours. That was no cliché in Texas this year. No sooner had a group of Houston Gulf Coast Building and Construction Trades Council (BCTC) volunteers completed the first day of work on an elevated boardwalk at the Trinity River National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) in March than Mother Nature began to make up for a four year drought. The refuge quickly flooded and remained in high water for more than 100 days, burying many parking areas and hiking trails under 10 feet of water.

The primitive 25,000-acre, Houston-area refuge offers visitors a plethora of recreation opportunities including hiking, paddling, hunting and fishing and houses diverse wildlife including deer, alligators, bobcats and many birds within the largest floodplain basin in Texas.

The boardwalk was the first project initiated through a joint partnership between the Department of Interior and the USA’s Work Boots on the Ground program. Once complete, it will be an intrinsic piece of the From Crosswalks to Boardwalks project, which will connect the city of Liberty, Texas, with the refuge, allowing hikers to traverse more than 500 feet of wetlands, access 13 miles of trails and have a more intimate view of the bayou.

“There is such an industrious environment beneath our feet in the water – fish lounging, crawfish picking along, bugs mining for food,” said Laurie Gonzales, a wildlife biologist at Trinity River NWR. “It’s a whole other world. There’s something magical to children when they get to experience nature like that. This boardwalk will make those experiences possible.”

Trinity River NWR and partner groups secured building permits for the structure and received funding for materials through a Recreational Trails Grant from the state of Texas, but they did not get funding for the manpower to build it. That’s where the Gulf Coast Building Trades volunteers came in.

“There is so much skill that goes into building a structure,” Gonzales said. “This crew has to plan out the work zone, bring in heavy materials, use machinery … and brave the heat and mosquitoes, all while balancing themselves in the mud and muck. Skilled union volunteers will be put to the test … but I know they can handle it because they are one tough bunch.”

All the flood waters couldn’t dampen the spirits of the diehard volunteers. Once the water receded, they headed back to the refuge in September to use their planning, layout, carpentry, structural, concrete, fabrication and public relations skills to begin building the 520 foot bridge with an 18’ x 18’ observation deck over a bayou on federal land.

Giving up overtime pay on the weekends, the volunteers will devote countless hours to the massive project through the fall. Because the muddy, post-flood conditions ensnare vehicles, the volunteers have to manually carry nearly $80,000 worth of concrete piers and construction materials through the swamp to the work area. As the boardwalk construction progresses, so does the trek in.

“We only had to dispatch one cottonmouth snake thus far and will probably have an alligator story to tell when we get to the bayou,” said Mike Cramer, financial secretary-treasurer of UA Plumbers Local 68 and the project coordinator.

When asked why he gave up so much time and energy to such a mentally and physically draining project, Cramer responded, “We all volunteer ourselves to the Union Sportsmen’s Alliance because we feel better … knowing we are giving something back to the organization we are dedicated to and the great outdoors. Union members do so many community projects … with little or no recognition. The USA provides a forum for these conservation projects to be recognized on a local and national level, while educating the general public about us and some of the wonderful unselfish things we accomplish on behalf of everyone.”

Volunteers began framing the boardwalk on Sept. 26.
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- It’s been said “nothing runs like a Deere.” That’s because John Deere products are made in America by Americans – members of the United Auto Workers union to be precise. The all-new 2016 Gator RSX860i takes the classic Deere craftsmanship and dependability and cranks it up to new levels. This high-performance utility vehicle is made for the trail. With speeds of up to 60 M.P.H., this 62 horsepower whirlwind packs a 839-cc, V-twin engine with 59.5 lb.-ft. of torque, a dry sump oil system, a closed-loop EFI system with dual oxygen sensors, an electronic engine oil cooler and new optional power steering, as well as an upgraded, aggressive suspension system. That means this swift, American machine can climb steep terrain like a mountain goat, stop with the reflexes of a puma and come down a mountain path in complete control. The Gator RSX860i is available in classic John Deere green and yellow; dark green and black; or camo. The base model starts at $12,299.00.

