The Real Measure of the Hunt

Lessons Learned, Pheasants Falling

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Features

Hunt of a Lifetime: the Real Measure of the Hunt
By Roy Griffith

Doing Good Isn’t Easy
A Bull Snake and Some Pheasant
By Michael G. Sabbeth

Departments

4 President’s Corner: Youth Shooting Sports Programs Helping Conservation
By Megan Wisecup, President IHEA-USA

6 USFWS Update: Take Them on a Field Trip!
By Tom Decker

14 Lessons Learned—“Pheasants Falling”
By Capt. Michael Van Durme, New York State Environmental Conservation Police, Retired

20 IHEA-USA ANNUAL HERITAGE HUNT: The Hunt of a Lifetime!

32 The Balance of Nature
By Jeff Borowski, Wisconsin Hunter Education Safety Instructor
One bright spot in the declining trend of hunter participation continues to be the increase in youth shooting sports programs. Organized youth shooting sports programs are attractive to kids and families because of the friendly social structure and the fun, interactive nature the sports provide.

We are fortunate in my home state of Iowa to be one of the nation’s leaders in youth shooting sports programs. Our close partnership with the Scholastic Shooting Sports Foundation (SSSF) has given us the support, tools and resources needed to administer a program with over 100 teams and over 3,500 youth participants in the Hawkeye state. The SSSF’s Scholastic Clay Target Program (SCTP) and Scholastic Action Shooting Program (SASP) give us the ability to offer shotgun, rifle and handgun sports to youth in elementary school through college. These programs offer an introduction to the shooting sports and multiple competition opportunities at the local, state and national levels. Part of the SSSF’s mission is to “facilitate continued involvement” of youth outside of their local teams—that’s where hunter education instructors come in!

The National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF) released an Industry Intelligence Report in April 2016 in partnership with the SSSF, highlighting the progress of the SCTP & SASP as well as facts about these two programs’ impact on hunting participation.

For many, organized youth shooting sports programs are the first introduction of firearms to non-shooting and non-hunting families. Because of the familiar sports structure of competition seasons, many non-hunting families build relationships with hunting families, ultimately leading to trips afield in the Fall that otherwise would not happen. According the NSSF study, fathers still hold the top spot for introducing kids to shooting, however SCTP and SASP teams were in second place with 22% of youth being introduced through their team or school shooting sports program.

Participants in the SCTP and SASP provide critical support to Pittman-Robertson funding for state agencies. Based on information from the NSSF Industry Intelligence report, the average SCTP participant shot almost 6,000 clay targets in 2015. In Iowa, the SSSF provides us with use of their Shooting Organizational Technology (SHOT) data system to record competition targets. For the 2015-2016 season, we had over 1.8 million targets shot in competition, so it’s not a stretch to think that these kids are shooting at least 10x more in practice and recreation over the course of a year. That’s a lot of ammo!!

Youth shooting sports are also driving hunter education across the nation. According to the NSSF study, 84% of SCTP/SASP participants have taken hunter education and 42% said it is a requirement to participate on their local shooting team. What a great opportunity to get more kids afield!

If your local shooting range or gun club does not have an SCTP or SASP program yet, I’d encourage you to get one started. These programs increase membership and youth involvement at the local level, ensuring the future of your range or gun club. To get going you need the following:

A qualified coach (or group of coaches) willing to lead the team and take on some simple administrative duties. Staff members with the SCTP and SASP routinely train coaches through the NRA coach education program if certification is needed.

A place to shoot for practices and possibly local competition.

Basic equipment.

The SCTP and SASP program staff can help you with any and all team startup questions as they have “been there, done that!” ALSO—the SSSF has released a new DVD all about the Scholastic Action Shooting Program (SASP). This two-hour video shows you everything you need to know to get a program started around rimfire rifle and/or handgun competition and is a great primer for those looking to start a team.

SSSF Website: www.sssfonline.org
SASP DVD: sssfonline.org/sssf-store/sasp-dvd/
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A number of U.S. states have long-standing black bear research projects that include outfitting black bears with radio collars and following them to gain information on movement patterns, habitat use, factors affecting survival and mortality, and other elements of bear natural history and life cycle requirements. In the Northeast, numerous states have been conducting these types of research projects since the mid 1980s. These studies are principally funded by Wildlife Restoration (WR) funds through the state fish and wildlife agencies, and conducted by state agency biologists or USGS Cooperative Research Units Programs.

These research projects are important in achieving wildlife conservation, but can also be used to create awareness and communicate our conservation successes to our industry partners. We invited staff from the National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF) to accompany us on several field trips over the past two winters that included state fish and wildlife biologists from Connecticut and Massachusetts, and staff from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program (WSFR). Often these WR-funded black bear projects involve den work in the winter months. These den checks follow radio-collared female bears to their winter dens and is an opportunity to immobilize the bear, change its radio collar, assess overall health and condition of the bear, and, if it has cubs, collect information on these offspring as well.

The information collected under these studies allow biologists to examine habitat use, home range, survival of adults and cubs, determine mortality rates, identify sources of mortality, identify important travel corridors across the landscape, and determine genetic profiles of bear populations. In the Northeast, Maine, Pennsylvania and Massachusetts have the longest-running bear-monitoring projects of black bears going back over 30 years.

In the early days of Spring, several NSSF staff members joined biologists from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection to see conservation science in action through the state’s black bear project. Paul Rego, the lead black bear biologist in Connecticut, guided a small crew to change the radio collar on black bear number “H1”—a sow who had denned in a large brush pile in a suburban area. Her three cubs, born several weeks earlier, were tucked in the den with her. H1 was immobilized with a drug delivered via a syringe mounted on a long, metal pole. The drug took effect quickly, and she was safely removed by Rego’s team. The team quickly changed radio collars, took body measurements, weighed the sow, and collected other biological data. The cubs were also weighed and discretely tagged with a small “pit” tag just under their skin. This type of tag is also used on dogs and cats. The entire procedure took about 25 minutes. Then all the bears were safely tucked back into the original den where they remained.
between December and Spring.

The information collected is used to write statewide management plans for bears and the establishment or adjustment of regulated hunting seasons. Black bears are classified most often as a big game animal in the Northeast. There are regulated hunting seasons in Autumn, and most states have over 15 regulations in place licensing and governing the hunting of bears. Black bears are used as food (by about 90% of the hunters), for their pelts as rugs, and taxidermy mounts; claws and bones can be made into jewelry, and the fat is used in cooking and for water-proofing leather and footwear. This sustainable utilization of a wildlife resource is consistent with the North American Model of Wildlife Management, and having sound scientific information is a fundamental element of that model.

The collection of this scientific information and the application and decisions it allows state wildlife managers to make would not be possible without WR funding. The cost of this type of research—for equipment (radio collars cost several thousand dollars each), the drugs, vehicles, training and data analysis—is expensive. Our system of funding this research through excise tax dollars is unique, and we want our industry partners who are part of the system to be aware of the excellent work that is done in each state.

We plan to continue these field trips so industry representatives can see firsthand the projects that state fish and wildlife agencies are conducting with the support of WR funds. We do not take for granted this important work—everyone who pays the excise taxes, buys hunting licenses, and conducts wildlife research with WR funds should be proud! Consider planning a field trip to a WR-funded project site for industry partners in your state too!

For a quick look at this field trip, check out this video on the NSSF blog: www.nssfblog.com/developing-an-appreciation-for-conservation-science-in-spite-of-those-cute-bear-cubs/

Tom Decker is a Certified Wildlife Biologist and has been involved in trapping and furbearer management issues for over 25 years. He is a Wildlife Biologist in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program based in the Northeast Regional Office in Hadley, MA. He can be reached via email at Thomas_decker@fws.gov.
I recently had the honor of sharing an elk hunt of a lifetime in Utah with seven of my lifelong closest friends. Rather than tell another “I climbed the tallest mountain, and took the greatest shot” story... I thought I’d share the hunt as experienced through the eyes of seven of my closest hunting companions.

