SWEET OCTOBER
TWO TRANSITIONAL WEEKS
A BOWHUNTER CANNOT MISS

SWIM BAIT TACTICS FOR FALL MUSKIES
LIFELIKE LURES TO TEMPT A MEGA-MUSKIE

A SNIPE SPECTACULAR
THIS WONDERFUL GAME BIRD IS NO LATE-NIGHT JOKE

DO-IT-YOURSELF MIDWEST BLACK BEAR HUNT
BIG BRUINS AND BIG ADVENTURES AWAIT ON PUBLIC LAND
The past couple of years have been tough on the labor community. But it’s not just collective bargaining and good salaries that are under attack—it’s our union way of life, and that includes our outdoor heritage.

Every day, I meet union sportsmen and women, who share heartbreaking stories of how their family’s favorite hunting or fishing destinations—places where they learned to hunt, fish and shoot from their fathers and grandfathers—are disappearing. And with urban sprawl, overpopulation, increased regulations and underfunded conservation and habitat protection programs, it seems like the factors limiting access to quality hunting and fishing opportunities are stacked against us.

It even feels like the problems facing sportsmen today are too daunting and beyond our control. But they’re not. As a union sportsman, you have the skills, knowledge and training to make a difference not only for your union but for the future of the great outdoors.

Locally, the best way to immediately make a difference is to get involved in one of the USA’s Boots on the Ground projects in your community or better yet, start your own. On a national level, you can exercise your right to vote for candidates, from the local and state level to Congress and the White House, whose records show they not only value workers but are also willing to protect your outdoor heritage.

It takes a little homework to learn where political candidates stand on issues that impact fish and wildlife and public land access, but as the economy remains sluggish and budgets tighten, the programs directly impacting hunters and anglers will continue to suffer.

In the U.S., we’ve already seen significant cuts to funding for the Forest Legacy Program, Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), the National Fish Habitat Action Plan and the Land and Water Conservation Fund—all programs that protect our nation’s fish and wildlife populations and fund access to hunting and fishing opportunities on our national forests, state parks and national wildlife refuges.

Our Canadian members are also struggling with conservation related cutbacks including the passing of a new, weaker Canadian Fisheries Act that slashes the number of habitat management programs from 63 to only 15.

The message this year is clear; conservation in North America is not a luxury. Whether they are sportsmen or not, our elected officials need to recognize that millions of Americans and Canadians participate in outdoor related activities each year, and those activities contribute to both economic activity and job creation. In America, those outdoor activities generate almost $1 trillion in revenue and support 9.4 million jobs annually.

This is a U.S. election year, and as our elected leaders continue to work on budgets that will help us climb out of our financial crisis, it’s critical for all of us to get involved and cast our votes for conservation. And it doesn’t stop there. After the ballots are counted, it’s up to you and me as sportsmen and -women, to make our voices heard—to let those elected officials know that we value the hunting and fishing traditions that are an inherent part of North America’s history and culture and that they should be protected for generations to come.

Fred Myers, USA Executive Director/CEO
Bricklayers Cement Commitment to Conservation

By Laura Bliss Morris

In August, the International Association of Bricklayers and Allied Craft Workers (BAC) signed on as the USA’s newest charter union, joining the ranks of the AFL-CIO and 10 of its affiliate unions.

USA charter unions, like BAC, provide imperative funding and resources to help support the USA’s mission to unite the union community to expand and improve hunting and fishing access and wildlife habitat throughout North America.

Boasting a long-standing relationship, the USA and the BAC have partnered on numerous conservation projects including the 2011 Ohio Special Needs Youth Hunt and 2012 Take Kids Fishing Day. BAC is also an active supporter of the USA’s nationwide sporting clays and trap shoot tour, which unites thousands of union members across the country and raised more than $650,000 to support the USA’s conservation mission in 2011.

“The Bricklayers have been one of our strongest conservation partners,” said USA Executive Director Fred Myers. “Union sportmen continue to make an impact across North America by educating future generations on the importance of conservation and by putting boots on the ground for volunteer efforts. We’re elated to have the support of nearly 90,000 skilled BAC masonry craftworkers to further this mission.”

As an extension of their union membership, all active and retired BAC members will be able to take advantage of a no-cost USA membership—giving them access to the USA’s quarterly magazine, Web site, special discounts, exclusive prizes and more.

Members are also encouraged to apply for their chance to hunt or fish on national TV via the USA’s award-winning outdoor TV show, Brotherhood Outdoors. Thanks to six years of support from the Bricklayers, the USA has been able to feature more than 60 union guests, including five Bricklayers on Brotherhood Outdoors and its previous show Escape to the Wild. Most recent guest stars from BAC include Bob Krien (BAC Local 4) and Eddie Roberts (BAC Local 7).

“Just as union members stand together in solidarity for workers’ rights, the Union Sportsmen’s Alliance offers BAC members the opportunity to join an organization that will help preserve their ability to hunt, fish and shoot while respecting both their union and family values,” said BAC President James Boland.

Ohio/Kentucky BAC District Council and BAC Local 16 volunteers provide special needs youth with a memorable day of fishing!

BAC volunteers get prepped for the Geauga County Special Needs Youth Fishing Derby.
You won’t want to miss great tips like how to make a wooden bow for wilderness survival or the best natural mosquito repellent to keep the blood-suckers at bay or the array of fish and game recipes that are so good you’ll be hitting the woods and water every weekend just to feed your addiction.

A digital bulletin board that allows members to “pin” their favorite things, Pinterest is the newest way to monopolize a rainy afternoon cataloging every great hunting or fishing article, picture, tip, recipe or video that’s ever crossed your scope.

Following the lead of the AFL-CIO and several union locals like Operating Engineers Local 49, the USA officially jumped on the newest social media bandwagon in July—launching our own Pinterest page dedicated to your outdoor passions.

If you’re a steward of the great outdoors or just have a little time to kill, check out our page for exclusive content that every sportsman or woman—regardless of age, skill or preferred pursuit—will benefit from.

Hunt. Fish. Pin?
By Laura Bliss Morris

Tired of hanging on to your favorite outdoor magazines, so you won’t lose that great article on roll casting, the latest American-made shotgun or the best tips for placing your decoys? Perhaps Pinterest is for you.

Our boards are kid friendly and sportsman approved, so what are you waiting for?

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Catching oversize muskies isn't easy anywhere, by anyone. But if you're going to do it, autumn is the time, as the big, toothy predators are on the prowl, chowing down for the coming winter.

Huge muskies are caught with many different style and action lures. But in recent years, hand-made, meticulously hand-painted swim baits have scored high. Such baits perfectly imitate choice muskie forage such as walleyes, perch, suckers and ciscos. Here are three hot ways to fish these remarkable lures for giant muskies.

