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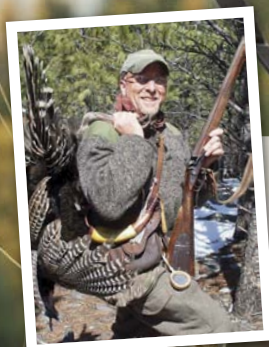
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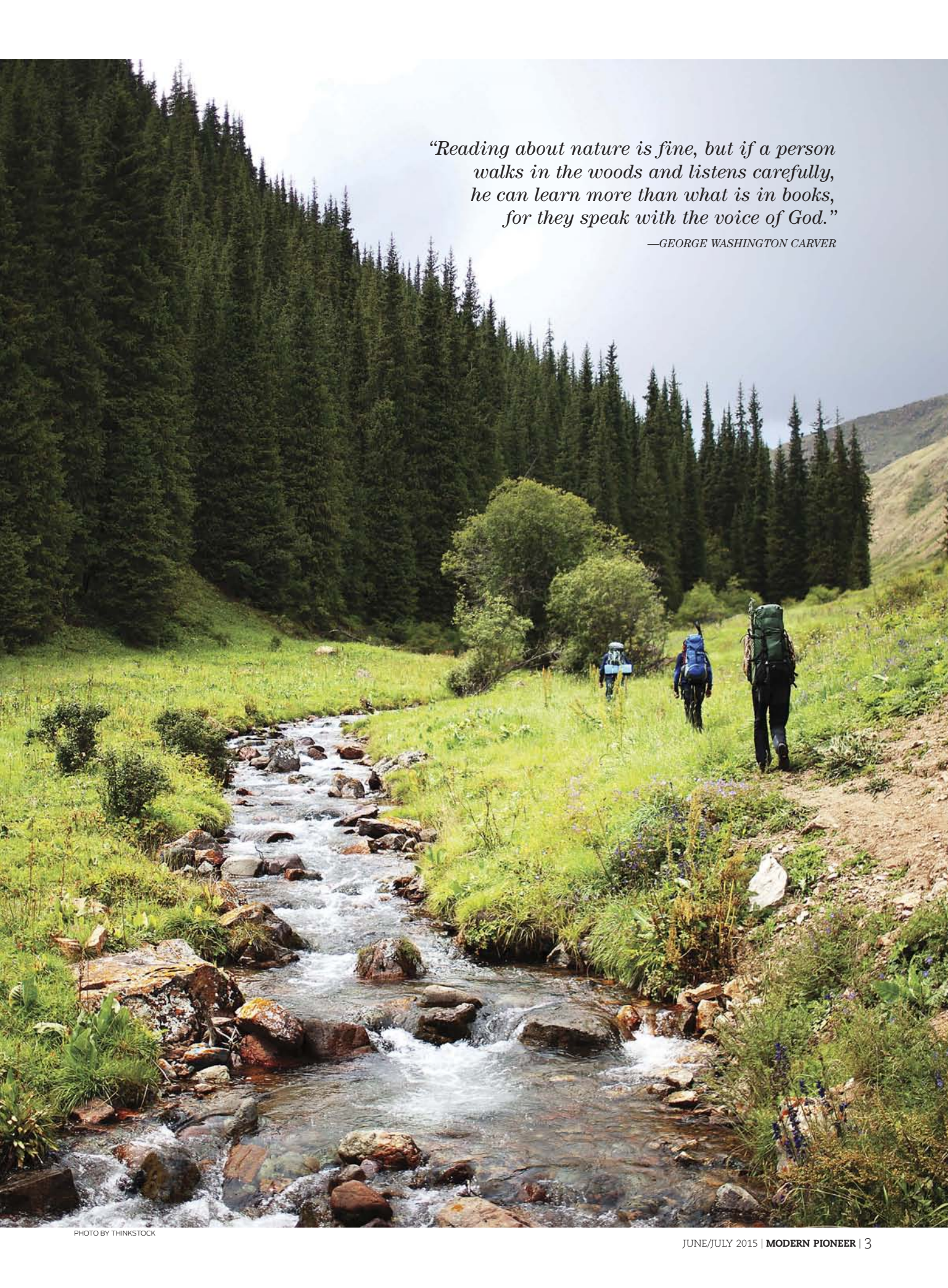
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*“Reading about nature is fine, but if a person
walks in the woods and listens carefully,
he can learn more than what is in books,
for they speak with the voice of God.”*

—GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER

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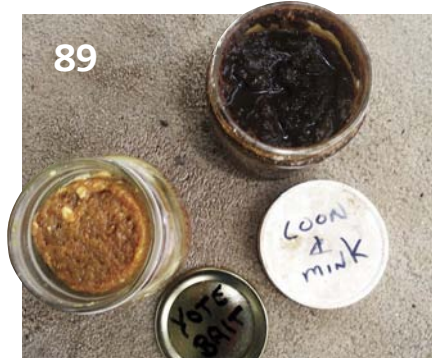
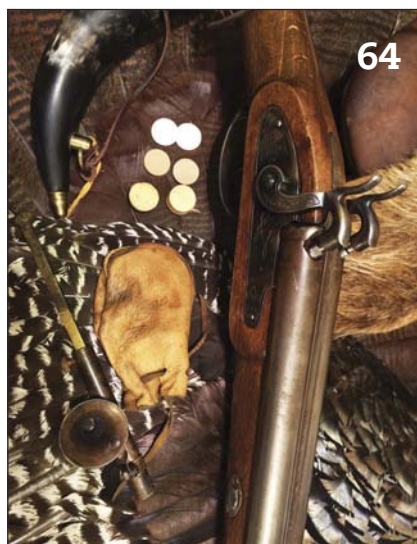
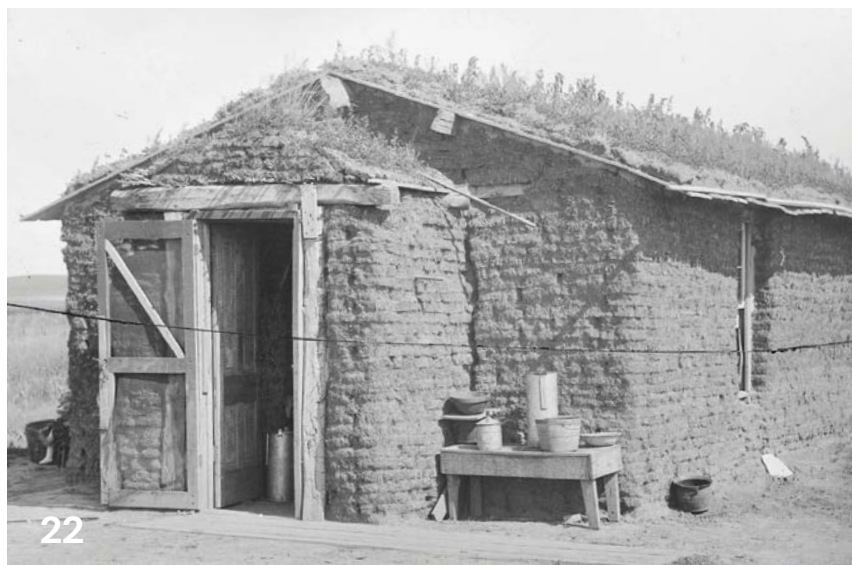
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Are You a Modern Pioneer?

As the editor of a completely new magazine, especially one with a name that contradicts itself, I must say, I often go about my week pondering the terms “modern” and “pioneer.” What exactly is a modern pioneer? Or, better yet, who among us is one?

For starters, I can say without question, my friends and main contributors Darryl Quidort, Michael Pendley, Tony Nester and Mike Yancey are without a doubt real-living modern pioneers. These gentlemen, through their lifestyle, hobbies, and interests reveal a deep-seated passion (and genuine contentedness) for primitive, ancestral-like living and hunting practices. I’m often amazed how such men can cope among today’s fast-paced craziness that surrounds our every move. Yet they resist it, and, to my way of thinking, are better souls because of it.

This thought naturally made me think about myself and how I personally come in as a modern pioneer. My background is rich in hunting, archery, firearms, and backpacking, not living like a pioneer per se. However, I’m drawn to the natural realm about as much as anyone I know, and I insist on simpler living in nearly all cases.

In fact, most of the time, I feel out of sorts if I’m not in the bush observing wildlife, climbing cliffs and eating ramen noodles cooked atop the tailgate of my truck, or back at home going from my desk to the backyard target butts to shoot a few arrows, all while looking for animal tracks cut into the adjoining foothill slopes. During the wintertime, I split wood almost daily, and in the summer and spring, I’m in the yard stacking rock or trimming trees, or out cutting a chord of wood for the two woodstoves in my house.

One of my favorite things to do is customize hunting gear, or really, anything around the house that needs changing or “upgrading.” I’m often amazed what a hacksaw, drill, file, epoxy and hammer and screws can do for making things work. I ultimately appreciate self-thinking, self-doing. I crave fresh meat, too, and not the stuff from the store. I love home-grown vegetables and my wife would grow them again if it weren’t for the small game in the yard. Maybe I do rate as some kind of modern pioneer after all?

In light of all this, I came up with five basic principles that would likely tell one’s fate as a modern pioneer. I’d say, if you find yourself doing, believing or owning at least four out of six of these things, chances are, you’re probably in the pioneering club, at least you are in my book.

Appreciate Hard Work

True pioneers are hard workers who believe in the adage “you get out of life what you put into it.” They don’t believe in shortcuts, long breaks and inferior quality. Work hard and enjoy the fruits of your labor pretty much sizes up a true pioneer’s thinking. If they can place some special emphasis or influence on making something better, a pioneer will do it.

Think Newer Is Not Better

Most pioneers are utility driven. They want what works, and what they can trust. They appreciate top quality over looks any day. Why buy a new chainsaw when the one you have is 100 percent American made and just needs a fresh carburetor, tune-up and bar and chain? Why trash what you can save and continue to use through a little bit of elbow grease? Whether it’s a truck, tool, or garment — it can be brought back to life and remain a trusted friend. That’s the pioneering way.

Love Old Clothes

Pioneers get dirty all the time because they find themselves doing constant grimy chores. Their clothes reveal this. I’m guilty of this... big time. My wife and kids give me a hard time about my tattered Carharts, which I often wear for a few days before washing. “They’re tough...not like regular jeans,” I tell them. I even have an old micro-thin Smartwool shirt with 20-plus tears in it. I find such garments comfortable and functional. Worn-out, dirty clothes are tried-and-true and add to a pioneer’s working focus. Any wardrobe that detracts from this is considered foolish.

Remain Friends for Life

In some circles, friends can come and go. In a pioneer’s circle, friends are usually for life. When you head outdoors to work and play hard (hunting, fishing or shooting), you

tend to get to know your friends pretty darn well. You see their good and bad sides quickly, as getting up early and working late all adds up to a taxed soul. This allows you to truly size up a person’s nature and quality. You either depart quickly or stay for the long haul. Time together creates a strong, personal bond that’s hard to break.

Drive Real Trucks

Getting back to the utility thing, a truck is just that. It gets you from point A to point B while hauling what you need. It must be functional and effective in fuel efficiency while driving across rough, rocky roads when placed into four-wheel drive. And, when it does get dirty, it stays that way for awhile, because you know it’s just a matter of days before you’re back in the thick of it.

Those fancy, “pavement princess” trucks you see all the time with giant tires, a dozen shocks, lift kits, and polished rims are not pioneering trucks, by any means. These lack true function, because they rate poorly in gas mileage, general handling, and lack the ideal utility pioneers demand.

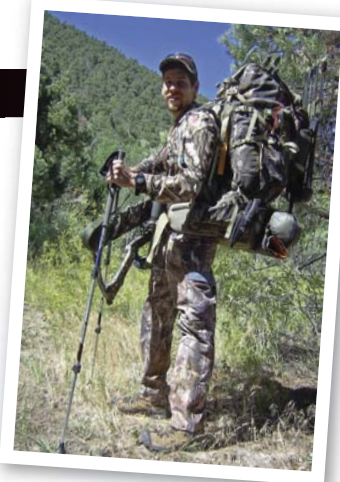
The Office Is Their Garage

Most pioneers spend more time in the shop or garage than they actually do in the house. As a result, they own more tools and outside things than they do inside stuff. A pioneer enjoys crafting items they know they can’t find in stores...at least not with the same quality and attention to detail. Whether this means making an ultra-strong hose-reel for the yard, wiring up a new light for the porch, or welding up a spare-tire holder for the trailer, pioneers find great satisfaction in making their own stuff and reaping what they sow.



JOE BELL

jbelle@engagedmediainc.com



news

The Passing of a Legend: **Chuck Buck**



THE BOONE AND CROCKETT CLUB is pausing to remember a hunting industry icon and ardent supporter of conservation. Chuck Buck, chairman of Buck Knives, passed away Feb. 6, 2015.

Chuck was the grandson of company founder Hoyt Buck, whose commitment to quality and innovation made his company a household name among outdoors enthusiasts. Today, Buck Knives is a fourth-generation company still as proud as ever of its American-made products. The company also remains a devout supporter of Boone and Crockett as well as many other conservation organizations.

"Chuck and his family have always taken great pride in how their products relate to the highest ethical use of game animals. A knife is how hunters convert a kill into tablefare. Doing it well respects the animal, and procurement of food is still the most fundamental element of hunting," said Marc Mondavi, vice president of communications for the Club.

Buck Knives and Boone and Crockett reinforced this message frequently over the years by partnering on special-re-

lease knives and cutlery sets, with profits earmarked to support the Club's work in conservation. In 2014, the company became an early and enthusiastic supporter of Trailblazers in Conservation, a Club initiative to help the hunting community rise to the challenges of a changing world.

Mondavi recalled, "Chuck Buck was everyone's uncle or grandfather - that

special someone who always seemed to have the right knowledge and experience for every situation. And he was always willing to share what he knew without hesitation."

"Mr. Buck didn't just make knives. He made memories," added Mondavi.

Buck Knives began in 1902, when Hoyt Buck, a Kansas blacksmith, developed a new way to temper steel so it would hold an edge longer. The company made knives for American troops during World War II, and in 1964 revolutionized the cutlery industry with its breakthrough locking folding system.

ABOUT THE BOONE AND CROCKETT CLUB

North America's first hunting and conservation organization, the Boone and Crockett Club was founded by Theodore Roosevelt in 1887. Its mission is to promote the conservation and management of wildlife, especially big game and its habitat, to preserve and encourage hunting and to maintain the highest ethical standards of fair chase and sportsmanship. To learn more visit www.boone-crockett.org.

To the Editor...

I just wanted to write in with a comment, regarding the story "Sweet and Clean," in the Spring 2015 issue. Apparently you good folks have never heard of BALLISTOL, the gun cleaner and lube for the German army during both world wars. It has been around for more than 100 years and is the preferred gun cleaner and lube for U. S. Navy SEALs, USAF Pararescue (I was one) and many Army Special Operations personnel. It does wonders for cleaning black powder guns; this is the only gun cleaner and lube I have used for more than forty years, to include black powder flintlock rifles a .30-06, and .45-70. Also works well on wood and leather.

Bart Conchin
MSgt, USAF, Retired

Hi Joe, I Just wanted to say how much I liked your article, *Longing For Adventure*, in the latest *Modern Pioneer*. It's difficult to tell people "why" we hunt and what we "get" from it. You did a great job of relating that hunting is about much more than getting.

Also, I really, really like the way the articles in MP start and end on consecutive pages. No, "continued on page X", and then continued from there on page Y, etc. That format makes the magazine much more "readable." Thanks again for such a great magazine.

D.Q.
via email



news

NWTF Pennsylvania Spends Nearly \$202,000 for Save the Habitat Project

NATIONAL WILD TURKEY FEDERATION (NWTF) chapters in Pennsylvania spent nearly \$202,000 in 2014 to further the organization's Save the Habitat. Save the Hunt. initiative within the state.

"The Save the Habitat. Save the Hunt. initiative supported by our state boards and chapter members," said Becky Humphries, NWTF chief conservation officer. "Hunting Heritage Super Fund money is critical to implementing the initiative, and investing in critical habitat management and hunter recruitment."

Nearly \$140,000 of the funding supported habitat improvements including 70 projects in more than 50 counties on state and federal lands. Projects included supplying lime, seed and fertilizer to treat invasive plant species with herbicide to conserve or enhance 1,500 acres.

In addition to projects on public lands, the Pennsylvania NWTF State Chapter used the NWTF's Conservation Seed Program and Seed Subsidy Program to improve more than 1,200 acres of habitat on private lands.

The state chapter also worked to create the next generation of hunters through funding hunter safety and education classes, JAKES education boxes, scholarships, wild turkey research, and JAKES, Women in the Outdoors and Wheelin' Sportsmen events.

About Save the Habitat. Save the Hunt.

The NWTF — a national nonprofit organization — is the leader in upland wildlife habitat conservation in North America. The NWTF Save the Habitat. Save the Hunt. initiative is a charge that mobilizes science, fundraising and devoted volunteers to give the NWTF more energy and purpose than ever. Through this national initiative, NWTF has committed to raising \$1.2 billion to conserve or enhance 4 million acres of essential upland wildlife habitat, create 1.5 million hunters and open access to 500,000 acres for hunting, shooting and outdoor enjoyment. Without hunters, there will be no wildlife or habitat. The NWTF is determined to Save the Habitat. Save the Hunt.

To learn more about the NWTF Save the Habitat. Save the Hunt. initiative, visit www.nwtf.org.

Fly Fishing Companies Make a Stance on Clean Water Act

LEADERS OF THREE top fly fishing gear manufacturers have called on Congress to abandon efforts to scuttle an Environmental Protection Agency/Army Corps of Engineers rulemaking effort that would restore protections under the Clean Water Act to small headwater streams.

In a letter to the joint committee hearing of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure and the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, industry leaders noted the importance of headwater streams to the health of America's waterways, and to the bottom lines of fishing manufacturers and retailers all across America.

"The small waters to which this important draft rule applies are the lifeblood for many of our country's prized fisheries. They flow into rivers, streams and lakes that provide the foundation of our industry — our bottom lines depend on intact watersheds, cold, clean rivers and streams and intact, fishable habitat," the letter reads. The letter was entered into the Congressional record by Travis Campbell, the president of Far Bank Enterprises (Sage, Redington and RIO), Dave Perkins, vice-chairman of the Orvis Co., and K.C. Walsh, owner and president of Simms Fishing Products.

The Waters of the United States rule proposed by the EPA and the Corps was drafted after two Supreme Court decisions in the early and mid-2000s removed Clean Water

Act protections from small "intermittent and ephemeral" streams because, the court said, there was no proven nexus between these small waters and the larger river and streams into which they flowed. The two agencies have scientifically proven that connection, and the draft rule, as per the court's direction, moves to restore protections for these important waters under the CWA. Trout Unlimited produced a report earlier this year that shows the importance of these small waters.

"In addition to being acutely interested in the health of our watersheds, we are also concerned that blocking this rule-making process could turn back the clock on the progress our nation has made since the Clean Water Act was put into place more than 40 years ago," the letter reads. "Today, rivers that once actually caught fire are home to remarkable runs of steelhead and brown trout. Streams that were once uninhabitable for native brook trout are now home to robust populations of these prized fish. What's more, our country's drinking water is healthier and safer than ever before."

To date, more than 800,000 Americans have commented in support of the rule through the EPA and the Corps.

Trout Unlimited is the nation's oldest and largest cold-water fisheries conservation organization, boasting more than 150,000 members from coast to coast. To learn more, visit TU.org. **MP**

gear

SHOWCASE



THE RETURN OF HORTON: THE LEGEND

The Legend Ultra Lite features an adjustable cheek piece and butt plate. The rubber cheek piece adjusts to any of seven fixed positions by removing the screws and sliding the comb to create perfect eye-level alignment. At 19.63 inches, the carbon-injected polymer barrel is fitted with a machined aluminum trigger box, which houses a 2.5-inch bullpup version of the company's 3.5-pound T3 trigger, the Dry-Fire-Inhibitor. There is a 175-pound draw weight, 13-inch HL Limbs powered by XR wheels and DynaFLIGHT 97 string and cables with a hard yoke system. The assembly measures 18.375-inches axle-to-axle when cocked and drives its recommended arrow at a quick 330 feet per second. The model sells only as a complete package that includes three 400-grain, 20-inch Victory® Archery carbon arrows, and a quiver.

> Visit Hortoncrossbows.com

RUGGED LUXURY

The new 11-foot 9-inch ADAK Adventure Trailer is a rugged recreation vehicle with a luxury interior built for outdoor enthusiasts. This adventure trailer is ergonomically designed with a new floor plan for 2015 (a full-size bed and optional single above). The ADAK is equipped with large tires for all types of terrain or to clear obstacles in its path and a durable aluminum chassis that will not rust. It features an electronic braking system and a custom torsion bar for stability and control. The walls and roof are also built with 1 1/2 FRP laminated honeycomb bonded together as a one-piece construction, making the trailer leak resistant. A new addition to the 11-foot 9-inch trailer is the premium wing style awning that sets up quickly and does not require poles or ropes. It provides shade around three sides of the trailer, will not collect water and is designed with a full aluminum construction for durability and easy maintenance.

> Visit ADAKtrailers.com



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DIY MEDIC

When accidents happen and you're miles from the nearest medical aid, sometimes you'll have to take things into your own hands. This surgical tool kit contains all the stainless steel instruments you will need to perform a variety of emergency medical procedures. Comes with two straight hemostats, one pair of scissors, one curved hemostat, one pair of tweezers, one scalpel handle, one suture set, two scalpel blades, one holder, one needle probe, two alcohol wipes, one pen light, and two antiseptic wipes. The tools do not arrive sterile.

> Visit AOTacticalGear.com



PHANTOM AQUATICS DRY BAG

The Phantom is a roll-top, 100 percent waterproof backpack with padded shoulder straps. It comes in red, blue, black and yellow. Dropped in water, it floats safely. It protects not just against water, but dust, dirt and sand. With lumbar support it's as comfortable as it gets. There are reflective patches on both shoulder straps and the front of the bag.

> Visit PrimeScuba.com

PORTABLE POWER

Honda EU2000i

This Honda EU2000i inverter generator is very quiet, easy to carry, and fuel efficient, making it ideal for TVs, small appliances, and basic lights. The stable power allows for safe use of computers and other sensitive electronics. With a very low 59 decibels at max power, it is perfect for an inconspicuous source of power. It is small, about the size of a gym bag, and light, at only 47 pounds. It can last nearly 10 hours on one gallon of gas and can provide 1,600 watts of continuous power.

> Visit Powerequipment.honda.com



SWEET RIFLE, SWEET PRICE

Since Winchester last introduced a new bolt-action rifle design a half-century ago, huge advances have been made in metallurgy, materials and manufacturing processes. The result of all this engineering is the innovative all new XPR™ bolt-action rifle. The new XPR™ uses the Winchester M.O.A. Trigger System that is adjustable and set at the factory at a crisp 3 ½ pounds with no perceptible over-travel. The trigger housing and all internal components in the XPR rifle's M.O.A. trigger are constructed of polished and hardened carbon steel, with a blued finish for added durability and corrosion resistance.

The XPR™ receiver is constructed from steel barstock that is precision machined and through-hardened during heat-treating to create a strong, stiff and solid receiver capable of delivering pinpoint accuracy. The ejection port is generously sized for more reliable ejection and easier access when loading single cartridges by hand. The robust bolt has a short 60-degree lift for improved scope clearance when cycling. Also, the steel barrel on the new XPR is precisely button-ripped to create outstanding accuracy and is free-floating to eliminate any accuracy pressure points. Plus, an Inflex Technology recoil pad directs energy down and away from your cheek to reduce felt recoil.

The new XPR™ bolt action rifle will be offered in 270 Win and 30-06 calibers with 24-inch barrel length and in 300 Win Mag and 338 Win Mag with 26-inch barrel length. Metal surfaces are matte blued to minimize glare with black polymer stock. Weight is 7 -7 ¼ lbs. **\$549**

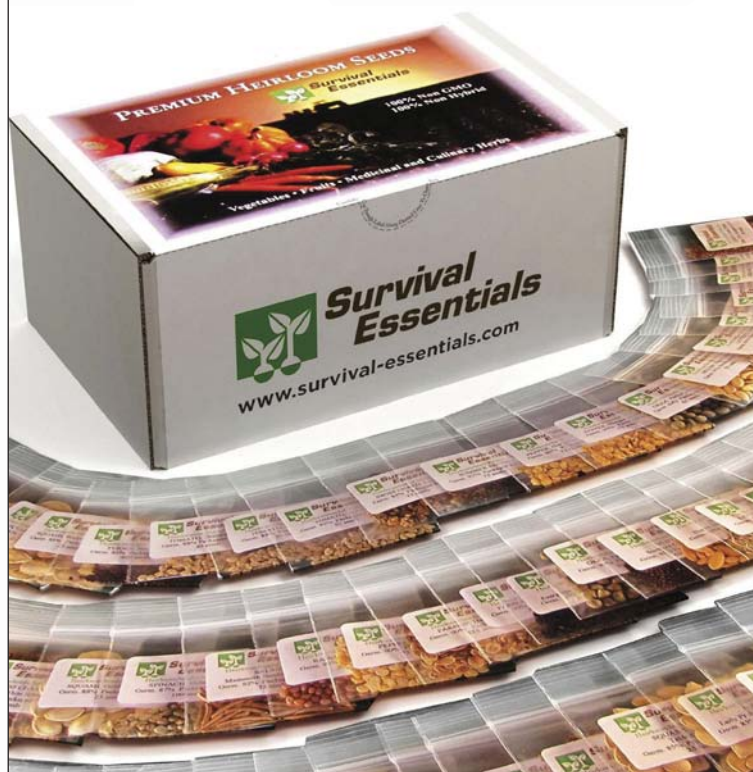
> Visit www.WinchesterGuns.com



HAWK TOMAHAWK

This United Cutlery M48 Hawk is lightweight so it can be carried all day without muscle fatigue, while the blade offers a wide, upswept axe blade for competent chopping, slashing, and cutting potential. The secondary edge on the back of the head is specially sharpened on both edges for cutting and hooking. When combined, the spike and axe head make for an efficient personal defense and/or breaching tool. It comes complete with a nylon snap button sheath. It has an 8-inch blade and is 15 inches overall.

> Visit Knifecenter.com



PLANT SEEDS FOR THE FUTURE

An expertly gathered collection of seeds assembled under the expertise of Suzanne Ashworth, a world-renowned horticulturist and author of *Seed to Seed*, the Premium Heirloom Seeds are grown and harvested specifically for this product in mind. It comes with over 100 different types of plants, herbs, and vegetables, with instructions on how to plant and harvest them, as well as long-term storage solutions for the seeds.

> Visit Survival-essentials.com

gear

SHOWCASE

HARD-CORE

Yamaha's new Wolverine R-Spec is an all-new side-by-side (SxS) vehicle that sets a new standard in off-road capability and class-leading comfort. Designed and engineered for exploring extreme terrain, this vehicle boasts an all-new nimble chassis with a compact design, look and feel, a comfortable and secure cab with seating for two, Yamaha's proven core technologies, and overall superior handling and durability with industry-leading suspension adjustability.

Some of the Wolverine's top features include long-travel suspension with standard KYB piggyback shocks that provide a full

9.7 inches of travel in front and 10.6 inches of travel out back – and more suspension customization than any other model in its class with high- and low-speed compression damping, rebound damping and spring preload adjustability. Also, the vehicle's 81.3-inch wheelbase, 11.4-inches of ground clearance and wide-arc A-arm design provide maximum ground clearance. Full-coverage skid plates front-to-back and side-to-side eliminate catch points and increase glide points.

