

# Vermont Sporting Journal

Volume V, Issue 1 \* July 2020



**Ava & Lyandon Warren  
with Ava's turkey!  
See the story on page 14.**

*We return a portion of pre-tax profits as follows:  
2% Hunting & Fishing Education • 2% Habitat Improvement • 2% Preservation of the Second Amendment*



## We're back!!!!!!

After a 10 year hiatus, The Vermont Sporting Journal is alive and well. As you recall, The Journal was founded in the winter of 2000, and had a good 10 year run. The magazine ceased publication when I took a position with The Vermont Fish and Wildlife as the Training Coordinator for Hunter Education. It was a great 10 year ride with Fish and Wildlife, but in May of last year it was time to enter retirement. The Journal will pretty much look the same, but I feel that we are coming back with a much better publication. I always had great writers, and some of the names are the same, but I have assembled a great team of writers. A huge difference that you will notice is that we have come back with an on-line version. This will be permanent, and a huge change from our printed copies back in the day. We will try to make it as reader friendly as we can.

We have assembled a great group of writers in all aspects of hunting and fishing. This list is ever evolving, and if you are interested in joining our stable of writers, drop us a line. This issue is heavy with turkey stories, as we have just wound up a very successful hunting season. Vermont's turkey population is very healthy, and our hunting is some of the best in the Northeast.

We are always looking for tasteful photos of the outdoors. Submit those at [vermontsportingjournal@gmail.com](mailto:vermontsportingjournal@gmail.com) If you cannot submit those electronically, send them to my attention at PO Box 823, Barre, Vermont. Please include a SASE if you want the photo returned.

So dig in, and enjoy this issue of the Journal. We welcome any and all comments. ■

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## The Vermont Sporting Journal

*is published bimonthly.*

*Advertising, editorial and circulation mailing address is:*

## The Vermont Sporting Journal

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*Letters, manuscripts and photographs should be mail to the above address.*

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## Muzzleloader Antlerless Deer Permit Applications Available

Vermont's muzzleloader season antlerless deer hunting permit applications are available on Vermont Fish and Wildlife's website ([www.vtfishandwildlife.com](http://www.vtfishandwildlife.com)).

MONTPELIER, Vt. -- Vermont's muzzleloader season antlerless deer permit applications are now available on Vermont Fish and Wildlife's website ([www.vtfishandwildlife.com](http://www.vtfishandwildlife.com)). A link to the information and online applications is on the home page.

The Fish and Wildlife Board met on May 20 and set antlerless deer permit numbers for the fall deer hunting seasons.

Hunting for antlerless deer will be allowed statewide during the archery season. One deer of either sex will be allowed during the October 24-25 youth and novice weekend hunt.

The muzzleloader season on October 29-November 1 and December 5-13 will have antlerless permits distributed in 19 of Vermont's 21 Wildlife Management Units, which is estimated to result in 6,385 antlerless deer being taken.

Landowners who post their land may not apply for a landowner priority muzzleloader antlerless deer permit. They are eligible to apply in the regular lottery for an antlerless deer permit.



*VT Fish & Wildlife photo by John Hall*

"The winter of 2020 was relatively easy for deer throughout Vermont," said Nick Fortin, Fish and Wildlife's deer project leader. "However, minimal population growth is expected due to lingering effects of the more-severe winter of 2019. Fawn and yearling age classes appeared to have fewer deer than usual in 2019. Yearling antler beam diameters, fawn

weights and other physical condition metrics are declining or are below optimal levels in many areas, indicating that deer have exceeded the level their habitat can support long-term."

The deadline to apply for a muzzleloader antlerless deer permit is August 12. ■



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## VERMONT ALLOCATES 55 MOOSE HUNTING PERMITS FOR 2020

The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Board voted on April 22 to have 55 moose hunting permits awarded this year. Moose permit applications are now available on the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department's website [www.vtfishandwildlife.com](http://www.vtfishandwildlife.com) for the hunt limited to Vermont's Wildlife Management Unit (WMU) E in the north-eastern corner of the state.

"Moose density in WMU E is more than one moose per square mile, significantly higher than any other part of the state," said Nick Fortin, Vermont Fish and Wildlife's biologist in charge of the moose project. "Moose densities greater than one per square mile support high numbers of winter ticks which negatively impact moose health and survival."

The Fish and Wildlife Department partnered with University of Vermont researchers to conduct a study of moose health and survival in WMU E. The results of this study, in which 126 moose (36 cows, 90 calves) were fitted with GPS tracking collars, clearly showed that chronic high winter tick loads have caused the health of moose in that part of the state to be very poor. Survival of adult moose remained relatively good, but birth rates were very low and less than half of the calves survived their first winter.

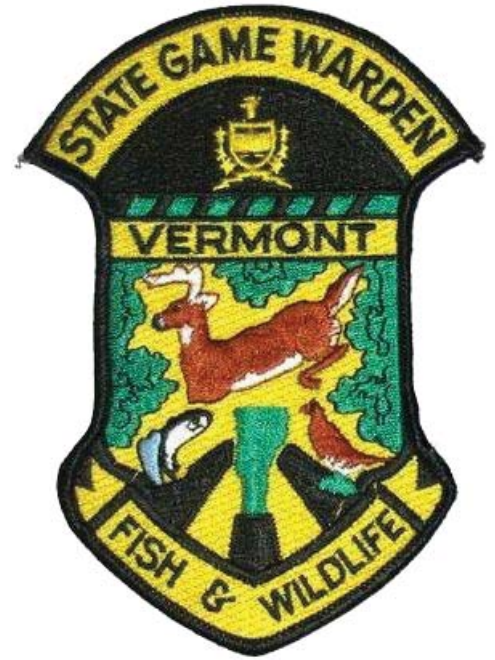
"Research has shown that lower moose densities, like in the rest of Vermont, support relatively few winter ticks that do not impact moose

populations," said Fortin. "Reducing moose density decreases the number of available hosts which in turn decreases the number of winter ticks on the landscape. The goal is to improve the health of moose in WMU E by reducing the impact of winter ticks."

The department will issue 55 either-sex moose hunting permits in WMU E for the moose seasons this October, which is expected to result in the harvest of approximately 33 moose.

"This is a conservative first step to addressing winter tick impacts on moose in WMU E," added Fortin. "Given the poor health of the moose population in that area and a clearly identified cause, we need to take action to address this issue. Without intervention to reduce the moose population, high tick loads will continue to impact the health of moose in that region for many years."

Lottery applications for hunting permits are \$10 for residents and \$25 for nonresidents. The deadline to apply is July 8. Winners of the permit lottery will purchase resident hunting permits for \$100 and nonresident hunting permits for \$350. Nonresident applicants are cautioned that although the current "Stay Home Stay Safe" directive and other travel restrictions, which includes self-quarantine requirements for nonresidents, are currently in place until May 15, this directive could be extended into the fall moose hunting season or expanded upon if required as a result of



COVID-19. Nonresident applicants are encouraged to consider this before applying as permits issued in 2020 will not be held to the following 2021 hunting season.

Hunters who held a permit within the past five years are not eligible to apply for a permit or to buy a bonus point. Also, although a "bonus point freeze" was in place for the 2018 and 2019 moose seasons, due to limited or no moose permits being available for those years, that is no longer in place and applicants must continue to annually submit a moose permit application if they wish to retain their past bonus permits and accumulate subsequent bonus points.

By law, five permits will be available to Vermont military veterans and up to three permits will be available for "Special Opportunity" recipients with life-threatening illnesses, and three permits will be auctioned in accordance with regulations. ■





**Trapper  
or  
Warden...  
Or Both?**

By Lt. David Gregory

It was 1993. I had saved up enough vacation time to take the first three weeks of trapping season off in Vermont. That same year I had applied to be a Vermont State Game Warden. During that trapping season, a few people rode with me on that trapline; one of them being my uncle, who had just retired after 30 years as a Vermont Game Warden.

One day we were chatting about where I was in the hiring process, when he dropped a bomb on me. He said "did you realize that if you become a game warden, then your trapping days are over?" That really took me back--- I was fine with not hunting and fishing as much, but trapping was another story. A couple weeks later I got a letter from Vermont Fish and Wildlife stating that I was not hired at that time, but that my name would remain on a list for the next year or two if they needed more warden trainees. Problem solved.

Two months later I happened to be at Fish and Wildlife headquarters picking up some trapping videos from Hunter Education, when I ran into the Lieutenant Game Warden that was involved in the hiring process. Because of a recent retirement, I was offered a Game warden trainee position that

day and soon thereafter began the 18 months of training to become a Warden.

