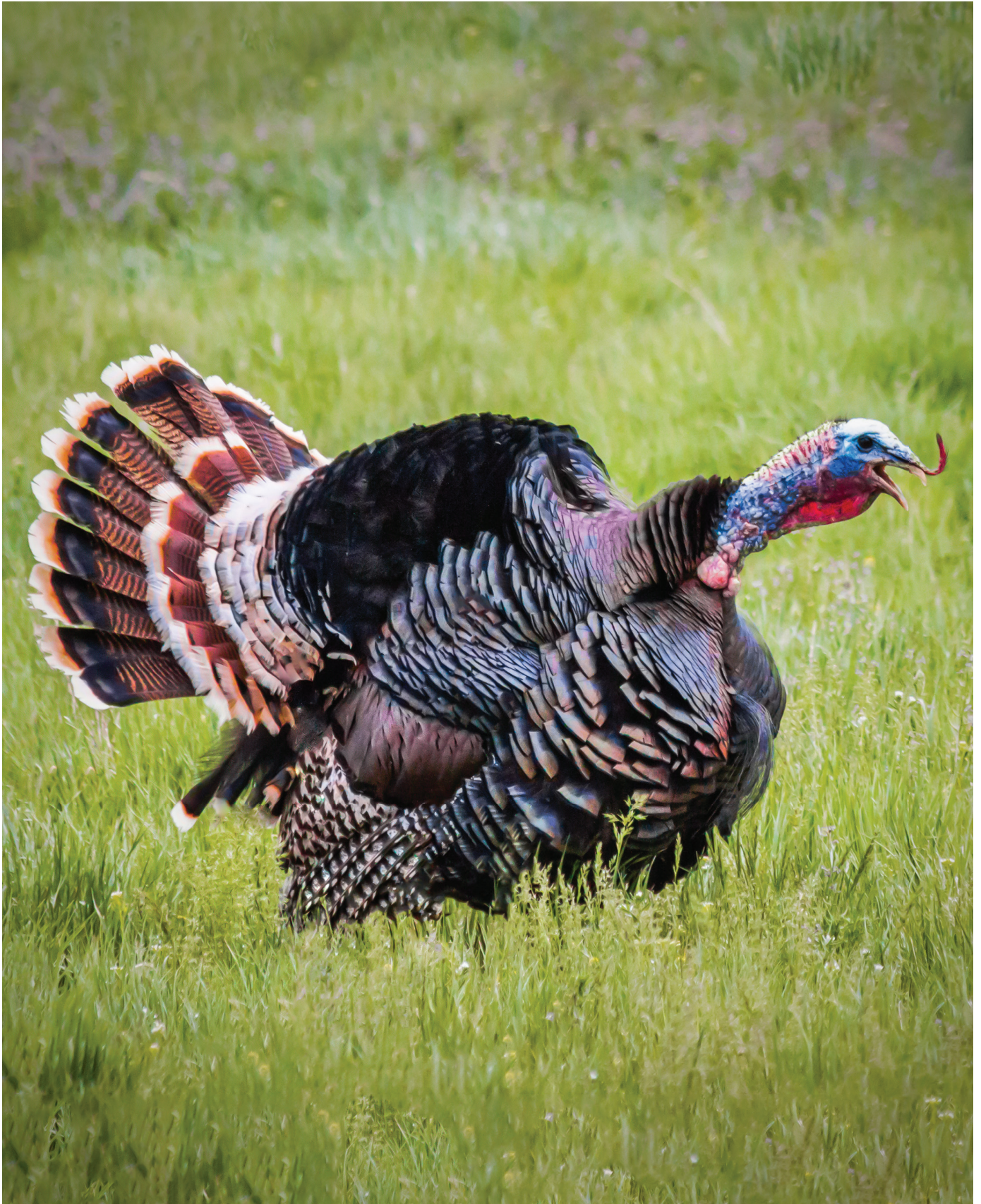


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HUNTING LIFE MAGAZINE

SPRING 2025





BY KEVIN PAULSON,
FOUNDER HUNTINGLIFE.COM

“PUBLISHING A MAGAZINE IS ALL ABOUT TRUST – TRUST IN THOSE WHO CHOOSE TO WORK ALONGSIDE YOU TO CREATE SOMETHING MEANINGFUL.”

never intended to uproot my life and start down the path of becoming a publisher. But as I sit here writing this, I realize it was 19 years ago when I walked into my second-to-last outdoor show as an outfitter just outside Pittsburgh. Sitting in my hotel room, getting ready to set up for the show, I got a call from my sister. My father had passed away far too young. That moment is forever cemented in my mind. Not a day goes by when I don't miss him, and not a day goes by when I don't recognize and appreciate how that moment changed my life for the better in ways I never expected.

Publishing a magazine is all about trust – trust in those who choose to work alongside you to create something meaningful. Each author has to do their part in crafting their articles. Our editor and copy editors must carefully select photos and fine-tune each piece. Our designer has to bring it all together with the ads to form a cohesive work. Our sponsors must believe in our vision and support the idea of creating something from nothing, quarter after quarter.

This issue is one I'm especially proud of because our team is really starting to come together. The stories in this edition are outstanding creations from an incredibly talented group of writers and contributors.

We just wrapped up ATA and SHOT Show in January, and I have to say, the energy at both events was incredible. We had tremendous meetings with companies up and down the aisles and connected with content creators every morning in the press room. We are truly part of the greatest industry, and it's refreshing to see so many people making a difference in the success of archery, shooting and hunting across the country.

I'll be at Pheasant Fest in Kansas City in March, and the next big conference we attend

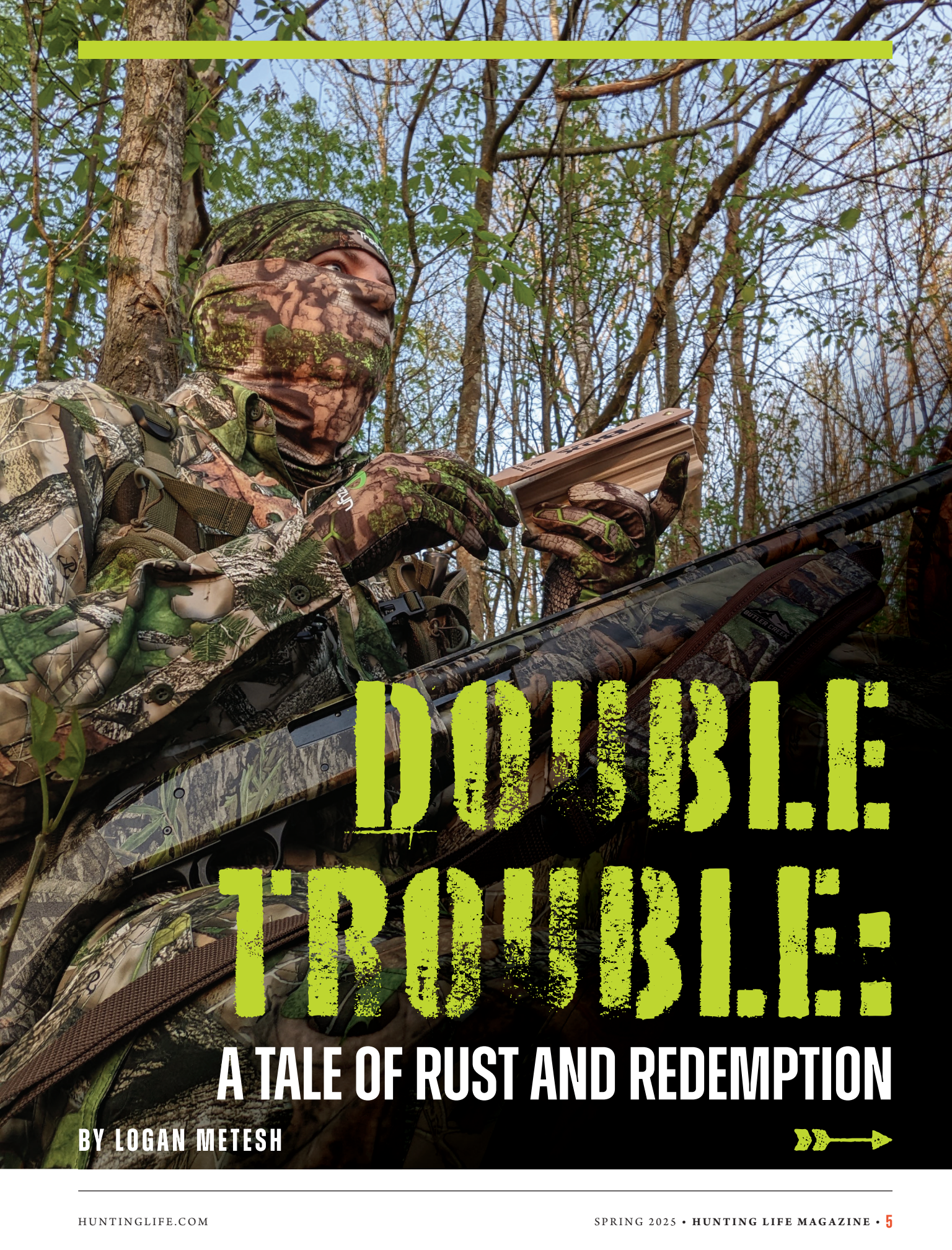
will be the POMA Annual Meeting in Ohio in June, followed by the AGLOW Conference in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, in September. These events are important to us because they give me the chance to connect with outdoor content creators and invite them to pitch stories for our readers. Our editor, Britney, and I are always on the lookout for new, upcoming and seasoned writers to fill our pages with award-winning content.

