KIDS AND TURKEYS
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RIG IT RIGHT FOR PANFISH
PLENTY OF FISHING ACTION AND GREAT EATING

SHEDS: THE EASY AND THE HARD WAY
ANTLER TROPHIES AND INSIGHT FOR YOUR NEXT HUNT

SPRING SNOWS
A UNIQUE WATERFOWL HUNTING OPPORTUNITY
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2011 Was A Banner Year for the USA

It's hard to believe but, July 2012 will mark the 5-year anniversary of the Union Sportsmen’s Alliance. It’s amazing to see how far this union-dedicated organization has come in just a few years.

Instead of just making a resolution at the beginning of the year, I did some reflecting on 2011. With the addition of new charter unions and national sponsors, record membership numbers, the launch of a national TV show on a new network, and the expansion of our shooting tour and conservation program, it’s clear that 2011 was a banner year for the USA.

We were very pleased to welcome the Insulators and Laborers to the ranks of our USA Charter Union partners, which include the AFL-CIO, Boilermakers, IAMAW, IBEW, IUEC, IUPAT, Roofers, SMWIA and UA. We were also happy to bring on additional corporate partners including Cabela’s and Burris/Steiner, and we thank our existing national partners Union Insurance Group and ULLICO.

In addition, we launched a no-cost membership program last June, which provides a free membership to charter union members. As a result, we welcomed our 25,000th member in September and ended the year with a record breaking 8,000 new USA members.

With the support of seven international unions, the USA also launched its Brotherhood Outdoors TV series on Sportsman Channel. This unique series puts the spotlight on union members and provides a national platform to promote their strong work ethic, community involvement and commitment to protecting North America’s hunting and fishing heritage. Already, the show is proving to be popular among union members and the general public. On January 18, Brotherhood Outdoors was awarded the 2011 Sportsman Choice Award for Best Combination Show. More than 140,000 votes determined this year’s winners.

Last year also saw the expansion of our USA shooting tour. After unveiling a custom-wrapped Chevy Silverado 3500 HD and shooting events trailer in June, we covered nearly 10,000 miles during the second half of the tour. In total, we visited 25 markets and got hundreds of union members, partners and sponsors involved in the shooting sports. Our 3rd Annual Kansas City Shoot, hosted by the Boilermakers, set a new record in October, raising $91,165. That was quickly broken in November, when we raised $95,925 at our 2nd Annual Las Vegas Trap Shoot, hosted by the Elevator Constructors.

USA’s Boots on the Ground conservation program also grew by leaps and bounds. Union volunteers began or have completed 14 projects in 12 states including South Dakota, Texas, Wisconsin, Ohio and Illinois. Projects ranged from a new trail bridge in South Dakota to a special needs youth whitetail hunt in Ohio.

Thanks to the Elevator Constructors, we ran a Nevada Trophy Elk Hunt Sweepstakes to raise funds for the Boots on the Ground program. The lucky winner, James Weingardner of Roofers Local 4, harvested an impressive 6x7 bull elk, and the funds gained from the sweepstake will go towards the USA’s work to improve hunting and fishing access and wildlife habitat for all sportsmen and women.

As we look towards the USA’s 5th anniversary, we hope to continue our efforts to unite the millions of active and retired union members who hunt, fish, shoot and spend time outdoors into one of the largest hunter/angler based, conservation organizations in the country.
America Votes
Brotherhood Outdoors
USA’s TV Series Wins Best Combination Show
By Laura Bliss Morris

Thanks to our dedicated members and viewers, the USA’s popular hunting and fishing TV Show, Brotherhood Outdoors, took home a 2011 Sportsman Choice Award for Best Combination Show during the Shooting, Hunting and Outdoor Trade (SHOT) show in January.

More than 140,000 viewers made their voices heard and selected this year’s winners, which were revealed in front of a crowd of 800 of the industry’s leading producers, personalities and sponsors during the network’s annual awards ceremony.

“Receiving national attention with an award of this magnitude means that Brotherhood Outdoors has the potential to help shape the American public’s understanding and impression of unions,” said USA Executive Director Fred Myers. “This was a very competitive category, and winning clearly demonstrates that America’s sportsmen and women are engaged and respect the dedicated volunteers and conservation heroes prevalent in the union community.”

Broadcast to 31 million homes via Sportsman Channel, Brotherhood Outdoors airs at 8 p.m. E/P every Thursday and highlights deserving, blue-collar characters—pairing their commitment to their unions and communities with their love for the great outdoors. Resonating with viewers across the country, the show rewards guests with a guided hunting or fishing trip in North America or the opportunity to show off their skills by taking host Tom Ackerman to their favorite honey holes.

Brotherhood Outdoors is made possible through the generous support of the Boilermakers, Bricklayers, Electrical Workers, Electrical Contractors, Machinists, Mechanical Contractors, Painters, Plumbers and Pipefitters, and Sheet Metal Workers as well as corporate partners like Buck Knives and Burris/Steiner. www.brotherhoodoutdoors.tv

Five USA Members Win a Cabela’s Shopping Spree

We have all, at some point, received a phone call or a letter in the mail saying we won this or that, and then we discover…the catch. But for five USA members, the only catch was choosing from all the great hunting, fishing and outdoor gear in a Cabela’s shopping spree.

As part of a 2011 membership recruitment campaign, all USA members as of Dec. 10 were entered in a random drawing for five $2,000 Cabela’s gift cards—just in time for the holidays. The lucky winners were Glen Christiansen of IBEW Local 3, Jesse Woods II of IBEW Local 350, Louis Faust of UA Local 502, Norman Barnes of Boilermakers Local 169 and Codey Lindsay of IBEW Local 354.

Congratulations to the winners! We hope their new Cabela’s gear brings them lots of luck in the woods and water.