Rock Reef Casting with Swim Baits

Noted Minnesota angler Ted Takasaki’s favorite late fall muskie tactic is casting swim baits over chunk-rock reefs as aquatic weeds die out. This is a weather-water transition period, and feeding muskies are looking for prey that has vacated weeds and headed to rocks for cover.

Ted prefers fishing rock reefs topping out three to four feet below the surface. He drifts with the wind, making long casts with the breeze. In blustery weather, he uses a boat wind sock to slow his drift. Often a slow, tantalizing swimming bait retrieve is the best way to trigger big fish in unstable fall weather. But alternate swim bait retrieve tempos and speeds until fish strike.

A muskie crashing a big, fast-moving swim bait is a collision powerful enough to split the toenails of some fishermen. And while big fish can hook themselves at the strike, it's wise to make a solid hook set or two to drive big treble hooks home. Additionally, a powerful rod is needed to drive steel into a muskie maw. Most anglers use two-handed plug rods, most 6 to 7 feet long, with heavy braided line and top-quality steel leaders, snaps and swivels.
Inside Weed Edge Casting with Swim Baits

At times in muskieland, warm golden days of Indian summer occur, and that can be an outstanding opportunity to bust a big muskie, according to Chicago muskie ace Spence Petros. When air temperature rises well above water temperatures and lake or river weed beds are still bright green in color, muskies commonly move to the “inside” edge of vegetation to chase forage fish. It’s a deadly set-up for casting lifelike swim baits that closely resemble perch, walleyes, suckers and other species. Long casts that keep a lure right on a weed inside edge are good, with snappy, erratic retrieves often deadly.

As fall progresses, weed beds begin to die and turn brown. Some muskie men mistakenly give up fishing weed beds and move toward other structures. This can be a huge mistake, says Spence, as muskies and their prey species seek the few remaining still-green weeds, where they can be concentrated and are comparatively easy to locate and catch.

“Snake” Trolling Two Swim Baits at Different Depths

No tactic works better at finding muskies and making them strike than trolling. And few lures are better for it than modern swim baits. But thoughtful trolling is required for best results. Choice locations for trolling are food shelf areas where a drop-off edge is located—deep water on one side, shallower water on the other.

To troll drop-offs most effectively for muskies, use two lures: a shallow-running swim bait on the less deep side of a trolling boat and a deeper-running lure on the opposite side. You can use a swim bait with a diving lip for depth work or rigga bullet-weight or dog-ear sinker ahead of the lure.

During trolling, maneuver a boat back-and-forth across the drop-off edge in a “snake” type boat system. This pulls lures through all areas of a structure where muskies may be lurking for prey.
Union Volunteers Team Up for the Future of the Shooting Sports

**TN Building Trades pull the trigger on youth shooting complex**

By Kate Cywinski

Bringing home an Olympic gold medal for skeet shooting at just 23-years-old with 148 successful shots out of 150 is quite a victory. But Vincent Hancock, the second American male to win the gold in skeet, has a bigger goal that doesn’t involve awards of any kind.

“It’s not just about medals,” Hancock said. “It’s about how big I can grow the sport and how many people I can bring into it. These kids may not be able to play basketball or baseball, but they can shoot. They’ll have a great time, especially when they break lots of targets.”

As Hancock implies, success in many school and college sports doesn’t depend just on hard work and determination but also on body size, build, gender and physical condition. The shooting sports, on the other hand, are something almost anyone can enjoy and excel at.

To help educate and mentor the next generation of shooting enthusiasts, the Union Sportsmen’s Alliance has teamed up with the Tennessee Wildlife Resource Agency (TWRA) and the Nashville Building and Construction Trades. After months of planning, they recently launched a Boots on the Ground conservation project that will benefit the shooting programs of nine middle and high schools near the USA’s office in Nashville, Tenn.

Students who belong to these school shooting programs currently drive up to 1.5 hours to practice and compete—a burden both for the students and their parents. Utilizing the unique skills of volunteers from Ironworkers Local 492, Electrical Workers Local 429, Painters Local 456 and Insulators Local 86 and potentially others to build a scholastic shooting complex, this project will make the shooting sports readily accessible to more than 200 student competitors each year.

In late August, Ironworkers Local 492 member Glen Sloan and Helmets to Hardhats apprentice Nathan May constructed a 36’ gate for the entrance of the new Harpeth Scholastic Shooting Complex located on a 20-acre plot in College Grove, TN, donated by the Haley-Jaqueth WMA. Members of IBEW Local 429 will be wiring the facility and installing outdoor lighting, while volunteers from other unions will build brick walls around the shooting area as well as a restroom.

The shooting range is just the first step in the development of the property. The TWRA plans to raise additional funds to build a learning center for hunter safety and wildlife management, so students can complete the live firing portion of the course at the same location, and to refurbish an old barn on the site. The Nashville Building and Construction Trades have already offered labor for any other projects they undertake at the facility.

While offering new shooting opportunities to all residents of Middle Tennessee, the shooting complex will directly benefit many of the union members volunteering their time and talents, including John “Tadpole” Ledwell of IBEW Local 429. His daughter is on the shooting squad of one of the local high school teams, his wife, Pam, is a faculty sponsor for the team, and he’s the team instructor.

“The cost of shooting sports is great. With the new facility, we should be able to reduce the cost and, hopefully, get more students involved,” Ledwell said. “Currently, our students must travel at least 25 miles one way to have access to a shooting range. This new facility is approximately five miles from the school and is scheduled to have lights, which will enable us to practice after school instead of waiting until the weekend.”

Teaching school-age youth safe gun handling skills, discipline and dedication, the shooting sports cross generational boundaries and can bring families together in the outdoors. At the USA’s First Annual Illinois Sporting Clays Shoot in August, Tony DeJohn, son of Ironworkers Local 63 executive board member Michael DeJohn, received the USA’s first youth shooter award after busting 74 out of 100 clays. Tony has attended USA shooting events with his father since the USA shooting tour originated. And at the 1st Annual IUPAT Northern Ohio Sporting Clays Shoot in July, a team of three youth shooters and two adults representing the Utility Workers Union of America took home top honors with the highest score.

“Youth are so important to the future of the shooting sports and our hunting traditions, and we welcome and encourage more youth to participate in USA’s trap and sporting clays shooting events,” said USA Director of Events/Fundraising Nate Whiteman. “With the scholastic shooting complex in College Grove expected to be completed this fall, we hope to see some of the students who will be utilizing the new facility showing off their skills at the USA’s Nashville Area Sporting Clays Shoot next year.”
Boots on the Ground at a Glance

Painters put the finishing touch on Youth Conservation Education Center

Members of the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades (IUPAT) District Council 30 recently teamed up with the Illinois Conservation Foundation to add some color, compliments of Sherwin Williams, to the new Torstenson Youth Conservation Education Center in Pecatonica, Illinois.

