PASSING THE ROD
VOLUNTEERS EDUCATE THE NEXT GENERATION OF ANGLERS

JULY 2012
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SUMMER CAN BE TOUGH, BUT THEY’RE OUT THERE
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Getting Back to Our Outdoor Roots

Growing up in rural Mississippi, I would take my .22 rifle on the bus and store it in my school locker, so I could hunt for varmints as soon as they let us out at the end of the day. While that would be unheard of today with all the school violence, I believe hunting actually kept me out of trouble as a boy, taught me valuable life skills and developed my appreciation for the outdoors.

In an age of computers, cell phones, video games, ipads and other devices, today’s youth are losing their connection to the outdoors and America's longstanding hunting and fishing heritage. While part of that is due to technological advancements, dwindling public access has also played a significant role.

When I was hunting as a teenager it wasn’t hard to gain access to private land. Everyone knew their neighbors, and good places to hunt, fish and shoot were always available. Sadly, much of the land available for hunting and fishing a few decades ago has been transformed into subdivisions, highways, factory farms and shopping centers, and private landowners have become more protective of their remaining parcels.

Studies have shown that loss of access is the number one problem facing hunters. And the impact of that loss trickles down from adults to youth. Research shows that active participation in hunting and fishing as an adult is directly related to active participation as a youth. My grandpa and cousins got me started hunting rabbits, squirrels, coons and eventually deer. I'd be willing to bet that a majority of USA members also got started hunting or fishing at an early age through a parent, grandparent or another adult family member. When adults give up the sports due to lack of access, they’re much less likely to pass those traditions on to their children or grandchildren.

Some people question why the declining number of hunters and anglers is a big deal. What they may not realize is that, through a 10-12 percent excise tax, hunters and anglers have generated billions of dollars toward fish and wildlife habitat. With no alternative funding system for conservation in place, the loss of hunting and fishing in America would be devastating to our country's ability to maintain habitat critical for healthy fish and game.

There’s no question that the future of hunting and fishing in the U.S. depends upon the commitment of future generations to these traditional fish and wildlife activities. And as the USA celebrates its 5th anniversary on July 1, we are sharpening our own commitment to ensure the future of hunting and fishing in America by focusing our efforts on three critical ingredients: enhancing public access to the outdoors, conserving wildlife habitat and passing on to our young people this incredible outdoor heritage we all love and care about so much. (Read about recent and upcoming projects on pages 6-8).

With more than six million AFL-CIO union sportsmen and sportswomen across North America, we can confront the challenges facing our outdoor sporting heritage, get back to our nation's roots, and reconnect future generations with the age old pastimes of hunting and fishing.

Fred Myers
Executive Director/CEO
Union Sportsmen’s Alliance

Not a USA Member?
Become part of a brotherhood of the great outdoors. Join the Union Sportsmen’s Alliance today!
www.JointheUSA.com 877-872-2211 (toll-free)
USA Member Honored as Field & Stream Conservation Hero

By Laura Bliss Morris

In June, retired Local 361 Ironworker and 9/11 volunteer John Sferazo was honored as a Field & Stream Conservation Hero. An active member of the Union Sportsmen’s Alliance, he’s also the founder of American Greenlands Restoration, Inc. (AGRI).

Nominated by the USA, Sferazo was a natural fit for Field & Stream’s Heroes of Conservation program, which honors individuals involved in grassroots projects to preserve the land, water and wildlife vital to sportsmen’s pursuits with a profile in the magazine and a $500 conservation grant.

Working amidst the devastation of 9/11 alongside fire fighters, police officers, reservists, national guardsmen and fellow union members, Sferazo suffered psychological and physical afflictions, including the loss of much of his breathing.

But adversity has spurred his personal mission to create the number one rated wildlife improvement program in Maine, which he has opened to disabled veterans and responders for hunting.

Focused on restoring native flora and fauna in forest ecosystems, Sferazo encourages species diversity and habitat creation and enhancement, which supports wildlife.

“We were honored to nominate John as a Field & Stream Conservation Hero,” said USA Executive Director Fred Myers. “This award helps showcase union members’ commitment to conservation on a national platform and inspires others to get involved in the fight to preserve and protect America’s outdoor heritage.”

This fall, Sferazo will have the opportunity to be selected as one of six finalists from the Heroes profiled in the monthly editions. Finalists will be flown to Washington, DC for an awards gala where the Conservation Hero of the Year will be named and awarded a new Toyota Tundra. Each finalist will also receive a $5,000 conservation grant to help with their individual projects.

About AGRI

The year before the twin towers fell, Sferazo purchased a parcel of land in Maine known as Owen’s Marsh. The site had gone through reclamation that included the construction of a dam, which created a deep water marsh. Just five weeks after Sferazo purchased the property, the dam breached, releasing 73 acres of water.

“I can’t explain the amount of waterfowl—ducks, herons, egrets—that were utilizing this body of water,” Sferazo said. “So the breach ripped my heart out. The reason I purchased the property went down the highway, more or less.”

Thus began Sferazo’s work reclaiming the site to create prime wildlife habitat. After securing organic matter to replace the topsoil that was washed away, Sferazo began planting fauna that only exists today in small pockets of Maine, such as Swamp White Oak and the American Chestnut—a good food source for deer and other wildlife. Sferazo got youth involved in the tree plantings to actively engage them in conservation efforts.

When Sferazo began his reclamation work, the land across the highway was being harvested for hardwoods, a mass food source for the local deer herd. Sferazo saw an opportunity to establish a feed area on his land by planting wintergreens, purple top turnips and other winter food sources for the deer and other browsers. By providing quality forage for prey species, Sferazo also benefited bobcat, the Canada lynx and other predators.

Quality habitat led to better opportunities to harvest game. In conjunction with the Pine Grove Program, which aids American heroes and their families that have survived man-made or natural disasters through nature therapy, Sferazo opened his property to disabled veterans and first responders.

In less than a decade, Sferazo brought together diverse groups of people to establish a Memorial Forest that honors America’s heroes and serves as an outstanding model of conservation practices at work, yet the work of this tireless, conservation hero is far from finished.

John Sferazo
Local 361 Ironworker and 9/11 volunteer

“We were honored to nominate John as a Field & Stream Conservation Hero.”
- USA Executive Director Fred Myers
USA 3rd Annual Spring Turkey Contest Achieves Record Numbers

By Kate Cywinski

This spring, nearly 50 USA members representing 19 states and Canada and 13 different unions submitted their gobblers in the USA's 3rd Annual Spring Turkey Contest, setting a new record for participation. And that wasn't the only record set; the birds themselves made a good showing as well. The first place Eastern, Merriam and Osceola turkeys were all the highest scoring birds in those categories since the USA began this yearly contest.

Sparky Sparkes, a member of Fire Fighters Local 29 from Chattaroy, WA, had a very successful season in Texas, claiming first place in the Rio Grande category and the top score overall with a 2-bearded gobbler that raked in 73.75 points. The turkey may have had a lucky getaway from a bobcat or coyote, which would explain its missing tail feathers, but it didn't get so lucky with Sparky.

