WHEN TURKEYS DON'T TALK
CONFIDENCE. PATIENCE. PERSISTENCE.
FROM THE DIRECTOR’S DESK

Building Bridges to the Communities Where You Live, Work and Play

FRED MYERS
USA Executive Director/CEO

(L-R) Nashville Building Trades President Anthony Nicholson, Montgomery Bell State Park Manager Pat Wright and USA Executive Director/CEO Fred Myers at Montgomery Bell State Park new bridge dedication.

“We continually strive to maintain all facilities and services on minimal budgets. There are multiple projects that fall behind other higher priority maintenance issues. The unions and USA provided the materials, a large number of highly skilled volunteers and high quality service. We could not be more thankful,” said Joshua Christ, assistant superintendent of Cedar Hill State Park.

Mr. Christ was referring to one of the USA’s earliest Work Boots on the Ground (WBOG) park projects, where 72 union members and contractors from the Dallas, Texas area donated their time and skills to refurbish three bridges at Cedar Hill State Park, using money raised at the USA’s Dallas Area Conservation Dinner.

We launched WBOG with the simple idea of directly engaging union members in conservation. As it often the case when you begin something with one central focus, there were unanticipated, though immediately valuable, side effects. We discovered that while WBOG builds bridges between skilled union volunteers and conservation projects that desperately need their skills, it also builds bridges between union members and the communities where they live, work and play.

These bridges are a powerful tool for unions. Unions and union members continually give back to national, state and local charities, yet people often extraordinarily receive the recognition they deserve. As a national organization, the USA can utilize Work Boots on the Ground and a variety of communications channels, including a TV show and magazine, to tell your inspiring stories and help reshape the American public’s understanding of unions.

Nearly 40 WBOG projects have been completed in 16 states since the program was launched in 2010, most of which would not have been possible without union skills. Projects such as roofing a picnic pavilion at Wisconsin’s Horicon Marsh, building a kayak launch at Georgia’s Harris Lake Creek State Park, and repairing a wheelchair-accessible walking trail at York River State Park got local union volunteers directly engaged in their communities, leaving a lasting and publicly visible impression.

In other examples, no rails or lumber were used to build bridges into the community. For many of the parents who brought their children to the USA’s Special Needs Youth Whitetail Hunt, Take Kids Fishing Day and Get Youth Outdoors Day, it was their first meaningful introduction to the union world.

Most recently, in Ohio, the USA was able to donate $17,000 to Ashland University’s Black Fork Wetlands Environmental Studies Center, thanks to the union members who helped make the USA’s 2013 and 2014 Ohio AFL-CIO Conservation Dinners such tremendous successes (see pg. 6).

Children are our future. Whether casting a line for a bluegill, learning to safely fire a gun or studying wetlands, these experiences will stick with them for the rest of their lives, and perhaps that early exposure will spark their interest in pursuing one of the union trades.

Through positive media coverage, volunteer recognition plaques at project sites, glowing testimonials from community leaders, and the direct engagement of member of the community, Work Boots on the Ground is changing how union members are viewed—one bridge, one trail, one child’s first fish at a time.

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BUILT RIGHT HERE, IN THE LAND YOU CALL HOME.
Welcome News for Carhartt Sweepstakes Winner

BY KATE NATION

Winning the USA & Carhartt “Rock It Country Style” Sweepstakes couldn’t have come at a better time for Carl Betancourt, a member of Sheet Metal Workers Local 67. Between rising taxes and limited work, he is faced with having to sell the Austin, Texas home he has lived in for the past 20 years.

“The news was a much-needed bright spot for my life,” Betancourt said. “Winning reminded me that every moment is new, and good things are always possible even in your darkest times.”

Despite current challenges, Betancourt is looking forward to an all-expense-paid trip to Nashville, TN, with his girlfriend, Kay, this June for the 2013 CMA Music Festival where they will have the chance to meet country artists, get autographs and enjoy live performances. Some of the artists they will be looking for on the schedule are Lady Antebellum, Little Big Town, Sam Hunt, Florida Georgia Line and Garth Brooks.

“When I called to tell Carl he was the grand prize winner of our national promotion, he told me he didn’t think he would ever win but was just hoping for a shot at winning a U.S. made jacket,” said USA Deputy Director Mike d’Oliveira. “I told him that, thanks to our great partner Carhartt, he was going to get that and a whole lot more!”

Already a big Carhartt fan, Betancourt is just as excited about the U.S. made Carhartt camouflage zip, pants and jacket he will receive as part of the grand prize package. Among the accessories, he has put his Carhartt Extremes Arctic coverall to the test on cold days—and it passed with wind-blocking colors.

“Don’t care what the temperature is if the bike starts. I’m riding,” he said.

His Extremes Arctic coverall does the job so well that it’s too warm to wear it at the temperature gets above 45-degrees, so Betancourt looks forward to wearing his new lighter weight gear when the temperature reaches the 45-60 degree range.

While he won’t be sporting the coat at the CMA Music Fest, when Nashville temperatures are likely to soar into the high 80s, he may find them very handy for working and fishing in Washington State, where he and Kay have been looking at homes. Betancourt has already researched some of the fishing opportunities in the Pacific Northwest and is excited about the salmon fishing available in that area of the country.

As a fisherman and a union member, Betancourt is happy to join a union-friendly outdoor organization when he learned about the Union Sportsmen’s Alliance, and it looks like that decision certainly paid off for him at a time when he needed it most.

Congratulations to Carl on winning the USA & Carhartt “Rock It Country Style” Sweepstakes, we can’t wait to hear about the trip.