If you think you can produce your best work for our magazine, we want to hear from you. Send an email to Britney@BoothMedia-Group.com and she can give you our query/pitch guidelines.

Last but not least, I want to acknowledge the incredible companies supporting our success and our team. It takes vision to build something like this, and it takes significant financial support to keep it moving in the right direction. The companies featured in this issue – and in every issue – believe in what we're working toward. They're investing in our business while seeking a strong return on that investment.

Please support these companies, and if you're one of them, THANK YOU. If you'd like to become one, reach out – we'll jump through hoops to help you. 🎯





DOUBLE TROUBLE

A TALE OF RUST AND REDEMPTION

BY LOGAN METESH



THIS IS IT.

The moment of truth. One day shy of a month's worth of hunting is about to pay off. My hunting buddies – husband and wife team Ed and Katherine – and I have been scouting and hunting hard, and we knew exactly where the birds were going to be.

Ed and I were set up in a blind, ready to go. Sure enough. Here he comes.

Wait, there's two! We're going to get a double! Wait, there's three! Take your pick!

Ed got his gun up and ready. I grabbed mine and instinctively went to flip the safety off, except something was wrong. It wouldn't budge. Stuck in the safe position. It would have been easier to pull the Excalibur from the stone or lift Thor's hammer than get my Mossberg 500 from safe to fire.

[Record scratch. Freeze frame.] Yep, that's me. You're probably wondering how I ended up in this situation.

My gun got soaked in a storm the day before while Katherine and I were posted up on some trees for the morning's hunt. After heading home and wringing out my thoroughly soaked skin, it was time to turn my attention to my gun. I took it completely apart, wiped everything down, oiled it up and put it back together. I made sure to check that everything functioned perfectly and was ready for the next hunt.

That next hunt was when Ed and I were sitting in the blind the following morning where I had to watch helplessly as I missed my chance due to a malfunction and Ed put a bead on a big ol' bird.

In less than 60 seconds, I went from joyous excitement at the sight of those toms to sheer panic and anger as my gun malfunctioned to acceptance and joy once again when we piled out of the blind and went up to Ed's bird: a great tom with a 10-inch beard.

After we parted ways, I went into the house to figure out what went wrong. I took that Mossberg apart and discovered that the problem was, of course, because of the one thing that I didn't take apart the day before: the safety switch.

When you take the switch off, you'll see that there's a small spring and a detent ball in there. While everything was good the night before when everything else was freshly cleaned, wiped down and oiled, the brief over-night hours were just enough time for a thin film of rust to form between the spring and detent ball, joining them together in unholy matrimony. That thin film – and I do mean

thin: it was like nutmeg-dusted-on-top-of-hot-chocolate thin – was just enough friction to prevent the spring and ball from gliding as they should and disengaging the safety.

THERE ARE A FEW MORALS TO THIS STORY:

1 If you're going to take the whole gun apart, then actually take the whole gun apart. Don't skip the safety just because it's small and not a part of the normal stripping and cleaning procedure.

2 Perform a basic function check before you leave the house. If I'd known this issue existed before I left home, I'd have grabbed a different gun and dealt with this one later.

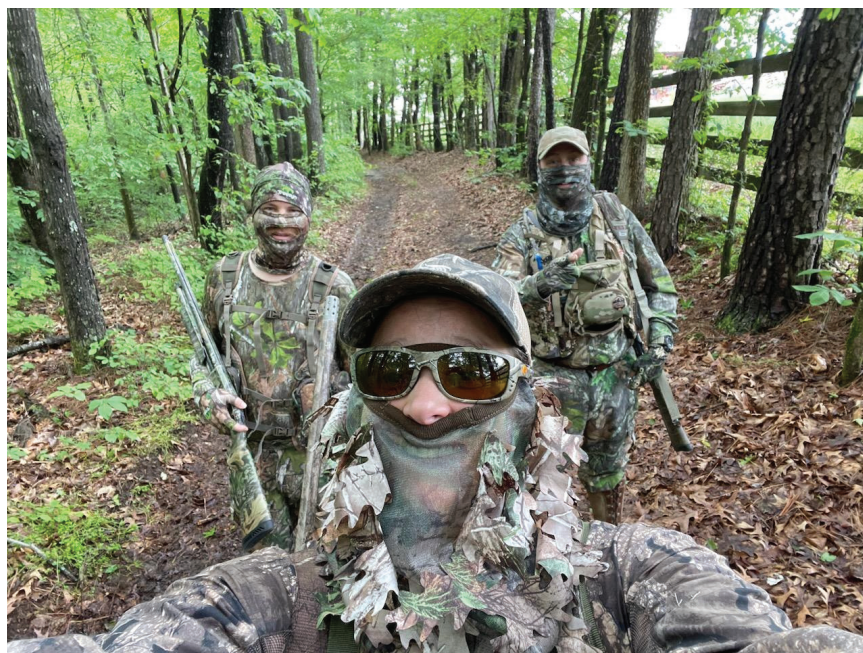
3 Don't stop until you see 'em flop.

As bummed as I was about missing my chance at a double, both Katherine and I still had tags to punch and, since our limit there was two birds that season, Ed still had another he could take, too. Over the next week, the three of us kept at it. Sometimes solo; sometimes doubled up. Didn't matter. Those birds were going down. It was personal now.

On a beautiful Sunday morning, Katherine and I met up to head for a field where we knew the birds were going to be. There were two blinds set up in different, noncompeting spots and Katherine asked if we should sit separately to increase our odds.

"Nope." I said, "Can't get a double sitting apart. Today's our day. I can feel it. Double trouble."

With the location settled, we hunkered





down in the blind. There was, however, one more thing to settle. If only one tom came in, who got the first shot? Clearly, there's only one way to settle this: rock, paper, scissors; best two out of three.

I'll save you the details, but suffice it to say I'm never playing that game with her again. She always wins. Every. Single. Time.

Katherine has really honed her calling skills this season, so she took the lead. It didn't take long before she had 'em hammering. Hens and a tom came in to our right with one bossy hen yelling like hell each time Katherine called. It was awesome to watch and listen. Unfortunately, the tom didn't come within range and the hens eventually led him into the woods at the edge of the field.

A short while later, Katherine tapped me and whispered that she saw a head bobbing along just over a rise to our left. Binos up, I searched and searched, but didn't see it. It wouldn't be the first time one of us saw something out of nothing in our desire to get a turkey.

Then, all of a sudden, there he was! The tom's head popped up again, this time closer to us. Katherine grabbed her slate and started calling him in. She was so focused on the tom

and her calling that I had to tell her to put down the slate and striker and grab her gun. This tom's time was almost up.

Then, like absolute magic, another tom appeared right behind the first one. I couldn't believe it. Was this really happening? Was I really going to get a chance at another double in the span of one week?

I grabbed my gun and quietly, giddy as all hell, whispered, "We're gonna get a double! You take the one on the right and I'll take the one on the left."

Targets acquired, we waited for them to come in range, tracking them as they went along. Then, they switched places with my left bird becoming the right bird. I rattled off a quick and quiet verbal confirmation that we were now swapping target birds to avoid overlapping shots. Katherine confirmed.