With 43 years of turkey hunting to his name, David Forbey, a member of Mine Workers Local 1907 from Boonville, IN, achieved first place in the Eastern category with a bird scoring 70.375 points. He filmed the tom the day before he harvested it, giving his wife a chance to see the before and after. Also from Boonville, IN, Andrew Kaiser of Steel Workers Local 104 took the top place in the Osceola category with a bird scoring 49.75. He harvested his gobbler while hunting with some buddies in Florida after taking his son to Disney.

Glen Krankowski, a member of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Local 2910 from Arnold, MD, earned top honors in the Merriam category with a bird he harvested while hunting with an outfitter for the first time. An exhausting day of hiking and crawling through hilly terrain earned him a bird scoring 55.5 points.

These first place winners will each have a brand new Primos Crusher Blind to use next season thanks to their scores. Second place winners earned an Ol' Tom Time & Motion Vest, and five third place winners in each category won a Primos Chick Magnet call.

Greg Geise of Sheet Metal Workers Local 20 was the lucky winner of the grand prize—a Mossberg 535 Turkey THUG shotgun. Geise just started turkey hunting a few years ago and, until now, didn't have a dedicated turkey gun.

Congratulations to all our winners and thank you to everyone who participated!
By now, you've surely heard all the buzz in the hunting and shooting worlds about Thompson/Center Arms' new Dimension rifle platform. Since its introduction at the 2012 SHOT show in January, it has likely been the most talked about rifle of the year. I've been fortunate to have had a chance to shoot the Dimension frequently for a year now, and my television partner, James Brion, and I spent an entire hunting season behind the new gun.

TC calls the Dimension a new rifle platform, and that's really what it is. You build your own rifle or rifles upon their LOC (Locking Optimized Components) platform, starting with a universal stock (with adjustable length of pull) and receiver. From there, it's all up to you. Both right and left-handed receivers are available.

TC is offering the Dimension in 10 calibers ranging from .204 Ruger to .300 Win Mag., and the calibers are broken down into four series, grouped by size (A-D). For example, a .204 Ruger is A, a .243 Win is B, a .30-06 SPRG is C, and a .300 Win is D series. The series you choose will determine other initial parts.
So let's say we choose a D series .300 Win Mag. We have our LOC stock and receiver, and then we get a D-series fluted bolt, a 3-round magazine and magazine housing. Finally, we get the caliber specific barrel that has TC's famous 5R rifling and a target style crown. These barrels all fit both the right and left-hand receivers, so no problems for southpaws.

What makes the Dimension different from other rifles is in only a few short minutes, you can transform that .300 Win that you plan to elk hunt with into a .22-50 Rem for a coyote or prairie dog hunt.

This is simply done by purchasing a B series bolt and magazine setup and the .22-250 barrel. The original Dimension comes with two tools that make the transformation foolproof (which I need), and you can be switched out in no time flat. Simply remove the stock, switch barrels, drop in the new magazine housing, replace stock and pop in the clip and bolt, and you are shooting. This all can be done easily in less than five minutes.

TC is offering an optional bridge scope mount that mounts on individual barrels. Once sighted in, you switch barrels and scopes and don't have to re-sight each time. From my extensive experience with the Dimension, after a barrel switch, I didn't have to touch my scope. Virtually 100 percent of the time, I was back within one inch of my original zero.

It's easy to see the great benefit and versatility of having a system such as this, but it has to be really expensive, right? Actually, price may be one of the Dimension's strongest attributes. Retail price on an initial setup is $649, with additional barrels coming in at $199, including magazine group. If you switch series and need a new bolt, they retail for $129. So if you wanted to purchase the Dimension and have it in .300 Win and .22-250 Rem as we discussed earlier, you would be looking at about $977 for two rifles that are guaranteed to shoot MOA groups. Best of all, the Dimension, like all Thompson/Center guns, is proudly made in the U.S.A. by New Englanders.

Now you tell me, is that a new Dimension in rifles?

Thompson/Center – Proudly Made in the USA

Thompson/Center is not old by historical standards; however, in less than 40 years, they have contributed heavily to the growth of shooting and hunting sports in America. Proudly made in the USA, Thompson/Center has helped elevate handgun hunting and hunting with a muzzleloader to new heights. Continuing to lead the industry through the development of innovative, quality products for sport shooters and hunters worldwide, Thompson/Center became part of Smith & Wesson Holdings, Co. in 2007. Joining the ranks of one of America’s oldest gun manufacturers, Thompson/Center is recognized as Smith & Wesson Hunting and headquartered in Springfield, Massachusetts.

For more information, visit www.tcarms.com
A merica’s anglers and boaters are one of the largest contributors to job creation and conservation in the country. In fact, more than 40 million anglers generate $35 billion in retail sales and $600 million for fisheries conservation and water access improvements through special excise taxes each year. That’s why it’s critical that we continue recruiting new anglers.

Much in the same way that union members take pride in passing on their trade to the next generation, more than six million union sportsmen and women also take pride in passing on our sporting heritage.

In June, the Union Sportsmen’s Alliance and union volunteers from across the country teamed up to hold three Boots on the Ground Take Kids Fishing Day events during National Fishing and Boating Week. Held in Illinois, Ohio and Wisconsin, these unique events helped educate and expose a future generation of American anglers to the sport of fishing. The Illinois and Ohio events focused on providing access to children with varying physical and mental disabilities—children who rarely get the opportunity to spend time in the great outdoors—while the Wisconsin event was open to the public.

After 100 local children enjoyed a great day of fishing in Wisconsin, USA’s Boots on the Ground committee paid it forward in their community by donating the leftover drinks, chips and hot dogs to the Salvation Army and the ICAN homes. Extra door prizes were donated to the City of La Crosse Youth Outdoor Fest that will be held on July 14.

“Take Kids Fishing Day is the perfect opportunity to educate youngsters on the benefits of fishing,” said USA National Events Coordinator Tim Bindl. “It’s also a great way to show families the abundance of public access opportunities available in their own communities.”

Statistics show that the earlier you get youngsters involved in fishing, the more likely they’ll be to respect the outdoors and reach for a rod and reel instead of a video game. Thanks to the American Sports Fishing Association and Zebco, nearly 200 fishing combination sets were available for children to use at the USA’s events.

Special thanks to volunteers from Laborers Local 773 and 1197, the Western Wisconsin AFL-CIO unions, the International Association of Bricklayers and Allied Craft Workers (BAC), the BAC Ohio Area District Council and BAC Local 16, who donated their time and energy to make these events possible.

Later this summer, the USA will join forces with the International Union of Elevator Constructors, United Association of Plumbers and Pipefitters Local 525 and Sheet Metal Workers Local 88 to host a similar event for children in the greater Las Vegas community. The event will be held at Sunset Park in Las Vegas and will be open to the public.

Not only is fishing fun but it helps protect our natural resources and create jobs. That’s why it’s critical that we do our part and help continue recruiting new anglers.
Conserve: Improving Wildlife Habitat

Boots on the Ground Combats Illinois Hog Invasion

By Laura Bliss Morris

In the last 20 years, the U.S. has seen its wild hog population double to an estimated 4-6 million individuals. Roaming free in at least 39 U.S. states, this non-native species causes an estimated $1 billion dollars in property and crop damage each year. According to the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, feral swine (hogs)—a hybrid of domestic pigs and Eurasian wild boars—first appeared in Illinois in the early 1990s. Believed to have been brought into the state and released illegally, they can currently be found in 14 Illinois counties.