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CONSERVATION FOCUS

USA’s Ohio State AFL-CIO Dinners Help Fund State-of-the-Art Wetlands Center

By Kate Nation

Ashland University’s new 1,200-square-foot Black Fork Wetlands Environmental Studies Center in Ashland, Ohio, is now ready for students to research wetlands firsthand thanks to several major donors, including the AFL-CIO’s Crawford/Richland Central Labor Council with funding from the Union Sportmen’s Alliance and its Ohio State AFL-CIO Conservation Dinners.

Featuring an open classroom, a storage area, skylights and two composting toilets, the “green” environmental studies center will assist Ashland University students as well as local students of all ages in studying the wetlands by serving as a staging area for them to receive instruction and equipment and a place to examine specimens.

Located halfway between Columbus and Cleveland, the 298-acre wetlands provides habitat for fish, wildlife and a variety of critical plants. Prior to classroom construction, the first phase of the Ashland University project saw the development of a parking area, walking trail and 400-foot boardwalk with an observation deck and bird-watching tower.

In order to raise the $156,000 needed to build the Black Fork Wetlands Environmental Studies Center, Ashland University reached out to Ron Davis, president of the AFL-CIO’s Crawford/Richland Central Labor Council.

“I took it to my council: they liked it,” said Davis. “It’s one of a kind...there’s nothing like it in Northern Ohio.”

After taking on fundraising for the facility, the Crawford-Richland Central Labor Council reached out to labor contractors and organizations, including the Ohio AFL-CIO, which contributed $17,000 from funds raised at the Ohio State AFL-CIO Conservation Dinner in 2015 and 2016 and an additional pledge from the USDA.

“We are making a substantial contribution to the Black Fork Wetlands project,” said Ohio AFL-CIO President Tim Bargas. “The Ohio AFL-CIO is proud that we are a part of this project and the learning experiences that will be shared on the grounds of Ashland University. I personally want to thank the Union Sportmen’s Alliance for all they do, not only in Ohio, but across the country.”

“Next year union members put their mind to something, there is no stopping them,” said USA Executive Director Fred Myers. “This new state-of-the-art facility is a perfect example. Between the efforts of the Crawford-Richland Central Labor Council in raising funds for the facility, the Ohio AFL-CIO in helping to secure two successful USA Conservation Dinners, and the union workers and contractors who built the facility in three months, this project was truly a labor of love.”

New Jersey Union Volunteers Stretch Sportsmen’s Dollars

Most sportmen and women know and even appreciate that their hunting and fishing license support the management of fish and wildlife. Their favorite activities fund fish and wildlife agencies, which then work to maintain healthy fish and wildlife populations, bringing their hard earned money full circle.

In New Jersey, some of those funds are used to operate the Rockport Pheasant Farm and the associated statewide stocking programs. The first pheasants raised at Rockport were released in 1925, and since then, the hatchery has raised more than two million birds. For the 12,000 New Jersey residents who hunt pheasants in New Jersey, the program is invaluable.

Thanks to the USA’s Work Boots on the Ground program and a group of dedicated union volunteers, New Jersey sportmen’s dollars are now stretching a little further.

Following the USA’s 1st Annual Tri-State Area Conservation Dinner in 2013, Tom Mattiingley, a member of IBEW Local 251 and the Tri-State dinner committee, contacted the New Jersey Division of Fish & Wildlife to determine how union volunteers could be of service. Using $5,000 of the money raised at the dinner to purchase planted pheas and other conservation materials, a group of union volunteers then built 50 pheasant transport boxes in a workshop owned by Don Mullins, a retired member of Insulators Local 14.

Armed with table saws, planers and Mattiingley’s best drafting skills, the volunteers constructed and painted stackable boxes that fit into the bed of a truck. According to Mattiingley, “they’re a work of art, like bird condominiums.”

“We had been accumulating boxes over the years, but it had been awhile since we had any new boxes due to lack of funding,” said Dave Golden, chief of the NJ Bureau of Wildlife Management. “So when the Union Sportmen’s Alliance stepped in and offered to help build the boxes, it was a big help. Some of our boxes are up to 20-years-old and still in operation.”

Meet Ty Brown | USA Conservation Manager

Ty Brown is the Conservation Manager. He is working to institute new processes that will further develop USA Work Boots on the Ground program, form new partnerships with government agencies and non-profits, and implement many youth events to advocate youth as the future of conservation.

A hunter, fisherman, country music singer and songwriter, Ty Brown grew up fishing and hunting from camouflaged to a cowboy hat and microphone to a gun and a guitar. He was happy to trade in that suit and tie and join the Union Sportmen’s Alliance as Conservation Manager. He leads the USA’s efforts to engage young people in the outdoors, restore America’s public lands, improve public access to the outdoors and educate youth about the outdoors.

As Conservation Manager, Brown facilitates all aspects of the USA’s conservation efforts from identifying, organizing and executing conservation projects to participating in fundraising events. He is also working to institute new processes that will further develop USA Work Boots on the Ground program, form new partnerships with government agencies and non-profits, and implement many youth events to advocate youth as the future of conservation.

With a background in sales, marketing and advertising, Brown is a passionate volunteer for USA Work Boots on the Ground. Brown is a person who enjoys meeting various groups and individuals for the greater good.

When not working, hunting or fishing, Brown can often be found tending to his farm, entertaining friends and family in a backyard setting to show his support for his alma mater, Municipal State University of New Jersey.

