

FALL/WINTER 2019

THE UNION SPORTSMEN'S JOURNAL

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE UNION SPORTSMEN'S ALLIANCE



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FISHING**

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**USA MEMBER ON
DREAM MOOSE HUNT**

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From the director's desk

BREAKING IT DOWN!

The day began well before daylight, in a drizzling rain, as we set up signs, tied on hooks and sinkers, and bought nightcrawlers for our Wilmore Park Take Kids Fishing event in St. Louis, Missouri. Hours later, while cleaning up after another successful project dedication and long day of fishing with the kids, I heard a small boy say "Sir. Sir!"

He may have been 11 or 12 years old. "Sir, is there any chance you have some extra fishing poles?" he asked. "You gave me one today, but I'd like to get another one."

We had just received several thousand rod and reel combos through our awesome partnership with Pure Fishing. Those rods would only go so far for the thousands of kids we'd take fishing in the coming year, but I allowed my pragmatic side to be overruled. "Yeah buddy," I said. "You bet. Walk over here with me, and we'll get you another one."

As we walked, he started talking. "My little brother was sick and couldn't come today, so I want to get him a fishing pole, too. We just live right over there," he said, pointing to a public housing complex. "I didn't even know there were fish in this pond. We ride by it every day on our way to and from school. Now we can fish every day after school and even on weekends!"

A lump rose up in my throat as big as an apple. As I fought to keep my composure, I smiled and handed him another Shakespeare fishing combo. "Take two more tackle boxes," I said, "and all of these leftover worms."

The smile on his face was worth every minute I'd spent mulling over budgets and herding proverbial cats at these events.

We've had many local, city and state agencies that were hesitant to partner with a "union" group, but our volunteers show up, smash barriers, and amazing things happen. Our Take Kids Fishing event gave this little boy and his brother a new outlook on life and was all I needed to confirm that our mission is amazing. He needed knowledge, equipment and confidence to become a novice angler. Our event gave him all three. The barriers we break down help to preserve our outdoor heritage, change lives and even change the trajectory of communities.

Our 200th project near Tampa is a shining example (see page 16). The \$800,000 pier and boardwalk provide mobility-impaired access for youth and their families to enjoy the wildlife-rich waters of Florida's Gulf Coast. This project required that public agencies work with both private non-profits and private contractors for the good of the community. That isn't easy, but the results are worth the effort.

The kids and families who live in the Tampa Bay area can literally be at the bay in minutes, but most of them have never fished. **Most live less than 5 miles from the water, and have never fished!** The Suncoast youth center coupled with the new fishing pier and boardwalk provides Tampa Bay youth with knowledge, access, opportunity and the equipment to not only understand and appreciate the ecology, sustainability and magnificence of the marine environments, but to experience them, first-hand, by seeing nature in action.

The next time you see barriers to uniting union members in the outdoors or introducing your community to conservation, break them down!

The USA is committed to helping you do just that. Breaking down barriers is what we do.



Scott Vance, CEO & Executive Director



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The USA is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with a mission to unite the union community through conservation to preserve North America's outdoor heritage.

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HAPPY HOURS

QUICK-TRIP TIPS FOR WINTER FISHING SUCCESS

BY DAN JOHNSON

When hard-working union members dream of fishing, many envision epic getaways spanning a weekend or more. Unfortunately, extended adventures can be tough to pull off. Carving out a full day on the water can even be a challenge.

No matter your shift or zip code, opportunities abound for quick fishing trips. And there's no time like the present. The following tips will help make this your best winter yet.

PREP FOR FAST GETAWAYS

"Having everything you need ready and waiting makes it infinitely easier to hit the water on short notice," says veteran ice and open-water fishing guide Brian "Bro" Brosdahl. "If it takes you three hours to wrangle gear, your window of opportunity will close before you leave home."

Brosdahl guides in the Northwoods of Minnesota. He also tours the country conducting fishing clinics, working sportshows and showcasing the wares of top tackle manufacturers including Union Sportsmen's Alliance national conservation partner Plano Synergy.

Even on the road, he finds time to fish for an hour or two. "I call it the minuteman system," he says. "Here's how it works: Limit gear to the bare necessities and keep it ready to go. You won't be running all over the lake, figuring out different patterns. Quick trips are all about hitting high-percentage hotspots with one or two top techniques. Two or three rods and a basic tackle assortment are perfect. Anything else only slows you down."

Ice fishing is Brosdahl's winter strong suit. His hardwater bug-out gear includes a trio of Frabill's Bro Series spinning or straight line rod-and-reel combos—one each in ultralight panfish, medium- and heavyweight options, to cover everything from jumbo perch and hungry 'eyes to sag-bellied pike.

He stashes a handful of key lures inside a Plano Edge 3600 utility storage box. The box, his portable sonar, small underwater camera and rods are tucked in a Frabill Sit-N-Fish bucket with Strato Seat cover.

"For fast, easy hole drilling, I use a Milwaukee M18 FUEL brushless, cordless drill paired with 6-inch, convertible auger," he adds.

Brosdahl hunkers down in a Frabill Sentinel 1100 1-person portable flip-over shelter, though he notes hub-style houses are perfect for outings with family or friends. "Host a few buddies in a hub house after work and you'll be a hero," he promises. "Especially when the fish are biting."



Brosdahl recommends choosing locations wisely. "Pick the best lake in the neighborhood," he says. "Then hit the best spot on that lake for the conditions and time frame you have available."

Evening walleye trips do well over small shelves and stairsteps along breaklines, which walleyes follow from deep water up onto shallow feeding flats. High spots on humps can be good, too. Crappies tend to roam deep basins but often gather along structures such as steep walls at the edge of deep holes.

GUIDE BRIAN "BRO" BROSDAHL PACKS LIGHT FOR QUICK TRIPS ALL WINTER LONG.

Bass fishing pro
Justin Atkins



WINTER BASS BLITZ

Top bass fishing pro Justin Atkins, of Florence, Alabama, shares Brosdahl's appreciation for quick winter getaways, though the surface of his favorite fishing hole is decidedly softer.

"A lot of anglers stow their gear for the season, but you can enjoy some really good bass fishing in the wintertime," he says. "Four key lures will cover most situations, so you can pack pretty light. The trick is to pay attention to water temperature and know the type of lake you're fishing.

"Anytime the water temp is above 53 degrees, bass may be actively chasing baitfish," he continues. "The fish will be high in the water column, even busting bait on top. Don't be surprised to see bass breaking the surface or birds circling above it."

In such scenarios, Atkins' go-to baits include a 3.3- or 3.8-inch Berkley PowerBait Power Swimmer, rigged on a 1/4- or 3/8-ounce jig with a 2/0 to 3/0 hook. When bass and baitfish churn the ceiling of their underwater world, he swims the lure at a steady, brisk pace, just below the surface. Slower surface action dictates a deeper retrieve, typically at the bottom of the baitfish school, above the noses of the hungry bass lurking below.

"If bass follow the bait to the boat but don't bite, try spicing up the retrieve with pauses and bursts of speed," he notes.

Atkins also throws the Berkley J-Walker on top. "It's a classic walk-the-dog topwater," he says. "It's a blast to fish when bass are actively breaking. Cast it out, point the rod down, and move the tip six to 10

inches per walk. Keep the bait moving at a pretty fast pace; you don't want the bass to get too good a look at it."

Interestingly, Atkins never sets the hook when a bass strikes the J-Walker. "I use 30-pound-test Berkley x5 superbraid on a 6-foot, 10-inch, medium-heavy Abu Garcia Fantasia Premier casting rod for topwaters," he says. "On this gear, the bass basically hooks itself, and the cadence of my retrieve drives the hook home."

Water temperatures below 53 degrees tend to push bass deeper. "They set up along bottom in places where the baitfish come to them, like the deepest part of a pocket or channel swing," says Atkins. "In river-run systems with a little current, anything that breaks the flow, like a laydown tree or rocks, can be bass magnets. Fish the current seam between slick and slack water."

Atkins' favorite deep threats include a 6-inch Berkley PowerBait Bottom Hopper Worm on a 1/4-ounce shaky head jig, and a 3-inch Berkley PowerBait Chigger Craw on a 1/2-ounce, compact skirted jig. He typically drags both baits along bottom. "In current, cast upstream and let the flow wash your jig back downstream," he says. "Move the rod tip from the 10 o'clock to 12 o'clock position, with a little bow in the line so you can see light bites—which you often won't feel because the bass is swimming toward you."

With all techniques, Atkins advises experimenting with speed and cadence until the fish let you know what they prefer at the moment. "Once you figure it out, you can catch as many bass as you want," he says. ■



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USA NEWS

We're Proud to Call Plano Synergy a National Conservation Partner

Head to any USA Take Kids Fishing Day or Get Youth Outdoors Day, and you're likely to hear a cacophony of turkey and deer calls mixing with the sounds of children's laughter and shouting. To the delight of kids (and torment of adults), Plano Synergy has supplied game calls for youth events that the USA has organized and supported for the past two years.

Earlier this year, Plano Synergy, an industry-leading producer of must-have gear for serious hunters and anglers, stepped up its support to become a USA National Conservation Partner.

"Our members, staff and supporting partners are proud to welcome Plano Synergy as a National Conservation Partner as we harness union workers' power, passion and skills to enhance and ensure opportunities for millions of Americans to enjoy the great outdoors for generations to come," said USA Director of Corporate Partnerships Brian Dowler.

The outdoor manufacturing powerhouse brings together 17 top brands in the outdoor industry, including Barnett Crossbows, Frabill, Plano and Zink. All are dedicated to creating innovative,



high-performance products that help users make the most of time spent afield.

As a USA National Conservation Partner, Plano Synergy will directly support the USA's Work Boots on the Ground program and United Outdoors Conservation Fund as well as enhance the USA's shooting tour and conservation dinner program.

"Partnering with the USA to help preserve our hunting and fishing heritage for future generations is a paramount priority and speaks to the core values of all our brands," said Plano Synergy VP of Marketing Pete Angle. "Like the USA, Plano Synergy strongly pursues habitat conservation and new hunter and angler recruitment efforts."

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FOUNDING PARTNER

8 UNION SPORTSMEN'S JOURNAL



One of the USA's elite founding partners, Bank of Labor is also a USA Diamond Life Partner, having donated more than \$1 million. The company has been involved in all aspects of the USA, sponsoring and providing manpower at numerous USA shoots, conservation dinners and the USA's Fundraising Gala. In addition, Bank of Labor has sponsored the USA's truck and trailer wrap, gun of the year and *Brotherhood Outdoors* TV series as well as provided a variety of banking services.