As the population increases, wildlife biologists are concerned the hogs will degrade habitats and consume important mast crops such as acorns, which sustain deer, wild turkeys and other wildlife. Feral swine are also known to carry at least 30 diseases that pose serious implications for people, pets, wildlife and livestock. To help head off an outbreak of wild hogs in the Prairie State, 31 apprentices from UA Local 160 in Murphysboro, IL, teamed up with the Illinois DNR to build corral hog traps.

Part of the USA’s Boots on the Ground (BOTG) program, first and fifth year apprentices volunteered more than 80 hours for the project, which helped them sharpen their trade skills while protecting Illinois’ wildlife habitat from one of the fastest-growing invasive species in the U.S.

"With all of the negative press about labor unions, it's always good to let the public know the union side of things, particularly when it concerns conservation projects," said UA Local 160 Apprentice Coordinator Patrick Williams.

With high reproductive potential, wild hog populations must be reduced by 70 percent each year just to keep them from expanding. Hunters in the field who observe feral swine and possess a valid Illinois FOID card can – with the permission of the landowner – legally shoot them.

Since their nocturnal habits and adaptability make them impossible to control with hunting alone, an integrated wildlife damage management approach, employing numerous techniques like the corral traps built by UA Local 160, is imperative to successfully controlling the population.

Help Put More Boots on the Ground

Donate Today!

With more than six million AFL-CIO union sportsmen and -women across North America, we can confront the issues of dwindling hunting and fishing access and diminished wildlife habitat head on and reconnect future generations with the outdoor heritage we hold dear. Your donation will make possible more beneficial projects like our Take Kids Fishing Day and walk-in access gate build. When you make a donation at one of these levels, we’ll send you a special thank-you gift for making a difference for hunters and anglers of today and tomorrow.

Donate Today!
Visit www.unionsportsmen.org/donate or call 877-872-2211 (toll-free).

Donation Levels

$15 Friend of the Outdoors
- USA auto and hard hat decals

$35 Conservation Supporter - $62 Value
- USA auto and hard hat decals
- USA-logo Buck knife ($30 value)
- 1-Year subscription to Petersen’s Hunting, Guns & Ammo or In-Fisherman ($32 value)

$65 Sporting Heritage Supporter - $87 Value
- USA auto and hard hat decals
- USA-logo Buck knife ($30 value)
- 1-Year subscription to Petersen’s Hunting, Guns & Ammo or In-Fisherman ($32 value)
- Choice of USA ammo bag or hat ($25 value)
Union Volunteers Build Gates to Protect Hunting Opportunities

By Kate Cywinski

With populations of elk, deer, moose, bear, sheep, and game birds, Washington State offers phenomenal hunting opportunities. Since about 50% of the state land is in private ownership, many public hunting opportunities rely on landowners opening their lands. Currently, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) private lands access program has more than 600 landowner cooperators and more than one million acres of private land under agreement.

Walk-in hunting areas on private land are typically open to the public exclusively for hunting and are limited to foot access. Because private landowners volunteer to enroll in the program, it’s critical that they and their land are treated with respect to ensure continued public access.

Last November, approximately 40 union members from the United Association of Plumbers and Pipefitters Locals 26 and 32 and International Union of Painters and Allied Trades District Council #5 and their Joint Apprentice Training Committees teamed up with the WDFW to help ensure that foot-access rules were adhered to by building large gates on hunter walk-in access roads.

Not only did union members donate their time, local unions donated their welding facilities, weld rods, painting and sandblasting equipment, while 10 contractors donated pipe and other supplies.

“Access continues to be one of the most pressing concerns for sportsmen and women today,” said USA Executive Director and CEO Fred Myers. “The time and resources union volunteers invested in building gates on walk-in access roads will help protect the quality and availability of land for public hunting in Washington State.”

Conservation in a Time of Austerity

By Whit Fosburgh, TRCP

“Conservation is a luxury we simply can’t afford.” That’s what sportsmen were told in 2011 as the House of Representatives passed a budget that eliminated or eviscerated almost every major conservation program, from wetlands conservation and public lands management funding to the Open Fields program, which encourages landowners to open their lands to public hunting and fishing.

But faced with giving up a century of conservation progress, hunters and anglers reached out to the outdoor recreation and historic preservation communities to make the case that conservation is fundamental to what makes America great, and it provides jobs.

The coalition, called America’s Voice for Conservation, Recreation and Preservation, boasts more than 1,200 groups, including the USA and AFL-CIO. It released a comprehensive economic study that showed hunting and fishing, other outdoor recreation, and historic preservation support 9.4 million American jobs, result in $1.06 trillion in annual economic impact and generate $107 billion annually in tax revenue. And these jobs can't be exported.

Conservation didn’t create the budget deficit, and it can’t solve the problem. As a percentage of federal spending, conservation has decreased from about 2.5 percent in the 1970s to about 1.26 percent today. You could eliminate every conservation program in the nation and barely make a dent in the deficit. And as anyone who has worked on a local conservation project knows, every dollar of federal funds is leveraged several times over by state and private funds and volunteer labor.

I’m pleased to report that common sense finally ruled the day, and the Senate reinstated about $1.8 billion in conservation funds in the final budget agreement. But the House now is poised to repeat history by passing a bill almost identical to its 2011 disaster. Once again, sportsmen and -women of all stripes must speak up for what Theodore Roosevelt called the common man’s birthright.

Learn more about the TRCP at www.trcp.org and America’s Voice for Conservation, Recreation and Preservation at www.avcrp.org.
Yellowstone: America’s Public Wonderland and Trout Fishing Hotspot

By Ken Barrett

Yellowstone is home to a diversity of wildlife and some of the best trout fishing in the Lower 48.

Yellowstone National Park, established 140 years ago by an act of Congress on March 1, 1872, was the world’s first national park. It’s where a uniquely American idea became a reality; many have called it the best idea we ever had. It’s also home to some of the best trout fishing in the lower 48 states that, like the park, is available to all of us.

Few other places lend themselves to a better family vacation. It has the greatest concentration of geothermal features such as Old Faithful in the world, incredible landscapes, and an amazing diversity of wildlife, including grizzlies, wolves, elk, bison, moose, mountain lions, antelope and more. There are campgrounds, lodges and cabins available to suit all visitors’ needs. You can take a stage coach or trail ride, and there are endless miles of hiking trails of various lengths.

And then there’s the trout fishing! Yellowstone offers some of the best publicly accessible trout fishing in the U.S. You’ll find five species of trout along with mountain whitefish and arctic grayling, and there’s not a stocked one among them. There are rivers, creeks and lakes, large and small, to fit every angler’s taste and ability. Some are accessible right off the road, others a short walk from your vehicle and still others lie deep in the backcountry.

Rainbow, brook and brown trout were all introduced in late 19th and early 20th centuries, but the highly regarded and sought after Yellowstone Cutthroat is the park’s native trout. Lake trout, a recent and problematic addition to Yellowstone Lake, threaten the cutthroat’s future, and efforts to eradicate it are ongoing. If you catch a lake trout in Yellowstone Lake, you must kill it.