That fall during trapping season I managed to take a day off on each side of a three day weekend and get some traps out. Hey! I did it! I was a Game warden and managed to trap a few days on my old trapline. Maybe I could do both, maybe not to the extent I once did, but at least enough to still say I was a trapper.

A few months later I was in my garage when a fellow pulled into my driveway and asked if I was the new Game warden. I told him I was and he introduced himself. I was speaking to Jim Colbeth from Newbury Vermont. He was a long time trapper that used a cane to get a round, but still managed an impressive water line each of the years I knew him. He had a few questions for me about trapping laws, and how I interpreted them. He didn't want to run into any problems that fall. Before I knew it, we had talked trapping for a couple of hours, and he invited me to stop by his place and check out the old sugarhouse he converted into a fur shed. I stopped by countless times, tagged fur, talked trapping, or asked him about someone or someplace I was not familiar with.

That old trapper was a lot of help to a new game warden.

That same year I was invited to join another trapper on his coyote line. I met him at his home early one morning and rode the whole line with him and his friend. I learned so much that day--the names of a lot of farmers that I had yet to meet, where they had been seeing strange activity, and the out-of-the-way- hidden routes onto many back fields and pastures. Both trappers were life long residents of the area to which I had been newly assigned and were a wealth of information.

Now, over 20 years later, I've been very fortunate that trapping has been a larger part of my job as a Game Warden than I ever would have imagined. I've been a member of the Department's Furbearer Team, involved with trapper education, and with training new Wardens in trapping as well as taking part in updating numerous trapping regulations. ■

*Editor's note: If I could just offer one piece of advice to trappers, it's to take the initiative that Mr. Colbeth did years ago with me, and meet the warden in your area, especially if they are new. It would be much appreciative and beneficial to all.*

## Turkey Hunting Addiction

by Jeff Blanchard

What is it about turkey hunting that lures people in? Is it the early mornings? Is it because it is typically warmer than during deer season? Or is it the vocal interaction with the turkeys? There are various reasons that people like to turkey hunt. For me, I can't pick just one reason I love it. I think it's because each hunt has its own story or stories to go along with it.

My Uncle is the reason I got into turkey hunting. He had been at it for several years prior to me. He proclaims he's not great at it but his success would say otherwise. He taught me a lot over the first couple of seasons. Calling, roosting areas, and much more. All I could do was soak it up like a sponge. Trying to retain everything he said. I read books, I practiced calling and most of all I studied the turkey's behaviors. Just when you think you've got it all figured out, you learn something new.

One of my memorable moments with my Uncle was when I was fairly new at it. We almost always took a little food and water with us when we would go out. Beef jerky, granola bars, cookies and sometimes a sandwich, things like that. He told me one time to take my food out of its packages and to use either Ziploc sandwich bags or Tupperware style dishes. This is so it doesn't make a lot

of noise and you don't get the crinkling of the wrappers or packaging.

We are sitting in one of our favorite spots that accommodates two people nicely. Two trees side by side looking into an open corner of a hay field. For some reason the turkeys don't roost near the corner we are in but always seem to make their way to this spot during the early morning hours. The day starts to break, and we can hear some hens start to softly vocalize their location in the trees. The are probably 150 yards behind our left shoulder. Right where we knew they would be. Soon after we start hearing some gobbles from the same direction. We knew there were a couple of Toms and a few Jakes in the group. The turkeys fly down into the field up behind us where they mill around for food for a bit. Now there's one of two options for this scenario. They can either walk towards where we are or they can turn the other direction and make their way through the hardwoods. This day they decided the wooded route would be their choice.

After a couple hours of not hearing or seeing anything my Uncle decides it's time for some breakfast. He usually has a bologna sandwich along with some other treat. This particular day it was something he had bought from

the store. He reaches into his backpack and grabs a bag. He proceeds to pull it out and tries to open it. All the while there's crinkling and crackling of the plastic bag. I begin to laugh, as he finally gets the bag open. I leaned over and whispered to him "you know, a wise old man once told me to put all of my food into a Ziploc sandwich bag or a Tupperware container so it won't make much noise". We both begin to laugh. He hits me on the arm and calls me a choice name.

Quite honestly I don't even remember if either of us shot a turkey that day or not. In my opinion not every hunt is about tagging a bird. It's about the experience. The moments you can share with someone else or even a story when you were by yourself. Sure, I've got stories about the actual success of shooting a Tom, but for me the reason I hunt turkey is more than just that. It's teaching myself, teaching my kids, teaching a class or seminar for Vermont Fish and Wildlife and about the actual hunt. Next time I'll share a successful hunting story from one of my many adventures. ■





# Bear Hunting an Awesome Opportunity

by Michael Jolly

I started bear hunting over hounds in 2018. I met my first bear houndsmen at the Groton State Forest Nature Center. I always wanted to try bear hunting over hounds, but I never knew anyone with hounds. I've hunted deer and turkey hunted with a mentor ever since I was nine, but this is something totally different.

In August of 2018 I met Butch Spear currently president of the Vermont Bear Hound Association. I met Butch at the Groton State Forest Nature Center. Butch was educating the public on human bear conflict, and ways to prevent nuisance bears from getting into your chicken coop and other types of problems. At the end of the talk; my parents and I waited to talk to Butch. I asked Butch if there was any possible way of me being able to go see what bear hunting with hounds was really like. Butch told me I was more than welcome to hop in the truck anytime he goes hunting.

On August 18, 2018, I went bear hunting for my very first time. The very first time I went out I was hooked. Although my first time out we didn't see a bear; we did see one though! There's just something about listening to the sound of the hounds that words can't describe. Being able to see the dogs work and do what they enjoy is just an incredible experience. The adrenaline you get when you see a bear and listen to the dogs bay is an incredible feeling. If you ever get a chance, I encourage you to get in touch with your local houndsman, and see if you can go out hunting with them.

During the year of 2018 I went with

Butch bear hunting over twenty times. Before I ever went out bear hunting with hounds; I wondered if it was really ethical. Going with Butch answered my question. It is very ethical. Those hounds are telling the bear by barking; that they are coming after it. A bear can run 25 mph; while a hound can only run approximately 14 mph.

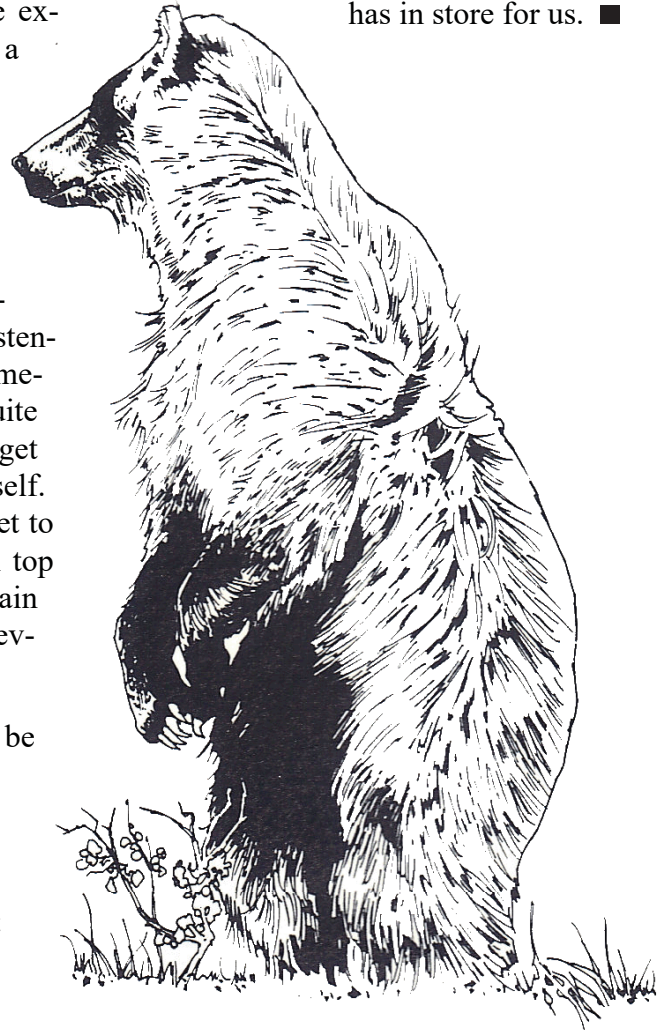
I shot my very first bear in October of 2018. It was a two year old nuisance bear that had been damaging a farmers corn. I still today beam with pride that I shot my bear over hounds. I say I beam with pride. I want to tell you more about that. I don't enjoy taking an animal's life, but I do enjoy the whole experience. Shooting a bear is beneficial, because you can utilize the hide, and you can enjoy the meat.

