How Hunters Can Continue to Save the Wilderness

Teach An Old Dog New Tricks

Learning Concepts, The Different Hats We Wear
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The preliminary results of the “2016 USFWS National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife Associated Recreation,” was recently released. As sportsmen and educators, we can learn a great deal from this survey and apply it to our hunter education classes and mentorship programs. As you know, the time we have is already too limited for the myriad of activities that we participate in including: hunting, conservation practices, outdoor activities, and mentoring. Therefore, using information from surveys and research can help us focus our instruction, in the time we have, for the optimal benefit of students and maximize the effectiveness of our message and mentoring.

While this survey doesn’t tell us the number of animals harvested, it does give us insight into the demographics of the hunting population, the type of hunting that they do, and the economic impact of this participation. Why does this interest us? As Aldo Leopold said, “There are two things that interest me: the relation of people to each other and the relation of people to the land.” As instructors and hunters, I’m sure this sentiment rings as true with you as it does with me.

Looking at the relation of people to each other or hunters to non-hunters, in 2016, 11.5 million hunters accounted for five percent of the U.S. population 16 years and older. While the number sounds impressive, it is a decline of 1.1 million hunters since 2006. If we look back to 1982, when hunters numbered 17 million, we are at a decline of 5.5 million hunters. The economic impact, including money spent on trips, equipment, food plots, books, membership dues, etc.; of that loss and/or changing interests between 2011 and 2016 is $10.7 billion dollars. This loss of revenue equates to a reduction in Pittman-Robertson funds which, as you know, are used for our hunter education programs and conservation of habitat programs on certain state-owned lands.

Reversing this trend is up to us as hunters and instructors who represent the hunting community to both prospective hunters and non-hunters. How? Can you offer just one more class in

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your community this year, as compared to the past, to increase the number of hunter education graduates? Are you mindful of the way you communicate about hunting and trapping across social media and your everyday interactions? Do your communications, as viewed by someone who has never been exposed to hunting, excite others and instill a passion to learn more about the intrinsic and extrinsic values of hunting and trapping? Or do your communications and actions cause someone to turn away from the idea? When is the last time you brought a new hunter out in the woods with you to relate them to the land, whether to hunt, to scout, to learn about conservation and the importance of habitats, or just to appreciate the serenity of nature? Tough questions to ask ourselves, but ones we need to answer honestly and improve upon to redirect the current trend of hunters from attrition to addition.

As we mentor new hunters, or specific demographics of hunters, whether for their first time afield or using a new implement, we can look at studies to see where their interest is and increase opportunities in those areas. Southwick Associates produced a report, “Women in the Outdoors in 2015,” which shows that more women who reported hunting upland game birds, at least once, was 19% compared to 17% by their male counterparts. Women also are more likely to shoot bow/archery and participate in shotgun shooting. However, with rifle shooting women are a much smaller proportion comprising 59% vs 76% of male shooters, as sampled in the survey. What does that mean for us? Finding the common interest of someone and increasing their level of confidence and knowledge can then open doors to expand their interest into other forms of hunting or shooting sports.

Research, surveys, and statistics are not the first thing we think of as tools to increase hunters, but as you can see they offer us a baseline of where to start, with whom, and not to delay. As safe and ethical hunters, we have much to share with a new hunter. Some of you may have hesitated to take someone afield because of comparing yourself to others you believe know more than you regarding hunting. Your hesitation may also come from thinking that you need to know everything about the hunting tactics of every species or how to master the use of all hunting implements. Your skills as a safe hunter are enough to take someone afield or introduce to a new hunting skill. Mentoring and sharing your knowledge in a hands-on way instills the lifelong passion of hunting in future generations and begins to reverse the current trend of the decline of hunters.

The number of hunters is dropping significantly—this is a FACT. If this decline continues at its current pace, the future of our hunting heritage and wildlife conservation will end as we know it.

In the world of hunter education and the R3 (recruit, retain, and reactivate) community, a mentor could very well be the savior of our hunting heritage. And the key is to mentor someone who does not look like us or already comes from a hunting family!

What is a mentor? According to Webster’s Dictionary, a mentor is “someone who teaches or gives help and advice to a less experienced and often younger person.”

Mentoring often begins in an educational environment, with a fellow student who is further along in the same program (a “peer advocate”), or between an instructor and a student. Mentorships can also be community-based, part of a church group or other organization designed to offer professional advice and guidance to those who’ve expressed an interest.

What are some of the characteristics of a good mentor?
1. Ability and willingness to communicate what they know
2. Preparedness
3. Approachability, availability, and the ability to listen
4. Honesty with diplomacy
5. Inquisitiveness
6. Objectivity and fairness
7. Compassion and genuineness

Hunter education instructors encompass these exact qualities! Most hunter education instructors are also looking for opportunities to share their years of knowledge and experience with new hunters beyond the basics in their classroom settings. Becoming a mentor could be just what the doctor ordered! Maybe your passion includes the flush of a pheasant, a flock of ducks locked up on your decoys, the gobble of a spring turkey, the excitement of the whitetail rut, or the beauty of a western elk hunt. Now is your opportunity to turn your passion into the ability to teach at an entirely new level and ensure the continuation of our hunting heritage.

Throughout the year you will see IHEA-USA taking steps to encompass mentorship into programs. This could include partnerships with both industry, NGO’s, and states. IHEA-USA hopes to give hunter education instructors another opportunity to teach and share as well as those not yet hunter education instructors.

I encourage you to use your classrooms—and outside them—to seek out those that might very well benefit from a mentor, take them under your wing, and share your knowledge and experiences with them. I can assure you that you will gain more from your mentor experience than those you mentor.

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The Scholastic Action Shooting Program (SASP), headquartered in Cedarburg, Wisconsin, works to introduce young shooters to team-based action shooting sports. SASP is relatively new, having been introduced in 2012 as a partnering program to the well-known Scholastic Clay Target Program (SCTP). Both are governed by the Scholastic Shooting Sports Foundation. SCTP, as its name implies, focuses on participation in the clay games, including trap, skeet, sporting clays, bunker trap, and international skeet, and supports participation through the university level. This support provides a dedicated, official path to USA Shooting and the U.S. Olympic Shooting Team for those who make the cut.

SSSF saw an opportunity for additional youth participation in the shooting sports due to the growing participation in action shooting sports, especially the Rimfire Challenge, which was run by the National Shooting Sports Foundation for several years before being turned over to Sturm, Ruger & Co in late 2017. Thus, SASP was created. SASP participants use .22 rifles and handguns, as well as center-fire handguns in timed, speed-shooting, steel plate matches.

We talked with Bill Perkins, SASP’s Western Region Field Representative and head coach of the University of Arizona WildGats (yes, that’s WildGats, not Wild Cats) action shooting team.

**Bill Perkins (BP):** I was aware that NSSF had awarded dozens of grants to help colleges around the country form competitive shooting teams through its Collegiate Shooting Sports Initiative (CSSI) program. I applied for a grant as the head coach of our newly-formed team at the University of Arizona.

**NSSF:** Tell me a little bit about how you connected with NSSF and our grant program for Scholastic Action Shooting.

**Bill Perkins (BP):** We purchased a full set of AR500 targets, shot timers, equipment tables, equipment wagons, storage shelves, the storage unit for our equipment, and a good first-aid kit. We can run seven shooting stations simultaneously for the athletes on the team to keep a lot of variety in our practices and still keep them productive.