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- Ever have days when your spread was just dead? G&H Decoys has developed a solution with its game changing Navigator series. Operating on 2 c-cell batteries that run for approximately 4 hours, the Navigator brings lifelike, random swimming motion (left, right, forward) to your decoys while also causing spraying and ripples in the water adding realism to the entire spread. With a simple adjustment of the decoy anchor, you can keep them in a tight swimming area or allow them to roam. The Navigator will soon be available in mallard, pintail and widgeon full body floaters as well as mallard and pintail feeder butts. G&H Decoys have been proudly making decoys in Oklahoma since 1934, and they’re uncompromising when it comes to quality. With their blow-molded, high-impact plastic construction; realistic, non-glare paint; and natural movements, these decoys will fool the birds and may even have you doing a double-take. The Navigator retails for $129.95.

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VENISON FROM FIELD TO TABLE

No organic meat is more natural and healthy than wild game. A single deer will provide a tasty centerpiece for countless meals.

BY BEAU TALLENT

Consumers can’t get enough locally grown, pesticide-free, non-GMO fruits and vegetables. They also want organic meat, which tempts the modern foodie with health-centric terms such as “free range” and “grass fed.” Meanwhile, popular diets harken back to the caveman days when humans ate only what they killed, and fruits and nuts were picked from their natural surroundings.

Isn’t it great to be a hunter? Hunters were rocking the Paleo Diet long before the Dr. Oz Show convinced suburban parents they should feed their families organic meat.

Sportsmen have long valued the simple yet profound concept of being personally responsible for putting up our own meat. Hunters take ownership in killing the animal, field dressing the carcass, and with most small game animals, hunters also process the meat for the freezer or prepare it for a fresh meal.

Big game animals like deer are often taken to a commercial processor, either out of convenience or because hunters feel they don’t have the expertise or means to process the deer themselves. That is changing, thanks in large part to the information age where anyone can learn just about anything from quality research on the Internet. This includes learning how to process your own deer.

Online videos, articles and message boards where hunters can ask specific questions make it easy for anyone to tackle their own deer processing.

Books have been written on how to field dress a deer and process your own venison. We won’t attempt a how-to, step-by-step guide here. Instead, we will cover some important yet often overlooked aspects of getting your venison from field to table.

FARM-TO-TABLE APPEARS TO BE A FOOD MOVEMENT WITH SOME LEGS.

A – E: The front half of a deer becomes ground. Some people also use it for stew meat or possibly take an arm roast from C (the upper foreshank).

F – L: Along the backbone are the loins, and inside is the tenderloin. Take these out whole and cut to size for packaging. With very little knife work, the loins will pull right out.

F – H: Use a meat saw to take the ribs. If you don’t want ribs, you can painstakingly remove the rib meat for ground, but it’s a lot of work for little meat.

I & K: The “plate” and “flank” cuts provide meat for your bin of ground meat, unless you want flank steaks.

J: If you don’t take the loins whole, use a meat saw to cut out steaks (t-bones).

L: Sirloin steaks

M: Rump roast for the Crock Pot

N: Round steak or ground

O: Ground or stew meat
Skinning Tips

Field dressing is not difficult, but it can be messy, especially if you're not careful or rush through the job. Here are some tips:

If you're field dressing your deer in the field, as the name implies, position the deer on its back, take a deep breath and resolve to take your time. Even being very patient, unzipping a deer and removing the entrails and internal parts shouldn't take 10 minutes.

The first cut up the deer's belly must be done carefully so your knife doesn't puncture the stomach and intestines, which will be pushing out toward your blade at every opportunity. Use your fingers to guide the knife and keep the blade away from the stomach and intestines. Keep the knife at a low angle to cut only deep enough to slice through the skin and first layer of cartilage-like lining that holds in the guts.

If you hang your deer on a gambrel for field-dressing, hang it by the rack if it's a buck or by the neck if it's a doe. Hanging head first, the stomach and intestines will allow gravity to pull the insides out so they fall into a gut bucket on the ground below. You can easily cut away at the linings so everything comes out neatly.

Don't forget the windpipe. Carefully reach as far up the cavity into the neck as possible with your knife and cut the windpipe, pulling it and attached organs from the deer. You'll have to cut the windpipe by feel, so be careful of your fingers.