The best part is getting outdoors, and listening to the hounds. Something that you can't quite describe unless you get to enjoy it for yourself. The sights that you get to see when you are on top of different mountain ridges is just unbelievable.

I was fortunate to be able to take a bear my first year bear hunting. Something that's admirable about Butch is that he only let 3-4 bears at the most; be killed

over his hounds in a year. We do not kill sows with cubs. We try our best not to shoot any sows at all. When we see a bear there is a lot of thought that goes into it whether we will kill that bear or not. We want to make sure we keep the bear population thriving.

Butch and I have had some awesome experiences and have great memories. One of my favorite memories was when I shot my second bear in 2019. A landowner offered to drive the bear off the mountain with their four wheeler. Good landowner relationship is something that we strive for. I'm looking forward to what the 2020 bear hunting season has in store for us. ■



## Fishing Memories

by Aron Tomlinson

When I think back to my childhood growing up in rural Vermont, many of my best memories include my time outdoors. My brothers (I am the youngest of three), neighbors and I were always swimming in the Waits River, riding bikes, fishing, shooting hoops, sliding, playing wiffle ball, or just trekking through the woods with a BB gun or .22. I always look back with a fondness during that period in my life despite the many bumps and bruises that came with it.

The lessons I learned during those years helped me with my direction in life as well as developed my interests. One of the interests that has continued to grow is my love for fishing.

Growing up in the 70's and 80's had its advantages; riding in the back of a pickup, drinking water from the hose, the Six Million Dollar Man, and being gone for most of a day fishing in local streams. Every spring and summer my brothers and I would spend countless hours at local brooks fishing for trout. We would start by making our own fishing "pole" with a branch and some monofilament wrapped around the end of it. We would first look for the right apple tree branch (the same kind we used to sling apples at each other with) and make our pole. It had to have just the right amount of flex, but still sturdy enough to lift a brook trout out of the water and flop it on the bank beside us. We would tie on a small Eagle Claw trout hook and begin our search for the plumpest worms we could find. We usually went to our parents, or grandparents gardens with a shovel or pitch fork to start digging. Of course, the pitch fork was the optimum tool as it wouldn't cut the worms in half! After we had our gear,

which consisted of the freshly made pole, a few worms in a green metal container that hooked on our belt, we would head to the local stream. We would spend hours walking the banks, or in the stream if it was big enough, fishing for trout. Of course, not all our time was spent fishing. We often took short breaks to throw small rocks at each other, or try to knock one another into the stream (as long as it wouldn't disrupt the pool we were fishing). One of our favorite distractions was the majorly annoying grass whistle that we (and every other kid in New England) made by holding a long fat piece of grass between our thumbs and blowing through it until we were light headed. When we had enough shenanigans we would bring back our catch to show off to the adults and then proceed to clean them and get them ready for the next meal, or maybe the freezer.

Despite the many hours I spent fooling around in and around the water when I was a kid, I may fish more now. These days I fish mostly for bass (I wish someone would let the thieving Northern Pike and Pickerel population know I am not there for them). Although the carefree days of childhood and horsing around with my brothers has passed, I have a new perspective and appreciation for fishing. There are many things I relish about the sport, like the planning and preparation that goes into a day on the water. Checking the forecast, cloud cover and wind conditions, along with time of year to help determine what may be the best option to catch quality fish. Of all the great things about fishing, probably my favorite part is early morning on the water. It is peaceful and picturesque, and I

love the anticipation of what the day will bring.

My gear has come a long way since those days fishing with my brothers and our homemade poles. Long gone are the days of night crawlers, so serious thought goes into the many options of artificial baits that may coax a bass into a strike. One of the most rewarding parts of fishing is trying to figure out what may get a fish to bite, and have it work. Of course, there are those rare times when the stars align and you can throw just about anything and get some kind of activity, whether it is a reaction or feeding strike. But for the most part you have to think about what you are using, and how you are using it. You also have to consider which type of bass you are targeting, Largemouth or Smallmouth when determining what your presentation may be. If things are slow you may need to make adjustments, something as subtle as moving from

8-pound test to 6-pound line as a leader tied onto your main line. Maybe it is switching a color, speed, or sometimes just a different presentation altogether may be what it takes to trigger some activity. And then there are the days where it seems nearly impossible to figure out a pattern. You grind out hours on the water for a few bites. I have developed an appreciation for the challenge of trying to figure out the many considerations that go into putting fish in the boat. This is especially exciting (and terribly frustrating) when tournament fishing. Although there are days when I come off the water wondering how I just spent an entire day with nothing to show but a sore lower back and high frustration level, I have still never had a bad day fishing. ■



## From One Tiny Spark by Chris Ingram

My introduction to hunting and the outdoors started in a typical fashion like so many others as I followed in my father's footsteps in the deer woods of southwestern Wisconsin. As an eager and imaginative child, I developed a profound fondness for the stories he brought home from deer camp. From the triumphant victories to the embarrassing mishaps to the recycled tales shared between friends over the years together; I knew there was something special about their time deer hunting. My wonder and curiosity turned into reality the year I was old enough to venture off into the woods with my dad for my first hunting experience. Many years would pass between that initial outing and the moment when I stepped back into the hunting realm as an adult onset sportsman in my late twenties after moving to New England. But the spark that was ignited as a child was never extinguished, it flickered for decades, just waiting to be fueled, and it was that first introduction for me, and for many, that can forever alter the path of a young person's life, initiating a lifetime dedication and connection to the outdoors, conservation, and our hunting lineage.

Commencing my career in the shooting sports as an inexperienced adult, what I lacked in success, I made up for in drive and desire. I developed a strong urge to share my passion for the outdoors and inspire and motivate others to get involved. Amidst a changing and sometimes volatile political climate that renounces guns and hunting and discovering the shift in mentality with a decline in numbers of hunters going afield, I had to take a stand. I started volunteering with

our state wildlife agency, local conservation groups, and youth programs to construct and organize community events focused on creating opportunities for our youth to discover the marvels of hunting and shooting sports. After putting myself out there into new circles and connecting with other supportive individuals and organizations, I met Scott Rouleau from New England Upland and the Merrimack Valley NAVHDA chapter and made plans to attend their upcoming summer youth event.

You might think it would be difficult to fill a roster of interested youngsters, boys and girls ranging in ages from 12-16, willing to give up a summer day to attend a full day of workshops and demonstrations, but we had fourteen individuals lined up, eager and ready to learn. Many of these attendees had no previous exposure to firearms or bird hunting. After a short lesson in the safe handling of an air-pistol and proper use of personal protective equipment, things kicked off with a bang as youth participants shot at balloons taped to a target, each balloon containing a mentor and their dog's name inside. Once all attendees were introduced to their mentor and canine companion, Scott led an instructional talk on firearm safety and proper gun handling methods. With confidence and curiosity brewing in our crew, we split into two groups; one headed to the trap range, the other to begin dog handling activities.

I followed the first group down to the trap range, where our youngsters took

turns on stand and their hand at shooting clay targets. Mentors carefully coached individuals, improving their form and techniques and within minutes, these crack shots were breaking clays like expert sharpshooters. Over in the training yard, handlers surrendered their leashes to their eager counterparts who began tossing bumpers, learning voice commands and hand signals and leading the dogs onto the training table and onto place boards. The cheerful smirks and snickers displayed by these quick studies confirmed their acknowledg-

"I developed a profound fondness for the stories he brought home from deer camp. From the triumphant victories to the embarrassing mishaps..."

ment for the joy and delight that is found in working with a bird dog.

After lunch, our two groups carried off to their afternoon events; one to the pond for water work and one to the field for a guided bird hunt. With the first group down at the pond, we observed the true essence of the versatile hunting dog as the dogs displayed impressive water entries retrieving launched ducks. The young handlers ordered their first marks and used hand signals to direct their dogs to the birds and deliver them back to hand. Later, I joined several guided gunners on their first ever live, planted bird hunts. Emotions were riding high as they assembled the day's lessons into a practical application. Volunteers

➔ **SPARK continuing on page 9**

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**SPARK** continued from page 7

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placed chukars into hiding cover while mentors set out with their mentee and trusted pointing dog. The dogs worked the cover under command as we learned about setting the dog up for success nosing into the wind. As the dogs went on point, the hunters were placed into safe shooting stances and given instructions on how to safely navigate from the flush to the shot. As the mentor stepped in to flush the bird, as in any live hunting scenario, some birds offered the perfect flight for our youngsters to shoot, yet other birds flew low and over the dog or up and over another group of hunters, rendering a safe shot impossible. In these instances, our young gunners displayed an extraordinary use of discretion, refraining from pulling the trigger and consciously choosing not to take an unsafe shot. It was in this staged exercise that the most character building was witnessed amongst these new hunters. There are prudent life lessons experienced here that these youngsters will not soon forget. It is in these sessions where invaluable skills and traits are instilled in a young person, essential qualities that will foster their positive attitudes as adults later in life. Discipline, control, adaptation, respect and perseverance are just a few of the notable accolades imprinted on that day.