**NSSF:** Did you have a specific need or plan for which you were seeking grant funds?

**BP:** Absolutely. Without this seed money, our team would never have left the starting blocks. We did not have an “angel” benefactor to donate money for equipment purchases, and we had no way to take out a loan. It is hard to be competitive or deliver quality training when you don’t have the tools. We think that the team fees provide the best bargain out there for learning how to be safe with a firearm and developing good shooting skills.

When you factor in the range time we get thanks to support from our county range, and the value of the coaching, we think that the team fees provide the best bargain out there for learning how to be safe with a firearm and developing good shooting skills.

**NSSF:** When did you receive the funding and how much did you receive?
**BP:** I got notification from NSSF in 2016 while the SSSF was having its annual State Advisors meeting in Missouri. We were awarded $10,000. It was great timing to be able to share with the coaches and reps from other states that Arizona would be joining the collegiate level competitions.

**NSSF:** Tell us how you’re using these funds today.

**BP:** We spent most of the grant money on equipment. It was all budgeted in the grant proposal, so there was not a lot of decision-making to do. The grant also included funding to pay for the certifications for two adults and two student athletes to get the NRA pistol coach training they needed.

**NSSF:** Can you provide some stats on SASP, participation numbers, yearly growth, number of matches, collegiate participation, etc.?

**BP:** Nationally, the program is really gaining momentum; we have more than 1,400 athletes, with participation ranging from those in the fifth grade through full-time college enrollment. Our program has grown 119 percent from 2013 to 2017, and women are the fastest growing segment, making up 30 percent of our competitors. We have teams in 45 states, and this year we will have over 40 competitions between the state matches, regionals and our nationals competitions. SASP also partners with other organizations to provide youth with opportunities in competitive shooting. For instance, when the Boy Scouts of America wanted to add a competitive shooting program for their Venture-aged Scouts, they didn’t need to invent their own program, they partnered with the SASP. And last year, the Young Marines announced that some of their 9,600 youth were joining in the fun and would be creating their own teams to compete side-by-side with our youth teams. We continue to look to add more teams, more coaches, and more youth to our program.

The WildGats are growing. This year we will see a jump in the size of our team to almost 30 members. As a team, we are practicing for SASP, but we are also providing resources to help these team members participate in other shooting sports, including Steel Challenge, Steel Workers, Rimfire Challenge, 2-gun, USPSA, and other local matches that occur in town. It is great to see these athletes take the skills that they have learned in the SASP and then branch out and join in the larger shooting sports community.

Though NSSF’s Collegiate Shooting Sports Initiative is on hiatus for 2018, NSSF continues to work with ranges, retailers, shooting clubs, and others in numerous ways to promote, protect, and preserve hunting and the shooting sports. To learn more about NSSF’s resources for today’s shooters, including its popular sites wheretoshoot.org, wheretohunt.org, and wheretobuy.org, visit www.nssf.org. For more information on the Scholastic Shooting Sports Foundation and all the ways it works to involve youths and young adults in the shooting sports, visit www.sssfonline.org.
Over the years I’ve heard many compelling stories of fish and wildlife successes, told with conviction that justifies the pride with which they are received by like-minded conservation professionals. We see these stories as valuable commodities to help create the illusive “connected conservation constituency” we seek in the hope of ensuring our work is relevant to the public. But, do we really know if there are receptive audiences for these stories? If so, what do we expect them to do different once they hear the story? Is it working? These questions got me thinking about the importance of relevance in our communications.

As a manager, I struggled with the concept of relevance. Discussions around the need for public engagement always stated its importance, but never answered my questions: What is “relevance”? Why does it matter? What can relevance do for an organization? How can an organization become more relevant? How is success measured? I set out to find answers. I’d like to share what I’ve learned about relevance from the world of business and its practical application to organizational success.

Business literature suggested two aspects of relevance in examples of successful marketing campaigns/products, and more directly captured in results of the brand consultancy company Prophet’s 2016 brand relevance ranking index. The index revealed the most relevant brands shared four characteristics:

1. **Customer Obsessed**: Everything these brands invest in, create, and bring to market, is designed to meet important needs in people’s lives.
2. **Ruthlessly Pragmatic**: These brands ensure their products are available where and when customers need them, deliver consistent experiences, and make life easier for customers.
3. **Distinctively Inspired**: These brands make emotional connections with customers, earn their trust, and often exist to fulfill a larger purpose.
4. **Pervasively Innovative**: These brands don’t rest on their laurels. Even as industry leaders, they push the status quo, engage with customers in new and creative ways, and find new ways to address unmet needs.
These characteristics highlight how relevant brands win and keep customers by addressing the two pillars of relevance: the purpose aspect (address a utilitarian need), and the meaningful aspect (create an emotional connection). An excellent example was Apple’s “shot on an iPhone” campaign—in particular, how they presented this during the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro (www.youtube.com/watch?v=ztMfBZvZF_Y). Apple’s ad addressed both aspects of relevance: crystal-clear iPhone images met the need for a high-quality camera, and the use of the images to illustrate an iconic poem built an emotional connection.

In the conservation world, the same imperative applies: to be relevant, your brand (organization) must fill a need in someone’s life and emotionally connect with them—this captures the essence of relevance. Businesses exist to earn a profit, and having a relevant brand helps them build a loyal customer base and sell more products. But what if you are not a business? Should relevance matter?

Being relevant matters because organizations exist to fulfill a purpose—if you work for a government agency, non-profit organization, charitable foundation, or professional association, your ability to fulfill your organizational purpose hinges largely on the goodwill of others. In the conservation arena, this may be votes for representatives/initiatives that prioritize conservation issues, donations made to conservation organizations, voluntary conservation measures on private land, or volunteering. Being relevant means your organization is serving a purpose by filling a need in someone’s life, while creating an emotional connection with them that generates goodwill and results in actions that benefit your organization. But how does an organization become relevant and generate this goodwill? Based on the business marketing literature, there are three keys to relevance. To be relevant, you must: know what matters to you, know who you are, and know what matters to people.

These concepts from the business world can be used by organizations to form a practical framework for improving their relevance. Applying this framework can help leaders focus their thinking and prompt them to ask the right questions of their communications and marketing professionals. In Relevance: The Power to Change Minds and Behavior and Stay Ahead of the Competition by Andrea Colville and Paul Brown, they write, “The ultimate goal of relevance is to change (or maintain) behavior.” Relevance is about getting a target audience to either continue or start doing something. If an organization knows what it wants and who it wants it from, it will be able to identify the behavior it seeks to change and define how it wants to change. Most leaders are not experts at leveraging traditional and social media to help influence target audience behavior. Instead, organizations hire communications, marketing, or branding experts to develop the messaging strategies and tactics. But to be successful, leaders need to set the stage.

Setting the stage means taking the time to provide a framework for success. Leaders must think about why their organization exists, what they need to be successful, and who they need it from. Different approaches can be used, but the one I’ve used with success starts by having the leadership team watch Simon Sinek’s TED Talk on the “Golden Circle” (www.ted.com/talks/simon_sinek_how_great_leaders_inspire_action), and then answer the following four questions relative to their organization: Why do we exist? What do we need? Who do we need? How do they help us?

The answers to questions three and four will define the target audiences and behaviors an organization needs to change/maintain to obtain what it needs to be successful. This concept is captured in Figure 1 (shown above).

The two ovals in the bottom left corner of Figure 1 are the relevance part. Every organization can define why they exist and what they need, but can only use this information to influence their success if leaders take the next step by clearly defining who provides what the organization needs, and what behaviors fulfill that need. Once an organization’s leadership has done this, they can provide communications professionals with a clear vision of success that defines target audiences and desired behaviors. Communications professionals can use this vision to define tactics and strate-
gies necessary to engage with the target audiences and measure success.