“These projects are important to the labor movement because they give union members the opportunity to refine their skills while working together to volunteer for a great cause,” said Ryan Anderson, Director of Organizational Development for IUPAT DC 30. “Unions provide members with the best when it comes to career opportunities and representation. It's great that our members are able to give some of that back to their communities, with a skill-set that allows them to do the jobs right.”

Twin Cities union volunteers get youth outdoors

This September—perhaps even as you’re reading this magazine—union members in the Twin Cities area will introduce the next generation of sportsmen to the great outdoors through the first Boots on the Ground (BOTG) Get Youth Outdoors Day in Clear Lake, MN.

Supported by the Roofers International and Local 96, Bricklayers Local 1 and the Central Minnesota Building and Construction Trades Council along with other local unions in the region, the event will take place on Sept. 16, on the heels of the 2nd Annual Roofers Intl. Twin Cities Sporting Clays Shoot.

Led by union volunteers trained in firearm safety instruction, the event will provide youth ages 9-17 with safety briefings and firearm handling instruction, a hands-on introduction to trap and rifle (.22) shooting and a chance to experience varying Minnesota terrains on an ATV simulator.

The event is open to the public and will help form a lifelong passion for the shooting sports and America's outdoor heritage in Minnesota's youth.

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 Get Youth Outdoors Day. 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)
You’ve been religious about slipping into the backyard and sending a few arrows into that 3-D deer. Maybe you even entered a few tournaments where they forced you to make shots from various heights and distances. But for most of us, we simply step off 20 or 30 yards and release arrows at a broadside target. This is great for dialing in our aim, but it really only prepares us for shooting in perfect conditions—which real hunting situations rarely are.

Deer don’t always offer that perfect broadside shot. They stand behind trees or limbs, they walk in from odd angles, they run and walk, and I’m willing to bet in virtually 99 percent of the situations, we aren’t standing on ground level with the animal when we shoot. We still have our work cut out to get shoot-ready for opening day, so let’s get started.

**Suit Up**

Are those t-shirts, shorts and flip-flops you’ve been wearing when you practice what you’ll be wearing when you hunt? Didn’t think so. Now when you practice, put on camo gloves, a face mask, a hat, hunting boots, even a light and heavy jacket—whatever you’ll be wearing when you hunt. The goal is to simulate actual hunting conditions. Don’t wait until you’re drawing on the biggest buck you’ve ever seen to realize your jacket is in the way of your bow string.

**Get High**

Most of us will hunt from a treestand. That means we should practice from a treestand. Hang a stand with the same size platform you’ll be hunting from and put it at the same height you typically hunt. Like to get 25 to 30 feet up? The target area is going to shrink from that angle. Better practice that, and don’t forget to wear your safety belt. Safety is still paramount, and you need to get used to shooting with that on as well.

**Take a Seat**

Conversely, if you’re going to hunt from a blind, you need to get used to shooting from a sitting position in a confined space. Set up your blind and put your chair, pack and any other gear you’ll have in there with you when you hunt. Figure out now
how you want to situate everything, so it doesn’t interfere with your movement when it’s time to make a shot at a real deer. Then practice shooting from inside.

**Work the Angles**

Because deer don’t always stand broadside, you need to set your 3-D target angling away from you and in any other conceivable position you feel will provide a clean, ethical kill shot. Similarly, set the target peeking from behind a tree or partially obscured on either end by two trees or limbs to simulate hunting in a woods situation.

**Go the Distance**

You need to make shots as close as 10 yards and as far out as 30, 40, even 50 yards, even if you never plan on shooting that far on a real deer. If you can nail a target at 50 or 60 yards, a 25-yarder will be a chip shot. Put targets at various distances, range them and shoot. Then move them and estimate the distances without ranging. This will help you develop an ability to accurately judge distances.

**Aim Low**

The vitals on most targets seem to be placed for center-of-mass practice shots more so than where vitals actually sit in a whitetail’s body. Targets also don’t reflexively duck or bend at the sound of an arrow. Get ready for shots at real deer by aiming at the lower third of the deer’s vital area. Most shots on deer are missed high. To avoid this, shoot low on a real whitetail and, when it flinches a few inches, your arrow will run right through the heart and/or lungs as it should.

Sure, setting up realistic hunting situations when you get out your bow will add some time to your shooting session, but being prepared will pay big dividends when that bruiser walks into range.
Do-It-Yourself Midwest Black Bear Hunt

Bigbruins and big adventures await on a public land bear hunt

By Bob Barteck, IAFF Local 425 Alumni

The sun filtering through the maple leaves turned the forest floor to amber. Perched high in an old basswood, my brother, John, and I enjoy a flurry of activity. Birds call and flutter past as squirrels rummage for the upcoming winter. I’m lulled into a trance when John pokes me. My eyes strain for what he’s seen in the deep timber. Suddenly, a shadow steps forward to reveal the jet black coat of our quarry. I hear John click on the video camera as I pull up my binoculars. A few minutes later, the small bear is at the base of our tree curiously staring up at us. He began a parade of five bears visiting our bait site that evening. They weren’t the bears we were looking for, but we weren’t complaining. Five days of watching and waiting paid off when the bear I wanted made a fatal mistake.

Early September in the upper Midwest brings beautiful, warm days followed by cool nights. The aspens turn gold, the whitetail lose their velvet, and the black bears are on their feet, packing in calories. For my family, it’s a time to celebrate the start of bear season. With rare exception, one of our family members or close friends draws a Wisconsin Unit C Bear Kill Permit. Our hometown in Wisconsin’s Clark County is close to thousands of acres of public land intermingled with farmlands full of corn and soy beans. The combination is perfect for the bears and, over the last 20 years, the bear population has exploded.

While I’d never claim to be an expert, my brother and I have killed our share of bears and helped a few friends kill good bears too. Our area of expertise is using bait sites to draw bears out of the dense forest. It gives the DIY hunter the best chance for a successful hunt. Here’s a list of tips and tactics to help you get started on a successful DIY bear hunt:

Choose a Destination: Wisconsin, Michigan and Minnesota offer fantastic bear hunting opportunities. With national forests, state and county lands, they’re home to some of the best public access hunting in the country. Plus, each state has programs that open private lands for public hunting. A visit to the states’ Web sites will reveal a number of options. Each state has a unique draw system for kill permits. In Wisconsin, residents and non-residents are entered into the same preference point draw system. Applicants can expect to wait four to eight years for a tag. Minnesota and Michigan have weighted draw systems that tend to have a shorter wait.

Picking the Perfect Location: When looking for a place to establish a bait site, examine aerial photos. Look for large, continuous tracts of land with a mix of swamp or low land and higher upper ground. If possible, pick a spot with corn or soybean fields nearby. Bears eat the soy beans through the summer and move into the corn fields as the corn ripens. Baiting close to those food sources will increase the likelihood that bears will continue to visit your bait even when feeding on crops.