Youth events such as these offer a safe and controlled environment which cannot always be demonstrated in a regular hunting situation. They also provide the perfect venue to thoroughly convey the various aspects of what compels us to bird hunting and our hunting dogs. After reflecting on the day and gathering testimony from our adolescent troop, it is apparent that our goal to expose them

to a new outdoor experience was a total success. Individuals who had never been around firearms or bird hunting shared their appreciation for trying something new, overcoming challenges and being proud of their accomplishments. Some of our teens

“I will always attribute my deep affinity and reverence for the outdoors to that first hunting experience with my father.”

expressed direct plans to pursue upland hunting and bird dogs in their immediate future. Still others who hadn't bagged a bird or broken a target, while some might consider unsuccessful, had expressed pride and gratitude for their attempts, knowing that sometimes things in life don't end up the way we want them to. It is often these introductory encounters to hunting that can initiate an enduring enthusiasm and lifelong pursuit of the hunting lifestyle. And once an individual develops a passion for our cherished sporting traditions, the game birds we pursue and the habitat they require, they will fight fervently to preserve that legacy and become ambassadors for our cause.

I will always attribute my deep affinity and reverence for the outdoors to that first hunting experience with my father. It was a simple and selfless act to include me in his narrative and I am grateful to carry on that piece of him and the memories of our time spent together. As I work diligently to create and nurture my own upland legacy, I know the future of bird hunting

and hunting dogs lies on the shoulders of ourselves now and the next generation. Without these opportunities to entry, our traditions have nowhere to go and the voiceless birds and habitat have no one to protect them. It does not require great effort and elaborate planning; often, it is the simple act of including our young family members along on our outdoor excursions, making them feel welcomed, valued and appreciated. It's also important to impress upon them there is more to our sport than killing birds.

Maybe it's the birds and habitat, maybe it's the guns and target shooting, maybe it's the dog handling or perhaps another component; there is a piece of it for everyone and it takes all of us in a united front to continue this movement. You never know what significant impact can arise from a little time spent together in the woods. It could be that first flush of feathers, the first time witnessing a dog slam into point, the first time hearing a spring grouse drumming or observing the mesmerizing sky dance of a courting woodcock; it can all boil down to one pivotal moment, one single instant, for that young person, that transforms them and sets them on a lifelong course as an ardent bird hunter, dog owner and committed conservationist. So, I encourage everyone to consider taking a kid hunting this season, openly share your most cherished hunting stories with your children, invite your family along on your next training session and welcome those in your community to join your local chapter at your next outing, our future depends on it. ■



## Why do you hunt? by Mike Covey

I often hesitate to answer complex questions too fast, at least when I recognize them as such. Quick answers to philosophical questions are often far too simple and may be wrong or open to misinterpretation. A couple folks have said we hunt for pleasure, but I would submit that the truth is far more complex. I think what we may, in a hasty answer, simplify to pleasure; is in truth a potpourri.

Challenge, communion, spirituality, camaraderie, focus, humility, jubilation, honor, respect, introspection, hunger, intellect, instinct, dedication, discipline, and even a degree of sorrow; these are all portions of what brings to the field in pursuit of game. This is much more grand than simple pleasure. Rather, it is a wholeness which grips us when we are working upon the landscape. A completion which we derive from the tactile bond with the lands which sustain us and the bounty they provide.

I watched the joy in a rabbit dog as she

worked, and felt it reflected in myself as I dropped to the tension of the hunt, where every muscle was taut, every sense tuned, every reflex wired to respond to the unexpected appearance of fast moving prey in tight quarters. I realized that we achieve joy when we become immersed. The rabbits won that day, but I didn't go home empty handed. After so many years, the day still carried a lesson and growth, and that is the truest measure of success.

There is something asunder in those who hate us for this connection. A hole they don't know exists from the loss of that ancient portion of themselves which understands that perhaps we need to be wild at times. That there's a piece of each of us handed down from a time before convenience stores and fast food.

A brilliant friend who inadvertently drove me to unfamiliar places in life where I hope I've been able to do good did so with a simple concept. He once mentioned an idea of "do-

mesticated humans", those who had so lost contact with their history and the landscape that they accepted servitude to the convenience store, the television, and the couch. We've all been domesticated to a degree, much like that beagle; but also like her, when we enter that state of singular, wild focus, it frees us from the minutiae of our modern gilded cages, connects us to that which sustains us, and reminds us we are whole.

To hunt, to gather, to trap. These are part of the human experience. We connect and interact with our world as a functioning part of the ecosystem. Some appeal to us on the basis of the idea that it is wrong to embrace our place as predators. The difference between humans and wild predators is that we have developed methods to humanely dispatch our prey. We are thoughtful, when it is appropriate to make a harvest we are efficient, and the overwhelming majority of us are reverent. To hunt, trap, and fish are natural birthrights of all humanity, and animal welfare is a primary tenet of those who accept that privilege. Trapping and hunting regulations are designed with the animal's general welfare in mind and wildlife as a whole benefits from our stewardship.

Hunters, trappers, and anglers ARE the single payer system for the health of our nations wildlife and we have embraced that role for nearly 100 years. WE sought laws to protect our natural populations in a time where the general population didn't care, WE ended market hunting and asked

*Mike lives in Williamstown on the five acres of "the north pasture" his great-grandparents bought in 1925 and built on when they retired from farming. He raised a son in the house the family built with timber they sawed off the land, and occasionally still makes syrup in the arch his great-grandfather bought new. He's been a mechanic by trade and by necessity, a hand on a several farms, made sugar, driven truck, and cut wood in the snow with duct tape on his boot and a bread bag inside it. He hunts, traps, and fishes, pretty much in that order. He has worked with several conservation groups within Vermont, coordinated with national groups, and continues to advocate for the sporting community.*

*In short, he is of his place. This place. Vermont- and that's a point of pride.*

WHY continued from page 10

that seasons be established and regulated, and we did all this in a time where animal rights wasn't even an idea.

In anthropology it is considered poor form to attack the traditions of a culture, yet that is the playbook of those opposed to the outdoor lifestyle. They choose not to partake of our pursuits which is their prerogative, the problem occurs when they presume to dictate our lifestyle to us based on their emotional response to a dynamic they don't comprehend. They choose to watch the world from outside of the bubble they have placed it in, whereas we are a functional part of it. From outside the bubble one can display a concern for it, but for those of us who are in there and engaged, it is our greatest concern. I feel sympathy for folks who blindly hate the outdoor sports. They are segregating themselves from an amazing level of understanding and involvement with their heritage and environment.

Those who oppose active wildlife management run the gamut from the generally misinformed, to the blatantly disingenuous. They try to incite negative emotion toward outdoorsmen and women while hiding the facts. Knowing that they are misinforming people and cannot bear scrutiny, they steadfastly refuse to allow intelligent dialogue in social media. They block and delete anyone who provides a counter to their false narrative. Their entire position is based on ensuring that people know as little truth as possible and can be coaxed to an emotional crescendo. The best way we as sportsmen and women


can combat their narrative is with facts. Don't get drawn into an emotional back and forth, because the facts make the case. Once those are established, leaven the facts with the sense of awe, the understanding, and the connection we all enjoy from our pursuits.

The sportsmen and women of Vermont are a mix of ethnicities, backgrounds, and professions. They all have different pursuits, and contribute to their communities, both natural and human, in different ways. Whether it be the trapper helping his neighbor mitigate property damage, the hunter giving the family down the street a share of his bounty, the fisherman working on a stream restoration project, the crusader fighting to clean up Lake Champlain, one of the many state associations who provide scholarships to conservation camps and college students, or the hunting/trapping instructors who volunteer their time to teach what it means to be a conservationist, these people all have a few things in common- their concern for the wildlife of Vermont, the ecosystems and habitat which

support them, and the education of the next generation of stewards. They volunteer their time, open their wallets, and work the year around for the betterment of all.