It has been said that: “Relevance is both a tool and an outcome, but it is not a singular destination.” There is a difference between relevance as a tool and outcome. The example we just went through demonstrates relevance as a tool to help focus and structure a communication plan that will achieve the results needed for organizational success. When we talk about being/becoming relevant, we are focused on relevance as a desired outcome—this leads to the question: “How can I make my organization more relevant?”

To answer this question, you have to know who you are as an organization and what your target audiences need. In Relevance, Matter More, Phil Styrlund and Tom Hayes discussed several aspects of relevance including the need for authenticity. They summarized the importance of authenticity as follows: “An accurate self-image is more important than a good self-image. If our image is accurate and we don’t like it we can always do something about it.” They also discussed how a barrier to an accurate organizational self-image is nostalgia for past success—which can cloud our ability to see organizational limitations.

Having worked in the environmental and wildlife conservation arenas for almost 30 years, I’ve seen nostalgia for past success block an organization’s self-image from reality. Most of the organizational leadership in wildlife conservation is composed of middle-aged, white men (like me), and most of us have similar backgrounds. We grew up with a connection to nature through fishing, hunting, camping, or other outdoor activity, and it motivated us to care about conservation and make it our life’s work. It’s easy for us to get caught up with what worked when we were kids, and believe if we can just get enough kids today to have similar experiences, they will develop the same lifelong commitment to conservation. In reality, this approach is almost always fool’s gold.

Everything has changed since we were kids. Societal norms are different in regard to hunting and fishing. Parental attitudes toward child safety, and the need for structured activities, are different. Access to natural areas has changed. The demands on kids’ time may be the biggest change. The 2015 Connected Kids report conducted by Childwise found that kids aged five to 16 spent, on average, six and a half hours a day in front of screens. This amount has more than doubled since 1995. We know this, yet leaders from my demographic want to “purify” the engagement of youth with nature, and insist on smartphone-free activities rather than meeting today’s youth on their terms.

To understand who you are currently as an organization, you have to be honest about how societal changes impact your workforce, target audience, and mission. This means understanding how your organization is currently perceived by your target audience, and recognizing any weaknesses or limitations your organization has. Once you understand this, you can work to address your limitations, assess the alignment between your mission and target audiences and, if necessary, rethink your tactics and strategies.

After your organization has fairly and accurately assessed itself, and used this assessment to identify and eliminate barriers, the next step towards improving relevance is to know what matters to people—your target audiences as defined by your organization’s leadership. Styrlund and Hayes refer to this aspect of relevance as “empathy” and write, “We can’t be relevant unless we understand the ‘careabouts’ of others.”

The importance of this statement is illustrated in the following example.

Dr. Melody Gunn, principal of Gibson Elementary School in St. Louis, Missouri, did not understand why attendance at her school was lower than it should have been. Low-income students were provided free/reduced cost meals, and there was excellent transportation. To better understand the situation, Dr. Gunn did a remarkable thing—she asked students who were missing school what mattered to them. The most common response was appearance—students felt too embarrassed to attend school when they had no clean clothes. She followed up with the parents and discovered that many didn’t have easy access to washing machines. Once she understood the situation, Dr. Gunn reached out to the Whirlpool Company and asked if they would donate a washer and...
dryer that students could use for free. They did, and with this one action attendance improved dramatically and launched a nationwide program known as “Care Counts” (https://carecounts.whirlpool.com/). All because one principal asked her students what mattered to them—she didn’t assume she knew and didn’t decide what should matter to them, she simply asked. Once she understood what students cared about, she used this information to eliminate a barrier and address a need. Based on the results, it is clear her actions established an emotional connection which made school relevant to the students again.

If your organization knows who it is and what matters to its target audience, then its actions must align with this knowledge to establish the emotional connection essential for relevance. The specific marketing/engagement strategy depends on the situation, and this is what marketing and communications specialists do. Yet it should be clear that a specific target audience and behavior have been identified, and there is an understanding of how this target audience perceives your organization and what they care about. Organizations also need to know what success looks like.

Marty Rubin said, “Every line is the perfect length if you don’t measure it.” So, ask yourself from the beginning, “How do I measure success?” Answering this can be difficult, especially when organizations try to tie a marketing, outreach, or messaging strategy to a specific change in behavior. Yet doing so is necessary to assess the return on your organization’s marketing investment.

For those of us not measuring our success by sales, how do we calculate return on investment? James Heaton of the Tronvig Group wrote in a blog post about the importance of non-profit organizations setting goals for branding campaigns, and how these goals should reflect things of agreed-upon value to the organization. There can be a financial benefit from increased donations, entrance fees, membership dues etc., but he argues that to assess the true value to our organization we need to ask, “What other criteria for success might we consider?” For instance: How valuable is an improved perception of our organization? What benefits can we assume from an increase in the desired behavior? What would attaining these benefits allow us to achieve in terms of delivered impact? This practical application of relevance to communication strategies can be a powerful tool to guide our efforts towards measurable success. But, it can also steer us in the wrong direction if we make it personal.

We may not always recognize it, but our desire to have who we are and what we do matter to others is about personal relevance. We all have an innate desire to matter to others. This need for relevance doesn’t leave us when we go to work. It surfaces in our desire to have our mission, our work, and our successes matter to others. This makes relevance a bit dangerous from an organizational standpoint if our desire for personal relevance starts to drive decisions on our organization’s communications, outreach, marketing, and branding strategies.

I’ve had the privilege of working for and with organizations that do important, consequential work, and have great stories to tell. Stories can be powerful tools in an overall relevance strategy to influence specific behaviors in target audiences. Yet, more often than not, I see stories told simply because they are good stories—as if we owe it to our staff and partners to share success stories to validate their relevance. Telling a good story can be a morale booster for staff, but telling this story to an undefined audience, with no defined outcome in mind, is not a strategy for organizational success. Organizations should avoid this “feel good” approach to communication and marketing.

Instead, organizations should take an analytical approach to relevance and use it to focus communication and marketing efforts on outcomes that will drive success. Warren G Bennis said: “Leadership is the capacity to translate vision into reality.” Clearly defining what an organization needs and who it needs it from are two of the most important steps an organization can take towards realizing its vision. Leaders should take a moment, look inward, and then firmly set in place a framework for success—they will be glad they did.
Fourteen years ago, I stood in the snow, struggling to digest what I had heard. A group of us, gathered to learn about monitoring and protecting wildlife habitat, had just discovered that our instructor—Sue Morse, founder of Keeping Track—was a deer hunter. I found the news disturbing. How could she work to safeguard the homes of animals she described as “neighbors” and then turn around and shoot one of them? I found it inconceivable that someone could be both an environmentalist and a hunter, a caretaker and a killer.

Today, I, too, am both. I understand that caring for animals and their ecosystems is not incompatible with participating in those systems as a predator. I recall how extreme the contradiction once seemed, but I now see how vital it is to bridge the gap.

Wildlife conservation faces serious challenges these days. Among other things, the climate is changing, development continues to fragment habitat, and many state wildlife agencies depend on antiquated funding models. The best way to meet these challenges is for hunter conservationists and non-hunter environmentalists to join forces—overcoming the mutual stereotypes and suspicions that obscure their common ground.

For many environmentalists, the word “hunter” suggests a mindless brute, an enemy of nature who loves guns, kills for fun, and cares nothing for biodiversity or ecological integrity. For many hunters, the word “environmentalist” suggests a self-righteous tree-hugger, an enemy of freedom who hates guns, has no respect for hunting, and imagines nature as a Disney-like fantasyland where humans should not tread.