We’re proud to offer USA members many opportunities to win prizes throughout the year. A few examples are our weekly Buck knife photo contest, Facebook contests, spring turkey contest and trophy elk hunt sweepstakes.

To stay tuned in to all the chance to win, visit www.UnionSportsmen.org, like us on Facebook and read our USA eblasts. And if you’re not already a USA member, join today at www.JointheUSA.com.

Norman Barnes of Boilermakers Local 169 heads to Cabela’s.
Earn Great Gear with Your Gobbler

For us turkey hunters, the mere mention of spring sets our mind racing to the woods and the resonating sound of that big ol’ tom answering our calls. Well the time has come to tune-up that shotgun, practice those calls, and submit your longbeard in the Union Sportsmen’s Alliance 3rd Annual Spring Turkey Contest.

If your practice pays off, you could win some fancy new gear. All USA members who enter their turkey (legally harvested in North America in the 2012 season) will be entered in a random drawing for a Mossberg 535 Turkey THUG shotgun. Additionally, the first place winner in each of four categories (Eastern, Merriam, Osceola and Rio Grande) will receive a Primos Crusher Blind. The 2nd place winner in each category will win an Ol’ Tom Time & Motion Vest. And the 3rd-7th place winners in each category will receive a Primos Chick Magnet call. See back cover for more details.

The deadline to enter is June 1, 2012. Not a USA member? Join today at www.JointheUSA.com to earn some gear with that gobbler.
I am an admitted turkey hunting addict. But my gobbler sickness aside, I honestly believe taking children in pursuit of spring turkeys is one of the best ways to introduce them to hunting. Obviously, it has its challenges.

Over the years, I've had the privilege of taking many young hunters into the spring woods, including my twin sons Will and Drew, and have learned a few things along the way. What is the number one lesson learned? You must make the experience fun for kids. Remember, this may be a first impression or at least a foundation for them in our great sport. If they don't have a good time from the onset, it may tarnish their feelings about hunting permanently.

I also recommend spending some serious time scouting before you take a child to the field. You want them to see turkeys when they go, so they can see what the sport is all about. Scout out a location the birds are using regularly—near a roost is always best. Hearing the woods wake up at dawn and a big tom or two hammering off the limb before flydown will get a kid excited, no matter what the outcome of the hunt.

If being within earshot of a roost isn't possible, setting up on or near a field that turkeys frequent also works. Again, even if you don't harvest a bird, kids will have a great time if they can see birds strutting and doing what turkeys do. Now if you can find a well-used field near a roost, you are really in good shape.

I think portable blinds, like the Primos Double Bull Dark Horse, are the best piece of equipment one can have when taking youngsters turkey hunting. Until they are more experienced, you probably aren't going to do much “running and gunning,” so picking a good spot and setting up a blind is the way to go. In a good blind, kids can sit comfortably, get away with movement, and it's just less stressful.

I've found that because movement is almost completely undetectable, kids can move a bit to see birds, and if a turkey comes in, they have a much better chance of maneuvering to get a shot off.

Lastly, I like to use numerous decoys when making a setup with a child. I often use a strutting jake and two to three hen decoys. This system will often bring birds in from long distances in fields, but more importantly, when birds come in to multiple decoys, they seem to stay around longer and stay preoccupied. This goes a long way with inexperienced hunters trying to make a quality shot, especially if they are excited.

Last spring, I took my boys to Texas and hunted a few days. On opening morning, Drew and I crawled in a Double Bull about 300 yards from a known roost. We were welcomed with a symphony of gobbles, and after 30 minutes, I called in a lone tom. He strutted around my decoys within 20 yards for more than nine minutes before he stood still long enough for Drew to get a good head shot. The system worked to a “T” and is a memory that both of us will cherish forever.

The key is making that first hunt fun for kids.

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

Bricklayers Host Dream Hunt for 30 Special Needs Youth

By Laura Bliss Morris

Combining incredible genetics, proper herd management, and an abundance of agriculture and cover, the Buckeye State is a top choice for bagging some of the biggest whitetail bucks in the world and the perfect spot to introduce future generations of sportsmen and women to the great outdoors.

For more than five years, George McCalvin of International Union of Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers (BAC) Local 7 dreamed of giving back to his community by organizing a youth hunt for children with varying physical and intellectual disabilities—children who would probably never get to experience a coveted Ohio whitetail hunt on their own.

In November, just in time for youth gun opening weekend, the USA’s Boots on the Ground (BOTG) program teamed up with 50 volunteers from BAC Locals 7 and 39 to make this hunt a reality.

Working directly with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, volunteers scouted for the perfect honey holes on designated public lands in the Wayne National Forest as well as on select, private lands for weeks leading up to the hunt.

Nearly 30 participants, ranging from 12 to 17 years old, were treated to a gun safety course, practice round and hands-on instruction at a local shooting range the day before the hunt. Outfitted with a variety of donated gear, each hunter took to the field the next morning with a newfound confidence.

“I feel blessed to have been able to attend and help by being a guide at this event,” said BAC Local 7 member David Tibbetts. “My hunting partner and his father are now my friends, and the bond formed in the blind and at the banquet and dinner will last a lifetime.”

Though no deer were harvested during the youth hunt, McCalvin hopes to repeat the event next year and continue to share Ohio’s longstanding whitetail hunting tradition with the next generation of American sportsmen and women.

This special youth hunt is the first of its kind for the USA’s BOTG program. Bringing together union members willing to volunteer their time and expertise, the BOTG program tackles conservation projects that improve and enhance public access, wildlife habitat and outdoor experiences for communities across America.

Special thanks to the International Union of Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers, BAC Locals 7 and 39, the BAC Ohio Administrative District Council and Captrust, who helped make this hunt a reality.

Check out a short video of the youth in action at www.UnionSportsmen.org/BOTGvideo

For more information about these BOTG projects or to find out how you can get involved in conservation projects, contact Tim Bindl at timb@unionsportsmen.org or 608-397-1023.