All these reasons and more go into the answer of why we hunt, so the next time you're sitting in the woods watching the leaves fall or waiting for a sunrise, dig beneath the surface, find the reasons it appeals to your soul, and when someone asks you, remember that the simple answer may not resonate with them; but the deeper ones likely will. ■

*"Maybe stalking the woods is as vital to the human condition as playing music or putting words to paper. Maybe hunting has as much of a claim on our civilized selves as anything else. After all, the earliest forms of representational art reflect hunters and prey. While the arts were making us spiritually viable, hunting did the heavy lifting of not only keeping us alive, but inspiring us. To abhor hunting is to hate the place from which you came, which is akin to hating yourself in some distant, abstract way." ~ Steven Rinella*




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## Trap Line by Randy Barrows

The old saying goes if you do not like something wait a moment and things will change. In the world of trapping this has really reared its ugly head.

I started my line last November with high hopes. One week in and winter reared her ugly force. With three to five inches of snow every other day and cold temps the streams froze right up solid. Being a older fellow and not a big fan of chopping ice I quickly gave up on the water line. Out came the land line and it was still a struggle. In the short time I trapped I did catch a couple of coyotes and a red and grey fox.

By the time deer season ended I pulled the line and called it a season.

It was still a fun season as I got to try different sets using different baits and lures. When the snow piles up the critters are always hungry and I quickly learned what peaked their interest.

Around early February, NAFA announced they were done, kaput, the end. Years of high expectations and dismal results financially ruined them. Last word was they were trying to figure out how to pay trappers what they were owed and were going to file bankruptcy. Not the end of the world but a definite kick in the keister.

Luckily Fur harvesters stepped up to the plate and bought all of NAFA's buildings and employed most of their employees. I have dealt with Fur Har-

vesters for 50 years so this was good news.

Normally in mid-February Fur Harvesters operate a pick up route where you can meet a agent and get your fur shipped. About this time the big "C" reared its ugly head. Pick up routes were cancelled, and all auctions worldwide were canceled.

SOOOOO, what to do now? There are still ways to deal with your fur. If you fur is still in the round a couple of wraps in news print and pop them in the freezer. If you fur is in the grease

around the states that buy fur if you choose to ship it .Groenwold out of Wisconsin in one outlet.

More locally you can call Stephen Rankin at 207-628-4503. I just got off the phone with him and he can still help out with beaver castor. His truck is loaded as we spoke for his final delivery but keep his number for this fall just in case. Another avenue is Petska Furat [www.petskafur.net](http://www.petskafur.net). Searching the net there many more out there just give them a call.

Things were looking really good for trappers this year. Prices were starting to tic up a bit as promised and the cold worldwide had raised the demand for fur products.

I am sorry all of this was doom and gloom but it is what it is. One fellow stopped by the shop and was quite upset about the whole situation. I asked him how much he made last year deer hunting? After a long pause he looked at me and replied "you got me there!"

If you are a serious trapper and do this sport thinking you are going to make a lot of money you will be greatly disappointed. It's all about matching wits with critters and enjoying the outdoors. I have trapped for 50 plus years and have seen good years and bad years but most of all I trap !

When you do go out, bring a kid. They are our future!!!! ■

*Randy and his wife Diane own and operate Arrowhead Trapping Supply in Milton, Vermont. Randy has trapped for 53 years, is the Chittenden County Director for the Vermont Trappers Association and past President, member of National Trappers Association, Fur Takers of America. Randy also teaches Trapper Education in Vermont. Randy and Diane can be reached at 802-355-7496.*

fold it leather against leather, wrap in a couple of layers of news print and in the freezer. If your fur is finished, again a couple layers of news print and in the freezer. Fur will hold up for a couple of years frozen.

No freezer is a problem but not the end of the world. If you have local crafters in your area, they are always looking for fur items. If you can search the web there are dealers

## Vermont Moose Hunt Application Deadline, July 8

The deadline to apply for a Vermont moose hunting permit is July 8.

Moose permit applications are available on the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department's website [www.vtfishandwildlife.com](http://www.vtfishandwildlife.com) for the hunt limited to Vermont's Wildlife Management Unit (WMU) E in the northeastern corner of the state.

"Moose density in WMU E is more than one moose per square mile, significantly higher than any other part of the state," said Nick Fortin, Vermont Fish and Wildlife's biologist in charge of the moose project. "Moose densities greater than one per square mile support high numbers of winter ticks which negatively impact moose health and survival."

The Fish and Wildlife Department partnered with University of Vermont

researchers to conduct a study of moose health and survival in WMU E. The results of this study, in which 126 moose (36 cows, 90 calves) were fitted with GPS tracking collars, clearly showed that chronic high winter tick loads have caused the health of moose in that part of the state to be very poor. Survival of adult moose remained relatively good, but birth rates were very low and less than half of the calves survived their first winter.

"Research has shown that lower moose densities, like in the rest of Vermont, support relatively few winter ticks that do not impact moose populations," said Fortin. "Reducing moose density decreases the number of available hosts which in turn decreases the number of winter ticks on the landscape. The goal is to improve

the health of moose in WMU E by reducing the impact of winter ticks."

The department will issue 55 either-sex moose hunting permits in WMU E for the moose seasons this October, which is expected to result in the harvest of 30-35 moose.

Lottery applications for hunting permits are \$10 for residents and \$25 for nonresidents. Winners of the permit lottery will purchase resident hunting permits for \$100 and nonresident hunting permits for \$350.

Nonresident applicants are cautioned that COVID-19 travel restrictions could be extended into the fall moose hunting season. Nonresident applicants are encouraged to consider this before applying as permits issued in 2020 will not be held to the following 2021 hunting season. ■

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## Deer Ages Available on VTF&W Website

Hunters who provided the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department with a tooth from their deer can now find out how old their deer was by visiting the department's website [www.vtfishandwildlife.com](http://www.vtfishandwildlife.com).

A total of 2,489 teeth were received from successful rifle season hunters. When added to the 1,148 deer examined by biologists during the youth and rifle seasons, the department was able to get accurate ages for 3,637 deer.

"We are thankful to the thousands of hunters who supported our deer man-

agement efforts by providing us with a tooth from their deer," said Deer Project Leader Nick Fortin. "This [age information](#) helps us estimate deer population size and assess the health of deer. It is also critically important for understanding the effects of new hunting regulations on the deer population and buck age structure."

The oldest deer harvested were a pair of 17-year-old does taken in Rockingham and Fairfax. The oldest buck was 10 years old and was taken in Shaftsbury. ■

**Remove one of the middle incisors including the root.**





# Youth Turkey Season

by Ava Warren

My name is Ava and I am twelve years old. I had the most exciting turkey hunt I have ever been on this year with my dad. I have been hunting for a few years, but I have never experienced a hunt quite like this one.

It all started at 3:45 in the morning when my dad, Lyandon, got me up out of bed and I went downstairs to have a bowl of cheerios. After I ate, I got my clothes and put on three pairs of pants and five shirts and headed out the door.

When we got to our spot where we had watched turkeys go up into the woods the night before, we laid out pine branches that we cut down the previous night and put them in front of and behind us at our spot. We got situated and sat there in the silence, only the peepers to listen to. After listening to the peepers for half an hour, we heard the first gobble of a long-beard. After waiting there for what seemed like one minute, we started to hear dozens and dozens of gobbles from several different long-beards.

Thirty minutes of listening to the turkeys gobble on the roost, the first hen flew out of the trees. She walked around a little and then the first long-beard flew down, then another, then another. It seemed like it was raining-turkeys! Six of the long beards had gotten into a group and were slowly heading towards the decoys we had set up.

The long-beards were coming in front of us, when we heard a huge long-beard right behind us! He was strutting over to the decoys. You could hear his wings dragging the ground because he was so fanned up! The hen that was in front of him walked right in front of us and looked at us.

She tilted her head, looked at the decoys, and then kept walking. Then came the big boy. He walked slowly and majestically towards the decoys and walked eight feet in front of us! My heart was pounding like multiple guns firing off and you could really hear it. Dad was whisper-shouting, "Shoot him, shoot him!!" I told him to shhhhh, because he would scare



the other turkeys away! I slowly raised the gun up and slowly pulled the trigger on the long-beard's head and shot him!!! Seven long-beards entered the field and only six left. I wanted to get up and scream, but Dad told me to not because getting up and screaming would make the other turkeys so scared, they would not come back today. He said he did not want to ruin this spot for other people.

After the turkeys left, I did get up and scream! This was my second turkey in two days! That is the best part of living on the border of two states: two turkeys!!! This turkey was so big. It's spurs were an inch long, it's beard was eight inches long, and it's fan was huge. I have been on many turkey hunts, but none quite like this one. ■



## To Build or Not to Build

by Bret Ladeau

By background I grew up in a hunting family but didn't start turkey hunting until 1997, at age 29. For some that is a long time ago and for other veteran turkey hunters I am still a newbie. Either way, I am a turkey hunting addict and the more I turkey hunt the more I want to turkey hunt. While I am successful at it, I will never consider myself an expert, but I am about as passionate as anyone regarding the challenge of calling in a turkey and sounding as real as possible. It is by far my favorite type of hunt, the interaction with the old long spurred demon draws me out of bed at some crazy hours for a month or more straight and has helped develop some lifelong friends from around the country. I spend as much time as possible in the spring woods and enjoy mentoring and spending time with as many people as I can during the season as well.