The Wolverine also comes with Yamaha's On-Command®



four-wheel drive system that features 2WD, 4WD and 4WD with diff-lock – and puts control in the driver's hand with an intuitive dash-mounted dial. The driver-controlled system eliminates hesitation or slipping while waiting for a computer to engage, which is common in some

competitive models. It comes standard with the new double-overhead cam (DOHC), 708cc engine with optimized torque and power delivery.

The fuel injected, four-valve engine packs a 10.1:1 compression ratio and 103mm bore by 85mm stroke. MSRP for non-Electronic Power Steering models starts at \$12,199 and EPS models starts at **\$13,199**.



> Visit Yamaha-Motor.com



ULTRA-LIGHTWEIGHT CAMPER

The Gear Wagon 125 Camper brings the RV experience to the small car owner with its ultra-light and versatile design weighing only 560 pounds. The trailer can be pulled by any vehicle, including those with Class I, 1,000-pound tow ratings. An economical and convenient alternative to pop-up or tear-drop campers, the GearWagon Camper provides 137 cubic feet of cargo carrying capacity for hauling everything from bicycles, motorcycles and ATVs to camping equipment, sporting gear and lawn and garden tools. Designed to comfortably sleep two with a large storage area below deck, it offers a combination of lightness, capacity, transformability and toughness. Measuring 93 inches long, 60 inches wide and 51 inches high, it features a durable, twin-wall polyethylene base and an aerodynamic tonneau-cover style lid that keeps cargo dry, secure and out of sight.

> Visit www.LetsGoAero.com, or call 877.GO.4.AERO (464.2376).

gear

SHOWCASE



ELEGANT DESK MOUNT

Skull Hooker's new Table Mount is specifically designed to showcase small to medium animals such as cougar, bear, pronghorn, impala and deer on a table, desk or shelf. The proprietary design of a multi-position adjustable prong that is incorporated into the display provides a stunning and unique presentation for each species. Available in robust brown or graphite black powder-coated finishes, this new display is the perfect way to elegantly present your trophy in an office or on the shelf in a room. **\$59.99**

> Visit www.SkullHooker.com



LOOKS LIKE THE REAL THING

The Hunters Choice Bale Blind is ideal for hunting ultra-wary critters, especially with a bow. It's also the perfect blind for dual-season hunters wishing to hunt waterfowl, turkey and predators, in addition to big game. The roomy interior of the blind provides plenty of room for two adults and their gear, and it offers several different shooting windows/doors. The blind is strong, lightweight, easy to move and can be left outside all season long under the harshest of conditions. The strong metal frame is built to withstand heavy snow loads and strong winds. Also, the durable hand-sewn natural cover has the toughness to take on several seasons and can easily be removed in just a few minutes for fast and simple off-season storage. It measures 64 inches long, 70 inches high and weighs 85 pounds.

> Visit RedNeckBlinds.com or call 877.523.9986.

SUPERIOR LUBRICANT

Goat Tuff's new GT 100 Ionic Bond Lubricant does it all. It not only penetrates the material but provides a protective ionic bond that overcomes surface friction to reduce wear and increase performance on all moving parts. It also quiets and protects the parts while penetrating, removing and preventing rust. GT 100 is perfect for all uses in sporting equipment, hunting, firearms, archery and fishing tackle, automotive, ATVs, home and shop and is Made in the USA.

"GT 100 Ionic Bond Lubricant is truly a revolutionary product," said Jerry Smith, owner of Goat Tuff. "The specially formulated synthetic components provide extreme protection and lubrication while the bio-components actually form an ionic bond that attracts the lubricant to the surfaces on which it is applied. The low viscosity coupled with the bonding nature penetrates to overcome surface friction. GT 100 won't attract dust or dirt, is non-toxic and has no odor. It is the kind of equipment saving, performance enhancing lubricant we've all been looking for."

> Visit GoatTuffProducts.com



TURN UP THE HEAT

Thermacell's ProFLEX Heated Insoles foot warmers make any cold weather activity more comfortable and enjoyable. They have all the features of the original Thermacell Heated Insoles but are more flexible and comfortable, have longer use time, contain a removable and rechargeable battery and can be charged using either USB cable or wall charger. Simply place Heated Insoles inside footwear and activate heat with wireless remote, then adjust heat (medium or high) or turn off with remote as desired. The ProFLEX Insoles' durable, lightweight, soft cushion polyurethane foam construction is breathable, conducts heat efficiently and has great retention and shock absorbency for all-day comfort. They maintain a steady temperature inside your footwear, keeping your feet at normal body temperature or slightly warmer as desired, as opposed to chemical foot-warming pads that get hot to the touch and can make your feet sweat.



These are powered by rechargeable, removable lithium-ion polymer batteries embedded in the foot warmer insoles that can run continuously up to 5 hours — or much longer if used in intervals — on one charge. It recharges fully in 4 hours. When one battery runs out, simply insert a new battery without even removing the insoles from the shoes for continuous use all day. The small, lightweight remote fits into a pocket or attaches to a belt.

Made for men and women, the ProFLEX Insoles are customizable to fit any shoe size from a women's 4.5 to a men's 14. **\$179**

> Visit www.ThermaCell.com

KINDLING PARACORD

Available in black, olive drab or coyote brown, this appears and functions exactly like a regular length of 550 paracord, but the difference is that one of the seven strands of cord inside the sheath is made of jute cord, which is a soft fiber made from vegetables and makes great tinder to help start a fire. Comes in 100-foot lengths.

> Visit CampingSurvival.com

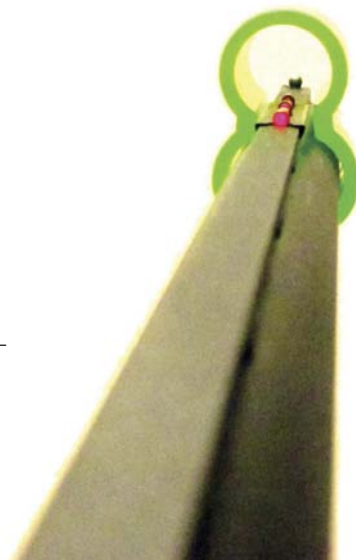


INNOVATIVE SHOTGUN SIGHT

Drop your tom with ease this spring with the innovative Snap Shot™ Sight, which now features Edge Glow Technology for better target acquisition. This unique technology traps ultraviolet light so the sight's edges glow in low-light conditions. This new and improved design increases your chances of bagging a bird, whether you run and gun or sit in a blind.

The sight easily snaps on almost any shotgun barrel, whether it's a vent rib or smooth bore. Its patented design enhances any existing sight system or works great alone. Similar to a scope, the sight forces you to keep your head down on the barrel and the gun up, but it is quicker and much less expensive than a scope because no magnification is involved. If the target is in the circle, then your aim is perfect. Because of its ease of use, the Snap Shot is ideal for youth as well as experienced hunters. It's available in 12- and 20-gauge versions that work great for turkey, waterfowl, varmint, big game and even self-defense purposes. And, as a bonus, the Snap Shot also works on muzzleloaders and revolvers. **\$14.99**

> Visit www.EzAccessGear.com



MP

Fishing the Bubble

If you like the idea of using a dry or wetfly but without the fancy flyrod, here's how to do it. > By **Darryl Quidort**

I learned bubble fishing when I was a kid. I fondly remember those hazy summer evenings, rowing along the shoreline of a small lake with my dad. He would use his flyrod to catch panfish from the shallows while I used my spinning rod and a casting bubble to fish the same fly he was using. As I remember it, I usually caught just as many fish as dad did. Of course, he did let me have the front boat seat so I had first chance at the fish. That's just what good dads do.

A casting bubble allows a person to fish with a fly without using a flyrod. A spinning or bait-casting rod is used to cast the bubble and fly combination. It's an easy method for young kids, who can't handle a flyrod, to safely fish with a fly. Kids can even cast bubbles from the same boat. If they were all whipping a flyline, someone would soon be "wearing" a hook. With a casting rod, a bubble can be cast from tight quarters where the use of a flyrod would be restricted. A bubble and fly combination can also be cast farther than a fly on a flyline, allowing a fisherman to fish his fly farther from the boat or shore.

Needed Gear

A casting bubble is simply a plastic, torpedo-shaped, float with an eye on each end. Attach your fishing line to the small end of the bubble. Then tie a 24 to 36-inch monofilament leader to the large end of the bubble. A wet fly, dry fly, or rubber spider is then attached to the end of the leader. Casting bubbles come in various colors and weights. Some fancy ones even allow the fisherman to adjust the weight of the bubble by letting a certain amount of water into it. I'm not that high-tech. I use a simple 1/4 ounce, 3 inch long, clear plastic bubble for all my fishing.

In recent years, since the movie *A River Runs Through It*, flyfishing has gained greatly in popularity. I don't see many people fishing a bubble and fly anymore. Some flyfishing "purists" may even look down on



The author with the sunfish that made him feel like a kid again.

it because it is not “real” flyfishing. Nevertheless, the bubble and fly combination can still be deadly on panfish.

Proven to Work

One spring I fished a lake, owned by the local power company, that seemed to be full of nice bluegills. The power company allowed fishing but didn't allow boats to be used on the lake. I waded along the edge of the water and cast my bubble and a rubber spider out toward any bluegill beds I could see. A rubber spider floating above a bluegill bed was more than those fish could stand. A savage strike usually resulted. In the clear water, I could see those big 'gills coming up to hit the spider. I had to learn to wait for the splash of the strike before setting the hook or risk pulling it away from them. Those were the big ole 'gills that turn sideways and won't let you reel them in.

After a good tug-o-war, I'd add another big, good tasting bluegill to my stringer. There were areas where trees and brush grew thickly along the shoreline of that lake. Had I been using a flyrod, there would have been no room for a backcast. With a spinning rod and bubble I didn't need room for a backcast. I could fish anywhere.

Methods to Use

Sometimes you need to experiment a little to find out what fishing method triggers the most strikes. One method that produces well for me, when using a wet (sinking) fly, is simply taking a few cranks on the reel handle then waiting for a few seconds before repeating it. This causes the bubble to glide ahead and the trailing wet fly to rise up while moving ahead. When you stop reeling, the bubble stops and the wet fly slowly sinks again. I believe this rising and falling motion of the fly imitates an aquatic insect. Aquatic insects make up a large part of the summer diet of most fish so don't be surprised if a bass or even a pike engulfs your fly.

Another good fishing method is to reel in steadily with the fly swimming along behind the bubble. Give it an extra twitch now and then and adjust the retrieving speed to find out if the fish like it fast or slow. A moving fly sometimes induces a “chase” response in fish and results in a strike.

To fish a floating rubber spider or a dry fly, cast out the bubble, take up the slack line and wait. There is nothing more excit-



A casting bubble allows you to fish with a fly without using a flyrod.

ing than seeing a fish slam a fly off the surface of the water with a big splash. This method works great in springtime when bluegills and bass are on their spawning beds. It is probably the most exciting way to fish the bubble.

Watching for a Strike

Always watch the bubble closely for any twitch or movement because you may not actually feel the subtle take of a feeding fish. If you do feel a tic or bump quickly raise the rod tip to tighten the line on the fish. Of course, sometimes the bubble will go down just like a conventional bobber. Then, just hook 'em and reel 'em in.

While fishing for panfish last summer, my wife and I were catching a lot of small ones with only an occasional keeper mixed in. Tired of re-baiting every time a little one cleaned my hook, I dug out my old casting bubble and tied on a favorite, chartreuse colored, wet fly. After casting the combination up into the shallows, I waited for the ripples to subside and the fly to sink. Then I gave the reel a couple of cranks. A nice sunfish immediately grabbed the fly.

Suddenly, I felt like that lucky kid in the front of the boat again. **MP**

“With a casting rod, a bubble can be cast from tight quarters where the use of a flyrod would be restricted.”

[General]



*“There are basically two types of people.
People who accomplish things, and people who claim to have accomplished things.
The first group is less crowded.” —MARK TWAIN*

PHOTO BY THINKSTOCK

· HOW-TO ·

Starting Kids in Archery >>

WHEN IT COMES TO SHOOTING ENJOYMENT, FEW TOOLS DO IT BETTER THAN THE BOW AND ARROW SET. HERE'S HOW TO START THAT PRECIOUS SON, DAUGHTER OR GRANDCHILD OFF ON THE RIGHT FOOT. *By Darryl Quidort*

The famous Apache War Chief Geronimo was quoted in 1908 saying, “the spirit of the bow dwells in the heart of all young men.”

He was right about that, and I would add young women to his quote as well. Kids just love to shoot a bow and arrow. Once they see an arrow powered by their own efforts fly to the target, they are hooked.

Kids learn fast. Once they develop the motor skills needed to shoot a simple kid's bow they progress amazingly well. My five-year-old grandson learned to shoot a bow in one afternoon. After an hour or so he was drawing, releasing and (sometimes) hitting the target right along with his older sister and brother. My granddaughter was seven at the time and she has a natural ability for sports. I was proud to see her easily pulling arrows from her back quiver, nocking them on the string properly, and shooting them with consistency. At nine years old, their big brother had been shooting a bow pretty well for a few years. He was interested in “more power” and asked how old you have to be to go bowhunting.



Cade Pestru developed his own archery form at five years old.

“My five-year-old grandson learned to shoot a bow in one afternoon.”



(top) Even greater excitement is found in shooting the “fancy” available targets.

(inset) As skills improve competition naturally develops. Chloe and Chance are proud of their scores.

An afternoon of archery with my grandkids is just as much fun for me as it is for them. I enjoy seeing their progress, hearing their excuses when they miss, and sharing their joy when they hit. I don't encourage keeping score, but as their skills improve competition naturally develops. I wouldn't miss it for the world.

Here are my suggestions for introducing kids to archery.

Use Kid-Sized Gear

Make sure the bow is light enough that the child doesn't struggle with it. Garage sales are great places to pick up kid's bows. Buy or make short, light, kid sized arrows. They must



“stick” in the target for kids to enjoy shooting. I keep a box of kid sized shooting gloves and armguards for them to choose from to protect tender skin.

Try Traditional Tackle First

I recommend traditional style bows, longbows and recurves, for kids. They are easier for children to handle. Traditional style bows work well for kids because they can be shot from any draw length. As the child grows, he will pull the bow farther, no adjustments are needed. The bow sort of grows up with the child.

Train By Example

Teach them safe shooting habits by word and by example. No one goes across the line until all shooting is over. Never stand behind someone who is pulling arrows from a target. Never nock an arrow until ready to shoot. Always keep a nocked arrow pointed downrange.

Always have adult supervision present.

Teach the Basics

Coach them on the basics of proper archery form, but don't nag on it! Too much coaching ruins the fun for a child. Let the child develop a form that works best for them. They can worry about the fine points of archery form later, if they are interested. For now just let them have fun. When correction is needed encourage them to try it a "better" way.

Keep It Simple

Let them learn. Just let them enjoy shooting arrows in a safe manner. They will develop their own methods of drawing, anchoring, and aiming. The more complicated stuff can come later.

Keep it Fun!

Repetition can get tedious in any sport. To keep archery fun, change targets often, and shoot from different distances. Breaking balloons fastened to the target is great fun for them. Find a safe, open area and let them see how far they can shoot an arrow, or try to land an arrow in a circle on the ground some distance away. There are many archery games to play to keep it interesting, challenging, and fun.

Keep Shooting Sessions Short

At the first sign of fatigue, boredom, or finger pain, stop shooting for the day. They will be anxious to shoot again another day.

So, the next time you head to the hills for a camping trip, or want to make any weekend a bit more adventurous and fun-filled, remember the archery solution. It's a sure way to win a child to the great outdoors and to the world of hunting and shooting. **MP**



Once kids are properly trained in archery, many of them will graduate to more advanced gear and eventually move on to the challenge of bowhunting big game. Young Augie Kleist arrowed this nice California wild boar. He was mentored by his father David, also pictured here.

Keep it fun! Kids archery is just as much fun for me as it is for them.



JOE BELL PHOTO

GET INVOLVED!

With today's urban population, getting and keeping young people involved in outdoor sports are goals we need to pursue. Youth archery programs are available from many organizations.

> The Boy Scouts of America offers archery training. The Archery Merit Badge, developed in 1911, has always ranked within the top 10 merit badges earned by Boy Scouts each year. It teaches not only shooting but an understanding of archery equipment and a "hands on" approach to making and maintaining it. Contact your local Boy Scout Troop for more information. Visit www.scouting.org

> Compton Traditional Bowhunters teaches youth archery and has donated hundreds of bows, with arrows and shooting gloves, to various clubs, organizations and individuals. A youth shooting class is held each year at their Rendezvous. Contact Compton Traditional Bowhunters, P. O. Box 191267, Boise, ID 83719. Visit www.comptontraditionalbowhunters.com

> The Professional Bowhunter's Society has a young bowhunter's program and believes the future of bow hunting lies within programs like this. The program is an excellent way for young people without hunting mentors to get involved with the sport. Contact Professional Bowhunter's Society, Young Bowhunter's program, P.O. Box 246, Terrell, NC 28682. Visit www.probowsociety.net —D.Q.

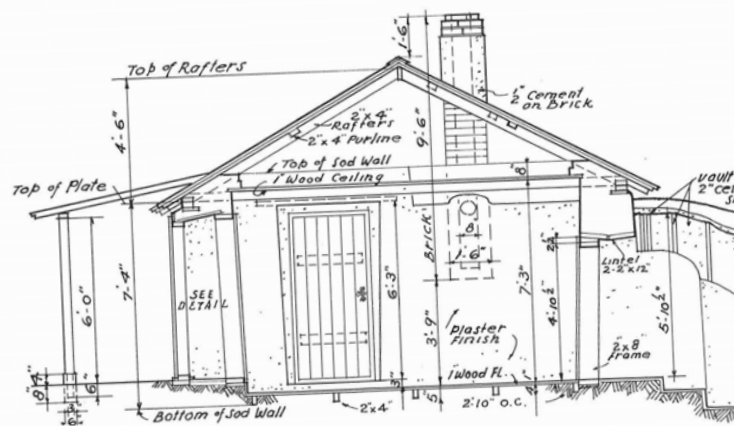
• SPECIAL •

Life in an 1800s Sod House

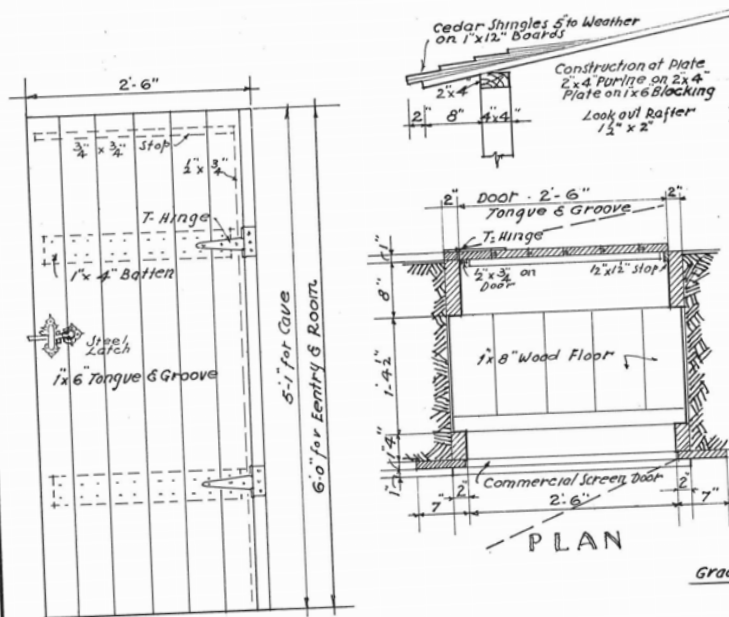
TAKE A LOOK AT LIVING JUST LIKE THE LITTLE HOUSE ON THE PRAIRIE.

By Larry Schwartz

In 1862, just one year after the Civil War began, America was expanding and Congress passed the Homestead Act to help get people to follow Horace Greeley's advice and, "Go West young man, go West and grow up with the country." For the price of filing and a lot of hard work anyone 21 years or older could register a claim on up to 160 acres of the Western frontier, which at that time was just west of the Mississippi River. To make it yours all you had to do was build a house on it, grow crops on it, and outlast exposure and starvation and plain old bad luck for five years. By 1900, over 600,000 claims had been filed. ➔



SECTION NO 2



TYPICAL DOOR

ENTRY-DETAIL

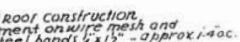
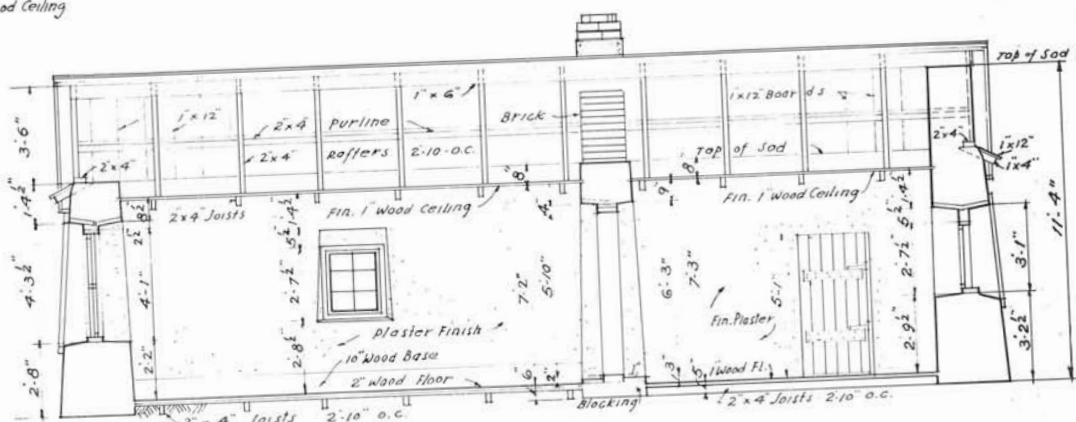
ISOMETRIC
DETAIL OF WALL
SHOWING METHOD OF
LAYING SOD BLOCKS
NOT DRAWN TO SCALE

BLOCK SIZES VARY
FROM 3" x 1'-0" x 2'-0"
TO 3" x 1'-4" x 2'-8"

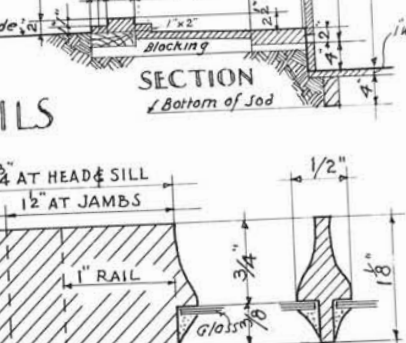
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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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BRANCH OF PLANS AND DESIGN

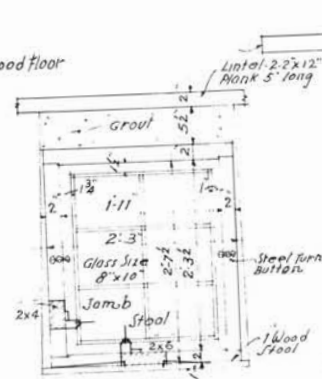
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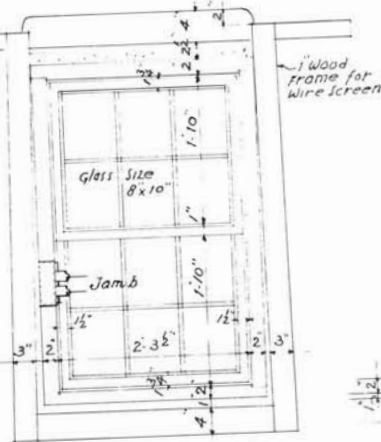
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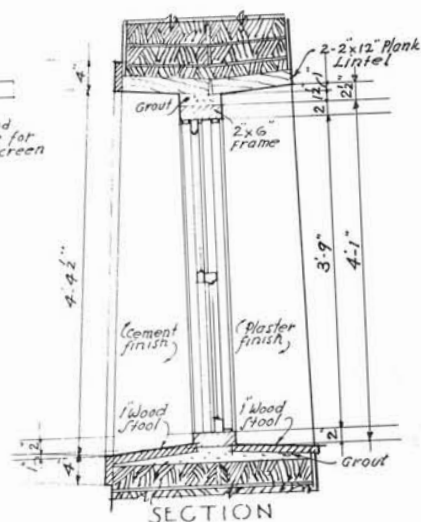
ULL SIZE SASH & MUNTIN



SINGLE-SASH
ELEVATION FROM ROOM



DOUBLE SASH
EXTERIOR ELEVATION



SECTION

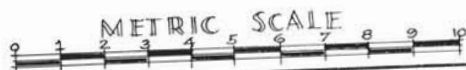
SCALE IN FEET

0' 1' 2' 3' 4'

SECTIONS & ELEVATIONS

0' 1' 2' 3' 4'

DETAILS



NAME OF STRUCTURE

NAME OF STRUCTURE
HOUSE OF GUSTAV ROHRICH BELLWOOD-NEB.

SURVEY NO.
35-10
3-1-1934

HISTORIC AMERICAN
BUILDINGS SURVEY
SHEET 2 OF 2 SHEETS

INDEX NO.

LIFE ON THE PRAIRIE

The homesteaders of the late 1800s faced a land very different from anything they had seen back East or in their homes in Europe. The North American plains went on for miles and miles in flat or gently rolling terrain. The grass that fed the buffalo and deer and many other species of wildlife often grew three to six feet high. A man on horseback could pick wildflowers without getting off of his horse and parents were forever worried about their children getting lost in the tall grass.

The weather too was extreme. As my grandmother used to say, "there isn't anything between you and that bitter cold wind that blows down from Canada but a few stalks of

The sod cutting plow, or grasshopper plow, was specially designed to cut long strips of sod thick enough to be used as bricks for the sod house. The homesteaders cut them to length on site as they built the house.

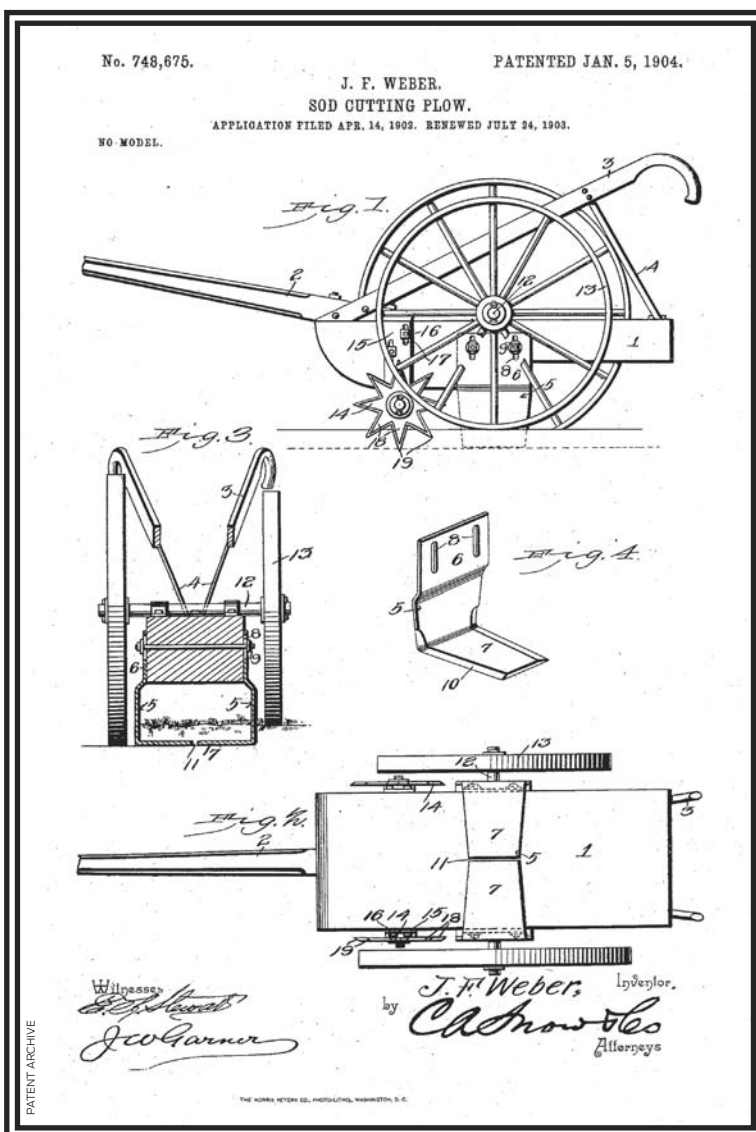
"The homesteaders of the late 1800s faced a land very different from anything they had seen back East or in their homes in Europe."