CORRECTION: In our Nov. 2011 issue, we identified BAC Local 29 as a host of the First Annual Special Needs Youth Whitetail Hunt. It was actually BAC Local 39. We apologize for the error and thank BAC Local 39 for their commitment to getting youth involved in the outdoors.
Union Volunteers Bridge the Gap for South Dakota Outdoor Enthusiasts

By Laura Bliss Morris

Union members from South Dakota recently took America’s failing bridge infrastructure into their own hands by volunteering invaluable skilled labor to help the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks rebuild a new hiking trail bridge just south of Hill City on the Mickelson Trail.

Part of the Union Sportsmen’s Alliance’s Boots on the Ground (BOTG) program, 22 union members from IBEW Local 1250, SMWIA Local 10, UA Local 192 and IUOE Local 49 teamed up for the conservation project, which helped bridge the gap between outdoor enthusiasts and access to public lands.

One of more than 100 converted railroad bridges along the trail, the 100 ft. bridge needed significant repairs to both the base and handrails. Volunteers worked over a busy four-lane road during wintery conditions while demolishing portions of the existing bridge and installing new planks and a pre-fab handrail system they developed.

Through teamwork and dedication, they were able to cover more than 50 feet on the first day alone, wrapping up the project by the end of day two.

“The new bridge will greatly improve community access by providing a better surface for hiking and biking,” said IBEW Local 1250 Business Manager Randy Stainbrook, who helped coordinate the project.

When asked if he’d recommend other unions getting involved with a BOTG project in their area, he replied, “Absolutely. It’s a great way to get outdoors, and it helps put unions in a good light in the public’s eyes.”

Help Put More Boots on the Ground

Donate Today!
The hunting, fishing and outdoor recreational opportunities we enjoy today didn’t come free, and it’s up to all of us to chip in and help preserve our outdoor heritage for future generations. Your donation will make possible more worthy projects like the Ohio special needs youth hunt and the South Dakota bridge 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 sportsmen and women.

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)
Rig It Right for Panfish

By Doug Howlett

Plenty of fishing action and great eating make panfish a great option.
Alternately known as an Alabama rig or even swimbrella, the set up allows an angler to fish as many as five swimbait (where legal) from one terminal connection. Heads & Tails Lure Company’s Swarmbrella features a fish head-looking pull point with stainless steel wire shafts and Rosco Duo-lock snap swivels for attaching swimbait, tubes, jigs or any assortment of lures to mimic schooling fish. Pop the rod slightly during the retrieve and the wires will flex, allowing the baits to group and then fan out like something spooked them. The center bait sets slightly farther back to simulate the weakest bait of the bunch. ($12, htlureco.com)

Berkley Atomic Pulse Tube
A tube bait with a design twist, the Atomic Pulse Tube, part of Berkley’s Power-Bait scent-impregnated line, has a ribbed body for additional scent dispersion and a softer body for easier hook penetration. Available in 20 colors—go with something brighter, like a chartreuse or glow/chartreuse combination in darker, muddier water and a lighter lure, such as a pearl or pearl/silver fleck, in clear water. Rig it with an Aberdeen hook (hook side up for crappie since they feed up and not down) and small split shot set about six inches from the lure. Combine it with a float tube to adjust the depth once suspended fish are located. Pulse tubes, or any tube for that matter, work well in conjunction with a light jig head, too. ($4/pack of 10, berkley-fishing.com)

Berkley Atomic Teaser
Spiderwire pro angler Bobby Lane is one of those anglers on the competitive circuit who enjoys casting for panfish in his native Florida. One of his favorite lures is the Berkley Atomic Teaser, which comes pre-rigged and combines the enticement of a tube bait with that of a power worm affixed to a nonlead jig head. They’re available in 1/32 ounce and 1/16 ounce weights and can be suspended above grass, ledges or underwater brush or dropped straight down alongside a pier or other structure where crappies hang out. Simple water action will flare the tentacles, which can be enhanced with a slight twitch. ($4/pack of 3, berkley-fishing.com)

Johnson Beetle Spin
A classic for hauling in slab crappie and large bluegills, the Beetle Spin is a great dark water lure given the flash and sound provided by the spinner. It also delivers the popping action of a jig. The hooked grub body can be quickly changed for one with a different color by detaching it from the spinner’s safety-pin-style attachment. Retrieve it slowly for spinning action or simply jig it. Tip the hooks with wax worms or maggots for additional enticement. ($1.50/1 lure and four grub bodies, berkley-fishing.com)

Umbrella Rig
Like most lures or rigs, the development started on bass and has trickled over to crappie. Umbrella lures are the biggest “new” thing right now, according to Danny Knight, manager of Ocean’s East 2 Tackle Shop in Virginia Beach, Va., and crappie anglers are jumping on board.

Rebel Crickhopper
For drifting bluegills or crappie drawn to the shallows as the water warms, the Rebel Crickhopper is a popper-type lure with two variations—one designed to work across topwater and the other that will submerge during the slow retrieve between zero to three feet. On topwater, wait until the ripples subside; then gently twitch the tip of your rod side-to-side for twitching action that can bring on vicious strikes. ($4, lurenent.com)

These five lures merely splash the surface of what’s available for the angler targeting crappie, bream and other panfish, but whether you’re making a triumphant return to the water or simply looking to enhance the contents of an already well-used tackle box, these are all great ones to use. So tie on, toss out and start filling up that stringer. Plenty of good fishing awaits.
Memorial Gun
USA Gun Winner Donates Prize to Support Youth
By Kate Cywinski

Scott Grandon, a member of UA Local 533, vividly remembers sitting in a treestand with his 8-year-old son, Jason, watching two 8-point bucks fighting in a field just 40 yards away. The boy was amazed. And when the bucks stopped fighting and a big 12-pointer walked out, they both watched in awe.