Though these stereotypes contain grains of truth, hunters and environmentalists aren’t as separate as many imagine. The Nature Conservancy counts many hunters among its members and staff, and works closely with hunting/conservation organizations. Likewise, Pheasants Forever has thousands of non-hunting members who appreciate the organization’s work on behalf of native prairie habitats, wetlands, butterflies, and clean water.
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The most avid hunters I know—including ecologists, educators, and birdwatchers—are committed to environmental causes. The most passionate environmentalists I know—whether they hunt or not—respect the roles played by all predators, including humans.

Stereotypes notwithstanding, American hunters and environmentalists have never been distinct groups. In the late 1800s, a coalition of hunters and non-hunters sounded the alarm over the excesses of market hunting and the dangers of habitat destruction. Out of those shared efforts came wildlife advocacy organizations including the National Audubon Society and the Boone & Crockett Club, and crucial legislation such as the Lacey Act of 1900, which prohibited interstate traffic of game taken in violation of state law.

When such organizations collaborate, their combined force is powerful. In 1936, the National Wildlife Federation emerged out of Ding Darling’s vision of a diverse-yet-unified conservation movement. The joint efforts of hunter conservationists and non-hunter environmentalists were vital to passage of the Wilderness Act of 1964, as they have been to the modern-day designation of wilderness areas such as Idaho’s Owyhee Canyonlands.

Such partnerships have conserved millions of acres of wetlands across the country, including 600 acres recently protected along South Carolina’s Black River. For many months, a diverse coalition pushed for the long-overdue renewal of Farm Bill funding for wildlife habitat. The alliance currently defending Alaska’s Bristol Bay against the proposed Pebble Mine—characterized by the company’s CEO as a bunch of “environmental advocacy organizations”—encompasses more than 1,000 hunting and fishing groups and businesses, including Trout Unlimited and the Pope & Young Club. The list goes on.

Hunting and environmental organizations don’t always see eye to eye, of course. Intense controversy has arisen over wolves, for instance. Some environmental groups have argued for continued federal protection under the Endangered Species Act, often citing the ecological value of top-level predators. Some hunting/conservation groups have argued for state management and public hunting, often protesting wolves’ predation on cherished game species such as deer and elk. Other organizations have remained neutral. In some cases, the politicized debate has driven rifts between longtime allies, causing rifts that will not be easily healed.

When clashes occur, it is all too easy to fall back on reductive notions about liberal, elite environmentalists and conservative, redneck hunters—the “greens” versus “the hook-and-bullet crowd.” With partisans on both sides invoking stereotypes and the media portraying hunters and environmentalists as opposents, it is tempting to imagine stark lines between the two. But such divisions are too simplistic. As it turns out, many predator/conservation advocates are hunters. My tracking instructor, Sue Morse, for instance, became a hunter in her 40s as a direct result of studying four-footed hunters. Interested in procuring more of her own food, she was drawn to emulate the animals she appreciated so deeply. Michael Soulé, the father of conservation biology, is also a hunter, as were famed conservationists Aldo Leopold, Olaus Murie, and Sigurd Olson.

Many conservationists have come to realize that there is danger in turning hunting into a polarizing issue. When each group becomes insular, powerful collaborative opportunities slip out of reach. In the long run, the ideological turf matters far less than the real places and ecosystems that, once lost, may never be restored.

This past autumn, I spent several days hunting deer on a friend’s woodlot. Sitting quietly, I savored the forest: maples and pines filtering the early morning light, chickadees flitting from branch to branch, a ridge-top pool inhabited by wood frogs and spotted salamanders. By next autumn, those hundred acres will belong to The Nature Conservancy. And I will return to hunt, grateful that the land’s future is assured.

Tovar is author of The Mindful Carnivore, which has earned praise from hunters, ecologists, and vegetarians alike. A thought partner for conservation leaders and teams, he has consulted and presented for dozens of conservation and education institutions, including the Wildlife Management Institute, The Wildlife Society, the Aldo Leopold Foundation, and many state wildlife agencies. Tovar’s writing has appeared in Outdoor America, High Country News, and Petersen’s Hunting, among other publications. He is a Vermont hunter education instructor and holds a Ph.D. in communication from UMass-Amherst.
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D ruckenmiller, FOXPRO direc-
tor of sales and co-host of
FOXPRO’s Furtakers on the
Outdoor Channel, says that is a topic he
covers in his predator hunting seminars. Predator hunting is a great way to get
youth or new hunters involved because of the possibility of exciting results any
minute you are on stand and there’s not much chance for boredom to set in, he said.

Instead of sitting in a deer
stand for eight, nine, or more
hours and maybe spotting a
deer or sitting in a blind five or
six hours hoping to see a
turkey, “you can literally go
out on a predator stand and
possibly call in a fox or coyote
in 30 seconds,” he said. Plus,
you typically spend 15 to 20
minutes on each predator
stand, so if nothing comes in
you’re not stuck all day getting
bored. You get up and go to the
next stand.

“You’re in and out of the truck so
you’re not getting cold and you can get
out of the elements for a while or you
can grab something to eat or drink
some hot chocolate between stands,”
Druckenmiller said. And, he said,
“there’s really not a lot of hiking
involved either. You try to do stands that
are relatively close to your access point,
where you park, so it’s just an easier
style of hunting.”

And, it’s a great shooting sport
because predators, such as fox and
coyotes, present small, challenging
targets, so you sharpen shooting skills.
“It’s really a good way to improve
shooting ability for later on when you
hunt deer, elk, or whatever else you
want to hunt,” Druckenmiller said.

Plus, there’s not as much pressure as,
say, deer hunting where a missed shot or
blown opportunity may be the only

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**Predator hunting may be the ideal gateway into hunting for youths or others new to the sport, according to veteran predator hunter Abner Druckenmiller.**

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**Pursuing Predators: A Gateway to Hunting**

By Joe Arterburn
chance for the day—or season. If you
miss a shot at a predator or it catches
your scent and disappears, you just
move to the next stand and start with a
clean slate.

It’s exciting, he said, and you don’t
know what to expect from stand to stand.
There’s always a chance a predator will
respond quickly and the excitement can
skyrocket if multiple predators come in
at the same time, which presents a
heart-pounding conundrum of deter-
mining which predator to shoot first.

Even on non-productive stands,
you’re not eating up your hunting day in
one spot. Typical stands last 15 to 20
minutes, sometimes longer, but if you’re
convinced nothing will come, get up
and go to the next one. The chance of
success is no further away than your
next stand.

And, it doesn’t take expensive or
special equipment to hunt predators.
“Most people have a shotgun and most
people have a deer rifle,” Druckenmiller
said. “I don’t care if you want to use a
30-06 or whatever you have to kill a
coyote, as long as you’re not
worried about fur damage. If
you just want to get out there
and experience it and see if it
is of interest to you, you can
use any shotgun, or a turkey
shotgun, 12-gauge, 3-inch
loads, or take your
243 deer rifle or 7mm-08,
anything like that, or if you’re
after fox, a 22 Magnum will
work. So most people have
the equipment from a firearm
standpoint to go out and see if
they like it before they invest
money and time into it.”

But what about calling
equipment?
Electronic calls make it
easy and can produce any of
hundreds of digital sounds.
FOXPRO sells e-calls from $99 to
$600, Druckenmiller said, and a good
starter call is the Patriot, which sells for
$150 but can be found in some places
for even less. He uses the Shockwave,
which sells for under $500.

A selling point about electronic calls is
that you set the call away from where
you sit so incoming predators key on
where the sound is coming from, not you
waiting with your rifle or shotgun ready.