Hang the deer by the back legs for skinning. Make incisions on each leg to the abdomen. Peel the hide away from the legs and use your knife to begin separating the hide from the carcass. Once you get a good opening, continue peeling away the hide while your other hand lightly slices through the connective tissue between the hide and the carcass. Gravity will help toward the end of the process. Keep your knife clean of hair! Hacking away through the hair to skin a deer will leave your meat a hairy mess.

Gear Up For Self-Processing

Don't let a lack of equipment keep you from taking the self-processing leap. You can literally get by with nothing more than a skinning knife and another good blade for boning out your cuts of meat. However, there are items that will make your job much easier.

First, have a cleaning and processing station ready to use that includes a decent gambrel to hoist and hang your deer. My workstation is in the backyard where I use a gambrel pulley rope slung over a tree. The back-yard is convenient because I have easy access to water and a garbage can lined with a trash bag. I set up a plastic table and use my pickup tailgate as additional workspace, and my kids are within yelling distance to come assist.

My family eats a lot of ground venison, so we need a meat grinder. I use the smallest LEM Big Bite Grinder made, the #5 .25 hp model. A larger grinder would certainly be a luxury that would make the job quicker, but the .25 hp grinder works fine for us. I like to debone a good bit of a deer, and running that meat through the grinder is the last step in processing a deer. It takes several hours as I run the meat through twice, stopping often to clean sinew from the grinding plates and gears. But it's done in the living room, usually with a fire burning, a football game on TV and with a sense of pride and satisfaction only a hunter can know.

The third item I recommend is a vacuum-seal, food-packaging device. It prevents freezer burn, and we can seal, mark and date cuts of meat quickly. We purchased ours for processing deer and other wild game, but we now use it for lots of other situations when we want to save and freeze food.

Plan For Success

Hunters are great at going the extra mile when it comes to hunt prep, from showers with scent-free soap to yearlong scouting. When you're hunting for meat that you intend to process yourself, planning for after the hunt is even more important than all the planning that goes into a successful hunt. Make sure the knives are sharp, the gambrel is ready to use and you have plenty of vacuum-seal bags.

Make sure you have a plan to age your deer. The venison will have a better taste. I'm blessed to have a buddy with a personal walk-in cooler made from the refrigerated part of an old food truck. I like to hang my deer at least a week. When I have a day set aside for processing, I get everything ready and then simply go pick up my deer from the cooler, hoist it on the gambrel and get to work. A commercial cooler will work, but expect to pay a daily fee to hang your deer.

If I didn't have a buddy with a walk-in cooler, I would skin the deer, quarter it, and ice the quartered sections in coolers until I have a day to process the meat. Plan to drain the coolers daily and change the ice, which in addition to aging the deer will remove almost all of the blood. Your already tasty venison will be even more delicious, and if you have a family member who thinks venison tastes gamey, this will help.

Shoot The Right Deer

Some deer taste better, and it's not the old gray-faced doe or giant buck. There are tough times in the woods when hunters need to jump at the first opportunity to harvest a deer. However, if you're watching a green field with several potential targets, pick the younger deer, and your taste buds will thank you later.

Have An Exit Plan

Sure, that cavernous draw that requires rappelling gear to access might harbor the biggest buck you'll ever see. I'll never forget what a professional elk outfitter once said about a plan I concocted to kill a nice bull that had found a safe haven on a tabletop plateau surrounded by steep rock walls. “Take a knife and fork,” he said. It was his way of saying; you might get your bull, but we'll never get the meat out and processed before it spoils. Don't shoot a deer you can't field-dress and get out of the woods quickly to begin the cooling process, either with ice bags in the cavity, by hanging in a walk-in cooler, or by skinning, quartering and icing in coolers.