To learn more about Yellowstone’s general fishing seasons and regulations, including information about licenses ($15 for 3 days, $20 for 7 days) and permits, visit www.nps.gov/yell/planyourvisit/fishing.htm

Yellowstone’s fishing season opens Memorial Day Weekend and runs through the first Sunday in November. All cutthroat trout must be released. You are allowed to keep a limited number of rainbows, brown and brook trout from specific waters, and barbless hooks are the rule. Use of any sort of lead is prohibited.

I’ve been fishing Yellowstone Park waters for 40 years, and I’ve barely scratched the surface, but I have some favorites. Here’s a rundown and a few tips:

Yellowstone Lake: The lake generally opens on June 15, but you can’t fish its tributaries or within a hundred yards of their entry into the lake until July 15 because of spawning cutthroats. My best day on the lake was with my friend, Tom Puchlerz, when we landed more than 100 cutthroats casting wooly-buggers. Fish the lake from shore, bring your own boat (permits are $10) or rent a boat at the marina. Take your trout to Yellowstone’s Lake Hotel and, for a modest fee, they’ll prepare it for you.

Yellowstone River: The river inside the park opens on July 15. My favorite areas are around Buffalo Ford, just a short walk from the parking area, and below Tower Falls, a moderately steep descent into Yellowstone’s Canyon. I’ve experienced wonderful fishing in July during the salmon fly hatch and later in the summer using Pale Morning Duns (PMD’s). Watch out for docile appearing bison along the aptly name Buffalo Ford stretch; bison harm more visitors than grizzly bears.

Fire Hole River: The Fire Hole opens Memorial Day. Its feisty rainbows and browns are “hot” and can provide great action. The Fire Hole is best early in the season and later in the fall when temperatures are cooler. During the heat of July and August, the action slows down. Disney hasn’t come close to matching the magic of the thermally heated swimming hole you’ll find along Firehole Canyon Drive. Your kids will remember it forever!

Slough Creek: This classic piece of cutthroat water in the northeast section of the park opens July 15. There are three distinct meadows, the closest being just a couple mile walk from the trailhead parking lot. Noted angler and author AJ McClane called Sough Creek “one of the prettiest cutthroat streams in the Rockies.” There’s no better time to fish Slough than when the grasshoppers make their appearance in August and September.

Gardner River: The Gardner River opens on Memorial Day Weekend and is home to “Boiling River,” the most visited hot potting spot in Yellowstone. It’s just inside the park’s northern entrance. Kids ages 11 and under can fish the Gardner with worms. Fly fisherman can expect good action during the famed salmon fly hatch in late June and early July through late summer’s hopper season and well into October, when big browns ascend from the Yellowstone to spawn.

Yellowstone Park is an American birthright and represents the best of our democratic ideals. It was established by an act of Congress “for the enjoyment of the people.” There’s no better place to visit, camp and hike, see geysers, watch wildlife, and catch trout. And it belongs to all of us!
Get Fit for Fall
By Bob Bartack  USA member and IAFF Local 425 Alumni

An hour before daylight on a crisp November morning, the steam from our breath is illuminated by our head lamps in an eerie haze. As usual, my hunting partners and fellow firefighters, Jason Joling and Matt Feder, and I are the only ones at the entrance to this remote piece of public land in Northern Wisconsin. It's cold, but we're stripped to our t-shirts as we prep our equipment for the mile+ hike to our chosen hunting spots. Experience has taught us that, in a few minutes, we'll be sweating as we tote our heavy packs, stands and bows in for an all-day sit in the prime of the rut.

The hunting was worth the work, and Matt's keen archery skills produced a 220 lb., 8-point bruiser. As the sun faded in the west, Jason and I were surprised to find that Matt had single-handedly hauled his buck and all his equipment more than a mile back to the truck. It was obvious his hundreds of hours of physical training had prepared him well. While this is no high altitude sheep hunt or backcountry western hunt, the logistics of moving equipment and venison over a long distance required us to be in good shape.

Often sportsmen fail to prepare themselves for the physical demands of their hunting adventures. Midwestern and eastern hunters wanting a successful hunt in the western mountains must dedicate themselves to a physical conditioning program. Not coming home with a trophy isn't the only thing at risk. Every year, we read news stories about hunters who push their physical limits and end up hurt or worse. As a 20-year paramedic, I can tell you first-hand that hunters who neglect physical conditioning put themselves at great risk of suffering a cardiac event or other acute medical conditions while in the field. Paddling your duck skiff or scaling an oak tree is no time to test your fitness level.

Start Today: Stop procrastinating! Write down some simple fitness goals that you would like to achieve before opening day. Post them in several spots to remind yourself frequently what you’re working towards. Self-discipline is required, so commit yourself mentally.

Do the Math: Losing or maintaining your weight is not a complicated problem to solve. Simply put, your caloric intake needs to equal or be less than your calories spent. Today, we have lots of options to help do these calculations. I use myfitnesspal.com. I enter my meals and snacks, then add my daily exercise into the free website. The program then calculates calories burned as compared to calories consumed and helps me eat and exercise every day.

Get a Physical: An annual physical is invaluable to your health. Your physician can help you set healthy fitness goals and find the best path to reach them. Developing a working relationship with your physician will help you stay fit to hunt many falls to come.

Recruit a Buddy: Exercising with your spouse or a friend will increase your enjoyment and motivation. Years ago, I met with a neighbor every morning at 5:30 a.m. for a 30-minute run. Knowing he was waiting for me gave me the motivation I needed to get out of bed on days I would have slept in.

Keep it Fun: Keep exercise fun. I never do the same thing two days in a row. Currently, I'm training for a local triathlon. I enjoy it because training varies between swimming, running and biking. I also make time for resistance training three to four days a week. What you do for exercise doesn’t matter; just get out and get moving.

Buy a Bib: Buying a bib number for a local 5K run or short distance triathlon provides even more incentive to train. Knowing I have to run a race gives me a huge amount of motivation to tie on the running shoes and prepare. The hard physical training provides motivation to eat right too.

Learn Some New Recipes: Get out of your rut and find healthier ways to cook all that delicious and healthy wild game in your freezer. Venison is high in protein and low in fat (as long as you don’t wrap it in bacon). Cut your dry, aged venison steaks thick, marinate them in zesty Italian dressing and grill them low and slow to medium well. Serve with a salad out of your garden and you’ve got a delicious, guilt-free meal that you hunted and gathered yourself!

Soon those daydreams of fall days in the field will be a reality. Good physical conditioning is just as important as sighting in your bow or scouting a new hunting spot, and it will help maximize your enjoyment and success. So get out and get fit for fall!
You’ve got one shot.

Your money has the opportunity to make an impact. Make it count by choosing Bank of Labor as your financial partner. Bank of Labor is this country’s 24/7 online labor bank that is operated by and for union members, meeting the unique needs and challenges of the labor community.

Like you, we appreciate the vision and purpose of the Union Sportsmen’s Alliance. We invite you to discover the value of being a customer and a partner in the mission of Bank of Labor.

Please contact us at 1.855.245.2267 or visit www.BankofLabor.com

Bank of Labor
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a division of Brotherhood Bank & Trust

MEMBER FDIC
The Union Sportsmen’s Alliance is proud to announce Bank of Labor as the title sponsor of its award-winning TV series, *Brotherhood Outdoors*. Owned by the International Brotherhood of Boilermakers and staffed by employees represented by the United Mine Workers of America, Bank of Labor truly is a labor bank.