OUTDOOR FUND

The USA Lands a Really Big Bass

America's undisputed outdoor retailing champions add their support to the USA's community-based youth outreach events with a \$25,000 grant from the Bass Pro Shops and Cabela's Outdoor Fund. Portions of the grant will support at least a half-dozen USA youth outreach events, including the 2nd Annual Take Kids Ice Fishing Day in Minnesota this January.

By all accounts, the partnership is a perfect match. Through its Work Boots on the Ground (WBG) program, the USA organizes free fishing, shooting and hunting events to connect participants with the outdoors and instill an appreciation for nature and conservation.

In a similar vein, the Bass Pro Shops and Cabela's Outdoor Fund—guided by the leadership of Bass Pro Shops founder Johnny Morris—unites more than 200 million consumers for conservation by inviting them to round up their purchases at Bass Pro Shops and Cabela's stores.

Bass Pro Shops also has a long track record of organizing and supporting community events that introduce tens of thousands of youth and adults to the outdoors each year.



"Bass Pro Shops, Cabela's and the USA have the same goal to introduce new people to hunting and fishing, so our outdoor heritage and conservation ethics survive and flourish," said USA CEO and Executive Director Scott Vance.

Many of the USA's outreach events are held in urban and semi-urban areas where young people have little or no opportunity to engage in traditional outdoor activities on their own. "Local union members, in service to their community, volunteer their time to mentor young participants, with the hope of igniting a spark that turns into a life-long passion for the outdoors," Vance explained.

"The USA is thrilled to partner with Bass Pro Shops and Cabela's—great organizations that share the vision of preserving our outdoor traditions and natural resources for generations to come," said USA Director of Conservation and Communications Forrest Parker. "This partnership will allow the USA to continue to grow our mission and engage even more youth and communities with the outdoors."

On November 2, when the partnership was just days old, Bass Pro Shops jumped at the chance to support a youth fishing event at the celebration of the completion of the USA's 200th WBG project, a wheelchair-accessible fishing pier at the Suncoast Youth Conservation Center in Apollo Beach, Florida. Bass Pro Shops donated \$2,000 in clothing and gear to help outfit the young anglers, and Ronnie Cheeks, General Manager of the Bass Pros Shops of Greater Tampa, attended to present the USA with the \$25,000 check.



FOUNDING PARTNER

Union Insurance Group (UIG) is a USA founding partner as well as a Diamond Life Partner, having donated more than \$1 million to the USA. UIG has been involved in all aspects of the USA, sponsoring and providing manpower at numerous conservation dinners and shoots as well as donating an ATV to assist USA staff in running a successful shooting tour. UIG has also sponsored the USA's Fundraising Galas as well as donated and served the meals and drinks at the annual event. In addition, UIG monitors the USA's insurance needs and ensures our organization has peace of mind about our coverage.

USA Partner Local Program Boosts UA Local 669 Disaster Relief Fund

BY KURT BECKSTROM

After a deadly F5 tornado ravaged the city of Moore, Oklahoma, in May 2013, resident Bill Baltrush and his wife Jane considered themselves lucky. They, along with their daughter-in-law and granddaughter, emerged from the family storm shelter without a scratch and found substantial, but manageable, damage to the elders' single-story home.

The storm ruined windows and punched holes in the roof and walls, but contractors estimated it would take just six weeks to put everything right again. All seemed well, until a second tornado roared through 11 days after the first.

"Debris still left from the first storm went airborne and pretty much shredded the house's exterior," Baltrush explained. "Then it took the tarp and patchwork from the roof, and the downpour of rain collapsed the ceilings throughout the house."

At the time of the disaster, Baltrush was a 45-year veteran of UA Local 669 Sprinkler Fitters, the largest local in the country with 12,600 members spread nationwide. Its District 24 Business Agent Lee Gilchrest asked Local 669 headquarters to lend a financial helping hand.

The check Baltrush received wasn't huge—just a few thousand dollars—but it meant a lot. "It helped cover the insurance deductible immediately and allowed us to replace some of the furniture we'd lost," he said. "When things like that happen, you don't know what to do or where to turn. I just remember that receiving that money was a great relief."

That simple act of compassion took root. It eventually grew into the UA 669 Disaster Relief Fund, which today, according to Business Manager Brian Dunn, receives dozens of requests for help each year from Local 669 members who've been displaced by tornados, floods, hurricanes, fires or other catastrophic events.

"The money the fund provides each recipient isn't enough to solve every problem a bad situation presents," said Dunn, "but it does help create a bridge until the member's insurance carrier takes over."



The F5 tornado that ravaged Moore, Oklahoma, in 2013 gave root to UA Local 669's Disaster Relief Fund.

UA 669 member Eric Zistl of Salem County, New Jersey, can attest to that after a freak fire took his home, and nearly the life of his wife, in 2018.

"Sitting in a hotel room when all you have left are the clothes on your back, you just don't know how you'll make it," he said, "but the money from our local allowed us to get food and clothing, and with support from our church and my brothers and sisters in District 10, we somehow got through."

Recharging the Well

Like a well providing life-giving water, UA 669's Disaster Relief Fund requires continual recharging. And while its groundwater mainly comes in the form of voluntary donations from UA 669 members across the country, local leaders are always looking for ways to supplement the inflow.

Recently that included using the USA's new Partner Local program, designed to help keep members engaged in their local. "We knew the program would be attractive to our members as soon as we became aware of it," said Dunn, "and it would be a perfect tool to raise money for the Relief Fund."

"The firearms, Buck knives, calendars and other premiums that came with the package were auctioned at our annual Seminar Dinner in Austin, Texas, and the proceeds provided a substantial boost to the fund."

According to USA Partnerships Manager Sam Phipps, the purpose of the program is to help union locals get to know their members on a personal level, while supporting conservation and raising funds for various causes.

USA Partner Locals participate in or organize a USA conservation dinner, shooting event, conservation project or outreach event—all great ways to engage local members. Partner Locals also participate in USA sweepstakes, giveaways and promotions, which bring added-value to union members. And then there are the premium bundles (see page 11).

"Each Partner Local can use the premiums in any way they see fit—as door prizes to encourage meeting attendance, as raffle items to incentivize timely dues payments, or simply to show their support for the outdoorsmen and women that make up a vast majority of their membership," Phipps explained. "What UA Local 669 did with the program is an outstanding example."



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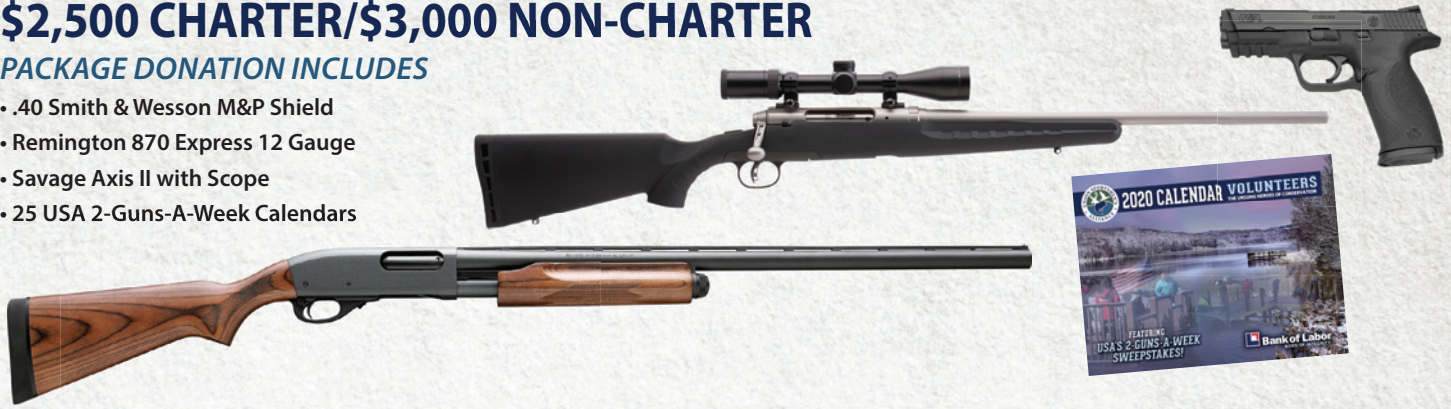


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- Signed by CJ Buck in 420HC Satin
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 - Buck Silver Creek Filet Knife
 - Buck Mr. Crappie Folding Slab Shaver
 - Flambeau T5 Pro
 - Flambeau IKE
 - Pfluegler Supreme, President & President Low Profile Reels

Images shown are representative of package benefits. The USA reserves the right to substitute any package item with another item equal or greater value, at its sole discretion.

MEMBERSHIP



UnionSportsmenStore.com

Under Construction: Worth the Wait

BY BRIAN DOWLER, USA DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE PARTNERSHIPS

So often we share stories about Union Sportsmen's Alliance volunteers tearing down bridges, fishing piers, boardwalks and other structures and then rebuilding them to improve access and opportunity. Now we are doing the same thing (sort of) with the USA's online store.

In April 2019, the USA launched UnionSportsmenStore.com as its newest member benefit. The store was created to provide USA members a place to shop for the gear that enables them to get outside and enjoy their outdoor passions, at a great price. The store also provides USA members a place to purchase outdoor gear while benefiting organized labor—rather than at Wal-Mart or through Amazon.

The first version of the site launched and has been successful in many ways, but it definitely isn't perfect. We learned that the registration process is clunky, and many members had trouble creating an account to access the store. Ultimately, our leadership team decided that the store isn't providing the level of service that USA requires for our members, so we are shutting it down in order to rebuild on a new platform with a new service provider.

When we reopen, the USA's web store will have a more robust platform, will be easier to search, and navigation on the site will be a lot more user-friendly. The site will also offer more than 25,000 different items and showcase a larger selection of apparel, boots, camping equipment and other outdoor accessories as well as Union Sportsmen's Alliance apparel.

An exciting feature of the new USA store is that it will include firearms. USA members will be able to purchase firearms, which will be shipped to your Federal Firearms Licensed gun dealer to complete the transfer.

UnionSportsmenStore.com 2.0 will offer great prices on shipping. USA Silver Sponsor members will continue to receive a 5% discount, and Gold Sponsor members will enjoy a 10% discount on all store purchases.

The new site will still be called UnionSportsmenStore.com and will remain a members-only store. We will email all of our members when the store launches with a link and instructions to create a new store account.

Until then, thank you for your patience and support of the Union Sportsmen's Alliance. We aim to provide exceptional service in all that we do and are committed to bringing you an excellent experience in our store.