To learn more about the USA’s Work Boots on the Ground program or become a volunteer, contact Ty Brown at (615) 631-6731 or tybrown@unionsportmen.org.
USA EVENTS

NORTHEAST

It’s going to be a busy spring and summer in the Northeast. From early April through the end of May, volunteers from the North & Central NY Building & Construction Trades, led by IBEW Local 43 Business Manager Don Morgan and Roofers Local 105 BM Ronald Haney will repair the reproduction home of President Fillmore’s birthplace at Fillmore Glen State Park to make it presentable for the 50th anniversary celebration of the replica. In May, the USA will host the 2nd Annual Central and Northern NY BCTC Conservation Dinner in Syracuse, NY.

The 2015 Shoot Tour will also make its way to this region, beginning with a stop in Port Republic on May 2 for the 3rd Annual SMART New Jersey Sporting Clays Shoot at Red Wing Sporting Clays, owned and operated by SMART Local 27 member Roger Gibson.

For the 7th year running, the USA will hold the 4th Annual AFL-CIO Capital Area Sporting Clays Shoot in Queenstown, MD. The sporting clays course at Pintail Point has been upgraded once again, so we can accommodate a greater number of shooters.

Many of the same union volunteers who refurbished a pier at Texas’ Dublin Lake State Park will be constructing a boardwalk at Trinity River National Wildlife Refuge.

On June 6, the USA will head back to Castlewood Rod & Gun Club in Ellwood City, PA, for the 5th Annual W. PA Sporting Clays Shoot. The facility is situated on 100+ acres of rolling hills with a variety of terrain and cover that provide a challenging and beautiful shooting experience.

At the end of June, the USA will make a second visit to Port Republic, NJ, to assist with the Building & Construction Trades Department’s Labor of Love Sporting Clays Shoot to benefit the Diabetes Research Institute Foundation.

UPCOMING EVENTS:
- May 2: SMART New Jersey Sporting Clays Shoot - Port Republic, NJ
- May 14: Central and Northern NY BCTC Conservation Dinner - Syracuse, NY
- May 29: Capital Area AFL-CIO Sporting Clays Shoot - Queenstown, MD
- June 6: Western Pennsylvania Sporting Clays Shoot - Ellwood City, PA
- June 28: Labor of Love Sporting Clays Shoot - Port Republic, NJ

The USA’s AFL-CIO Capital Area Sporting Clays Shoot has grown year after year, and the 7th annual event will be able to accommodate even more shooters.

SOUTH

The USA’s 2015 Shoot Tour began with a bang in Lithia, FL, in January, as the 4th Annual Central Florida, Sporting Clays Shoot raised $8,000 more than the record set in 2013 for the event. It also set a new participant record with 127 shooters. The USA’s 6th Annual Houston Area Sporting Clays Shoot was also a big success, increasing the number of shooters from 109 in 2014 to 129 this year. We know the momentum will only continue as the tour rolls into Nashville on March 21.

The very first USA Conservation Dinner was held in Dallas, TX. In 2012, and $3,000 from that event was used by Work Boots on the Ground volunteers to refurbish three bridges at Texas’ Cedar Hills State Park in 2013. Building on that success, we were excited to hold the 2nd Dallas BCTC Conservation Dinner on March 14.

The USA’s Work Boots on the Ground projects are kicking off in Texas and Georgia this year, led by UA Plumbers Local 68 Secretary-Treasurer Mike Kramer and Ironworkers Local 84 Business Manager Ed Vargusco. Union volunteers near Houston, Texas are constructing a 500 ft. elevated boardwalk connecting the Trinity River National Wildlife Refuge to the city of Liberty, Texas’ existing trail system. A joint effort between the USA and the Department of Interior, the project is expected to be completed by late March.

In Georgia, volunteers from the Columbus Metal Trades Council (CMT), spearheaded by CMT Recording Secretary Dave Hall, are lending their skilled hands to Florence Marina State Park. In February, they evaluated the park’s boat docks and slips for electrical issues and made necessary repairs to areas owned by the state. This March, volunteers are installing a pump with a grinder and a sand filtration system at the park’s waste water treatment facility to ensure a cleaner facility and protect nearby rivers and streams.

UPCOMING EVENTS:
- March 21: Nashville Area Sporting Clays Shoot - Nashville, TN
- April 16: West Virginia AFL-CIO Dinner - Charleston, WV

WEST

This past fall saw several impressive achievements by USA members in the West. Lost Knuhs, representing Electrical Workers Local 46, won both the High Over All (HOA) Individual Shooter and HOA Ladies Division awards back-to-back at the USA’s Puget Sound and Portland-Salem Shoots with scores of 88 and 81. A little farther south, Ben Courtemanche, representing San. California Pipe Trades District Council 16, took home the HOA Individual Shooter award for the 5th year in a row at the USA’s 5th Annual IBEW 50 So. California Sporting Clays Shoot.

We will hold our first USA Alaska BCTC Conservation Dinner on March 6 in Anchorage, and our 2015 Shoot Tour will make its way to the West again this fall.

UPCOMING EVENTS:
- Spring 100: Greater Kansas City Conservation Dinner - Kansas City, MO
- June 6: Eau Claire Kids Fishing Day - Eau Claire, WI
- June 7: Western WI AFL-CIO Take Kids Fishing Day - La Crosse, WI
- June 13: IBEW 50 AFL-CIO Take Kids Fishing Day - Bucyrus, OH
- June 20: BAC So. OH / NW KY Sporting Clays Shoot - Drummin, KY
- July 18: Illinois State Sporting Clays Shoot - Hainesville, IL
- June 27: Madison Take Kids Fishing Day - Madison, WI

MIDWEST

You would never have guessed the USA’s 1st Annual Des Moines Area Conservation Dinner on January 23 was a first-time event. With 420 guests, it was one of our most highly attended dinners, and it set a record for the most money raised, bringing in more than $59,000. Robert Gilmore, BM and Secretary-Treasurer for IUPAT District Council 61, led the charge with a dedicated committee that worked tirelessly to make this event such a great start to our 2015 season event.