Bank of Labor’s mission is to serve the needs of the North American labor movement by respecting and supporting the financial needs as well as the social values and causes of its affiliate institutions and their rank and file members.

“What Bank of Labor is offering the labor movement is a new and better approach to how labor invests its capital,” said bank Chairman and CEO Newton B. Jones, who is also president of the International Brotherhood of Boilermakers. “And as a union-dedicated institution, we’re proud to invest in *Brotherhood Outdoors* because it provides opportunities for everyday union sportsmen and women to experience extraordinary outdoor adventures while sharing their union story with a national audience.”

“So many union members are involved in projects that improve their local communities and help ensure the future of America’s outdoor heritage, but their efforts often go unrecognized,” said USA Executive Director and CEO Fred Myers. “So we feel honored and grateful that Bank of Labor has stepped up to help shine a spotlight on those dedicated individuals through our union-dedicated, outdoor TV series.”

*Brotherhood Outdoors* airs exclusively on Sportsman Channel, the only television and digital media company fully devoted to the more than 82 million sportsmen and women in the United States, and is made possible by the following union and contractor partners: Bank of Labor, International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, International Brotherhood of Boilermakers, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, National Electrical Contractors Association, International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers, and United Association Veterans in Piping Program.

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**Apply for Brotherhood Outdoors**

Watching hunting and fishing shows is great, but imagine being part of one.

You work hard to keep this country running. You’re committed to your family and union brothers and sisters. You make a difference in your community. And you’re passionate about the outdoors and passing on our hunting and fishing heritage to the next generation. That makes you a star in our book, and we want you on *Brotherhood Outdoors*, the USA’s union-dedicated outdoor TV series.

We’re not looking for expert hunters and anglers; we’re seeking everyday union workers for extraordinary hunting and fishing adventures across North America.

**Upcoming trips** include Colorado elk, Illinois Asian carp (bowfishing), Florida or Texas hog, Michigan salmon, Texas exotics/whitetail, Western mule deer and predators.

**You Never Know Until You APPLY!**

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**Three Ways to Apply:**

1. Apply online at www.brotherhoodoutdoors.tv (preferred method)
2. Email the information listed below to katec@unionsportsmen.org
3. Mail the information below to:
   USA – Brotherhood Outdoors
   3340 Perimeter Hill Dr.
   Nashville, TN 37211

**Information to send by email or mail:**

1. Name
2. Union/Local
3. Phone
4. Email
5. Address
6. Explain why one of the upcoming trips listed on left would be the fulfillment of a dream or describe your own dream hunting/fishing adventure.
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Fishing for Freedom Founder to Star on Brotherhood Outdoors

By Laura Bliss Morris

In the Spring of 2013, Brotherhood Outdoors will feature Fishing for Freedom founder and retired IBEW Local 124 member Leroy Shull on a salt water fishing adventure in Hawk’s Cay, Florida.

Fishing for mahi-mahi and tarpon may be a far cry from the white bass of Missouri’s Truman Lake, but it’s just as therapeutic for Shull, who has dedicated the last several years to helping veterans readjust to civilian life.

“I’m totally overwhelmed by the experience,” said Shull after filming the episode in May. “Having the chance to be on Brotherhood Outdoors changed my life and really let me tell my story.”

For many of our wounded veterans, time away to rejuvenate and reacclimate is a luxury that is often unattainable and unaffordable. With more than five million wounded veterans in the United States, Shull joined forces with the NECA/IBEW Power Partners, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers and the Leavenworth Bass Club to unite returning, wounded veterans with the great outdoors during their annual bass tournament, Fishing for Freedom.

One of the largest wounded veteran events in the nation, Fishing for Freedom provides an opportunity for America’s heroes to spend a day on the lake with some of the best bass anglers in the country at no cost to them. Offering a relaxed, fun-filled and often therapeutic environment, programs like these help veterans refresh from their combat deployments, escape the hardships of their wounds and begin the process of readjusting to everyday life.

With programs like Helmets to Hardhats and The Wounded Warrior program uniting veterans with unions across the country, Fishing for Freedom draws some of its largest support from the building and construction trades including the IBEW and NECA/IBEW Power Partners.

“We are honored to reward Shull’s commitment to America’s veterans with a fishing trip on season four of Brotherhood Outdoors,” said USA Executive Director and CEO Fred Myers. “Leroy’s commitment to his union, community and America’s heroes is a true testament to what the USA’s TV show is all about.”

Stay tuned to see how Shull fairs against some of Florida’s most sought after saltwater fish.

Get involved with Fishing for Freedom

Fishing for Freedom is currently looking for volunteers, sponsors and individual donations. The 2012 tournament will be held Columbus Day weekend (Saturday, October 6 thru Sunday, October 7) on Truman Lake at the Long Shoal Marina in Warsaw, Missouri. Participate, donate and celebrate with the brave men and women that have given so much of themselves to fight for our freedom! To find out how you can help, visit www.FishingforFreedom.us.
**Enter USA’s “See it to Believe it” Story Contest**

Win a pair of Steiner binoculars!

A two-headed fish, an albino bear, whitetail bucks with locked antlers…

the elusive Sasquatch.

As they say, sometimes you have to see it to believe it. And the USA and Burris, America’s shooting optics icon, want to help you see better, whether counting the tines of the buck heading your way, scouring the waves for the fin of that monster sailfish or confirming that you did indeed see Big Foot.

Share a 150-500 word story about the strangest or craziest thing you’ve seen (or think you’ve seen) in the woods or on the water in our “See it to Believe it” Story Contest, and you could win a pair of 8x22 Steiner Predator Pro Xtreme binocs valued at approximately $180.

Part of the Beretta family, the Burris Company recently joined forces with Steiner Optik—combining an unparalleled selection of award-winning scopes and binoculars perfect for sportsmen and women. The 8x22 Steiner Predator Pro Xtreme packs a lot of performance into a compact binocular including 8x magnification, wide field of view, ergonomic eyecups, rubber armoring and the extreme contrast lens coating. They’re perfect for bow hunting, backpacking or hiking.

**HOW TO ENTER:** Email your story to USAmembers@unionsportsmen.org with “See it to Believe it” as the subject line OR mail your story to: USA • See it to Believe it • 3340 Perimeter Hill Dr. • Nashville, TN 37211

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**CAMO CALAMITIES**

**Black Mud**

By Chris Salinas, Postal Workers Local 451

Every year, I go out for early muzzleloader deer season in Iowa. In 2011, my employer was understaffed, and I was working overtime up the wahzoo. As a result, I only had one day to hunt that season, and on that day, Murphy’s Law took effect.

I had several problems at home, including a leaking pipe and a car issue, to deal with first, so it was a little past noon before I got to my hunting area. When I arrived, I threw on my stalking gear and prepared my T/C Triumph. After dropping some powder, ramming my bullet and putting a primer in the breach, I was ready to go—or so I thought.

Upon reaching the area where I knew a small herd of does hung out, I snuck to within 20 yards of the herd. I had scouted this area and seen some nice bucks. With about an hour left of legal shooting, a buck appeared and slowly made its way toward the does. It had a large beam, 10 tall tines and a massive body. It seemed like an eternity before he came into a clear shooting lane at 50 yards. Already imagining what he’d look like mounted, I raised my muzzleloader slowly, took careful aim and pulled the trigger.