Processing your own deer is easier than ever with the wealth of how-to information available on the Internet. There is great satisfaction in knowing exactly how your meat was acquired and handled at every step—from pulling the trigger, to proper field dressing, to processing and packaging.
Chef Jordan’s Venison Jerky Recipe

Ingredients:
- 2 lbs. venison top round or leg of lamb, boneless
- 3 TBS red chili flakes
- 3 TBS of chopped garlic
- 1 cup olive oil
- 1 cup soy sauce
- 1 cup Worcestershire sauce
- 1 cup tupelo honey
- 4 TBS minced green onion
- salt and pepper
- 2 TBS sriracha
- 3 TBS brown sugar

Method:
Slice the venison, AGAINST THE GRAIN, into ¼-inch thick slices. Set aside. Combine all the other ingredients and whisk together about 5 minutes until combined. Cover the venison and mix with covered gloved hands. Cover with plastic wrap and let sit over night.

The next day, set the pieces in a single layer in your dehydrator. Repeat the stacking of shelves until all your venison is layered out. Set the temperature on the 145 degree timer and let the unit dehydrate for the next 6 hours, rotating the shelves every hour to ensure even consistency.

Remove from racks and let air dry for 1 hour. Enjoy!
YOU ARE THE USA

FEATURED UNION LEADER

Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers
President Joe Sellers, Jr.

What are your personal interests in the outdoors?
Coming from Philadelphia, I was fortunate to be raised close to the Pocono Mountains and the Jersey Shore. This gave me ample opportunities to spend time outdoors. I learned early on the value in caring for our environment. This rubbed off on my daughter as she is passionate about and is majoring in Environmental Policy and Planning.

How did you get started hunting?
At an early age, I joined my father, uncles, cousins and friends at a hunting lodge in northcentral Pennsylvania. They were all part of a union family. When I reached age 13, I was able to have a stand of my own. I also have fond memories of family and friends at the lodge outside of hunting season.

Who do you most like to shoot with?
I used to do a lot of trap and skeet shooting with my father, father-in-law and friends. Since the USA was formed, I’ve really enjoyed shooting sporting clays, especially when my son, Nick, is able to join me. It’s an opportunity for us to spend time together doing something we both enjoy. I was also able to shoot a few rounds with my daughter, Alexandra. It seems like it has always been a family and friends activity.

Why should union members have an outdoor organization of their own?
One of the intangibles that make unions strong is that we function as a community of common interests at the worksite. The USA builds upon that community by embracing unionism and engaging union members across all trades to get outdoors, be active and experience hunting, fishing, shooting and conservation outside of work in a safe setting with their families.

Why is it important the USA brings together union members to complete conservation projects?
The USA gives union members the chance to give back to their communities the skills they have learned through their trade. The USA’s conservation projects provide the perfect opportunity for members of all crafts to showcase what they are capable of and make a difference in conservation efforts while ensuring that the resources they are protecting will be available for future generations. Union members standing together addressing conservation issues strengthens our union community.

President Joe Sellers, Jr. with son, Nick, at USA’s 3rd Annual SMART New Jersey shoot.

Lincoln Electric – Proud Supporter of the Union Sportsmen’s Alliance

Lincoln Electric – Proud Supporter of the Union Sportsmen’s Alliance
November 11, 2013, is a day Donna Shaver – a 17-year member of Steelworkers Local 3657 – will never forget. It was Veterans Day, and she had permission to muzzleloader hunt property in Stanly County, North Carolina.

Shaver hails from a family of hunters. Growing up, she spent weekends traveling with her parents to bow competitions throughout North Carolina, and by age 13, she achieved the state record for the youth division. Soon after, she began hunting, but it wasn’t until she met her husband, Lynn, that it became a true passion.

Since then, she has hunted bear, deer, turkey and doves, often with her family. Though she enjoys hunting with a bow, she prefers muzzleloader season with its cooler temperatures and bucks in the frenzy of the rut.

The Shavers integrated their son, Jeremy, into the family tradition nearly from birth. “We bought his lifetime hunting license before he was one,” Shaver said. “He used to sit at the bottom of the tree with me. We’d take a sleeping bag and snacks, and he’d tell me to wake him up when I saw a deer.”

Now an adult, Jeremy was serving as a Marine security guard at the Israel Embassy as Shaver was heading to her tree stand that Veterans Day morning, joined by her 72-year-old father, James Potts, who asked to sit with her. Potts has had to wear a brace on his leg since he was run over by a logging skidder in 1995. He only has 40 percent feeling in his legs and less in his right foot and ankle.