Days later, on January 27, the USA’s 4th Annual Greater Lansing Labor Council dinner had a great turnout. One of the USA’s oldest dinners, this event continues to be strongly supported by the local union community.

Thanks to the state AFL-CIO in Illinois and Ohio, March has been another terrific month for the dinner program with great local participation and support at our 3rd Annual Illinois AFL-CIO Conservation Dinner on March 2 and our 3rd Annual Ohio State AFL-CIO Conservation Dinner on March 13.

Later this spring, the USA will hold its 2nd Annual Greater Kansas City Conservation Dinner (date to be posted on USA website), and the USA Shoot Tour will make its way to the Midwest in early summer, beginning with a stop in Eau Claire.

UPCOMING EVENTS:
- March 21: Nashville Area Sporting Clays Shoot - Nashville, TN
- April 16: West Virginia AFL-CIO Dinner - Charleston, WV

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**5 PRO TRICKS FOR PRE-SPAWN BASS**
Top tourney anglers offer sage advice for early season bass.

Some of the biggest bass of the year are caught during the pre-spawn by anglers who know the right tips for success.

**PRE-SPAWN BASS** can be difficult to pattern and catch. Fish are transitioning from winter to spring holding areas—here one day, there the next. But for anglers who understand subtle nuances of water, structure and tackle techniques, it is possible to consistently score big on heavy pre-spawn fish. In fact, armed with the right knowledge, the pre-spawn staging period can produce some of the best bass fishing of the year.

Here are five top tactics from notable bass pros on what they do to locate and catch early season bunkers.

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**ENTRY FORM**

USA Youth Turkey Quiz

1. What is the flap of skin under a male turkey's chin called?
   - a. gizzard  b. double chin  c. wattle  d. snood

2. What is it called when a male turkey puffs up his breast feathers and spreads its tail feathers like a fan?
   - a. fanning  b. strutting  c. feathering  d. puffing

3. Which of the following is not a type of turkey?
   - a. Western  b. Osceola  c. Eastern  d. Merriam

4. What is a turkey's strongest sense?
   - a. smell  b. hearing  c. vision  d. taste

5. What sound does a male turkey make to attract females (hens)?
   - a. yelp  b. holler  c. purr  d. gobble

6. How fast can a turkey run?
   - a. 5 mph  b. 18 mph  c. 35 mph  d. 40 mph

7. What are baby turkeys called?
   - a. poults  b. chicks  c. hens  d. flocks

8. Which of the following is not a name for a male turkey?
   - a. jake  b. buck  c. tom  d. gobble

9. What do male turkeys use their spurs for?
   - a. clinging to trees  b. breaking acorns  c. picking their nose  d. fighting

10. How many turkeys were left in the early 1900s when they were endangered?
    - a. 10 million  b. 1 million  c. 100,000  d. 30,000

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Mail completed form to:
USA - Youth Turkey Quiz
3340 Perimeter Hill Dr.
Nashville, TN 37211
5 PRO TRICKS FOR PRE-SPAWN BASS

JONATHAN NEWTON SAYS HUMPS ARE KEY STAGING AREAS

Some of the best pre-spawn bass action Alabama pro Jonathan Newton finds is around submerged humps near well-known bass holding areas like creeks, coves and broad flats in sheltered shoreline areas. But not all humps are the same. A good pre-spawn hump can be up to a half-mile away from a likely bass bedding area. That’s because when conditions become perfect, bass move great distances quickly. Some humps are connected to shoreline areas; others are far out in open water.

An ideal hump tops out at 12 to 14 feet of water, with 20 feet of water or more surrounding it. It should have a hard bottom consisting of shell, gravel or rock. Soft-bottom humps sometimes hold bass, but hard bottom is best. The best humps are small—ones other anglers overlook. They only may be 20 feet across the top—about the size of the average dining room at a home. And a dining room is a good comparison, because that’s what a pre-spawn hump is to schools of staging bass.

Not every hump is consistently good for pre-spawners. It may be great one year, poor the next. Timing is crucial for pre-spawn bass on humps. Water temperature should be in the upper 50s to low 60s, and there should be an abundance of baits fish in the immediate area of a hump.

B RETT HITE TARGETS SECONDARY POINTS

Brett Hite loves the pre-spawn. When he sights a hot spot like a secondary point, he knows it can hold a number of bass.

“Bass move to the shallows for bedding in water, so new fish area are showing up all the time on key contact spots like secondary points just before moving out of spawning sites,” says Brett Hite, a pro and the son of famed angler Davey Hite. “Secondary points also get a load of bass that move back out to them when a spring cold front hits.”

“Just when you locate a good secondary point, you’re getting fish moving in—and moving out—the shallows all the time. And that can last for weeks.”

Brett defines a secondary point as a “hump” off the bank in a main creek or at an offshore point, off the main lake, and well away from larger more dependable primary points where a creek enters the main lake.

“Structure fishing is easy now because of maps on sonar,” he says. “So I want a secondary point that’s not shown on a map, and I zigzag over a likely area with a Humminbird side-scanner sonar unit that gives an exact picture of the bottom type I’m seeking.”

RUSTY SALEWSKE WORKS STAINED WATER FOR CONSISTENCY

Pro Rusty Salewski has earned a lot of money in tournaments during the pre-spawn period. His trick is to locate stained or clear water for fish staging concentrations.

A stained water pattern often starts in the back of creeks following rain, says the California native. Stained water entering the back of a creek is often warmer, and it often brings food into the lake that attracts baitfish and bass.