That's one of many fond memories Grandon cherishes since losing his son to a drunk driver in 2002, when Jason was just 20-years-old. Tragedy impacts lives in many ways. Rather than dwelling on his loss, Grandon chose to honor his son's life by establishing the Jason Grandon Memorial Fund and helping other young adults as they graduate high school and pursue their dreams—whether in college, the military or the workforce.

To get the memorial fund started, Grandon opened a savings account and began adding any overtime pay he earned. Jason's grandparents, aunts, uncles and other relatives added to the fund, donating what they would have given Jason in birthday and Christmas gifts each year.

Now the Jason Grandon Memorial Fund provides 10-15 $100 scholarships to students at both Paola High School in Paola, KS, where Jason graduated, and Osawatomie High School in Osawatomie, KS. One student at Paola High School receives a combination scholarship that also includes money raised at the local Ducks Unlimited banquet, where Grandon sponsors a Redman print each year.

A large number of the students at both schools come from single parent homes or are being raised by grandparents and really need financial help, so choosing the scholarship winners each year is not easy.

"Many of the scholarships go to kids that may not have that 4.0 GPA. Many of them are not even going to college," Grandon said. "Those that choose to join the workforce, military, etc. need the acknowledgment and support for the paths they are choosing too."

When Grandon won a Remington 887 from the Union Sportsmen's Alliance at the National Building Trades Convention last year, he donated it back to his local union to set up a similar scholarship for the children and grandchildren of Pipefitters Local 533 members.

"Anyone affiliated with labor knows that when tough times hit, your brothers and sisters are there," Grandon said. "That's one reason I donated the gun back and established an annual luncheon with scholarships for kids and grandkids of our membership."

UA Local 533 member Ray Wilson won the Remington raffled by the local and, for Grandon, it was the perfect scenario since Wilson hunts with his son, brother and nephew. Grandon and Wilson talked about the importance of spending time in the outdoors with their kids, and Grandon was honored to present Wilson with both the shotgun and J.G. memorial hats to pass out to his hunting group.

"The shotgun let me think about the 20 years I had in the outdoors with Jason," Grandon said. "I still hunt with the same guns I used to carry when we hunted together, so I wanted this one to go to a member who may make some memories of his or her own."

Using the money raised through the gun raffle, UA Local 533 hosted a luncheon for 19 graduates and their families to provide them with a small scholarship and to help them understand the importance of the next step.

"I need to thank my Local 533 brothers and sisters for helping get this scholarship event started. Many bought tickets, sold tickets and donated," Grandon said.

While helping provide financial support to students graduating from high school, Grandon also donates, in his son's name, to many hometown organizations that represent Jason's interests, such as Little League baseball, the Paola Kid's Wrestling Club, and the Cops for Kids Fishing Derby.

Sharing stories and memories of his son and supporting other youth have helped him cope with his tragic loss. He also does speaking engagements for schools, victim panels and law enforcement.

"God gave Jason and I our last day fishing together," Grandon said. "I lost him a week later." Grandon is thankful for that last trip and reminds people at every opportunity to never take for granted the time with their kids - enjoy every minute of it.
I knew this was going to be an exciting day. It would be my first wild boar hunt with a new bow and arrows. With my deer and bear hunting experience, I figured it would be a breeze.

As the sun peered from the top of a distant mountain, we began our adventure with snow on the ground. It was a clear morning; and the woods were completely silent. While walking, the guide told my father and me about the tendencies and habitats of wild hogs.

All I heard was “charge and attack.” I figured he gave this pep talk to everyone because “no way could a little hog attack me.” Being a stubborn Navy SAR Diver, I asked the guide to point us in the direction and let us do a stalk hunt. The look on his face was awful. As my father and I charged up the hill, I heard his wish of “good luck” fade in the distance.

I knocked an arrow, and we walked for hours, looking for trails and signs of hogs. At 8:15 a.m., I saw movement—a deer cruising by. We stopped on a game trail where heavy tracks made a blazing path in the thick woods of Upper New York State. The area we were hunting was primarily old evergreens, where many older logs had fallen. I remembered the guide saying hogs love to lay under them for protection.

It felt like days of walking up and down the mountain with little sign. But suddenly, we saw hogs running from the foot of the valley to the other side of the mountain. There were at least 30 little piglets and six boars of 150-300 pounds. We decided to split up and conduct a mini drive. My dad would go around the top of the mountain they passed over, and I would go the opposite way to post. As my old man disappeared, I tried to tip toe as I approached a fallen tree and was taken by surprise by three hogs bedded down. I couldn’t get a good visual to determine if they were mature, so I continued on, paying more attention to fallen trees and brush piles. I could hear my dad in the distance, so I whistled my location.

Jason Delgado (right) with LiUNA Local 79 member Phil Di Maggio.

I panicked, knowing I couldn’t outrun this thing. There were too many fallen trees and branches, deep snow and mud banks to pull a Carl Lewis. The hog must have heard my dad because it suddenly stopped at 30 yards. With my heart pounding, I tried to get a second arrow out of the quiver. I could barely hit a target at 20 yards with my new bow, and I had to hit a boar at 30 yards with my heart thumping and my hands sweating. I pulled myself together, aimed and released an arrow. The hog let out this noise the entire mountain heard—a sound of desperate anger and defeat.

I killed my first hog and was both relieved and prouder than ever. With big smiles, my father and I exchanged high fives. This was no ordinary hog hunt; this was something special—a bond between father and son and the sacrifice of a hog for the meat and excitement.

Back at the cabin, news spread fast about my close encounter with this hog. The ride home gave me time to reflect on the amazing weekend. To those who are thinking of going wild boar hunting, go for it. It’s a thrill you’ll never forget. Just listen and pay attention to your guide.