It all started over 14 years ago when a good friend of mine, Fish and Wildlife Lieutenant Kent Harrison, was drawn for a similar tag in Utah. Kent harvested a tremendous bull that year and told me, “You should put in for the hunt. If you ever get drawn, I’ll guide you!” Lucky for me Kent is a man of his word and 14 years later I got to hold him to his promise! Kent shared the following: “The memory and meaning of Roy’s elk hunt to me, was fulfilling my promise made to him 14 years earlier, that if he ever drew the Fillmore Pahvant elk tag, I would happily ‘guide’ him on his hunt, the two of us patiently awaiting the witching hours of fading daylight on a high mountain ridge in Utah, culminating with a celebratory high-five with a long-time friend.”

I was not raised in a family of big game hunters. My father’s passion was upland game and waterfowl, so of course, not knowing otherwise, I followed in his footsteps. I went to Humboldt State to pursue a degree in Wildlife Management and it was there I met my lifetime friend Dave McFarland. Dave manages and operates a private fish hatchery in Northern California. Dave shared, “Hi Roy, just wanted to thank you again for letting me tag along on your elk hunt. Great group of guys, and plenty of nonsense to be shared by all!” Hunting camp represents cooperation, support, appreciation of being immersed in the great outdoors, and the possibilities of what exists over the next ridgeline. It also takes us away from the day-to-day monotony of work, and societal norms. Open spaces and getting away to the mountains recharge our batteries, and allow us time to reflect and appreciate the things we might otherwise take for granted, such as the peaks above Maple Hollow (especially how steep they are), friends and family, or the fact that we have the where-with-all and time to travel to these wonderful places.

I was totally impressed by the “best shot,” and the complete utilization of the elk. I have never seen such a clean carcass! My brother always takes a lot of time to get every spec of meat off of the animal, and I am always pushing him to hurry up. (Why? I do not know.) Accurate shot placement and complete utilization of the animal is the least we can do when the elk/deer gods shine on us with opportunity. Thanks for setting the bar a little higher.

The hunt could not have been complete without my good friend, retired San Bernardino Sheriff’s Department retired lieutenant Dave Rehrer. I first met Dave 25 years ago on patrol in Southern California. While in line at the courthouse to file some citations, I was approached by David who told me, “Game wardens do not stand in line in my courthouse!” After completing my
business I met David in his office and of course we started sharing hunting stories. A week later we were fishing together in Baja. David quickly became my backup, fishing buddy, hunting companion and lifetime friend. Dave wrangled us two cabin tents and a toy hauler trailer ‘The Clubhouse’ that made the cold nights and entire trip possible! Dave shared, “I was thankful to have been asked by my good friend Roy to help with this hunt. The laughter and good natured joking with each other nightly around the dinner table added to the enjoyment and fun in continuing the hunting traditions.”

I first met Lieutenant Shawn Oilage about 15 years ago when he was promoted to Hunter Education District Coordinator. I was quickly impressed with Shawn’s dedication to the cause of Hunter Education. His passion for hunting and fishing goes unmatched. It was not long before he wormed his way into my heart and became known as ‘my son that hunts!’ Shawn shared the following with me about the experience: “This hunt was about planning, teamwork, skill and a little bit of luck. In August, during our scout trip, we said we were going to ‘kill an elk on that mountain.’ Well, it happened. It was maybe not as planned but our persistence paid off. I will forever remember and be proud of the hunt.”

I first met Warden Jerry Karnow when we attended the Warden Academy together in 1990. To say we hit it off like brothers is a bit of an understatement. We started hunting together while at the academy and have not missed a year since. We have hunted everything from spot lighters to trophy mule deer. I will always cherish his friendship! “I was privileged to again hunt with my longtime hunting partner Roy Griffith, along with several of our mutual hunting friends. Camaraderie and re-connecting with really good guys, most of us who live hundreds of miles from each other, was priceless, and in an outdoor setting many people don’t ever realize in their lifetimes. Aside from a great hunting trip, focusing on Roy’s hunt, the use of new and old specialized equipment, and sharing strategies for past and future hunts in the West, this hunting trip brought us together because of our common interests in the wholesome tradition and adventure of a hunt. To add to the excitement, I brought my horse ‘Modoc.’ As for the use of a horse, which some people may not enjoy or understand in this day and age, new technology and equipment could never replace what Modoc could accomplish for us. It was amazing to watch my Mustang pack out a few hundred pounds of Roy’s huge elk in one trip! I think I had as much enjoyment watching Modoc transport the elk and be a part of the hunt, as did Roy who pulled the trigger on the big bull elk.”

I first met George Oberstadt, California Waterfowl Association Heritage Program Supervisor, when he became a Hunter Education Instructor about ten years ago. George and I have since hunted everything from quail to pronghorns from here to Wyoming! I consider his friendship an honor. George shared,
“Team Roy came together from all over California as a collection of the best of the best, carefully chosen for this elk hunt of a lifetime. Led by our inspiring and fearless leader, who made the ‘perfect shot’ on an awesome bull elk, an adventure of over 15 years in the making came to a close. From the elk tenderloin, teal and tuna grilled to perfection, to the elk stew, homemade rice pilaf and soups, this was the ‘perfect hunt’ with great hunters and men of honor and dedication to hunting. Thanks Roy for having me as part of it.”

I have known Retired Game Warden Bruce Walder for about 25 years. We have shared many miles in the backcountry and countless campfires. His wit and sense of humor make for never a dull moment and his skills as a woodcarver go unmatched. I consider him a dear friend. Bruce shared his thoughts. “The special part of building a friendship over many years is to share the experiences and adventures as friends. The experiences and adventures become cherished stories and memories as the years move along. I have relished my friendships with the traditions and character of the people I have been fortunate to have met along the way. The trip to Elk Camp has reminded me again about the bonding of old friendships and the developing of new ones.”

Seven people showed up in Utah to honor their friendship and give their support for Roy Griffith and his quest for a “Bull Elk.” Oh! Yes! The hunt was a success, but the real measure of the hunt was in the seven friends who left their busy lives to enjoy a week with their friend Roy Griffith.

The traditions that we share and are so passionate about are being threatened. There are people who believe their beliefs and core values are inherently more acceptable and just than ours. Unlike us, they feel they need to impose their values on others and stand to take away all that we believe in.

To protect our traditions you must get involved! At whatever level you can! Share your passions with others. Have your neighbors over for a wild game dinner. Explain conservation and the sportsman’s role in wildlife management to the person who cuts your hair. Become a Hunter Education Instructor and take an active role in passing on our hunting heritage. Be a positive role model and hunter advocate every chance you get! Share your passions with anybody who will listen! Bottom line—get involved!!!

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By Michael G. Sabbeth

Most people want to be good; and based on many conversations, most hunters—everyone I’ve spoken with—want to be honorable and ethical. For them, honoring the animal, the land, the hunting culture and themselves are sources of pride and self-respect. But to be an honorable hunter, wanting is not enough. Doing good, doing what’s right, is the result of several complex thoughts, actions and character traits.

What does it take for a hunter to be honorable? I share two situations that offer lessons on how a virtuous hunter behaves, and which show important character qualities a hunter needs to do what is right. This first story was told to me by a fifth grader. Some of his classmates were throwing rocks at a bull snake slithering through bushes in the school playground. This youngster tried to stop the rock throwing, saying the snake was harmless and hurting or killing it was cruel. The classmates rejected his request. When the little fellow persisted, the classmates threatened him.

When the youngster finished telling me his story, he looked at me with searching eyes and asked a question that penetrated to my soul: “Why is doing good so hard?” That question has been asked for thousands of years. I haven’t found a satisfactory answer.

My other story is about a teenager hunting pheasant on public land with some friends. A dog flushed several pheasant that flew onto private property, where they had no permission to enter. The friends and their dogs chased the pheasant but the young man telling me this story refused to go along, even though the friends taunted him and one friend said, “We’re not inviting you to join us again.”