“Walking uphill is a huge struggle for him, much less climbing into a tree stand, but he was very determined,” Shaver said. “I remember getting behind him and helping push him up the hill in the dark to get to the stand before daybreak.”

Once in the stand, they were elbow to elbow, and Potts spotted a flash of antlers in the pines. Shaver watched the buck as he came toward an opening. His horns were impressive, but she hesitated. She knew, from trail cam photos, there was a drop tine in the area, and she only had permission to take one buck.

“I don’t know what you’re waiting on. I would have already pulled the trigger,” Potts said.

Her mind made up, Shaver raised her 50 caliber Savage and fired on the buck at 126 yards. It donkey-kicked and ran into the trees. Unable to see through the smoke, Shaver asked her dad if he saw the buck, but he was shaking so badly he “couldn’t see a thing.”

As they laughed with excitement, Shaver pondered her shot and texted her family. Her husband told her to wait an hour to pursue the buck, but after 40-minutes, she couldn’t take it any longer and climbed from the stand.

No blood. Anxiety crept in as Shaver scoured the woods for signs of a wound. Then, there it was, 70 yards away – a 10-point buck with two stickers, weighing 197 lbs. She shouted, and her father rushed over as fast as he could.

Suddenly, Jeremy surprised them with a FaceTime video call on Shaver’s iPhone. He checked out the buck, laughed, bragged on his mom and shared the moment from across the world. “What a Veterans Day! Celebrating with my Marine son stationed in Israel and my 72-year-old dad over the biggest buck I’ve ever taken,” Shaver said. “Then my husband, mom and friend drove up, and the fun began again. It was a very blessed lifetime experience!”

Scoring 155 7/8” with a 21 ½” inside spread, Shaver’s trophy earned her the title of Biggest Buck for Female Muzzleloader in the 2013 North Carolina Dixie Deer Classic.

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Kids & Waterfowl—Create A Lifelong Passion

Waterfowl hunters are a passionate bunch. That passion can be instilled early for young hunters but only with care for details and safety.

BY DAVE MULL

Some folks who know how much Kevin Essenburg likes hunting waterfowl are slightly surprised to learn that he has never owned a four-legged retriever. When hunting over water, he usually jumps in his well-concealed 14-foot fishing boat or canoe and gets the duck, but when field hunting, his retriever has been of a two-legged variety. His towheaded daughter Andrea, now 12, started running out and picking up downed birds at age 5. This duty continued up until last year when she started toting her own shotgun. So now, some of the field-retrieving duties go to 9-year-old Lauren, the younger daughter of Kevin and wife Sarah.

Kevin, who lives in Holland, Michigan, has fostered a true passion for the outdoors in Andrea, and it appears that the same fire is starting to build in Lauren, who began asking him about taking her hunting back in the summer. The two girls also troll for salmon on Lake Michigan with their dad, and Kevin says a big key to kids enjoying hunting and fishing is to make sure they are participants, not just observers.

“Andrea has not just retrieved ducks and geese but also has been involved in scouting, setting up and taking down decoys, the whole nine yards,” Kevin said.

I joined Kevin and Andrea in a marsh off Michigan’s Kalamazoo River on Andrea’s first day as a real hunter during the state’s youth waterfowl hunt in September 2014. With me was my own retriever, a gray-faced golden dog named Gabe, who rode stoically on the back of my Hobie kayak.

“We’ve had some opportunities but no downed ducks so far,” Kevin reported when I found the duo on a small island with scrubby trees that made a terrific natural blind.

More than a dozen decoys bobbed in the slow-moving marsh water in front, the sun already well above the horizon. Kevin and Andrea had paddled their canoe to the spot and set up in the predawn darkness after scouting the location together earlier in the week.

Kevin had introduced Andrea to a 12-gauge Beretta semi-auto early in the summer, and it had proven a tad too heavy for her to wield comfortably, so Kevin brought along shooting sticks to support the shotgun.

“The plan is to land them in the decoys this first time,” he said. “Andrea is a good shot—just not quite ready to shoot ducks on the wing. Landing ducks is not standard operating procedure, but I’d rather she harvested her first duck cleanly instead of possibly crippling it by trying to shoot it flying.”