Send your camo calamity story to: USAmembers@unionsportsmen.org
I f you’re an average Joe, like me, setting your sights on a wild turkey public land Grand Slam isn’t something you’d plan to accomplish in one season, or in my case, likely ever. I’m pretty happy with a triple. So how does a union sportsman plan and execute a public land turkey hunt in the quest for the working man’s triple. Like every other good thing that’s come to you – with hard work.

I’m no turkey hunting expert—I’ve only been at it for four years. The process starts with learning as much as you can about your quarry. Start with the internet, and search for websites with a forum. The USA has an excellent forum to ask questions and get honest answers. Go to: www.unionsportsmen.org/forums.

Another excellent way to learn is through conservation organizations. The National Wild Turkey Federation (www.nwtf.org) pours funding into access programs and conservation efforts that enhance turkey populations. Another group that works hard to provide public land access is the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership (www.trcp.org).

In my quest for a triple, I found that the average Joe can find public access to Eastern, Merriam and the Rio Grande subspecies without outfitter or land access fees. Public land Osceola hunting is available, but I’m not a fan of gators and snakes. So here’s the batting order to a public land triple:

Set realistic goals and complete a true self examination. If you’re afraid of not filling your tags or you don’t have much time, consider saving enough money to hunt with an outfitter.

Calculate the costs for licenses and permits, park passes, camping or lodging fees, fuel, etc. I’ve found that the biggest expenses are fuel and tags. Knowing your budget will help direct the trip logistics. I prefer to camp and apply the savings to another turkey tag. Consider travel costs while scouting and driving from location to location. Setting up and hunting the same area can reduce fuel expenses.

Decide on a subspecies. If you’re working on the triple or a grand slam, choose an area that’s more likely to have the subspecies you’re after. My focus for Kansas was a Rio Grande. I harvested a Rio jake and a nice tom that’s likely a Rio/Eastern hybrid. Kansas is a good choice for Easterns in the eastern part of the state and Rios in the central region. Nebraska has a solid population of Merriams in the northwest region and mixed species further east. Eastern subspecies are predominant in the eastern portion of Nebraska.

Decide on a region to hunt. Travel costs may limit you to an area, and a subspecies quest may limit you to an area. Nebraska offers up to three over-the-counter permits for the spring season, and Kansas offers up to two.

Gather intel. I choose areas with several public land hunting options. Both Nebraska and Kansas offer valuable public land hunting atlases. When hunting unknown land, I start with satellite recon. I use a free internet mapping site (google or bing) to locate the public lands and then the best turkey habitat. Look for water sources, roosting sites, food sources, etc. This isn’t as good as on-the-ground scouting, but it helps narrow your choices. It’s good to have options too. Then gather information from those in the area. Try hunting forums or call state agencies. Don’t expect pinpoint information. Do your homework, and then ask specific question about population densities, peak hunter activity periods, access options, etc.

Choose a location to set up camp. Most state parks have camping available. Hotels can be difficult to find in more remote areas, but both Kansas and Nebraska have enough public land that hunting opportunities are often relatively close to lodging options.

Respect the land, game, fellow hunters and the folks who allow access through the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and the Walk-In Hunting Area (WIHA) program. Stay within the public land boundaries. I highlight the borders of the land I can hunt on the satellite photos ahead of time. Pack out your trash and that from others—leave it better than you found it. Be safety conscious and polite.

Don’t restrict yourself to public land options. With a bit of luck and common courtesy, you may be able to gain permission to hunt private land. If given the privilege to hunt, be aware of property lines and livestock areas. Close all gates you open and in an area that causes no damage to the land and that’s out of the way of any farming operations. Always follow up the hunt with another thank you.

Just go! Set your mind to the fact that the average Joe, with limited funds and a week of vacation, can make it happen. If a novice turkey hunter like me can do it, you can too!

For more turkey hunting articles including those listed below, visit www.UnionSportsmen.org, click on the Hunting tab and search turkey.
• How Old is That Gobber
• Turkey Setups for Common Situations
• Effective Use of Turkey Decoys
• Turkey Hunting Safety Tips
By Ken Barrett

Spring snows used to mean just one thing—grabbing the shovel or firing up the snow blower. That’s not the case anymore, especially if you’re a waterfowl hunter looking for action. Not since great-grandpa took to the fields during the spring migrations 100 years ago has it been legal to hunt any species of waterfowl after March 10th in the United States. But that changed in 1999 when snow goose populations exploded and threatened the very habitats they and other species depend upon.

Today, you can hunt snow geese during their spring migrations from Texas to North Dakota, with some seasons lasting into mid-April. If that wasn’t enticing enough, in most states, you can unplug your gun, stuff it with as many shells as it will hold and forget about bag limits because there aren’t any! You can use electronic callers too.

From an estimated population of just a few thousand individuals in 1900, snow goose numbers have sky rocketed to approximately 5,000,000 birds, and their growth rate isn’t slowing. There are a number of explanations ranging from legal protection to climate change and their ability to exploit waste grains that weren’t historically available to them. Regardless, snow geese now threaten to out eat and out breed their habitat.

In 1999, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service issued an unprecedented Conservation Order allowing spring snow goose hunting, something that hadn’t happened since the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 stated there would be no migratory bird hunting after March 10 anywhere in the U.S.

Many waterfowl biologists and hunters consider snow geese the wariest of all waterfowl species. Decoying them is not easy, nor done with a handful of dekes thrown in piecemeal fashion. Successful snow goose hunters use hundreds, even thousands, of decoys and go to great lengths to construct their blinds. That’s because many of those birds have been hunted continuously since the previous September and are hyper vigilant for anything that doesn’t look right as they head north. And given the size of their flocks, thousands of eyes are watching for any sign of danger.