“Click, Pffiff!” Every deer looked in my direction as I held the gun in case I had a hangfire. I continued to hold my position until all the deer relaxed. Then, as quickly as I could, I assessed the problem. I removed the breech plug and discovered I had what I call black mud. I had forgotten to run a couple dry patches to remove the lube from the barrel. Worse yet, I didn’t have a cleaning kit.

After punching out the rest of the powder and the bullet, I used tissues to wipe the inside of the breech and plug as well as the barrel. The hardest part was still to come…loading a muzzleloader horizontally. Using the tree next to me to brace the butt, I managed to reload.

Unfortunately, my monster buck had left the area, so I chose a large, young doe to salvage my one day of the season.

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**Loose Screw**

by Michael Higgins, Steelworkers Local 449

I’ve always been the type of hunter who has patience to sit for long periods and wait for that perfect shot. That follow up shot is a rare occurrence for me, so it isn't uncommon for me to leave deer camp with just my fully loaded rifle. On one particular day, that would cost me dearly. I had a beautiful whitetail buck not more than 50 yards from my treestand. He offered me a shot I thought I could make, so I pulled up on him and squeezed the trigger. What happened next still haunts my dreams.

First of all, I missed him, but after the crack of the rifle and the recoil, I heard a strange noise and felt something hit my boot. My eyes were still fixed on the buck; confused about where the shot came from, he ran under my tree and stopped. At that point, I realized what the strange noise was. Apparently, I didn’t tighten a certain screw during my previous rifle cleaning, so the recoil and loose screw allowed the bottom plate to unlatch. What hit my boots were my three follow up rounds dropping from the magazine and onto the ground 20 feet below. All I could do was watch as that buck walked away.

Send your camo calamity story to: USAmembers@unionsportsmen.org
Anglers face their fair share of challenges, and few species can be as trying as the walleye. They ignore presentation after presentation. Fast trolling, slow trolling, jigs, crankbaits, spinner rigs – it doesn’t seem to matter; the fish occasionally develop the ultimate case of lockjaw. That is, however, until the sun sets. Then a change comes over these notoriously fickle fish. The hot button is switched into the “on” position, and the bite comes alive. It’s not easy, and it’s by no means a guarantee, but walleye fishing after the sun goes down can prove to be some of the most incredible angling of year.
WHERE TO FIND ‘EM

While it's well documented that fishermen seldom agree on anything, there is a common thread when it comes to walleyes after dark—shallow. With their light-sensitive eyes, walleyes show a tendency to huddle in the deep throughout the day. Switch off the sun, and these predators crawl out of 20 feet to spend the night cruising water that may only be three feet deep or less. One of the hottest dusk ‘til dawn walleye bites I ever experienced took place on a quarter-mile stretch of flooded gravel road. Shallow running crankbaits were the prey du jour, and it didn't take long to fill six-fish limits with walleyes ranging from one to three pounds.

Other potential nighttime hotspots include sand flats adjacent to deeper water, i.e. creek channels, rip-rap shorelines or the gently sloping sides of rock humps rising out of deeper water. Day or night, successful walleye fishing is all about structure. However, it's important to remember that structure doesn't necessarily translate into a readily visible bit of topography, e.g. a rock hump, but can be something as subtle as gentle undulations in an otherwise flat and featureless sand bottom. Quality electronics, then, become as important a piece of equipment as the rod and reel. The equation for nighttime walleyes can be elemental: find the structure in shallow water, and chances are, you'll have found the fish.

WHERE TO FIND ‘EM

Night-fishing for walleyes lends itself to several different styles of angling. Leading the pack in terms of popularity and productivity is the art of casting crankbaits over and around the aforementioned bits of shallow-water structure. The lures themselves are many, with well-recognized names such as Shad Raps, Reef Runners, STORM Lures’ Hot ‘n Tots, and 6A Bombers leading the pack. My favorite crankbait, and one I’ll throw day or night, is the Wally Diver by Cotton Cordell. Colors or patterns are often dictated by the primary bait source – shad, perch, or shiners, to name just three. However, two perennial choices that have proven themselves time and time again across the country are Fire Tiger, a blend of chartreuse, orange, green and black, and my personal pick --particularly in a Wally Diver-- red ‘n white. Whether day or night, experimentation remains key when it comes to unraveling what walleyes want at any given moment.

Crankbaits aren’t the only option for after-dark walleye hunters. A slow retrieve with a RoadRunner leadhead jig tipped with a ‘crawler or lively minnow can fill a stringer. Leeches or larger 4- to 5-inch minnows fished underneath a lighted or glow-in-the-dark slip bobber are a good choice too.

HOW TO CATCH ‘EM

Fishing tackle used for nighttime walleye fishing will share a common one-word characteristic—sensitive. Much of what happens on the water after dark, at least on the part of the angler, is accomplished largely by feel. That means a quality rod and reel, one which transmits every bump, tick or tap immediately back to the hands, is vitally important.

My go-to, after-dark walleye rig consists of a 6-foot medium action Berkley Series ONE IM7 spinning rod mated to a Shakespeare Intrepid 3030 reel spooled with simple No. 6 monofilament. With this, I can cast comfortably well into the wee hours of the morning and can easily feel the often subtle take of a feeding walleye. It’s important to maintain ample backbone to subdue something as large as my personal best for walleyes, a 31.5-inch Columbia River brute that weighed 14.5 pounds taken just as the sun was sinking behind the Cascade Mountains. I wooed that trophy with a 5/8-ounce chartreuse jighead rigged with a No. 6 stinger hook and tipped with a nightcrawler. Not that I remember much about it. No sir, not much at all.

WHERE TO FIND ‘EM

Much of what happens on the water after dark, at least on the part of the angler, is accomplished largely by feel.
The Alabama Rig
Made by your union brother
by Kate Cywinski

If you fish, you’re probably familiar with the buzz surrounding The Alabama Rig or the myriad of similar products often labeled umbrella rigs. Designed to allow anglers to fish as many as five swimbaits on a single rig, this innovative product is revolutionizing the fishing lure industry.

What you may not know is that The Alabama Rig, the original product that started this trend in multi-bait lures, was developed by Andy Poss of Plumbers and Steamfitters Local 760 in Muscle Shoals, Ala.

Frequently on the road with his job as a pipefitter and welder and as a tournament fisherman, Poss’ inspiration came while watching the behavior of tuna and sardines on The Blue Planet on the Discovery Channel in a hotel room.

He began fishing at a young age and has been in the tournament circuit for 35 years, so Poss recognized the potential of The Alabama Rig right away but spent almost two years developing and redesigning his lure before releasing it into the bass fishing world.

Designed to be casted and retrieved by the angler, The Alabama Rig has a head with five separate wires, swivels and lures connected. It can be rigged with almost any lure selection from top to bottom.

Local bass club tournaments around the country are being won on The Alabama Rig. In fact, the lure helped Poss achieve first place with a weight of 21.86 in the American Fishing Tour bass tournament on Pickwick Lake last March.

Because The Alabama Rig is sold out of stores nearly as fast as they’re put on shelves, many companies have capitalized on the demand by making copy cats. The patent for The Alabama Rig has been pending for more than 16 months, and Poss has seen variations of his product, many of them made overseas, flooding the market.