Stained water can hold a lot more active bass because it maintains stable water temperature from suspended particles. Bass in stained water continue to feed and are aggressive because water temperature is warmer or remains more constant than clear water.

Salewski said he likes to make parallel casts to cover in areas near drop-offs in 6 feet of water. He wants to keep lures in the most productive strike zone throughout a retrieve. Parallel casts along a structure produce far more bass than casts made perpendicular to it.

Lure speed is important in drawing strikes from pre-spawn bass, he said. Sometimes a moderate retrieve is best, other times a stop-and-go retrieve is most effective. As air and water temperatures rise, much faster retrieves around docks and brush piles in stained water may be needed to provoke strikes.

Not every hump is consistently good for pre-spawners. It may be great one year, poor the next. Timing is crucial for pre-spawn bass on humps. Water temperature should be in the upper 50s to low 60s, and there should be an abundance of baitfish in the immediate area of a hump.

GREG PUGH’S BEST LURES FOR PRE-SPAWN BASS

Pre-spawn bass are aggressive, according to pro Greg Pugh. He fishes “searching lures” to locate bass by drawing reaction bites. Greg prefers isolated cover in creeks and pocket water off main lakes, and he prefers working lures along bottom breaks that quickly jump from 5 feet to 3 or 2 feet deep.

“Usually I’ll work a spinnerbait, swimming jig, lipless crankbait or buzzbait, depending on the weather, water conditions, and what bass tell me they want on that particular day,” says the Alabama angler.

The four pre-spawn lures Greg prefers for this style shallow-water fishing are:

1. Tandem-blade spinnerbaits in 1/4- or 3/8-ounce sizes with a chartreuse-and-white skirt. He likes a size 3 or 4 golden willow blade paired with a size-4 Colorado blade.

2. Swimming jigs in 1/4-ounce, white, black, or blue with a white trailer, or a plain dark color. Greg fishes these willow blade, bullet-head jigs in visible brush in 3 feet of water or less.

3. Lipless crankbaits, especially after a spring cold front. He uses the retrieve. It’s a fast way to cover a lot of water to locate schools of pre-spawn bass.

4. Buzzbaits are a great warm weather, pre-spawn bass weapon. Greg says. When fish are up cranking and feeding in spring, a buzzbait is hard to beat.
Small Boats, Great Lakes

The warmest springtime water is usually shallow and near shore. Small boats are all that's needed—just take the proper precautions to be safe.

By Dave Mull

Many anglers don't realize they can enjoy incredible springtime fishing on the Great Lakes out of their trailerable 14- to 18-foot boats. With common sense and a weather eye, smaller boats offer a safe means to get out after the salmon, trout, and steelhead that now manuever the shallows of the Great Lakes.

Take those tips to heart, and you can catch on some great action and fine fillets. This is primarily a trolling game, with the goal of covering water to contact wandering fish. In the spring, coho salmon and brown trout often cruise shallow water near shore, sometimes joined by bigger king salmon and steelhead. It's all about baitfish, which are usually in the warmest water they can find after a long winter. The warmest—ever if it's just a couple of degrees warmer—is usually right along seawalls and the beach.

All five of the Great Lakes offer ports that can produce great springtime action, much of it along the southern shores of the lakes where southerly winds create favorable conditions by keeping near-shore waters relatively calm.

The southern end of Lake Michigan offers a variety of species and the earliest spring action due to its more southerly location among the big lakes. Action can be found from Milwaukee Harbor in Wisconsin through Illinois and Indiana waters and on up to the port of St. Joseph/Benton Harbor. The very earliest fish catching often happens in the waters from Portage to East Chicago, Indiana, where effluents from steel mills provide warm water. While not the most pristine fishing experience, you can stop noticing the backdrop of smokestacks when you start landing the cohos and browns.

Lake Erie, mostly known as a walleye fishery, also produces springtime steelhead for trolls. From Erie, Pennsylvania's Presque Isle Bay through Cleveland to Sandusky, Ohio, steelhead provide springtime targets that are often within a few hundred yards of shore.

Lake Ontario provides multi-species action at the Niagara Bar at the mouth of the river of the same name on the west end, easily accessed from Lewiston, New York. Brown trout provide great action from New York eastward all the way to the city of Oswego.

Springtime salmon central on Lake Huron can often be found at Port Huron, Michigan and Sarnia, Ontario, where the St. Clair River starts.

The latest spring action heats up on Lake Superior, most northerly of the lakes. Great fishing can be found from where the St. Louis River comes in at Duluth all the way through Wisconsin and Michigan waters to Sault Ste. Marie. In this coldest of the Great Lakes, shallow crankbait spreads can rule the day right into June.

A GOOD SPREAD OF LURES

WHEN THE COHOS ARE CLOSE to shore, fishing is fast and furious. When they’re not in, you can often either go out deeper and find them or stay close and target brown trout in the shallows. You often come across a roving steelhead and the occasional king salmon in shallow, too.

Bodies that will work great for salmon and trout, too. There's no need to buy a bunch of specialized artificial baits, although a few like the Brad's Thin Fish are worth adding to the arsenal. Brown trout like a natural looking minnow bait, such as a Floating Rapala and Bomber Long A, while coho attack plugs with high action, bright colors and rattles. The venerable Rat-Traps lipless crankbaits and Dave's Winning Streak are coho killers.

For lures, crankbaits and stickbaits rule early in the year. If you pursue bass or walleyes, you'll likely have some hard-colored rattling lures such as this Brad's Thin Fish.

Rat-Traps are coho killers.