The best hunting spots will be where thick underbrush opens to more open high grounds. Bears love thick cover to conceal their daytime movement. They’re very nocturnal, so place bait in a location that capitalizes on daytime movements. The stand and bait site should both be considered when picking a location. Using the prevailing west to northwest wind, we place the stand to the southeast of the bait.

Hunting on public land demands being discrete about your bait locations. Park off main roads, keep foot paths to the bait as concealed as possible and leave your quad at home until you need to retrieve your bear. Typically, the farther you’re willing to walk, the more private your hunting spot will be.

Baiting: We begin baiting in mid-July and have the bears conditioned to visit our buffet line by the time hunting season rolls around. If you’re under a short time line,
it's possible to establish and hunt over a bait site at the same time. Just use strong attractant scents and play the wind.

We use a mix of candy, cereal, crackers and chocolate from a local bear bait supplier. Place the bait in a hollowed stump with a cover and heavy rock to keep raccoons out. To help attract bears, pour filtered fryer grease from local restaurants on the ground around the bait. The bears’ paws get covered in the grease as they wander away, leaving a heavy scent trail that leads other bears to your bait.

**Inventory:** We place well protected cameras at each bait site. Bears are curious and love to use cameras as chew toys, so protect your investment with a good steel or wood box. When baiting, change the SD card and download all the pictures organized by bait site. Measure your bait stump and/or nearby logs to use as a size reference. After a short time, you’ll recognize the bigger bears and develop a list of potential shooters.

**Time to Hunt:** We don’t hunt in the mornings because we’ve spooked too many bears trying to sneak in before daylight. Instead, we fish in the morning and keep our hunts to long afternoon sits. When the first jet black bruin arrives, be patient and study it. Be alert for cubs. It’s unethical to kill a sow with cubs. Judge the bear’s size by comparing it to the size of your bait stump.

**Making the Shot:** Understanding the anatomy of a black bear is necessary for a clean and ethical kill. A black bear’s heart lies more forward and lower than a deer. Due to the large amounts of loose and greasy fat, wounded bears don’t leave a huge blood trail. Be patient and wait for a broadside shot with the near leg forward. Aiming at the middle mass 3 to 4 inches behind the near leg will produce a double lung shot and a short tracking job.

Research, planning and hard work pay off on any public land hunt, and bear hunting is no different. The reward is not just the bear rug on the wall; it’s also a freezer full of bear meat and many cherished memories. Bear hunting is affordable and probably closer than you think, but once you try it, you’ll be hooked for life!
American Hero Overcomes Injuries to Hunt Trophy Whitetail

Inspiring episode of Brotherhood Outdoors to air Oct. 4th on Sportsman Channel

By Kate Cywinski

Connie Rendon stared through the scope of a borrowed .243 rifle at the large, Texas whitetail walking toward her. Right-handed for most of her life, she fought buck fever as her left pointer finger hovered over the trigger.

Eight years ago, Connie was comfortable shooting an M16 as an Army Reservist. But her life changed forever, in 2004, when she was called to active duty in Iraq.

Leaving behind her husband and two sons as well as her role as the secretary-treasurer for the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAMAW) Local Lodge 2916, she headed across the world to serve her country.

“I hear people say, ‘women don’t go to the front lines.’ In my opinion, the front line is everywhere,” Rendon said. “I was a truck driver, and truck drivers leave the camp to deliver supplies to other camps. Driving on the road for hours or days in Iraq is considered the front line; we never knew what to expect.”

On her first trip after dark, Rendon’s truck hit a roadside bomb that left her with severe injuries to both of her arms as well as her lower lip and chin. Her left hand was salvaged, but she no longer has use of her right.

Rendon’s traumatic experience impacted not only her life, but also the lives of her family and friends. Her father and husband cared for her 24/7 while she was being treated at an Army medical center, while her sons and friends took her to and from regular medical visits. And her union stood behind her the whole way.

“Union membership, to me, means family,” Rendon said. “My union brothers and sisters supported me when I left for Iraq, when I was wounded, when I was at at the Walter Reed and Brooke Army Medical Centers, and they continue to support me now.”

It’s been a long road to recovery with years of pain and surgeries, but Rendon hasn’t let it stop her from living. Now working as a parts and tool room clerk, Rendon considers going back to work the best therapy and a continuation of her healing process. She’s also involved in a number of organizations including the American Heart Association, Impact Heroes, Patriot Paws and, as an avid cyclist, she dreams of pedaling for miles to raise funds for various organizations.

To honor Rendon for her service and sacrifice, the IAMAW nominated her to be a guest on the USA’s Brotherhood Outdoors TV series. Despite her life-altering experience in Iraq, Rendon has remained positive and continues to inspire others on and off the job, so it seemed fitting for her to share her motivating story with a national audience while experiencing her very first hunt—Texas whitetail—on Brotherhood Outdoors.

Although Rendon had sat with her sons while they hunted, she had never been the one hunting, so she was curious and excited about the “buck fever” they described. But she also had her reservations.

“I was kind of worried I wasn’t going to be able to fire the rifle because of my injuries to my right hand, but the people there helped me,” Rendon said. “They modified the hunt for me, so that was really neat….A lot of people think you get injured, and you’re disabled and that’s it. Life stops. But it doesn’t. You can continue doing the things that you like to do—just in other ways.”

Rendon’s concerns gave way to anticipation after some practice shots at the range and many deer sightings. After the guide got the attention of big-antlered buck, Rendon got set up on shooting sticks for a shot at her first deer. That buck wasn’t in her cards; he caught their scent and headed in the opposite direction. But giving up is not Rendon’s style, and on the last day of her hunt, she got a chance at another trophy.

As she shifted to get the gun in a good position and clicked off the trauma and pain she experienced over the last seven years faded. It was just her and the deer in her sights.

To find out if this American hero harvests her first buck shooting left-handed for the first time, tune in to Brotherhood Outdoors at 8 p.m. E/P on Thursday, Oct. 4 on Sportsman Channel.
The Role of Food Plots in Fall Hunting Success

By Josh Genz
G2 Outdoor Products

A way to enjoy the outdoors while benefiting wild game

Hunting season is quickly approaching, and the anticipation of what this year’s harvest will bring is building in hunters across the U.S. You’ve been monitoring your deer herd since the end of last season, seeing which animals made it through and how they’ve developed over the past few months.

Whether hunting for that early season doe for the freezer or that trophy buck of a lifetime, implementing a food plot program into your plan of action is sure to give you an edge. Incorporating a food plot into a management plan often separates the successful and unsuccessful hunters each fall. So let’s take a closer look at the what, where, when and how of food plots.