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THE BEST WAY TO CREATE YOUR OWN **CHRISTMAS STORY**

Could any movie better capture the awe and wonder of a kid getting that first BB gun—and a proud parent passing on the shooting tradition—than “A Christmas Story”?

Actually, yes. In fact, this magical moment happens every year in the home videos of real families across the country as beaming parents watch wide-eyed kids open what might be the best present.

But what about all that “You’ll shoot your eye out” stuff? While the possibility is very real—firearm accidents can and do happen—they are almost always preventable.

What really makes a BB gun, shotgun or any other kind of firearm “the best present ever” is a mentor’s commitment to teach kids gun safety.

If you’re not sure where to start, there are some helpful tools online. The National Shooting Sports Foundation’s (NSSF) Project ChildSafe program has educational videos for kids and parents, and the NRA has resources available through its Eddie Eagle program. Many of these resources are geared toward what kids should do if they happen to find a gun as opposed to being safe with a gun that has just been handed to them. Regardless, firearms safety education is an important foundation to teach kids before deciding whether or not to give a firearm as a gift. Project ChildSafe also has a “Child’s Pledge” certificate that kids and parents can sign together and then frame and display—just like a major award.

GOLDEN RULES OF SAFE FIREARMS HANDLING

- 1 Keep the muzzle in a safe direction, and only point it at what you intend to shoot.
- 2 Always assume a firearm is loaded, and keep your finger off the trigger until you're ready to shoot.
- 3 Don't rely on the gun's "safety" mechanism. Safeties, like house furnaces, are mechanical devices and subject to failure.
- 4 Make sure you have a clear view of your target and be aware of whatever might be beyond it, like a metal sign that could send a ricochet right back at you.
- 5 When crossing fences or ditches or when climbing up a tree, keep the gun unloaded and incapable of firing in case it gets dropped or the trigger snags on something.
- 6 Always pull a gun toward you by the butt or handle, never by the muzzle.
- 7 Unload and store the gun securely when it's not in use. This one will be up to you; it's important to set a good example.

Ultimately, gun safety is about reinforcing with your child that a gun – even a BB gun—is a tool and not a toy. Set rules about when and how the gun can be used (for example, never without an adult present), set expectations about how they should behave while the gun is out, and most of all, set an example by living out these safety rules yourself.

Finally, don't overlook the benefits of formal instruction and training. National 4-H Shooting Sports and Scouts BSA offer all kinds of classes on shooting, from BB guns and rifles to pistols and shotguns. For older youths and young adults, NSSF also has a list of target shooting programs on its website. Finally, most gun ranges across the country offer classes on gun safety and shooting instruction. Check out NSSF's "Where to Shoot" page to find a range near you.

And from all of us at the USA, have a safe and happy holiday!

'TIS THE SEASON FOR FAMILY

The Union Sportsmen's Alliance is like family. As a proud founding partner, Union Insurance Group has been there from the beginning to support the USA's mission. This holiday season, we reflect on our shared values and commitment to grow the conservation movement with the strength of Labor for communities across the country.

UIG UNION
INSURANCE
GROUP

USA'S LARGEST CONSERVATION PROJECT SERVES THOUSANDS OF YOUTH | BY KURT BECKSTROM



The dedication of a boardwalk and fishing pier at the Suncoast Youth Conservation Center (SYCC) on November 2 marked the 200th USA Work Boots on the Ground conservation project, the largest endeavor in the program's history.

The handicap-accessible structure skirts the center's 5-acre saltwater pond and marsh area, paving the way for thousands of visiting students to enjoy catching redfish, snook and other saltwater species while also learning about conservation.

As part of the celebration, the USA held a free Take Kids Fishing Day event. Hundreds of local youth attended and received hands-on assistance from volunteers from local labor unions, the NFL Players Association and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC). They also received Shakespeare rods, reels and tackle kits from Pure Fishing as well as game calls from Plano Synergy.

"It was wonderful to see so many people enjoying the center and the new boardwalk and pier," said Ironworkers Local 397 President Keven Barber, who oversaw the project.

"I took my 9-year-old for a mom-and-son date. Neither of us know how to fish," said attendee Megan Delatte. "Volunteers were so nice and helpful. We had a lot of fun, and my son told me he wants to go fishing every weekend. Just me and him. My heart is full. Thank you to everybody who made this event possible and for providing an opportunity to get my son off the couch and into nature."



A Place to Learn and Play

"We are absolutely thrilled that the USA chose to take on this construction project," said SYCC Director Dr. Kathleen Guindon. "It's something we've needed for a very long time."

The SYCC is the newest education and outdoor recreation facility within the FWC's Florida Youth Conservation Network. It shares a 20-acre campus on the shore of Tampa Bay with the Florida Aquarium's sea turtle rehabilitation center and a soon-to-open FWC saltwater fish hatchery.

In addition to fishing, students on field trips to the center can kayak or hike through the mangroves. "Many of the students normally don't get farther than their own neighborhoods," Guindon said. "So, part of our mission is to get children outside where they can gain an appreciation for the outdoors."

She saw such a transformation occur during a recent field trip. "It was obvious that one young girl in the group wasn't interested in fishing, and was here only because she had to be," Guindon said. "A little later, however, I saw her intently watching fiddler crabs in the marsh grass and then gaze at an osprey overhead. Sometimes that's all it takes to ignite a spark of interest in the outdoors."

School-year field trips, along with the SYCC's summer day-camp program, generate about 6,000 student visits



USA PRESENTS AWARDS AT SUNCOAST

During the dedication ceremony, the USA recognized two volunteers who helped make the Suncoast boardwalk project and youth fishing event a huge success.



per year. But the center's reach extends beyond academic excursions.

"The first time we went to the SYCC, we were there to go fishing," said Andy Chasanoff, coordinator of Paralympic Sport Tampa Bay, a program designed to involve children and young adults with varying levels of mobility and physical abilities in sports of all types. "This was in 2018 before the fishing pier had been built, and though it was doable, it was also complicated."

His athletes had to be carried, wheelchairs-and-all, to spots where they could access the water. On a return visit to kayak, the Paralympic athletes got a look at the new boardwalk and pier. "They saw how expansive and accessible it is and pretty much demanded that we book a second fishing trip in 2020," Chasanoff said.

Massive Multi-Year Project

The project took more than two years to complete and required cooperation from the FWC, Fish & Wildlife Foundation of Florida, Southern States Millwright Regional Council, Florida Gulf Coast Building Trades Council (BTC), Florida AFL-CIO, The Saunders Foundation, Frank E. Duckwall

Foundation, Ben Hur Construction, Pure Fishing, TECO Energy, The Community Foundation of Tampa Bay, Bass Pro Shops and a number of local labor unions.

The value of the project topped \$800,000 and included more than \$100,000 in volunteer labor donated by union members from the Florida Gulf Coast BTC; IBEW Local 915; Insulators Local 67; Iron Workers Locals 7, 397 and 808; IUOE Local 487; LiUNA Locals 310, 517 and 1652; IAMAW Local 1000; Roofers Local 123; UA Locals 123 and 915; UBC Locals 1, 283, 1000, 1809, 1905 and 4070; Ben Hur Construction and U.S. Rep. Kathy Castor's office. Collectively, union volunteers donated 2,500 hours of their time.

"This is going to mean a lot to the students and community members who come to the SYCC for years to come," Barber said.



Dan Skuta received the NFL Players Association (NFLPA) Conservation Steward of the Year Award. Skuta recruited 10 NFLPA members to volunteer at the Suncoast Take Kids Fishing event and has worked as a liaison between the USA and the NFLPA, helping to grow the partnership.



Wayne Jennings (R) of the Southern States Millwright Regional Council was honored with the USA's Non-Charter Union Volunteer of the Year Award. Jennings helped secure funding for the boardwalk and pier as well as coordinate members of his union to volunteer both with the construction and the youth fishing event.

USA SHOOT TOUR RAISES RECORD BUCKS, ENDING SEASON WITH A BANG

For more than a decade, sporting clays shoots have played a key role in the USA's efforts to unite union members as well as their families through a shared interest in the outdoors. This year, an impressive 2,224 participants turned out for the USA's 20-shoot tour, which draws youth and beginners as well as seasoned shooters. While these events build comradery, they also raise funds to fuel USA conservation projects, outreach events, member programs and other vital operations. This year's tour busted its previous record by more than \$135,000, raising the bar for 2020.

Kansas City Shoot Sets All-Time Record

Torrential rain didn't stop more than 200 shooters from gathering for the USA's 11th Annual Boilermakers Kansas City Sporting Clays Shoot on September 21. With strong support from the International Brotherhood of Boilermakers (IBB), 102 sponsors—including 30 IBB Locals—raised more than \$215,000, shattering the previous all-time record set at the same event in 2018.

Members of the Piper High School trap team put their skills to the test alongside union members on the course.



Twin Cities Shoot Smashes the Mark

The USA's Roofers Twin Cities Sporting Clays Shoot is continually one of the USA's largest fundraising shoots. This year, the shoot reached its team sponsor goal well before the event, so the USA and International Roofers staff joined forces to achieve a historic number, raising more than \$20,000 over the event's previous record.

So. California Shoot Draws Novice Shooter

Kaili Peko of Roofers Local 220 learned about the USA at the 2019 Trades Women Build Nations Conference. When her boss mentioned the USA's IBEW Southern California Sporting Clays Shoot, she jumped at the chance to participate. Though a novice shooter, she busted more than 50% of the clays, winning the Ladies HOA award. On top of that, the shoot busted its previous fundraising record with a 13% increase.





USA, LABOR AND ARMY CORPS ENHANCE OUTDOOR RECREATION

| BY KATE NATION

Visitors to Rend Lake, one of Southern Illinois' premier vacation spots, will soon be able to enjoy even more outdoor opportunities at the lake's North Marcum Recreation Area, a 420-acre public use property managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE).

The USA joined a coalition of partners including the USACE, local labor unions, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Rend Lake College, Rend Lake Bike Club, Scholastic 3-D Archery and Rend Lake Conservancy District, pledging to build and maintain a state-of-the-art archery range and mountain bike trail on site.

Plans call for a half-mile-long 3-D archery trail with 20-plus shooting lanes as well as a handicap-accessible 10x80-foot shooting shelter with a concrete floor, target lanes and permanent covered targets. An elevated shooting platform will also be erected on-site. The mountain bike trail will span 12 miles and include a bike maintenance station.