All of a sudden, the birds quickened their pace and started making their way to the same tree line where we lost sight of the earlier tom. It was now or never as they were getting a little farther away each second.

"I'm gonna count to three and we're gonna fire. Are you ready?" I asked.

Without waiting for Katherine's reply, I

started counting.

BOOM! BOOM!

We looked like two of the Three Stooges as we scrambled to get out of the blind and make our way to the birds.

After ensuring the birds were truly down and calling for my wife to pick up Ed and meet us in the field, I grabbed my rangefinder and measured it out. Two toms down at 54 yards, mine with a 20-gauge and Katherine's with a 12-gauge.

Plenty of whooping, hollering and photos were taken before heading home to measure and clean the birds. Katherine's tom had 1-inch spurs and a 9 3/4-inch beard. Mine had 3/4-inch spurs and a 10-inch beard.

After a total of 57 hours in the woods over the course of five weeks, I was elated to close the deal with just one week left in the season. That it was a double with a friend was the icing on the cake.

After the birds had been sealed and put in the freezer, I smiled and gave Katherine another high five.

I'd been given a chance at redemption from the rust.

"Double trouble," I beamed. ❧





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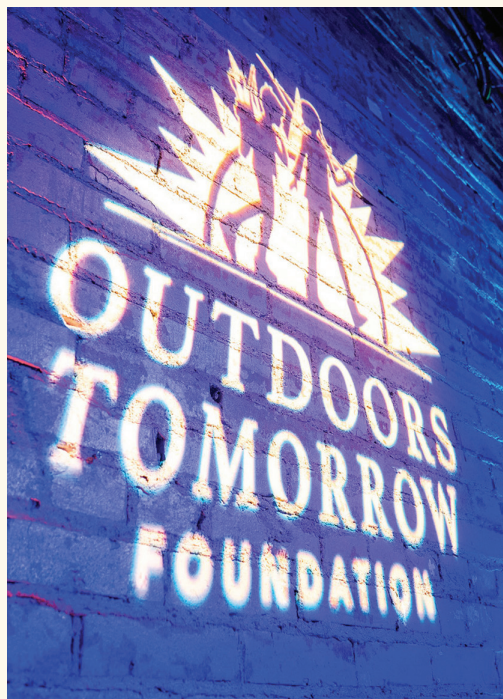


CREATING THE NEXT GENERATION
OF OUTDOOR ENTHUSIASTS, **ONE**

STUDENT AT A TIME

THE OUTDOORS TOMORROW FOUNDATION TEACHES
STUDENTS HOW TO THRIVE IN THE OUTDOORS

BY DOUGLAS PATON



In his last year of high school, Neil Turner decided to try out a relatively new physical education program that focused on outdoor recreation called Outdoor Adventures (OA), which was developed by the [Outdoors Tomorrow Foundation](#) (OTF).

“After 18 years of school, having something other than athletics to get you out of the classroom while still providing the opportunity to learn was exciting,” said Turner.

Turner loved the program. It was led by Scot McClure, who taught students skills like tracking deer, hunting, fishing and boating. However, McClure didn’t simply have his students read about these activities. OTF curriculum is all about hands-on learning.

For example, as part of their unit on tracking, McClure set up a fake blood trail to recreate what you might see in the wild when you’re tracking an animal, like a deer, that you’ve wounded, but haven’t killed.

“What really affected my life was going fishing on Fridays,” said Turner. “One Friday, Scot handed me a fly rod. I caught a bass, and I was hooked.”

Like a lot of kids, Turner had been exposed to the outdoors growing up. He spent time on the lake with family, mostly waterskiing, but also fishing. “I was an outside kid,” he said. “I have a lot of memories fishing off the dock.”

But there was something about fly-fishing at the pond in high school that changed everything for Turner. Fly-fishing never really left his mind and, when the opportunity presented itself, he moved from actively running a chain of restaurants to being the director of operations at Tailwaters Fly Fishing, a fly-fishing store and travel company in Dallas, Texas.

BEING AN OUTDOOR EDUCATOR

It’s not hard to notice Scot McClure’s, OTF Director of Education, enthusiasm for the outdoors – even over a video call, it’s almost infectious. He’s been involved with OTF since the early 2000s, and he cares deeply about it.

One of his favorite stories involved a senior who needed a physical education credit to graduate. The principal reached out to McClure to see what he could do.

“WE TARGET KIDS WHO AREN’T INVOLVED OR INTERESTED IN ANYTHING AND FIND A WAY TO GET THEM INTERESTED IN AND EXCITED ABOUT SOMETHING NEW. THEN THEY GO OFF ON THEIR OWN AND KEEP DOING IT.”



When the student showed up, McClure immediately recognized him. “Everybody knew him,” he said, “He had long black hair and wore black clothes. His mom had given up on him. He hated school. He walked into my classroom; he was cussing the principal and me, and I just said, ‘Come on in. I’m glad you’re here.’”

Eventually, they got to the fishing unit. No one had shown him how to fish before

and when he learned how to fish in OA, something clicked. “He couldn’t wait to get to class,” said McClure. “He was so excited to talk about fishing. He walked into my class one Monday morning. He goes, ‘Guess what I did this weekend? I went and bought a rod and reel.’ And then he started showing me all these pictures, all the fish that he was catching over the weekend.”

McClure stayed in touch with that student



throughout college, mostly talking about fishing.

“That’s the beauty of Outdoor Adventures,” McClure said. “We target kids who aren’t involved or interested in anything and find a way to get them interested in and excited about something new. Then they go off on their own and keep doing it.”

When McClure first started working with OTF, Outdoor Adventures was only

in a handful of schools in Texas, where the program originated. Today, it’s in more than 1,500 schools in all 50 states, along with one in Canada. Across the board, OTF now reaches more than 150,000 students each year from kindergarten to 12th grade.

“Based on Texas alone,” said McClure, “We know that we have thousands of kids going on their first hunt or catching their first fish in our class. We have sporting clay, archery,

and fishing teams nationwide that are being created because of Outdoor Adventures.”

OTF is lucky because it fits nicely into the PE curriculum. Unlike a lot of other subjects, which have very specific criteria, PE is anything that teaches physical skills engaging the arms, legs, and hand and eye coordination. “They’re thinking of activities like volleyball, baseball, golf and tennis,” said McClure. “We turn that around and say, try archery,



fishing, backpacking, hiking. We make those standards work.”

“URBANIZING” THE OUTDOORS

Because the OTF curriculum aligns with the standards of every PE class in the U.S. and Canada, expansion can be straightforward. Often, what happens is that a donor steps up and offers to sponsor the program in their local schools. “We’ve added over 30 schools in New York City, because of one donor,” said McClure. “

The program sees a lot of growth particularly in urban areas like Brooklyn, in part because kids don’t have the same access to the outdoors as they might in rural areas.

“When someone says, ‘You can’t teach wildlife conservation in New York City,’ I say, ‘Yes, we can,’ because the wildlife conservation unit is not all about hunting,” said McClure. “It’s about wildlife conservation. Believe it or not, there’s wildlife in New York City! They have a lot of fishing opportunities in all the stocked ponds around the city. They get that message, and they love it because it’s brand new to them.”

It’s also adaptable. The entire curriculum – all 360 lessons – can be taught both indoors and outdoors. At the primary level, that flexibility is key.

USING OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES TO EXPAND EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES

Mary Driemeyer is a PE teacher in St. Louis, Missouri. She first noticed the impact of outdoor activities in her school when she started an archery club. She knew that at least some of the kids in her school were interested in outdoor activities and wanted a way to introduce students to more of them.

“They have the notion about things like hunting,” said Driemeyer, “But they don’t understand the benefits.” Outdoor Adventures plants the seed for her students to better understand the benefits of the outdoors.

Among other things, Driemeyer noticed that “the program opens up conversations at home.” Even students from non-hunting households become interested in outdoor

activities because of the program and the way it sticks to science and facts. Students gain a stronger understanding of the role that hunters and anglers play in conservation and the overall health of the ecosystem.

Perhaps, best of all, is the way that Outdoor Adventures levels the playing field in PE for all students. “It’s about offering kids more than just team sports,” said Dreimeyer. The program encourages everyone to explore new things and find new passions.

“I hope that more mainstream programs get exposed to Outdoor Adventures,” said Dreimeyer. “It’s a great expansion of physical education.”