The Limits of Ethics

“The most powerful person is he who has himself in his own power.”
—Lucius Annaeus Seneca, Roman Philosopher (5BC-65 AD)

What would you do in each of these situations? Before you answer, let’s think about how to figure out what’s right and what can motivate you to do what’s right.

Ethics is the study of what is right and virtuous. Ethics guides us to know what is good. With that knowledge, people should be encouraged to do good. If a person knows what is good, the assumption is the person will do good, or at least, is more likely to do good. Obviously, and unfortunately, reality shows that this assumption is often not accurate.

Most of us know what’s right in any situation. For example, you don’t injure or kill living things just to be destructive and you don’t go along with breaking the law. However, more than knowledge is needed to do good. A person also needs moral courage and confidence. Moral courage requires, at times, standing up to or rejecting the requests of other people. These two stories are examples of the need for moral courage. It took courage for the fifth grader to...
stand up to those willing to injure or kill a harmless reptile. It took moral courage for the pheasant hunter not to join his trespassing friends.

The fifth grader showed moral courage, but he also had confidence in his beliefs and values. He was confident he knew what was right and that his actions were ethical. Even when his classmates turned on him like a mob, his confidence in his values motivated him to continue to try to make his classmates stop their bad behavior. The confidence the non-trespassing pheasant hunter had in his values was sufficient to overrule the emotion and peer pressure to act unethically and illegally.

Lessons to be Learned

The fifth grader is correct—it is difficult to be good. It is difficult to stand up for what is right. Sometimes you can’t do it alone. In the snake story, the youngster would have benefitted from help from teachers and any other adults on the playground. Sometimes, as in the pheasant story, you have to act alone and stand up against a group even if you are not trying to change the behavior of the others. The pheasant hunter probably knew he could not stop his friends’ trespassing.

I share the pheasant story to make a point about friends and friendship. The human tendency to do what friends want you to do—that is, to give in to peer pressure—is among the most powerful human forces. So, let’s take a look at the magnetic power of friendship to figure out when, if ever, it should influence our actions.

What kind of friends did this non-trespassing hunter have? Friends that wanted him to break the law; that wanted him to risk having his firearm confiscated; that wanted him at risk for fines and perhaps lose his hunting privileges. Maybe they’re friends, but they cannot logically be considered friends that care about his best interests. At that moment, at least, they were not good friends.

A person can become stronger and more confident when, as in this pheasant hunter case, he analyzes and figures out the cost of a friendship—that is, what a person must give up to keep the friends. Bad friends making decisions for you is foolish. My point is that thinking and reasoning can make a person morally stronger. That’s why every person has a moral obligation to think. Many people don’t think, of course, but that fact does not change the reality that thinking is a moral duty. Only by thinking can a person know right from wrong and what is better or worse.

Morally strong people are more likely to act morally. People become morally stronger by thinking about and understanding the consequences of their actions. The morally strong person has control, or more control, over him or herself. This understanding of human nature is seen in Seneca’s statement about being the most powerful person. Thucydides, an Athenian historian, expressed a similar and equally important idea that links happiness to courage: “The secret to happiness is freedom, and the secret to freedom is courage.” The person, hunter or not, that has moral courage is often a happier person and happy people make the world better.

We should be very cautious about giving to others the power to influence us about right and wrong. Understand that morality—right and wrong—is not determined by the number of believers. Whether one person disagrees with you or whether one hundred million people disagree with you has nothing to do with whether you are right or wrong. Either you are right or you are not. Either facts support your ideas and actions or they do not. Either your opinions and ideas have moral support or they do not. Numbers are irrelevant; character and honor are not.

Michael G. Sabbeth is a lawyer and author living in Denver, Colorado. He lectures on ethics and rhetoric. He has written the book The Good, The Bad and The Difference: How to Talk with Children About Values, available on Amazon at tinyurl.com/c5flmmu. He is now working on a book titled No More Apologizing! Arguments to Defend and Advance Hunting and the Shooting Sports. Visit www.thehonorablehunter.com and his Facebook page at www.facebook/thehonorablehunter.
Lesson Learned—“Pheasants Falling”

By Capt. Michael Van Durme, New York State Environmental Conservation Police, Retired

It was the first time these buddies had a chance to get together to hunt in a few years. Bob and Sam were regular shooters, they hunted together often and shot skeet at the local club on Tuesday nights. Larry was a good friend from high school but only an occasional shooter at best. He hunted only when he got together with the boys and he had tried the skeet thing once but was intimidated by the fancy, high-priced European over-unders. The first few pheasants dropped quickly to Bob and Sam. No sooner would the rooster start to rise before one of them would jerk up their gun and snap off a shot before Larry could even shouldered his trusty Mossberg. It was going to be another one of those days where he tried to play catch-up to his partners but seemed to always fall behind. They razzed him as they always had, telling him get with it. “You can’t hit it if you don’t shoot.”

The next rooster startled them all and Larry swung up and shot well behind the bird just after Bob dropped it cleanly. Larry was getting more and more frustrated and vowed to be the first on target the next time. They finished that field and walked down a laneway towards the next field. The path was muddy and rutted from the recent rains and Larry was thinking more about how to shoot faster than about were he was stepping. Walking at the end of the line Larry saw Sam hop across a large puddle and he tried to do the same. It was larger than he thought and he missed the far side, slipping and falling forward. He braced himself for the collision with the ground. His arm muscles contracted and he squeezed both hands tightly. Just as he landed on top of his shotgun he was startled by the shot. What was that? Who shot? He heard Sam scream out and saw him fall forward in front of him. The full load of #6’s had struck Sam in the middle of his back. Immediately paralyzed, Sam would be dead before the ambulance left the garage.

Last year there were several news reports of people killed in “hunting accidents” when a companion tripped and fell and accidentally shot the person in front of them. The news reported that each of these was “just an accident” and the shooter falling down was the cause. Thinking about the rules we teach over and over, it is easy to see what went wrong. In order to get his next shot off quicker, Larry had taken the safety off and was keeping his finger on the trigger. Clearly he also failed to keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction. Tripping and falling certainly contributed to the incident, but the real causes were the violations of these fundamental rules.

When we report and track hunting-related shooting incidents, it is important to look for and report all the causes, not just one.

LESSONS LEARNED

1. Always keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction. This is the most basic safety rule. If everyone focused on this rule every time they handled a firearm, there would be very few incidents. This rule applies from the minute you pick up a firearm until you set it down.

2. Keep your finger off the trigger. Studies have shown that it is not faster to keep your finger on the trigger. By the time you make sure you have identified both your target and a safe backstop, shoulder your firearm and find your target in your sights, you had plenty of time to slide the safety off and place your finger near the trigger, ready to shoot. When you are startled or when you begin to fall, your body reacts involuntarily by bracing itself. The “fight or flight” response includes constricting the muscles, including squeezing the hands tightly.

3. Keep the safety on. The safety is a mechanical device that is meant to supplement proper gun handling, not replace it. Keeping the safety on until just before the shot and immediately putting it on again helps prevent involuntary discharges.

4. Hunting is not a competition. If you focus on trying keep up with or beat your friends, you will not remember that firearm safety always comes first. Many investigations have shown that it was close to the end of the season and everyone else in the group already got their deer or turkey—the shooter disregarded safety rules he knew well, hoping to catch up with his friends.