The partnership was announced last May at a ribbon-cutting ceremony marking the grand opening of the new Pollinator Trail at North Marcum, which features a rejuvenated pond complete with four fully accessible fishing stations. The 1,200-foot trail encircles the pond, which was dredged and expanded to improve habitat for gamefish and other wildlife.

While the USACE covered part of the cost, volunteers from Laborers Local 773, Operating Engineers Local 318, Operative Plasterers' and Cement Masons' International Association, Carpenters Regional Council, Lake Contracting, Erb Equipment and Ryterski Trucking donated more than 100 hours as well as materials and equipment to complete the project.

"We have had such wonderful experiences working with our local unions on past projects and look forward to continuing this strong partnership in the future," said USACE Natural Resources Specialist Cassie Magsig.



2019 LIUNA Conservation Steward of the Year

Jim Hobbie, a field rep for LIUNA Local 773, played a major role in the Pollinator Trail project at North Marcum and is helping organize volunteers to create the new archery complex and mountain bike trail.

"Jim has been a wonderful partner and the key player in bringing these visions to life," said Magsig. "With his help, our partners continue to work toward improving outdoor recreation for everyone."

The USA honored Hobbie with its 2019 LIUNA Conservation Steward of the Year award to recognize his volunteerism, leadership and commitment to his community.

Hobbie received his award at the USA's 3rd Annual Southern Illinois Conservation Dinner on September 19. The dinner, organized by IBEW Local 309 Business Manager Tim Evans, was a huge fundraising success. Funds from that dinner, along with the USA's Illinois State Conservation Dinner, support a variety of conservation events and projects in Illinois, including the Rend Lake archery complex.

Hobbie was quick to share credit for these successes. "I'm extremely proud and honored by this award," he said. "I see it as well-deserved recognition of our entire group. If it weren't for the Local 773 members and the fantastic volunteers from the other trades, none of this could have been done. That also goes for my business manager and executive board who've allowed me the time to devote to these projects."

USA Partners with Army Corps

The USA recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers expressing their plans to partner on additional USA Work Boots on the Ground projects on public lands managed by USACE.

The USACE is one of the nation's leading federal providers of outdoor recreation and steward of 12 million acres of land and water resources that receive 260 million visits annually.



UNITING THE UNION COMMUNITY

2019 CONSERVATION STEWARD OF THE YEAR AWARD WINNERS



Prince George's County Trap & Skeet Center project



Vance Ayres IUEC International

In 2009, the USA held its first shooting event at Prince George's County Trap and Skeet Center in Glenn Dale, Maryland. A decade later, union volunteers built three new covered, fully-accessible shooting stations at the facility. Vance Ayres, International Union of Elevator Constructors (IUEC) Director of Governmental Affairs, helped make both possible.

The USA awarded Ayres with the 2019 IUEC Conservation Steward of the Year Award for his commitment as a longtime USA supporter, volunteer and fundraiser.

"It's impossible to convey the value of someone like Vance," said USA Conservation Manager Robert Stroede. "Without dedicated volunteers like him, we wouldn't have nearly as great an impact on the future of conservation."

Ayres also played a big part in the USA's 100th Work Boots on the Ground project at Jones Point Park in Alexandria, Virginia—an effort that saw more than 100 union volunteers restore a 60-year-old public fishing pier on the Potomac River.

"Volunteering is one of the most important things all of us can do to make our lives better and to protect our communities," Ayres said.



2019 Illinois Youth Duck Opener



Ryan Anderson IUPAT DC 30

Whether coordinating a conservation project, organizing a dinner or getting kids outdoors, Ryan Anderson—Business Manager of Painters DC 30—is a champion for the USA. The USA honored him with the 2019 IUPAT Conservation Steward of the Year Award for his efforts.

"Ryan is always willing to tackle the tough work and never backs down from challenges," said USA Director of Conservation and Communications Forrest Parker. "His efforts to introduce youth to the outdoors are amazing, and we are lucky to call him a friend."

Anderson has been involved with a number of USA conservation projects and events. Several focused on the 750-acre Torstenson Youth Conservation Education Center near Rockford, Illinois, which features 750 acres of woodlands, wetlands and prairies. Under Anderson's leadership, Painters DC 30 sponsored the 2019 Illinois Youth Duck Opener at the center with support from the USA and Illinois Conservation Foundation.

"With participation in hunting and fishing declining since the 1980s, I believe it's important that we do everything possible to preserve our natural and cultural outdoor heritage by supporting educational and outdoor recreational programs for the next generation," Anderson said.



FOUNDING PARTNER

Union Labor Life Insurance Company (ULLICO), a proud USA founding partner, is also a USA Diamond Life Partner, having donated more than \$1 million. ULLICO has been a longtime sponsor of USA shoots, conservation dinners and Fundraising Galas. In addition, the company has provided volunteer support at multiple conservation projects, including the restoration of a fishing pier at Jones Point Park in Virginia, and construction of three shooting stations at Prince George's County Trap and Skeet Center in Maryland. ULLICO's leadership has always provided the USA with support and mentorship, increasing our impact in the Labor community.

The USA Conservation Steward of the Year award recognizes a volunteer from each of the USA's charter unions who have made exceptional contributions to the USA's efforts to organize union volunteers to donate their time and trade skills to preserve North America's outdoor heritage. Congratulations to some of our recent winners. *See pages 17 and 19 for additional award winners.*



Dayton Area
Take Kids Fishing Day
at Lakeside Lake



Greg West

OPCMIA Local 132

The USA honored Greg West, Operative Plasterers' and Cement Masons' Local 132 business manager, with the 2019 OPCMIA Conservation Steward of the Year Award.

A resident of Dayton, Ohio, West was instrumental in completing a USA project that transformed Dayton's Lakeside Lake from a dilapidated eyesore into a popular city park.

After volunteers removed trash and underbrush from around the lake, West and the OPCMIA placed concrete supports for a floating pier and park benches. Greg's leadership and the OPCMIA's involvement encouraged other trades to get involved.

Last May, more than 120 young anglers and their families lined the bank of Lakeside Lake for the first Dayton Area Take Kids Fishing Day. An older resident watching from one of the new benches said she never thought she would see the lake area cleaned up in her lifetime.

"I am honored to be part of turning an eyesore into a beautiful area that can be used by the community," said West. "It was awesome working side by side with my brothers from the other trades, and I especially want to thank my brothers and sisters from Local 132 who volunteered their time and skills."



Restored fishing pier
at Wolftever Creek



Jeff Burgin

SMART Local 5

When Jeff Burgin—a resident of Dunlap, Tennessee, and business representative for Sheet Metal Workers Local 5—heard about a USA project to enhance access to Tennessee's Lake Chickamauga, he was all in.

He played a pivotal role in the overhaul of one of lake's busiest access points, the Wolftever Creek Boat Ramp. The renovation expanded year-round access by replacing an existing dilapidated dock with a 104-foot-long, handicap-accessible floating pier and restoring a fishing pier adjacent to the launch. He also helped organize a youth fishing event at the rejuvenated ramp.

The USA honored Jeff Burgin with the 2019 SMART Conservation Steward of the Year Award for his dedication to the project.

"Jeff was crucial to the Wolftever Creek fishing access project," said USA Conservation Manager Rob Stroede. "He, along with the apprentices that he leads, donated their time to see the restoration through to the end. Now the renovated pier provides better access to the thousands of anglers and boaters who utilize the boat ramp and fish from the pier."

"The USA is spot-on with its efforts to provide union labor with an outlet to serve their communities with meaningful conservation projects that positively impact the environment," Burgin said. "I'm thankful to serve and look forward to working with the USA again."

AFL-CIO
INVESTMENT TRUST CORPORATION

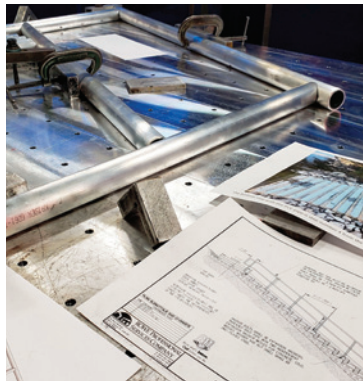
FOUNDING PARTNER

AFL-CIO Investment Trust Corporation (ITC) is a proud USA founding partner that has stood beside this organization from the beginning. The company has sponsored the USA truck and trailer wrap, the USA's Fundraising Gala and numerous sporting clays shoots and conservation dinners. Under the leadership of Randy Kinder, ITC will continue supporting USA events while finding innovative ways to impact our mission. The USA and ITC are exploring opportunities to collaborate on Work Boots on the Ground projects within ITC's target markets.



A DRIVING FORCE FOR USA'S MISSION

The United Auto Workers (UAW) may be best known for keeping world-class cars and trucks rolling down the assembly line, but members of this diverse union also drive countless community service projects across the country, including USA conservation efforts.



Since 2017, the UAW-Ford National Community Outreach Program Michigan Ramp Team—under the direction of UAW Acting President Rory Gamble and Vice President Bill Dirksen—has been involved in USA Work Boots on the Ground projects in Michigan. The team constructed 12 trackchair-accessible observation/hunting blinds for Michigan Operation Freedom Outdoors and informational kiosks for Pheasants Forever (PF) and the National Wild Turkey Federation. Now they are building additional kiosks for PF chapters across the state.

Recognizing the value the USA brings to its members and communities, UAW leadership extended its support to USA events this year.

In February, UAW Region 1-D hosted the inaugural USA conservation dinner in Flint, Michigan. Funds raised at the dinner, along with a matching grant from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, helped fuel the creation of the new Paddler's Landing public access in Flint's Mott Park Recreation Area.

The Flint River offers opportunities for canoeing, kayaking and tubing. Plus, the fishery holds bass, walleyes, northern pike and panfish. Yet, historically, river access was difficult. Within the city, water follows a concrete channel with no public access, while the park's rocky banks are not easily negotiated.

Paddler's Landing features a wide concrete stairway that offers safe access to and from the river. It includes a wooden-railed watercraft slide, as well as a transfer seat and step system to allow those with limited mobility to safely access the water. To complete the project, the UAW Local 659 community service team will fabricate and install a metal handrail.

"As part of our official ribbon-cutting ceremony, participants released 100 lake sturgeon. It was exciting and gratifying to see how easily and safely people could reach the water's edge," said Sarah Scheitler, manager of the Corridor Alliance Chapter of

the Flint River Watershed Coalition. "Until the UAW made this connection, we had not had a relationship with the USA. We were amazed by their ability to raise funds, and we're eager to work with the USA again."



A short drive from Flint, the USA's Michigan State Sporting Clays Shoot in Grand Blanc brought together more than 100 shooters in August. The UAW and National UAW Community Action Program title-sponsored the event for the first time, adding to its success.