It’s a similar sentiment to what Scot McClure talks about, too. His love for the Outdoor Adventures program and the way it helps kids led him to shift his career from teaching to OTF’s Director of Education. “I was working with a hundred students annually at my school and the thought that I could impact a thousand students annually filled my intrinsic drive to change kids’ lives,” he said. “I had no idea we would be impacting 150,000 annually now.”

While the impact can be hard to measure, McClure says he always loves to see the way an outdoor activity can follow a former student through their entire lives.

“It’s so funny,” he acknowledged, “I have a student who now works in a fly shop, but I didn’t know it. I walked in and there was Neil [Turner]. I said, ‘What are you doing here?’ And he said, ‘The first time I touched a fly rod was in your class. Look at me today.’”





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Honoring Legacy:

*Celebrating The Life of
James Jackson Jr.*

THE BUB JACKSON HUNTING PRESERVE

BY BETHANY BEATHARD



Nestled in the heart of North Carolina, the Bub Jackson Hunting Preserve began as a family farm dedicated to honoring a cherished friend. Today, it has grown into a nonprofit organization, standing as a testament to legacy, tradition, mentorship and community, striving to inspire generations to connect with the outdoors. It was established in 2020 in honor of the memory of James “Bub” Jackson, a legendary hunter and mentor whose dedication left an indelible mark on the outdoor world. Following Bub’s passing in May 2020, close friend Tim Bazemore Jr. founded the preserve to ensure that Bub’s legacy would live on. A farmer and entrepreneur, Bazemore Jr. is a man of hard work, determination and an unwavering commitment to community. His vision for the Bub Jackson Hunting Preserve was born out of a desire to honor his friend while also creating meaningful opportunities for underrepresented communities to engage with the outdoors.

As a newer nonprofit organization, the preserve focuses on the Recruitment, Retention and

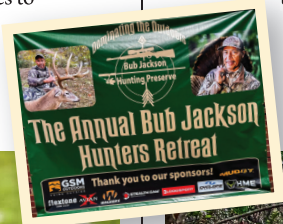
Reactivation (R3) initiatives, while offering inclusive opportunities for women, youth, families and first-time hunters. It’s more than just a hunting ground; it’s a community dedicated to education and mentorship. Through impactful experiences and family-friendly events, the [Bub Jackson Hunting Preserve](#) ensures that the spirit of mentorship and conservation thrives for generations to come.

THE LEGACY OF JAMES “BUB” JACKSON

James “Bub” Jackson was a trailblazer, a devoted family man and a mentor whose contributions have left an indelible mark on the hunting community. Coming from a rich hunting heritage, Jackson tagged along on hunts as a kid and developed a passion for the sport as he got older. Together, with his father, James Jackson Sr., they started hunting for more than just subsistence, and more for trophies and sport. This led to one of Bub’s celebrated projects, the Virginia Whitetail Collection, a display of full body mounted whitetail deer, bear, turkey and fish that he showcased at outdoor expos across the coun-

try. This collection not only highlighted his hunting success but also opened doors for him to meet and collaborate with Kelly Darden Jr., a partnership that led to the creation of the TV show, “Outdoor Moments.” As the first Black co-host of a nationally broadcast hunting show, Bub broke barriers and inspired countless individuals to embrace hunting and the outdoors. The show was broadcasted to millions across North America.

Bub’s pioneering role in hunting extended far beyond television. He was featured in prominent publications like Buckmasters, ESPN Magazine, NRA’s American Hunter and North American Whitetail. ESPN also did a mini-documentary on the Jackson hunting heritage that featured both James Sr. and Bub. Despite losing many mounts in a devastating house fire, parts of the collection remain on display at the new Bub Jackson Museum. The museum offers visitors a glimpse into Bub’s life and legacy, honoring his contributions to the Black hunting heritage and his enduring impact on the outdoor community. As a hunter, you know that each turkey beard or taxidermy mount is an untold story. It’s a lifetime of adventures on display. For me, as a minority in the industry, visiting the museum was a bit of an emotional experience. It’s impossible to overlook the





blood, sweat and, likely, tears Bub poured into paving the way for future generations.

In 2019, Bub connected with Tim Bazemore Jr., and they began planning a documentary to tell Bub's life story. They began prepping the property, built mobile trailer blinds called "domination stations" and enjoyed some hunting together as well. In his later days, Bub still had a passion for hunting, but he enjoyed mentoring, teaching and the filming side more. Just a month before his passing in May 2020, Bub told Tim, "I think it's time I tell my story." While Bub didn't get to share it himself, his legacy lives on through the preserve, the museum and the countless lives he touched. Bub's story is one of resilience and mentorship with a profound respect for wildlife – definitely a story that will continue to inspire for generations to come.

THE VISION OF TIM BAZEMORE JR. AND THE PRESERVE'S MISSION

Bazemore Jr. is a man driven by a singular vision: ensuring that James "Bub" Jackson's legacy lives on. His goal is to honor his late



friend by continuing the work Bub started, mentoring new hunters, promoting conservation and fostering diversity in the outdoor community. Through the preserve, Bazemore Jr. and the Bub Jackson pro-staff strive to make a meaningful difference by creating opportunities for education, outdoor projects, hunts and community events.

Since its establishment, the Bub Jackson Hunting Preserve has grown steadily, hosting

an increasing number of events and hunts each year. These gatherings aren't just about hunting—they're exciting, positive experiences that bring people together to celebrate the outdoors. The preserve actively supports R3 initiatives, ensuring that hunting remains a sustainable tradition for future generations. From guided hunts to hands-on workshops, the preserve is a space where people of all backgrounds can connect with nature, learn valuable skills and



build lasting memories. For now, the hunts are invite-only with an emphasis on getting hunters their “first” deer, eastern turkey, bear, etc.

HUNTING EXPERIENCES AND EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

The Bub Jackson Hunting Preserve is made up of a little more than 1,200 acres com-

bined with a variety of habitats ranging from swamps to woods to fields. Coupled with years of farming experience, the land is truly a wildlife paradise. Additionally, there are areas designated as wildlife sanctuaries where no hunting is allowed. I’ve enjoyed taking tours of the property, knowing the effort it takes to maintain the trails, stands, food plots and clear hunting lanes.

Currently, the preserve offers a wide range of hunting opportunities designed to engage hunters of all experience levels. New hunters

are provided with experienced mentors who ensure participants feel supported and confident. Whether it’s a young hunter taking their first shot or a family sharing the excitement of a day in the woods, they strive for experiences that leave a lasting impact.

Beyond hunting, the preserve hosts educational classes and family-friendly events throughout the year. The annual Hunters Retreat is a highlight, offering two days of preserve tours, clay and bow shooting, educational sessions, good food and fun activities like paddle boating and bounce houses for the kids. In the future, they hope to hold more hunts, workshops, hunter safety courses and outdoor skills training. A vision that started small has grown into quite the flourishing community.

THE ROLE OF THE PRO STAFF TEAM

The success of the Bub Jackson Hunting Preserve wouldn’t be possible without the dedication and expertise of its pro-staff team. This group of passionate individuals forms the grassroots foundation of the organization, working tirelessly to ensure that every hunt, event and project runs smoothly. Many travel hours to the preserve, often sacrificing their own hunting opportunities to make sure guests have the best possible experience.

Led by owner Tim Bazemore Jr., the current pro staff team includes Devin Nichols, James C. Kearney, Baraki Dale, Ph.D., James Collins, Daphne Williams, Dr. Alexis Footman, Wilmarie Boisvert, Travis Tucker, Robbie Cox, Moses Wyche and Candelario Carranza. Additionally, advisors Kelly Darden and Sheldon Lovelace provide invaluable guidance and support to the preserve’s mission.

Each pro staff member brings their own unique skills and abilities, whether it’s guiding hunts, organizing events or teach-





ing skills. They all share a deep passion for hunting, fishing, mentoring and building community. Beyond their work at the preserve, they actively post on social media, encouraging others to get outside and connect with nature. Having met this incredible team and attended several events, I can say firsthand that their dedication and enthusiasm are contagious. The joy they bring to the preserve is a testament to their unwavering commitment to Bub Jackson's legacy and the organization's mission.