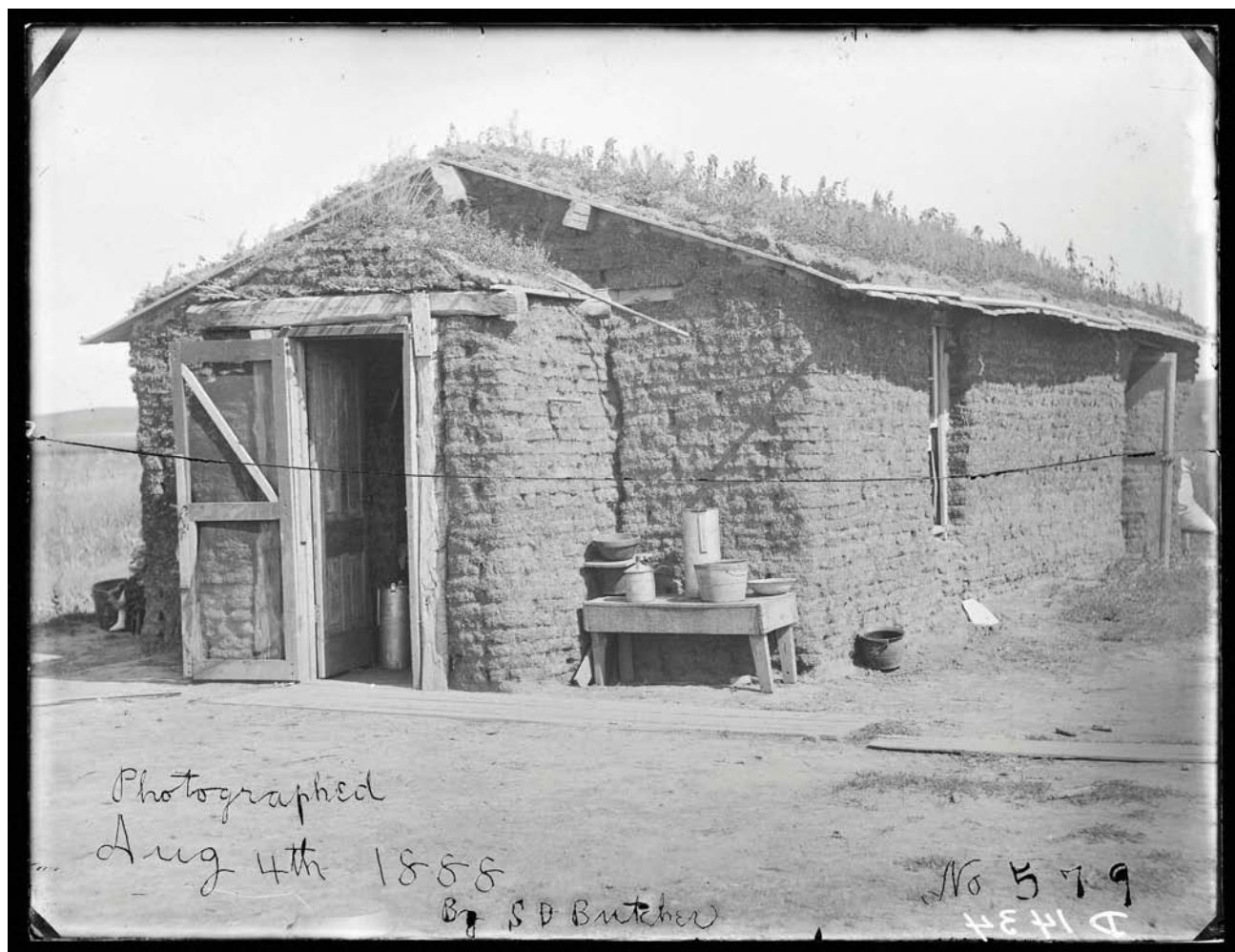
corn in Kansas." The land was for the most part devoid of trees and larger vegetation, the biggest plant being bushes anywhere other than a creek bed. Temperatures in the summer would range above 100 degrees Fahrenheit and winters would drop below freezing due to the lack of anything to block the sun and wind or hold the heat. If drought, storms, and tornados were not enough to contend with these "sodbusters" also faced swarms of grasshoppers that could wipe out their crops in a day. Diseases could decimate their livestock or their families, with medicine and medical or veterinary care miles away. It was not an easy life and more than half who set out to live there for the requisite five years didn't make it. In the winter snow could cover your house and trap you there until the thaw in the spring.

But life on the prairie wasn't all disaster. It was, and is, a beautiful example of God's work. The land held abundant game for someone who knew or could learn how to hunt. The soil was rich and excellent for farming, once you got the ground turned over. If you had the skills, and the determination to make it, you could be part of the half that stuck it out for the five years and thrived.

BUILDING A SOD HOUSE

The anchor in the life of the homesteaders, or sodbusters as they were called, was their soddie or sod house. With the lack of trees and other building materials like stone or lumber the cheapest and most available material for making a home was the ground they walked on. The top layer of soil on the prairie contained strong grasses that sank their roots down into the soil in a tangled mess that held onto the dirt well. By cutting blocks out of this sod they could make long rectangular building blocks from which they could fashion their homes, just like a stonemason or brickmason





today might build a wall with heavy pavers or narrow cinder blocks.

Conestoga wagons and tents didn't provide much protection from the cold and heat for the settlers, so they built dugouts to have somewhere to live while the sod house was being built. A dugout was basically a cave dug out of the ground or into the side of a low hill at the house site. They made it large enough for the family but not much bigger as it was a temporary home and they needed to put their energy into the sod house rather than the dugout. The thick dirt walls provided good insulation from the cold and heat, just like a modern basement keeps a standard 65 degrees once you get six feet below ground level.

Once the sod house was completed the dugout would be used as an outbuilding for storage or stock. If the new settler was a forward thinker he or she would build the sod house so the dugout became an extra room in the house.

It took a week or two to build the sod house if you knew what you were doing. Unless they were the first to the area, many homesteaders had the benefit of neighbors who might travel the handful of miles from their homes to the new settler's claim to show them the ropes of how to cut sod and build the house.

The typical sod house was a single room approximately 16 feet wide by 20 feet long and seven or eight feet high. It was built following seven basic steps:

> **Pick a good location:** Like today, location was everything for the new homesteader. They wanted someplace that was close to water but not so close that a flood overflowing the banks of the stream might reach the house. It needed to be sheltered from the wind and elements, so a location on the southern side of a copse of trees or a hill was always a good idea. The last characteristic was that it needed to be close enough to a town or the railroad that they could get there and back for supplies within a day.

This picture of a sod house, taken in 1888, shows how a simple structure could be made very home-like over time with an entryway for the front door, a chimney for a cook stove inside, and a washing area outside.



“To get enough bricks took approximately 3000 sod bricks. After some trial and error they learned to only cut what they would use in one day since the sod would dry out and crumble if left out and not used in the construction.”

> Cut in the floor: The first step in the actual building of the sod house was to cut out the floor. This was done by cutting down into the Earth about six to 12 inches, leveling the ground out, and then making it hard by wetting it and then tamping it down with a post or other flat and heavy object to compact the dirt. Cutting out the floor provided a number of advantages; it showed the dimensions of the house for when they started laying the walls, it reduced the insects and small animals that came into the house, and the bare floor reduced the chances of a fire inside of the house.

> Cut the sod “bricks”: The sod was cut either by hand with a shovel, or, if they were lucky, with a special plow designed for that specific purpose called a grasshopper plow. It would cut a long swath of sod which the homesteader could then cut to length. Each piece was approximately 18 inches wide x 20 inches long by four to six inches thick, and weighed in at around 50 pounds each! They often cut the sod from the ground around the house, if it was the right type. This provided two important benefits: first, they didn’t have to carry it far to add it to the house and second, this left a vegetation-free zone around

the house so wildfires could not get to it. To get enough bricks took approximately 3000 sod bricks. After some trial and error they learned to only cut what they would use in one day since the sod would dry out and crumble if left out and not used in the construction.

> Build the walls: Depending on the size of the sod bricks the walls were between 18 to 24 inches thick, built two bricks deep at the bottom and sometimes narrowing to one brick deep as it got toward the top. The wider base was needed to provide a strong and solid foundation as the house would settle significantly over time as the sod dried out. Without the thick base the walls might settle inward and collapse the house. The sod bricks were laid with the root side up so the roots would grow upward into the brick above it making the wall even stronger. Every third row or so they would lay the bricks crosswise to tie the inner and outer rows together.

> Doors and windows: As they got to the point where the door and windows would go they added wooden frames they brought with them or made from whatever wood was available on the land, or from their wagon. If they had windows with them they would put those in place. If not they would fill the opening with thin, light colored cloth to allow sunlight into the house until they could get glass to go in the frame. Then they cut sod to fit, just like a brickmason cuts bricks today, to fit around the window or door frame. A gap was left above the frame to allow for the bricks settling so that they would not put pressure on the window or door. Pressure might break the glass or make the door stick or jam in place. The sod above the gap was supported by sticks laid crosswise above the frame and the open space filled with cloth or grass or other material to provide insulation.

> Put on the roof: The most important, and most challenging, part of the construction was adding the roof. The roof was made by laying poles or beams across the walls which were then covered by bundles of brush tied together, then by mud to bind it together, and finally by a layer or two of sod laid grass side up. Care was taken to ensure the roof slanted a bit so that it would not get soggy when it rained.

> Finish off the interior: Like any new home construction, the last part is the finish work. The first task was to stretch a light colored sheet across the ceiling to help reflect the light in the room but more importantly to keep dirt and bugs and small animals from dropping out of the ceiling into your dinner or onto your face while you slept. The next step was to finish off the walls by scraping them smooth and then adding a layer of mud or newspaper or plaster that acted like drywall



compound to give the wall a smooth and water-resistant coating. Sometimes the walls were covered by fabric like muslin or canvas. But, always, a light color was used to help reflect any light that made its way into the building. If they were fortunate enough to have brought a stove with them, a hole was cut for a chimney.

The resulting sod house was a good place to live. It was strong enough to withstand heavy rains and winds, and the thick earthen walls had excellent insulating characteristics that moderated the temperature inside to around 60 degrees, although it could be a bit damp if the walls were not finished well.

LIFE IN THE SOD HOUSE

Like anyone living in a one room building, life in a sod house lacked privacy unless sheets were hung to separate sleeping areas from the public spaces. Furniture like closets and shelving was either brought with them on the journey west or built right into the walls themselves. Space was at a premium and often the materials for nighttime activities like sleeping were stowed away during the day and only brought out when preparing for bed. The same was true for special purpose items like sewing machines or butter churns; they were stored outside until needed and used there or brought inside if the weather was bad. Pleasures were simple with handmade toys and dolls for the kids, and one or two special items like a favorite pocket knife or books filled the niche for the grown-ups. Flowers on flat surfaces like the window sills and even in the grass on the roof helped to brighten up the house and make it more of a home. **MP**

(above) The detail of how the windows were set in and how the sod bricks were alternated to help add strength to the walls is shown in this picture of a reconstructed sod house in Nebraska.

(opposite) "A low hill was often used to create a dugout that served as the homesteaders first home on the prairie."

Salt-Cured Country Ham

FOR ADDED MEAT FLAVOR AND EASE OF STORAGE, THIS TECHNIQUE RIVALS ALL.

By **Michael Pendley**



Curing ham with salt arrived in North America with the first European colonists. Born from the need to cure and preserve meat without refrigeration, dry salt curing was an old world method already familiar to these pioneers.

These early Americans soon realized the seasonal temperature changes of their new homeland were perfectly suited for curing fine tasting hams. In fact, the hams were so sought after they were used as one of the main trade goods with the old country.

Fast forward a few hundred years and salt cured, or “country” hams, are still popular today, not so much for their ease of storage, but more for their outstanding flavor profile. Prized in country kitchens and high end gourmet restaurants alike, salt cured ham has an outstanding flavor and complex flavor profile.

Curing your own ham at home isn’t complicated. Begin by choosing a fresh ham, the fresher the better. Leslie Scott, who, along with his wife June, has been curing their award winning country hams in Western Kentucky for 50 years, likes getting hams no later than three days after the hog has been butchered.

“Fresh hams just seem to cure better and there is less chance that harmful bacteria have started to grow on a fresh ham,” says Scott.



Curing country hams has traditionally been a group event. Lots of hands make short work of a big job.



Butcher shops that slaughter hogs on site are your best bet for a fresh, high quality ham. Choose a well-muscled ham with firm, pink lean meat and a small amount of white fat. He prefers his hams start out between 20 and 25 pounds. This size allows the cure to penetrate evenly throughout the ham. If too small the finished ham can come out too salty while much larger and the cure might not penetrate deeply enough to preserve the ham fully.

"The modern pork industry has pretty well taken care of the lean part of picking a good ham, there isn't as much fat as we used to see on a pig," says Scott.

Hams are traditionally cured in the months of December and January when the air temperature and humidity levels are low enough and consistent enough to safely store the ham for the thirty to forty days necessary for the cure to fully penetrate the meat. Rather than feeding them precious commodities through the winter, in colonial times, these were also popular times for killing hogs raised over the spring and summer months. If temperature controlled storage is available, hams can be successfully cured throughout the year.

The cure mixture for a country ham starts with non-iodized salt. Many ham producers like to add sugar to the salt, either brown or



(left) Fresh hams ready to be rubbed down with the cure mixture.

(above) Apply the cure evenly over the entire surface of the ham, making sure to cover the exposed ends well.

(right) Gloves and aprons help keep the mess down and prevent any unwanted bacteria from reaching the ham's surface.

(opposite, left) Once the hams have been well coated with cure, they can be transferred to a well-drained storage box or a bag.

(opposite, right) A close up view of a rubbed ham ready for the curing process.





with rubbing and packing cure by hand on to all areas of the fresh ham. Massage extra cure into the exposed muscle end of the ham, as this area will absorb the cure faster than the skin. Care should be taken to really pack cure into the hock end of the ham in order to prevent souring as the ham ages.

Once the ham has been completely coated with the salt mixture, wrap it in brown paper. Uncoated brown butcher or craft paper, or even brown grocery bags will work. Do not use paper with any type of wax or plastic coating, as these will prevent moisture from escaping as the ham cures.

The paper wrapped ham is then placed into a ham sock and hung, hock down, in an area with adequate air movement. As the ham ages, the moisture will escape through the paper and salt will penetrate the meat. After a period ranging from 35 to 50 days, the ham will be cured. Remove it from the sock, brush any remaining salt from the surface and place the ham into a new sock. At this point the ham is ready to either smoke or age without smoking. Hams should be aged, hanging, for at least six months so that the salt has time to evenly distribute throughout the meat.

The Box Method

Used most often when large numbers of hams are cured at once, the box method is exactly as the name describes. Hams are rubbed with salt mixture and then stacked in a well-drained box to absorb the cure. As with the bag method, begin by rubbing the fresh ham well with cure, packing it into both the hock and exposed muscle ends and coat the entire ham well. Scott says many of the old time ham cures called for the hams to be packed in salt cure so a thick layer of salt separates the hams. Modern ham producers generally just coat the

“Choose a well-muscled ham with firm, pink lean meat and a small amount of white fat.”

white, with red or black pepper. For every 100 pounds of fresh ham, use eight pounds of salt, two and a half pounds of sugar and one pound of black pepper.

Instacure #1, a mixture of salt and sodium nitrite, is occasionally added as a preservative to guard against spoilage. For a single, 25-pound ham, simply divide the cure amounts by one quarter. If curing hams in a box, divide the cure amount in either two or three equal portions for the different cure applications. Salt cured country hams must contain at least four percent by weight of salt when they are finished curing.

There are two methods of curing hams, and while the cure amount and make up are the same for both methods, getting that cure into the ham is very different. Both methods take approximately the same amount of time.

The Bag Method

Often used when only a single, or just a few, hams are produced at a time, bag curing begins

“Prized in country kitchens and high end gourmet restaurants alike, salt cured ham has an outstanding flavor and complex flavor profile.”



Hams are hung hock end down to age and cure.

outer surface of the ham and stack them tightly in the box.

Unlike the bag method, the cure is rubbed into the ham in multiple applications, usually two to three, each five to seven days apart. Hams are then stacked flat into the box with any extra cure mix poured between the layers of ham. Make sure the curing box has plenty of drainage, as a great deal of moisture will escape during the process and must be able to move away from the hams in order to prevent spoilage.

Hams should be left in the curing box for one and a half to two days per pound of fresh ham. A twenty-five pound ham should cure from 38 to 50 days. The longer the cure time, the saltier the finished product will be.

At the end of the curing process the hams should be removed from the box. With a stiff brush, remove all salt from exterior of the ham

and then wash the ham well under fresh running water. Dry the ham well and place into a ham sock to either smoke or age.

Smoking

Country style hams can be eaten smoked or un-smoked. In Kentucky, most hams produced west of Interstate 65 are smoked, while those from east of the interstate are un-smoked. Missouri and Northern Virginia hams are un-smoked for the most part while Tennessee and Southern Virginia ham producers smoke their product.

Hams should be smoked at less than 100 degrees for three to seven days over hickory, fruitwood or a mixture of the two. The cool temperatures allow the smoke flavoring to penetrate the meat without destroying any of the beneficial bacteria protecting the ham from spoilage.

Aging

Smoked or not, cured country hams need to be aged. Aging takes place as the ham hangs, shank down, in an area with good air circulation. Temperatures can safely fluctuate wildly during the aging process, often reaching as high as 95-degrees during the summer months. Hams should be aged for a minimum of six months and for as long as one year. Hams aged in the Prosciutto style of old Europe are often aged two years or more.

As the hams age, they lose moisture, concentrating and enhancing the flavors. Once aged in this manner, the hams do not require refrigeration.

Cooking a Country Ham

Country hams are traditionally served either roasted whole or sliced and fried. For roasting, begin by washing and scrubbing ham with a stiff bristle brush. Place the ham into a large kettle and cover with cold water. Let it soak a minimum of eight hours. Ten to 12 hours is better and soaks as long as 24 hours aren't totally uncommon. Change the soaking water every four to six hours.

Pour off soaking water and recover ham with fresh, cold water. Cover roaster or kettle and bring to a simmer on the stovetop. Simmer the ham for 20 minutes per pound.

Lift cooked ham from kettle and remove the skin. Place the ham into a roasting dish and sprinkle the exterior with brown sugar. Roast ham in a 35-degree oven until the sugar has melted and formed a glaze over the exterior of the ham. Pineapple is a popular addition to roasted hams, as is a pour of Coca Cola or Dr. Pepper over the top before baking.

For slicing, crosscut the ham in quarter inch slices. Add a drizzle of vegetable oil to a skillet and fry ham slices gently on medium heat, turning often. Be careful not to burn the ham, the finished slices should be soft and meaty. Serve as a main course or between the layers of a warm biscuit.

Perhaps the best way to enjoy the distinctive flavor of a cured ham is to simply shave off a paper-thin sliver with an extremely sharp knife. Serve as you would Prosciutto on a cheese or cracker plate.

Once your ham has been cooked, refrigerate any leftovers for up to four weeks. Don't be afraid to use cured ham as an ingredient or seasoning in other dishes. The salty tang of the ham melds well with other flavors. Save the hock from your ham to use as seasoning meat in a pot of beans or soup.

A salt-cured country ham is the true flavor of Americana, its flavors mirroring that of the hams our forefathers made when they first arrived on this continent. Those flavors are even more outstanding when you have cured the ham yourself. **MP**



A few of the many state and national awards that Scott Hams have picked up over the last 50 years. (below) One of the best ways to cook country ham is to gently fry the slices in a cast iron skillet. Cooking it on a wood burning stove makes it that much better.



[Hunting & Shooting]



*"The last word
in ignorance
is the man
who says of
an animal or
plant: 'What
good is it?'"*

—ALDO LEOPOLD

PHOTO BY THINKSTOCK

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Turkey Hunting 101

THE BASICS FOR A FIRST-TIME TURKEY HUNTER.

By Thomas C. Tabor

Beginning in the latter part of the 19th century and continuing through the 1930s, the wild turkey population dwindled to a point where the species was on the verge of total extinction. Few birds remained except in the most remote and inaccessible areas of the country. By the conclusion of World War II, however, extensive efforts had been made to bring the species back from the brink by individual states, conservation groups, and hunters, but it wasn't until the 1960s those restoration efforts were heralded as a wildlife management success. By that time, with the exception of Alaska, the wild turkeys could be found in virtually every state of the union. And, by 1991, all 49 of those states had established spring wild turkey hunting seasons.

The wild turkey population is made up of five subspecies with the Eastern being the most abundant and located primarily in the eastern half of the U.S. The other species include: the Florida, which reside in the southern portion of that state; the Merriam, found in the west; the Rio Grande residing in the south-central plains states and northeastern Mexico; the Gould's found in northwestern Mexico and parts of the desert southwestern U.S.; and the Ocellated occurring primarily on the Yucatan Peninsula.

It always surprised me how much effort has gone into convincing potential turkey hunters they need to purchase a huge amount of specialized equipment and gear in order to be successful. Paw through any hunting catalog and you will likely find a huge selection of camouflaged shotguns, many earmarked as being designed specifically for the turkey hunter. In many cases, these will be equipped with a screw-in interchangeable choke system that will encourage the use of chokes specially designed for tighter-than-normal shot patterns. And, of course, how could anyone think of hunting turkeys without some form of specialized sighting equipment like an illuminated space-age electronic red dot sight or maybe a variable powered scope? I am, of course, being facetious here.

While the marketing of these items are probably considered close to being marketing genius to the manufacturers, for the person that just would like to put a wild turkey on the dinner table it borders on the ridiculous. While most hunters enjoy the thought of adding new equipment in hopes it might improve their outdoor experience and success, when it comes to turkey hunting, you may already have most of what is needed to be successful.

The Right Shotgun

Fearing the raft of anger from those trying to sell you a pretty new shotgun, you may find that that old 12-gauge you've been using for years for hunting other types of game may work out perfectly fine when it comes time to put a turkey on the table. Obviously there are



These two turkey hens came out in the open obviously looking for a little gobbler companionship.

advantages in what a new shotgun could offer you, but let's take a look at what is really necessary before you go out and spend a lot of your hard-earned money.

I certainly do not want to give anyone the idea turkeys are easily killed and virtually any shotgun and ammunition would work effectively on them. It generally takes a lot of pellet energy and multiple impacts of shot to bring one of these huge birds down. The good news is most turkeys are killed at the relatively short range of around 30 yards or under. In order to ensure a clean and humane kill, most hunters usually concentrate on centering the head and neck of the bird in their pattern. These are fairly small targets, and for that reason, your shotgun must be capable of placing as many pieces of shot in those areas as possible.

(opposite, top) **My granddaughter Danielle Peterson is thoroughly enjoying her time with her dad turkey hunting.**

Turkey hunting is a great way to bestow the pleasures and excitement of hunting on a youngster.

(opposite, bottom) **Using a slate call my friend Jim York answers a gobbler's call.**

(below) **A distant call from an ol' weary gobbler captures our attention while walking in on an abandoned mountain road.**

Even though, on occasion, you might find a few hunters using another gauge shotgun than a 12, in my personal opinion, the 12-gauge is, by far, the best choice when it comes to going after these extremely tough birds...and it should be choked full. The good news is this description likely fits 80 or 90 percent of the shotguns in existence today. A 12-gauge possessing a 2-3/4-inch chamber will suffice, but, as much as you are attempting to put as many pieces of shot into the bird's head and neck as possible, a shotgun with a 3-inch chamber provides a slight advantage over the shorter length shells.

I am hesitant to brand shotgun shooting as an inexact science, but in many ways it really is. Unlike a rifle or pistol relying on a single bullet to impact precisely where the shooter is



aiming, the pattern of the shotgun has essentially a built-in error factor due to its broad shot pattern. From a full choke gun typically that pattern covers about three feet at 30 yards. Of course, every shooter attempts to place their target in the center of the pattern, but if you are off a little to one side or the other it really doesn't matter a whole lot. That is why I think scopes and various other fancy sighting options are overkill when it comes to turkey hunting and again, in my opinion, it accounts as only a marketing ploy to get at your hard-earned dollars. As long as you can keep the head and neck of a turkey inside your shotgun pattern at a reasonable range, you should have a leg up when it comes to your Christmas dinner.



The Right Ammunition

Everyone has a preference when it comes to ammunition, but my best recommendation is to place a heavy emphasis on shooting as large a shot charge as possible, even if you have to sacrifice a little on velocity. That would generally mean I prefer a 2-3/4-inch chambered 12-gauge to be loaded with 1-3/8 or, better yet, 1-1/2 ounce of lead shot, and if you are shooting a 3-inch chambered 12, it would be best if it was loaded with maybe 1-7/8 ounce of shot.

Shot size is a matter of personal preference. Some shooters feel a larger number of shot impacting the bird is better even if the shot is smaller in size. Other shooters, however, look to the advantage of higher pellet energy and deeper impacts which typically come from shooting heavier and larger shot. Those two philosophies essentially cover shot sizes ranging from a small as #7s up to #4s. For me personally, I prefer somewhere in the middle of that range, and my first choice would probably be #5s for most instances. It is always a good idea to pattern your shotgun at about 30 yards in order to evaluate the pattern density as compared to the general size of a turkey's head and neck.

To Decoy or Not to Decoy

The use of decoys makes good sense on two fronts. Obviously the birds see the decoy and hopefully are encouraged to come in closer for a shot. But another advantage in using a decoy or two is to keep the bird's attention on them rather than you. The turkey's eyesight is



excellent and keeping their eyes locked on a decoy may prevent them from seeing your movements while you are readying yourself for the shot.

You really don't have to get carried away with a bunch of decoys. All you need is a couple, and turkey decoys, in most cases, are relatively cheap to purchase. There are a wide variety of choices to select from, varying from simple silhouettes to blow-up style to fully-body types. Personally I like the lightweight blow up kind, simply because they are easy to pack in and relatively easy to set up. You should set your decoys up in an area within your shotgun range and with an unobstructed view, so the birds are quick to see them. If you place them each 30 yards away, this will provide a great range indicator when a bird comes into view.

(above) Even though this jake wasn't the biggest turkey ever taken he will certainly taste good on the dinner table.

(opposite) The wild turkeys could have easily been lost forever if it wasn't for the good work that state game departments, wildlife groups and hunters did to bring them back from near extinction.