While it’s possible to hunt these birds on your own, most hunters take advantage of outfitters and guides who specialize in finding, tracking and hunting these unpredictable and wary geese. The best guides have big decoy spreads, move and relocate quickly with the migrating birds, and have numerous fields lined up and available. That gives them the ability to put clients into the kind of action few of us have the time and/or abilities to match.

Spring snow goose hunting can be viewed in many ways. It’s an opportunity to hunt in what has traditionally been the off-season, to suspend rules like bag limits, and to control snow goose numbers for the good of the geese and other species that depend on the habitats they threaten.

I’m personally attracted to spring snow goose hunting by the huge flocks, the sound of thousands of geese, and the chance to suspend the 21st Century for a day or two and return to the days of yesteryear, when waterfowl numbers seemed limitless.

How to Get Started

Type “snow goose hunts” or “snow goose outfitters” into any search engine, and pages and pages of listings will come up. Type in the state you want to hunt to narrow your search. Hunt the North (www.hunthenorth.com) is one of the better sites for snow goose hunting. It offers up-to-date information about the migration’s progression and outfitters and guides available by state along with their rates. Every state fish and game agency along the migration path has information and some, like North Dakota, have a telephone hot line. Visit www.fws.gov/offices/statelinks.html for a state directory.

Photo Credit: Mike Checkett, Ducks Unlimited
Beagle Outdoor Wear
Tracker Series Coat & Pants

Early mornings in the turkey woods can be damp and chilly, especially when you're sitting motionless to fool the keen eyes of that gobbler you're after. Beagle Outdoor Wear's Tracker coat and pants are perfectly suited for early season turkey hunters as well as archery hunters on the move. Made in the U.S. with Beagle's trademark 22 oz. Melton wool, lined with 100% polyester Microtherm and treated with DuPont Teflon fabric protector, the Tracker series is not only lightweight and quiet but also water and stain resistant. The coat offers ample storage with two welted breast pockets with snap down flaps, one interior pocket and two front dual entry pockets. Bib overalls are another option in the series. Available in traditional Buffalo Check green plaid, solid green and Mossy Oak Break Up Camo, the Tracker Series features the coat that started it all.

www.beaglewear.com

Mossberg Flex System Shotguns

Envision a gun that's flexible, versatile and virtually limitless for fit, style and application. Mossberg took that vision and made it a reality with the new Mossberg Flex System, which is built around the 500/590 series shotgun and consists of an array of barrels, butt stocks and forearms that can be mixed and matched to create a shotgun to meet your specific needs. You can transform your upland bird gun into a waterfowling gun and then a home defense gun in just minutes—without tools! All together, there are 11 base models of the shotguns in all-purpose, hunting, and tactical models, and you can select and purchase only the accessories that meet your personal gun needs. The Flex System has four metal finishes, along with Break-up Infinity and Max-4 Camo. With this great selection, there's bound to be a combination to suit just about everyone.

www.mossberg.com
Mendota Product Check Cords

The warmer temperatures and longer days of spring mean it’s time to get outside and start training that pup to be your hunting buddy. Dogs quickly learn they don’t have to respond to your commands when they’re away from you. Check cords can prevent bad habits by reminding dogs that you’re still in control, even when not by their side. Mendota Products recently introduced a family of U.S. made check cords made from multi-filament polypropylene rope and solid braid webbing. When those spring showers intrude upon your training, you can take comfort in the fact that Mendota check cords are waterproof, colorfast and maintain performance when wet. UV coating also protects against decay and fading. Mendota check cords range from a 3/8” x 30 obedience cord to a 7/16” x 50 floating Super Cord for every training situation.

www.mendotaproducts.com

Battle Lake Deluxe Shotgun Case

Protect your shotgun to and from the field, and show up in style at a USA shooting event near year (see USA shoot schedule on pg. 19) with a Battle Lake Deluxe Shotgun Case. Handcrafted in Minnesota, the Deluxe Shotgun Case offers high quality construction, durability, and uncompromising materials for unmatched protection—and it’s the same size as a soft-side case. It features a high-density, closed-cell foam that won’t absorb water on the inside and a plastic outer panel to take any impact on the outside along with silent zipper pulls, wrap-around webbing handles and an attachment ring for a shoulder strap. The Deluxe Shotgun Case comes in a variety of sizes ranging from 50 to 60 inches, and is available in several camo patterns as well as Black, Forest, Sandstone and Olive Drab.

www.battlelakeoutdoors.com

McCoy Rod Shields

When you spend your hard-earned money on quality fishing rods, the last thing you want is to have them tangled or banged up when packed into your car, truck or boat. With their innovative, economical and hassle-free on/off design, McCoy Rod Shields provide peace of mind that your rods will be ready to catch fish when you are. Made with a needle point nose and fluted cone for easier removal and stowing, Rod Shields are snug resistant, light-weight, flexible, breathable and resistant to every environment. They’re also made without a metal grommet to keep them from getting hung up in a rod locker or damaging the tip-end of your fishing rod. The Rod Shields series was recently expanded with six new colors including Purple, SuperHero, Safety Stripe, Carbon, Neon Green and Patriot for baitcasters, and they’re also available in black and red & blue for baitcasters and black and red for spinning rods.

www.mccoyfishingline.com USA members receive a 25% discount on McCoy online products. Visit www.unionsportsmen.org/deals for your special code.
Shed antler hunting is as intoxicating to me as estrus to a rutting bull elk. At the time, I wasn’t thinking about my addiction, future hunts for owners of the found antlers or decorative antler ambiance. I was focused on staying upright as I inched my way down a vertical, ice-covered chute. Loaded down with elk antlers, the descent had become treacherous at best. Although I had about as much weight as my joints could stand, my antler addiction spurred me to grab several more muley sheds on the way down. By the time I reached my four-wheeler, I was exhausted.