The UAW's impact on the USA extends beyond Michigan's borders. A stone's throw from the USA's headquarters in Spring Hill, Tennessee, UAW Local 1853 partnered with the USA last spring for a combined membership drive that resulted in 1,170 new USA members and 30-plus new UAW members. Local 1853 also partnered with the USA and UAW Region 8 to host the first Spring Hill Take Kids Fishing Day, which brought together more than 200 youth and their families.

"It's rewarding to watch the UAW International grow and expand its engagement in the USA as its leadership takes full advantage of the value the USA offers labor," said USA Director of Union Relations Walt Ingram. "Our membership development efforts, community outreach and events change the relationship between union leaders, their members and the community in a powerful and positive way. As much as we appreciate the past, we're very excited about our future together."



As part of a PIO mentor recruitment effort, local IBEW and SMART members joined youth from Big Brothers Big Sisters for an evening dove hunt.



Friends of Ottawa NWR used their USA grant to construct three fishing platforms with the help of UAW and UWUA.



Before the fishing platforms were constructed, Ottawa NWR had only a grass trail to provide temporary fishing access.

USA'S FIRST GRANTS BROADEN CONSERVATION IMPACT

| BY KATE NATION

The nature of American childhood has changed in a single generation. Today, childhood is spent mostly indoors with huge declines in outdoor activities like bike riding, swimming and hiking. Hunting and fishing have declined even more. Those who don't spend time in nature are less likely to protect it, leaving our nation's natural resources and hunting and fishing legacy at risk.

In late 2018, the Union Sportsmen's Alliance unveiled its United Outdoors Conservation Fund to expand its conservation footprint. Through a grant application process, the fund provides financial assistance to union-based and conservation organizations and agency partners to execute impactful conservation and access projects or outreach programs.

This year, the USA awarded its first two grants to the Friends of Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) and Pass It On – Outdoor Mentors.

Ohio's only national wildlife refuge complex, Ottawa NWR encompasses more than 10,000 acres of pristine habitat and is filled to the brim with eagles and other wildlife. Each year, the refuge hosts an increasing number of students for environmental education programs. While fishing is a key component, the refuge lacked a safe and accessible place for children to learn to fish. Instead, staff utilized a mowed grass trail next to a pond near the Visitor Center.

The Friends of Ottawa NWR received a \$10,000 USA grant to support its Anglers for Tomorrow initiative, which included the construction of an accessible 100-foot concrete trail and three fishing platforms near the Visitor Center pond. In October, volunteers from Auto Workers Local 12 and Gas Workers Local G-555 completed the project by constructing the fishing platforms. The new structures increase fishing opportunities and participation by providing wheelchair access and reducing the threat of insect bites associated with the grass trail formerly used.

"It was great to work with partners who bring different backgrounds and skills to the table for a common goal," said Friends of Ottawa NWR Executive Director Aimee Arent. "The refuge operates under the knowledge that connecting children to conservation supports their growth into stewards of tomorrow. This project will help ensure the realization of this goal."

Pass It On—Outdoor Mentors (PIO) also focuses on youth to positively impact the future of America's natural resources and sporting heritage. PIO received a \$5,000 USA grant to create opportunities for at-risk youth to experience hunting, fishing and other outdoor activities by recruiting at least 15 USA members to serve as long-term mentors.

Having grown from a partnership of Kansas Big Brothers Big Sisters and the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, PIO takes a unique approach in getting children outdoors by concentrating on at-risk children with little or no connection to the outdoors.

These children typically come from low-income, single parent homes, and most would never have the opportunity to learn to hunt, fish or shoot. In fact, many of the youth have never seen a cow or traveled a dirt road.

"USA members who have a passion for the outdoors and successful careers in the trades can serve as excellent role models for at-risk youth," said PIO President Michael Christensen. "The goal is to lead these youths to a life that embraces the great outdoors and give them a vision of a life greater than that of their current environment."

The USA grant will help recruit mentors, manage the youth-mentor relationships as well as host outdoor activities for youth on the waiting list for a mentor.

If you live in the Kansas City area and have an interest in becoming a mentor, contact Michael Christensen at 316-253-7221 or mchristensen@outdoormentors.org.

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE UNITED OUTDOORS CONSERVATION FUND
UNIONSPORTSMEN.ORG/GRANTFUND

UNITING THE UNION COMMUNITY

CONSERVATION EFFORTS WE PROUDLY SUPPORT

In addition to organizing infrastructure projects and outreach events, the USA is proud to offer promotional support and free gear to many conservation efforts organized by unions and union members.



Kids Crusade Ministries Camp OYO
— West Portsmouth, OH



Harrison County Sheriff's Youth Fishing Rodeo—Gulfport, MS



Illinois Youth Duck Opener—Pecatonica, IL



Young Guns Youth Whitetail Hunt
—La Plata, MD



Wood and Brook Sportsman's Club Youth Pheasant Hunt—Alden, NY



Middle Tennessee Outdoors Youth Turkey Hunt—Mount Pleasant, TN

CAN THE USA HELP YOUR EVENT?

If you're planning an outdoors-related community project or event, the USA may be able to help. Contact us at conservation@unionsportsmen.org.

NO-KILL DEER HUNT A DREAM COME TRUE

BY KATE NATION



Justin Hatton enjoys his first deer hunt with lead guide Rick Bell.

When Justin Hatton was diagnosed with Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy in 2004 at seven years old, doctors said he wouldn't live past his 18th birthday.

On September 21, at age 22 and now in a wheelchair, Hatton brought down a 20-point buck with the help of family and volunteers. Fred Taylor, Hatton's grandfather, flew from his home in Arizona to join Hatton for the hunt, which was made possible by Ohio deer farmer Todd Dunn.

Dunn's plan was to raise deer, collect their urine and produce a hunting lure that no buck could resist, but something even better grew from it. Dunn has to regularly examine and vaccinate the deer as well as remove the bucks' antlers to prevent them from injuring each other. Since he has to tranquilize the animals to do so, Dunn developed a plan to give disabled children and veterans the opportunity to hunt the deer with dart guns. Now in its fifth year, Dunn's True Lure No Kill Deer Hunt has hosted more than 50 hunters.

Guests don't harvest just any deer—they harvest really big deer. Dunn explained that the farm gets its genetics from Dan and Pam Paden of Velvet Dreams, who graciously donate large bucks for the no-kill hunts.

Hunters are given as much help and time needed to dart their deer. Afterward, Dunn has a local taxidermist mount the antlers on a plaque for hunters. Greg Messer, a 27-year member of Painters Local 555 and taxidermist, donates most of the mounts, while retired marine Randy Lewis of God's Creation Taxidermist mounted the antlers for Hatton. The entire experience doesn't cost guests a dime.

Hatton's mother, Melissa Taylor, learned about the no-kill hunts through an article in the local newspaper. Her father and older son have hunted together but Hatton never had the same opportunity. When she shared Hatton's story, Dunn booked Hatton for the first hunt of 2019. Now Hatton is enjoying bragging to his older brother about his buck.

U.S. Army veterans Rick Bell and Josh Mead assisted on the hunt. Bell, who was injured in an explosion that left him a paraplegic, is Dunn's chief hunting guide. He uses a track chair and never misses a hunt.

"There needs to be more people like that," Melissa said, adding that Hatton wanted to be in the military before he was diagnosed with what she described as "the worst form of muscular dystrophy."



(L-R) Todd Dunn and son Marvin Dunn, Justin Hatton, Fred Taylor and Josh Mead celebrate Hatton's successful hunt.

Hatton took his last steps in June 2009, and today, his heart is functioning at just 30 percent.

"I'm thankful every day for every experience we get to have with Justin," Melissa said. She described the chance for her son to shoot a deer just like his grandfather and brother as a blessing.

"It is hard to put into words the awesome experience of sitting in the blind with my grandson," Fred said. "Participating in this experience that neither of us imagined he would ever be able to do is a memory we will cherish forever."

A former member of Laborers Local 83, Dunn's ties to the union community in Ohio are strong. His three sons are union members, and union members have served as hunting guides on his farm and helped at the disabled youth and veteran fishing derby he hosted last April. So, it was only natural that conversations between Dunn and Fred led to the union. Though retired, Fred has been proudly carrying his union card since 1969.

Dunn's efforts to improve access and opportunities for others to experience the outdoors falls perfectly in line with the USA's mission. Recognizing that, USA's Ohio State Conservation Dinner committee connected the USA with Dunn. To make Hatton's hunt even better, the USA supplied him with Plano game calls, bags and other gear.

"We are beyond grateful for the package of game calls and other goodies you sent Justin. He loves the hat," Fred said. "We are thankful to all the people who made this day special for Justin. Knowing there are people out there doing things for the disabled and making things possible is inspiring."



Justin Hatton and Fred Taylor

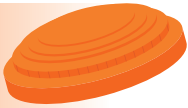
UNITING THE UNION COMMUNITY

USA 2020 SHOOT & DINNER SCHEDULE

Mark your calendar—*make that your USA 2020 calendar* and join us at a USA shoot or conservation dinner next year!