This year, more than ever, hunters will experience the importance of having proper food sources available to their whitetail herd and other wildlife. The severe drought that has affected much of the nation has left most areas with a lack of agricultural crops, fruit and soft mass production as well as a diminished acorn crop for deer to feed on. Having a fall food plot on your hunting property is sure to increase your chances of harvesting a whitetail.

Over the years, I’ve designed, altered and planted many types of food plot blends to accommodate the deer herd on my properties. From nutrition feed plots, which offer forage during all seasons, to kill plots designed to draw and hold deer during daylight hours, food plot blends are designed to optimize your property throughout the hunting season and beyond.

The blends described below were designed after years of research and testing on properties throughout the Midwest. It’s important to take into consideration where your property is located within the U.S. and follow the step-by-step instructions provided on the product to help you succeed in your food plot efforts. By planting each of these products in the same plot or within the same property management system, you’ll provide whitetails with quality nutrition all year and hold them on your property, giving you the best chance at success during hunting season.

The Kill Zone
Step one is killing the unwanted vegetation in the plot with Glyphosate (Roundup). Then work the ground to create an adequate seed bed to plant. Timing your planting with a rain in the forecast will ensure quick germination and growth for your newly planted plot. Following these steps will set you up for mini farmer success.

The next step is to plant your field of dreams. The following blends—with seed varieties including clover, chicory, winter oats and brassicas—each serve a specific purpose in the success of your plots.

A Perennial Blend of Clover and Chicory: The Foundation for Years to Come
This blend, consisting of perennials, provides the first source of protein for whitetails, beginning early in the spring and continuing through the growth stages into fall. Providing a blend of premium perennials will enhance antler and fawn growth and increase doe lactation performance, leading to a healthier herd.

Fall Finisher Oats: Establishment and Early Attraction
The quick germination and extreme cold tolerance of a winter oat blend will give your plots protection from overgrazing and attract whitetails from early season into late season.

Brassica Forage Blend: Forage Fit for a Giant
A brassica blend has the potential to produce up to eight tons of quality nutritious forage per acre. The plot is so sustainable, even the heaviest of deer densities will have trouble eating this food plot out. A quick to germinate, fast growing, cold tolerant blend of brassica will act as a super attractant as the cold weather and snow start to move in. The chilly temperatures will sweeten your plot, delivering what big whitetails crave.

Mineral Supplements: Developmental Attraction Mineral
Offering a snack bar on the edge of your food plot with a quality deer mineral that has the proper level of salt and other essential vitamins and trace minerals will provide your whitetails what they need to optimize their growth potential. Mineral use policies vary by state, so always check and follow your local and state regulations. Visit the Made in the U.S.A. section of this issue for more information on minerals.

You Reap What You Sow
The most critical factors of food plot seed and seed blends are seed purity and germination. You want to pick a blend that will grow in your climate, germinate quickly and is pure seed or has very limited filler, noxious weeds or weed seed. Finding a seed blend that offers all of these will ensure that your plot will establish quickly to fend off competition from weeds and other unwanted vegetation.

Offering premium forage to your whitetail herd this fall and winter is sure to increase your chance at success now and in the future. It’s another way to enjoy the great outdoors while doing something that benefits the wild game you’re chasing. Good luck this fall!
I have a confession. I’m almost 30 years old, grew up in a hunting community, work for a hunting and fishing conservation organization, and I’ve never taken a hunter safety education course. I’m not sure why. But with more than 70,000 volunteer instructors training 750,000 students in North America each year, I really don’t have a good excuse.

Established to promote safe firearms handling, hunter safety training began in the 1950s and, by the 1970s, expanded to include information about hunter responsibility and wildlife identification and conservation — making it hunter education instead of just hunter safety training. Modern courses, offered by state and local wildlife offices and conservation groups, also focus on hunter conduct and ethics and often include sections on bowhunting, tree stand and muzzleloader safety. With all the resources available to develop a smarter, safer, more educated generation of sportsmen and women, there’s been a steady decline both in non-fatal and fatal hunting-related firearms accidents.

In fact, between 1998 and 2004, there were no fatalities — making the sport statistically safer than golf, ping-pong, tennis, boating, bicycling and others, according to a column posted by author James Swan on ESPN.com. But no matter how well-educated or safe hunters are in the field, they will always be drawn into national debates about 2nd amendment rights. As heated as those debates can get, we must remember that, as sportsmen and women, we have a responsibility to keep educating the next generation of hunters, anglers and shooters, regardless of what transpires outside the sportsmen’s arena.

And that’s a responsibility Laborers’ Local 393 out of Marseilles, Illinois takes very seriously.

In 1996, Illinois passed a law requiring all hunters born on or after January 1, 1980 to successfully complete a state-accredited hunter education course before receiving their first hunting license. Situated in a densely populated hunting state, LiUNA Local 393 saw a need in the community and immediately stepped up to fulfill it.

Since the law passed, they’ve mentored more than 1,500 future sportsmen by sponsoring two hunter safety education classes each year. Hosted in the spring and the fall, the course is free and open to the entire community. Participants are provided with access to a continental breakfast and lunch each day as well as all of the ammunition, guns and materials needed to complete the course.

Taught by Illinois Department of Natural Resources certified instructors, LiUNA Local 393’s classes offer instruction on wildlife management and identification, firearms safety, hunter ethics, game identification, first aide, survival techniques and state regulations to attendees as young as nine-years-old.

“An union members know that the future of hunting is in these young adults’ hands,” said LiUNA Local 393 retired Business Manager David Raikes. “These young people want to experience the outdoors, and we have to do everything we can to mentor them.”

Why? Because as populations grow and regulations change, North America needs a generation of hunters, who are safe in the field and see the same big picture regarding wildlife habitat and public access that sportsmen like President Theodore Roosevelt fought to protect years ago.

“Programs like this not only educate and teach our children about gun safety and safe hunting practices in the field but also about being all around conscientious sportsmen, who appreciate the outdoors,” said Raikes.

If, like me, you’ve never taken a hunter education course, perhaps now’s the time to join the ranks of the 35 million hunters who have. Let’s make a commitment to not only educate ourselves but our communities as well. Free fall classes are available in almost every state and can be found on the National Shooting Sports Foundation Web site at www.huntinfo.org.

If you want to follow LiUNA Local 393’s lead, Raikes suggests putting together a committee of union members who’ve passed a safety class and working with your state DNR to get them certified to teach.

“As proud union members, we should all be mentors, good environmental stewards, educators and leaders in our community. We should set an example... by donating our time and skills for these types of programs that give back and make a difference for our future hunters,” said Raikes.
Bear Backdrop

By Harry Van Beest, IBEW Local 213

When Vancouver, British Columbia hosted the Olympic Games in 2010, a couple guys from Oswego Creative, based in Denver, came to town to document the great work IBEW Locals 213 and 258 members undertook to build and provide power to the Olympic venues.