Types of Calls

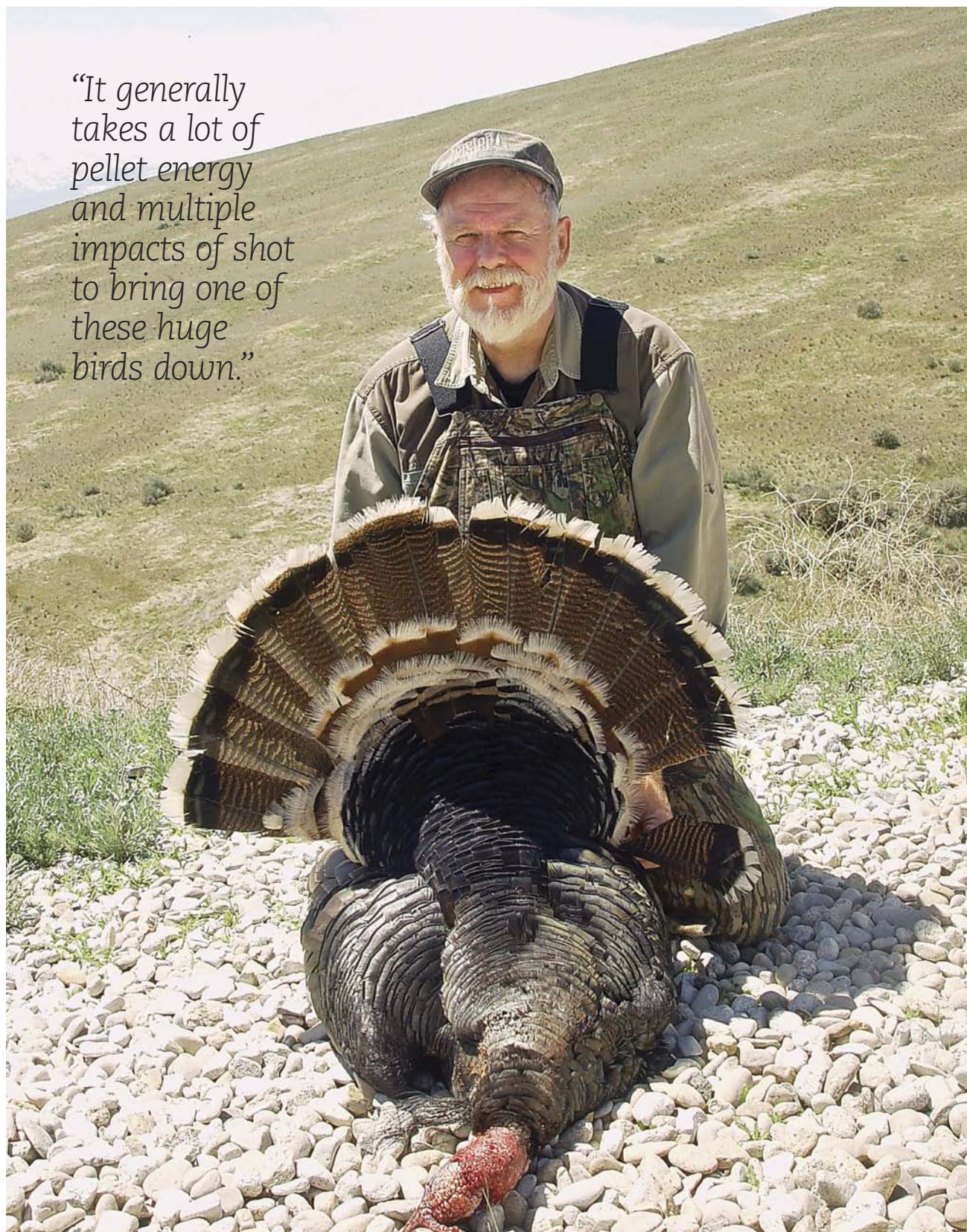
When judged against the difficulty of learning to call ducks and geese, turkey calling can be a breeze to master. But one of the first things a new turkey hunter will likely notice is the fact that there are a lot of different types of turkey calls to select from. The basic choices are the slate or friction call, the box call, the push-pull, and the mouth or diaphragm call, but within each of those categories there are multiple subtypes.

In addition to the actual turkey calls, a locator call can sometimes be extremely helpful to have with you. Unlike the other calls which mimic the sounds made by the turkeys, the locator call produces a sound that may seem out of place to the birds. Possibly the most common calls used as a locator is a crow or hawk call, but virtually any loud sound will frequently encourage the turkeys to start gobbling, conveying to the hunter they are close by. In order to help demonstrate how virtually any loud sound can start turkeys gobbling, a short and somewhat amusing story might be in order.

I was once preparing to walk into an area to hunt. I had parked my truck in a pull-off area along the side of the road and was getting my gear together when a car appeared on the horizon moving slowly in my direction. Being all decked out in camo and carrying my shotgun it was obvious to all I was a hunter. All too soon the driver of the car showed his true colors as an anti-hunter when he began wildly blowing his horn, obviously thinking he was spooking any game that might be in the area and vulnerable to my attempts to shoot them. His lack of understanding of turkeys, however, became blatantly obvious because immediately upon hearing the horn blasts, the turkeys began gobbling in response, conveying to me that I was in the right location. I couldn't help but chuckle at the ill-informed ignorance of that person's fledging attempt to disrupt my hunting, and, as soon as I heard the gobbling in the nearby woodlot, I simply put my locator call back in my bag and headed off in that direction.

Of all of the turkey calls, the mouth or diaphragm call was to me the hardest to master. I always have one of these calls with me, but I personally hate the tickling feeling they produce inside my mouth and only use them occasionally for that reason. Once mastered, however, this type of call comes with a couple of distinct advantages. First, it is essentially a hands-free instrument which is a great benefit when you are trying to keep your movements to an absolute minimum. And second, these calls are totally unaffected by bad weather.

"It generally takes a lot of pellet energy and multiple impacts of shot to bring one of these huge birds down."





“Of all the calls, I believe the push-pull and box calls are the easiest to master and, for that reason, I would encourage any prospective new turkey hunter to consider using them.”

Of all the calls, I believe the push-pull and box calls are the easiest to master and, for that reason, I would encourage any prospective new turkey hunter to consider using them. Both these style calls produce their sounds by a scratching movement. The amount of pressure applied and the speed of the movements will be directly proportional to the loudness of the calling. A drawback to both of these calls is the fact that they usually rely on wood and friction to produce their sounds and because of this they simply don't function well in wet conditions.

The slate call, while just slightly harder to master than the previously mentioned calls, consists of a pot made of slate or some other material and a striker. In order to produce the various turkey sounds, the striker is held at an angle and moved across the surface of the

pot in a scratching manner. Both very soft clucks and chirps sounds can be produced as well as loud yelping calls with the slate call. In order to produce yelping and purring sounds, the striker is moved in either half circles or in a “J” manner. To produce clucking, cutting or cackling, the striker is usually pulled in short strokes toward the user. The loudness of the calling is dependent on the amount of pressure put on the striker.

Learning to Call

Calling can be extremely beneficial when turkey hunting and for that reason I would encourage everyone to take advantage of it. As I said before, turkey calling really isn't all that hard to master and possibly the best tutorial will likely be found inside the package of your call. Another aid in learning to call can be

(right) Turkey calls come in all shapes and sizes, a few of which are shown here (top to bottom and left to right): box call, slate pot and striker, mouth call and a HS Strut squealing hen mount call. (bottom) A collection of my own 2½-inch 12-gauge shotguns frequently called upon for turkey hunting consists of (L-R): Browning Superposed over and under, Browning A5 semi-automatic, Ithaca Model 37 pump and a custom built Winchester Model 12.

found on the Internet. Many Youtube videos can be found with instructions to help you master the various sounds needed.

Camouflage and Field Gear

Turkeys have some of the most acute eyesight of any of our feathered fowl and for that reason it is imperative to stay well hidden and keep movements to an absolute minimum. Full camo is considered by most turkey hunters to be a requirement rather than a choice and that includes a face net. An alternative, of course, could be face painting, but I personally prefer some form of netting which can be easily removed or roll it up over the top of my hat when not needed. But no matter what method you use to hide your beaming face, it is important you employ some method of camo or you will likely stand out as badly as I would on a ballet dance floor. A small portable blind can sometimes be helpful as well, but if you have properly camouflaged yourself you can usually utilize the natural surroundings to hide you.

Another item that can be extremely helpful would be a barrier placed between your own butt and the ground in order to ward off moisture. Many hunters carry a cushion with them, some of which actually attach to your belt. Even though I haven't personally used one of these, they certainly look pretty darn comfortable and nice, particularly if you are positioned up against a tree for a backrest. As an alternative I usually take along a backpack or fanny style pack and keep a black colored garbage bag inside for this purpose and a plastic bag sometimes comes in handy for other purposes as well.

Some form of a pack is nice to have along, but if you don't have one simply place your calls and other gear inside of whatever thing you have available. Just be sure it isn't a color that would send the turkeys fleeing to the closest brushy bit of cover.

Another item some hunters like, but one I would place in the category of "nice to have but not really a requirement" would be some form of a shotgun rest. I don't really find a rest necessary while shooting, but sometimes these make a nice place to rest your shotgun against while you wait for the turkeys. The advantage in doing so is that your movements can be kept to a minimum. **MP**





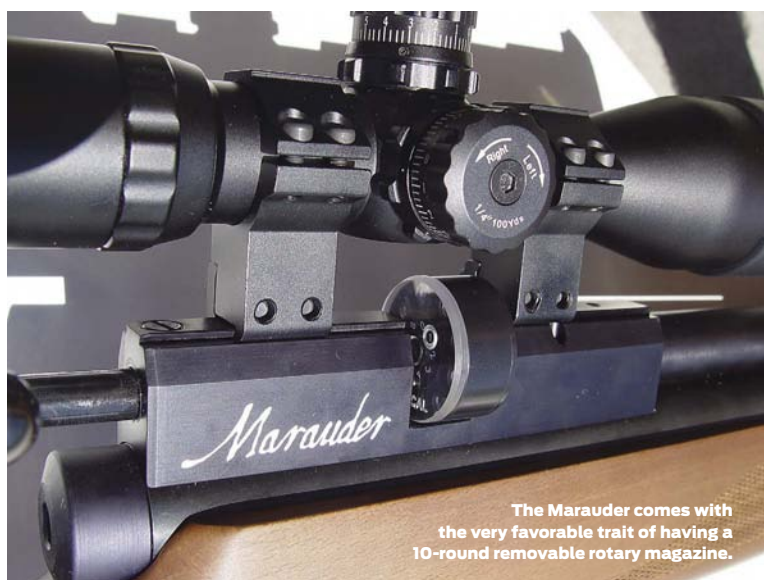
The Crosman Benjamin Marauder .25 caliber PCP air rifle with a hardwood stock is a great rifle for use on small game.

Quiet & Effective

IF YOU WANT A SILENT HUNT, CHECK OUT THIS NEW GENERATION OF PELLET RIFLES.

Story and Photography by Thomas C. Tabor

Unless you have taken a close look recently at the new generation of powerful airguns, you may not be aware of the engineering marvels and strides that have been made in this area of powderless shooting. Beginning at the age of about six years old I spent a great deal of time with my Daisy BB gun, seeking out things on which to test my aim, all while imagining I was in some exotic land in pursuit of dangerous game animals. But as much enjoyment as I received from those days of my youth, that old Daisy could only be described as being a bit pathetic when compared to what is available today. Airgun technology has advanced so dramatically in recent years that it is now bumping the performance produced by the rimfire .22s, and with those enhanced capabilities has come the real possibility of its being used for hunting small game.



The Marauder comes with the very favorable trait of having a 10-round removable rotary magazine.



New Era of Airgun Calibers

The new airgun technological advancements have helped usher in a significantly greater choice in calibers. Today airgun shooter have at their disposal calibers ranging from the more traditional .17 caliber all the way up to massively powerful rifles in calibers like .357, .45 and even a few huge .50 calibers. In the latter case, it means sending out a pellet weighing 225 grains at around 680-fps to produce as much as 230 ft. lbs. of energy upon impact. But even as impressive as this performance is, no one should consider it acceptable in terms of big game hunting. On the other hand, when it comes to small game

The .25 caliber is a great choice when it comes to the hunting of cottontail rabbits.

(right) To charge his PCP rifles Tom generally uses a hand pump. When the rifle is completely empty of air it takes a significant amount of effort to bring it all the way up to the maximum pressure level of 3,000 psi. On the other hand, to bring the pressure back up after 25 or 30 shots have been fired takes considerably less energy.

(inset) Maximum air pressure for the Marauder .25 caliber rifles is 3,000 psi as shown here on its built-in pressure gauge.



(and certainly pest control), the new era of rifles chambered in the calibers of .17, .22, and .25 can certainly provide a great substitute for the more traditional rimfire rifles.

Further adding to the diversity of choice are the new innovative lightweight pellets that have the ability to increase velocities by as much as 30 percent over that of the more traditional lead pellets. Typically, a reduction in pellet weight equates to a reduction of energy upon impact, but these faster, lighter pellets still provide a great option when it comes to hunting small game.

Airgun Designs

There are essentially four basic designs of airguns currently available to choose from: CO2, single-shot break-barrel, pump-up style, and the Precharged Pneumatic (PCP) guns. There are both positive and negative aspects connected to each of these designs, but in my personal opinion, the least desirable style when it comes to hunting would be the CO2-powered rifles.

CO2

First, if you intend to use one of these guns, you might find over time the purchase of the CO2 cylinders can have a fairly heavy impact on your pocketbook. Second, and possibly even more important, CO2 does not do well when it comes to cold weather shooting. That being the case, if you are looking to put a plump cottontail or a nut stuffed squirrel on your wintertime dinner table, a CO2-powered rifle would be a poor choice of weaponry.

Single-Shot Break-Barrel Rifles

The very popular single-shot break-barrel rifles are a little more favorable to hunting conditions. One big advantage in this style of rifle is that the velocities and pellet energy remains consistent from shot to shot, which encourages consistency in shooting accuracy. Obviously, any single shot takes a bit longer to get a follow-up out the barrel than in the case of a repeater-style rifle. Single-shot break-barrel rifles are currently available in either the older spring design or the relatively new Inert Gas Technology (IGT).

Pump-up Style

Contrary to how some shooters favor the single-shot break-barrel rifles because of their ability to produce consistent velocities from shot to shot, some shooters still seem to prefer the pump-up style rifles for the absolute opposite reason. Those shooters like the ability to be able to vary the velocity depending on how many times they pump the rifle. This may be a beneficial characteristic when it comes to shooting in close neighborhoods where a reduced level of noise and slower velocities would be more appropriate.

Precharged Pneumatic (PCP)

The final design, and in my opinion possibly the best choice as a general hunting style airgun, are the precharged pneumatic (PCP). As the name would imply, this style of airgun must be charged prior to use. This can be done by the user, or these guns can be charged at a commercial paintball facility. Once the rifle has been fully charged, they are good for firing multiple rounds before needing to be recharged.

My own Crosman Benjamin PCP rifles are good for around 30 shots before the pressure has dropped back to a level that starts to affect performance. The maximum pressure level of those rifles is about 3,000 psi and after 30 rounds have been fired the pressure has generally dropped back to about 2,000 psi. In order to charge my rifles, I use a hand pump specifically designed for that purpose. Doing so, however, takes a bit of physical effort. You

Tom has found a good size air gun to work wonders on cottontail rabbits as long as the shooting range is within 50-yards.

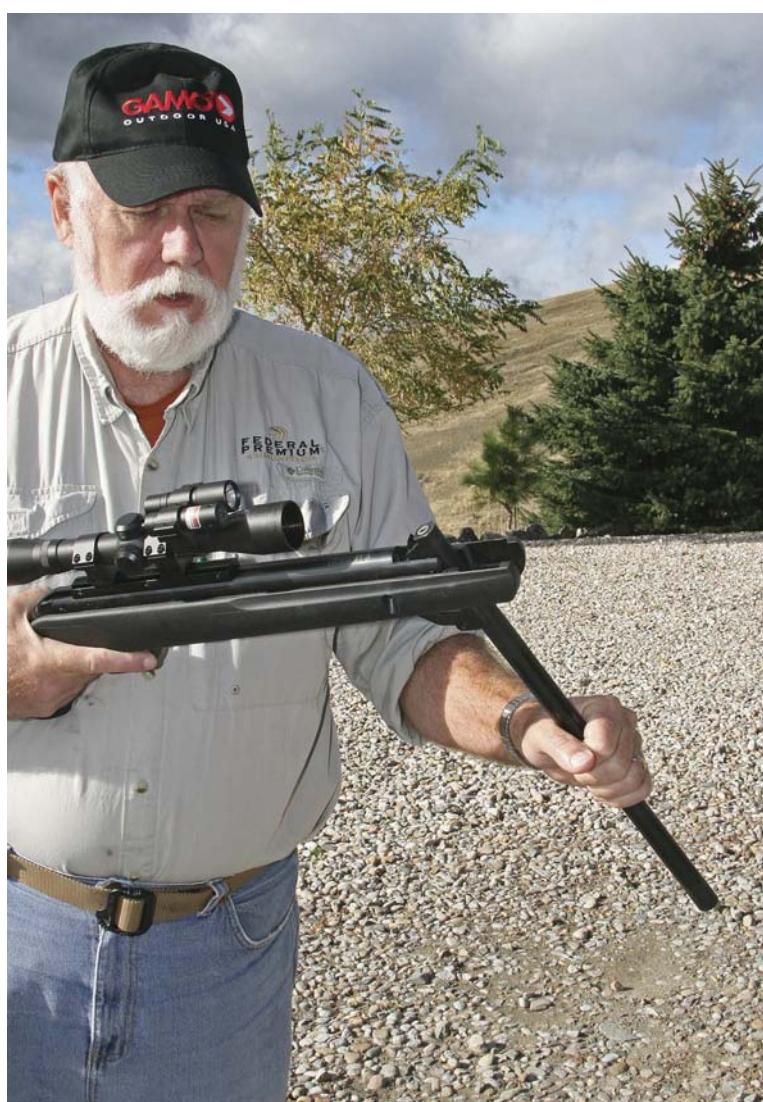




(above) The .177 caliber Gamo Model Varmint Hunter single-shot break-barrel rifle shot is capable of very accurate groups at 25 yards.

(top right) Loading the Gamo Varmint Hunter rifle is simply a matter of opening the barrel and placing a pellet inside the rifle chamber.

(right) To cock the Gamo Varmint Hunter air rifle you force the barrel downward. After that, a pellet can be loaded in the chamber followed by reclosing the barrel making it ready for the shot.



might opt to use some form of an auxiliary air tank for the recharging. This is done using a tank specifically designed for that purpose, or in some cases a modified scuba diving tank can be used.

Applying Air Technology to Hunting or Pest Control

If you are looking for the most versatile and powerful form of airgun, the best choice would be a PCP rifle. Nevertheless, the other types of airguns clearly have applications for which they are well suited. I frequently use my own .177-caliber Gamo Model Varmint Hunter single-shot break-barrel rifle for pest control. This is a very versatile rifle that came equipped from the factory with a 4x32mm scope, a laser sight and a mounted light source. When pests come a-knockin' day or night I can grab that rifle, quickly stick a pellet in and with one cock I am ready to take action. The rifle is capable of sending a normal

lead pellet weighing about 8 grains on its way at about 1,000 fps, or I can opt to boost that velocity by 30-38 percent by choosing to shoot one of the Gamo Raptor™ pellets that weigh in at around 5.56 grains.

But while the more traditional .177- and .22-caliber pellet rifles are still very popular today for both pest control and small game hunting, better choices when it comes to small game hunting are the innovative new PCP .25-caliber rifles, like the Crosman Benjamin Marauders. I have hunted with these rifles for several years now, primarily for cottontail rabbits.

My first Benjamin Marauder was one of the company's hardwood stocked models, but when the company came out with their new synthetic stocked version about a year ago I upgraded to it. Both rifles shot amazingly well and frequently astounded me as to their accuracy and hard hitting abilities. These rifles came with the distinct hunting advantage of being a repeater design with the removable magazine holding 10-rounds of pellets. Simply by pulling the bolt handle straight back then pushing it forward loads a fresh pellet into the chamber, ready to be fired. When fully charged, these rifles produce an actual measured muzzle velocity of around 800 fps. That results in driving a 28-grain, .25-caliber pellet clear through a cottontail rabbit at up to 50 yards. And as far as accuracy goes, my groups off the bench at 50 yards seldom exceed an inch, and in many cases, I have been able to shoot groups half that size. That level of accuracy would be considered great for any rimfire or even most centerfire rifles.

Limitations of Air Power

The major limitation in airgun use for hunting purposes comes in the form of effective range. While a typical rimfire rifle can be quite effective out to about 100 yards, no one should expect that same level of performance from any airgun. When it comes to the .25-caliber PCP Crosman rifles, I personally consider the maximum killing range for hunting purposes to be 50 yards. For the .17 Gamo single-shot break-barrel Varmint Hunter, that range would be about one third to a half of that distance. While both rifles do exceptionally well when confined to these limitations, beyond those distances you can expect considerable degradation in their performance. The trajectory drops are so severe beyond those ranges that it would be very difficult to accurately compensate for them.

While I found the Crosman 25s to be fully capable of accurately grouping their shots out to even as far as 100 yards, the pellet trajectory was down at that distance to about 20



If you would like to put a little hasenpfeffer (a traditional German stew made with rabbit) on the dinner table, an air rifle is fully capable of doing just that.

“When fully charged, these rifles produce an actual measured muzzle velocity of around 800 fps.”

inches. That being the case, if the shooter misjudges the range by only a few yards it would likely result in a missed shot, or worse, a wounded animal. And that isn't even considering the reduction of pellet energy at that range. So, keep your shots within a reasonable distance and I don't think you will be disappointed with the results.

In order to handle the relatively high pressures needed in the PCP designs, it typically requires the use of fairly heavy materials in its construction and, leading to heavier rifles. The scope-mounted, synthetic-stocked Crosman Benjamin Marauder .25 caliber tips the scales at about 9-1/2 pounds. Obviously that is a fairly heavy rifle to pack around, but with weight comes steadier holding potential and that can be beneficial to shooting accuracy.

The Way I See It

When it comes to hunting, I don't believe airgun technology will ever completely replace the other more traditional firearms for small game. Nevertheless, there are many shooting niches where airguns fit very nicely and provide a viable alternative to the more traditional style of rifles. Airguns are quiet, effective and economical to shoot. But, over and above all that, they are a whole lot of fun to use. For the person that likes to shoot in an area with restrictions against other types of weapons, sometimes an airgun can be used to fill that gap. Or, in my personal case, I simply like the concept of powderless shooting as a unique way of expanding my outdoor experiences. **MP**



A picture of author and a few of the antelope bucks taken over the years with a bow and arrow.

Wyoming Antelope Adventure

COME ALONG ON THIS GREAT EXPERIENCE WITH AN OLD FRIEND USING A COMMEMORATIVE PAIR OF STICKBOWS.

By Mike Yancey

· ADVENTURE ·

The pronghorn antelope have held a special spot in my heart for many years now and are still one of my favorite animals to pursue with a bow and arrow. My fascination with these speedsters of the western plains began many years ago when, for a graduation present in 1979, I went with my lifelong friend and mentor Jay Gill to Colorado for a week-long trip to prospect for gold. Gill took me under his wing when I was a kid and taught me the fur trade and trapping business as well as many other ways of life I still enjoy today.

From Arkansas and not used to seeing them, I had never given the antelope much thought as an animal I would want to spend time hunting. Little did I know that first trip out west, and seeing a herd of pronghorns on the plains of New Mexico, would spark an interest in me that has burned my whole adult life. It was that first time seeing an antelope I knew I would return and bow hunt these fascinating animals.

Return I did. I have hunted and taken the pronghorn with a bow and arrow in New Mexico, Colorado and Wyoming. This story is about a special place in Wyoming and the making of two special bows that helped begin a lifelong adventure.

Starting the Journey

I had been writing hunting articles for a few years about primitive archery hunts I had been going on, telling about the places I hunted and about the primitive style bows I made to hunt with. From time to time, you will get contacted by a reader who likes your articles enough that, for one reason or another, they will contact you about a hunt or a mutual area hunted. It was just such a call that I got from Jerry Bowen in Wyoming. He had hunted caribou

at a camp that I had written about and was fascinated that I had made a bow out of a single piece of wood, eventually taking two caribou bulls on the hunt with that very bow. Jerry wanted to try to make a bow himself and hunt there with it. It wasn't until after a few phone calls and me helping him make a primitive bow that a friendship was formed, one that has taken us to many campfires together over the years while perusing big game with traditional and primitive bows and arrows.

Jerry and I were hunting a private ranch in Wyoming in an area around the Medicine Bow. This ranch was like a place time had forgotten. With the exception of a fence or two and an occasional windmill, nothing had changed since the beginning of time. Antelope were everywhere, and we each had a watering hole we would hunt each day, allowing both of us to take some nice bucks and fill our doe tags too.

This was such a special place, and the opportunity to hunt an area with the same type of bows the native people had used so many years before made me want to create a very special bow to commemorate our time on the ranch.

Building the Bows

Keeping the sinew from the antelope on our hunts (as well as the hides to make rawhide), my plan was to make Jerry and me each a bow, using the sinew and rawhide to back the bows. That was the plan, and we did go on many more hunts on that ranch. I did make each of us different bows for those hunts but I never made the special bows I originally planned. I kept saving all the sinew tendons and hide pieces as well as a shed horn I found while walking to an antelope Jerry shot one year. Over the years, the pieces began to pile up, as did the trophy bucks, when finally I was

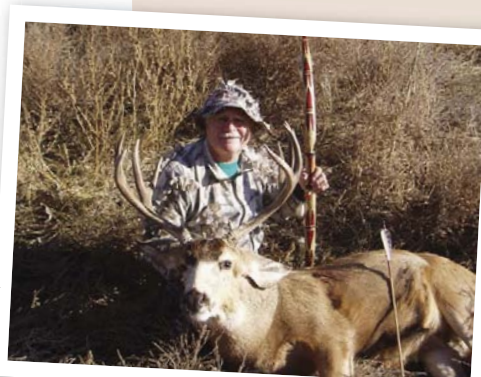
THE AUTHOR BAGGED THIS NICE PRONGHORN BUCK USING HIS CUSTOM-MADE STICKBOW.



JERRY BOWEN USED THE BOW HAND-BUILT BY THE AUTHOR TO TAKE THIS SUPERB PRIZED GOAT AND ANTELOPE DOE.



THE AUTHOR'S GREAT FRIEND JERRY BOWEN IS AN ACCOMPLISHED TRADITIONAL ARCHER AND ALSO BAGGED THIS NICE MULE DEER USING THE SPECIAL COMMEMORATIVE LONGBOW.





These show the author's and Jerry's beautiful bows using the sinew backed limbs.

able to envision the type of bows I would make for us.

The bows would reflect the style of the Cheyenne Indians that hunted the area before us. A sinew-backed short bow with reflex for speed and sinew backing for added speed and protection. I began construction of a form to bend the osage wood to the shape I wanted, and after that the real magic began.

With each piece of antelope sinew added to the bows and with every bit of work done on these two bows, my mind would reflect back on the hunts from which these pieces came, as well as some daydreaming about hunts to come.

With work on the two bows completed and both bows shot in, all that was left to do was to add the final bit of medicine to them. This consisted of rawhide backing from hides saved from previous hunts as well as tip overlays made from the shed antelope horn I found years earlier. With the artwork done and bows finished, I shipped Jerry his bow so he could get used to shooting it before our annual antelope hunt later that year.