It's truly remarkable to see the R3 objective come to life. While we often envision and talk about it, the Bub Jackson Hunting Preserve is actively living it. People from all walks of life are coming together to make a lasting impact. This year, the preserve has begun planning an exciting event calendar that includes a turkey hunt, the annual Hunters Retreat and some fall hunts. As a newly established nonprofit, the preserve is working to secure grant funding and donations to expand its educational programs and hunting opportunities, ensuring more people can connect with the outdoors. For those wanting to stay connected with the latest happenings, the preserve regularly shares updates, events and opportunities on social media. Follow them under [Bub Jackson Hunting Preserve](#) to be part of this incredible journey. ❧



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BARKING UP THE RIGHT TREE

MY FIRST BEAR HUNT WITH DOGS

BY BETHANY BEATHARD



RECENTLY, I TRAVELED TO NORTH CAROLINA FOR THE INCREDIBLE OPPORTUNITY TO HUNT A BLACK BEAR, GENEROUSLY SPONSORED BY THE BUB JACKSON HUNTING PRESERVE, AN ORGANIZATION DEDICATED TO PRESERVING HUNTING HERITAGE AND FOSTERING COMMUNITY IN THE OUTDOORS. ALONGSIDE SOME NEW GOOD FRIENDS WHO ARE ALSO MASTER DOG HANDLERS, WE VENTURED TO TYRELL COUNTY, THE HEART OF SOME OF THE BEST BLACK BEAR HUNTING IN THE COUNTRY. IT WAS THE FINAL DAYS OF THE BLACK BEAR SEASON, AND THE AIR WAS FILLED WITH ANTICIPATION. THIS WAS MY FIRST BEAR HUNT – WITH DOGS AT THAT – AND IT WAS A JOURNEY OF LEARNING, LAUGHTER AND ADRENALINE. FROM THE CAMARADERIE OF THE HANDLERS TO THE INCREDIBLE SKILL OF THE DOGS, IT WAS AN ADVENTURE THAT SHOWED ME JUST HOW MUCH HEART AND EFFORT GO INTO THIS TIME-HONORED PRACTICE.



The experience was nothing short of remarkable. This wasn't just a hunt; it was a window into a tradition steeped in skill, history and teamwork. Every bark heard in the woods carried the weight of generations' past, connecting us to a legacy of respect for the land and the animals we pursue.

THE HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF HUNTING WITH DOGS

Hunting with dogs is a tradition as old as the partnership between humans and canines. For centuries, dogs have been indispensable companions in the field, valued for their keen senses, loyalty and natural instincts. Across cultures and continents, hunters have relied on dogs for a variety of tasks, from tracking elusive game through dense forests to pointing and flushing game birds and treeing animals like bears and raccoons. This unique collaboration between humans and dogs has been pivotal in shaping hunting practices and traditions.

In bear hunting specifically, dogs have played a crucial role in helping hunters navigate challenging terrain and locating the animal. The sound of a bark echoing through the woods is not just a signal that the hunt is on, but one where handlers can tell whether they're on the trail or have the animal bayed. That level of trust and communication required between hunter and dog is unparal-

leled, and it's a relationship built on mutual respect. I was amazed. Behind every great hunting dog is a dedicated handler who's poured countless hours into their training. Bear hunting dogs aren't just born; they're raised and conditioned. The effort required to train these dogs is immense, involving long days in the field and teaching them to stay focused on the scent while navigating difficult terrain. Shawn Dennis, one of the handlers, said his dogs had treed 62 bears in the off-season – and that number was down from last year. He also mentioned that the truck and dog boxes he was driving that day were his wife's and that she was just as passionate about the sport. It was nice to see women holding a presence in the different sectors of hunting.

If you've followed me for any amount of time, you know I cherish my hunting heritage. My great-great grandpa, Leonard Davis, trapped and ran dogs in southern Arizona on jaguars and mountain lions. While it was a tradition that didn't get passed on, getting the privilege to experience running dogs in this capacity was special and something I hold deep admiration for.

RUNNING HOUNDS: MY FIRST BLACK BEAR HUNT

We started the day at base camp loading the side-by-side, hounds barking with anticipa-





tion and hunters buzzing with excitement for what lay ahead. This property has a very healthy black bear population with several cameras actively capturing bear movement. The dog handlers and landowners were incredibly experienced with a well-honed system that left no room for guesswork. Each of the groups was equipped with a walkie-talkie. They also ran Garmin Alpha 200 GPS system with a couple of 300 units paired with TT25 dog collars to track the dogs. We started at the top corner of the property, hoping the bears were still in the area, sparing us from having to navigate the swamp canals. Before heading out, someone joked, “Hope you don’t mind getting wet—and brought a change of clothes.” Not knowing what to expect, I was game for anything, taking in every moment of the experience.

The previous weekend, they’d treed two smaller bears that weren’t of legal size, and the hunt had stretched out for hours. With

that in mind, I was prepared for a long day. Shortly after releasing a few dogs, they picked up a scent, and the excitement began. Before long, two bears were on the move. As more dogs were released, the larger bear slipped deeper into the swamp while the smaller one led the dogs on a fast-paced chase, turning it into what could only be described as a “rabbit race.”

The terrain was a challenge, thick vegetation heavy with briars, bordered by canals. That bear gave the dogs a run for their money, navigating through the dense foliage like it was second nature. Dennis, a seasoned expert, joked, “I hope that bear trees or we’re going to have to go in on foot and bay it on the ground.” As usual, I’m up for anything, but that would have been wild. Then, the call came over the radio: “Bear’s treed, get her over here!”

That’s when the adrenaline really kicked in. Making our way to the tree was the hardest part of the hunt. The vegetation was so dense,



and we had to skirt the edge of the vegetation line, constantly trying to avoid dropping into the bordering canal. At some points, we had to crawl. These are the moments I reflect on most, getting into the animal's space, somewhere few humans have stepped, pushing through exhaustion and adrenaline to reach the goal. Once we got close, the handlers tied back the dogs, keeping the bear bayed, but ensuring the dogs' safety.

We moved in closer, directly under the tree, and I took a shot straight up. The bear fell within two feet of us and one of the hounds. Bear down! Although I took the shot, it wouldn't have been as successful hunt without the dogs. I can see why these guys live this life – it's definitely an addiction. I got my first black bear in the best way. The rush of adrenaline, the teamwork between hunters, handlers and dogs and the connection to the wild made this an unforgettable experience. This is one that I'll carry with me for a lifetime.

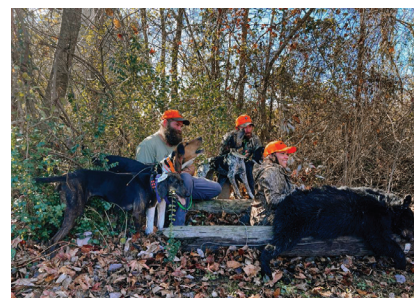
A HUNT TO REMEMBER: LESSONS, GRATITUDE AND NEW FRIENDS

Reflecting on my first bear hunt with dogs, I'm struck by the invaluable lessons it taught me. The hunt itself felt like it happened in a whirlwind and took me a while to digest. This hunt was more than just a chance to pursue a bear; it was an opportunity to witness the dedication, skill and passion that goes into every aspect of this hunting tradition.

I'm deeply grateful to the Bub Jackson Hunting Preserve for giving me this unforgettable opportunity. Their commitment to fostering community and preserving hunting traditions is truly inspiring. I also want to acknowledge the landowner and the dog handlers, some good ol' boys and friends from North Carolina, who welcomed me into their world with open arms. They've asked

to remain unnamed, but their warmth and generosity made this experience far richer than I ever expected.

I went to North Carolina to hunt a bear and, while I returned home with hide and meat, I also left with so much more: lifelong memories, a deeper appreciation for our hunting heritage and new friends. It's experiences like this that remind us why preserving these traditions is so important, ensuring that the legacy of hunting with dogs continues to inspire future generations. 🍷





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“WILDFED”

WITH DANIEL VITALIS:

REDISCOVERING
THE ART OF
LIVING OFF
THE LAND



IS THERE A DEEPER ART TO LIVING OFF THE LAND?

To the practices of hunting, gathering and foraging? It's not just about sustenance or consumption – it's about connection, creativity and understanding. Daniel Vitalis, host of the TV series "[WildFed](#)" on the [Outdoor Channel](#), passionately believes this. His show goes beyond simply showcasing the harvest of wild foods; it's a celebration

of our relationship with nature. By blending art, education and entertainment, "WildFed" invites viewers to rethink their engagement with the natural world.