We spent a day in Whistler, BC, viewing the bobsled and ski jump venues. Matthew, the producer, and Rand, the photographer/videographer, were enjoying the spectacular BC wilderness and documenting the workers’ stories—bears stealing the electricians’ lunches, the pride felt while working on such important buildings, the First Nation’s culture and influence.

As we were leaving the ski jump site, Rand noticed an information center building covered in First Nation carvings and immediately wanted photos of the unique structure. I parked and waited in the car with Matthew as Rand took off, happy as a photographer could be.

Four-Eyed Rabbit

by Richard Mock, Insulators Local 72

My dad owned a commercial and industrial insulation company that employed union workers of Local 72 in Greensboro, NC. Dad enjoyed hunting and fishing and taught my older brother and me to hunt and fish when time allowed. We subscribed to various hunting and fishing magazines, and while looking at a Kline mail order magazine advertised in Field & Stream, I saw a picture of a Beretta pump (Silver pigeon) that I really wanted.

On Christmas Day 1957, I received that gun as a gift from my dad. The day after Christmas, my older brother woke me up at 5 a.m. to go hunting. We had permission to hunt at my teacher’s family farm in the adjoining county, where there was lots of wildlife including squirrels, quail, rabbits and deer. Arriving early at the farm, we decided to go in different directions.

I admit that, at the age of 18, I had a few alcohol beverages on Christmas evening, but I was not intoxicated. While walking, I wasn’t feeling well. I decided to sit down, and while sitting, a rabbit came by and stopped about 25 feet away. I knew I would have to aim and shoot high to keep from destroying the meat. Just as I was about to squeeze the trigger, the rabbit turned and looked at me. To my surprise, the rabbit had on eye glasses. Seeing this, I knew I couldn’t shoot this rabbit with glasses.

I am now 73 years old, a lot wiser and still love to hunt and fish. I will never forget the rabbit with glasses and have told this story to family and friends many times. They laugh and tell me I must have been intoxicated. I was not intoxicated! I still own the Beretta pump, and it will be handed down to my daughter.

Matthew Walton, Oswego Creative Producer

While we waited, I asked Matthew to pose for a photo, claiming that the hillside backdrop full of wildflowers and the lighting would make a photo that even Rand would be proud of. Matthew complied, stood with his back to the hillside and shuffled left and right as I needed.

Walking towards Matthew to show him the picture, I took the opportunity to say, “Matthew, in BC, when we’re out in the woods, we have one basic rule: One does not have to outrun the bear; one simply must outrun his photographer.”

If I only could have captured another picture of Matthew’s face when he looked over his shoulder.

We had no need to run as the bear was coming down for fresh wildflower salad and had no interest in fresh meat. Neither the bear nor the Brothers from Denver were harmed.
G2 Outdoor Products Applicious Attraction Mineral

Getting that trophy buck for your wall doesn’t just come down to luck. You can certainly increase your chances by spending time at the shooting or archery range and in the woods looking for deer signs and travel patterns. But you can also utilize minerals, on their own or as part of a food plot program, throughout the year to help optimize the growth of whitetail on your property. Made by Wisconsin-based G2 Outdoor Products, G2 Applicious is American-made for the American deer hunter at an affordable price. Designed with a super apple attractant and containing up to 10X the vitamins found in other brands, G2 Applicious will improve the growth and health of whitetail bucks in your area, not only in antler inches but also in body mass and size. It will also help the does with lactation in the spring and fertilization in the fall, leading to a healthier herd overall. *Mineral use policies vary by state, so always check and follow your local and state regulations.*

www.g2outdoorproducts.com

Trophy Totes

After countless hours at the range, searching for scrapes and rubs and sitting in a stand or blind, you want to preserve the moment when you take that prized deer. For many of us, that means getting it mounted. Yet many an unprepared hunter has gone home empty-handed or disappointed when the taxidermist couldn’t do anything with the spoiled or damaged carcass. Bacteria can thrive in temperatures above 32 degrees, and any exposure to the elements can render a skin completely unusable, so the trick is to be prepared. Created by USA and IBEW Local 479 member Brian Hicks, Trophy Totes™ is a soft-sided cooler designed to transport the head and cape of an animal from the place of harvest to the taxidermist. Featuring flaps that seal around the base of the antlers to shield it from heat and lock in the cold, it protects your trophy until its final preservation. Plus, it’s designed so it can be used as a regular cooler when not transporting your trophy. Patterned with the latest Mossy Oak camouflage, Trophy Totes™ are handmade in the U.S. with the highest quality materials to ensure a beautiful mount on your wall.

www.trophytotes.com

Kenyon OUTLAST® Mid-Weight Base Layers

Still recuperating from the sweltering heat that assaulted much of the U.S. and parts of Canada this summer, it’s hard to think about cold-weather gear. But after last year’s mild winter, we’ll likely get pummeled with snow, ice and cold temperatures in just a few months. Kenyon’s OUTLAST® mid-weight base layer top and bottom are perfect for cold days spent hunting, ice fishing, skiing, sledding—and plowing that driveway! Their adaptive comfort technology interacts with the microclimate next to your body and the external environment to buffer swings in temperature and humidity. Unlike fabric and insulation that trap heat, OUTLAST® thermals absorb, store and release heat as needed to reduce overheating, sweating and chill. Made of a 100% polyester face backed with a soft OUTLAST®/micro acrylic brushed surface, they help regulate your body temperature and feel great too. Best of all, they are 100% made in the U.S.

USA members receive a 10% discount on all online purchases. Visit www.unionsportsmen.org/deals for your special discount code.
Winchester Power Max Bonded Ammo

For whitetail deer hunters, the goal is not only to recover the deer but to drop it in its tracks for a quick ethical harvest. Winchester's Power Max Bonded ammo is specifically designed to get the job done with a single, super tough projectile for maximum penetration and improved performance on quartering and shoulder shots. The Power Max Bonded bullet is constructed with a lead core and a contoured copper alloy jacket bonded together the same way you solder pipes (clean, flux and heat), resulting in a protected hollow-point bullet. Its aerodynamic profile promotes long range accuracy and initiates maximum expansion—doubling the bullet diameter—for a massive transfer of knock down power. In other words, it creates a big hole to trigger hydrostatic shock, which results in a quick kill and saves you from hours on a blood trail.

www.winchester.com

Vapor Trail Scents The Vapor Maker

You used scent-free soap and wore the latest scent blocking products, yet you saw that buck sniff the air and make a 180 back the way he came. With olfactory senses 1/3 greater than a dog's, deer survive by their nose. Most scents and lures only do one thing, like cover scent, and are applied to a small area with a cloth or sponge or with a pump to deliver patchy cover. USA and UA Local 430 member Charles (Rex) Holmes, Jr. developed The Vapor Maker® to create a wall of protection between the hunter and the prey. The Vapor Maker is a pump-up bottle with a special atomizing tip that disperses up to 16 oz. of any scent killer or attractant in the air as vapor—the natural way animals smell. It provides cover in a quick, even motion and will distribute scent 1/8 of a mile in just a 3-mph wind. Weighing just 2 lbs. when full, The Vapor Maker fits easily in a pack and may be the key to packing out a deer on your next hunt.