UNIONSPORTSMEN.ORG/CALENDAR



SHOOTS

USA 2020 SHOOTING TOUR SCHEDULE

Feb. 2	OPCMIA Las Vegas Invitational Trap	Las Vegas, NV
Feb. 22	UA Local 469 Arizona Sporting Clays	Mesa, AZ
March 21	Central Florida Sporting Clays	Sumterville, FL
TBD	Nashville Area Sporting Clays	Nashville, TN
April 4	Provost & Umphrey's TX Sporting Clays	Lumberton, TX
April 18	Houston Area Sporting Clays	Houston, TX
May	Dallas Fort Worth Sporting Clays	Fort Worth, TX
May 16	SMART New Jersey Sporting Clays	Port Republic, NJ
May 30	BAC Northern Kentucky Sporting Clays	Owenton, KY
May TBD	Western Pennsylvania Sporting Clays	Ellwood City, PA
TBD	IUPAT Northern Ohio Sporting Clays	Bucyrus, OH
June 26	AFL-CIO Capital Area Sporting Clays	Glenn Dale, MD
TBD	Illinois State Sporting Clays	Morris, IL
TBD	IUEC Baltimore Trap	Carney, MD
TBD	UAW Michigan State Sporting Clays	Grand Blanc, MI
Aug. 22	Richard L. Trumka PA Sporting Clays	Dilliner, PA
Sept. 12	Roofers Twin Cities Sporting Clays	Clear Lake, MN
Sept. 19	Boilermakers Kansas City Sporting Clays	Lenexa, KS
Sept. 26	SMART Cigna Colorado Sporting Clays	Brighton, CO
TBD	IBEW Southern California Sporting Clays	Corona, CA



DINNERS

2020 CONSERVATION DINNER TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Jan. 28	Greater Lansing Dinner	Lansing, MI
Feb.	Reading BCTC Dinner	Reading, PA
Feb.	UAW Region 1-D Dinner	Flint, MI
March 14	Iowa BCTC & AFL-CIO Des Moines Dinner	Des Moines, IA
March 20	Tri State Dinner	Philadelphia, PA
March 27	Ohio AFL-CIO Dinner	Columbus, OH
April	Greater Atlanta Dinner	Atlanta, GA
April 25	West Virginia AFL-CIO Dinner	Charleston, WV
May	Central & Northern NY BCTC Dinner	Syracuse, NY
May	Mississippi BCTC Dinner	TBD
May	Utah BCTC Dinner	Salt Lake City, UT
May	Illinois State Dinner	Northern IL
May	Rochester BCTC Dinner	Rochester, NY
June	Greater Kansas City BCTC Dinner	Kansas City, KS
July	Oregon BCTC Dinner	Portland, OR
Aug. 11	UA & Milwaukee Tool Ann Arbor Dinner	Ann Arbor, MI
Aug. 15	Greater Richmond BCTC Dinner	Richmond, VA
Sept.	Missouri AFL-CIO Dinner	TBD, MO
Sept. 18	Madison BCTC Dinner	Madison, WI
Sept.	Illinois AFL-CIO & IBEW Local 702 Dinner	Southern IL
Sept.	Arkansas AFL-CIO Dinner	Little Rock, AR
Sept.	Alabama AFL-CIO and BCTC Dinner	Birmingham, AL
Sept.	Greater Detroit Dinner	Detroit, MI
Oct.	Central & Western Kansas BCTC Dinner	Wichita, KS
Oct.	South Jersey BCTC Dinner	South Jersey
Oct.	Capital Area Dinner	Lanham, MD
Oct.	Texas Gulf Coast BCTC Dinner	Houston, TX
Oct.	Colorado BCTC Dinner	Colorado Springs, CO
Nov.	Augusta BCTC Dinner	Augusta, GA
Dec.	Washington BCTC Dinner	Seattle, WA
Dec.	Tri Cities Dinner	Kennewick, WA

NEW USA FACES IN THE FIELD

If you attended a 2019 USA conservation dinner in the past six months, you may have noticed a new face or two. In June, the USA welcomed Fred Bird of Lee, New Hampshire, and Eric Bakken of Lacey, Washington, to the staff. As event coordinators, they host and execute USA conservation dinners as well as assist with USA conservation projects, outreach events and presence at union conferences and conventions.



FRED BIRD

After serving in the U.S. Air Force from 1999 to 2005, Bird earned an undergraduate degree from the University of New Hampshire and explored a variety of occupations before finding his calling in conservation.

"I live, eat and breathe the outdoors," Bird said. "I understand being part of and giving back to something bigger than yourself to improve communities, states and our country."

Bird's passion is turkey hunting. One of his life goals—along with becoming skilled at taxidermy—is to kill a turkey in all 49 states where it's legal.

Before joining the USA, Bird was a regional director for the National Wild Turkey Federation. While he loved his job, he appreciates that USA projects and events benefit outdoorsmen and women of all types.

"When I get loud and passionate about the work we are doing, it's real," he said. "I'm not a salesman. I could never sell you a car, but I can talk all day about conservation, leaving a legacy and giving back to the resource."

Bird hopes to help grow the USA into a household name that all walks of sportsmen and conservationists will want to join and contribute to. He also aims to leave a positive mark on natural resources in his home state of New Hampshire, where he serves as Fish and Game Commissioner of Strafford County.

In everything he does, Bird tries to be a good example to his two school-aged children, Addison and Kaleb, and teach them the importance of conservation and giving back.



ERIC BAKKEN

Bakken served in the U.S. Army as an infantryman for nine years. After leaving the military, he started a non-profit, The Fallen Outdoors, which has connected more than 250,000 veterans of all eras and branches with the outdoors through hunting and fishing trips since 2010.

The military taught Bakken work ethic, chain of command, respect and initiative. Bakken is now using those skills, combined with his inherent ability to connect with people, to help unite union members for a common cause and show communities what the USA and its members are capable of.

"After the military, I felt lost and disconnected," Bakken said. "But with the USA, I have a purpose and am surrounded by people I consider brothers and sisters seconds after we meet."

Before joining the USA staff, Bakken was a freelance videographer and filmed hunting and fishing TV shows. Now on staff, he is applying his photography and videography skills at USA dinners and other events as well.

In his free time, Bakken is an avid hockey player and die-hard duck hunter. He hopes to one day get into wood carving, especially decoys. He also loves to spend time outdoors with his wife Nikki and 4-year-old daughter Finnley, named after his best friend who was killed in Afghanistan.



RENEWED PARTNERSHIP GETS KIDS TO THE WATER

BY KATE NATION

Nearly 200 kids packed Jacobson Park in Lexington, Kentucky, on October 19 for a free fishing event hosted by the USA, Kentucky American Water and the American Water Charitable Foundation (AWCF).

Youth were coached in fishing techniques by a crew of volunteers, including members of Service Employees Local 320. They also received a free rod and reel—courtesy of AWCF and Pure Fishing—to take home so they can continue to hone their fishing skills.

“We’re always excited to get people, especially children, into the outdoors,” said Carrie Williams, president of the AWCF. “It’s our hope that kids exposed to nature at a young age will grow to appreciate water as a valuable natural resource and want to take care of it throughout their lives.”

The USA and AWCF first came together in 2015 through their shared interest in conservation and getting youth outdoors.

The USA used its first AWCF grant of \$25,000 to complete water-based outdoor recreation projects in West Virginia, Tennessee and Illinois. The success of those projects bolstered the relationship and led to the construction of a handicap-accessible fishing pier at Jacobson Park in 2016 and the inaugural USA Take Kids Fishing Day in Lexington the following spring.

On July 16, 2019, the AWCF renewed the partnership by pledging a three-year, \$300,000 grant to the USA to host additional outreach activities as well as to support its Work Boots on the Ground infrastructure projects in American Water service areas.

“Our partnership with the Union Sportsmen’s Alliance is an important component of our efforts to give back and make a difference in the communities served by American Water,” Williams added. “The Take Kids Fishing Day at Jacobson Park is a wonderful example of our partnership.”



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BREAKING BARRIERS

USA MEMBER
BREAKS DOWN
DREAM MOOSE HUNT
BY BOB BARTECK – IAFF LOCAL 425 ALUMNI



“I can’t believe I am standing here,”

USA member Mike Jackson remembers thinking.

The landscape, topography, and local lifestyle on the Newfoundland peninsula made a lasting impression. This was the hunting trip Jackson had been waiting and working for. The Union Sportsman Alliance is full of men and women who set goals and then live out their dream hunting and fishing adventures. When Jackson submitted a photo of his giant Newfoundland moose in the USA’s Photo of the Week contest, we discovered he was a prime example.

A member of SMART Transportation Local 1374, Jackson serves his fellow railroaders as a Transportation Peer Prevention Coordinator as well as a trustee and Engineer’s LCA secretary. He enjoys traveling the country for his job but prefers to be at home in Pennsylvania with his wife and children. Jackson faced many of the same barriers we all do when we want to take on an epic adventure: getting time off work, working around a family schedule, staying within a budget—the list goes on.

Yet he found a way.

This was the hunting trip Jackson had been waiting and working for.

PLANNING

Jackson's trip to Newfoundland didn't happen overnight; it took several years to achieve. He and three friends had hunted together for many years on smaller trips, but they always talked about going on a "bucket-list" hunt. Moose hunts always caught their eye at the Great American Outdoor Show in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania—so the research began.

Newfoundland was within driving distance. Better yet, they didn't have to wait years to draw a tag. Plus, it was far cheaper than hunting moose in the Yukon or Alaska.

"We attended lots of sport shows and talked with every outfitter we could," Jackson explained. "We examined their success rates, costs and if we thought they were right for us. After a long search, we narrowed it down to Northern Edge Outfitters. They were humble, honest and we found lots of past clients returned to hunt with them again."

They made the right choice. The guides, they discovered, were fellow union members.

"The most important thing is to find the right outfitter," he said. "We have been on a few other guided hunts, and they always treat you as a client. These folks treated us like family. They are hardworking union commercial fisherman during the spring/summer season, and they appreciated what it took for us to get there."

Mike and his friends booked the trip three years in advance, which allowed them to save money, vacation time and purchase necessary hunting gear over an extended period.

FINANCES

The expense of a dream trip is often one of the biggest hurdles, especially when there are big family expenses on the horizon, like college.

"It was difficult for me to justify pulling money away from the family to satisfy my dream hunt," Jackson said. "However, my family was very supportive and decided now was the time to do it. Plus, the hunt being three years away allowed time to save."

Jackson and his friends did the math and found that small sacrifices would pay off big.

"We figured we needed to save \$50 a week. We spend more than that on lunch, coffee, snacks and doughnuts before work. By cutting those extra expenses, picking up some extra side work and selling a few pieces of older equipment, we could all pull it off."

They factored in everything: outfitter expenses, tips, meat processing, shared cost for fuel, tolls, ferries, hotels, meals, passports, coolers for the meat, U.S. and Canada customs clearance for the guns, even reloading proper rounds for moose.

And they didn't stop there; they also considered what gear they would need to purchase. "We needed good shooting sticks, sharp knives, rubber boots, leather boots, rain gear, binoculars, range finder, backpack, etc." That level of financial planning enabled them to determine an accurate amount to save while eliminating surprises.



Jackson, his buddies, and the Northern Edge Outfitters crew

THE HUNT

When Jackson and his friends arrived at the hunting camp in the heart of the Northern Newfoundland Wilderness, the rut was not quite in full swing. They had mixed results with the calls, and the weather held back normal moose movement. By the fifth evening of the hunt, Jackson had only seen three cows, two calves and 12 caribou. All three of his hunting buddies, though, had filled their tags.

"The pressure was on. I had two hunting days left, and the weather didn't look like it was going to improve, but the bulls were starting to react to the calls," Jackson said.

The next morning was cool and overcast. No moose. When high winds moved in, the hunters traveled farther from camp to lower elevation for the evening. They stopped to call a few times, and if nothing happened in 20 minutes, they moved on. The sign and locations got better and better, but they ran out of time and had to head back to camp before dark.