Looking for shed elk antlers is a surefire way to enjoy Western topography up close and personal, and it gives you a jump-start on scouting a particular unit. Sure elk migrate miles to winter, but they leave clues along the way and are often closer to their homelands than you think.

I hunt sheds for fun and hunting information, since it delivers clues on the density of mature bulls in an area. As you put on miles, you’ll see rubs and wallows, indicating that elk may be rutting at lower and mid-altitude ranges in addition to commonplace cool, alpine retreats.

Last spring, I happened across a hidden rutting zone I’d never have known existed had I not been on the hunt for sheds. Most of the elk in this region spend summer and fall above 9,000 feet, but by pushing beyond a traditional wintering zone, I ascended to a hidden shelf a mile or so long by a half mile wide. It was characterized by dark timber and small springs, many turned into makeshift wallows. Rubs were everywhere, and I found a handful of shed antlers.

In some Western zones, elk spend their entire life in a non-migratory zone where snow doesn’t hinder survival. If you shed hunt these areas, watch for similar sign as the whitetail hunter. Keep an eye out for elk wallows dished out more than those found in a farmer’s muddy hog pen. Bulls and bucks alike leave rubs around food or dense bedding cover, indicating a high rate of occupation. You may also stumble across the carcasses of unfortunate big game giving you solid information on what animal densities to expect in the fall.

Shed hunting offers antler trophies and insight for your next hunt.

By Mark Kayser
Whitetail Shortcuts

A trip to elk country for shed antlers may not be in the cards soon, but everyone has whitetails in their backyard.

1. Always carry binoculars. You can look over an entire hayfield by scanning it from a ridge. Plus, you can scan the woods to confirm or reject any strange, white objects in the forest duff.

2. Walk fence lines. Deer jump fences throughout their range, and the jarring landing from their spring can lose an antler.

3. Walk deer trails. Trails leading to feed and from bedding cover are where whitetails travel the most. Antlers often fall off while deer follow these routes.

4. Search smart. Grid the area either on a map or mentally and crisscross it with swaths wide enough to see your last track. Biodegradable fluorescent tape can aid in searching an area systematically and keeping you on a straight-line path.

5. Look where deer spend the most time such as near food, bedding cover and micro environments for warmth. Southern slopes attract deer looking for protection from brisk north winds and a place to soak up warm winter rays.

Learn more at www.shedantlers.org

The Easy Way

You don’t have to take rock climbing lessons or purchase crampons to find elk sheds. One of the easiest ways to get into shed elk antlers quickly and conveniently is to research state game and fish department websites for elk wintering grounds. Many of these areas have been allotted refuge status with no access until spring arrives. Most have a posted opening date and locals, plus a few travelers, line up at the gate for a run at the antlers.

It pays to scout ahead of time and note where bull elk have been biding their time prior to dropping antlers, which generally occurs in late March through mid-April. It also pays to know the rules—whether ATVs are allowed or if the area has “walk-in” status only. You’ll find these refuges in most western states and in areas with large grassy slopes.

The Hard Way

Mature bulls are like mature whitetails. They tend to avoid the herd, look for out-of-the-way locations to winter and will disappear in a veil of snow if disturbed. Knowing this, I look for steep canyons with no motorized access and little hiking access. Most of these locations have near-vertical slopes, rock-strewn terrain and grazing that requires multi-level maneuvering to fill a hungry elk belly.

I characterize many of the target areas as sheep country. The bulls meander out onto narrow ledges to soak up sunshine, graze for nutrition and look for danger. Elevation differs on where elk winter depending on the climate and latitude, but 6,000 feet seems to be a fair range in many areas. And if you enjoy picking up any shed antlers, watch for muley sheds.  They’re usually one level below elk wintering grounds.

Shortcuts

To find elk sheds, you have to find elk. Tap into the resources of local biologists, who know the traditional pathways of migrating big game. They can offer helpful insight when you’re trying to locate masses of wintering elk.

Next, make sure you’re in shape. My average day is a 12-mile roundtrip of which half is straight up and most is side-slope hiking. Sturdy, leather hiking boots and one or two hiking staffs is a must. You must also have a durable and comfortable pack such as the Tenzing 5000 or 2200.

You can find many antlers by looking down slopes or across canyons with good optics. Focus on white objects and look for partial tips or beams protruding from brush or grass. Have optics with enough power to pick apart the landscape. Finally, always leave word of where you are going and when you’ll be back. Elk country is big and unforgiving.

Shed antler hunting doesn’t include the reward of adrenaline, but it does offer an antler trophy and insight for your next hunt.
2012 Shooting Tour Promises to be a Blast
By Kate Cywinski

In June 2009, the Union Sportsmen’s Alliance held its first sporting clays shoots in Maryland as a test to gauge union members’ interest. That very successful shoot was followed by two more in the fall. Less than three years later, we have a full-scale shooting program with more than 25 shoots scheduled for this year. And 2011 saw the fulfillment of our dream to have a custom truck and trailer to haul shooting supplies and serve as a central gathering point at our events.

The USA’s 2012 shooting tour kicked off in the Sunshine State with our 2nd Annual Southern Florida Sporting Clays Shoot. Six teams representing the IBEW, UA, NECA and Miller Electric came out to Markham Skeet, Trap & Sporting Clays to test their skills and ring in 2012 to the tune of shotgun blasts.

Making our way up the state, the USA shooting truck and trailer rolled in to Lakeland, FL, on February 1 for our 1st Annual Central Florida Sporting Clays Shoot. Forty-nine shooters from locals across northern and western Florida came out in the balmy 85 degree weather to shoot, eat and celebrate conservation and unionism.

Following that successful first-time event, we headed west to the Lone Star State, where we joined 65 eager shooters at our 3rd Annual Houston Area Sporting Clays Shoot and took the first steps toward forming a Houston Boots on the Ground committee.