Great Hunt

This hunt proved to be a success like those in years past. We hunted antelope from water-



ing holes in ground blinds. The only difference was that we had with us bows that meant something both of us. They were made from pieces from past hunts in a way that honored and respected the animals we hunted.

The hunt always begins early in the morning with the smell of sage in the cool air of the high plains. Going to my blind that had been good for so many years, I noticed the top of the windmill had been blown off the top of the platform by a winter storm. The only water there was from rain runoff in a small pond below the windmill, and with several hundred head of cattle in the area, that small hole of water was shrinking fast.

As I sat in the blind, I could literally watch the water evaporate and turn into a shiny film of mud. I knew I had few choices as to where to hunt if this water source dried up on me. As a desperate measure, I left the blind and went to a spot in the mud that would offer me a good angle for a bow shot and began to scoop out mud from the dried up waterhole. Making a small depression in the mud big enough to hold water about the size of a baseball cap, I felt it would hold water long enough for a buck to come and drink.

Like a well-written plan, a buck later headed my way to check out the water source. Upon his arrival, the only water was what I scooped from the mud. The buck checked out the area for a long time, making sure all was to his liking, before he quickly closed the last several yards to the watering hole. Like magic, he went right to the small bit of water in the now muddy pond, allowing me to prepare for the shot I felt would soon present itself. Dipping his nose to the water to drink, the buck instantly jerked his head up one more time before settling down to offer me a shot at a semi-relaxed animal. The bowstring came back and a wood arrow shaft bridged the time gap between native hunters and this Modern Pioneer. **MP**

"The bows would reflect the style of the Cheyenne Indians that hunted the area before us."

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·ADVENTURE·

SUPER-COLD,
SPRINGTIME HUNT
FOR TROPHY
LONGBEARDS.

By Mike Yancey

Flintlock Turkey Quest

The sound of wild turkeys gobbling through a hardwood forest will get me out of bed before the alarm goes off morning after morning for weeks at a time. Often, to the point of exhaustion, the chance to duel with a wild turkey keeps me going long after common sense has gone by the way side. I am simply a turkey hunting nut. My love of turkey hunting has taken me all over the United States, with many different weapons, but my current weapon of choice is the flintlock, both rifle and shotgun.

There are a few states that will allow a rifle to be used while spring turkey hunting, and one of them happens to be my favorite state of all, Wyoming. This adventure will find me in Wyoming in April with my favorite flintlock rifle, a .54 Cal. That gun has taken its share of turkeys in Texas as well as big game all over the country. Along with me on this hunt was my wife, Lisa, on her very first out-of-state hunt.

Rough Weather

Our hunt began with a springtime blizzard in Wyoming. After arriving and getting our hunting licenses and conservation tags, we visited with two of my friends. Our concern was if we would be able to make it up into the snowy mountains, but after a long talk, we decided to give it a try rather than spend a night in town and lose a morning of hunting. The trip up into the mountains was one you don't often experience in the South. It was four-wheel drive all the way, pushing snow drifts over the front bumper of my three-quarter-ton truck. My wife's eyes were as big as the blowing snow flakes, and her knuckles just as white, when we finally pulled into camp already set up by my good friend Martin.

Settling into camp after a 14-hour drive on the interstate and a 30-mile snow plowing run had us both ready to settle in and get some much needed rest. Before we bedded down for the night, I had to give a loud hoot to try and

“My love of turkey hunting has taken me all over the United States, with many different weapons, but my current weapon of choice is the flintlock, both rifle and shotgun.”



locate a gobbler and, just as in years before, a bird answered me on the mountain just out of camp. Lisa expressed her doubts about my sanity and how I thought we were going to turkey hunt in a blizzard. I assured her these springtime snows are quick to come and just as quick to leave and the sun would soon be shining. Besides, what else could you ask for? There was a bird gobbling his head off just out of camp in the middle of a blizzard; just imagine how good it will be when this clears up.

Heading Out

The next morning found us up before daylight and, with a quick pot of coffee and a hearty breakfast, we left the comfort of the warm travel trailer for the foot-deep snow as more was falling all the time.

I knew where the bird from the night before was roosting and I wanted to get there before he flew down, if he even would, what with the snow as deep as it was. As we hurried to my intended spot, Lisa bumped the end of her 20-gauge shotgun and, unknown

to us at the time, knocked off the fiber optic sight from the end of the barrel. Once set up on the bird I began to call it for Lisa.

I didn't even bring my flintlock, because I wanted this to be her hunt; I would kill one after she did.

Close Call

As I began to call, the bird would answer but wouldn't come. This went on for quite some time, and I could tell Lisa was beginning to get wet and cold from the now blowing snow. So I poured on the calls as hot and loud as I could, and that did the trick. The once-stationary bird was now on the ground and coming our way fast. I knew where he would crest the hill by the way a bird did the year before (which I took with a recurve bow), so I told her where to point her gun and where he would be coming from.

Just as the year before, the bird topped the hill and went into a full strut right in front of her shotgun barrel. As he came a little closer I whispered to Lisa, "if you're on him, you can

"...the gun went off, and the snow exploded at his feet, sending a spray of snow all over the bird as he made his way out of there extra fast."



(opposite) The author and his wife Lisa are all smiles behind their successful cold-weather turkey hunt.

(top) The year prior, Yancey arrowed this nice tom using a Black Widow recurve bow.

shoot any time." A second later, the gun went off, and the snow exploded at his feet, sending a spray of snow all over the bird as he made his way out of there extra fast. Lisa was crushed and couldn't figure out why she had missed the bird. I told her she shot low and that was just a bad deal. It wasn't until later in the morning, as we hiked back to camp, I discovered the sight on the gun was broken. So, with snow still piling up, we decided to head to town and visit our friends and, while we were there, get the sight replaced.

Relentless Cold Front

The trip in was much worse, and once reaching town, I doubted if we could make it back to camp. Martin assured us we could make it and that the snow drifts were okay as long as they were soft and not frozen. He even

offered to follow us up to make sure we made it. Well, we made it back and felt foolish for ever leaving camp in the first place, but the visit to town was nice and the sight was now back in working order. We were ready to hit the mountains hard in the morning.

We worked birds every day for the next two days but just couldn't get a shot at a good bird. It was the morning of the third day that the snow quit falling and the birds started going nuts. There were turkeys gobbling all over the mountains, and I could sense Lisa was now having a lot of fun hunting. Every time we set up and called in birds, she couldn't, for one reason or another, get a shot.

After lunch that day I decided to load up my rifle and take it along with me in case I got a chance to shoot after Lisa got a bird. It was on this setup that we both got our



chance. I had a group of birds talking to me and coming fast. Lisa was on my right, but the birds were coming from the left and they would all have to pass by me to get to her setting about five yards from me.

As the birds began to work toward us, some went around but others were walking right in front of me and Lisa's now-ready gun barrel. I didn't think that she was ever going to shoot, as the seconds passed like minutes. A bird right in front of me began to get nervous and was ready to leave the area. When it did, the one behind him came a few steps forward, and Lisa downed him with a load of number fives. At the shot, the bird began to flop like a head shot turkey does, and Lisa jumped up

With nearly a foot of snow on the ground, and constant wind, the turkey hunt proved tough, but in the end, that made it an experience never to forget.

(bottom) The splendor and peacefulness of the Wyoming landscape were unforgettable.

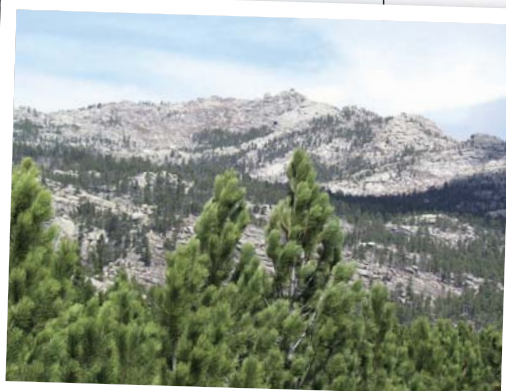
and started to run in after him. I still had my .54 laying across my lap and told her to hang on just a second that that bird was dead and going nowhere. As I raised the long rifle, the hammer came back to full cock and was ready to go into action with the other tom that was running away. As I watched the bird and looked for a chance to shoot, he got lined out in a walk going straight away at about 40 yards. I said to myself, *buddy you just messed up*. I might miss a running sideways shot, but I seldom miss a straightaway shot, and with the crack of the rifle and the cloud of smoke, our turkey adventure was over.

Double Success

The next sound I heard after the shot was Lisa screaming, "Did we just do what I think we just did? Did we kill both birds at once!"

Which we had, in fact, done. Lisa took her first turkey ever, and at the same time, got to see me take one with a flintlock.

That evening, as we sat in camp and warmed ourselves by a roaring campfire, the snow began to melt, and we reflected back on our successful hunt and the great time that we had in the mountains of Wyoming. Lisa said she would do this again! **MP**



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Ditch That SCOPE

HERE'S WHY YOU SHOULD CONSIDER A PEEP SIGHT OVER A TELESCOPIC SCOPE OR FACTORY IRON SIGHTS. *Story and Photography by Brian Brown*

In 1975, my grandfather wrapped up a pair of Marlin .30-30 lever action rifles and placed them under the Christmas tree for each of his sons. My uncle's curiosity got the better of him and his ended up in pieces before it was ever fired. Lucky for me, my father learned from his brother's mistake and took better care of his rifle, because 23 years later, he passed it down to me on my 15th birthday. Over the years, it had acquired a few dings and the clear coat was wearing off in a few places, so my father and I spent some time sanding and refinishing the stock.

Unfortunately, I carelessly leaned the rifle against a wall, and it fell on the rear sight splitting it in two. Typical of a young kid who spent too much time drooling over the latest and greatest gadgets showcased in hunting magazines, this seemed like the perfect time to upgrade to a scope. My dad agreed, reluctantly, and I spent the rest of my birthday money on a 2-7x scope. Years passed, as did a few hunting seasons, and the scope held up just fine. However, on every trip to the range or field, something felt off: a scope on that old lever action just felt wrong. So I pulled it off and began searching for a replacement rear sight. During my search I stumbled across peep sights, and while I never considered one before, it seemed like a good compromise to upgrading the factory sights without straying too far from the original intent.

Basic But Effective

Peep sights, also known as aperture sights, are a basic yet effective option. They are simple, lightweight and allow for more precise aim, because they do not block the lower half of the sight picture like a typical V-blade rear sight. Due to their larger field of view, they allow for quicker target acquisition and faster follow-up shots. A ghost ring sight also came up during my search, but the larger rear sight made the field of view seem too large; simply unscrewing the peep during low-light conditions allows for the same idea. Several companies offer peep sights for a variety of rifles, shotguns and muzzleloaders with various options for mounting and adjusting.

After some research, I purchased the higher-end Williams "FP" sight based on its reputation and the easy installation. The sight utilizes the factory-drilled holes in the receiver and has micro-click adjustments for both the elevation and windage, allowing for

much more precise adjustments. At the range I started out at 25 yards just like when dialing in a scope for the first time and was surprised how easy it was to get on paper. At 100 yards, I made a few minor adjustments and was even more impressed by how much my groups tightened up—I was shooting better than ever. Curiosity was getting the best of me, so I walked out to 200 and, with the help of shooting sticks, I was still able to shoot less than a 6-inch group. While I probably would not take the first shot at this range, it's good to know that if a follow up shot was required it should be acceptable for any big game I would be pursuing.

While looking down the peep, notice how the peep drifts out of focus and your eye wants to center the front post while looking down range.



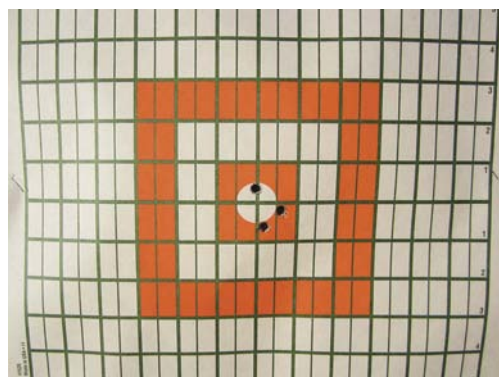
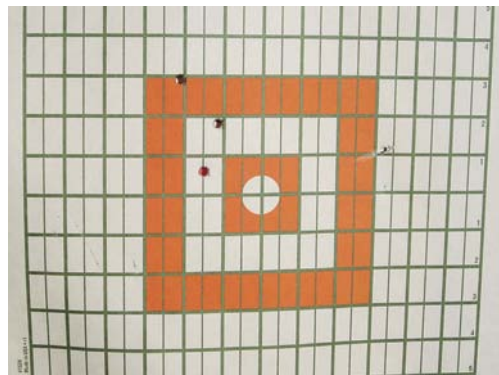


The Williams "WGRS" model is not only less expensive but it is also very compact, while making adjustments is still very easy.

(above) After the William "FP" is installed on the .30-30, the adjustments are made easy with the graduation marks and a "felt" click as you turn the adjustment screws.

(right, from top) A typical group at 100 yards with standard V-bar rear sights of the .30-30, although a fairly strong cross wind was not helping.

- With a peep sight installed on the .30-30, my groups instantly tightened up and rivaled some groups I have shot with my other scoped rifles.
- A typical group with the peep sight installed on the muzzleloader will only get better once I dial in the right load combo.



PEEP SIGHT OPTIONS

Besides Williams, there are several other companies making peep sights, such as Lyman, NECG, Skinner and others to consider. Target sights with very small apertures are great at the range but a simple peep sight with removable peep is better suited for hunting when low-light conditions can be expected.

A fiber-optic front bead paired with the rear peep offers the best combo for my eyes, but a brass bead or painted front sight might be a good option if your eyes are sensitive to the extra brightness provided by the fiber optics.

A Recent Upgrade

Last fall, I picked up a muzzleloader and the first thing I noticed was the factory fiber-optic sights were too bright and bulky and they obscured too much of the target. After the success on my .30-30, another peep sight was the obvious choice, especially considering the hunting laws here in Colorado do not allow scopes during muzzleloader seasons.

For this rifle I selected the Williams "WGRS" sight without the micro adjustments and because of the simpler design the sight was not only more compact but also cost about half as much. Installation was simple, and I was dumping 90 grains of Triple 7 and stuffing a 340 grain slug down the barrel in



Peep sights are fun to shoot, accurate and offer very fast sight acquisition compared to other sighting methods.

no time. Settling in for that first shot, it was obvious the new sight was well worth the investment, as I looked down the barrel and could actually focus on the target. Though the groupings were plenty acceptable at 120 yards, which is about the maximum of my comfort range with a muzzleloader, there is still room for improvement, as I will continue experimenting with other bullets and charges before this fall.

Scopes will always have a place on modern firearms for long-range shots or when accuracy is of utmost importance whether in competition or in the field. A peep sight is right at home on those classic rifles with cartridges better suited for short-range encounters or on a traditional weapon, like a muzzleloader that maintains the primitive sight options our pioneers used. Try one and I think you might be surprised by their simplicity and accuracy without spending a fortune. **MP**

TIPS&TRICKS

- > Use an anti-seize compound on the screws that attach the sight to the rifle to prevent them from coming loose due to the recoil.
- > A quality gunsmith's screwdriver set will save you from marring the finish or mangling the screws.
- > Adjust the rear sight in the same direction you need your shots to move: Move the sight down if you are hitting high or move it to the left if you are hitting to the right of your target.
- > Make sure to loosen the set screws on the "FP" prior to making any adjustment and torque them down once the rifle is dialed in.

Blackpowder Turkey Guns



PHOTO COURTESY OF JAYD RAINES

HERE'S A LOOK AT THE BEST ANTIQUE RIFLES AND LOADS FOR SPRING GOBBLERS.

By Michael Pendley

As daylight started to happen, the cardinals began to sing, and I smiled as I sat against an ancient Osage tree in a hedgerow gripping my double-barrel 12-gauge muzzleloader in Kansas. Soon, the first gobble rang out about 100 yards over the hill, followed by a few others. It wasn't long until the hens pitched out followed by Mr. Big and a few sidekicks. I watched the gobble strut with the hens for about 20 minutes, just out of range in the pasture. I gave them a few calls but Mr. Big had all the hens he wanted. The hens got excited, but they had their mind made up on where they wanted to go, so I slipped back in the hedge and circled around.

(left) A .58-caliber smoothbore rifle designed to fire shot or ball. .58 Caliber roughly equates to a modern 20-gauge gun. (opposite) Mike Anthony's custom .62 with some of his turkey hunting gear. His powder horn and shot pouch match the ones used by early pioneers.



As I eased up to the fence I saw a big fan about 50 yards out. I gave a few soft yelps and he came out of strut and popped his head up, then started my way show-boating the whole way. I laid the hammers back when he got to 30 yards and killed him at 25. He sure was pretty with the morning sun on his big fan and a chest that just glistened!

At the shot, a hen flew back up into a nearby tree. I waited for probably another half hour for the hen to fly back down. She was eyeing me hard and I didn't want to educate any of them just yet. Once she flew down, I crawled out and claimed my prize, and after a short admiration session, hung him in a tree.

I eased up to the next big field about 300 yards down the hedge and spotted a coyote at the far side. I made my way around but the coyote was gone and hens were in the trees. I guess he tried for dinner and flushed them. I





“Not all blackpowder smoothbores fall under the umbrella of traditional shotgun gauges.”

Custom Christian Springs .62 caliber smoothbore rifle hand made for his son Mike by Rick Anthony of Breckinridge County, Kentucky.

spotted a gobbler coming across the field, eased into position and gave a few soft yelps with my voice. Soon he was in range and I fired while lying prone in the weeds. He continued into the woods after the shot and I missed!

I didn't reload the one barrel after the first gobbler so I was out of shots and walked back and reloaded where I had left my gear at the initial setup. I decided I couldn't have completely missed and went back and picked up his trail, flushing him nearby where he went into the brush. He went across the creek into the thick cedars and the search continued.

Finally, after cross-hatching the thicket I spied him trying to hide under a cedar and

dispatched him, claiming a nice double-bearded gobbler they had named “Scraggly” since his bottom beard had one-half rotted off with only a portion going the full length.

The description of that hunt, by Wess Vandembark, perfectly illustrates the challenges of turkey hunting with a muzzleloading shotgun. Unlike hunters using modern turkey guns, Vandembark was forced to get extremely close to the turkey gobblers, and a fast follow up shot on the second bird was out of the question.

These are the challenges fueling the resurgence in turkey hunting with muzzleloading weapons.

The Guns

Muzzleloading turkey guns cross a wide range of ages and styles. From original antique firearms, to modern-day replicas to modern in-line styles, hunters need only choose the style to which they are most attracted.

A great many original antique guns can be found on today's market. When choosing an antique firearm for the purpose of hunting, give the gun a thorough check before loading and firing it. Check barrels for smoothness and lack of pitting. Make sure there are no cracks or bulges in the metal. Actions should fit tightly and lock up solidly. Check flint or nipple openings for a clear path for the spark to travel to the powder. It is always a good idea to have antique guns checked out by a reputable gunsmith before firing for the first time. Start with very light loads and work up from there.

Modern replicas are firearms produced with current day manufacturing processes and materials, but made to look and function like the original they copy. Companies like Davide Pedersoli specialize in replica firearms that exactly match the antique firearms. Pedersoli produces several single and double barrel shotguns in various gauges. Other companies, like CVA, Navy Arms and Traditions also produce quality replicas. Replicas featuring both flintlock style and percussion-cap ignition systems are available.

Not all blackpowder smoothbores fall under the umbrella of traditional shotgun gauges. A great many traditional firearms were large-bore combination guns designed to shoot either a large roundball or a packed load of shot. Smoothbores in .58, .62 and even larger calibers hold more than enough shot for turkeys while still being capable of taking any large game in North America with a patched roundball.

Even more modern are the in line style muzzleloading shotguns. Featuring in line ignition systems that employ modern 209 shotgun primers, screw in choke tubes for tight patterns and even modern camo finishes, modern in-line muzzleloaders can approach, and in some cases exceed, the performance levels of modern breech-loading firearms. Models like the Knight TK2000, the Thompson Center 209x12 and the CVA Optima Pro 209 feature fiber optic sights, extra full turkey chokes and superfast lock times that even come drilled and tapped for scope use.

(right) Mike Anthony uses a custom Cedar and Copper call by Bo Spencer of Three Little Birds Game Calls.



Custom guns, be they antique or crafted by modern gunmakers, often proudly carry the name of the maker engraved on the barrel.



(left) Anthony's gun uses a traditional flint and steel lock.

(middle) A modern reproduction double barrel caplock 12-gauge used by Wess Vandembark on his muzzleloading turkey hunts. Also in the photo is his shot pouch, some over and under shot cards and his powder horn and powder and shot measure.

(far right) A custom knife, handmade by Rick Anthony from a Solingen, Germany blank with a curly maple handle, completes the hunting gear.

Powder Choices

Powder choices for shotgun loads can run from true blackpowder to modern blackpowder substitutes. In blackpowder grades in FFg or FFFg are most often used or the RS equivalent in blackpowder substitutes like Pyrodex or Hodgdon's 777.

The Load

Regardless of the style shotgun being used, they are all loaded in basically the same way. A charge of powder is poured down the barrel, followed by a measured amount of shot. The other components differ among individual shooters and firearms. Most often, the powder charge is followed by an over the powder card, a thin disk of cardboard or fiber material, to hold the powder tightly to the rear of the barrel and provide some waterproofing to the powder. Some shooters follow this overpowder card with a thicker lubricated cushion wad. The cushion wad helps buffer the shot string as it travels down the barrel and also

lubricates the barrel and softens fowling, making reloading easier. Other shooters prefer to use a slightly thicker overshot card and forego the thick cushion wad.

Next down the barrel goes the shot itself. While a consistently sized load of number 4, 5, 6 or even 7 ½ shot is most common, many turkey hunters like to load a mixed size shot load, say 4 and 6 shot or 5 and 7 ½, to get both close and longer range performance with each shot. The shot is followed by an overshot card, another thin disk, to hold everything in place.

Some turkey hunters employ a plastic shot cup to hold their shot payload together for an extended distance. Shot cups can be split or solid, and each load and gun will perform differently with different cups. Load the shot cup by pushing it down onto the overpowder wad before pouring in the measured shot load. Plastic shot cups are designed to hold varying amounts of shot, depending on length. Match the cup to the amount of shot you are using.

Depending on the style of your smoothbore, ignition can be achieved through flint and



PHOTO COURTESY OF MIKE ANTHONY

steel, number 11 percussion caps, musket caps or 209 shotgun primers. Many users of traditional flintlock guns, be they original or reproduction, stick with true blackpowder instead of modern blackpowder substitutes as the blackpowder ignites easier.

Safety precautions with muzzleloading shotguns aren't that different from modern breech loading guns. The one exception comes with double-barreled firearms. It is easy, in the immediate excitement of a shot or in the rush to reload, for a hunter to forget which barrel has been fired and which still holds a charge. Mark your ramrod with a clearly visible line at the empty barrel length and make it habit to check the mark before reloading. While this adds a step to the loading process, it ensures that a double load isn't added to a charged barrel. A second precaution with double barreled guns is to remove the cap from the loaded barrel when reloading the empty side. This removes any chance the gun may go off in the process of the reload. **MP**



PHOTO COURTESY OF WESS VANDENBARK



PHOTO COURTESY OF MIKE ANTHONY


Custom Rifle

HERE'S HOW TO ENHANCE THE
APPEARANCE AND PERFORMANCE OF
YOUR DEER OR PREDATOR GUNS.

Story and Photography by Thomas C. Tabor



Improvements



Another of Tom's Ruger 10/22 conversions was made by installing a Champion stock, barrel and extended magazine and a Harris bipod.

Making changes to your firearms to improve your shooting abilities in the field simply makes good sense. I come from the generation that feels obligated to change things, and that desire probably stems from when we were teenagers and a car wasn't considered your own until you'd made some sort of change to it. In those days, that might have taken the form of lowering the front end or something as simple as replacing the gear shift knob. The type of change, however, wasn't as important as was the rebellious act of deviating from the norm. As our generation grew older, a much greater emphasis was placed on improvements rather than simply change for the sake of change. And nowhere is there a better example of that philosophy than in the gear I use for hunting.

Customizing the Ruger 10/22

Ruger's 10/22 is likely the most popular rim-fire rifle ever produced. In fact, in 2014, the company celebrated a half a century of its production. But to make a good rifle even better, many shooters like to customize the 10/22, and there are plenty of aftermarket products available to do just that. I've personally customized several of these rifles and have always found the upgraded version to be more effective and better matched for hunting and bush use. Many manufacturers produce replacement barrels of higher quality than those used on the original rifles, and there are custom composite stocks in a wide range of colors and designs available. One component that is certainly very worthy of change is the trigger, as several manufacturers are now making replacements of much better quality than the originals that come with the rifle.

Possibly the best thing about converting and modifying the Ruger 10/22 is that all of these upgrades are usually easily performed without the need of a gunsmith. With the drop-in designs of most 10/22 replacement stocks, it usually only amounts to removing a single screw, removing the factory stock, putting the new stock in place and tightening down the screw. However, a few words of caution are necessary.



After the Camo Form was used on the Remington 870 it changed the appearance and visibility considerably.

If you also intend to replace the barrel with a bull target-style barrel you will need to factor that into your decision. Bull barrels typically come with a diameter of around 0.92 inches, which is much larger than the factory barrel. Some stocks like Blackhawk's new Axiom R/F Model 10/22 can accommodate any barrel diameter because of its totally free-floating barrel design. Lyman approaches this issue a bit differently with their Adtac™ RM4 stock by including an insert allowing it to accept either a standard diameter barrel or a bull barrel. Some other stocks, however, are more barrel-diameter-specific, and for that reason, you need to know what diameter barrel you will eventually use before making a stock purchase.

Barrels are fairly easily removed and replaced, and the benefit of doing so can add greatly to your shooting accuracy. Unlike the

barrels of most centerfire rifles which are screwed into the receiver of the gun, most .22 rimfire barrels are of a slip-in design. After removing the stock, you will find a barrel retainer with two bolts threading into the front portion of the receiver. After removing those bolts the barrel should slip free. If the factory barrel doesn't slip out under its own volition, it might be necessary to mount the barrel in a padded vise then use a soft mallet to break it free.

Another great improvement to a factory 10/22 is to replace the trigger with an aftermarket unit. This, too, is a very easy process. Simply remove the stock, knock out the two pins holding the trigger in place and slip in the replacement. Timney makes a great replacement trigger I have always found provides a significant improvement over the original, but there are other companies producing excellent aftermarket triggers. Recently Ruger even started to offer an aftermarket replacement trigger for its 10/22. At the time of this writing those have only been available a few weeks and, as such, I haven't yet had an opportunity to evaluate them.

Camo the Easy Way

Camouflage has become a very trendy thing today, but even though the use of camo has been carried to the extreme in a few cases, it really can be important to a hunter. Being able to blend into the surroundings can be a great asset when wanting to put a little meat on the dinner table. For this reason, camouflaged gunstocks have become very popular today and even some manufacturers are offering fully camo'd firearms. However, why spend the money if you can essentially achieve the same result for a pittance of the cost of a new stock or an entire new gun?