Druckenmiller also recommends
Finding a place to hunt predators is usually not hard, he said. Landowners often welcome predator hunters to help control populations of fox and coyotes which can prey on farm and ranch animals. Many landowners “don’t want that type of animal around on their property,” Druckenmiller said, so if you treat the landowner and his land with respect, you are likely to be welcomed. Plus, he said, helping a landowner control predator populations, and hunting ethically and respectfully, may lead to other hunting invitations, like for turkeys, deer, and waterfowl. “Predator hunting opens the door for a lot of opportunities,” he said.

And, many landowners will be able to tell you where they’ve seen predators and point you to the best calling locations, essentially scouting for you.

But don’t think hunting for coyotes, which are cunning hunters themselves, is going to be a cakewalk. “They are a very challenging animal to hunt,” he said. “They can see very well, they can hear very well, and they can smell very well, so you have a lot of things against you. The most important keys I tell people is you have to have the wind in your face and elevation. You always want to have the high ground on any animal you hunt, whether it’s deer, elk, turkey, predators, anything. If you give them the high ground and they’re above looking down at you they can see everything that’s going on and if they don’t see something that’s causing that distress sound (that’s where a decoy can help), they may turn around and leave, but if you have the high ground, you have the advantage of seeing an animal approaching.”

Another topic is controlling your scent, which is why you want the wind in your face, coming from the direction you are calling so your smell is not blowing out over the area in front of you.

“Is it all about keeping the wind in your face,” Druckenmiller said. “If that coyote gets downwind of you, he’ll be gone just as fast as he can, sometimes faster. You’re not going to fool a coyote’s nose. You’re not going to fool it at all. If he gets downwind and smells something that’s not common to that area, he’s out of there.”

Decoys can give predators visual assurance, confirming there is something animal-like making that distressed-animal sound, as they approach your stand, he said. You use the call to fool their hearing and a decoy to fool their sight and hopefully their sense of smell won’t come into play because you are downwind of them, he said.

People ask Druckenmiller why he needs so many sounds on his electronic caller and why he has multiple mouth calls. “I say, well, if you’re a fisherman, why do you need so many different lures in your tackle box?” he said. “It’s the same principle. Because you don’t know what sound is going to trigger a response and when calling coyotes and fox I’ve been on stands where I played 30 different sounds trying to trigger a response.” He’s also been on stands where a coyote held up in the distance after hearing the electronic call “so I pick up my Kamikaze call and start blowing and that does it, he came in and I shot him.”

A final bit of advice: Once you find a sound that’s working, that’s prompting predators to come in close, keep using it, he said.
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There has been a lot written and taught about Hunter Education over the years. However, when you really think about it, it comes down to two words: Muzzle Control! It is the first commandment in the list of the Ten Commandments of Firearm Safety. It is that important. Why, you might ask? Well let me tell you why.

If you have control of the muzzle of the firearm, you have control of the firearm. The muzzle being the business end of the firearm and where the projectile/bullets/shot pellets come out. As a gun owner or hunter, you can see why it would be beneficial to make sure to keep control of the muzzle. Wherever it is pointed when the firearm is discharged/shot is the direction the projectile/bullet/shot pellets will travel.

During my 31-year career, when I worked for the Georgia Department of Natural Resources Law Enforcement Section as a Conservation Ranger/Game Warden, I saw many incidents where hunters lost control of the muzzle of a firearm and tragedy was the result. If the hunters were lucky, they got a good scare and learned a valuable lesson. One time a good scarifying took place is when another ranger and I were chasing a truckload of night deer hunters down a sandy dirt road late one night. We had chased these poachers over a mile at very high and dangerous speeds with blue lights and siren, and it appeared they were not going to stop. All of a sudden they came to a sudden halt. So much so that we actually skidded by them, sliding in the sand. We came to a stop about two car lengths in front of their vehicle. We ordered them out and two males and two females exited the vehicle. We noted that the females were crying. After we got everyone secured and the situation under control, we noticed the right front tire of the vehicle was flat. We figured it was a blowout and that was what caused them to stop. However, when we searched the vehicle we found the real reason. When they were moving the gun around in the vehicle with the safety in the fire position, the firearm discharged. Lucky for them it did not hit anyone, however the bullet went through the floor of the vehicle and punctured the tire. The percussion of the firearm inside the enclosed vehicle along with everything else was why the females were crying.

Another incident that I investigated was when I got a call that a squirrel hunter had been shot and was rushed to the hospital. He had shot off part of his hand. I sent one ranger to interview the victim, if possible, while another ranger and I went to the hunting incident scene. At the scene we found a 12-gauge single shot break action shotgun lying in a trail in the woods. It had a spent 00 buckshot shell in the chamber. Further down the trail we found blood on some leaves and buckshot pellet strikes on the base of a large oak tree. I dug one of the pellets out and confirmed it was a 00 buckshot pellet. Right in front of the tree on the ground was an old wire fence that was about six or seven inches above the ground. Apparently the squirrel hunter was actually hunting deer with 00 buck, had seen a deer, and was running through the woods trying to get a shot with the hammer cocked on his firearm when he tripped over the fence and lost control of the muzzle. His hand passed in front of the muzzle as he struck the ground and the shotgun fired, taking off about half of his hand. This is one of the cases I discuss in our book “Blood on the Leaves,” where muzzle control was a factor in 10 of the incidents we describe.

Both of these incidences involved losing muzzle control. One turned out to be a good scare and a large fine, and the other a tragedy with the loss of a body part.

It is also important to remember where the muzzle is pointed when you...
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Or This,
Or This,
Or...
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are not planning on firing. Most people would be amazed at how many times we have investigated bullet holes through the top of a foot. The careless hunters rest the muzzle on the top of their boot, often while standing in a group talking to other hunters. At some point the safety comes off and a finger hits the trigger! Just this year we have also seen several crossbow bolts sticking into the top of a foot!

Muzzle control is also very important when raising and lowering your firearm into or out of a tree stand. KEEP THE MUZZLE POINTED IN A SAFE DIRECTION! Certainly, the firearm should be unloaded first but if the muzzle was always pointed in a safe direction, as in not up, pointed at the hunter, then many incidents would have been avoided.

Everyone who handles a firearm, whether for shooting targets or hunting, should always be aware of what direction the muzzle of your firearm is pointed. Remember that once that projectile/bullet/shot pellets leave the barrel of a discharged firearm, you can never call them back. They will strike whatever is in front of your muzzle. Don’t let a tragedy happen to you or someone you care about. Always maintain muzzle control! You owe this to yourself and the people you hunt with. Remember, safety first and always!

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June 25th-28th, 2018
Anchorage, Alaska

Join us for a fun-filled week of networking, learning, and exploring the world of hunter education.
Scheduled conference highlights include:
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• Conservation Day activities at the Rabbit Creek Shooting Park and the Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center
• IHEA-USA Region meetings
• Alaska Dept. of Fish & Game staff presentations on topics including subsistence hunting, Dall sheep research and hunting, and small game hunting used as a recruitment tool
• Richard Lynch-presentations on volunteer management, customer service, and positive attitudes
• A taste of Alaska’s abundant resources-salmon, halibut, reindeer...
THE OUTDOOR CLASSROOM STARTS INDOORS

Hunters learn something every time they go afield, yet their foundation as safety-conscious, ethical hunters likely begins in your classroom. The knowledge they gain from dedicated volunteer hunter education instructors like you sticks with them for a lifetime and also helps them mentor new hunters.

Through its printed and digital materials, the National Shooting Sports Foundation has been assisting volunteer instructors with teaching students about firearms safety, ethical hunting and conservation for decades. We can help with your mission.