USA members receive a free gift valued at $10 with orders of $30 or more. Visit www.unionsportsmen.org/deals to take advantage of this offer.

www.vaportrailscents.com
Sweet October
Two transitional weeks a bowhunter cannot miss

By Jason Mendenhall
LiUNA Local 663

Anytime that you can get into your stand is time well spent, but there are two magical weeks that a bow hunter cannot miss, and your window of opportunity starts when it's time to carve the pumpkins.

From the steamy start of bow season in September to the sometimes brutal end of archery season in January, no single month during the season sees as much change as the month of October. Many times, the beginning of October doesn't look a whole lot different from September; there's still a ton of browse, the crops are still green and delectable, and the falling acorns make it sound like it's raining on a blue bird day. There's good and bad to this situation, but you can bet change is just around the corner. Here are some ways to recognize it and consistently keep deer around your tree stands.

The Big Transition
During this phase, deer pull somewhat of a disappearing act. Whether the bean pods have hardened or the corn has been harvested, the deer will now switch to their preferred food source—acorns. Your job, at this point, is to find individual trees or, better yet, entire oak flats that hold the acorn “motherload.” Since identifying these individual trees can be a daunting task, concentrate on finding these trees or flats in conjunction with terrain features that will concentrate deer, such as funnels, saddles, rivers and ditches. This is also an excellent time to pinpoint where the does are actively feeding.

Does, Scrapes and Rubs
Once you've identified where the deer have gone and the food source they're now on, it's time to find rub and scrape lines. These will show up and be concentrated around travel corridors and preferred food sources. Think of these rub lines as a wagon wheel; the center of the wheel is the preferred food source, and the spokes are how deer access that food source. Some of those “spokes” will be strewn with rub and scrape lines. That's where you want to be. Unless you have a foolproof way of getting in there, resist the urge to set up in the thickest cover.

Putting It into Action
I had never stepped foot on this piece of property. With a sizeable creek flowing right down the middle of it, I quickly noticed the sizeable ditch that ran down the middle of the finger of timber that ran east/west from the creek. Upon closer inspection, this weedy corner held a surprise; an entire complex of rubs. I stopped counting at 16 rubs and started looking for a tree!

Around 8:00 a.m., I heard something behind me coming through the corner. It was a pretty nice buck. After raking a few trees, he stepped onto the trail coming through the corner. The large bodied buck would be very close to Pope and Young. Moving ever so slowly, I ranged him at 29 yards. At about 18 yards, he stopped and looked up at me, but it was too late. I knew he wouldn't be on his feet for long.

All the elements that went into this hunt went as planned. I needed minimal scouting because I had carefully studied aerial photos. By effectively using terrain features, I located food sources and deer signs, and I knew where the does would be going. Remember, the stand you hung for opening day may not produce even two or three weeks into the season. The month of October changes a lot of things in the deer woods. If you want to put the tape to some antlers, you had better change with it.
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The Performance You Need. The Quality You Expect.
From saving lives to enhancing hunting experiences to providing companionship, dogs have had a special relationship with humans for centuries that earned them the title of man’s best friend. And for many people with disabilities, these dedicated canines are far more than that.

More than 60 years ago, Joseph Jones, Sr., a retired member of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAMAW), recognized the ability of dogs to provide independence and mobility to the disabled. Blind at age 57, he applied to existing schools for a guide dog but was turned down due to his “advanced age.”

Unwilling to accept defeat, Jones sought help from the IAM's Executive Council, which determined there was a growing need for guide dog services and endorsed the founding, in 1948, of International Guiding Eyes (IGE), which was later renamed Guide Dogs of America (GDA). It was one of the first guide dog schools to adopt a policy of no upper age discrimination, and it continues to provide guide dogs and instruction in their use, free of charge, to blind and visually impaired men and women across the U.S. and Canada.

Unlike other tools and aides for the blind, guide dogs have unique personalities and attributes, just like humans. Recognizing the critical interdependence between the user and the dog, GDA takes the lifestyle of each visually impaired person into consideration as well as the individuality of both the user and the dog to ensure they are a good match.

While the improved quality of life guide dogs provide to the visually impaired is priceless, the process of training the dogs and preparing both them and their owners comes at a significant expense. It costs approximately $42,000 to train each dog and provide instruction to the guide dog user. The dogs typically begin working when they are two and a half years old and provide their valuable service for six to eight years.

Guide Dogs of America receives no funding from the federal, state or local government, so it relies on voluntary contributions from union members, charitable foundations, corporations and individuals. With a 40-person staff made up of IAMAW members and a board of directors consisting of IAMAW members, business leaders and graduates, the Machinists’ Union continues to be an integral part of the organization. While the union advocates the school’s mission, it also helps raise funds for the GDA both at the international and local level by hosting a variety of events including golf tournaments, motorcycle poker runs and skeet and trap shoots, including the annual R. Thomas Buffenbarger Skeet & Trap Shoot.

This fall, the Union Sportsmen’s Alliance will join the IAMAW in helping fundraise for this worthy program with its Las Vegas Trap & Skeet Shoot on November 15 at the Clark County Shooting Complex. “We are extremely proud and grateful that the Union Sportsmen’s Alliance has chosen to partner with GDA to host a skeet shoot during our annual Las Vegas event,” said GDA President Dale E. Hartford. “It is through events like these that we are able to continue our programs that offer freedom and mobility to those who cannot see.”

First time and veteran shooters, alike, are encouraged to register for a day of fun on the shooting course to support GDA. For more information or to register, contact Dale Hartford at 818-822-8261 or dehartford@guidedogsofamerica.org.

“Those who hunt with dogs understand the special bond that develops as you work the field together as a team and the pride you feel when those shared signals and commands lead to your quarry. Imagine how strong the bond must be between the visually impaired and their guide dogs,” said USA Executive Director Fred Myers. “We are very happy to support Guide Dogs of America and the independence they provide to the blind, while bringing together union members for a day of fun in the outdoors.”

Learn more about GDA at www.guidedogsofamerica.org.
IUPAT Sponsored Shoot Raises More Than $20,000 for Conservation

When it comes to paint, flooring, drywall, glass and signs, nobody is more skilled than members of the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades (IUPAT). And when it’s time to put down the work tools, many IUPAT members are handy with a shotgun as well.