The show has gained popularity for straddling two worlds: hunting and gathering/foraging. This is a challenging task, but Vitalis is up for the job. He's lectured across North America and abroad for over a decade, bringing modern day hunter-gatherer tactics to the masses. So much so that, due to its popularity, he also hosts a podcast with the same name. "WildFed" has become a lifestyle brand that encourages people to engage with nature by sustainably harvesting and consuming wild foods.

HOW THE TV SERIES BEGAN

For decades, Vitalis has asked deep questions about the origin of humans and animals with in-depth discussions on his podcasts and in his lectures. If animals are domesticated, are humans domesticated, too? He thinks so, and

he believes our health is suffering because of it.

"Our health is breaking down in the modern world because we aren't getting exposure to things like hot, cold, uneven surfaces and terrain challenges daily. That led me to get serious about wild food. Is it possible for a person to feed themselves on hunted and gathered food?" he asks. A cinematographer thought a wider audience needed to hear these questions and reached out to him for the TV series on the Outdoor Channel.

"I came to 'WildFed' as a relatively green hunter – someone who started hunting later in life – so the show has really documented my own personal learning journey," said Vitalis. "I started hunting because I wanted to be closer to the source of my food and to the natural world."

This personal transformation is central to the mission of "WildFed," captured by its tagline, "Food Is All Around You." Over the course of five seasons and 50 episodes, Vitalis has proven this to himself and his audience.

"Food really is all around us, when we know where to look. Unfortunately, many people have forgotten this truth, or they





only see the handful of game species that are popular among hunters,” said Vitalis. “But there is so much more out there, so much more that people are missing out on. I’ve become infatuated with opening people’s eyes to see their own local environment differently and to ask the question, ‘Can I eat that?’”

For Vitalis, hunting goes far beyond food; it’s about a genuine connection to the natural world. “That might sound cliché at first, but when you consider the direction we’re heading – spending more and more time in the artificially created, man-made digital environment – it becomes clear why we need nature immersion now more than ever,” said Vitalis. “We’re a part of nature, but when you look at the typical urbanite, they act more like astronauts from another world than like the hunter-gatherers who are native to Earth. Hunting (and gathering) reconnects you, plugs you back in. Nature starts to seem welcoming, abundant, ready to meet your needs if you are willing to meet her on her own terms.”

Through his experiences, Vitalis has rediscovered something buried deep within himself. “Making ‘WildFed’ has woken







something up inside me. Something I think we all have inside. Domestication may have blunted it, but we all have some wildness left within us. Hunting is like a cheat code that unlocks it.”

FORAGING'S GROWING POPULARITY

The practice of foraging, which involves searching for and harvesting wild food, is experiencing a resurgence as people are drawn to the idea of locally sourced and unique ingredients. However, Vitalis is quick to point out that foraging isn't without challenges. Regulations for foraging can vary and are not always well-defined. A game warden might be well-versed in managing 10 animal species, but would need knowledge of hundreds of plant species to regulate foragers effectively. Yet, Vitalis advocates for sustainable gathering practices, promoting ideas like replanting seeds when harvesting fruits or avoiding uprooting plants

to ensure their continued growth.

He explains that foraging isn't just about heading deep into the wilderness. “People assume I'm walking into a forest when I talk about foraging. Not necessarily. I'm on the edges of town or in an abandoned parking lot. I believe humans are good for the environment, as disturbance of the landscape is good. It kicks up seeds that didn't get to germinate; it allows for new areas to grow.”

BRIDGING HUNTING AND GATHERING

Vitalis has taken on the challenge of uniting hunters and foragers – two communities that might initially seem worlds apart. “On its face, you'd expect hunters and foragers to be very different kinds of people. It's not hard to imagine the stereotypes of each. Hunting involves incredible challenges, requires weapons and the ability to take life. Foraging, in contrast, is much gentler and requires

species-specific knowledge. But the truth is, they're natural counterparts.”

The two skill sets are complementary. “Hunting and gathering are the fundamental human skill sets. Not just one, and not just the other. When they aren't co-joined, you have an incomplete diet. Hunters may enjoy exceptional wild game meat, but they often rely on supermarket produce. Foragers may savor wild greens and mushrooms, yet lack essential proteins. When the two paths come together, we can enjoy a more balanced and fulfilling wild diet.”

Vitalis's mission is to show hunters and foragers that collaboration is possible. “I relish the opportunity to wow hunters with wild plant ingredients – wild mushrooms or ramps paired with venison, for example – and equally enjoy serving wild game or fish to a forager alongside plants we've harvested.

“Humans are hunter-gatherers. Sometimes you just have to remind them. One thing is certain – when the two come together, it's synergy. The result is greater than the sum of its parts.”

Personal Connections in the Wild

Vitalis's passion for wild food has also deeply shaped his personal relationships, particularly with his wife, Avani. Their shared adventures in foraging and hunting have strengthened their bond in unique ways. "Avani and I have built a significant part of our marriage through the pursuit of wild food. We hold annual traditions in the field, like making maple syrup, fishing for striped bass, harvesting cranberries by canoe in the fall or even 'foraging' our Christmas tree and carrying it out on our backs every winter."

These experiences not only bring them closer together, but also serve as life lessons. "All of these adventures pose challenges –

cold, heat, snow, rain or navigating the back-country. Taking on challenges as a couple bonds us closely and prepares us for the unforeseen challenges that life throws at us."

Their time outdoors reminds them of what's truly important. Sharing meals they've harvested together connects them not only to each other, but to their shared human heritage. "It keeps us grounded as people and as a couple," said Vitalis.

WHAT TO EXPECT ON "WILDFED"

In season four, Vitalis visited New Zealand

and brought home incredible footage for several episodes, but he said that pushed him to film more in the U.S. for season five.

"This year, we do a lot of oddball things," said Vitalis. "I want the episodes to inspire people. My goal was to do a season back in the States and focus on plants and animals underutilized."

The series starts off with a conservation snow goose hunt in South Dakota. "The agriculture fields have done so well in the Dakotas. They helped boost the snow geese population, which is a good bird to eat." Then, the series heads to Michigan for squirrel hunting and a look at the local hickory nuts. Next, he's off on a whitetail deer hunt while also foraging for truffles in the Appalachian area.

"We probably ate thousands of dollars of truffles on that episode!" he exclaimed.

Eventually, they land in Alabama, seeking the American lotus flower and shooting crow, which Vitalis declares the breast meat is good. Another educational episode is where they visit the American Chestnut Foundation and learn how this once dominant tree is now gone and how the foundation has been trying to breed a blight-resistance chestnut for decades.

"We call our show the 'antidote to the metaverse' as more people are moving away from the natural world and into the digital world. We want more people in the natural world as it immunizes you from nonsense," he explained. "Spend more time outdoors and in the natural world, and you will realize the nonsense being fed to you daily."

Vitalis takes health seriously, which is why he started his supplement company, [Surthrival](#), in 2008. "Our health as a species is declining in such a way that if we saw the decline in another species, we would step in to help. There is no one stepping in to help us. We must do it ourselves."

Throughout the TV series, Vitalis works with award-winning chefs and restaurants to prepare foraged items and hunted meats. "We want to elevate the cuisine to show innovative ideas on working with a wide variety of foods. People have a very narrow view of food and where it comes from – exclaiming some species as 'trash species,' but I beg to differ. You just need to prepare it correctly. Learn how to trim off a part and butcher the species correctly, and it will be good."

Follow Daniel on [Instagram](#). Learn more on his website [Wild-Fed.com](#), and listen to back episodes of [Wild Fed podcast](#). 📺





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25

YEARS OF LEARNING TURKEY HUNTING TOOLS AND TACTICS



BY KEVIN PAULSON

I STARTED TURKEY HUNTING AT THE AGE OF 30 IN THE YEAR 2000. I WAS ALREADY A DEDICATED BIG GAME HUNTER AND I'D STARTED SEEING A LOT OF TURKEY IN THE FALL ON OUR HUNTING LEASE. WATCHING AND NOT BEING ABLE TO ACTUALLY HUNT THEM WAS BOTH EXCITING AND FRUSTRATING. AFTER BEING SURROUNDED BY A FLOCK OF TURKEYS IN MY STAND ONE TOO MANY TIMES, I BECAME INTERESTED IN SERIOUSLY HUNTING THEM AS A SEPARATE SPECIES. BUT NO ONE I KNEW WAS ACTUALLY PURSUING TURKEY, SO. I BOUGHT A COUPLE OF CALLS AND A DVD ON TURKEY CALLING BACK WHEN YOUTUBE REALLY DIDN'T EXIST. INITIALLY, I TRIED MOUTH CALLS, BUT I COULDN'T FIGURE THEM OUT SO I'VE STUCK WITH BOX AND FRICTION CALLS.