Visit NSSF.org to order materials today.
Kevin Markt of Omaha, Neb., has been named the National Bowhunter Education Foundation Instructor of the Year. He will receive a new-for-2018 TRIAX bow, a compact, powerful compound bow that is the quietest and most vibration-free bow Mathews has ever made.

“Mathews Inc. is honored to sponsor the 2017 NBEF Instructor of the Year Award,” said Corrine Bundy, Media Relations Manager for Mathews. “As a company and as individuals, we wholeheartedly support developing safe and responsible bowhunters. The backbone of these efforts is the volunteer instructor. Their tireless hard work is a true credit to the heritage of our sport. Kevin Markt is a shining example of that volunteer who goes those extra miles.”

With more than 20 years of instructor experience, Kevin Markt, the National Bowhunter Education Foundation Instructor of the Year, said he sees the positive impact bowhunter education has on students’ lives.

“I see so many kids that come from a non-hunting family who have a huge desire to spend time outdoors and try hunting,” he said. “Bowhunter education is a great starting place for them to learn safety, ethics, and preparation as well as pick up tips before they head out to give it a try.”

Markt said he’s a long-time volunteer, with different organizations and coaching his kids’ sports teams. And, he said, “I’ve hunted my whole life and thought this would be a great way to give back to the hunting community.”

An operations manager for a property management company, Markt said he’s able to balance his work as a hunter education instructor with his work and home life, thanks to “a very understanding wife,” and the fact that during his long tenure with his company he’s accumulated vacation time, which he often devotes to hunter education and other outdoor programs.

He’s also a mentor with the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission’s Mentored Youth Archery program, which matches mentors with 12 to 18-year-olds who want to bowhunt. “This is a program that requires a large amount of time to make a great experience for the kids and to hopefully instill a lifelong passion for hunting,” he said. “This is where the understanding wife and vacation time come into play.”

Markt also teaches firearm hunter education as part of Nebraska’s Hunt-Safe program.

Hunter education is important because for many it is their first step, and the most important step, toward hunting, he said.

“Hunter education gives people of all ages a great place to start,” he said. “Safety is the most important aspect of hunting and is always emphasized in all the classes. After that we teach ethics, responsibility, equipment, and techniques to help them get started in the right direction.

“At a lot of these people don’t have anybody in their life to get them started. That’s where the hunter education programs come into play.”

“It’s about enjoying the outdoors safely,” he said. “Safety first. Then I want students to be as prepared as possible so they enjoy their time spent outdoors. If you are safe and prepared it usually makes for a successful adventure.”

And success, to Markt, is about the experience.

“I want to make sure they have fun, whether they harvest an animal or not,” he said. “That’s what it is all about. Take quality photos and share them with their family and friends. This is one way to get more people involved in the hunting lifestyle.”

Markt’s dedication to hunter education drew praise from Gary Brunberg, a long-time NBEF Board of Director who nominated Markt.

Brunberg said Markt, a Nebraska Master Instructor, has conducted youth archery classes weekly and has been a principle organizer for the Omaha Ted Nugent Kamp for Kids for 18 years, which has grown to where every year 100-plus young kids get a chance to shoot air rifles, shoot bows, fish, learn about trapping, shoot wrist rockets, learn hunting folklore, and have a day-long adventure. Brunberg said Markt has also organized and trained archery club members in Colorado and Iowa so they can conduct their own Ted Nugent Kamp for Kids events. Markt also trains hunter education instructors and is bowhunter education chairman of the Nebraska Bowhunters Association.

Markt’s volunteerism resume goes on. As Jeff Rawlinson, Chief of Education and Communications for the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission (and NBEF Board Member) said, Markt “has our highest respect and admiration.”
LEGENDARY CLEANING PRODUCTS.
My name is Brent Buech, and I am an Iowa Volunteer Safety Instructor. You may have seen my previous article entitled “Make it a Learning Experience,” which was about taking a youth turkey hunting and teaching him new tactics and techniques. In this article, I’m going to be at the other end of the spectrum. This time, I am teaching an “old dog” new tricks.

Shortly after our successful youth turkey hunt, I was already anxiously anticipating the opening day of bow season. Until then, it was off-season practice time. I’ve already been shooting bow and bow hunting for years. In those years, my father has always supported me. Brent Buech Sr., my father, has been an avid outdoorsman for as long as he can remember. He was the one that passed his love of the outdoors down to me. My father has always been a shotgun, whitetail deer hunter for many, many years, but he has never bow hunted. In the fall of 2017, I made it my goal to introduce my dad to my favorite hobby of bow hunting.

In the spring of 2017, I had an old bow set up to the right draw weight and length for my dad. After discussing consistency, anchor points, and a few practice sessions, it wasn’t long before the old shotgun hunter was stacking arrows at twenty yards. Shortly after, he was stacking arrows at thirty and even out to forty yards. In between shooting the bag and practicing form, I took every moment possible to teach him all that I have learned from my time in the woods with my bow. Some of the concepts I educated my father on included wind direction, scent control, shot placement on the 3-D target, tree stand safety, calling, and decoying techniques. My father had a lot to learn because he was used to driving deer to fellow hunters.

Finally, October first was here, and these early season hunts gave me opportunities to sit in the double stand with him. This way, I was able to help him with questions that he had as they arose during his first bow hunts. By November, I was very confident that my father could go out on his own and successfully take a whitetail buck with his bow. On the morning of November fourteenth, my father and I were complaining about another early morning, but little did we know that this morning would be much different. After wishing my father good luck on this morning’s hunt, we split up to hunt neighboring farms. While watching a group of does enter and exit the field I was hunting, I could not keep my mind from wondering about the new bow hunter who was hunting about a mile and a half away from me. Suddenly, a vibration came from my pocket. My phone showed an incoming call from Dad. My heart raced with excitement when my father said the three words every deer hunter dreams of: “Big buck down!” I told my dad to sit tight, and I would be over in an hour to help trail his first bow buck. After hanging up the phone, I bowed my head and thanked God for being able to get my dad hooked on a new hunting experience.

When I arrived at the base of the tree my father was in, I found him pointing to his arrow which was stuck in the ground and completely covered in blood. He got down from the stand, so we could follow the very short blood trail. It led us into the cornfield to find a dandy eight-point buck. After some pictures, tagging, and field dressing, we were heading home with a buck in the bed of my pickup truck.

On the ride home, I asked my father about his hunt. I will never forget his response. He told me that his hunt that morning was one of the best hunting experiences of his life. The excitement in his eyes was just the cherry on top. My father telling me the details of his hunt reminded me why it is all worth it. It also reminded me why I enjoy introducing others to the different aspects of hunting and the great outdoors. Being able to give back to the man who gave me my love for hunting was very rewarding and fulfilling. I hope this story inspires you to get someone into the outdoors, and you might just get the opportunity to teach an “old dog” some new tricks.
ATTENTION ALL INSTRUCTORS: WIN A BRAND-NEW YAMAHA KODIAK 700EPS ATV!

The 2018 edition of Hunter’s Handbook is now making its way through the system for you to distribute to your hunter education students. For 27 years, the Handbook has been the official student publication of IHEA-USA. Hunter’s Handbook is an ideal collateral training tool for students to take home and further their knowledge about how products and techniques can enhance their experience in the field.

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$\textbf{Distance Learning in Hunter Education}$

By Ken Russell, Kansas Hunter Education Instructor

Hunter education courses in the USA have historically been taught using traditional classroom instruction. Some states also required hands-on firearms safety testing. Currently, many state hunter education programs are incorporating distance learning into their hunter education programs. Many people still correlate distance learning with old style correspondence courses, and truth be told, many of our state hunter education courses struggle with using computer-delivered distance learning beyond animated slides and a few videos. Speaking as an educator and a hunter education instructor, we need to better integrate advanced distance learning techniques into our online hunter education programs.