To further the safety of the hunt, Andrea had just a single shotshell in the semi-auto, which Kevin loaded—and eventually unloaded—for her.

“She’s good shooting 3-inch shells, but you never know what can happen with the kick of a shotgun,” Kevin said. “Last thing we want is the kick to throw her off balance with another live round in the chamber and the safety off.”

Despite near bluebird conditions with a high, clear sky and bright sun, other hunting parties scattered through the marsh seemed to be having steady shooting, while our four sets of eyes scanned the sky. Finally a pair of mallards zipped by and circled when Kevin started calling. Tantalizingly close to following the game plan and settling into the decoys, they ultimately headed off without offering a shot.

Soon, he and Andrea were in the canoe collecting decoys, ready to paddle back toward the ramp. But it was just the beginning of a waterfowl season in which father and daughter logged nearly 4,000 miles on the family jeep, scouting and hunting throughout the state’s seven waterfowl management areas and other public hunting land. Andrea had her shotgun for every hunt and eventually did shoot a duck—a cripple in the decoys.

“The duck was right in front of her while my hunting partner’s dog was retrieving another duck,” Kevin recalled. “She looked around and made sure she knew where the dog was before shooting—I watched her do everything right, and I knew she was good to go as a duck hunter.”

Kevin is an engineer who designs exhaust systems for a number of different U.S.-made autos and has been an avid waterfowler since he was in high school, largely teaching himself while hunting with teenage friends. His immediate family had no avid hunters, and now he enjoys bringing his two older girls into the hunting lifestyle. Two-year-old Isabella will soon get her turn.

“Andrea started coming along when she was really young while we were scouting and just enjoyed tagging along. From there we got her her own layout blind, and she’s just become part of the whole program.”

Lauren is on course to have her own layout blind before long, too. Kevin noted Andrea wanted to take Michigan’s hunter safety certification course when she was 10, passing in flying colors with mother Sarah.

“Basic firearm handling and safety has never been an issue with her,” Kevin said.

The 2015 season was a bit more than week away as I wrote this article, with another September youth hunt scheduled. Father and daughters were ready for another excellent season of togetherness in the great outdoors.
Keys to Teaching Kids to Hunt
Advice, tips and tricks for parents:

- Get them involved as participants, not just observers, letting them help set up and gather decoys and retrieve downed birds.
- Going on a big trip can be cool, but it’s probably better to keep things short—and warm—for beginners. Hunting in a layout blind can be especially good with kids—bundled up they can stay warm and nap during lulls in the action.
- Firearms safety and shooting should start long before the hunt. Parents should spend all summer going over safety and gun handling with their kids.
- If they’re not enjoying it because of mosquitoes or cold rain, quit and go get a burger. You don’t want to turn them off of hunting just as they’re starting their career.

Golden retriever Gabe and Andrea watch expectantly as father Kevin Essenburg attempts to coax a pair of mallards into the decoys.

Youth Waterfowl Days

Imagine hunting even the best duck holes with little to no pressure from other hunters. Imagine being able to hunt before the regular waterfowl season or in the southern states hunting after the regular season ends and more birds have migrated down. Special youth-only waterfowl seasons are added incentive to take a kid waterfowl hunting.

Most states offer a two-day, youth-only waterfowl hunt, typically on a weekend before or after the regular season. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which regulates the hunting of migratory birds, first implemented youth-only waterfowl hunts in 1996. The idea was to provide young hunters with an opportunity to get out either before or after the regular season, offering a chance to hunt without all the competition for good hunting spots. The USFWS provides a flexible framework for these special hunts, so states can set their own youth dates as long as it is on a holiday, weekend or other day when school is out. Youth-only waterfowl dates can be 14 days before or after the regular season or during a split between the regular state seasons.

State-specific regulations apply, but the federal framework for youth hunts accommodates hunters age 16 and younger. A federal duck stamp isn’t needed for kids, and in many states a hunting license isn’t required.
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Denise Langford, wife of Utility Workers Union of America President Michael Langford, made this nice catch in Lake Michigan out of Ludington, Michigan.

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