Rod and reels can be whatever you use for your favorite species. You don't need super heavy line—even though you might hook into a bruiser that pushes 20 pounds, the big lakes with featureless bottoms don't offer anything for the fish to wrap your line around. Most anglers spool with 10- to 20-pound test.

Basic trolling gear for your boat starts with decent rod holders. You don't want to have to hold a rod the whole time, and most states around the Great Lakes allow you to troll with two or three rods at once. A good spread of lures helps contact fish, so the more rods, the merrier. When Kevin Eisenburg, an experienced salmon angler from Holland, Michigan, takes his two young daughters trolling in his 14-foot aluminum Sea Nymph boat, he often runs eight, sometimes nine rods. To avoid tangles and increase the width of his spread, he employs inexpensive, on-line planer boards, which clip to the fishing line in front of the lure and take the lure out to the side.

Brown trout like natural finishes as seen on this Bomber Long A. Note the front hook is removed as a big trout sucked on the hook and running can get the front hook caught on its Gill plate, which makes the fish extremely difficult to land.

This coho fell for a streamer pattern Junior ThunderStick.

The key to avoiding tangles is to run deeper lures and shorter lines closer to the boat and the longer lines with shallower lures outside of them. For instance, you might run deep-divers like Reef Runner Deep Big Rippers directly behind the boat, then run shallower lures further back. Shallow, small-lipped stickbaits behind planer boards can then go well to the side of the boat. When running more than one planer board on the same side, the longer lines and shallower lures should go outside of deeper diving lures, which you should set closer to the planer boards.

Planer boards take your lure out to the side of the boat, which helps you cover water.
ST. CROIX LEGEND XTREME CASTING ROD

- Xtreme sensitivity, extreme power, lightweight, great design, comfortable handle and U.S. made. What more could you ask for in a rod? With the most advanced technologies and features, the St. Croix Legend Xtreme Casting Rods earned the "Best of Show Freshwater Rod Awards" at the 2012 ICAST—for good reason. Each rod is handcrafted with St. Croix's premiere SCVI graphite materials, a $2,000,000 modulus, high strain graphite that compliments Legend’s core of SCVI graphite.

- Full Kill Concept Tangle Free guides with SCVI rings and exclusive EX Color Flare frames are ideal for braid, mono and fluorocarbon lines, and their sloped frame and ring design help them shed tangles. Full SCVI split seat also furnish the ultimate in lightweight functionality and sensitivity, and Xtreme-Skin handles repel water, fish slime and dirt, while providing superior comfort.

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- Be prepared to hit the water for whatever is biting this season with the Flambeau Brush Guard Front Loader. Not only can it hold a huge amount of tackle and supplies, it’s also very sturdy. Its top loading open compartment is large enough for those big accessories, and you’ll find plenty of storage in its (2) 6004R and (1) 7004R tuff tainers with enough dividers to arrange all your lures and baits. With outside tool holders molded right into the box, there’s a place for everything. Plus, the front loader’s torqube and groove lid to base construction keeps the elements out when the lid is closed. Give it a try, and you’ll know why it’s the best extra-large frontloading tackle box on the market.

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IHUNT APP BY RUGER

- Deer calls, turkey calls, duck calls, coyote calls…phone calls. What do these calls have in common? They can all be made with a smartphone thanks to the iHunt app by Ruger. Skeptical about how realistic a game call produced from a cell phone can sound? Consider this—iHunt has been the best-selling hunting app for more than three years. The iHunt app is easy to use and navigate, and it offers more than 47 animals and 606 hunting calls. Plus, it features hunt logs, solunar times, weather and more. The iHunt app is available through iTunes and Google Play as a free trial or for purchase at just $2.99. When you compare that to the combined cost of all the calls you’ve purchased, it’s a steal. Plus, it’s one less thing to pack.

www.ihuntcalls.com

GOOD OUTDOOR TECHNOLOGIES KUTZ-ALL

- Ever wish you had a telescoping saw to reach that tree limb obstructing the view from your treestand or blind? Good Outdoor Technologies has solved that problem with its new KUTZ-ALL telescoping saw, one of the innovative products in its Good Outdoors Collection. For safe and convenient transport, the KUTZ-ALL aluminum handle acts as a carrying case for its three, interchangable pruning, cutting and filet blades. Simply secure a blade into the handle and go right to work, or extend your reach by cutting a tree limb of any length and twisting the green end into the KUTZ-ALL handle to make the perfect saw. Easy to use, lightweight, waterproof, rustproof, and easily fits into a tackle box, turkey vest, backpack or under your treestand seat.

www.goodo.t.com

WARM-SEASON FOOD PLOTS HOLD DEER ON YOUR PROPERTY DURING THE OFF-SEASON, AND THEY PROVIDE VALUABLE NUTRITION TO YOUR WILDLIFE.

You don’t need a food plot to kill a deer. Hunters have been getting along just fine before anyone thought of planting a patch of clover. Make no mistake, though: Food plots not only attract and hold deer, they can increase your success dramatically. Food plots concentrate whitetails in a small area, and they allow you to practice better herd management. They also attract and benefit other wildlife species like turkeys, rabbits, quail and songbirds.

Cool-season food plots are most commonly planted on hunting clubs and properties. These seeds are put in the ground in the late summer or early fall. They provide green fields during the hunting season that greatly improve hunter success.

Warm-season food plots are less common, but they may be even more important for a balanced management program to improve the quality of the deer on a tract of land. These plots, planted from April to June depending on the region of the country, provide valuable nutrition as does hayfarms and as bucks are growing antlers.