While I use all types of calls the mouth call or diaphragm is my focus in today's article. I have always been proficient with a mouth call as I called birds in from my first hunt using one and still have success using them. Again, I am no expert but being proficient is good enough for me. I have always used calls that someone else built, whether it be from some of the major call builders that you can find at the big sporting goods shops or some smaller custom call builders. I've always been fascinated with the mouth call and had considered building my own from the early days but never quite dared. The longer I hunted the more desire I had to give call building a try. I have built some wingbone calls for several years and have given most of them away to friends and sold

a few. They are time-consuming and while I enjoy it, I have not built many over the past few years.

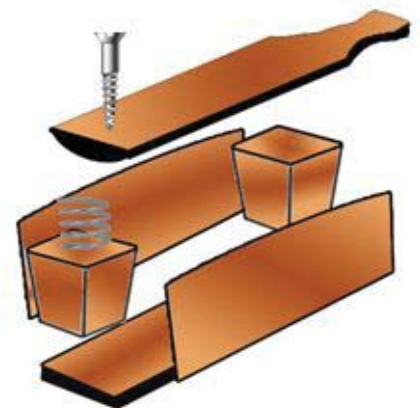
In my early days of hunting I had no idea where to get a jig or press and/or call supplies. It was easier for me to use a call someone else built. However, today mouth call supplies and jigs and presses are a lot easier to find. I watched other people build their own calls for several years. Even some of my good hunting friends made their own. I used calls from almost all of them. Finally, three years ago, I bought a small hand jig, tape cutter, and ordered some mouth call building supplies. I figured how hard could it be? Well, it's harder than it looks. The first several calls I built didn't sound much like a turkey and putting the cuts in proved to be a challenge for these none surgically trained hands. The science of call building goes deeper than I thought. The cuts are just part of the process. You also need to know the side tension and back tension to build consistent calls. Stacking the reeds is also a learning curve and knowing how close or how far a way to stack them is all trial and error. Just like anything though, the more I built the easier it got, and my cuts started looking better and the calls started sounding better as well.

Last year I decided to give a few away and even sold a couple as I thought I was making some decent sounding calls. Come to find out the turkey agreed, at least a few of them did. I ended up getting a few pictures sent to me from several people telling me they called their birds in with my calls. I have learned that as a call builder this is the biggest reward,

being part of someone else success. This year, I got even more serious about building calls and posted on my Facebook page that I was selling calls this year if anyone was interested. To my surprise, several people bought them and this year I have gotten even more pictures of successful hunts with my calls.

Another reason I chose to build my own calls was that I could experiment with different stretches, cuts, and materials to try to find that "perfect" call for me. The search continues and even if I find it, I doubt I will be ever completely satisfied. I want to sound as much like a turkey as I can and while I am decent on a call, I find that I am not nearly as good as I'd like to be. The challenge of becoming a better caller keeps me building calls and experimenting which should also help me become a better call builder.

So, if you are considering building your own calls, I would say go for it. It's rewarding on many levels and it helps you pass the off-season hours while we all are impatiently waiting for the season to arrive. Plus, it will make you a better caller and you might get a few new friends from the deal too. ■





# Getting Started With Fly Fishing

By David Aronson

The day I started fly fishing was a truly memorable experience. I had been working as a chef in Stowe and had hire a new Sous Chef (John) from Montana. One evening on the line while preparing a meal of Braised Rabbit for a guest the conversation between John and I shifted to fishing, and he asked if I had ever Fly Fished. Well one can only imagine the look on his face when I told him I had not and by the very next day we had loaded his canoe and set off on an adventure to a high elevation Brook Char pond for a lesson. It will go on to be an outing I will never forget and a formative change in My life.

Now, all that said, I left that day with a headful of questions and began to delve into equipping myself with gear which was reasonable to start with. I will tell you that while the choices I had made were not what I would say ideal, I was able to learn from them and catch few fish albeit not without discovering the follies of sub par equipment.

So lets try to flesh this out simply to get a fair and smooth start.

## Rod Weight

First off, lets start with Rods. Rods have a weight designation, i.e. 2 weight, 3 weight. etc they can run up to as much as 15 weights if not more. This is a designation to help the angler decide what rod will work for the best situation. The smaller the weight designation the smaller the fish and the stream or water body. There are exceptions to this rule but thats for later. In this state most anglers work with 4 and 5 weight rods for average streams and up to 6,7 and above for throwing streamers, fishing bigger

rivers like the Connecticut and fighting bigger often migratory or toothy fish.

What I would say to start, is think 4 and 5 weights for trout and 6-7 weight for bass and lake fish. Of course, if your targeting Pike you'll wanna think 8-10 weight.

## Rod Length

Next we move onto length. average rod size is between 7 -10 feet and many anglers use a 9 foot 5 weight rod for trout, which is versatile for Nymphing, Dries and Streamers. The longer rods allow for more reach over the water and the shorter rods can be nice for working in tight tree lined streams. I fish a 6'6" 2 weight for Brook Char and love it.

## Rod Manufacturers

There are many manufacturers out there producing moderately priced rods but Temple Fork and Echo are both affordable and well reputed. Be sure you get a rod with a warranty. Tips break often, snag breaks or whacking the rod with a weighted fly during a poorly executed cast will make you glad you have one.

## Rod Action Factor

The last consideration you may come across when looking at rods will be the "Action Factor" its a gauge of rod flex. Just think fast flex for dries and slow flex for heavier rigs (like nymphs and streamers) with Mid flex being a "do all" kind of rod which is a good starting point.

## Reels

Next we look at reels, anyone will tell you that a Plueger Medalist is the only reel you need when getting started and I would tend to agree. A basic clic and pawl drag system will keep you humble and teach you how to play fish off the reel while having a device to hold line. When you're ready to step up you can look at any reel with a disc drag system or really go for it with a cork drag which is extremely smooth forgiving when it comes to line breakage. I have reels of all types, click and pawl, disc drag, cork drag, at all price points, but I will say that Orvis makes a simple disc drag reel (clearwater) that is an entry model that works well for me on Salmon and Bass (both the fresh and saltwater persuasion). Just be sure to always wash your gear down after salt it will ruin equipment thats

→ **FLY FISHING** continued on page 12

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not rated for it. Lastly mid to large arbor reels will keep your line running straight without odd coils to foul your cast and for presentation sake. Most older reels have small arbors which makes your modern line coil like a plate of spaghetti.....yet there's something special about old reels and I'd never say no to one. In some cases seek them out for their beautiful machining.

## Backing

Continuing on with the breakdown we come to backing, Its a secondary line that runs from the reel to your main fly line, which gives you piece of mind if you're into a slab of a fish and it has ripped you down to the backing, most times you can follow the fish but a minimum of 75-100 yards of 20 lb Dacron backing is ideal and many put on 200 yards which never in all my time of steelhead fishing have I ever seen my second 100 yards of Dacron.....yet it does help take up more space on the arbor keeping your line straight and is also a great way to adjust a well balanced rod. Meaning, when you have your system all together, a well balanced rod with the reel in place and the line out the the tip of the rod should balance on your finger at the head or just off the cork. This makes for an ideal swing weight.

## Lines

Moving onto lines, all lines are designed for the weight designation of the rod which we spoke of earlier, hence 5 weight line for 5 weight rod. Some, including myself, will load a line the next weight up for a faster loading system which has a few advantages, but when delicate presentation is a must, matching weights tend to work better.

Lines which are matched to their rod

counterpart weight wise is a good start. Line technology is way more vast than one would expect. Between tapers and coatings for slicker shooting its a wide world.

Tapers define the work that you are demanding of your rod, weight forward is really where any beginner should start. Imagine the line, instead of being level all the way though, this has an increased thickness toward the head of the line. In turn is defined in grams hence allowing the angler to load the rod with a minimal amount of line out allowing for a fly to be launched with ease.

Many experienced and frugal anglers run double taper lines which look the same on both ends and are designed more so for nymphing (subsurface) yet can cast a dry fly in a pinch. The nice thing is when the front end of the line has had the radish, just turn it around and you've have a line almost like new!

If your thinking bass or even fishing from a boat, think about lines that are "Bank Shooters" or "Big Fly" lines. They have extra heavy tapers a little bit further back in the line that let you throw further and bigger flies particularly on heavier rods.