My first couple of turkey hunting trips, I could hear them, but I couldn't call them in to where I was. I did manage to call in a coyote one morning, so I knew I was making an impact, but not with gobblers. I walked out of the first couple of hunts knowing that I needed to learn more. I spoke with anyone with turkey hunting experience, peppering them with questions. I learned to call less and, if I got a response, to match the calling of the hen. Even so, I still ate tag soup for the first year.

The next year, I was back in spring calling turkeys with some decoys set up. I was seeing a little more action, but I still wasn't quite figuring things out. I was only able to get in about seven or eight hunts per season, and they were never consecutive. I was still working on patience, but I was nowhere near where I needed to be as a hunter. I got busted more often than I would've liked. I would sit and hunt and call and then get bored. I'd get up from my stand and see the turkey(s) run

away. I ate tag soup again for year two.

Year three, I continued to hunt locally, and I got the chance to hunt Missouri on a friend's farm. That was the hunt that really changed the course of how I turkey hunt today. I was able to hunt alongside someone for a day before branching out on my own to explore 500 acres filled with open areas as well as a ton of forested areas that were all hills and canyons. I was interacting with birds each day and there were enough birds and time available that I was able to try different tactics. I wasn't afraid to make mistakes; I just had the confidence to know that, by the end of the week, I would have my first bird. I did finally get my first turkey that week – a result of a very little bit of skill and a whole lot of luck.

It was day five of the hunt, and I had a couple of birds that started to interact with me. It got very exciting. The gobblers would respond to every sound, and I could tell they were going crazy, but they were just out of sight from me and I didn't feel confident in moving. It was a tremendous hour of my life as they went ballistic just out of reach. The great news is my friend, Mike, who was hunting nearby, took one of the two gobblers and, after I heard the gun shot, I was super excited. I had called in a bird for my friend. We met up and I got to see the gobbler he took and, another turkey broke off a raspy gobble and I took off to get closer. Over the next two hours that bird and I traded barbs back and forth. He would go up a hill and I would call







and he would go over the hill into the next valley. I would walk up to where I thought he was and call and he would gobble back.

We did this on and on until I needed a bathroom break. I sat and waited until I didn't hear a gobble and I took my chance. I got up and found a great spot and took care of my business. The gobbler became curious as to why I wasn't calling back, walked right in to me and gobbled at 15 yards. It was quite a shock with my pants around my ankles. When he stepped behind a tree, I grabbed my shotgun and took him on his next step forward. It's not a typical hunting story, but it was learning that gap between constantly calling and finally interacting with the turkey that I needed to learn from that hunt. I still needed to learn patience and, honestly, every turkey hunt since then continues to teach me a little more about patience and a little more about gobblers. Now, 20 plus years after that first gobbler and having taking dozens more over the years in several different states, I'm still learning the lesson of patience year after year.

Learning comes in many forms, but without question, the best way to learn turkey hunting has been in the field for me – and it's a lot harder to learn if you can't spend more than a few days consecutively in the field. Each year, I get the opportunity to mentor one or two folks, and I love the opportunity to teach turkey hunting. I focus on teaching them about the equipment and then the tactics.

Equipment for hunting turkey is pretty easy to get your hands on. Any good shotgun will work. I prefer a 12-gauge or 20-gauge shotgun with a dedicated turkey choke. It's a crucial to pattern your shotgun and buy quality, dedicated loads for turkey hunting. I have been using [Apex Ammunition](#) for the last couple of years. It's heavy hitting and patterns well. For turkey hunting, I'm a tremendous fan of [Quik Camo](#) because the suit can be easily pulled on over any other clothing you have and it works extremely well for turkey. I like the Mossy Oak Greenleaf for turkey season as it seems to blend in best where I hunt. I work hard to hunt as light as possible during turkey season. I carry a small [My Medic](#) Sidekick IFAK First aid kit, a pair of small binoculars, a rangefinder and my Garmin InReach in my pack. I also bring a small pair of pruning shears and a small saw in case I need to create a blind or clear a shooting lane. For decoys, I utilize the [Montana Decoy](#) System almost exclusively these days because I can quickly fold them up and carry them long distances. They provide a photo realistic decoy and



have worked for me year after year.

Turkey calls are all about personal preference. A simple box call and a slate call are good enough to get you started – and they don't need to be the most expensive ones. I generally recommend buying cheap as beginner's calls, if you will. Once you learn how to utilize those two calls, you can begin working your way up the line with better and better calls. This year, I am learning a tube call from a small turkey call maker. I'm constantly playing with different types of calls to learn more and more. Adding a quality owl locator call can also be extremely helpful in locating turkey in big forests. Owl locator calls are pretty easy to use: just blow into them, "Who, who, who cooks for you," and it'll sound great.

As for hunting tactics, focus on the following: Scout early and often using something like onX Hunt maps and actual boots on the ground. A couple of days listening for turkey and spotting them in fields can provide enough intel to boost your hunting success once the season starts. I look for roosting trees

and fields where gobblers strut. Preseason, I focus on practicing my calling. I spend between three to five hours every year working on my calling two to three weeks before the season starts. I work so I'm good enough to be able to match the turkey intensity of the birds I'm hunting. During the season, I focus on finding the best locations for specific set-ups and I utilize onX maps to zero down a location for the specific farm I'm hunting. I always look for thick wide trees to back up against if possible or locations that work for a blind if I'm hunting with kids. I clean and prep my decoys before the season and I plan out my set up ahead of time. Eight out of 10 times, I utilize two hen decoys and a jake decoy, and I set them about 20 to 25 yards out from my personal set up. I position the decoys so they're easily seen from almost any location and I set them so it would be really hard for another hunter to shoot at the decoys or in my direction for me, which means that they're about 25 yards out and to my left so I can easily swing the shotgun onto birds.



While all of these tips will help you be successful, patience is the key. Learning to sit still and quiet for extended periods can often lead to more success than the right calling or decoys. I've taught myself a rule while turkey hunting. If I get antsy and I want to get up and move, I set a timer on my phone for an extra 20 minutes. I don't allow myself to get up before that timer goes off. Patience leads to more success in turkey hunting and in life. Those gobblers are teaching me life skills. ❏



FIRST

TIME

JITTERS

BY ADAM BERKELMANS



"TAKE THE SHOT."

"Take the shot!" my buddy repeated, somehow conveying great urgency while muttering quietly under his breath.

"I can't even see him!" I hissed back, craning my neck to look over my right shoulder, trying desperately not to make any sudden jerky movements.

This was my very first turkey, and I was beginning to panic.

I'd arrived the evening before, pulling into the driveway of a friend I hadn't seen for years after a seven-hour drive. He'd seen my social

media post saying I hadn't shot a wild turkey before, so he gave me a call right away and invited me to go out on a hunt with him.

"It's more for my benefit than yours," he'd insisted. "I'm already tagged out, but there's still two weeks of the season left. I'll be hunting vicariously through you."

I was happy to take him up on the offer. I'd spent many hours hunting for turkeys on the postage-stamp piece of land in the woods behind my house, setting up decoys and practicing my calls, but to no avail. It was by no means a good hunting spot, but it was all I had.

My friend here had access to all sorts of land and was known as a bit of a turkey whisperer.

We stayed up way too late catching up over beers and I realized with a start that my 4 a.m. alarm was going to go off in a few hours.

"Ah man, we'd better get to bed," I yawned.

"Yeah, probably," he said, stroking his bushy beard and cracking another beer.

I took a big breath and followed suit. It was going to be tough waking up.

Early morning found us cruising towards our hunting spot in the dark, coffees in hand and gear in the box of his truck.

While I was contemplating how to keep my brains from spilling out of my ears, he looked chipper and well-rested, despite getting the same amount of sleep I did.

"I can't wait!" he roared, cranking up the classic rock playing on the radio. "I've got a good feeling about today. We're going to get you a bird. Just do me a favor and don't mess up your shot!"