There’s more to planning a successful food plot or two than turning some dirt and throwing down some seed, though. The best plots are the result of thoughtful site selection, careful design and thorough preparation.
Choose Your Spot
Aside from water, food plots need one key ingredient more than anything else: sunlight. Without it, they will fail to live up to their potential. That’s why it’s critical to choose your plot locations with that in mind. Ideally, your food plots need at least four hours of direct sunlight per day. That can eliminate some locations. No deep woods or narrow trails unless you knock down some of those trees.

If you have plenty of locations with suitable sunlight, don’t just plant them randomly. Instead, says forestry and wildlife consultant Andy Rimmerman, think like a deer before you build them. For instance, he likes to plant plots adjacent to bedding areas.

“You must deer to feel as comfortable as possible. If they don’t have a place to travel across a field or through open woods, they’re more likely to use your plot during legal shooting hours,” he says. “Like putting plots in the middle of a planted food area, which is often prime bedding cover, because the deer feel safe as they walk to the plots.”

 SPRING FOOD PLOT SEED CHOICES
While cool-season plots are often as basic as a cereal grain or two, like winter wheat or oats, it’s a different palette of potential seeds for plots planted in the spring.

It’s always recommended to blend several different seed plants in the same plot. This provides measured results, as different plants mature at different times and some last longer.

Common seeds to consider blending for spring plantings include iron clay cowpeas, soybeans, Alyce clover and joint vetch. Other options include lespedeza, brown-top millet, sunflowers and buckwheat. A simple mix of cowpeas with buckwheat or Alyce clover with joint vetch will serve you well.

Pre-packaged spring mixes work well in most situations. Pennington’s Rackmaster blend is an example of a popular mixture. Rackmaster contains soybeans, iron clay cowpeas, buckwheat, rape flowers and sorghum. This blend is high in protein, and it’s palatable. It won’t take deer long to begin using a food plot that contains these plants, and since deer maintain predictable patterns during the summer, they are likely to utilize the plot all summer long.

SPRING PLOT SPRAYING
Start preparing your food plot sites now. It can take several rounds of discing and spraying to reduce the inevitable weed growth.

SPRING PLOT DISKING
Once you’ve spaded the existing plant growth, disk the soil and then wait a couple of weeks. Hit the site again with another dose of herbicide after new weeds sprout and then the soil again.

TEST YOUR SOIL
No farmer worth his John Deere plants a crop without first conducting a soil test.

Whitetail Institute Vice President Steve Scott says a soil test will not only tell you what nutrients your plots reach their full potential, they can save you money in the long run.

“You may not need as much lime or fertilizer as you thought. A soil test will tell you that,” Steve says.

On the other hand, you may need to amend your soil significantly, which will then lead to strong, vibrant and productive food plots.

Test kits are available through your local extension office or through seed companies like Whitetail Institute.
In a perfect world, spring gobblers would sound off on the roost as you settle against the base of a tree 100 yards away. They’d fly down, puffed into a ball of feathers and gobble every three or four minutes—or more—as they inch their way through the woods in your direction. You’d be able to follow their every move as they zigged and zagged or even walked the other way.

But turkey hunting is far from perfect. Gobblers don’t always sound off when they hit the ground and head your way. Sometimes, they don’t utter a peep at all, even when it seems like the perfect morning.

**BE CONFIDENT**

When a gobbler doesn’t gobble, that’s where your confidence becomes the most important ingredient of the day. A quiet spring morning doesn’t mean the turkeys have vanished, and it certainly doesn’t mean they can’t be called into range. You simply have to believe that gobblers are hearing your yelps, clucks and purrs. And you must believe they will respond, even if they never make a sound.

“I learned a long time ago to be ready for a gobbler every time I hit my call,” says Rick Patterson, a lifelong turkey hunter from central Missouri. “Gobblers will often come without making a sound, especially if they’ve been pressured, so you need to sit down with your gun up as if you are certain a gobbler is on his way.”

In other words, don’t just walk down a trail and throw out a few yelps hoping a gobbler sounds off. Expect one or two in quiet every time you call.

“They actually do that a lot,” adds Patterson. “I don’t know how many times I’ve been standing there waiting to hear a gobbler after I made a few calls when I saw one running toward me. Now, I won’t make a call without sitting down and getting ready. I expect to see a gobbler every time I call.”

**BE PATIENT**

Not all gobblers sprint to his calls. Move often, and Patterson doesn’t see anything. Sometimes, though, he does. It just takes a while. Most silent gobblers are in no hurry to investigate the sounds of a hen. They can take an hour or more to approach a nearby gobbler to make his way to you. That was another hard but valuable lesson Patterson learned over the course of 40 years in the turkey woods. He would sit for a few minutes before assuming there was no gobbler within hearing distance.

“It seemed like every time I stood up, I’d see a gobbler running away,” he recalls. “Any more, I won’t work an active bird and I haven’t heard a gobbler all morning. I might as well stay in one place and stick it out. I’ll fit for two or three hours sometimes.”

**BE PERSISTENT**

Waiting in a single spot may be a great way to kill a silent gobbler, but it also helps you kill time. That’s important on those silent mornings. Patterson says gobblers often start looking later in the morning, even if they didn’t gobble at first light.

“They may already have hens in the morning, but those hens may leave and the gobbler will start gobbling to attract new hens or to call his harem back to him,” he says.

“If you can stick it out to 10 or 11 or even later, there’s a pretty good chance you can hear one gobble.”

That late-morning activity is even more likely to happen on public land. Although some hunters do stay in the woods throughout the morning, the majority are gone within a few hours of sunrise. Turkeys figure that out. They wait for hunters to leave before resuming their normal breeding activity. They may not talk much, but a single gobble is often enough to lead you to the right general location.