As they worked their way back through areas where they had called earlier, Jackson happened to look to his right and saw something that didn't belong.

"It was about 100-yards away, behind a small clump of bog trees," he said. "It wasn't a shape. It wasn't an outline. It wasn't even movement. It was a color that just didn't fit the landscape. Then it stood up!

"How the hell did that 1,200-pound animal hide behind that tree?" Jackson wondered as he remembered his grandfather's lessons on sighting-in the kill shot rather than focusing on the head.

The 10" x 10" color that caught Jackson's eye was the left palm of the antler. Though the tree was small, it blocked his angle to a kill shot. The guide was screaming "shoot before it runs; you will never see it again."

When Jackson said he didn't have a shot, the guide grunted. The bull took one large step to his right. Jackson fired a 150-grain .270 round right in the vitals. Less than 10 yards later, the bull fell into the bog.

"A swarm of emotion and relief flooded my soul. I filled my tag! I still didn't know how big he was, nor did it matter at that moment. My bucket list hunt was now complete," Jackson said.

As he approached the bull, Jackson realized why the guide was so excited—this bull was something special. He was 49" wide and had 21 points with huge, thick eye guards that would make any bull in the area shutter. He was a true rarity for Newfoundland.

KEY LESSONS

Jackson's story can serve as inspiration for all of us. First, get your hunting partners onboard and begin planning years in advance; then slowly and steadily work toward your goal. Second, overcoming the financial barriers can be as easy as giving up a few luxuries—brown-bagging lunch rather than eating out or skipping a \$5 fancy coffee. Lastly, the success level of the dream trip is up to you. Mike's enjoyment of the trip in its entirety, from the road trip to the people to the landscape, made the trip a success before he bagged his moose. Now he can look back at the photos and relive that trip of a lifetime over and over. ■

BE A PART OF THIS SERIES

If you have lived out your own hunting and fishing dreams, we want to share your tips and strategies with fellow USA members. On the other hand, if you feel like your dream trip is impossible, we want to know what barriers are standing in your way, so we can address them in this series.

Email us at magazine@unionsportsmen.org



"Do your homework and do not put it off. The only thing you will regret is not doing it. I am thankful I have a group of friends who motivated me, and I'm blessed to have a union job that made it possible."

- Mike Jackson

A hunter in full camouflage gear is shown in a forest, aiming a compound bow. The hunter is wearing a cap and has a focused expression. The background is a dense forest with tall trees and sunlight filtering through the leaves.

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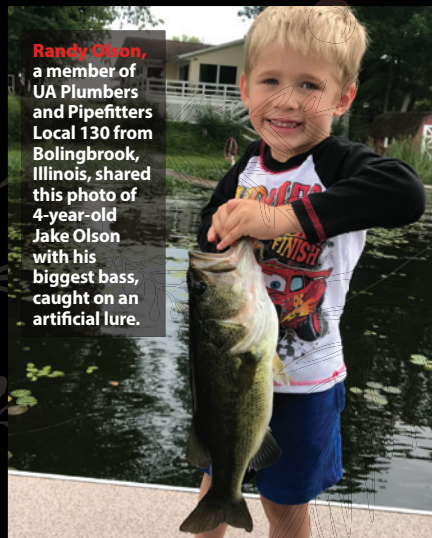
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Randy Olson, a member of UA Plumbers and Pipefitters Local 130 from Bolingbrook, Illinois, shared this photo of 4-year-old Jake Olson with his biggest bass, caught on an artificial lure.



Cassie Allen, USA's Human Resources and Employee Relations Coordinator, harvested her first pheasants at Dismal River Ranch in Mullen, Nebraska.



Victor Docherty, member of Electrical Workers Local 164 from Hamburg, New Jersey, harvested his biggest archery buck to date. It scored 162 1/4 inches.



'TIS THE SEASON FOR MAKING NEW MEMORIES IN THE OUTDOORS!



For the past 15 years, **Stephen Desisto** of Painters DC 35 and his brother have been organizing a New Year's Day morning of striped bass fishing and breakfast for anyone willing to brave the cold. This photo was from January 2019. "What a great way to start your year."



Each year, **Justin Vollbach**, a member of Auto Workers Local 228, and his dad head to Michigan's Upper Peninsula to hunt whitetails the weekend after Thanksgiving. "I couldn't imagine spending it any other way!"



Jason Darco, a member of Teamsters Local 320 from Thief River Falls, Minnesota, and his family embrace the snow with an annual fishing trip to Minnesota's Lake of the Woods.

Gerry Gay, member of Fire Fighters Local 1624 from Sanford, Maine, might have snapped the perfect Christmas card image from his treestand.



Devin Hosking, a member of Sheet Metal Workers Local 16 from Portland, Oregon, caught and released this beauty while fishing with his son at one of their favorite fishing holes. He also caught a female, which will be smoked and given out as Christmas gifts.

CROSSBREED HOLSTERS SUPERTUCK

- CrossBreed Holsters revolutionized comfort for those who carry concealed handguns. They may look a bit exaggerated and difficult to conceal, but they're not. The back of their SuperTuck holster is a wide piece of leather, which rides wonderfully on the hip and protects your pistol from salty sweat and oils. The front of the holster, and where the CrossBreed idea originated, is molded Kydex that holds a gun secure.

The SuperTuck can be worn with a shirt un-tucked, or tucked-in by tucking your shirt in behind the belt clips and over the holstered pistol. The leather helps the holster conform to your body shape. This is an especially solid option for those who like to carry on their strong side, with the gun slightly toward the back.

CrossBreed has options for most brands and sizes of handguns and offers numerous color combinations. They also guarantee their work. Should the holster fail during use, simply send it back, and they'll replace it. All their holsters are made in the USA.



www.crossbreedholsters.com

ZINK CALL OF DEATH

- When it comes to buying a duck or goose call, sound is everything. But there are some—like the crew at Zink Calls—that put a high priority on aesthetics, too. Call of Death is no exception. If you like laser engraved graphics and candy-colored acrylic, Zink Calls has you covered.

You won't lose The Call of Death if you drop it in the weeds, and these beasts sound good, too, and that's what really counts.

The Call of Death is a goose call meant to pull in the most reluctant birds at close quarters. Built around Zink's "competition caliber" worn-in tone channel, it has all the power you could want from a goose call. Its convincing low end makes it ideal for geese.

The call comes with extra reeds, a solid carrying case, a leg band and an instructional DVD that makes mastering the Call of Death a breeze.

MSRP \$159.99



www.zinkcalls.com

ZINK NOTHING BUT GREEN POLYCARB

- The Zink Nothing But Green Polycarb is a budget-conscious option for the dedicated mallard hunter. It produces the natural sounds that made Zink famous, but at a price that's much less stressful on your wallet.

As the name suggests, this is a polycarbonate call. Polycarbonites are easily worked, easy to mold and can even be brilliantly transparent. While they lack some of the visual punch of acrylics, they're much less expensive. And it is very hard to tell the difference between the sounds of the two.

The Nothing But Green Polycarb is a great call for beginners, thanks to Zink's "easy blow sound system." This is a single reed call with a Z-cut tone channel to eliminate reed lock. For those looking for a call with excellent range (crucial for pulling in mallards), this is it. And the Nothing But Green Polycarb can sound like a bevy of hens, which will drive an alpha mallard nuts.

MSRP \$139.99



AMERICAN ROOTS ALL-SEASON QUARTER ZIP

• Professional, soft and insulating, this cotton quarter-zip is superior in versatility. You can wear it on the job site, to your union meetings or to an evening bonfire in any season. You can wear it anywhere — and feel good about supporting the USA and show your union pride in this American-made, union-made garment every time you do.

American Roots began in 2013 when founder and co-owner Ben Waxman moved back to Portland, Maine, with a dream to create jobs in the place he grew up. The company formed relationships with Goodwill, Portland Adult Education and Capital for Opportunity and Change to develop a training course for stitchers to build its union workforce.

If that wasn't enough "feel-good" to keep you warm, you can get this quarter zip screen printed with the USA logo, valued at \$90, and support conservation when you purchase a USA Gold Sponsor membership (\$75) or a Platinum Sponsor Membership (\$100) to also receive a Buck knife.



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NAIL POLISH NOT JUST FOR NAILS

If you've met USA Operations Manager Heather Tazelaar, you know shotgun blasts are no match for her boisterous laugh, and her fingernails are always a masterpiece. Over the years, those nails have caught the eye of many USA members.

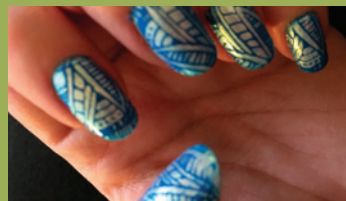
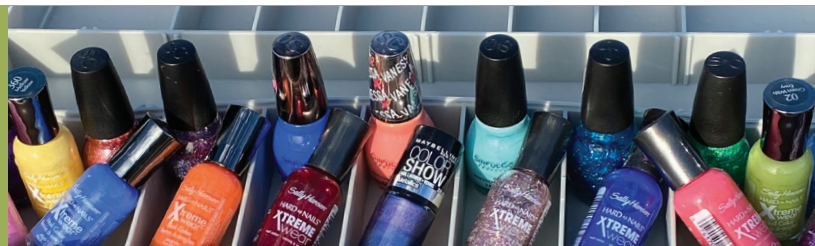
"I was setting up for a shoot in Alaska, and President Trumka noticed my fingernails," Tazelaar recalls. "He said he has used nail polish to add color and shine to lures."

He wasn't the only one. Another longtime USA member pointed out that nail polish is a great economical choice for color repairs, preservation of original color or adding a bit of extra flair with shimmers and glitters. Another member said the red polish is a great option if you want to add a bit of "blood" to a lure.

And what better way to beat the winter blues than painting your own lures in preparation for spring fishing?

Tazelaar identified three U.S. made nail polish brands that can be found at almost any grocery or drugstore, offer a wide array of colors and finishes, and cost less than \$5 a bottle, and she provided a few tips to get you started:

Sally Hansen Insta Dry and Xtreme Wear Sinful Colors Professional and Sinful Shine Maybelline Color Show



PAINTING TIPS

- Allow the polish to dry for 3-4 days before using the lure to allow the smell to dissipate.
- Use a clear base/top coat like Sally Hansen Double Duty before and after applying the color combo of choice to help the nail polish adhere and shine longer.
- Apply the same base/top coat to restore glitter or shimmer you've painted on lures.
- To repaint your lure, remove nail polish with acetone.
- If your polish gets thick or gloppy, add two drops of acetone and shake it.