Captain Michael Van Durme retired from the NYSDEC Police, is now a partner in Hunting and Shooting Related Consultants, LLC, and one of the authors of “Blood on the Leaves, Real Hunting Accident Investigations—And Lessons in Hunter Safety.”
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Please Remember the IHEA-USA When Writing Your Will

As you know, the International Hunter Education Association – United States of America has a commitment to preserving and protecting our right to hunt as well as our hunting heritage. By providing for the IHEA-USA in your will or trust you will help to ensure that future generations will get to experience the same kind of outdoor experiences that you hold so dearly. Please read this testimonial:

“The mission of the International Hunter Education Association – United States of America is so pure that for those of us that hunt and believe in education first and legislation last, I personally have included in my Last Will and Testament 1/2 of my estate be awarded to the IHEA-USA. Hunting for me has been one of life’s great disciplines and made me a better person in so many ways. Having an understanding of our connection with the land, how we both collectively and individually influence our natural resources and the opportunity to actively participate in the management of those resources is key to the future of our hunting heritage.” – Tim Law hern

You can set aside:
• A specific dollar amount
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All donations received from this program will be deposited into our Planned Giving Endowment and will be utilized for long-term funding of the organization. The interest earned from this Endowment will be used for general operations for the IHEA-USA. We urge you to consult your attorney in preparing your will or trust and hope that the following language will be helpful in providing a bequest to IHEA-USA:

“I give, devise and bequeath ___% of what remains of my estate (or $_______) to the International Hunter Education Association – United States of America (Tax ID # 37-1145157), a charitable corporation presently having offices at 800 East 73rd Avenue, Unit 2, Denver, CO 80229”

IHEA-USA is a non-profit 501(c)3 corporation organized and existing under the laws of the State of Colorado.

Bequests of any size are gratefully accepted and sincerely appreciated. However, while IHEA-USA can accept gifts of land, we are not in a position to hold property for any reason. Any land given outright or bequeathed to IHEA-USA will be immediately sold. The proceeds of which will be used to fund our programs.

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To assure hunter education continues to train, educate and recruit future hunters, shooters and conservationists, I/we pledge to be an IHEA “Foundation” member at: $2,500 per year (minimum) for five (5) years.

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To become an IHEA “Foundation” member, submit completed form to:

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The annual IHEA “Heritage Hunt” allows Focus Group, Inc., publishers of Hunter’s Handbook, and the International Hunter Education Association (IHEA-USA) to showcase the most historic conservation education success story in the history of modern-day wildlife management efforts. Each year throughout North America, over 680,000 students are trained in hunter education by nearly 60,000 trained instructors (mostly volunteers) in safe, responsible, knowledgeable and involved hunting and shooting practices. Nearly 26 million students have completed hunter education, considered a “rite of passage” for hunters.

This all-expense paid “Hunt of a Lifetime” opportunity announced each year in Hunter’s Handbook that is distributed to students in their hunter education courses, is for three students, their parents and two hunter education instructors randomly selected from thousands of entries. “I did not believe him (Brian Thurston, Publisher) when he called me,” said Liam Schulte, this year’s student winner from Winfield, Missouri. “I just thought it was another phone scam—but here I am!” The other students, parents and instructors echoed Schulte’s remark.

The lucky winners represent the grassroots effort that is “hunter safety” education in local towns and communities as taught by dedicated volunteers, school teachers and conservation wardens who know that their efforts significantly reduce hunting- and firearm-related accidents and violations.

The Hixon Land & Cattle Ranch near Cotulla, Texas, once again hosted this year’s hunt, something the ranch owners, Tim and Karen Hixon, both former commissioners of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, strongly believe in. “We notice that these kids and instructors truly demonstrate safe knowledge and skills around firearms when they are sighting-in, shooting clays or hunting,” said their son, ‘Timo’ Hixon, three-time host of the Heritage Hunt.

Mike Hehman, ranch and hunt manager said, “They (the hunters) help us achieve our wildlife management goals on the ranch—which is something I really like!” He went on, “It is a great

“It is what we do!”

–Somerset Jones, Alaska Hunter Education Instructor

Heritage Hunt Participants

Representing Hunter Education Throughout North America and Beyond
win-win for us and it is also nice to meet folks from other states and gain their perspectives, too.”

Fish and wildlife agencies and Hunter Education Instructors are encouraged to continue distributing *Hunter’s Handbook* in their courses and, along with their students, complete a Heritage Hunt Drawing Card in the magazine or online at www.huntershandbook.com. Focus Group and hunt industry sponsors want nothing more than to highlight hunter education’s successes in producing safe, responsible hunters and shooting sports enthusiasts.

**Special thanks to** the Hixon family, Mike Hehman and guides/staff assistants, Chef Bubba Laughinghouse, Rusty Weed—videographer with Careco TV, and the many 2016 hunt partners including: Birchwood Casey, Browning, Buck Knives, Bushnell Optics, Cabela’s, Careco TV, Federal Premium, GrovTec, HIVIZ, Lansky, Otis, Wiley X and YETI.

Trenton Halvorson—HE student from Sanborn, Minnesota, took four management deer including this nice 8-pointer. Nicknamed “Ice Man,” hunting guides said Trenton was “cool under pressure” every time he squeezed off a shot at the range or while hunting.

Jill Halvorson (parent)—“This was the first time I actually ever hunted with Trent—it was something!” She added, “What a thrill to be with my son on this trip so I can learn about hunting and see what he goes through.”
Liam Schulte—HE student from Winfield, Missouri, took a few deer including a nice six-pointer, but also was the “hot shot” at the sporting clays range which was part of the noon-day activities on the Heritage Hunt. “Yeah—I really like to shoot shotgun.” He continued, “I had fun competing against Mike (ranch manager), especially on that #4 target!” a tough crosser at 40 yards.

Danny Schulte (parent)—While helping his son skin his deer said, “My son is really excited to be here—he loves to experience new things and being selected to go on this hunt which will be something he can talk about with his friends for a long time!”
Volunteering as a hunter education instructor is a personal commitment and sometimes challenging. Obtaining quality hunter safety and educational materials shouldn’t be. The National Shooting Sports Foundation® has been supporting hunter education instructors for more than 50 years.

A longtime supporter of the International Hunter Education Association, NSSF has been in the forefront of developing multimedia hunter safety and education materials. We provide printed and electronic materials for volunteer instructors—most of which is free. And when your students graduate and are looking for places to hunt or for additional information to develop their skills and knowledge, the answers are simply a click away!

Log on to nssf.org/safety and order your materials today. All the help you need is at your fingertips.
Anthony Oro—HE student from Athol, Massachusetts, when asked the difference between South Texas and where he hunts back home, he chuckled, “That’s easy! We actually see deer here!”

Dennis Oro (parent)—When asked about their favorite experience during the hunt, Dennis and his son both admitted, “Definitely the javelina—that is something none of his friends will believe,” (as Anthony texted his friends his ‘collared peccary’ photo).

Sommerset Jones—HE Instructor from Chugiak, Alaska, and top instructor this past year in Land of the Midnight Sun, mentioned that taking a white-tailed deer is among his favorite hunts in the United States. He teaches hunter education, outdoor survival and other subjects in a rugged outdoor state and reminded the other hunters, “It is a whole lot easier cleaning one of these deer compared to field dressing and cutting up a moose.”
Rusty Weed, CarecoTV, who was on hand for his second Heritage Hunt, hustled continually to get interviews and shots of hunting, the students and instructors, sporting clays, game care and other great moments.

Left: Scott Crossland—HE Instructor from Clinton, Ohio, mentioned that he experienced some great hunts for whitetails in Ohio, but he enjoyed hunting from the elevated stands. “I can’t exert too much energy these days, so hunting from the stands and glassing and judging the deer made it fun for me.” He added, “I’m enjoying the comradery on these hunts, and the food was out of this world!”

Above: Brock Minton—South Texas Hunter Education Specialist with the Texas Parks and Wildlife, host state agency, assisted hunt participants in shooting sporting clays as part of their activities around the noon hour each day.

They Won’t See You Coming...

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Above/left: Sponsor Gear
Above/right: Industry Sponsors Heritage Hunt 2016
Left: Students go to sight in rifles with Guide Lannon
Below: Cooking staff at Heritage Hunt 2016
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Duke Walton, Jack Yoder and Stephen Spencer

In this issue, we honor three Gallery of Guns Champions of Hunter Education winners who were recognized among the thousands of dedicated hunter education instructors for their outstanding contributions and devotion to teaching and promoting safe and ethical hunting.