First, we must understand some basic concepts.

Traditional education is when a teacher/instructor is teaching/lecturing and the students are listening. Generally, this has been in a traditional brick-and-mortar classroom with face-to-face academic delivery. The teacher and student interaction has been the principle learning element. Distance education is when the teacher/instructor is separated by distance from the learning audience. For our purposes as hunter educators, we are focused on incorporating and integrating computer-delivered, distance education into our hunter education courses. Our challenge is to maintain the teacher and student interaction using computer-delivered, distance education.

Another concept we must be familiar with is the difference between synchronous and asynchronous delivery of computer-based, distance education. Simply put, synchronous delivery means a class of distance education students participate together and at the same time online, while asynchronous delivery means students can participate and progress at their own pace as an individual learner. Currently most hunter education online courses seem to be asynchronous, however this can minimize, or even lose, that all-important teacher and student interaction.

Now let’s look at some distance education techniques to advance learning that are beyond the animated slideshow delivery or viewing of a video.

An important, yet simple distance education technique is a discussion forum – and it can be done either synchronous or asynchronous. Hunter education students would go online and participate in a discussion on virtually any hunter education topic. Discussion forums evolve around an instructor-posted question or statement, for example, “What is the concept of fair chase? How does hunter ethics apply to the concept of fair chase?” Once the instructor has posted the question, students then have a set time period to first answer the question, then engage other students in discussion. A discussion forum can be a specified, short block of time (30 minutes up to an hour) that all your students must attend, and the discussion is pretty much real time, or the discussion forum can be done over a few days with students coming and going as their schedules permit. The key to a successful discussion forum is instructor-guided discussion within the forum regardless of how it is executed.

Another important distance education technique is a virtual classroom. There are many companies that provide virtual classrooms online and the state hunter education agency would have to commit to funding a virtual classroom, but the benefits are enormous. Instead of hunter education students viewing stale slides or videos without hunter education instructor interaction, you would have expert instruction delivered online by a hunter education instructor. The virtual classroom would allow
Teaching Tips—Chris Beebe, Ohio HE Instructor

Anecdote from class:

I was teaching a segment on water safety. One of the points I like to make, lest a student think “I’m a good swimmer” and stop listening, is that going into the water for a swim and falling into the water on a hunt are two vastly different situations. To make this point, I draw a contrast between going into the water in a swim suit and falling into the water wearing several layers of clothes, boots or waders, having gear strapped on, pockets full of ammunition, etc. I set this up by asking who likes to swim. Most hands go up. I choose a student and ask him what he wears when he goes swimming. On this occasion, the response from a boy of about 13 was “Nothing.” The class (and instructors) had a good laugh over that. He of course corrected himself pretty quickly!

Teaching aids:

When teaching marksmanship, I of course emphasize the importance of being able to hit the game animal’s vitals to obtain a quick, clean, humane kill. I typically mention during this segment that our family has an annual family shooting contest with a prescribed course of fire. We keep score, give prizes, and just generally have a good time. This is a great way to encourage good marksmanship.

Another teaching “aid” or technique I use is to discuss the prioritization of tasks after the deer is “down.” I start this by asking, “So your deer is down. What is the next thing you do?” As I ask this, I begin a list on the board. Numerous students will give answers, most of which are wrong. As I repeatedly respond “no” to the incorrect answers, more and more students want to get involved and be the one with the correct answer. After the first correct answer, I ask “What’s next?” The process (and, typically, many incorrect answers) continues until the list is complete. I think this generates participation and sticks in the students’ memories. The answers, which may vary according to state laws, are 1) ensure the deer is dead, 2) tag it, 3) field dress it, 4) get it checked in.

Teaching aids:

Teaching aids are essential to the teaching of hunter education. They provide a means of presenting information in a manner that is easily understood by students, and they can be used to engage students and make the learning process more interactive. Some of the teaching aids that can be used in hunter education include:

1. Visual aids: These can include slides, videos, or other visual tools that can be used to illustrate points or demonstrate concepts.
2. Hands-on activities: These can include dissections, hands-on shooting ranges, or other activities that allow students to interact with the material.
3. Games and simulations: These can include computer-based simulations, role-playing games, or other activities that engage students and make the learning process more interactive.
4. Discussion and brainstorming: These can include group discussions, brainstorming sessions, or other activities that allow students to share ideas and engage with the material.

Teaching aids can be used in a variety of ways to enhance the teaching of hunter education. For example, they can be used to introduce new concepts, to reinforce key points, or to encourage student participation.

Norm Hansen, Utah HE Instructor

One of the things I do in each class after introductions is pass around a bullet that I recovered from an elk that I shot several years ago. I teach three things with that bullet. First is marksmanship, as it only took one shot to kill that elk. Second is safety, and I ask them to think about what would happen if that bullet hit them, and then I describe the wound channel. The third thing I teach is they have to do their homework, and I have them try to guess how many hours went into locating and killing that elk, which was about 23 hours—20 hours scouting and three hours actual hunt time. It gets them thinking about the things we will discuss in class.

Distance Learning...continued from facing page

Questions and answers, and provide the hunter education instructor a variety of tools like a chat board, in-class surveys, short check on learning testing, etc. The virtual classroom is synchronous, but it provides that necessary teacher and student interaction without students or instructors having to travel to a classroom. It would require a minimal level of automation availability, such as a computer with internet access, speakers and a microphone – a computer camera is optional but would be nice to have, however bandwidth limitations can prohibit camera use during class sessions.

Online journaling is a great tool. As students go through the hunter education class they can keep an online journal about what they learned, questions they may not have had answered, or other areas they may be struggling to understand. Instructor access to the journals allows the instructor to provide individual attention to struggling students – of particular importance when teaching younger students, or those with little to no hunting experience.

My recommendation to leaders in the hunter education community that manage online hunter education courses is to create hybrid courses. Hybrid courses incorporate both synchronous and asynchronous delivery methods using multiple distance education techniques, as well as range time for students to show firearms safety. The advantage of a hybrid course is that it will maintain teacher and student interaction while minimizing traditional classroom time.

There are many lessons in our hunter education courses that can easily be learned using asynchronous lessons involving slides and a computer-based quiz. Our challenge is to figure out what is important enough to be delivered interactively using an instructor and distance learning techniques that actively involve the students. The benefits to both hunter education students and our students are enormous if we can get this right.

Send Us Your Stories!

One of the main goals of the Journal is to provide a platform for the exchange of ideas and teaching experience that can help improve the education process of the more than 650,000 new hunters annually. In order to fulfill that goal we need the input of instructors in the field. Please submit your stories and/or photos about teaching techniques that work for you, thoughts about the state of our hunting heritage today, anecdotal stories about “it happened to me” in class, visual training aids, etc... don't worry about spelling or grammar.

Every submission that is chosen for print receives a gift from supporting manufacturers.

Send your submission to Susie Kiefer at susiekiefer@msn.com.

No computer? You can mail your submission to: IH EA-USA Journal, PO Box 432, Wellington, CO 80549.
Instructor Discount Corner

Huntego CleanShot

Discount for instructors on CleanShot, the first “shoot-through” bore-cleaning device.

Discounts are now available for hunter education instructors from Huntego CleanShot on their high-velocity, highly effective bore-cleaning device that field cleans your gun’s bore in an instant.