Now, just to muddy the waters, if you want to fish streamers subsurface, a "Full Sinking", or a "Sink Tip" line will get you deeper when you need to wake the fish up. Full sinking has it sounds, where a sink tip is usually the first ten feet of line has a heavier core to get the fly down yet leaving the line behind it to float. These lines, since only ten feet is subsurface, are far easier to pick up and cast than a full sink but have their limitations.

When you really need the fly on the

bottom you can buy poly leaders and run them off a weight forward line, if you want versatility. Sink rates on poly leaders and such are measured in Inches Per Second (IPS) which allows you to work flows and depths accordingly.

Fly lines usually have built in loops for attaching leaders. I would recommend a 9 foot long leader in 4 or 5X. I'm thinking I wont discuss the X rating in this article but lets just say 2X is a larger and stronger and more suited to big streamers. Generally (but not always) bigger fish and higher water than that of 7X which is very fine and for clear streams, small flies and fussy trout.

Tippet and leaders come in Floro-carbon and Monofiliment. I tend to use Floro for subsurface for its more stealth properties and Mono when fishing up top because of its ability to float better which I find helps with presentations of dry flies.

Going forth, I recommend reading every book you can get your hands on, practice your fishing knots like the No Name knot, the Davy Knot, the Blood Knot, Double Surgeons, Perfection, Uni, and Non Slip Loop Knot to name a few. Also, find a space to cast before you even hit the water. Give yourself lots of room and cast away, work on your false cast and most importantly your roll cast. I can understand this is a whole lot to digest, please feel free to write me at [roundfacedave@gmail.com](mailto:roundfacedave@gmail.com) with questions. ■

*David C. Aronson is the Vermont Chair of the Native Fish Coalition:*

[www.nativefishcoalition.org/vermont/](http://www.nativefishcoalition.org/vermont/)



## SEEING Is Believing

by Ken Jones

I've been an avid turkey hunter for some 38 years now. I've been a member of the National Wild Turkey Federation for nearly as long. I finally joined a local chapter a few years ago. Three years ago now VT decided to begin a Wheel-in sportsman hunt. A division of the NWTF that takes people with various disabilities with the help of volunteer mentors and takes them on a turkey hunt.

Well I jumped at the chance to get involved as a mentor and when all was said and done I was paired up with a young man named Josh Tabor.

Josh was a rather unique hunter since he's been blind since about the age of three. I had seen some facebook videos of Josh shooting with the aid of another person sighting for him from over his shoulder so I had a bit of an idea how we were going to pull this off. Another small hurdle we would have to get over was Josh's choice of weapons for his hunt, a .62 caliber smooth bore flintlock rifle. Turns out that's the same bore diameter as a twenty gauge shotgun. So we started working on loads and we came up with a combination of 80 grains of powder topped by a Winchester AA wad holding an ounce and a half of TSS #8 shot. We would still have to keep our shots to thirty yards and under. After a couple of range sessions with the other hunters and mentors we were ready to go.

The night before our first hunt I was able to roost some birds way back at the base of a mountain that would be a good walk in the dark for us. We met our other mentor, my best friend Phil Salzano, with plenty of darkness

to hide our arrival to the back pasture and to get the pop up blind set up before the day started to awaken. As the black sky began to lighten, a barred owl broke the silence and our two gobblers sounded off. We thought we were sitting pretty. When it got to be close to eight o'clock and we were still listening to our guys up on the mountain in the timber gobbling steady but not coming to the calls.



If you know a hunter with a disability or you want to be a mentor contact Adam Degreee at [Deerhunter2574@yahoo.com](mailto:Deerhunter2574@yahoo.com)

This is where the abilities of disabled people can amaze you. After some discussion in the blind we decided we would take the fight to the gobblers and headed up into the timber. Josh can not see at all other than to know night from day. He holds a guide's elbow and can read from that contact pretty much tell what the person leading him is doing. We moved up hill, down hill, around objects etc. very effectively. After several set ups and birds that would answer but not commit and time running out on day one we made our way back down towards the blind and to our surprise

there were several birds in a plowed piece just across a tractor road right near the blind!! They moved off and we were able to get back in the blind and do some calling to those birds but their flock mentality or whatever wouldn't even get us a response and day one came to a close with us hearing birds, seeing some birds but not connecting.

Day two of that first hunt turned out to be a deluge of rain showers throughout the morning. We did have a lone hen walk past the blind which we set up in the plowed piece that our unannounced visitors showed up in the day before but they didn't show that day. All we heard was distant gobbles early.

Season two had me paired up with Josh again and a new co-mentor Sterling Pelsue from the Vergennes VT area.

I scoured my areas for birds the night before and Sterling made the rounds on his turf. It was decided that we would meet up Sterling's way since he had some birds located that we could get on in the morning. We met Sterling and followed him to a corn field we were to set up in. Sterling with the use of one of these new fangled electric bicycles got the blind and chairs out the three hundred yards across the field while Josh and I made our way out through. Again his ability to negotiate terrain was remarkable. We got the blind set up and Josh and I climbed in and Sterling posted up beside the blind.

As the day came alive turkeys started

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gobbling in the tree line some two hundred yards across the cornfield from us. Soon we could see birds flying down into the corn. Three jakes started inching towards our decoys and calling. As they came closer their pace picked up and I thought, this just might happen!!

We had the decoys set at around fifteen yards and the lead bird was closing fast. I let him get right inside the decoys and began coaching Josh left, right, up and down.

When the bead settled on the birds waddles I gave him the word to shoot. The flash pan erupted with

flame, followed by the concussion of the shot leaving the barrel. I have to say I didn't see the hit because of the smoke from the flash pan filling the blind. I guess we should have packed some sort of air tanks in there or something because that was enough smoke to feel like the blind was on fire!! When it cleared I saw Sterling coming back giving that jake the old goose neck ringing and we had done it!!!! Josh had taken his first spring turkey.

This was not Josh's only major achievement. In the interim between the two wheel-in hunts a group of us got together and got Josh outfitted with a crossbow and he passed the ar-

chery safety course required by the state of Vermont before one can bow hunt. That fall while hunting with Morgan Gouveia and their host Nick Falzo of Green Mountain Gobblers Josh harvested a nice whitetailed doe with a crossbow!!!

A friend of mine from Virginia that has been doing Wheel-in stuff for years said to me when he found out I was hunting with Josh, 'You ain't hunted til you've hunted with a blind guy.' Man he wasn't kiddin.

If you're looking for a different and very rewarding way to get someone involved in hunting that might not think they can because of a disability, get involved in the NWTf and the

## North American Wildlife Enforcement Officers Association Officer of the Year: Vermont State Game Warden Currier

MONTPELIER, Vt. -- Vermont State Game Warden Sgt. Warden Robert Currier of Essex Junction has been named "Officer of the Year for 2020" by the North American Wildlife Enforcement Officers Association, according to an announcement from the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department.

"This award is one of the highest honors that can be bestowed on a game warden in North America," said Colonel Jason Batchelder, Vermont's chief game warden. «An international panel of conservation law enforcement professionals receives nominations from the United States and Canada and chooses the annual winner."

"Robert is an outstanding all-around game warden," said Lieutenant Carl



Wedin, Currier's supervisor. "He handles all complaints in a timely manner and with a professional demeanor. He is physically fit and scores superior on each physical fitness assessment. He is a very competent, determined and successful investigator, as proven by the quantity and quality of his big game cases in 2019. Robert is a warden that others look to for assistance as well as look up to. Day to day, he proves he is a true professional."

"Warden Currier is the first Vermont State Game Warden to receive this award," said Vermont Fish and Wildlife Commissioner Louis Porter. "I congratulate him for his excellent service and dedication to protecting Vermont's fish and wildlife resources." ■



## Have We Reached Our Limit?

by Chris Ingram

Do you consider the act of hunting to be a sport? We often hear about game birds being “sporty” or “he’s a true sportsman”, was it always this way? Is hunting considered a competition? If hunting is a sport, and since we tend to think of ourselves as competing in sports, should hunting be considered a competition? If so, whom are we competing against? Each other? Ourselves? The birds? Is that truly what hunting means to you and to our society in today’s age? Should we be going afield with a mentality to do better than those around us or set out to win something? Are we to compare ourselves to those around us to measure our own success? Perhaps the “sporting” essence of hunting comes from its nature, like any other classic modern-day sport, there is a challenge with a reward that is not guaranteed to every participant. Maybe it is the nature of pursuit, hard work, perseverance, conditioning and strategy that solidifies hunting in the realm of other sports. And much like baseball, basketball, football and other sports, some of us are naturals and take to the game effortlessly while others struggle to make the connections to improve their individual abilities.