The success of the USA’s shooting program, both in bringing together thousands of union members from different trades and raising critical funds to support our mission, is a testament to the enthusiasm and support of our sponsors and participants. With your continued help, the program will only get better with each new season.

USA sporting clays and trap shoots are a great opportunity for both experienced and novice shooters of all ages to meet and enjoy friendly competition with union men and women who share a similar passion for the outdoors. Participants have the chance to win awards, door prizes and premium raffle items as well as test out firearms, optics and other products from some of the leading outdoor brands.

Check out our 2012 Shooting Event calendar on the next page and register for an event near you. We promise you’ll have a blast!

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

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Director of USA Events/Fundraising
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timb@unionsportsmen.org

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UNION SPORTSMEN’S ALLIANCE
2012 SHOOT TOUR

Wednesday, April 11
Southern Illinois Sporting Clays Shoot
Sparta, IL

Saturday, May 5
Baltimore Area Trap Shoot
Phoenix, MD

Wednesday, May 9
New Jersey Sporting Clays Shoot
Port Republic, NJ

Saturday, May 12
New York Sporting Clays Shoot
Yaphank, NY

Friday, June 1
AFL-CIO Capital Area Sporting Clays Shoot
Queenstown, MD

Wednesday, July 11
Western PA Sporting Clays Shoot
Wampum, PA

Wednesday, July 25
Northern Ohio Sporting Clays Shoot
Medina, OH

Wednesday, Aug. 1
Northern Illinois Sporting Clays Shoot
Hainesville, IL

Saturday, Aug. 4
Chicago Area CFL/CCBTC Shoot
TBD

Saturday, Aug. 25
Anchorage Area Sporting Clays Shoot
Wasilla, AK

Saturday, Sept. 15
Roofers Twin Cities Sporting Clays Shoot
Clear Lake, MN

Saturday, Sept. 29
IUEC Las Vegas Trap Shoot
Las Vegas, NV

Saturday, Oct. 6
IAMAW St. Louis Area Shoot
St. Louis, MO

Friday, Oct. 19
Boilermakers Kansas City Clay Shoot
Kansas City, MO

Thursday, Oct. 25
Puget Sound Sporting Clays Shoot
Puyallup, WA

Saturday, Oct. 27
Portland/Salem Sporting Clays Shoot
Gervais, OR

Wednesday, Nov. 7
Northern California Sporting Clays Shoot
Dunnigan, CA

Friday, Nov. 9
United Association Phoenix Area Shoot
TBD

Wednesday, Nov. 21
Southern California Sporting Clays Shoot
Corona, CA

Dates and locations subject to change.
For more details and to register for an event near you, visit:
www.unionsportsmen.org/events

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Cara Keller, daughter of Elevator Constructors Local 139 member Eric Keller, caught this black drum in Titusville, Florida in June 2011.

Jerry Steinbrecher, a member of Sheet Metal Workers Local 67 from Marble Falls, TX, harvested this 9 pt. buck during the 2nd weekend of TX general rifle season. It weighed an estimated 180/190 lbs.

Jennifer Baerwolf, a member of Machinists Local 1406 from Rio, WI, shot this 9-point buck in Nov. 2011 with a Golden Eagle bow and Muzzy broadheads. It had a 15 ½” spread and weighed 165 lbs. dressed.

Jonathan Held, a member of Electrical Workers Local 130 from New Orleans, LA, displays a limit of grey ducks and green wing teal he shared with USW member Thomas Hood.

Adam McCormick, a member of Laborers’ Local 561, proudly watched his 11-year-old daughter, Kaitlyn, harvest her first deer in October of 2011.

Daniel A. Alvarez, a member of Sheet Metal Workers Local 66 from Shoreline, WA, and his hunting buddy, Clinton, bagged these muleys just hours apart.

Brian Dreblow, a member of Communication Workers Local 1140 from Eden Prairie, AL, caught this Northern pike in Jan. 2012. Twenty minutes later, a village of fish houses surrounded him.

John Richardson (far right), a retired member of Electrical Workers Local 3, harvested his first elk while hunting with his sons and a good friend in Ruby Mountains, Montana in Nov. 2011.

John Blake, a member of Electrical Workers Local 890 from Delavan, WI, caught this lake trout in Ontario, Canada in June 2006. It was a great day of fishing with fellow sportsmen, his 82-year-young father and his brother.

Follow Us On
First Harvest

Dylan Middleton, son of UA Local 123 Training Director/President Lee Middleton, shot his first 8-point buck in December 2011.

USA Kids Create Artwork from Nature

In our November 2011 magazine issue, we asked youth to combine their imagination and outdoor inspiration to create artwork out of materials found in nature.

Participants were divided into three age groups. Thanks to our friends at ProEars, Plano and Ruger, the winner of each group received ProEars ReVO hearing protection muffs and a Plano 5000 Starter Tackle Box, and all participants were entered in a drawing for a Ruger 10/22 Compact rifle.

The hard work of the youth was evident in all the entries, so the USA staff had some tough choices.

Kailani Alvarez (age 5) won the 3-7 age group with her pine cone Rudolph and Christmas tree. According to her mom, Barbara, she was very excited about the contest and had fun with the project.

Kaitlyn McCormick (age 11) won the 8-12 age group with the wildlife scene she created from bark, acorns, pine cones, pecan hulls, rocks, turkey feather stems, squirrel hide and sticks. Kaitlyn was also drawn as the winner of the Ruger 10/22 Compact.

Jackie Daily (age 13) won the 13-16 age group with a holiday wreath she created from deer sheds, a turkey beard and arrows. Since those are common items in her house, she thought this contest would be a good use for them.

Congratulations to our winners and thank you to all the youth who participated!
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THIRD PRIZE
Primos Chick Magnet

MARCH 12TH - JUNE 1ST

FOUR CATEGORIES
EASTERN, MERRIAM, RIO GRANDE, OSCEOLA