In recognition of these outstanding efforts, Gallery of Guns is proud to annually recognize and reward six instructors who epitomize the characteristics of educators dedicated to making a difference. All hunter education instructors reach students by teaching, recruiting and mentoring thousands of students, assuring our hunting traditions continue in a safe, respectable manner. Their contributions—the time, energy and resources—are immeasurable. Immeasurable, but certainly very much appreciated.

In our previous issue, we highlighted three Gallery of Guns Champions of Hunter Education winners. Here are the stories of three more extraordinary instructors.

Stephen Spencer saved a life.

A student in one of Spencer’s hunter education classes acknowledged the information he learned saved his life when he fell victim to a treestand equipment failure. “I find this a rare opportunity to recognize someone who was recognized by the public for saving a life,” Indiana Hunter Education Administrator Lt. Larry Morrison said in nominating Spencer for the award. “While I truly believe we save more lives through hunter education than we will ever know, it is a rare occurrence that one of those people take the time to acknowledge where the information came from that allows them to safely return home to their family.”

But that is not the only reason Morrison nominated Spencer. “Stephen is extremely deserving of this award,” Morrison wrote. “He is self-initiating and strives continuously to improve upon the courses provided. Stephen constantly evaluates how topics are taught and provides the insight to improve the courses.”

Morrison continues, “Every year, Stephen organized and taught various Indiana Hunter Education classes, certifying students in traditional classes as well as youth camps, including the Karl E. Kelly Youth Camp, providing instruction to and certifying approximately 200 people, both youth and adults. Stephen is also a member of the State Hunter Education Academy Instructor team, conducting treestand safety classes for new and experienced Hunter Education Instructors. Stephen has also developed a hands-on first-aid and survival class that he has started teaching to new instructors to improve the information they provide as well driving home the hands-on approach to instructing. Stephen works to recruit not only new individuals into hunting but also recruits volunteer instructors to assist with the Hunter Education program and Bow Hunter Education.”

Spencer is also an outdoor skills instructor, a wilderness first responder and an instructor at Becoming an Outdoors Woman and 4-H shooting sports events, and also promotes hunter ed at sport shows and deer, turkey and waterfowl events and the Indiana State Fair.

Spencer, a certified Master Treestand Safety Instructor, has been the Indiana state chairman for the National Bowhunter Education Foundation since 2006, as well as the NBEF Region 3 (Midwest) Regional Coordinator. He has twice been recognized as a member of District 6 Teaching Team of the Year, and 2015’s District 6 Instructor of the Year.

“Stephen has worked to evolve the teaching style of his teaching team to be more hands-on and interactive, moving away from the video-centric and lecture style used previously,” Morrison said. “He has incorporated a method of hands-on that not only teaches the student the fundamentals, but provides them the confidence to know that they can apply the information they have been provided successfully.”

Spencer said the impetus for getting involved in hunter ed was his daughter, Haylie, signing up for 4-H shooting sports. Spencer had been a competitive archer and “saw this as a way of passing on what I’d learned and to give back to the community,” he said.

He became a certified hunter ed instructor in 2003 as “an outgrowth of my work in the 4-H archery program,” he said.

Spencer is able to balance his passion for hunter education with his job as operations excellence project manager for a medical device manufacturer, a job he took on earlier this year after 18 years in various roles at AT&T.

Hunter education is valuable for today’s youth, he said. “I see so much of what the youth are into today,” he said, citing a nephew whose “primary passion is video games.”

It is important, he said, to spend time
with kids outdoors and help them learn about related things to which they may not be exposed, “to teach the passion of outdoors, that hunting is not just the big racks they see on TV” but the appreciation of small game, waterfowl and all the other animals and aspects of nature.

“Hunter education is important to me,” he said. “The importance of understanding safety and responsibility of dealing with firearms, whether it’s a BB gun or handgun or high-powered rifle. It’s our responsibility to help kids learn that.”

In his classes, he hopes students learn, “responsibility and ethics, a good internal compass to make ethical decisions in the field; that they learn to be safe and prepared for the choices they’re going to be faced with.”

And treestand safety cannot be over-emphasized. It is really important for kids to understand that if they are going to hunt from an elevated position that they wear the safety equipment.”

So how did it feel to learn his classroom teaching had saved a life?

“I was completely overwhelmed when the student was telling me his story,” Spencer said. “We all hope that, as instructors, we’re making a positive impact, but it’s a rare opportunity to have that person stand in front of you as an example of that impact. That student is now part of the Hunter Education team in my county, and shares his story with every class.”

Elmer “Duke” Walton, Jr.

So far, Duke Walton’s hunter education resume includes:
– Certified 1,773 students in hunter education
– Taught 43 hunter education instructor workshops
– Certified a total of 78 new hunter education instructors
– Taught more than 1,900 hours in the hunter education program
– Attended seven IHEA-USA conferences
– Assisted in hosting San Antonio IHEA-USA conference in 2013
– Led five women’s hunts
– Mentored more than 20 adult/youth hunts

As impressive as the list is, it only touches on the reasons Texas Hunter Education Instructor Steve Hall nominated Walton of this award.

“Duke has always gone above and beyond the call of duty in the hunter education program,” Hall said. “Every contact he makes, every store he visits, every youth and adult he is around, he never misses the opportunity to share his passion about hunting, wildlife conservation and spending time outdoors.”

Walton, who is “working on his 30th year” as an instructor, said hunter education is “engrained in me. If I wasn’t teaching hunter ed, I’m not sure what I’d be doing. It’s just me. It is who and what I am. I am a hunter education instructor.”

Walton’s dedication was evident from the beginning, Hall said. “Although he worked full time for a telephone company, he was able to rearrange his schedule daily to help school-aged youths,” Hall said. “He traveled around one of the very large school districts in Houston, rotating across six campuses each day for about an hour each. He did this for as long as it took, one hour at a time each semester, for students to become trained and certified in hunter education.

Now retired, Walton worked for 34 years at Southwestern Bell, which, he said, “was good to me,” and allowed him to teach his courses in the company’s meeting room. He balanced work by teaching mostly on weekends, sometimes on Thursday nights “unless there was Thursday night football,” he said. Or he’d teach on Saturdays and half days on Sunday, “so we could go to church Sunday morning.”

“Duke has built relationships across Texas to support hunter education,” Hall said. “He started a great partnership with Cabela’s and frequently travels across the state to work several of their outdoor expos and events for women and youths.” He does the same for other large retailers, including Bass Pros.
He has personal examples to prove it. A woman, a successful businesswoman and single mother, called him and asked if he’d take her son hunting. He told her no, but he’d take her and her son hunting. It’s a great story involving not only hunting, but camping, stars, s’mores, an award-winning hunting story and a kid, now 22, who has grown up to be hunter and fisherman.

T he main reason,” Walton said, himself in a fence-crossing accident which rippled through the family. “He is a sight to watch,” Hall said, “especially with the level of excitement and involvement he shares with each person who approaches his tables with a curious eye.”

D uke is also involved with many youth hunts across Texas,” Hall said. “He never misses an opportunity to connect a kid with nature, especially those who have no access or experience. He is heavily involved with the Texas State Rifle Association which partners with Duke making youth hunts a success.”

W alton brought a hands-on approach to teaching with what he calls “a hundred different skulls, furs, tracks and poops.” Hall said the “trailer’s worth” of wildlife identification items draws interest. “He is a sight to watch,” Hall said, “especially with the level of excitement and involvement he shares with each person who approaches his tables with a curious eye.”

W alton said he got involved in hunter education to serve a need. He was the Future Farmers of America booster club president and an ag teacher told him they needed someone to teach hunter education. Walton made phone calls to find out what it would take. After a series of calls to, from and between his boss at Southwestern Bell and school administrators, Walton received approval, got certified and taught at each of the schools until he certified the ag teachers as instructors. It took off from there.