If the patent goes through, that will only be the beginning; the companies producing imitations won’t give up the fast-selling products without a fight, and they have deeper pockets when it comes to lawyer fees.

But Poss remains hopeful that the support of his union family will make the difference. If the patent goes through, he plans to send an appeal to fellow union members asking them to contribute $1 toward lawyer fees to help protect his patent. Money that isn’t used for legal purposes will be donated to Disabled Veterans or the Children’s Hospital.

If competing companies understand they’re not contending with one person but rather hundreds of thousands of union members, they’ll be more likely to respect his patent. After all, unions were built on the idea that an injury to one is a concern for all and a victory for one is a victory for all.

www.thealabamarig.com

Greenbug for People

While some enjoyed the mild temperatures this past winter, we’re all now paying for it in the form of larger numbers of blood-sucking, itch-inducing, disease-spreading bugs! When it comes to maintaining sanity while enjoying the outdoors, we often overlook the health risks of chemical laden insect repellents. But thanks to Greenbug for People, we no longer have to choose between two health risks in order to enjoy nature. Proudly made in the U.S., Greenbug for People is an all-natural, completely safe, pest control product that kills and repels mosquitoes, ticks, chiggers, fleas, ants and other annoying pests using nature’s own powerful ingredient—cedar. Deadly to pests but harmless to humans, pets and beneficial insects like bees and butterflies, the natural aroma of Greenbug for People also serves as a perfect masking scent for hunters. This product can be purchased in several sizes, including a convenient 2-ounce spritzer that’s perfect for a pocket, tackle box or hunting vest and can even pass through airport security. Don’t let bugs keep you from nature; beat them with nature’s own solution.

www.greenbugallnatural.com
Easton Ultra-micro Injexion Arrows

The archery competition at the London 2012 Olympic Games will call for nerves of steel and pinpoint precision out to 76 yards. That distance demands a lot from an arrow as archers combat variable crosswinds and velocity decay. Precision Easton arrows have won every gold medal since 1996, and now Easton Technical Products has introduced ultra-micro Injexion arrows to provide hunters with the same level of performance.

Proudly made in the U.S., Injexion arrows utilize many of the same design characteristics of the X10 arrow, the shaft many Olympic contenders will be using in a few weeks. Injexion utilizes Deep Six, a new standard in high performance inserts and points for bowhunting. In the past, conventional broadheads and inserts were too large to allow hunting with the micro diameter shafts used by world-class target competitors.

Easton’s Injexion arrows bring an Olympic performance tool to bowhunting. Of course, the tool is only half the equation. As bowhunters, it’s our responsibility to practice and limit shots to distances we are comfortable with for a clean kill.

www.eastonarchery.com

Vicious Braid

Trophy bass achieve their long life and large size by spending their time in the shallow, weedy water nature equipped them for, according to Doug Hannon, Florida’s legendary “Bass Professor” with more than 500 10+ pound largemouth to his name. To put one of those lunkers on your wall, you need line that can stand up to nasty cover. Woven from the highest quality Spectra fiber, the Vicious Braid is highly abrasion resistant and practically impervious to UV rays and water to provide years of service in the most brutal fishing conditions. With virtually no stretch, the braid allows you to feel the slightest bite at any depth and set the hook with lightning speed. While it may cost those monster bass dearly, the U.S. made Vicious Braid won’t cost you an arm and a leg, coming in on the low end of the price range for good braid.

www.vicious-fishing.com USA members receive a 25% discount on their entire catalog of online products. Visit www.unionsportsmen.org/deals for your special discount code.
Averaging 1,030 people per square mile, New Jersey has the highest population density in the United States. So the last thing USA staff expected to find when organizing USA’s 1st Annual New Jersey Sporting Clays Shoot at Red Wing Sporting Clays was a beautiful, wooded and seemingly remote shooting course just a few miles from the seaside resort and gaming capital of the east coast—Atlantic City.

USA’s events team was even more surprised by the rich history of the property, which has been in the same family for seven generations, dating back to the Revolutionary War. According to Roger Giberson, a member of Sheet Metal Workers Local 27 and the current owner of Red Wing, his earliest ancestor on the property was one of the privateers who raided British ships to supply George Washington’s army. When the British retaliated by burning the American outpost and surrounding homes, Roger’s great-great-great-great grandfather’s home was among them.

But that didn’t deter him, and the property has stayed in the family ever since. Despite development and population growth, the land has always been used for outdoor activities including trapping, logging, farming, hunting and shooting. Roger’s grandfather built a campground in 1963, which is still in use today and has been visited by just about every union trade in town—electricians, painters, roofers, and the list goes on.

Red Wing Sporting Clays got its start 16 years ago after Roger and his father, a retired Local 825 operating engineer, shot at a sporting clays course and thought it was much different and more fun than shooting trap and skeet. Built in the heart of the New Jersey Pinelands, Red Wing’s 25-station shooting course weaves through forests and marshland and caters both to experienced shooters and beginners alike. Getting youth involved in shooting is very important at Red Wing, which is operated by Roger along with his wife and three boys, who all share a love for the outdoors.

“It’s very important for youth to get out and experience the outdoors, and what better way than a sporting clays course with its target variety and walking through the woods,” Giberson said. “We need to send a message to kids that guns are not to be used for violence but to have fun.”

For the past 15 years, Red Wing has hosted a youth shoot for kids between the ages of 10 and 15, and last year’s event was attended by a whopping 120 shooters. Red Wing has held sporting clays and golf events to help United Way raise more than $1.4 million over the past 15 years, as well.

Just before the USA shoot this year, Pheasants Forever had an event at the facility, and the NJ Federation of Sportsmen’s Clubs held one a few weeks after. There’s no doubt unionism, conservation and heritage are valued at Red Wing Sporting Clays, and we look forward to heading back to the Garden State for USA’s 2nd Annual New Jersey Sporting Clays Shoot in 2013.

As a proud USA member, Roger is eager to help sign up more union members for next year’s event. And as a proud SMWIA member, he may also hope SMWIA Local 27 maintains its 1st place title next year…not that anyone is keeping score!
Behind the Scenes with the USA Events Team
by Kate Cywinski, edited by Heather Tazelaar

If you’re one of the thousands of union members who have attended a USA shoot, you’ve probably met the USA’s events team—Nate Whiteman, Tim Bindl, Heather Tazelaar and Travis Sadler. Since June 2009, they have been all over the U.S., hosting sporting clays and trap shoots and forging great relationships with USA members.

When you arrive at a USA event, you may indulge in a donut after filling out your paperwork and receiving a gift bag. After the safety briefing and welcome speech, you head out to break clay pigeons in pursuit of one of the trophies wood-worked by a union shop teacher in IL. After taking your final shot, you enjoy lunch and perhaps win a door prize, gun or a wad of cash before heading home.

Have you ever wondered what happens behind the scenes and in between USA events? The USA’s events team has hosted more than 40 shooting events, and the stories from the road keep piling up. The USA truck and trailer have clocked about 10,000 miles in 2012, bringing the total miles driven since their introduction in June 2011 to 25,000…and they don’t drive themselves!