“A clean gun is a safe gun,” said founder and CEO Curt Whitworth. “Safe and responsible hunting is the framework of our hunting heritage. We are delighted to support the tireless efforts of volunteer instructors throughout the hunter education system.”

The first-of-its-kind patented technology power scrubs, traps particles, and wipes your bore clean with the firing of a CleanShot round—the only product that can make that claim. Simply load a CleanShot cartridge and safely fire at the range or in the field—removing fouling, plastics, and other contaminants in less than a second.

Manufactured with the same processes and standards as current ammunition, CleanShot is currently available in 12-gauge, though Huntego plans to release 20- and 28-gauge and 410-bore. They are also developing loads in 9mm and 5.56. CleanShot’s commitment to the invention and innovation of gun bore cleaning solutions is changing the game forever.

Hunter education instructors can get the CleanShot discount by visiting https://huntegoltd.com/ and using the discount code IHEA1718 at checkout.

Walker’s

Walker’s, maker of famous hearing-protection products, knows using ear protection while hunting in the field is just as important as it is on a shooting range, and in an effort to prevent irreversible hearing loss, they’re working to get the word out through the IHEA-USA.

GSM offers hunter education instructors generous discounts on their products. Instructors may not realize the lifelong impact they have on students when they teach proper ear protection and are in the prime position to emphasize the importance of it.

“Most hunters wear hearing protection while sighting-in guns, but not when they are hunting,” said Ben X. Smith of GSM Outdoors. “It might be because they feel only taking one shot won’t have any impact on their hearing, but continued exposure to muzzle blast year after year (especially hunting in an enclosed blind) can really do irreversible damage.”

There are better choices than ear plugs or muffs that just block all sound. Hearing commands and conversation at a shooting range improves the safety and enjoyment of the experience. The ability to hear while hunting in the field is essential for safety as well as successful hunting. Walker’s offers electronic products that deliver crisp, clear sound, but instantly compress loud noises such as gun shots, to prevent hearing damage.

Two excellent choices from Walkers are the Silencer Ear Buds and Razor Patriot Slim Electronic Muffs. For more information on these and other hearing protection products, visit online at gsmoutdoors.com/walkers. While there, check out other great GSM Outdoors products for hunters.

For more information go to: www.ihea-usa.com/instructors/special-offers-for-instructors

Instructor Access for IHEA-USA Website

Hunter Education Instructors have the opportunity to purchase many items at a discounted rate on the “Special Offers” section of the IHEA-USA website! For your exclusive access go to: www.ihea-usa.com/instructors/special-offers-for-instructors. Just click on the company hyperlink you are interested in and, when prompted, enter “gohunt” as your password. The password has no space and is all lowercase.

Purchase these fine products and more!
New Products for Instructors

Outdoor Edge Expands Popular RazorLite EDC Line

Outdoor Edge, celebrating its 30th anniversary this year, has expanded its award-winning RazorLite EDC line of the sharpest, strongest replacement-blade knives with a handy, downsized version.

RazorLite knives quickly became popular with hunters because blades can be changed quickly, safely, and easily with the push of a button.

The newest 3.0” RazorLite features replaceable heat-treated 3-inch stainless steel, shaving-sharp blades which are held securely in a black oxide-coated blade holder which makes it as strong as a standard knife, but offers the versatility of replacing surgical scalpel-sharp blades.

Rubberized insets in the handle help provide a non-slip grip, even when wet. The ambidextrous thumb stud allows for easy one-hand opening, and the stainless steel pocket clip (which sleekly contours with the handle) lets you secure it handy in a pocket or pack.

This newest introduction was the result of the overwhelming response for the original 3.5-inch RazorLite EDC. The lighter (it weighs only two ounces) and smaller version answers the need for a version even more easily carried in the pocket every day. Overall length when opened is 7-1/2 inches.

Available with blue, gray, or orange handles, the 3.0” RazorLite EDC comes with four blades. Additional replacement blades are available in packs of six.

For more info, visit outdooredge.com.

Henry Repeating Arms Introduces Patriot Series

Henry Repeating Arms has introduced a new line of rifles celebrating America, patriotism, and the Second Amendment, including God Bless America editions of Henry’s popular Golden Boy and Big Boy rifles, and a Stand for the Flag edition of the Golden Boy.

The God Bless America Edition Golden Boy is a .22-caliber lever-action with Henry’s popular and reliable Golden Boy platform engraved with iconic images of the American flag, Liberty Bell, and bald eagle, all with 24-carat gold highlights. On the stock is an engraved and hand-painted image of the Statue of Liberty’s torch and on the forend is engraved “God Bless America.”

The God Bless America Edition Big Boy features similar imagery in Henry’s popular centerfire version chambered for 44 Magnum/44 Special. On the stock is an engraved and hand-painted salute to the American flag.

The Stand for the Flag Edition Golden Boy is a direct salute to the American flag, with a red, white, and blue depiction applied to both sides of the receiver in durable polymer-ceramic Cerakote. The buttstock features a hand-painted image of a man standing with a hand over his heart and the words “O, Say Can You See.”

The series also includes plaques suitable for mounting on a wall or in your lawn. For more info, visit henryusa.com.
By John Kunkle

This past fall, the IHEA-USA Journal was kind enough to print my article entitled, “When it comes to the students...RIDEM!” The article addressed a few learning concepts to help ensure quality learning was taking place during our hunter education classes.

Since then, several fellow instructors have contacted me and requested to hear more on the subjects of, “Teaching vs Training” and “Coaching vs Mentoring.” As I mentioned in the article, though these terms are closely related, they each serve an independent purpose in the overall scheme of instruction. It is important for the conscientious hunter education instructor to understand this.

Teaching is cognitive as it introduces a broad spectrum of new knowledge to the student. For example, when we teach the Ten Commandments of Firearms Safety, we introduce the student to theoretical situations involving firearms handling. They hear and think about those safety rules.

Training, on the other hand, is task-oriented and much more focused on particular skills. If our students spend time physically holding the training firearms, we train them to do things like always point the muzzle in a safe direction or keep their index finger outside of the trigger guard at all times.

If we teach without training, the newfound knowledge is often soon forgotten. If we train without teaching, the newly developed skills are questioned and never fully understood.

For Hunter Education Instructors with such a short amount of instructional time, coaching and mentoring are not as finite.

Coaching too is task-oriented and closely related to training as described above. As coaches, we often work closely with the students during exercises like firearms handling, trap operations, field day practicals, etc.

The student must reasonably and safely demonstrate minimal competency to ensure learning has taken place.

Mentorship, conversely, is achieved by establishing a long-term trusting relationship with the student to help further develop his skills. Many students will remember us for a long time and may seek our knowledge in the future. It is honorable to be considered a mentor, but the students must see us as professional, kind, knowledgeable and qualified to achieve that title.

As Hunter Education Instructors, we meet the challenge of all these duties while ensuring we are doing the best job possible.

I wish to thank those who take a special interest in my articles and to all those who are passionate about sharing our hunting traditions with new students.

“The kite of knowledge will fly high if the string of learning is long.”

Mr. J.W. Kunkle is a retired peace officer and a graduate of the POST Master Instructor Development Program. He currently serves the Idaho Department of Fish & Game as an Instructional Technician which includes the duties of HEI, Trapper Education and NRA Range Safety Officer.
The **Taurus Spectrum™** exudes style, comfort and functionality unlike any concealed carry pistol in its class. Lightweight—yet heavy on innovation—the subcompact 380 seamlessly incorporates soft-touch materials into the grip and slide for enhanced traction. While unique contours in the grip allow your hand to naturally conform to the firearm.
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