“What a great opportunity to bring union brothers and sisters together to enjoy a day on the shooting range while promoting unionism and conservation,” said IUPAT Executive General Vice President Ken Rigmaiden. “I look forward to more of our members taking advantage of the many benefits the USA has to offer to those who hunt, fish, shoot and recreate outdoors.”

Sponsored by the IUPAT, the Union Sportsmen’s Alliance’s First Northern Ohio Sporting Clays Shoot on July 21 raised more than $21,000 to support the USA’s conservation mission. Garnering support from the community, the event boasted 11 teams comprised of union members, shooting enthusiasts, corporate partners and guests from across the state.

“I had a great time at the USA shoot! It’s really great that there is a union organization to bring union members together for a day of fun, prizes, and friendly competition,” said Joseph Kish of IUPAT DC 6 LU 707.

From a beautiful day on the shooting course to the great food and prizes off the course, everyone had a blast and left feeling even more vested in the USA and its mission.

Aside from being a great way to spend a day, the USA’s sporting clays and trap shoots raise imperative funds to support the USA’s efforts to expand and improve hunting and fishing access and wildlife habitat throughout North America, and this event surpassed its net goal by more than $3,000.

While raising money for the USA’s conservation efforts, USA shoots are often the building blocks to Boots on the Ground (BOTG) projects. BOTG brings together skilled union members to tackle projects that improve and enhance public hunting and fishing access, conserve wildlife habitat and pass on our outdoor heritage to current and future generations of sportsmen and women.

Register for USA’s upcoming events at www.UnionSportsmen.org/events.

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

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

Heather Tazelaar
National Events/Fundraising Manager
Phone: 615-831-6779
heathert@unionsportsmen.org

Tim Bindl
National Events/Fundraising Coordinator
Phone: 608-397-1023
timb@unionsportsmen.org

For a complete list of events and to register visit:
www.UnionSportsmen.org/events
A Snipe Spectacular

By M.D. Johnson

This wonderful game bird is no late-night joke

Snipe. Those birds of dark, moonless nights, burlap sacks, flashlights and laughter. Few people know the bird intimately, and even fewer have spent a morning in the marsh specifically seeking this fascinating little mystery of wetland evolution. What wingshooters need to know initially about the snipe is that if they’re not spending at least a day or two hunting this little brown rocket, they’re missing out on some of the greatest bird hunting available in the U.S., bar none.
Finding snipe in sufficient numbers is a process of where and when. A bird of the wetlands, snipe are attracted to moist, soggy soils where they can easily find any number of the small invertebrates and worms upon which they regularly feed. Low-lying, damp harvested cornfields are a favorite habitat for snipe, as are soggy pasture fields and open, but likewise damp, grasslands. Like their cousin the woodcock, snipe are short-legged former shorebirds that shy away from areas of heavy, ground-level brush and cover. Instead, they prefer open areas where they can use their long bills to probe the soft, wet soil for food and their eyes to constantly search their surroundings for danger.

Typical snipe habitat is home to dozens of non-game bird species, some of which can, to the novice, appear to be snipe. A little smaller than a robin, snipe somewhat resemble ruffed grouse or bobwhite quail in their browns, tans and white coloration. A long bill and short legs set them apart from these familiar upland favorites; however, such qualifiers don't differentiate them from the many non-game wetland bird species that share a similar environment. Two characteristics that make identifying snipe easy are their corkscrewing, twisting style of flying and the grating “Sraipe!” call they make at the flush. Both are readily recognizable, and identification becomes immediate after only a handful of such encounters.

The “when” portion of the snipe equation is usually the most difficult to predict. In eastern Iowa, snipe migrations traditionally begin in mid-October, with peaks around Halloween or the first week of November. This isn't to say, however, that some snipe can't be found earlier in the season. Again using Iowa as an example, the snipe season begins in early September; with some diligent looking, a hunter can find small pockets of birds in and around traditional wetland areas commonly associated with waterfowling.

Of the three variables, “how” is probably the most easily answered question. Although I have talked with some Southern snipe hunters who have successfully decoyed snipe into shooting range, the vast majority of snipe shooting is done in a “walk 'em up” style of hunting. Owners of two black labs, my wife, Julie, and I include our dogs in each and every snipe hunt and have found the little birds to be excellent training tools.

Firearms and ammunition requirements for the successful snipe hunter are essentially a matter of personal preference. Both Julie and I shoot Remington Model 11-87 autoloading 12s filled with three 1-ounce loads of Winchester steel No. 7s. I choose steel for two reasons. One, the Remingtons provide a fast load of small shot that patterns very well in both of the 11-87s, and two, the steel allows us to include smaller ducks such as teal or woodies in the bag if we're given the opportunity. Light over/unders or side-by-sides in 12-gauge or 20 will also work well.

And last but not least, there's the eating part of the snipe hunting adventure. Dark-meat birds due to their long-distance migratory ways, snipe provide an excellent, rich culinary experience. Although we have experimented with different ones, our favorite snipe recipe involves breasting the birds in much the same way we do doves. The entire bone-in breast is then rinsed, seasoned with salt and pepper, and lightly dusted with flour. Several breasts are then browned in bacon grease and set aside to drain. Once dry, the breasts are layered in a Dutch oven or baking dish over a bed of rice and broccoli. Some sliced Vidalia onions and a can of cream of mushroom soup complete the recipe. Cover and bake at 350 degrees for approximately 45 minutes to one hour.

So whether it's on the wing or on the table, there's really only one word for snipe, and that's fantastic.
Take Your Best Shot

WIN A BUCK KNIFE!

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.

Walter Robinson, a member of Electrical Workers Local 1547 from Fairbanks, Alaska, shot this goat after hiking 4,000 feet up a mountain in Haines, AK, in Nov. 2011. While hunting, he saw lots of brown bears and bald eagles.

Mark Weathers, a member of Electrical Workers Local 1316 from Gray, GA, caught this 11-lb. largemouth bass when he saw the fish inhale the worm less than a foot from the bank.

David Murdock, a member of Sheet Metal Workers Local 162 in Sacramento, CA, kept his tradition of hunting on Easter alive when he harvested this Rio Grande turkey in CA.

Charles Tortorici, a member of Electrical Workers Local 3 from Westwood, NJ, shot this whitetail at 450 yards with a TC Pro Hunter Encore .300 Win Mag while hunting in Nebraska in Sept. 2011.

Sam Webb, son of Pipefitters Local 597 member Shaun Webb, is on his way to being one fine fisherman. Sam felt the fish bite and was able to bring in the 2½-lb. largemouth all by himself.

Brian Lemke, a member of Carpenters Local 156 from LaGrande, Oregon, recently caught this nice rainbow trout after a day on the water.
Join the Union Sportsmen’s Alliance and Protect America’s Outdoor Heritage.

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Pass on the Heritage

**CONSERVE**
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**VOLUNTEER**
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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.

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