While attending the annual SHOT Show in Las Vegas, I encountered an interesting new item called Camo Form®. This can be used to camouflage virtually any type of firearm or other gear you use in the field, but the results are reversible so permanent damage is done to the item. Camo Form is a stretchy cloth material that comes on a roll measuring 2 inches wide and 144 inches long. When it is wrapped



around an item, the Camo Form material adheres to itself. To use it, you simply unwind the material and wrap it around whatever item you wish to camouflage. By overlapping the edges of the material slightly, the material securely clings to itself.

Some of the neat characteristics of this product is that it is reusable, it acts as a protective barrier from potential damage, and, when removed, it leaves no residue. If the Camo Form material should become soiled, it can be washed, restoring it as good as new. Obviously you can't wrap the Camo Form material around moving parts like the action of a firearm, but it can be used in most instances to cover a gunstock, a barrel or even a scope. And it is cheap to purchase too, carrying a MSRP of only \$15.95.

(above) Some manufacturers are now producing replacement camouflage-colored composite-style stocks like this Bell & Carlson Medalist (shown on the bottom). The advantage in this is the composite stock can be used when the hunting conditions are extreme and the wood stock can be used when less hostile conditions are expected.

(below, left and right) Tom mounted his BSA Tactical Weapon Lumen Flashlight to a Ruger 10/22 rifle. It's also shown here installed on a Winchester Model 69A .22 rimfire rifle.

The Benefit of Screw-in Chokes

Many shotguns today come over choked, which, in many cases, limits a shooter's ability to hit what they are aiming at. A great way to remedy this problem is to have a gunsmith install a screw-in choke system. Once completed, you will have a wide range of choke constructions to choose from. I would recommend purchasing an improved cylinder choke for close-quarters shooting, a modified choke for most bird hunting situations and a full choke for those pesky ring-necked pheasants that like to flush far out in front of you.

While you are at it, you might want to consider having the gunsmith lop off a couple of inches of that long barrel. This would certainly be an opportune time to do so and it might allow you to get on your target a bit quicker. In this case, it would mean the front bead would have to be relocated, but that amounts to a fairly easy proposition for the gunsmith.





Lighting up the Dark

For pest control and even, in some instances, for hunting, a light can be a great assistance, but when it is installed on your rifle or shotgun, it can be even better. A great product I found extremely useful along these lines is the BSA Tactical Weapon Lumen Flashlight. There are three models of lights to choose from and each varies in size and intensity. My own is the largest model called the TW180LED, but the series also includes two smaller units, TW140LED and TW160LED. Each model is adjustable to five light intensity settings: low, medium, high, strobe and SOS.

These units are easily mounted using a standard Weaver-style or Picatinny-rail system and allows you to still use the iron sights on the rifle by looking through a hole in the base mount. Power is provided by two CR123A Lithium batteries. In order to control the light,

(top) Here is Tom's fully customized Ruger 10/22 rifle, which includes: a Kyptek Highlander camo colored Lyman Adtac™ RM4 stock and equipped with a TacStar® TacTred™ monopod on the rear and a Harris Engineering bipod on the front, Timney trigger, Volquartsen bull barrel, Champion magazine and a Redfield BattleZone TAC .22 2-7x34mm scope mounted with a set of Leupold QRW quick release scope rings.

(bottom) In this case, a Blackhawk Axiom R/F Model 10/22 stock was used to replace the original hardwood stock that came on the Ruger 10/22. Notice how the barrel is completely free-floating in this case, allowing for any diameter barrel to be installed.

there is a power button located on the back of the unit, but a remote switch is also included with each light which can be attached to the side of the firearm stock or any other place that is more accessible.

Before using any type of light for hunting purposes it is important to make sure doing so is legal in your particular area. In most cases, the use of an auxiliary light source is illegal when hunting game birds and animals, but in many areas night hunting and the use of lights is perfectly acceptable for the unprotected and non-game species and well as for pest control.

Taking a Rest

Most shooters do not shoot as accurately off-hand as they do when firing from either a sitting or prone position. I certainly fall into this category and to compensate for those inability I seldom go afield without a bipod attached directly to my rifle. In most cases bipods are easily attached to the front sling swivel stud on the rifle. Some of the best



(this image and below inset)
In order to remove the Ruger 10/22 factory barrel it is as simple as removing two bolts which hold the barrel retainer in place. This allows the barrel to slip free from the receiver.



bipods I have found have been those produced by Harris Engineering, which are available in a wide variety of styles and lengths. I personally prefer the models that allow the rifle to pivot from side to side and are adjustable to a length that allows me to shoot from either the sitting or prone position.

The Way I See It

Change for the sake of change doesn't really make a lot of sense to me anymore, but when that change is accompanied by improvements to my firearm's performance, that is another thing entirely. For that reason I would encourage all shooters and hunters to carefully consider some of the great new products now available on the market and to take advantage of the benefits these can provide. **ASP**



(left) By shortening the barrel and installing a screw-in choke system it helps to encourage quicker target acquisition and makes the firearm a more versatile weapon.

(below) Converting your shotgun to accept screw-in interchangeable chokes is a great option that has the ability to improve your shooting.



CONTACTS

Camouflaging

www.mcnett.com/tactical/camouflage

Triggers

www.timneytriggers.com

Shooting Lights

www.bsaoptics.com

Bi-Pods

www.harrisbipod.com

[Bushcraft]



"Nature always wears the colors of the spirit." —RALPH WALDO EMERSON

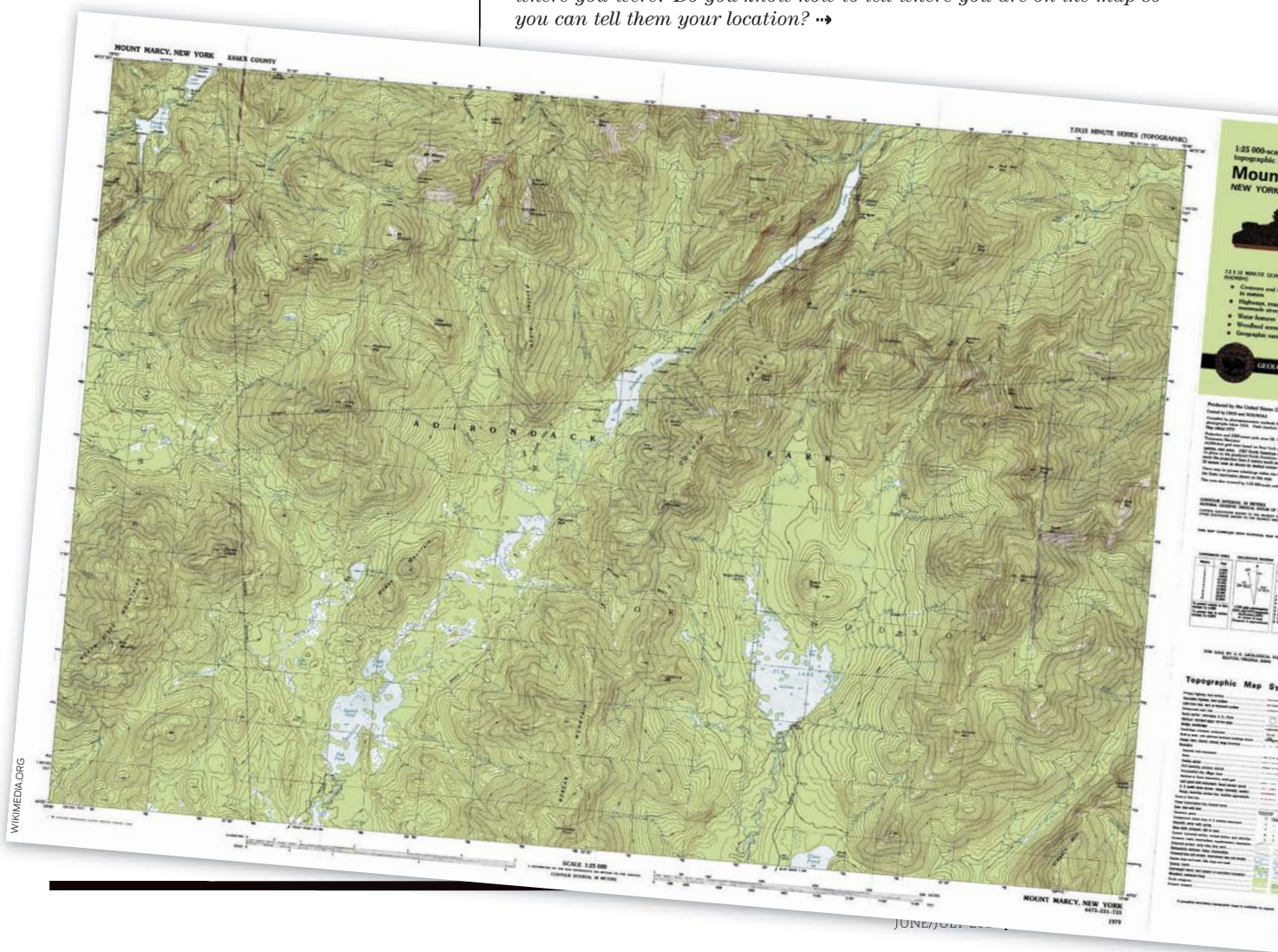
PHOTO BY THINKSTOCK

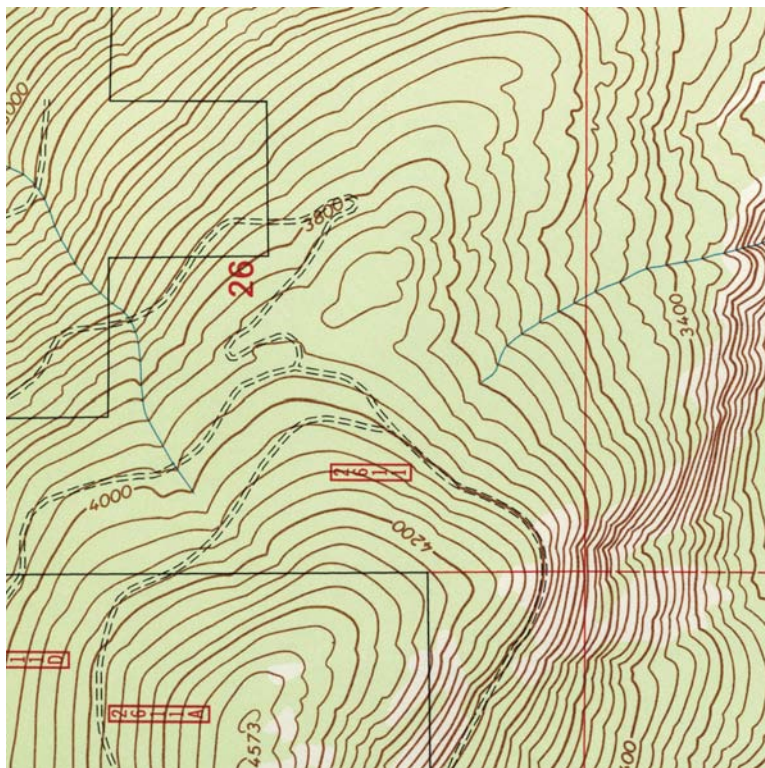
Wilderness Navigation

HOW TO GO
FROM POINT A TO
POINT B IN THE
BACKCOUNTRY.

By **Larry Schwartz**

You and Frank left the truck two hours ago to head up the ridge-line to get to the new campsite he found. Rain from the night before was still present on the rocks you had to cross over and he slipped. Both he and his forty pound backpack are now on a ledge ten feet down and that crack you heard when he landed and the look of pain on his face told you all you needed to know. His leg was broken and it was going to take a search and rescue team to get him to the hospital. *Do you know how to read a map to tell them where you were? Do you know how to tell where you are on the map so you can tell them your location? →*





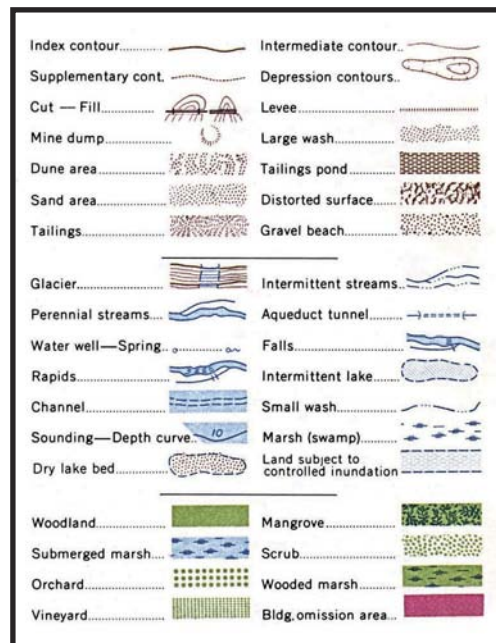
(above) The brown contour lines on a topographic map show you the shape, or contours, of the ground as it looks from above. Each line shows the shape of the ground at a different elevation. Taken together the curves show how the land curves and folds.

(top right) Topographic maps are made easier to read by the use of color and symbols like those shown here. Brown for contours, blue for water, green for vegetation, and red and brown for man-made things like roads and buildings.



(middle) Your compass can be used to determine the direction from where you are to where you want to go from a map. Or, you can use it by itself to determine the direction.

(bottom) Constellations like the Big Dipper and Little Dipper are useful tools for finding direction at night.



The land you and your spouse just bought is just what you needed to expand your herd of cattle. It has large pastures for grazing, streams and ponds to provide water, and sheltering woodlots on the upwind side to protect them from the weather if needed. Now you just have to figure out what the best route would be to move them to and from their new pasturing areas each year without making it too difficult for you and the cattle, and without adding danger to the whole operation. *Do you know how to pick a good route through the wilderness? Can you give someone the coordinates of the pastures or a couple of bearings from points they would know to help them triangulate on it?*

There he is! After an hour and a half of tracking it you finally found the big mule deer to feed you and your family for the next month. It took you over one ridgeline, down a draw for a long distance, and then across a long bench. But you are in terrain you have never been in before. *Can you figure out where you are without a map? Can you determine the best way to get all that meat back out to a road or trail that will eventually get you back to your pick-up truck?*

The bank called today, they approved your loan. Now you can buy that wilderness land you want to build your secret retreat on. It is so out of the way you don't think anyone will come around if things get bad. Now you need to finalize your plans on the route you will use to get there on foot or by vehicle. *Do you know how to interpret different kinds of terrain from aerial photos and topographic maps?*

PHOTOS BY THINKSTOCK

What kind of terrain is best for you to use to stealthily move there by vehicle? What if you go by foot? Will those routes work at night if you can't or don't want to use a light?

Knowing how to find your way in the woods is a skill you may not think you need, but it is a skill every outdoorsman needs, and one you'll need to have at the worst possible time. And wilderness navigation isn't just one skill. It is a mixed bag of different techniques and equipment you need to use together to effectively find your way in the backcountry. So, let's take a look at the basic steps you need to follow to find your way in the woods and the skills and techniques you will need to use.

HOW TO FIND YOUR WAY

Finding your way in the wilderness encompasses four basic steps you can use regardless of where you are:

- Finding where you are
- Finding where you want to go
- Selecting the best route to get there
- Keeping track of where you are while moving there

LOCATION

Your first task is to figure out where you are. But how do you do that? The easiest way is to look at a map, which you should always have with you, to see if you can find the terrain where you are somewhere on the map. Your first step is to orient the map so the top edge is toward North. Now that it is pointed the right way to reflect what the ground looks like you can look for whatever terrain feature you are on, whether it is a meadow on a hillside, a long ridgeline, along a small lake, on a hilltop, or by a stream in a draw. Looking at the ground around you and comparing it to the map is called terrain association. You can use this skill to see where you are and also when moving cross-country as you won't need to look at the map every few minutes.

If you don't see the meadow you are in on the map then you can look around for major terrain features like mountaintops or forks in a river or a road intersection you can then find more easily on the map. Once you find at least two of those you can determine where you are by drawing a line toward each feature on your map and where those lines cross is where you are located. The best way to do this is with a compass, but if your map is oriented to North the terrain features will be positioned on the map just like they are on the ground so you can still look at the terrain feature and then draw a line back toward you.

A topographic map gives you a detailed description of the ground around you in a graphic format. The word 'topographic' comes for the

"If you don't see the meadow you are in on the map then you can look around for major terrain features like mountaintops or forks in a river or a road intersection..."

Greek words "topos" for place and "graphia" for writing. They use standard symbols and colors to show how the ground is shaped and what is on it. The shape of the ground, or its topography, is shown by the brown contour lines. Contour lines show the outline of the ground at different altitudes. Imagine picking up an object and slowly lowering it into a bowl of water one inch at a time. The line around the object from the water is the same as the contour line on a map. For example, a hilltop will look like a series of smaller and smaller pancakes stacked on top of each other. Ridgelines look like a series of U-shaped lines nested within each other, while draws or valleys will look like a series of V-shapes nested within each other. The closer together the contour lines are the steeper the terrain and the wider apart they are the flatter the terrain. Cliff sides look almost all brown because the lines are so close together.

Streams, lakes, and other bodies of water are shown in blue. Forested areas green. Orchards look like a matrix of green dots showing the trees are laid out in rows. Marshy areas, which you want to avoid, are shown as green areas with little blue symbols in it. Roads are red or black. Buildings and other man-made things are shown in black. If you see something in purple it is an update to the map.

DIRECTION

While a map is an excellent tool for wilderness navigation, because it is the only thing that can show you what the terrain looks like, it is even more useful if you can tell directions. You can find where you are with the direction to distant landmarks, which you can then transfer to the map. With a direction to follow you can move to a distant location without having to keep it in sight. But, how do you find that direction? There are a number of ways to do that. A compass is the first thing that comes to mind and it is the most precise tool for the job. You can also use an analog watch, a shadow stick, or the stars to determine direction.

To determine direction with an analog watch you point the hour hand at the sun. A line drawn through the middle of the angle formed by the hour hand and twelve o'clock will point to the south.

To determine direction with a shadow stick put a stick in the ground so it casts a shadow. Put a marker at the end of the shadow. Wait 15 minutes and put a second marker at the new end of the shadow. Since the sun moves from east to west the shadow will move from west to east. A line drawn between your two markers will be your east-west line. You can then draw a line perpendicular to it for a north-south line.

To determine direction with the stars there are two methods you can use. If you can find

“Although some folks like to just take a bearing and set off through the woods on a straight line to their destination, it’s often wiser to take a little more time picking your route.”

the Big Dipper you can use the two pointer stars to find the North Star. The pointer stars are the two stars at the end of the bowl part of the dipper. A line drawn upward between them will point to the North Star, which is always north of your location in the northern hemisphere. The other method is like the shadow stick method used with the sun. As the Earth rotates the stars will appear to move just like the sun, from east to west. You can aim across the top of a stick from a fixed point at a bright star, then aim at the same star 15 minutes later from the same fixed point and you have your east-west line.

(opposite) Linear terrain features like ridges or streams or forest edges are great choices for wilderness travel as they are easy to follow during the day and at night and provide easier travel in many cases.

(below) Picking a prominent landmark that will always be visible while you are moving is a good way to stay on course without having to look at your map and compass all the time.

ROUTE SELECTION AND EASE OF TRAVEL

For ease of travel, use easy to recognize terrain features based on day vs. night movement and use landmarks as waypoints.

Although some folks like to just take a bearing and set off through the woods on a straight line to their destination it is often wiser to take a little more time picking your route. Things to consider when picking your route include:

Ease of travel: pick a route that gets you where you need to go while avoiding difficult terrain like marshes, rocky hillsides, blown

down trees, thickets, or muddy or sandy soil. Other than walking in the open on flat land, walking along a ridgeline is probably the easiest walking in the wilderness. The terrain is more open and you don’t have to worry about walking on a slope. Draws, on the other hand, are often narrow and steep along their bottom which makes for difficult walking.

Ease of navigation: Trails are obvious ways to ease navigation challenges. Just stay on the trail and it guides you where you want to go. Linear terrain features, just like a trail, are a great way to make navigation easier. Linear terrain features are things like ridges, streams, forest edges, roads, or long draws or valleys that are easy to see and provide a continuous edge you can easily identify. Another tool to make navigation easier is to pick landmarks along your route of travel and move to them. This allows you to move without having to frequently look at your map and compass to make sure you are going the right way. Find a prominent, easy to identify tree or rock covered hilltop and move toward it. Once there, pick another easily identifiable landmark on your directions of travel and move to it. This technique can be used in both the open and under the cover of a forest.





PHOTOS BY THINKSTOCK

Day travel vs. Night travel: You can use the methods described above for travel in the day or during good weather, but at night or when visibility is obscured by fog or heavy rain you need to be more picky in terms of what techniques you use to navigate. The same holds true if the route you select is used both night and day. Easily identified linear terrain features are best for this purpose as they can be followed both day and night with ease. In the open, high landmarks can be used as they will appear darker against the night sky if there is starlight or moonlight.

The value of an offset: Your destination will often be along a linear terrain feature or near a major landmark. If you are an expert with a map and compass and can stay on an azimuth without error you can move directly to your destination. Unfortunately, nobody is that good and for that reason experienced land navigators use an offset from their actual direction. By following an azimuth that is a little left (or right) of your destination once you get to your linear terrain feature or landmark you don't have to worry about which way to go to find



your destination because you know you need to move right (or left) along it to get to where you want to be.

Wilderness navigation is one of those skills that is very perishable. To be good at it you need to practice on a regular basis. Every time you head to the woods you should use it and use a variety of techniques so you don't become dependent on one or two methods that won't be useful the next time you need to find your way in the wilderness. **MP**

Biography: Larry Schwartz is an experienced outdoorsman, prepper, hunter, shooter, and instructor who enjoys passing on his love and knowledge of the outdoors and the shooting sports and how to "Be Prepared" to others through his writing and workshops on a wide variety of topics. He is a regular longtime contributor to Modern Pioneer magazine.



Picking the Perfect Knife

WHETHER YOU NEED A TRUSTY POCKET KNIFE, GAME SKINNER, OR ALL-AROUND CAMPING BLADE, HERE'S HOW TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT ONE.

By Michael Pendley



This Puma fixed-blade offers a full-tang blade and an integral gut-hook, making it an ideal hunting knife. It features 440C stainless steel, which offers outstanding strength and corrosion resistance.

An argument can be made that a sharp knife is the most important tool an outdoorsman can possess. From skinning game to building an emergency shelter, having the right knife can truly be the difference between life and death. On a more everyday level, the right style of knife can make skinning or butchering any wild game a breeze.

What makes the perfect knife? The answer will differ with each individual and their intended use for the blade. Folding or fixed, replaceable blades or sharpening after use, skinner, drop point or clip, the following guide will help you pick the perfect knife for your needs.

Replaceable-Blade Knives

Taking the market by storm the past few years, replaceable blade knives have gone from a relative novelty to commanding a large portion of today's outdoor knife market. From manufacturers like Havalon, Outdoor Edge and even traditional knife-making giant Gerber, replaceable blade knives offer surgical sharp blade inserts fitting tightly into a skeleton frame. Once the blade dulls, simply discard the worn out steel and replace it with a new one.

Advantages to this system are mainly with the scalpel-like sharpness of the blade inserts. Time saved at the sharpening bench is another plus for these knives. No matter the size of the job, a razor-sharp blade is available without stopping to work on the edge.

“When choosing a folding hunting knife, look for a heavy blade, strong locking system and comfortable handle style.”



For field-dressing and skinning game, a drop-point style blade with a deep belly and more rounded tip is an excellent choice to consider. This blade style offers maximum cutting surface, while the rounded tip prevents puncturing hide and muscle, causing smooth-skinning interference.

While replaceable blade knives are popular, they aren't for everyone. The trade-off for their amazing sharpness is a more fragile blade than traditional knives. They are also hard to resharpen should you run low on blade inserts while on a hunt.

Traditional Style Knives

Folding knives: Not your grandfather's pocketknife, today's folding knives are well built and plenty strong enough for the vast majority of outdoor needs. Because the cutting edge of the blade is sheltered inside the handle when not in use, folding knives are safer to carry and pack than fixed blades. Their compact size comes in handy when pack size is at a premium.

When choosing a folding hunting knife, look for a heavy blade, strong locking system and comfortable handle style. An interesting option in folding knives today is the bright orange handle offered by manufacturers like



Buck, Spyderco and Benchmade. For anyone who has ever put a knife aside while field dressing a deer in the fall hardwoods, a brightly colored handle saves a lot of time searching for a lost knife.

Fixed-Blade Knives: Even though they are bulkier than folding knives, and they require a separate sheath for safe carry, fixed-blade knives are still very popular. Many fixed-blade knives incorporate a full length tang, the spine of the knife that runs from the blade down through the handle, making them incredibly strong and durable. This toughness makes fixed-blade knives great choices for tough jobs like camp chores, chopping through heavy bone while butchering big game, and even as a makeshift splitting maul. An extra thick spine, the unsharpened back edge of the blade, available on a fixed-blade knife is even strong enough to strike with a log if extra force is needed for a tough chopping chore.

Blade Shape

Once you have decided on a style of knife, the next question to answer is blade shape. Keep the main intended use for the knife in mind when choosing a blade style. Will you be using the tool most often as a skinning knife? Will you need to pierce a tough material with the blade? The following common styles will fit the bill for most any outdoor need.

Clip Point: This popular style sports an unsharpened back spine leading to a sharpened tip. The moderately deep belly and long cutting surface makes this style a good all-around camp knife. The sharpened tip works well for piercing skin and field dressing, but care must be taken not to pierce intestines with the sharp tip. The moderate belly is adequate for most skinning needs.

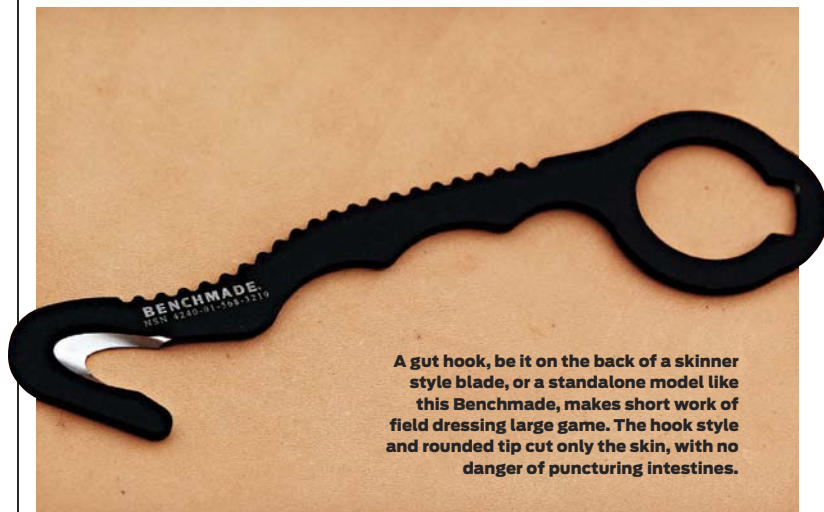
Drop Point: This blade style is extremely popular with hunters for a reason. The deep sweeping belly, thick spine and more rounded tip make this the perfect skinning knife. Because the belly sweeps up to the tip, this blade is less likely to puncture intestines when field dressing.

Tanto: This blade design features a straight back that meets a straight front at a sharp angled tip. An extremely strong design, tanto style knives are useful in tough camp situations. The straight blade and lack of belly, as well as the sharp point make them less useful as skinning and field dressing knives.