When asked why hunter education is so important to him, Walton relates a story of a co-worker whose brother shot himself in a fence-crossing accident while squirrel hunting, the tragic effects of which rippled through the family. “The main reason,” Walton said, answering the question, “is to promote safety and stop hunting accidents. You can’t be too safe.”

H unter education instructors, he said, can make a significant impact on kids’ lives by introducing them to hunting and the outdoors.

Jack Yoder
Mason Neck, Virginia

Jack Yoder garners high praise from Virginia Hunter Education Administrator Jimmy Mootz.

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outfits these kids with the proper equipment and clothing, ensures they receive proper safety instruction in the use of firearms, helps them practice at the range and takes them scouting to learn first-hand the skill and knowledge necessary to be a safe and ethical hunter,” Mootz said.

Yoder’s interest in hunter education dates back to the 1990s when he was one of a core group that started Suburban Whitetail Management of Northern Virginia to address deer overpopulation issues.

“Most suburbanites did not have a hunting heritage and were skeptical of hunting,” Yoder said. “Firearms were not permitted in most areas so bow hunting was the only hunting management option.”

SWMNVA was dedicated to placing qualified bowhunters on private properties suffering deer damage. “We believed that by setting standards for bowhunters and providing liability insurance, small-property owners would be more comfortable with accepting bowhunting as a management option,” he said. “Many of these properties were only a few acres and some neighbors considered the deer as pets while others considered them vermin. This complicated the process and made it imperative that bowhunters adhered to a very high standard.”

The resulting influx of hunters put a heavy load on local classes, he said, “so, in 1998 several other founding members of SWMNVA and I became certified IBEP instructors.”

Then, the merger of IBEP with Virginia’s hunter education program prompted Yoder to become a certified hunter education instructor and that led to the next step.

“Since the early 1990s, I was also a Conservation Volunteer on Quantico Marine Corps Base,” he said. “One of my hunting mentors, retired Col. Byron (Chub) Madden, the lead instructor, asked me to help with one of his basic hunter education classes. This class had a much broader mix of participants, a much larger percentage of kids and I quickly fell in love with teaching the class. As Chub was getting older, it was not long before he asked me to take the lead. As many of his instructors were also aging, I began to recruit new instructors to help teach the classes on base.”

Yoder sees hunter education as a key to the future of hunting.

“There are two key things we want students to take away: safety and ethics,” he said. “Without commitment to both of these, the future of hunting is bleak. As demographics shift and high-density population centers dominate, it is important hunters show themselves to be both safe and ethical to the non-hunting public. Without this, finding support from folks who don’t have a hunting heritage will be nearly impossible in the future.”
The Balance of Nature

By Jeff Borowski, Wisconsin Hunter Education Safety Instructor

As a growing boy, my friends and I would often go and “hunt” for rabbits and squirrels in a wooded area behind the house that I grew up in, in the city. The kind of “trouble” that boys get into without committing any crimes, and hope that their parents never find out about.

We would arm ourselves with anything from our Daisy BB guns, to baseball bats, to large sticks. At one time, I remember us making our own “heavy duty” shoulder-fired sling shots out of a couple of 2x4s nailed together as a “T,” and using thick rubber bungee cords for the launch straps. Needless to say, they didn’t work very well but it was fun at the time.

Because we were young and somewhat careless, (that’s what boys do!) we never really bagged anything. But we did chase a lot of the rabbits and squirrels in the awkward, noisy, chaotic way that we conducted our hunts and we had fun doing it. It kept us out of trouble.

And from there our young foolishness only got worse, as we decided to play G.I. Joe with those same Daisy BB guns. “They were only BB guns…they can’t hurt!” or so we thought! To this day I wear a small grey spot (ironically, the size of a BB) of hair in the back of my head. From a “BB” (remember—“They can’t hurt!”) that probably damaged some kind of pigment nerve or something. If I were facing the shooter at the time, I would have lost an eye. I was lucky…this time! It was another one of those things we hoped our parents would never find out about. That put an abrupt stop to our childish antics with BB guns.

We were clearly careless, with no hunting ethics, and there was a lack of responsibility for our actions. SHAME ON US!! A lesson learned!

As I said, we never really bagged anything. But we did learn the movement and hiding—or running, habits of the little critters. It is now I realize that those days were not only just a way to pass time and play, but it was the activity that planted the seed in my head to one day go hunting…for real! I knew deep down I needed to, and wanted to hunt, but needed to get some responsible training.

When I was 16, my parents allowed me to go deer hunting for the first time with an uncle and his party, but it was conditional. I had to pass a Hunter Safety Course first. I was okay with that, even though it wasn’t a state requirement back then. The other agreement was that I had to get good grades in school. I managed to meet both “PARENTAL LAWS” and got to go on my first real hunt! I was so excited.

We went to my uncles’ relatives land “UP NORTH,” and for the entire week I learned my first hunting term—skunked.” At the same time, my uncle and the hunting party showed me a lot of the basics of different techniques of deer hunting.

I learned a lot, but the only thing that really stood out in my mind when it was all over was that I got “skunked.” That was the end of my hunting days…for a while.

I swallowed my losses and concentrated on graduating high school. I ACTUALLY DID IT! THANKS MOM AND DAD! From there, I joined the U.S. ARMY.

There, I learned my “Basic Rifle Marksmanship” (BMR) skills, and how to “hunt” the most dangerous game, and earned the “Expert Rifleman” badge.

The most dangerous game that I refer to is not bear or lion or elephant or any other wildlife. It’s the kind of game that shoots back…the enemy.

I’ll leave that aside, and focus on the

The attitude of the hunter should be instilled that he/she will go out and harvest only what they need for their own consumption.
skills I learned that were hidden inside that training.

I’m talking about the skills of basic survival, field emergency first aid, cover, self-concealment, camouflage techniques, tracking, when to move, when to sit, what gear to use, what gear not to use, and most important, when to shoot and what to shoot at.

All this stays with me in my techniques for hunting to date. Note that the ethics of combat and wild game hunting are obviously and extremely different. But the responsibility and personal discipline behind either scenario are both one in the same. “Think before you shoot, every shot counts and once you squeeze that trigger, you can’t bring that bullet back!”

After I was discharged from the Army with honors, I established my place back in civilian life with a job and home for my family.

Once my transition stabilized (about two years), I decided that it was time to get back into the hunters’ world.

A fellow worker invited me to hunt with him, so I went out and bought my trusty deer rifle and the gear that I would need to get back into hunting, but this time as a mature man and not the carefree child that I was not too many years ago.

Remember “SKUNKED?” You guessed it—I still carried that for the following two years.

Twenty-five plus years have passed since then, and I have missed my fair share of bringing one home. But at the same time, I have brought home a satisfying amount of food. I remember harvesting my first deer, and how good it felt to ethically apply all the good things that I learned about hunting, and forget my bad, childish antics, to obtain that deer. It was a nice-sized buck with four points, although I didn’t care about “the rack” or “spread.” All I knew, is that I had grown up and now did things correctly, with the proper ethics in mind. And it all didn’t end there. I also began to learn how to field dress, skin, and process my harvest in the same ethical manner and leave nothing to waste.

Over those years, I have also managed to combine the skills taught and learned from my past and present, and I am comfortable in my hunting skills, rewards, and losses. I still like to hunt rabbit and squirrels with my pellet gun, as I feel that a shotgun is too much for such small critters, and takes away from developing and maintaining “marksmanship skills.” I shy away from bird hunting due to the fact that I am color-blind. Not accurately identifying bird markings can get one into a whole lot of trouble. (There’s your ethics.) If you don’t know, DON’T GO! I am fortunate enough to have friends occasionally give me some of their takings to enjoy. That’s fine with me. Again, the ethics.

“Killing” is relentless destruction, and “hunting” is a humane and ethical way of taking only what is needed for one to survive.