I nodded and gave him a tight smile, then looked outside with bleary eyes, trying to find my bearings.

Eventually, we pulled into a farm field and parked the truck.

"You're going to love this!" he crowed, getting out of the truck. The minute I opened the door, I was hit in the face with the intensely overwhelming aroma of rotting onions.

"The guy who lets me hunt here uses dumptruck-loads of rotting onions as fertilizer," he explained.

"Oh," I said, swallowing bile.

We humped our gear for about a mile down the fields, eventually finding a huge cedar tree on the edge that would act as cover for us. Hunkering down under the shelter of the tree, I could see the first glimmers of dawn and set my expectations for a long wait.

"Don't fall asleep, don't fall asleep."







I repeated the mantra in my head, worried that I'd embarrass myself by immediately nodding off. As dawn broke, the black flies stirred to life and started swarming my eyes, ensuring that nodding off wasn't going to be a problem.

We heard the first gobble shortly after and I felt the hangover, lack of sleep and nervousness slough off of me in a moment of intense

focus.

Within 30 minutes of the first gobbles, two hens raced across the field in front of us, followed by a large gobbler – all out of range.

I could feel the excitement coursing through me as my hunting partner tried to call them back over to us. That excitement eventually dwindled into tired boredom as the hours marched on towards noon without

any more action.

I could feel my morale slipping, and my frustration with the biting and swarming black flies wasn't helping. My butt and right leg had gone numb, I had to pee something awful and my head painfully pulsed with the bad decisions from the night before.

Just as I was considering getting up to stretch and pee, we heard a sound from behind us. My friend stuck his finger in the air and, with wide eyes, motioned for me to get ready.

I gripped my shotgun, suddenly very focused again. My aches and pains were forgotten as I tried to get myself into a shooting position, making minute, silent adjustments.

"Take the shot. Take the shot!"

"I can't even see him!"

I craned my neck over my right shoulder, scooting my numb butt over to widen my angle of vision.

There.

A blue and red mottled head, ugly as sin, but perhaps the most beautiful thing I'd ever seen, appeared through the cedar branches behind me. The bugger had circled around us to investigate!

"Shoot!" my buddy groaned.

I set myself up for the most awkward shot I'd ever taken, my left trigger hand pressing up against my right shoulder with the barrel of the gun pointing towards five o'clock and my body towards one o'clock.

"Now or never," I thought to myself. "Don't #&%@ing miss."

BAM.

"Yeah bud, nice shot!" he whooped, clapping me on the shoulder.

I beamed happily as I went to check out my very first wild turkey, shot exactly where I needed to shoot him. We brought the turkey back to his place, plucking and breaking it down in the garage while his two Brittany's watched, tails wagging.

"What's the first thing you're going to make with it?" he asked as I pulled out a whole breast.

"I'm thinking something Portuguese," I replied.

It's been nearly a year since getting my first turkey and the excitement still hasn't worn off. Sitting inside, watching snowflakes lazily tumble from the sky through the window, I notice my phone light up. It's a text from my turkey hunting buddy with nothing but a turkey emoji with a question mark.

My smile widens as I pick up the phone and start planning my next turkey hunt. ❧





PORTUGUESE WILD TURKEY BIFANAS

BY ADAM BERKELMANS

These wild turkey bifana sandwiches were inspired by the three separate Portuguese communities I've lived in or been adjacent to. In each place, the food created by these communities was consistently outstanding. Pork bifanas are a common food to serve at community events, from family gatherings at the park to televised soccer games in church basements. If I ever see them for sale, I drop everything and buy at least one. These sandwiches are like nothing you've ever had and it's definitely worth searching out authentic Portuguese ingredients like the pimiento paste, papo secos and piri piri sauce, all of which can be found at Portuguese grocers or online.



Serves: 4

Prep Time: 15 minutes + 2 hours marinade

Cook Time: 45 minutes

INGREDIENTS:

1 turkey breast, sliced into 1/2" cutlets	(optional)
1.5 cups white wine (Portuguese preferably)	1 tablespoon butter
1 teaspoon kosher salt	6 garlic cloves, minced
1/2 teaspoon black pepper	2 onions, sliced thinly
1 tablespoon smoked paprika	4 papo secos (Portuguese buns)
1 tablespoon sweet paprika	Piri piri sauce (optional)
1 tablespoon Portuguese pimiento paste	Yellow mustard (optional)

PREPARATION:

Combine the white wine, salt, pepper, paprika, pimiento paste and garlic in a bowl and mix well. Add the turkey cutlets, ensuring that they're completely covered in the marinade. Let marinate for one to two hours.

Melt the butter in a skillet over medium heat and add the onions. Once sizzling, reduce heat to medium-low and cook, stirring occasionally, until caramelized – about 30 minutes. Transfer the onions to a bowl.

Add more butter to the skillet if necessary and increase heat to medium. Add the turkey pieces in batches, searing on both sides until cooked through. Adjust the heat so that the garlic doesn't burn. Once all of the turkey has been cooked, deglaze the skillet with the marinade, scraping up any bits stuck to the bottom. Add a splash of white wine if you need more liquid to do this. Cook until the liquid thickens, about one to two minutes.

Warm buns in the oven, slice open, then stack on the turkey pieces. Top with the caramelized onions, pan sauce and piri piri or mustard, if using. Enjoy! 🍴





BY BRITNEY BOOTH,
BOOTH MEDIA GROUP

“AT HUNTING LIFE MAGAZINE, WE ARE DEDICATED TO BRINGING YOU THE BEST STORIES, INSIGHTS AND INFORMATION TO FUEL YOUR PASSION FOR THE OUTDOORS. “

SPRING IS FINALLY HERE,

bringing with it the excitement of a new season in the outdoors. After months of cold, gray winter days, the world is waking up again. Trees are budding, rivers are running high and the familiar sounds of gobblers echo through the woods at first light. It's a time of renewal, fresh opportunities and, for hunters, some of the most exhilarating days of the year.

Each season has its own appeal. Fall is defined by big-game pursuits, summer is prime for fishing and scouting, and winter challenges us with harsh conditions. But spring is a season of action. Whether you're chasing longbeards, hiking for sheds, hunting spring black bear or fine-tuning your gear for the months ahead, this time of year calls us back outdoors with the promise of new adventures.

For me, spring has always meant one thing – turkey season. There's nothing quite like the challenge of matching wits with a wary gobbler. The early mornings, the strategic calling, the anticipation as a tom inches closer – it's an adrenaline rush unlike any other. Last year, I went on my annual spring turkey hunt in Michigan, and as always, it reminded me why I love this sport so much.

Turkey hunting demands patience and strategy. Even the most seasoned hunters will tell you that turkeys have a way of humbling you. They hang up just out of range, spot the smallest movement or go completely silent when you least expect it. But when it all comes together – when your decoy setup is just right, your calling is convincing and that tom struts into range – it's an experience that never gets old.

This issue is packed with everything you need to make the most of your spring hunts. Kevin Paulson reflects on 25 years of learning turkey hunting tactics, sharing hard-earned wisdom on what works and what doesn't. Logan Metesh takes us on a journey of frustration and redemption in [*Double Trouble: A Tale of Rust and Redemption*](#), a story that perfectly captures the highs and lows of the hunt. We also highlight conservation efforts protecting the future of our sport and mentorship programs ensuring the next generation of hunters carries on the tradition.

Beyond turkey hunting, spring

presents plenty of other opportunities. Black bear hunting continues to grow in popularity, offering a unique and challenging pursuit. Shed hunting is the perfect excuse to get into the woods and gather intel for the fall. And let's not forget fishing, an ideal way to cap off a day in the field.

At [*Hunting Life Magazine*](#), we are dedicated to bringing you the best stories, insights and information to fuel your passion for the outdoors. Hunting isn't just about filling a tag. It's about the journey, the experiences and the memories made along the way. We hope this issue inspires you to get outside, embrace the season and make the most of every opportunity.

No matter where this spring takes you – whether deep into the turkey woods, up a mountain in search of bears or along a riverbank waiting for the next big catch – take time to appreciate the moments in between. The sound of the woods waking up at dawn, the camaraderie of a hunting camp and the quiet satisfaction of a day spent outdoors are what make this lifestyle so rewarding.

Here's to a season filled with adventure, success and plenty of stories to tell. See you in the woods! 🦃



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