Skinner: A longer, heavier version of a clip point, the skinner features a deeper belly and point that culminates in slightly blunter tip. If you only own one knife, this shape would cover the vast majority of your needs. The deep belly and long cutting edge make it a



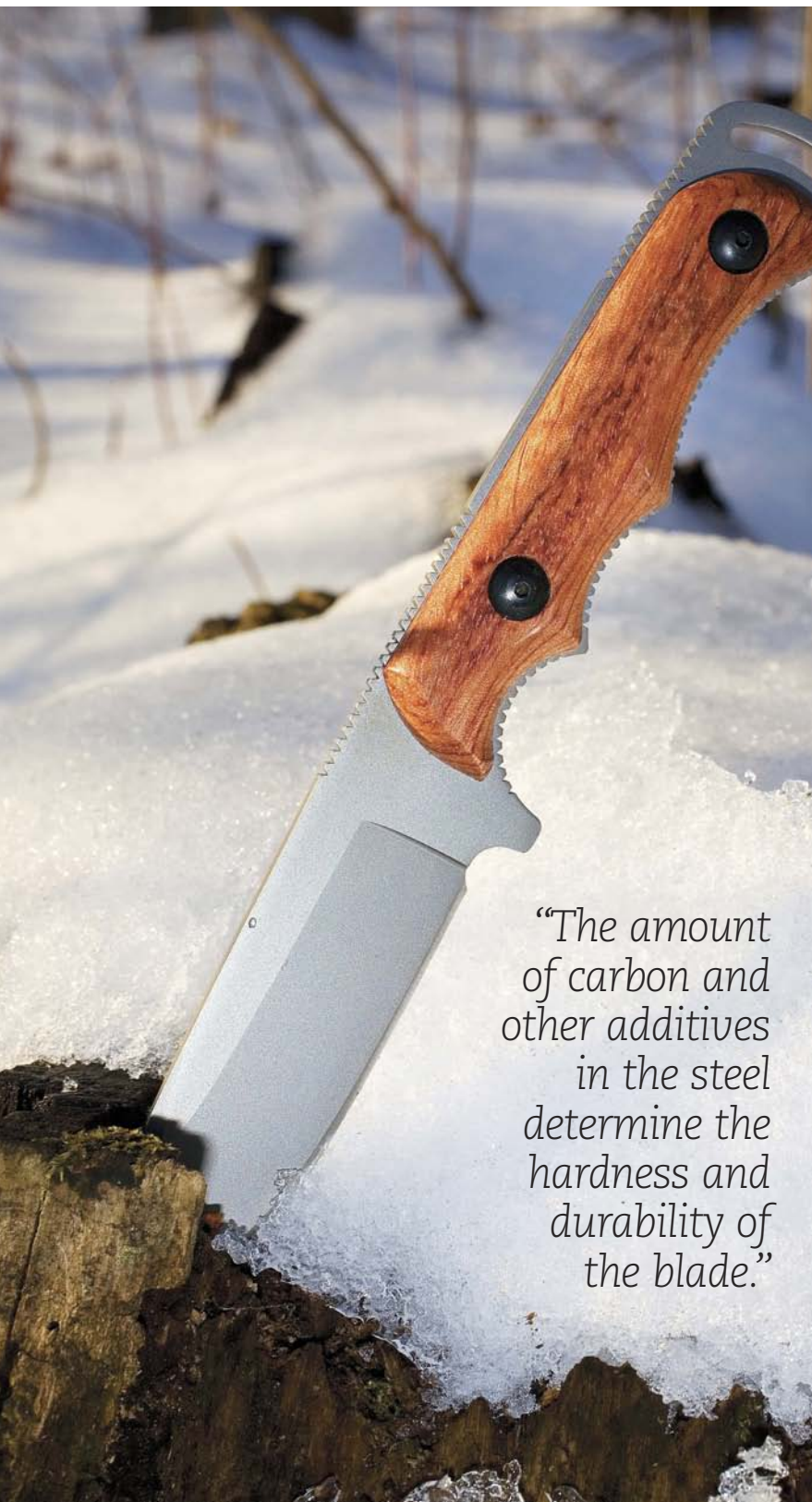
A quality folding knife will last a lifetime. The clip style blade on this classic Schrade is a nice combination of long cutting surface with a sharp point for piercing.



A gut hook, be it on the back of a skinner style blade, or a standalone model like this Benchmade, makes short work of field dressing large game. The hook style and rounded tip cut only the skin, with no danger of puncturing intestines.



A wide backed, full length tang on a fixed blade knife is an extremely strong design and lends itself well to heavy work chores.



“The amount of carbon and other additives in the steel determine the hardness and durability of the blade.”

very serviceable skinner, while the tip is still sharp enough for most piercing needs.

Guthook: Be it on the back side of a skinner or drop point blade, or even as a standalone tool, guthooks are steel hook shaped loops with a sharpened edge on the inside of the loop.

These hooks allow the user to insert the hook through the skin of a big game animal and open the organ cavity like a zipper with absolutely no fear of cutting or nicking intestines.

Blade Materials

The type of steel in a knife blade is another important consideration. The amount of carbon and other additives in the steel determine the hardness and durability of the blade. The softer steels, like 1095 carbon steel, take an edge well, but aren't strong enough to hold through extended use. Corrosion resistance is also a problem with carbon steel.

Stainless steel results when chromium is added. Still soft in terms of knife steel, 440 series stainless takes an edge with relative ease and is much more resistant to rust and discoloration than carbon steel. The most popular and best performing of the 440-series stainless is the 440C and 425M alloys. With carbon percentages ranging from .5 to 1.2%, these steels are hard enough to maintain an edge for extended use and are very resistant to damage.

Besides chromium, several other alloys are commonly used in knife steel. Vanadium increases hardness, impact resistance and tensile strength. Molybdenum also increases hardness and tensile strength and adds overall toughness to the blade.

Sharpening and Maintenance

It is important to maintain your knife. A sharp edge is crucial to getting the most from your knife. Keeping it that way is a skill every knife owner should have. There are many styles of sharpener available today and each has its own pros and cons.

The most traditional sharpening style is the flat stone. Be it from natural material like Arkansas stone, or a modern diamond or ceramic style, stones are an excellent way to build and maintain an edge on your knife.

To sharpen your knife on a flat stone, begin by adding moisture. With natural stones, that moisture can come in the form of water or honing oil. With diamond or ceramic stones, only water is necessary. Place the knife flat on the stone and lift the back to form an approximate 15 degree bevel. Make firm, even strokes from heel to tip of knife. Keeping the pressure and the angle to the stone the same for each pass, make ten to fifteen strokes on one side,



then flip and do the same number on the opposite side. Repeat the process until a razor edge is formed. Switching to progressively finer stones will refine the blade edge.

If you find you have a hard time maintaining a consistent 15 degree bevel with the blade, clamp on guides are available to help. Simply clamp the guide to the spine of the knife and sharpen as described, keeping the bottom side of the clamp flat on the stone surface.

A step up from the flat stone is a guide system like those offered from Lansky. This system uses smaller stones attached to the end of a steel rod. The knife spine is placed in a clamp and the steel rod is inserted into the desired angle slot in the clamp body. To use, simply glide the stone over the edge of the blade, keeping the angle guide rod in place, thus maintaining an identical angle. As with the flat stones, progressing to finer and finer stones will enhance the edge.

Long used by commercial knife sharpeners, belt sharpeners have become more available to home users in recent years. The Work Sharp systems are excellent belt sharpeners designed to sharpen the edge without causing damage. The belts come in a wide selection of sharpening grits, from coarse for axes and

(above) All-around camping knives are usually fixed blades, as extreme strength and durability are needed for chopping and prying tough wood surface.

(opposite) Knife steel comes in a variety of materials, but generally speaking, the more carbon the steel has in it, the softer it is, and the easier it will take an edge. However, these steels also rust the most and won't hold an edge for as long.

large blades, to extremely fine for buffing a finished razor edge, these sharpeners can put an edge on just about any tool needing one.

Once you have a keen edge on your knife, keep it there for as long as possible by running your blade over a honing steel after each use, or even during use on big projects like skinning a large animal. A properly sharpened blade has an almost microscopically fine leading edge. With use, this thin edge begins to roll to one side or the other, causing the blade to seem dull. By passing the knife over the honing steel, this fine edge is raised and straightened, ensuring the blade will stay razor sharp for a much longer period.

A quality knife deserves proper care. Keep dirt and grime cleaned from your knife as much as possible. An occasional light wipe down with a quality gun oil will help prevent corrosion. Adding a drop or two of the same oil to any moving parts of a folding knife will ensure a long working life. A wet knife should never be stored inside a sheath. If your knife and sheath get wet while afield, dry each separately before storing them for any length of time.

A well maintained knife will not only last your lifetime, it will be a tool that can be treasured by generations to come. **MP**

[Survival]



"The clearest way into the Universe is through a forest wilderness." —JOHN MUIR

PHOTO BY THINKSTOCK



The Stinky Side of Trapping

THE SECRET TO EFFECTIVE TRAPPING IS USING GOOD SET UP TECHNIQUES AND BAIT. HERE ARE SOME DEADLY BAIT AND LURE RECIPES.

By Jason Houser

Trapping season is still a few months away but if you are one of those people, like me, who think about trapping all year, within the next month or two your traps will be fixed from last year's wear and tear.

Preparations such as dying and waxing will be done too and some trappers scout in preparation for the season as well. But what about making your own trapping lures and baits?

Traps are the most important piece of equipment in trapping, but in order to constantly fill those traps you will need a good lure and/or bait. The odor lures give off is what draws the animal to your set and hopefully to be caught. Without that smell your traps will often sit empty.

Many lure makers claim theirs will out-produce competitors when it comes to putting fur on the stretcher. I have tried many lures on the market. Some lived up to their name and helped me catch a good number of the animal I was targeting. Others were not worth using ever again.





With trapping, the right bait can make all the difference in the world.

Why Lures and Bait?

There are a couple reasons I like to make my own trapping lures and baits. The first is that it is cheaper than buying them retail. Trapping lures are not an expensive piece of equipment for trappers but every dollar you save means more money in your pocket when you go to sell your furs.

The second reason I often use lures and baits I made is the satisfaction I get when I am successful. I love the feeling when I check a set and see a critter in one of my traps and know the lure I made is the likely reason.

It did not take me long to realize making trapping lures is a stinky process. If you are married you will also learn very quickly too, as your wife or husband will be sure to tell you it stinks.

“The odor lures give off is what draws the animal to your set and hopefully to be caught.”

For this reason it is best to make lures outside and far from your house... and your neighbor's house for that matter. If you have a shed your spouse does not like to visit, this would work as well as long as you do not mind the lingering odor for months to come.

Keeping it Simple

Beginning lure and bait makers should keep it simple at first. Below are some recipes I find easy to make and produce well for me year after year. Many of the supplies, including the jars and bottles needed to store your lures and baits, can be found in trapping supply catalogs.

Coons are not a hard animal to catch and probably the most sought after. Lures and baits as simple as marshmallows and/or syrup, even a can of sardines, might be enough to entice a coon to your set, but let's explore some lures you can make on your own.

The recipes I will share with you are easy to prepare and work as well as any I have ever purchased. One final piece of advice when making lures and baits is to cover the jar opening in which you are making the lure or bait with cheesecloth before putting the lid on. This will keep out flies and maggots that will ruin your batch.

Try your hand at making your own lures this year. Experiment with the ideas you already have. It is nice to coax a critter to your set with a lure you made yourself. Always wear rubber gloves when manufacturing lures. This, after all, is the stinky side of trapping. **MP**

Coon Lure

¾ quart fish oil
 ¾ quart strained honey (dark honey)
 ¼ ounce anise oil
 1 tablespoon beaver castor

Add all ingredients in a gallon jar. Leave the lid a little loose so gas can escape and store in a dark place for a couple of months until it turns black.

Coon Bait

1 gallon of tuna or jack mackerel
 2 ounces anise oil
 1 cup fish oil

Add enough honey or corn syrup to hold bait together and make it sticky.

Muskrat Lure

6 ounces oil of sweet flag
 1 ounce pure oil of catnip

Add the above ingredients to a quart jar and fill jar with oil of paraffin. Mix well and age for 2 months before using.

With muskrats pelts selling at prices many trappers never thought were possible, trappers are now focusing their attention on this small furbearer. Many muskrats, as well as mink, are caught in blind sets, but can be caught with the aid of a lure as well.

Mink Lure

½ pint of ground mink musk
 2 ounces ground beaver castor
 6 ounces ground muskrat musk

Add the above ingredients to a quart jar and fill with fish oil. Mix well and age in a warm place for 3 to 4 months before using.

Coyote Lure

4 ounces ground or chopped semi-dry castor
 2 ounces glycerine
 ¼ ounce asafoetida tincture
 10 drops tonquin musk

Add the above ingredients to a pint jar. Mix well and age in a warm place for 2 to 3 months before using.

Coyote furs sold very well last year. Hopefully the trend continues this year. Use this bait to up your chances of catching some coyotes.



The nice thing about making your own lure or bait is you can fine-tune the ingredients until you find the magic concoction. With store-bought baits, you're stuck with what you get.

“Beginning lure and bait makers should keep it simple at first.”

Beaver Lure

4 ounces ground or chopped semi-dry castor
 2 ounces glycerine
 3 drops anise
 3 drops valerian
 6 drops apple essence

Add the above ingredients to a pint jar. Mix well and age in a warm place for two to three months before using.

Most of my beaver trapping is done with blind sets. Every now and then I make a castor mound set and use this lure.



Emergency Signals



“Audible signals are most effective for short to medium range signaling.”

PHOTO COURTESY OF WIKIMEDIA.ORG

WHEN AN EMERGENCY STRIKES, SIGNALING FOR HELP IS OFTEN YOUR BEST COURSE OF ACTION. HERE'S HOW TO DO IT.

By Larry Schwartz

Most of us are pretty self-sufficient. We have skills and training and we know our way around the backcountry. But sometimes we find ourselves in situations where we need to reach out for help. A broken leg, a medical emergency with someone in our group, or we just can't find our way home. When that happens we need some way of communicating with the rest of the world to help us. There are many ways to signal others about where you are and what your situation is and they come in three categories: audible, visual, and electronic.

Audible

Audible signals are most effective for short to medium range signaling. The best way to use them is to use the commonly known signals of three blasts to show you need help. The response from rescuers is four blasts to acknowledge it was heard. The Morse code for S-O-S of three short blasts, three long blasts, and three more short blasts is another commonly known signal for needing help. There are many tools you can use to make your noises; each one has its advantages in different scenarios.

Whistles: You can shout of course, but a whistle will save your voice and can make a much louder sound with much less effort. Since it is a higher pitch it will also carry farther than a human voice will. It is also the lightest audible signaling device you can carry and should be part of your standard emergency/survival gear; one always rides in my front pants pocket as part of my every day carry (EDC) kit.

“...the signal mirror is designed to flash a bright light at aircraft flying near your position as part of a search party or an aircraft on its normal flight plan.”

A whistle is a lightweight but very effective audible signaling device and should be part of your every day carry (EDC) gear.

Air horns are a great way to make an audible signal and are louder than a whistle or your voice.



PHOTO BY THINKSTOCK



PHOTO COURTESY OF LARRY SCHWARTZ

Air Horns: An air horn is much louder than a whistle but it has the limitation of only working while it has compressed air to make the sound. It is also much heavier and bulkier than a whistle but is still a great option for short range signaling if travelling by vehicle. Like the whistle, it is best used to help lead rescuers to your location when they are close by.

Car Horns: Like an air horn, this will produce a loud audible signal if you are lost or trapped with your vehicle, but it will only work as long as the battery can provide it with power.

Gunshots: Although you will most likely want to conserve your ammunition, if you have no other way to create an audible signal you can use a series of gunshots to signal your situation. Keep in mind you do not want to shoot up into the air as you don't know what or who that 30-06 round will come down on.

Visual

Unlike audible emergency signals that work the same during the day and at night, each type of visual signal works well in one or the other but not both. For this reason you will want to know how to use daylight signals and nighttime signals and then use the ones that make sense in your emergency situation.

Signal Mirror: Most likely the best known survival signaling device, the signal mirror is designed to flash a bright light at aircraft flying near your position as part of a search party or an aircraft on its normal flight plan. As effective as they are on a day with bright sunlight they are not very useful when it is cloudy or overcast, so don't depend on this as your only daytime visual signal. The best way to aim the mirror is to position yourself between the aircraft and sun so the light reflects off the mirror. Then shine the light onto your



IMAGE COURTESY OF LARRY SCHWARTZ

Ground to air signals are used to communicate specific information to rescuers. You can also just write a big SOS or HELP in the sand, dirt, or snow and fill it with something of a contrasting color to make it easier to see and read.

PHOTO COURTESY OF WIKIMEDIA.ORG



thumb and use it like the front sight of a gun and aim the light at the aircraft to get the pilot's attention.

Ground to Air Signals: A signal you place on the ground can be your most efficient method of signaling since it works whether you are there or not when rescuers see it or are nearby. However, they often work best when they are combined with movement like smoke rising into the sky or waving a flag or a branch that contrasts with the background. The standard ground to air symbols shown here are easy to put out on the ground using brush, leafy branches, digging in the dirt or sand, or packing down snow and putting foliage in it. If you don't remember the symbols and their meanings, in North America you can always just put out and "SOS" or "HELP" in letters that are one or two times your body height. These of course are only useful during daylight hours, but that is when rescuers are normally out anyway.

Signal Fires: A fire is effective during daylight and nighttime hours. During the day you want to make a smoky fire by adding wet wood or live foliage to a strong fire. At night you want it to be a big and bright fire. Signal

(above) Signal mirrors pack a powerful signaling punch for their small size. (below) Signal flares, be they hand held, fired from a pen, or launched from a tube to float down on a parachute, can be used during both daylight and nighttime hours to signal rescuers on land, sea, and air.



PHOTO BY THINKSTOCK

fires need to be big, especially if they need to be seen from a distance. They should be built ahead of time so all you need to do is put a flame to the tinder and kindling to get it going. You want to build it with a lot of kindling so the fire will catch quickly and burn brightly quickly. One disadvantage of using a signal fire is you most likely will not have time to get it burning; so, you should have a small fire burning all the time so you won't have to depend on a match or flint and steel to get your fire going quickly.

Flares: Signal flares are also useful both day and night. They are also useful on the ground and in the air, depending what kind you use. Flares, like the ones we all keep in our cars in case we break down, can be used to show

your location on the ground and since they last for several minutes aircraft or rescuers can see them from a long way off and use them to find your location. Aerial flares can be shot into the air to catch the attention of aircraft or ground searchers. The parachute varieties are very useful as they will hang in the air longer but can drift away from your location if they are caught by the wind.

Electronic

Often overlooked because we are all used to our cell phones and their limitation of needing to be near a cell tower, electronics provide a useful and powerful means of signaling.

Cell Phones: Your cell phone or smartphone can still be a viable means of communication, especially if you are high on a ridge or hilltop. Some service providers have better reception in rural areas than others so checking the coverage map is a good thing to do when picking a provider. Also, text messages take less signal strength than a voice call so even if you cannot make a phone call your text message may still make it out and you can receive a response as well. Testing your phone's capability when you are in a new area is always a good practice.

Satellite Phones: The latest generations of satellite phones are often equipped with an internal GPS so they can send not only a voice message but also your GPS location. The main advantage of these phones is that they communicate with the outside world via satellites rather than cell phone towers which require a line of sight to receive the signal. Satellites also need line of sight but since your signal is going vertically rather than laterally it is easier for them to make the connection. They do have two limitations. First, there must be a clear view to the satellite so if you are in a building, under heavy vegetation, or if you are blocked by a terrain feature you may not be able to connect with the satellite. Fortunately, if you are blocked by terrain you only need to wait a few minutes before the satellite clears the terrain or another one comes overhead. The second limitation is that since the satellites are moving across the sky your conversation can only last for a few minutes at a time. If you lose your connec-

A personal locator beacon is probably the best tool you can have for signaling for help. It has a long lasting battery and transmits nonstop until you turn it off when help arrives.



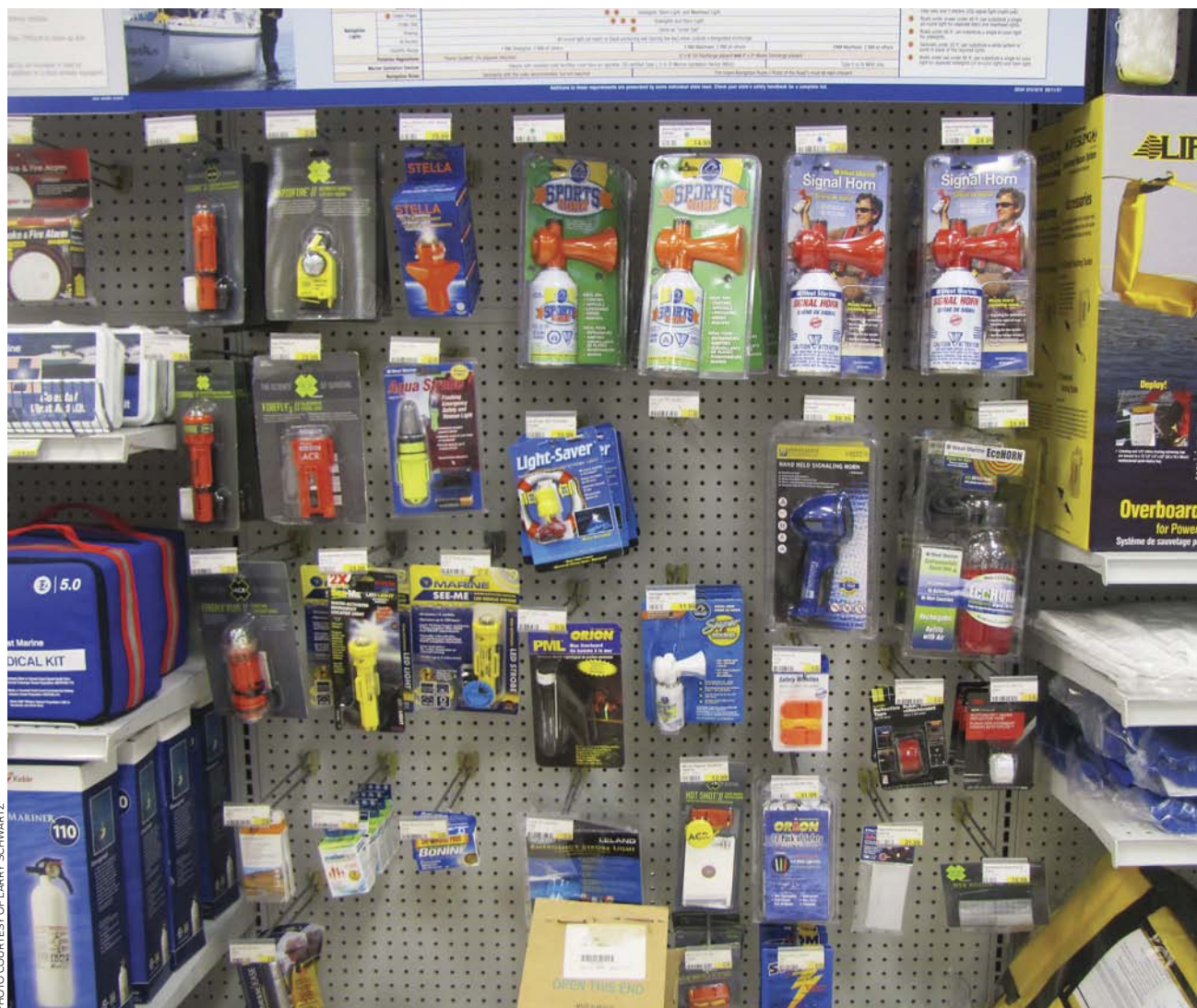


PHOTO COURTESY OF LARRY SCHWARTZ

tion you will be able to get another one in a few minutes when the next satellite comes overhead.

Personal Locator Beacon: The best electronic device available to the backcountry traveler and to those on the seas is a personal locator beacon, or PLB. These also work with satellites and have the same limitations that satellite phones have, they need a clear view of the sky to reach the satellite. They differ from the satellite phones in that they are not designed for voice communication. The PLB does one thing, it sends your location to the search and rescue satellites along with your location and keeps transmitting it until its battery runs out, which is normally 24 to 48 hours. So it keeps transmitting until your rescuers arrive. They are also much cheaper at a few hundred dollars each than

satellite phones which run in the thousands, and they do to require a service contract to cover their usage.

So, as you spend your days in the wilderness, take time each day to think about what signals you would use in the various situations you find yourself in. Maybe even practice using them, like your signal mirror to contact a friend on another ridgeline or aiming it at a rock face you can see.

One important warning though, if you have a PLB do not practice with it unless it has a test mode. If you turn it on you will have a search and rescue team coming to get you and if it is a bogus call you can wind up with a bill for thousands of dollars for wasting SAR resources. **MP**

Boating supply stores are a great resource for finding all kinds of signaling devices; flares, whistles, horns, radios, mirrors, and more.

[Self-Reliance]



PHOTO BY THINKSTOCK

“It is only through labor and painful effort, by grim energy and resolute courage, that we move on to better things.” —THEODORE ROOSEVELT



Traveling Alaska

This shows Denali (Mt. McKinley) as seen from the Alaska War Memorial more than 50 miles away.

IF YOU'VE EVER THOUGHT OF VACATIONING IN THE 49TH STATE, BUT WOULD REALLY LIKE TO DO IT ON YOUR OWN AND WITH LESS TOURISTY FLAIR, HERE'S HOW TO MAKE IT HAPPEN.

By Darryl Quidort

Alaska really is "The Great Land." It's a land of postcard-like scenes, snow-capped mountains, glaciers of blue ice, calm lakes reflecting green spruce forests, and sunny ocean harbors filled with colorful fishing boats.

If you want to travel Alaska but a cruise ship loaded with strangers doesn't appeal to you, or you cringe at the thought of riding all day in one of those big, smelly tour buses, don't despair. There is a way you can easily travel Alaska on your own. Besides, we don't want to just "look" at Alaska. We want to get out there and "do" something.

My wife, Dawn, and I have visited Alaska several times. We travel at our own speed, hike, fish, stay where we want, and do what we want. How? By flying commercial airlines to Anchorage and renting a pickup camper. It's easier than you think. People do it all the time.

“Blue ocean and blue sky are divided only by the snow-capped mountains and the fishing boats lying peacefully at anchor in the harbor.”



Rent an RV

There are several RV rentals in Anchorage. Most will rent various sized RVs, or pickup trucks with campers. They can be found on the Internet or in the advertisements. Compare the ads as they may vary on mileage allowed, gravel road restrictions, or equipment provided. Pick the one that works best for you. Some of the rentals will even provide shuttle service from the airport and take you back to the airport after your vacation.

When you pick up your camper you'll probably need to show your driver's license, proof of automobile insurance, and a credit card for them to hold a \$500 damage deposit, which is refundable when you return the rig without

damage. The daily rate for renting a pickup and camper is about the same as a night in a good motel. Of course, there are no motels where we want to go. It helps to plan ahead on your trip and reserve your RV well ahead of time as substantial discounts can be available for early booking.

The campers we have rented came equipped with everything needed for self-contained camping. Linens, towels, dishes, silverware, pots and pans, shower, stove, refrigerator, freezer were all provided. The gasoline and propane tanks were full, with unlimited mileage, so all we had to do was stock up on groceries and hit the road to adventure...on our own.

Get a Guide Book

The most important tool needed to pull off the “great escape to the great land” is *The Milepost*. This magic book, updated annually by field editors since 1949, tells you exactly what is happening, as well as the history and sights to see, along every mile of road in Alaska and including the Alaska Highway through Canada. The cover boasts, “Food, gas, lodging, camping, fishing, sight-seeing, and road conditions along the highways and byways”. My navigator (wife) keeps tabs on *The Milepost* as we travel. We are amazed at the information and insight we gain from it. Don’t try driving Alaska without *The Milepost* at hand.