The act of hunting likely started as a means for early humans to survive which ultimately allowed them to move out of the caves and evolve into modern society. With the explosion of human populations and industry in North America at the turn of the century, the era of market hunting became a means to supply food to the masses. We quickly adapted to the perils of overharvesting migratory birds with the adoption of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the subsequent evolution of modern wildlife management and conservation principals. It was also around this time in the 1940’s-1960’s where men finally had extra time to recreate and started hunting as “sport” for fun. This is

generally the format we are familiar with now, and most of us who choose to hunt aren’t substance hunter/gatherers, although we may supplement our diet with fresh, locally sourced meat. Nowadays, we are typically taking to the woods and waters to recreate, fill our freezers, enjoy a hobby, commune with nature and celebrate a family tradition, but should hunting be considered a sport and/or a competition?

Competition has winners and losers; it has rankings, it has measurable metrics and with all of that comes pressure. Not the hunting pressure we talk about in terms of number of hunters visiting an area, but the pressure to succeed, overcome challenges and do better than someone else or ourselves. Now, I am all in favor of learning, growing and progressing as a hunter, achieving more success over the years, as quantified by increased knowledge about bird biology, bird behavior, locating birds and ultimately bagging more birds, but if we start to compare ourselves to those around us, we’re going to be in big trouble. You’ll never truly know why another hunter or hunting party is more successful than you or shoots more birds than you. Perhaps it is because they were in the duck blind before they could walk, maybe they grew up in a family completely immersed in the hunting life or perhaps they put in endless hours of scouting, reading, and studying the birds and their habitat and have honed their craft over the decades. And if you lean on social media to rank yourself amongst others in your area, you are truly missing the point and setting yourself up for a miserable time. Social media has evolved into nothing more than a highlight reel for everyone’s lives and you’re only seeing the best parts. What you don’t often see, are all the outright failures, the harsh lessons, the embarrassing mistakes, and the mornings with empty skies and empty

straps.

Now let’s talk about bag limits for a second. Do you drink alcohol? Do you set out to reach your legal blood alcohol limit every time you drink in order to feel a sense of accomplishment or success? When did bag limits go from a conservation tool to protect against overharvesting, to a personal goal to measure one’s success in the blind? When did reaching a limit become a hard stop for ending a day’s hunt? Why do some individuals or groups wait in the blind all day to shoot one more duck just to fill a limit? What would be the harm in calling it a day after reveling in a magnificent sunrise over the marsh, seeing a young pup retrieve its first mark, embracing good blind banter with your best buddies or simply having a personal moment of connected clarity with nature? My opinion may be somewhat unpopular, but I feel if you consistently set your sights on filling a limit, you are completely missing the point. If you don’t fill a limit, are you going to go home feeling discouraged, inadequate, embarrassed and are you going to beat yourself up because you can’t measure up to your peers? If your agenda is to stack a pile of birds for a tailgate hero pic and seek gratification from you Snapchat and Instagram followers in order to feel successful, you may want to reconsider your motivation for hunting altogether.

Now here is the silver lining. I’d like to think some of these notions, are what makes hunting a sport and a competition, but an individual sport at that; whereby, as an individual, we strive to improve our own successes, victories and achievements over the years. We constantly push ourselves to be better, to learn, to grow and to expand our abilities, but let us not ig-

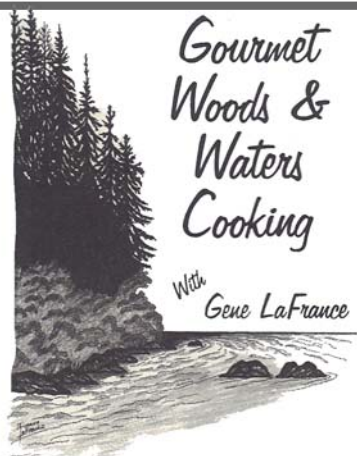
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nore the fulfillment we receive from the outlying aspects our pursuit. We are incredibly lucky to have the freedom to go afield, to experience wild birds in wild places and relish in these raw experiences with friends, family and our faithful gun dogs. And if this is the case, let success be measured by passion and drive. Passion, drive, dedication, heart; these qualities are difficult to measure, but no one can deny their existence or inherent personal value. Far be it for the working professional guide, seasoned expert hunter, or anyone with more birds in their bag to hold them-

selves in higher regard than the newcomer or young person with an unbridled joy and infectious enthusiasm for waterfowl hunting. Let us begin to recognize and reward those with a fervent excitement for hunting and the outdoors, lest you be the judge to award the prize between the one with a limit of birds and the one who had the time of their life but didn't see a single bird or fire a single shot. As hunters, we are all aware of the increasing disparity between the hunting community and those who oppose us and want to strip us of our rights to hunt, fish and trap. As hunter numbers continue to decline and with hunting and firearms under constant political

and social scrutiny, we need to be focused on reclaiming our united sense of culture and community. We require hunters in our landscape to fund and further conservation efforts and to foster the future of wetlands and waterfowl and we need to turn the tide on how we conduct ourselves and how we measure our successes. We ought to showcase the prize of our efforts to be one of personal merit, not one granted from the approval of our peers. If we are to encourage new and young hunters into our beloved sport and lifestyle, we need to show them that our currency is one calculated in the quality of our experiences, not the quantity of birds and certainly not in bag limits. ■



## Venison Stew

### INGREDIENTS

9 Pounds venison. I use meat from the neck, shank, etc.  
4 pounds potatoes  
2 1/2 pounds onions  
2 1/2 pounds mushrooms  
3 bunches carrots  
4 packages brown gravy mix  
1 liter dry burgundy wine (optional)  
starch or flour  
1 pound butter or margarine

The mere thought of this gastronomical delight has me drooling like one of Pavlov's dogs! Few people can find fault with, or turn down a steaming bowl of stew. Stew is a full balanced meal in itself, for it combines proteins, starches, and vegetables in one delicious potpourri. Add a thick slice of pumpernickel rye bread, liberally spread with butter or margarine, and you have a meal that will stick to your ribs and drive off the coldest of chills.

If the following recipe sounds like I am cooking for a platoon of U.S. Marines, it's only because I concluded a long time ago that it takes as much time in the kitchen to make a quart of stew, as it does to make twenty quarts. Therefore I make my stew in quantity. Put up in one pound plastic containers of the type used in local supermarkets deli counter, then frozen, and one has single serving portions of venison stew for months to come.

Melt your butter or margarine in a large pot if you are planning to make a large amount of stew. I use on of those huge blue enam-

el-canning kettles. Cube your venison into bite-sized pieces. Place your venison in your kettle, adding just enough water to cover the meat. Bring the contents of your pot to a gentle simmer. Stir the meat at very regular intervals. Failure to do so will cause you venison to scorch on the bottom of your pot. Add your brown gravy mix, sprinkling each packet into the pot, stirring the contents well, so the gravy mix doesn't lump together. Simmer your venison for just under two hours, stirring your pot at regular intervals. This is important.

It takes about two hours to tenderize venison neck meat and the tougher pieces of venison. During this time period, you prepare all the other ingredients of the stew. Peel your potatoes and cut them into bite-size pieces. Dice your onions, and the same goes for the carrots.

Wash and cut your mushroom into small pieces. When the venison has been simmering for about an hour and forty-five minutes, I add my onions and carrots. Fifteen minutes

later, I add my potatoes and mushrooms.

Though the meat, in cooking, will lose about fifty percent of its raw volume, and create its own liquid, and the vegetables may be expected to add their liquid ingredients to your stew, additional water is often called for. Add enough water to you mix to strike a balance to your stew; not too thick, not too thin. At this point I add several cups of dry burgundy wine.

The alcohol quickly cooks off, but the burgundy adds a rich, earthy flavor to the stew. After the potatoes have been in the pot for about fifteen minutes, I add my thickening agent to my stew. I use flour. You might elect to use cornstarch. Whichever agent you use, start with a little, and work up to the thickness you desire.

Thoroughly mix several tablespoons of flour in a cup of warm water, and pour this thickening agent into your stew. Stir well and often. If after five or ten minutes of cooking, you feel your stew is still too thin, add more flour or cornstarch to the stew.

I do not add salt, pepper, or other herbs to my venison stew. I feel the delicate flavor of venison can easily be overpowered by too liberal use of various herbs. Besides, who am I to dictate to your taste buds?

Cooking time for the venison stew will be under three hours. This same basic recipe can be applied to beef, veal, and lamb, but the prospect of buying eight pounds of beef for a stew scares me! I sincerely hope you may successfully join me in sharing one of life's greatest pleasures ... Good eating. Enjoy! ■