Once you close the distance, you shouldn’t “talk” much. Either spend enough time in the woods, and you’ll realize that’s just aren’t that vocal most of the time. They might cluck occasionally and they’ll make a few soft yelps at times, but they are rarely loud and aggressive. You shouldn’t, either.

**WHEN ALL ELSE FAILS**

If you can’t get an answer or you never hear a gobbler, find a known strutting area, sit down and wait. Fields, ridges, openings in big woods and along river bottoms are all common strutting areas. Gobblers will often follow their hens around for a couple of hours before heading to their strutting zone. If you get their first, there’s a good chance you can punch a tag. It’s a roll of the dice, but if you are greeted by the sound of silence the next time you step into the turkey woods, it’s better than loading up your truck and heading home.

“Most gobbling activity is between April 1 and June 30,” Patterson says. “A gobbler’s song is a soft, low-pitched cluck, so you need to be patient.”

Staying put is much better than simply walking through the woods. In fact, there’s no better way to burn out a tract of land than by constantly walking around. You may not see or hear them, but there’s a good chance you are doing nothing but spooking birds and ultimately decreasing your opportunities for the next season.

**WHAT AFFECTS GOBBLING ACTIVITY?**

A number of research projects have examined gobbling activity and the various factors that influence it. One, conducted on a managed area in South Carolina, found a distinct peak of gobbling activity in the early spring when flocks of hens and jakes break up. Gobblers also increased gobbling activity during the peak incubation period. More hens were sitting on nests, gobblers were more active in their search for unincubated eggs.

That study looked at activity throughout the spring and developed a trend for the entire season. It didn’t capture daily or short-term factors like weather and hunting pressure. A study in South Dakota did. It examined gobbling activity of a hunted population and a nearby unhunted population and examined gobbling activity related to various weather conditions. Temperature, precipitation and barometric pressure don’t seem to dictate gobbling activity, at least not in any way that researchers could tell. However, hunting activity did. The results were obvious. Pressured birds clammed up.

**Random calling may elicit a gobbler from a nearby hen, but even if you don’t get a response, assume there is a gobbler nearby. Sit down, get ready and be patient.**

**Careful scouting prior to or during the season can put you in locations with lots of birds. Knowing turkeys are in the area will half the battle. Confidence will keep you hunting hard when gobblers are silent.**

**It’s legal to hunt all day, why not stick it out? Find a likely spot, sit still and call.**

**If all else fails, set up on the edge of a field or in another known strutting area.**

**If a gobbler shows up, even if he never announces his presence.**
Prize Bucks Priceless Memories

Longshoreman wins Texas dream hunt

"It almost didn’t seem real."

That’s how Justin Lair, a proud member of International Longshoreman’s Association Local 1551, described the phone call in early 2014 telling him that he won the grand prize in the Union Sportsmen’s Alliance’s Remington Texas Dream Hunt Giveaway.

“All that started going through my mind was, ‘no way!’ and ‘it cannot come soon enough,’” said Lair of the all-expenses-paid hunting trip for him and a guest, complete with guides, lodging and a brand-new Remington 700 CDL rifle, made possible through the USA’s proud partnership with Remington.

As soon as Lair got off the call, he phoned his dad.

“There was no doubt in my mind that I was going to take my father,” Lair said. “I chose him because he introduced me to hunting at a young age of seven and, since then, we still hunt together every year. It is such a way to give a little bit of payback to the person who introduced me to hunting and fishing and the outdoors.”

On the Saturday before Thanksgiving 2014, Lair’s ‘dream hunt’ became very real. He and his father, John Lair, loaded up with their favorite hunting gear and made the four-hour drive from their home in Seabrook, Texas, to the 110,000-acre Mllen Creek Outfitters free-range ranch in Refugio, Texas, where they would enjoy their hunt.

They arrived at noon, settled in, tested their guns and headed out for day one of the hunt.

“We saw hundreds of deer,” Lair said. “I’ve never seen so many deer. The sheer numbers of these animals is amazing. It really leaves you breathless.”

Lair and his family owned 150 acres of land and harvest deer each year on the property, but for them, this adventure was unlike anything they had experienced before.

“We’re not used to having a guide,” Lair said. “We are used to hunting in a deer stand. The people were great and the guides were incredible and extremely knowledgeable. I would recommend that place to anybody.”

Justin Lair with his biggest buck.

After seeing so many deer on the first day of the hunt, Lair and his father wanted to make the most of the opportunity to hunt at a managed ranch of such magnitude and wait for that deer of a lifetime.

“It took a long time to get here from when we won, and it was over in a blink,” Lair said.

As the two hunters headed home on the Tuesday of Thanksgiving week, their load was a bit heavier than the drive out. They each had a large buck and a doe. Lair’s measured 130 3/8 inches, his dad’s 132 inches.

“It’s the biggest deer I’ve ever shot,” Lair said. “It’s one of the biggest my dad ever shot.”

While Lair said the deer meat would be shared with friends and family, the head and horns were off to the taxidermy to be mounted.

“By far, this is the coolest thing I’ve ever won,” Lair said. “The hunting part wasn’t about winning or losing. It was being afforded the chance to take my father and pay him back for all of the years he taught me about enjoying and respecting the outdoors.”

Lair joined the USA at the beginning of 2013, and he’s now more of an advocate than ever.

“I tell people about the USA all the time,” he said. “I tell all my brothers and sisters about it. All you got to do is join and become a member. It’s for a good cause; it goes to the future. It’s a great thing.”

Since winning, Lair said he has entered a few more USA contests, “because you never know, and you can’t win unless you play.”

“I entered one time and was not expecting to win anything,” he added. “And the rest is history. The experience is something that both of us will remember for the rest of our lives.”

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