Have you heard the saying “Everything’s bigger in Texas?” Last February, the team prepared to pull out of the shooting facility in Houston only to find the huge gate at the entrance was locked. The only way out was to drive the USA’s Chevy dual-wheel truck through the giant ditch beside the gate. Big gate, big ditch, and big-huge-gigantic culvert of mud. The only thing that could’ve been bigger was the tow truck.

As with any road trip, mechanical and operational problems are a given. On one journey last year, the trailer blew two tires and, by the end of the season, Nate and Tim changed every tire at least once. And you haven’t lived until you’ve driven through the Northern California mountains with no power to your trailer lights or brakes.

When not on the road, the USA shooting trailer often doubles as a makeshift camper for the events team, who know the importance of stretching membership dollars. With all the gear onboard, that makes for close quarters. One night, Tim woke the team at 2:00 a.m. when he turned on the compressor to inflate his drained air mattress. His muttered “I’m so sorry guys” was the only thing that saved him from a barrage of pillows.

Long hours, early mornings, sore muscles and too much time together have taught the events team to always expect the unexpected. And while they may have just dealt with one crisis or may be on the way to another, you’ll never know it. They manage each USA shoot with smiles on their faces because all their hard work is paid off when you leave our USA shoots with a smile on yours.

For information on sponsoring or helping organize a USA event near you, contact:

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Director of USA Events/Fundraising
Phone: 440-867-2732
Cell: 440-867-8229
natew@unionsportsmen.org

Heather Tazelaar
National Events/Fundraising Manager
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Tim Bindl
National Events/Fundraising Coordinator
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timb@unionsportsmen.org

Three Hot Spots for Summer Bass

By Doug Howlett

Summer can be tough, but they’re out there.

The old Tracy Byrd song laments that “it’s too hot to fish, too hot for golf and too cold at home.” And while scorching summer temps may definitely translate into unbearable discomfort on the links, and your home situation may well be in the toilet (we can’t help you there), there’s no need to give up on the fishing. While summer fishing may not rock like the spawn, there’s still plenty of action to be had for the determined angler. After all, angling pros Kurt Dove, John Crews and Mark Rose have all had to learn how to produce on even the most brutal summer days.
Start Shallow

Read 90 percent of the summer bass fishing articles, and they all begin by urging anglers to go deep where both bait fish and, ultimately, bass will suspend in the cooler water. While that is certainly true, Texas pro angler and Lake Amistad guide Kurt Dove (Amistadbassguide.com) says by doing that, a lot of folks waste valuable time and miss out on opportunities much closer to shore.

“Most people are looking deep, but there are a lot of bass—really big bass—right near the shore in the shallows,” Dove says.

The key is to find an area with plenty of cover to provide both shade as well as likely ambush spots. Weeds, lily pads, milfoil and other vegetation in waters as deep as 3 to 7 feet are perfect. The angler recommends using a topwater bait, such as a Buzz Frog or El Grande Lures Sapo, regardless of the time of day.

“You want to get a reaction strike, so wind it through the grass pretty fast,” Dove says. “You want the fish to think something is getting by them.” As an alternate option, you can flip a creature bait or crawl imitation bait and work it across the top.

Go With the Flow

Anywhere water is flowing through or into still water—a spillway, a pipe that runs into a lake, a fresh flowing creek, below a dam—you’ll find bass stacked up. The current generates turbulence, which puts more oxygen in the water, something bass need. It also moves bait around.

While most anglers focus on the hiding spots of the protected down-current side of structure i.e., bridge pilings, rocks, etc., the bigger, more active bass will be found in the current where the feeding opportunities are. This means your lure needs to be there too, and you need to be fishing in front of the cover instead of downstream of it.

“Throw a spinner bait, crank bait, jig, soft plastic…they will all work in this situation,” says Dove.

Get Deep

As recommended by 90 percent of summer bass fishing articles, going deep works.

“Water temperatures are a big factor in the summer,” says FLW pro Mark Rose. “When temperatures start getting to the 80s at the surface, bass will start descending to seek cooler water. The shad will be there, too.”

The thermocline, that magic line where the cool water piles up and sits toward the bottom, is where you will usually find all of the fish. Just like looking for deep-water structure, or even better, structure where the water is deeper (at least 10 to 15 or more feet deep) and cooler, an angler needs to use his electronics.

“Look for ledges, boulders, submerged brush piles, stumps…bass need ambush points,” says the Arkansas angler.

Once you find the cover—and the bass—Rose says nothing beats a “plain Jane worm” when working a spot with brush or grass, since it’s weedless. In open water, just as Crews does when fishing rocks and other structure, go with a crankbait.

“Give the lure a good steady retrieve. When you hit cover, let it walk its way through it,” says Rose. “Don’t crank and stop. I don’t find that helps anyone.”

Fellow angler Dove also likes trying a vertical jig presentation such as a Hopkins spoon. Another tactic that is getting a lot of attention lately is long lining for bass, whereby anglers toss a crankbait out, then continue to spool line out as they move the boat away as much as 200 to 300 yards. Then they begin to reel up line, getting crankbaits down at once unimaginable depths of 35 and even 40 feet. The goal is to just rip the bait through big suspending bass.

Lastly, Dove urges anglers to always stay focused on the water and keep an eye out for schooling activity.

“Pay attention with all of your senses,” says Dove. “As a guide and tournament angler, I see a lot of anglers looking off into nature instead of really paying attention to what’s going on in the water. That’s certainly part of enjoying the day, and I’m not knocking it, but if you really want to catch fish, pay attention to the task at hand. There will be time for riding and looking around later.”
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.

Harley Eskew IV, a member of Plumbers and Pipefitters Local 333 from Charlotte, MI, caught this king salmon during his first fly fishing trip on Michigan's Pere Marquette River in Sept. 2010.

Jennifer O’Brine, a member of Electrical Workers Local 340 from Roseville, CA, harvested this black bear (her first) during a hunt in Quincy, CA, in Nov. 2011.

PJ Anthony, a member of Plumbers and Steamfitters Local 267 from Syracuse, NY, caught this steelhead in one of Lake Ontario's tributaries on his 8-weight fly rod.

Mark Poole, a member of Electrical Workers Local 429 from Joelton, TN, caught this 5 lb. largemouth bass while fishing on a 4 lb. test at Bluff Creek in March 2012. He’s also sporting some nice USA gear!

Michael F. Conry, a member of Electrical Workers Local 164 from Milford, NJ, harvested this 10-point, 202 lb. whitetail after a day of hunting with his boys in Oakfield, Maine in Nov. 2005.

Stephen Desisto, a member of Glaziers Local 1044 from Boston, MA., caught this striped bass in the Essex River near Crane Beach in Ipswich, MA.

Bryan Swiderski (left) and Trent McNutt (right), members of Painters District 6 and Local 7 in Toledo, OH, took the friendship they started in apprenticeship school to the field when they harvested bucks together for the first time. It was Trent's first deer!

Frank Kamuf, a member of Electrical Workers Local 702 from Dale, IN, and his daughter, Ashley First, shot their Rio Grande birds in Texas. It completed Frank's Grand Slam. Ashley is a member of the Teachers Union KEA District 4.

Mitchell Christian, a member of Machinists District 751 from Marysville, WA, caught this 62 lb. halibut on a sardine.
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