I have enjoyed the hunts as well as the learning experiences, and gained so much that I decided to become a Hunter Safety Instructor. SO I DID! I am going on five years now as an instructor, and the only thing that I regret is that I didn’t do it sooner. The greatest reward in being an instructor is the satisfaction that after a course is completed, I am confident that the students learned, understand and respect the teachings and ethics that I provide.

I occasionally meet past graduates from my classes, and they always have positive feedback from what I taught them and what they have experienced since their graduation. They all still address me as “Instructor Jeff” or “Mister Instructor,” and they continue to tell me about their first or second hunts. Some good, some not so good. But either way, I can see that they accepted the results in the good way that I have taught them, and acknowledge they see and respect what hunting is all about. What really warms my heart is when they say “Thank you Instructor Jeff,” or “Mister Instructor.”

I have felt that I needed to pass on the mix of knowledge that I had obtained over the years to future generations of hunters, both young and old, the difference between HUNTING and KILLING.

It’s not a matter of “going out and killing something” as I thought of it as a child, or a “combat situation,” as I experienced as a soldier.

It’s more of taking what you need in an ethical way, and without agitation to the balance of nature or human society. Some seasons you succeed, and some seasons you fail, although you don’t really fail. You are just exercising the responsibility to know when to shoot and when not to shoot. Very respectable, whichever decision you make! It’s all up to the individual to adjust to it, and accept it as it turns out. If that can’t be done, then the hunter is not mentally or ethically ready to be in the woods.

In all that I have learned over the years, I have resorted back to hunting as I have seen in so many (yet not enough) old western movies.

The attitude of the hunter should be instilled that he/she will go out and harvest only what they need for their own consumption.

I go out with minimal gear as required by laws and regulations, and sit and wait for my take. I do not need nor rely on today’s commercial aids to bring one home. Calls, scents, rattlers, and the like did not exist back in the day and the hunters who hunted like that still harvested only what they needed. Regardless of what sex, size, or “today’s bragging rights” pose, that’s what I do.

As I said earlier, I have been skunked, and I have taken my harvest over the years. Nothing has gone to waste, and I have never starved. There is the balance of nature, and the balance between “hunting” and “killing.”

“Killing” is relentless destruction, and “hunting” is a humane and ethical way of taking only what is needed for one to survive.

A responsible hunter knows the difference and it’s my responsibility as an instructor to get that point across to the students so that they understand.

It is a job that I really enjoy and intend to do for years to come.
New Resource for Hunter Education Instructors Now Online at IHEA-USA.org

Hunter Education Instructors now have access to a new resource that can provide them with additional methods and teaching tips to help them as they prepare for and present their classes. Titled the “Instructor’s Toolbox,” it is part of the IHEA website and Hunter Education Instructors across all 50 states can access the information.

The Instructor’s Toolbox has been developed by the IHEA Instructor Advisory Committee (IAC) that was formed in 2012, and was tasked with, among other things, developing teaching aids to assist instructors in the presentation of their classes. In 2013, the IAC asked Hunter Ed Instructors across the nation to respond to a survey which included questions about specific teaching techniques and teaching aids they have successfully used in presenting their classes. The IAC received a great many responses and decided that since there were so many great ideas, a method to share these with all instructors needed to be developed. Hence the “Instructor’s Toolbox” was started and will be an ever-growing, dynamic resource, that additional “teaching tips” can be added to in years to come.

The Toolbox was designed around the newly-accepted IHEA Standards and the major heading areas follow those outlined in the standards. Each major heading has numerous subheadings that encompass the total Hunter Education arena. The IAC then identified specific “teaching tips” from the survey responses that applied to the headings and inserted them under the specific heading. So, if a Hunter Education Instructor wanted to add or present a specific topic in a different way, he or she could go to the Toolbox, look under the appropriate heading, and find which “teaching tips” might be available to assist in presenting their class.

The “Instructor’s Toolbox” is available online through the IHEA website. It is located under the “Instructors” portion of the home page. The process for using the Toolbox on the website is a drop-down menu that identifies major headings. There are also links to related topics and a method for instructors to send in additional training aid ideas and teaching tips to add to the Toolbox.

The IAC will continue to accept and request additional “teaching tips” that might be added to the Toolbox in the future. The “Instructor’s Toolbox” is a dynamic, growing resource available to Hunter Education Instructors and gives them ideas and methods that they can use to enhance and improve their already outstanding classes.

Teaching New Hunters to Fish

By Christopher Collins, Idaho Hunter Education Instructor

Think back on how you became a hunter. Was it a slow, steady progression throughout your life, or did you wake up one day and decide that you wanted to hunt? For me, I woke up one day and decided I wanted to start hunting at the age of 11. I took hunter education, started playing with game calls, worked my tail off to earn enough to buy my first shotgun, and basically became obsessed with every aspect of the outdoors. However, if it wasn’t for others telling me where the public property was located, my desire to go hunting might have dwindled quickly.

I ran into a roadblock when I was 15 and had to move to Idaho. This was a brand new state, and I had no idea where to go hunting. I had a few friends take me hunting occasionally through high school but the city life of Boise, Idaho was completely different than where I started hunting. It wasn’t until I got out and started exploring Idaho, buying maps and hiking miles upon miles that I started to have a better feel of where I could go in Idaho, but that took years to figure out. Fortunately for me, the desire to be a hunter was very strong and I wasn’t about to give up. If we want our hunting heritage to continue, we need to make sure every hunter, new and old, has a place to go hunting.

As a hunter education instructor, the number-one concern that I receive from my adult students is that they don’t know where to go. In my four years of teaching, I have never given up a single personal spot that I have worked so hard for, although I have taught my students how to fish, or search, for themselves. There are plenty of resources now that allow you to view property ownership boundaries. I don’t show specific spots, I show them how to use the different technology that is currently available (GPS chips, PLAT Maps, and websites like the Idaho Fish and Game Hunt Planner) to find out for themselves. I encourage them to find places to hunt, I teach them about the five key elements of habitat so they can find better places that will hold animals. Students will generally stay after class and we will talk about how they would go scout an area that they have located.

I am part of several hunting-related Facebook groups and every year around this time someone starts asking for a place to hunt. Instead of insulting them or scaring them off from hunting entirely, educate them, teach them how to fish. We will all be better off because you took the time to teach them how to locate a place to hunt.
Book your travel where it makes a difference!
Visit the IHEA-USA travel website at:

www.ytbtravel.com/ihea

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New Products for Instructors

Hornady 6.5 Creedmoor American Whitetail Ammunition

Good news for deer hunters, but bad news for deer. Hornady just significantly increased the arsenal for deer hunters by adding the accurate 6.5 Creedmoor caliber to its popular American Whitetail line of ammunition.

Hornady originally developed the 6.5 Creedmoor as a competition-grade match cartridge, a factory load that allowed competition shooters to compete against accurate hand-loaded ammunition. The caliber proved popular and with its light recoil, flat shooting and highly accurate characteristics, it didn’t take long for the experts at Hornady, many of them hunters, to come out with ammunition to bring the same precision-based performance to the hunting field. The 6.5 Creedmoor is now established as an accurate hunting cartridge as well as a competition cartridge.

This latest addition to Hornady’s popular American Whitetail line features Hornady’s 129-grain InterLock bullet with Hornady’s exclusive InterLock ring that keeps the core and jacket locked together during expansion to retain mass and energy, translating into powerful knockdown performance on that deer you have in your sights. Actually, the caliber is well-suited for any North American game, up to and including elk.

For more information about the 6.5 Creedmoor caliber and the American Whitetail line of ammunition, visit Hornady.com.

Lyman Essential Rifle Maintenance Mat

Lyman Products Corporation, a leader and innovator in reloading ammunition, clearly understands proper care and maintenance of firearms is essential to safe hunting, which is why they continue to produce innovative accessories, the latest of which is the aptly named Essential Rifle Maintenance Mat.