Horse Trade Turned Family Tradition

Four Generations Hunt with Springfield Model 1873

BY KATE NATION

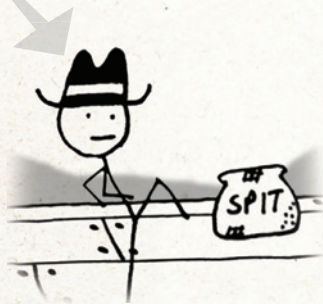


It's been 51 years, and Gordon McCleary vividly remembers when his dad traded a .300 Magnum that he said "kicked like a Missouri mule." That simple moment began a lasting family tradition.

"We didn't have a lot of extra money floating around, so it was quite the horse trade," McCleary recalls of the barter his dad, Ted McCleary, made in 1968 with someone he met at the local watering hole.

In exchange for the .300 Magnum, Ted—a member of Teamsters Local 839—got a Springfield Model 1873 .45-70, a .25 Stevens, an antique clock and two **spittoons**. That Springfield became a family treasure that's been handed down through generations of McClearys, just like the union brotherhood.

The Springfield Model 1873 was the first standard-issue breech-loading rifle adopted by the U.S. Army, and it was widely used in the Indian Wars of the 1870s and 1880s.



After making the trade, Ted repaired and refinished the stock. "Other than that, it's pretty much in its original condition," said Gordon, a 43-year member of the Operative Plasterers' and Cement Masons' International Association.

"That same year my dad got the gun, he took it on an elk hunt in Washington's Cascade Mountains with family and friends and shot a bull elk," Gordon said. "It was the only bull taken in their camp that year, which gave him pretty substantial bragging rights."

Gordon recalls his dad taking the gun elk hunting the following year hoping to "rub a little more salt in their wounds." When he missed a shot at another bull, Ted went back to his modern rifle, and the Springfield found a home in the corner of a closet

In 2000, when Ted passed away, Gordon's mom handed the gun down to him.



Ted McCleary, 1968

The rifle is really awkward, Gordon says, because it's so long and heavy. "You think it's going to have a tremendous recoil because of the size of the bullet (405-grain), but the weight of the gun absorbs it. It has ladder sights that flip up, but you really don't want to shoot beyond 100 yards because that much lead sinks in a hurry."

Fitting for a nearly 150-year-old gun design once favored by Custer and the 7th Cavalry, Gordons' first hunt with the Springfield Model 1873 was for bison in Red Rock, Montana, in 2003.

"You are almost awe-struck when you get behind a buffalo. They are massive, and you understand why they are so revered by Native Americans," Gordon said.

After a 33-year break, the .45-70 performed perfectly. As Gordon watched the bull fall, he wondered if the old gun had been used to kill a buffalo in its early history. The following year, he took his son Gordon McCleary Jr., now a member of Steelworkers Local 12-369, on a successful buffalo hunt to the same area.

"I remember, at -10 degrees, watching through the binoculars as the vapor trail of the 405-grain bullet hit its mark, and over 1,200 pounds of animal piled up in the snow," Gordon said.

After killing an elk with the gun in 2015, Gordon put it away for four years until he was able to take both his son and 15-year-old grandson, Alex, on a Saskatchewan elk hunt in 2019. Alex had handled the Model 1873 from the time it stood taller than him. He knew he was next in line.

"On the second day of the hunt, we stood a nice 5-point bull out of his bed at about 60 yards in heavy timber," Gordon recalls. "I put the shooting sticks in front of Alex and quietly said shoot. He placed the long gun on the sticks and dropped the hammer"



Gordon McCleary Jr., 2004

As the bull crashed to the ground, the magnitude of the hunt sunk in. "I realized the circle had been closed with a gun built for Custer and the Indian Wars and a tradition that started unknowingly more than 50 years earlier and passed from my dad, to me, to my son and now my grandson," Gordon said.

Both hunting and the union are ingrained in the McCleary family, and Gordon has spent his life helping pass on both. "That's why I have a commitment to the Union Sportsmen's Alliance," he said. "Just as I felt when I was a union representative, I have a responsibility to set the table for the next generation as the prior generation did for me and my family."

Gordon also feels a responsibility to ensure the old Springfield has a place to go. "We laughed after Alex got the elk because it's up to him; he's the only one on the tree who can pass it on," Gordon said. "But at 15, we told him not to get in a hurry. I'll try to hang around." ■



Alex Mendoza, Gordon McCleary Jr. and Gordon McCleary Sr. share a hunt in 2019 that carries a family tradition to the 4th generation.



Gordon McCleary Sr., 2003



Harvesting white-tailed bucks based on age is becoming an increasingly common management strategy. Hunters can accurately age bucks on the hoof based on their body characteristics—an ability many considered impossible not so long ago. With practice, hunters across the whitetail's range can estimate the age of a buck as a means for selective harvest within Quality Deer Management (QDM) programs or merely for the fun of it.

AGING WHITE-TAILED BUCKS ON THE HOOF

BY KIP ADAMS, QUALITY DEER MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

Why would you want to protect some younger bucks from harvest?

When a deer population is socially balanced, with all ages represented, hunters witness the full range of social behaviors. Rubs and scrapes are more common in the woods. Hunters witness more buck fights, see more bucks chasing does, and often hear vocalizations like grunting. Calling techniques like rattling are more productive. Overall, the rut is more obvious and intense, leading to a more enjoyable hunting experience and higher hunting success. There is also a better chance of seeing and harvesting a mature buck because more are present.

Like humans, whitetails show signs of aging. While some body characteristics change by season, fall is the best time to age bucks because of pronounced neck swelling and tarsal staining. You can estimate age at other times of the year, but many characteristics are viewed relative to what they will (or did) look like during the rut.





FAWNS

Buck fawns are easily distinguished from other bucks but are commonly misidentified as female deer. Buck fawns have small square bodies, small short heads and relatively large ears. Their heads are flatter between the ears rather than rounded like that of a doe. The distance from their ear to eye is also approximately the same as the distance from their eye to nose. In contrast, the distance from an adult doe's ear to eye is much shorter than from its eye to nose. Fawns also have short necks, flatter bellies and backs, and less muscle definition than adult does.



1½ YEARS

For most QDM programs, especially those in beginning stages, learning to identify yearling bucks is the most important aging skill. Yearling bucks have long legs, a thin neck, a slim body and a lanky appearance. Their legs appear too long for their bodies because their torsos (stomach, chest and neck) are not fully developed. Their antler spread is nearly always less than the width of their ears when their ears are in an alert position. They have a distinct line of separation between their neck and shoulders and little muscle definition. They have a thin waist, and they may have slight staining in their tarsal glands during the rut.

Overall, a yearling buck looks like a doe with antlers. In well-managed populations on high-quality-habitat, yearling bucks can have large bodies and even 10 or more antler points, but the above characteristics will be present and can be used to separate them from 2½-year-olds. Study body characteristics before considering antler size when attempting to age a buck.



2½ YEARS

Two-year-olds have legs that still appear too long for their bodies, and they still have an overall sleek appearance. They have some muscle in their shoulders and slight swelling in their neck during the rut, but their waist is still thin. Given adequate nutrition, their antler spread can be equal to or wider than their ears. Finally, they can have moderate staining in their tarsal glands during the rut, especially if few mature bucks are in the population.



3½ YEARS

Three-year-olds have legs that appear to be the right length for their bodies because their torsos are now more fully developed. They have muscled shoulders and a highly swollen neck during the rut, but their waist is still lean. I liken three-year-olds to middle linebackers as they are big and strong but also lean and fast. A deep chest and lean waist give them a "racehorse" or "front-heavy" appearance. Their antler spread can be even with or wider than their ears. Research shows that, at this age, most bucks have achieved 50 to 75 percent of their antler-growth potential. They also have a lot of tarsal staining during the rut.

Beyond 3½ years of age, determining the exact age of a buck becomes more difficult because of increased variation among individual bucks. However, for most QDM programs, harvest goals can be achieved if hunters are able to confidently separate bucks into one of three groups: A) Yearlings, B) 2½-year-olds, and C) 3½ or older. Hunters who want to sort and select bucks based on ages older than 3½ can still do so, but more time spent studying each buck may be required.

What's the best way to do this? Live-study in the field. Trail-camera photos and home-video footage can refine your estimates. Also, once a buck has been harvested, check its toothwear and/or cementum annuli ages from a reputable lab. This will help you hone your skills at aging the deer in your region or habitat type.



4½ YEARS

Most four-year-old bucks have legs that appear too short for their bodies. They have fully-muscled shoulders, heavy swelling in their necks during the rut, and their waists drop down to become even with their chests. Given adequate nutrition, they'll become structurally mature and can reach 75 to 90 percent of their antler growth potential. They also have a lot of tarsal staining and, during the rut, the stain may extend below the tarsal gland. Four-year-olds have an entirely different appearance than one- to three-year-old bucks.



5½ TO 7½ YEARS

Few free-ranging bucks exceed five years of age, so I'll combine five-to-seven-year-olds. Bucks in this category have legs that appear too short for their bodies. They also have several other characteristics of four-year-olds, including fully muscled shoulders, heavy swelling in their necks during the rut, and waists that are even with their chests. They may have pot bellies and sagging backs. Their increased body mass gives them a more rounded appearance, and they often look like a small cow. They will have achieved 90 to 100% of their antler growth potential, and they can have highly stained tarsal glands during the rut, with the stain extending well below the tarsal gland.

As you study age-specific body characteristics, you'll notice there aren't age-specific antler characteristics (other than the range of antler potential that may be reached at each age class, and this percentage can't be accurately estimated by viewing the antlers). Therefore, I suggest you don't rely solely on antler size when aging bucks. Large antlers on a younger deer and small antlers on an older deer can negatively influence your estimated age. I prefer to estimate age based solely on body characteristics with respect to location and time of year and then use antler size to "check" my estimate or to break a tie if I can't decide between two ages.

For more assistance, I recommend the book "Observing and Evaluating Whitetails" by Dave Richards and Al Brothers, as well as the pocket field guide to aging bucks, produced as a companion to this book. Also, QDMA has produced an educational poster, "Estimating Buck Age," that uses photos of live bucks of known ages to illustrate variations in body characteristics by age class. These items are available at www.QDMA.com.

Aging bucks on the hoof is a lot of fun. Whether you hunt with a bow, sporting arm or camera, this information can make you a more knowledgeable whitetail enthusiast.

Kip Adams of Pennsylvania is a wildlife biologist and the Director of Conservation for QDMA. ■



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