The 10- x 36-inch mat (large enough to fit most rifles and shotguns, especially when disassembled for cleaning or other maintenance work) provides a firm, cushioned surface to protect your firearms, including rifles, shotguns and handguns, as you clean or work on them.

It is perfect for those tasks that require assembly or disassembly of firearms, especially with the clever molded-in compartments to keep small parts organized—out of the way, yet handy, ending the age-old problem of lost screws or mislaid parts.

The durable mat is made of non-slip synthetic rubber that is resistant to cleaning and other chemicals. It also cleans easily, so spilled solvents, oils or other substances can be wiped up.

It not only protects your firearm’s finish, it also protects your workbench or other work surface from dings and spills.

For more information about the Essential Rifle Maintenance Mat, visit lymanproducts.com.

Mossberg International SA-20 Field Autoloading Shotgun

Mossberg’s new International SA-20 Field semi-automatic shotgun is a lightweight, soft-shooting 20-gauge ideally suited to shooters new to hunting or target shooting, as well as veteran hunters and shooters. New or experienced, all shooters will be taken in this classically-styled, highly reliable all-purpose shotgun designed with comfort, fit and reliability to allow you to enjoy your day afield without sacrificing performance.

But let’s start with what makes it tick. The SA-20 features a specially-designed gas system that vents excess gases from the fired shotshell, which helps reduce recoil, which eases stress on the shooter and the smooth-operating internal components. The gloss-finished, walnut stock with traditional checkering on the forend and grip complements the polished blue finish of the metalwork, including the 26-inch vent-rib barrel.

Comfortable to carry and shoot, the SA-20 balances well in the hand, making it easier to get on target quickly and accurately, and swing comfortably to stay on target. It can handle 2-3/4-inch or 3-inch shotshells, with a total capacity of five 2-3/4-inch shotshells; four 3-inch shells. (Be sure to follow regulations regarding shotshell capacity.) It also features a reliable and conveniently-located cross-bolt safety and interchangeable choke tube system so you can adjust to changing conditions in
Otis Technology’s new line of cleaners, lubricants and protectants are smart—smart in the sense they are bio-friendly, user-friendly and neither harsh nor disagreeable to use. In short, it’s smart to use them to clean and maintain all your firearms.

Otis, which has focused on firearms cleaning and maintenance since 1985, makes its formulas in the USA. They’ve also introduced new, straight-forward packaging that easily identifies the product and what it is for. No fancy guess-what-it-does names, so it helps you pick the product for your needs.

Take the Long-Term Protectant for example. It is for protecting your firearms from rust and corrosion for up to 12 months. Its bio-based formula displaces moisture and leaves a thin, waxy, protective film. It’s the choice for wrapping up your end-of-the season cleaning sessions before you store your firearms for an extended length of time.

The new line also includes Complete Cleaner, Copper Remover MSR/AR Cleaner; Firearm Surface Prep, Firearm Grease, Firearm Lubricant and the popular Dry Lube. They also have two CLP (Clean, Lubricate, Protect) choices for when you need a quick all-in-one formula. Their tried-and-true O85 CLP and the new biodegradable Bio CLP.

Otis’ new line covers all the bases of firearms cleaning and maintenance. To learn more, visit otistec.com.
Mossberg

Mossberg knows the importance of hunters having the right tools—in the classroom and in the field—which is why they offer IHEA instructors special firearm training sets as well as discounts on the purchase of popular firearms through their Friends of the Family program.

The Mossberg training set provides instructors with the five types of firearm actions covered in Hunter Education: Mossberg 500 pump-action shotgun; Mossberg 930 semi-automatic shotgun; Mossberg Maverick Hunter break-action shotgun; Mossberg International 802 Plinkster bolt-action rifle and Mossberg 464 lever-action rifle. The durable non-firing firearms feature orange stocks and forends, made of rugged synthetic (except for the lever-action, which features hardwood), as well as engraved receivers clearly identifying them as non-firing training firearms.

And through the Friends of the Family program, certified hunter education instructors can receive a discount on a selection of Mossberg’s most popular firearms.

“Mossberg’s focus, throughout the company’s history, has remained on providing exceptional quality and value-added features to our firearms, for hunters and shooters of all ages, while promoting the importance of education and safe gun-handling,” said Chief Executive Officer Iver Mossberg. “Introducing a young or new shooter to recreational shooting or hunting provides an opportunity to teach discipline, responsibility, sportsmanship and a respect for the outdoors; and with firearms that fit properly, such as our Bantam and Super Bantam offerings, the shooting sports can provide years of enjoyment.”

Instructors can learn more by going to the “Special Offers for Instructors” section under the “Instructors” tab at www.IHEA-USA.org.

Otis Technology

Otis Technology, a long-time supporter of hunter education, understands a well-maintained, properly functioning firearm is a safer firearm, which is why they work so hard to develop firearms cleaning and maintenance products, including their famous cleaning systems, kits, chemicals and accessories.

To make their products more available, Otis offers certified Hunter Education Instructors a 40-percent discount off their products, as well as firearm-maintenance instruction sheets, catalogs and other information valuable to Hunter Ed students. Plus, they will include coupons for students to receive discounts too.

“Otis Technology fully supports hunter education programs and teaching the importance of proper firearm handling and safety,” said Heather Bennett, marketing manager for Otis. “These programs, through the dedication of Hunter Education Instructors, help ensure the future of the shooting sports by educating our next generation of hunters. Offering a discount on our products supports instructors with their classroom training and demonstration materials. By giving the instructors the tools they need to teach proper firearm safety and cleaning, they are able to demonstrate these techniques and convey the importance of regular maintenance as a part of responsible gun ownership.”

Instructors can learn more by going to the “Special Offers for Instructors” section under the “Instructors” tab at www.IHEA-USA.org.

Instructor Discount Corner

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.
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**Mossberg® MVP Flex Youth Sporter**
- Item #: 27749
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- Matte Blue Finish
- Bolt Action
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- Spiral Fluted Bolt
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**Remington® 870 Express Youth**
- Item #: 5561
- Caliber: .20 Gauge
- Capacity: 4+1
- BBL: 21"
- Sights: Front Bead
- Matte Black Finish
- Satin Finish Checkered Wood Stock
- Multi-Choke (Mod)
- 2-3 Chambers
- 6 lbs.

**Ruger® American Rifle Compact**
- Item #: 6908
- Caliber: .243
- Capacity: 4+1
- BBL: 18"
- Sights: No Sights
- Black Matte Finish
- Bolt Action
- Black Composite Stock
- Power Bodging
- American Adjustable Trigger
- 12.5" Length of Pull

**Ruger® American Rimfire Rifle Compact**
- Item #: B323
- Caliber: .223
- Capacity: 9+1
- BBL: 18"
- Sights: Front: Fiber Optic Rear: Adjustable Y Slot Folding
- Satin Blue Finish
- Bolt Action
- Black Composite Stock
- Power Bodging
- American Adjustable Trigger
- 11.5" Length of Pull

**Savage® AXIS XP Youth Camo**
- Item #: 1973
- Caliber: .243
- Capacity: 4+1
- BBL: 20"
- Sights: No Sights
- Matte Black Finish
- Bolt Action
- Black Synthetic Stock
- Mossy Oak Break-Up Camo Synthetic Stock
- 3-9/40 Scope
- 12.5" LOP

**Savage® AXIS II XP Youth**
- Item #: 22230
- Caliber: .243
- Capacity: 4+1
- BBL: 20"
- Sights: No Sights
- Matte Black Finish
- Bolt Action
- Black Synthetic Stock
- Synthetic stock with Ruger Tact-Tite Panels
- Adjustable Trigger
- Target Crown
- 13.5" Length of Pull with Scope

**Venture Compact**
- Item #: 3148
- Caliber: .243
- Capacity: 3+1
- BBL: 20"
- Sights: No Sights
- Blue Finish
- Bolt Action
- Black Synthetic Stock
- Adjustable Trigger
- 13.5" Length of Pull with Scope

**Tikka® T3x Lite Compact**
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