An *Alaska State Atlas* map book is also helpful to know what is found off the road system. To gain an appreciation for the awesome size of the 49th state you need to realize what is off the roads. You can also check out places to hike for an overnight camp or a day of fishing. Of course, there are also local visitor guides available from every tourist stop and visitor center which can be helpful. You’ll find they are often heavy on advertising and light on information though.

Traveling By Road

Travel in Alaska is different. There are only a couple of thousand miles of accessible roads in the whole Alaska road system. That may sound like a lot, but it is a huge state and most of the state has no roads. Most of the accessible towns and cities have, basically, only one route in and one route out of town. In fact, for some towns the only route in and out are the same road. You won’t get lost on Alaska’s highways. By the way, many of Alaska’s “highways” are gravel.

The Marine Highway is another option to explore. This state-run ferry system connects mainland highways by water routes and reaches many towns that are without road access. Scheduled right, a car ferry ride from one of Alaska’s coastal towns to another could save you miles of backtracking on the highway. We have used the Marine Highway and found it to be a convenient and well run system.

When driving in Alaska, “pull over for traffic” is a state law. Meaning, if more than four vehicles are being held up behind your RV, you must pull off the road and allow them to pass. The state has provided pullouts along the highways for this purpose. A quick check of *The Milepost* will tell you where the next pullout is so you don’t miss it. The pullouts are also acceptable overnight camping spots for self-contained RV’s. We have enjoyed camping at a pullout many times. Don’t be surprised if you are awakened by the howling of nearby wolves while camping in a pullout along a deserted stretch of road.



In summer, it never really gets dark in most parts of Alaska. Reading in bed at 11 p.m. without a light is no problem. Sleeping may be a problem for some though. A sleeping mask may be helpful. I’ve also found ear plugs to be helpful for sleeping when camped near one of the busier highways. Yes, there are semi-trucks in Alaska.

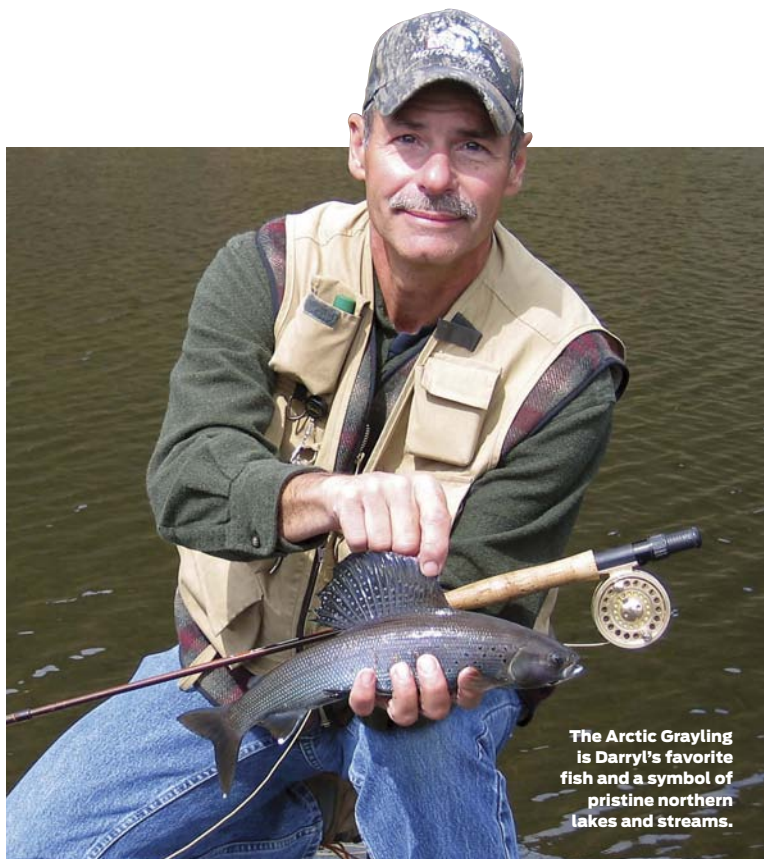
Dump stations for camper waste tanks and a supply of potable water can be found at many gas stations or campgrounds. Again, check *The Milepost* for this information.

Lots of Bears

In early June, we stopped at a mostly deserted campground by a beautiful lake to use

(opposite)
Valdez harbor is a beautiful scene on a clear day.

(above)
The author and his wife, Dawn, have traveled Alaska on their own several times. They enjoy the fishing immensely. Here, Darryl helps Dawn hoist her 70-pound halibut.



The Arctic Grayling is Darryl's favorite fish and a symbol of pristine northern lakes and streams.

the dump station. As I hooked up the hose under the camper, my wife, Dawn, was getting nervous. "There's a bear, right there!" she whispered. Looking down a little hill into the woods we saw a black bear, 30 yards away, walking slowly along while feeding on dandelion blossoms.

"Get the video camera," I suggested, as I walked along above the bear watching him. The wind was blowing toward me and the bear continued to move slowly along unconcerned. I looked around for Dawn with the camera. There she was, standing on the camper step, holding the camera out at arm's length toward me. Her feet wouldn't let her come any closer. The bear wandered away.

Incredible Fishing Opportunity

There are three types of fishing available to Alaska's road travelers: ocean fishing, fishing the salmon runs, and stream fishing for trout and grayling. Ocean fishing can be chartered out of many of the coastal towns. Homer, Seward, and Valdez are all known as great ports for halibut fishing and salmon trolling. We have enjoyed halibut fishing trips out of Seward and Valdez.

In addition to the chance to catch a really big fish, a day out on the ocean is an experience in itself, especially if it gets a little rough out there. Be sure to check out motion sickness remedies. Back at port, they make it easy for you by filleting your catch, packaging it, quick

"I pack my hip boots, fly fishing vest, small landing net, and a take-down, six-weight fly rod into a duffle bag as part of my luggage for every trip to Alaska."

freezing and shipping the excellent meat right to your home. All for a price, of course.

The salmon runs in Alaska's rivers start early and end late each summer as five different species of Pacific Salmon need to crowd their spawning rituals into about four months of time. I find the salmon fishing laws to be complicated and the limits to be surprisingly low compared to salmon fishing here at home in the Great Lakes. Therefore, I haven't pursued salmon fishing in Alaska. They do catch some huge salmon though.

Trout and Arctic Grayling fishing is easily accessible from the road system. Rainbow trout are found in many lakes and grayling are available in most lakes and clear water streams in the central and northern areas of the state. Many streams and rivers in Alaska are glacial fed and contain no fish at all because the silt suspended in the milky looking glacial run-off will clog gills. Be sure to look for clear running streams for fishing. Arctic Grayling are my favorite fish. They will eagerly take a fly and they live in some of the most beautiful, pristine streams a fisherman could ask for. I pack my hip boots, fly fishing vest, small landing net, and a take-down, six-weight fly rod into a duffle bag as part of my luggage for every trip to Alaska. Oh, don't forget the mosquito dope or a head net. Small dry flies or nymphs are the ticket to some great fly fishing for this beautiful, almost exotic, fish. Fresh grayling are also a tasty addition to the camping menu.

Spectacular Views

Dawn loves the scenic coastal towns of Alaska. On a clear day there is no more beautiful place. Blue ocean and blue sky are divided only by the snow-capped mountains and the fishing boats lying peacefully at anchor in the harbor. The air smells fresher there than anywhere else on Earth. Bald eagles are a common sight along the ocean and a surfacing whale or a sea otter may be spotted as well. A local museum, shop, or eatery is always interesting. The small town atmosphere is wonderful to experience in an unspoiled Alaskan town. To each his own, but we tend to avoid the towns that allow cruise ships to visit their docks. Those towns have become very tourist oriented and we aren't interested in the many shops featuring "Alaskan souvenirs" imported from China.

We have enjoyed day trips for marine wildlife and glacier viewing on Prince William Sound (Valdez) and in Kenai Fjords National Park (Seward). Both trips were well worth the expense. Seeing whales, porpoises, sea otters, sea lions, puffins and viewing huge glaciers up close is something we just can't do at home. Don't miss it on your tour of Alaska.



Dall sheep can often be seen on distant mountain-sides. Getting this close involves some climbing.

Using the Railroad

The Alaska Railroad (ARR) is another option to consider.

The ARR operates year round to ferry passengers and freight through some of the most awe inspiring scenery anywhere. We truly enjoyed the day trip from Talkeetna to Hurricane Gulch. This is a “whistle stop” train that stops to pick up local passengers waiting by the tracks as well as stopping to drop off freight or groceries to people living in remote cabins. Riding the ARR is an experience you probably won’t find anywhere else.

Interior AK is very different from the coastal regions. Behind the barrier of the main mountain ranges it is much warmer and dryer in summer and colder and dryer in winter. Fairbanks is the hub city of the highway system in the interior. North of Fairbanks is the Arctic Circle, the actual “land of the midnight sun.” Travel 125 miles south of Fairbanks to find the highest mountain in North America. Private vehicles are only allowed to drive about 15 miles into the huge Denali National Park. From there you must ride a park service bus. Be sure to call ahead to reserve your bus seat. It can get crowded at times. Phones seem to work as well in Alaska as they do anywhere. A day trip on the bus into Denali is very interesting. Where else can you see nine grizzly bears in one day? Denali is wild.

While camped at Savage River, inside the park, Dawn and I hiked out to look for wildlife one evening. We noticed the usual Dall sheep on the distant mountains and a few caribou nearby. Then a wolf came by, not far away. He was looking for a caribou dinner. The wind was right, so we kept pace with the wolf as he hunted three caribou feeding along the river. Dawn was watching the wolf, now 60 yards away, through the binoculars when I felt the breeze switch around. “Oh oh,” I whispered. At that time the wolf quickly turned to stare directly at us. Dawn suddenly found herself looking into those yellow, predator eyes through the binoculars. She jumped back. The wolf silently vanished.

We have found the best view of Mount McKinley (Denali) to be from Denali State Park. From the Byers Lake Campground you can walk the foot trail up to the Alaska War Memorial.

On a clear morning it is a breathtaking view, even though the mountain is more than 50 miles away. You often get a better look at the mountain from that spot than you will from anywhere inside Denali National Park.

Our trips to Alaska have been filled with life’s wonderful experiences. More than once we have asked each other, “Do you think we will ever get to see this unspoiled beauty again?” I only hope we do get to see Alaska again, and I hope you do, too. **MP**

TRAVEL TIPS

> There are a number of reputable RV rentals to choose from in Anchorage. ABC Rentals has always treated us fairly. www.abc-moterhome.com

> *The Milepost* can be purchased at many large bookstores or online. Check it out at www.themilepost.com

> *The Flyfisher’s Guide to Alaska*, by Busch and Rice, has been valuable to me. It describes fishing opportunities around any chosen locale in AK.

> We have found Fred Meyers stores to be Alaska’s equivalent of our Super Wal-Mart stores.

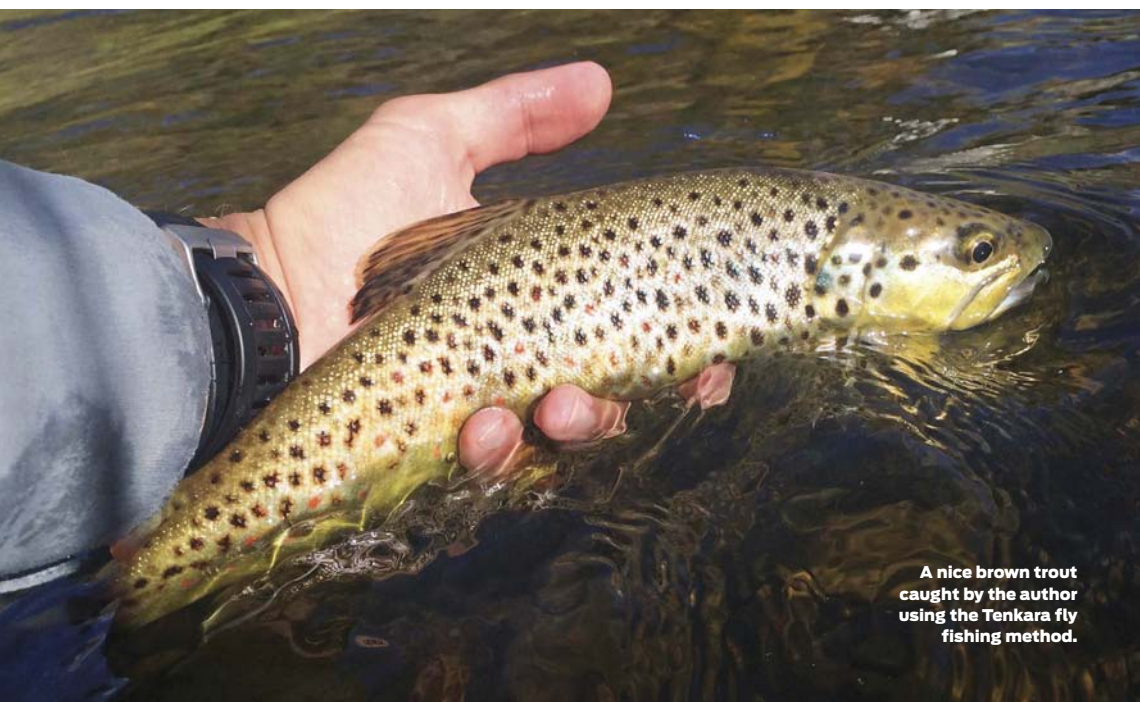
> There is no sales tax in Alaska.

> The government has now provided Wi-Fi at even small town libraries where the Internet and email can be accessed on the computers or your own device.

> Information and schedules for the Alaskan Railroad can be found at www.AlaskaRailroad.com

> Information and schedules for the Alaska Marine Highway can be found at www.ferryalaska.com

PIONEER FLY



A nice brown trout caught by the author using the Tenkara fly fishing method.



Our pioneer ancestors were successful in filling their baskets with fish by using only a long switch with a piece of string or braided horsehair tied to the end. Yet today's pioneer looking to add fly fishing to his wilderness tool kit faces a head-spinning array of equipment choices, with composite rods named after space ships and costing four-figures, machined aircraft-grade disc drag reels, and hundreds of confusing line choices.

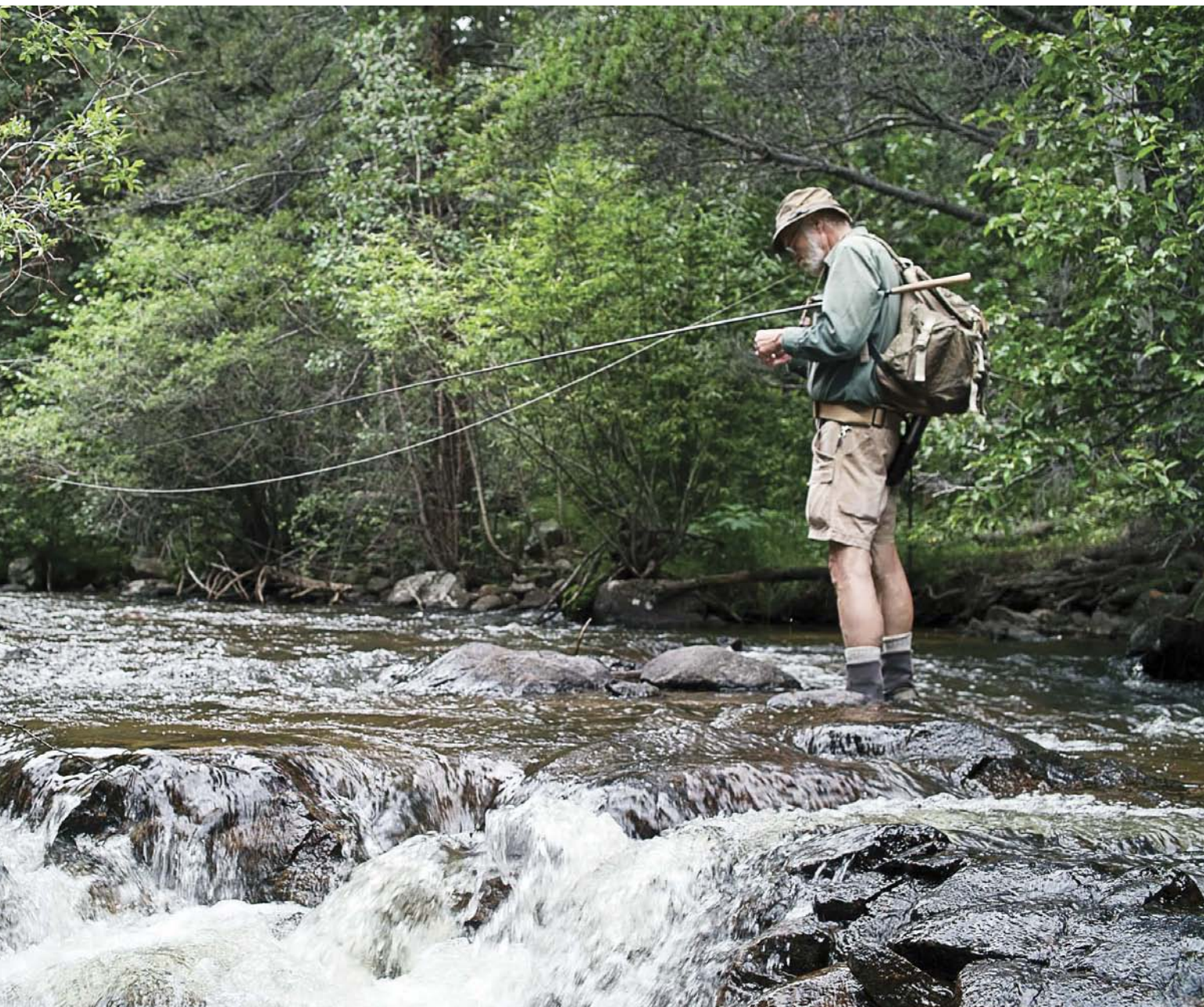
To be honest, a person planning to fly fish for giant tarpon, bonefish or salmon needs this level of sophistication. But for the vast majority, woodsmen who want to supplement our wild game larder with the natural bounty of finned creatures, there is a simpler and less expensive path. It is so effective it's scary. It's basically the old cane pole method we learned as kids, adapted for fly fishing, and it dates back over 200 years. It is called Tenkara, which means, "from Heaven" in Japanese.

"I've been fly fishing for over 50 years, from the Arctic Circle to the southern tip of Chile."

FISHING

HERE'S A REAL BASIC WAY
OF TOSSING A FLY, AND IT'S
JUST AS EFFECTIVE TODAY
AS IT WAS 200 YEARS AGO.

By Lou Phillippe





It differs very little from how our American pioneers fished, except our ancestors often used bait. Many early Tenkara masters fished for the market, so they refined their techniques to catch the maximum number of fish in the shortest amount of time. Artificial flies were a natural choice to avoid catching and keeping bait fresh, rebaiting after each fish, and going home when the bait ran out. Their flies were simple, effective, and durable, mimicking a live insect pulsing in the water.

A Special Method

Tenkara requires no fancy machined reels, compound-taper fly lines or complicated casting skills. The super-light fiberglass rod, with line attached, collapses into a small package

that weighs nearly nothing and fits in any daypack. A handful of local flies and a few feet of monofilament leader for the end of the line are the only other ingredients needed to complete this simple, yet deadly go-anywhere fishing kit.

I've been fly fishing for over 50 years, from the Arctic Circle to the southern tip of Chile. Now most of my efforts are on the local streams around my cabin, and one day it occurred to me when reading about Tenkara that almost all the fish I catch are within about 25 feet of where I'm fishing. As with the conversion to a longbow many years ago, I was seeking to simplify processes as I refined my outdoor skills. I picked up a 12-foot telescoping Tenkara rod that squeezes down into





a single 20-inch butt section, and made two lines out of pieces of an inexpensive level floating line. One line is 10 feet long for small streams, the other is 14 feet for a bit more reach on the larger water. They can be changed on the water in seconds, if needed. I use a two or three foot section of four-pound test monofilament which can easily be snapped if a fly hangs up in the trees, sparing the sensitive solid glass tip. A pair of Fuji Ez-keepers on the butt of the rod holds the line and fly when collapsed, and completes the system. A tiny fly fishing bobber can be used, but I've found it's much more effective if the fly swims naturally.

On the Water

On my first outing I hiked up the brook trout stream that runs beside our cabin. Rather than bother with the traditional Tenkara flies many purists use, I simply tied on a favorite wet fly, snuck up, and gently flipped it out into the first long run. The long rod allowed me to stay hidden and not spook the fish. I followed the fly across and downstream, expecting to feel a jarring strike on the nearly weightless rod. Instead, my line began to move sideways. I lifted the tip and was fast into a fat dark brookie. I landed a dozen out of that run before it played out, another three-dozen by lunchtime and I was deeply hooked.

One thing I've discovered is that the fish feel virtually no tension when they bite the fly, so they often inhale it and casually swim off. This provides more time to detect the strike and set the hook. Sometimes I don't know a fish is on the line until I raise the rod to flick the fly

“Tenkara requires no fancy machined reels, compound-taper fly lines or complicated casting skills.”

(top) Here's an assortment of the author's favorite flies.

(opposite, top) Here are two traditional Tenkara flies commonly used.

(opposite, bottom) Tenkara doesn't require a lot of gear, just a light fiberglass rod, line, monofilament leader and a few flies.

back upstream. The other noticeable thing is that unlike a dramatic strike with a conventional fly outfit, setting the hook with the long, super-soft rod requires only a soft lift. Larger fish don't become excited and run wild, but rather swim calmly against the limber rod's springy resistance, allowing you to gently wear them down and bring them to hand.

I decided to find out what a big rainbow would be like when attached to this sparse outfit. (Some of my conventional fly fishing buddies had been chiding me about the futility of this challenge...) A couple miles below the cabin there is a small reservoir with a tailwater that holds fat trout up to 20 inches. These fish are a hoot on a conventional lightweight fly outfit, and often strip line off the reel on runs. I didn't know what to expect. The first few hits were from smaller trout which I led in easily. Then the line stopped. I lifted the rod tip and it felt like I was stuck on a rock – which slowly began moving sideways in the current. The big trout didn't know he was hooked, so I gently applied more pressure and prayed. He swam back and forth in the current, shaking his head, and when he eased away from me I simply allowed the spring action of the 12-foot rod to apply the pressure as it flexed, which caused him to turn back be-



“Last fall, on an elk hunt, the outfit provided some nice trout to ease the monotony of freeze-dried meals.”

fore breaking the leader. At one point he jumped, but because I wasn't actively attempting to derrick him in, he never panicked. Instead he kept swimming closer as I followed him downstream, until he allowed himself to be netted.

The thick 19-inch, three-pound rainbow never knew what happened. Unlike the adrenaline surge often triggered in both fish and fisherman by an abrupt strike, this big guy calmly gave up after awhile and submitted himself to capture. That experience proved that even trout that are “lunker” size for most anglers can be managed with this simple system. I've since landed a number of large trout,

including a stout 20-inch rainbow on a tiny size 20 dry fly. On most small to mid-size streams, I now believe I will hook and land more trout than with my normal fly gear.

Works Everywhere

A Tenkara rod and a film can full of flies ride with me wherever I go that may involve water. Beneath the seat of my truck or in the corner of my daypack, the little tool is ever-present. During the past season I rarely used any of my fine, expensive bamboo, boron and graphite custom-made conventional fly wands except when fishing big lakes. I was enjoying the Tenkara experience that much.



Last fall, on an elk hunt, the outfit provided some nice trout to ease the monotony of freeze-dried meals. On a scouting trip last summer I encountered a promising-looking stream. Within a couple minutes I was catching fish after fish, brilliant wild cutthroat trout I never knew existed in that area. I've continued to refine the technique, adding a dry fly and nymph dropper to the repertoire, as well as a two and three nymph system for larger waters. I've yet to hook three fish at one time, but have landed a number of "doubles" when the first hooked fish swam slowly enough to attract a second fish to a fly.

For today's modern woodsman who wants to avoid investing in inexpensive fly equipment, complicated casting techniques (and expensive lessons), and to fly fish without looking like a model from an urban yuppie catalog, Tenkara is the way to fill the pan for a delicious fish dinner. The simplicity and direct connection to the process is addicting. You'll soon find the rod joining your survival kit as one of the two essential items in your day-pack on most outings afield. **MP**

(top) The author takes his telescoping Tenkara rod wherever he goes (it rides underneath the seat in his truck). It collapses into a single 20-inch butt section. It's pictured here with a pair of Fuji Ez-Keeper on the butt to hold the line and fly.

(bottom) When in the backcountry, while on a hunt, the author will pack his handy Tenkara rod and land a few brookies for the pan.

(opposite) The author has fly fished most of his life and enjoys the craft of a simpler way of fly fishing.

TENKARA: A UNIQUE EXPERIENCE

It's widely acknowledged that Tenkara was introduced to the U.S. by Daniel Galhardo, who brought a Tenkara rod back from a Japanese visit in 2008. He became so enamored with the technique that in 2009 he quit his promising financial career to start Tenkara U.S.A., the Boulder-based company that is now the leader in this country. Their website is TenkaraUsa.com. Daniel recommends a 12-foot rod for an all-around choice, and likes the traditional Japanese flies which don't represent any specific insect, but instead imitate a variety of tasty morsels.

Many conventional fly fishing purists initially scoffed at the craft, calling it a fad, but it quickly caught on with those looking for a simpler way. Now, six years later, there are a number of websites, forums, and rod builders dedicated to Tenkara. Those who try it and experience the effectiveness, grace, and simplicity, bite the bug hard. There are even guide services specializing in Tenkara, but you don't really need any lessons to get started since the method differs little from the cane-pole fishing most of us old timers remember. —L.P.

· HOW-TO ·

A Pan Full of GOLD

FINDING GOLD ISN'T ALWAYS ABOUT LUCK.
IT'S ABOUT SKILL, TOO. HERE'S HOW TO DO IT RIGHT.

By Michael Pendley

Gold has been a valued commodity since the dawn of civilization. Greek accounts from as early as 1300 B.C. describe miners and miners' camps established solely to supply gold. While a variety of methods have been employed throughout the world to locate and extract gold from the earth, panning is one of the oldest and simplest.

Panning for gold consists of scooping up silt, sand and other material and swirling it in the pan to separate the gold from other materials. Because gold is heavier than the other materials, it will settle to the bottom of the pan with adequate agitation. While panning can be accomplished in either wet or dry conditions, the addition of water aids in the separation and speeds the process.

Gold pan design and material varies throughout the world. One of the earliest designs can still be seen in the Spanish Batea. Most often constructed from a single block of wood, the Batea is a slope-sided pan measuring up to 20 inches across. The sides gradually slope to near the center of the pan. Only a small portion of the pan's bottom is flat.

Modern day pans in the United States are, as the name implies, more pan shaped than the Batea. These pans feature more sharply sloped sides and a much larger flat area for a bottom.

Modern pan shapes first began to appear in the early 1800s. By the mid 1800s, improved pan designs began to be patented. Some of these design improvements included gold catching ridges along the sides and removable bottoms for faster retrieval of gold flakes.

Modern pans are most often constructed of molded plastic or metal. Darker colored pans contrast well with small flakes of gold, making spotting them and picking them out of the remaining sand easier. Plastic pans are also lightweight, a feature that is helpful in preventing fatigue when panning for long periods of time. The gold pans of the United States generally range in size from 10 to 17 inches with 14 inches being the most popular.

James Caffee, a gold panner from Kentucky, prefers a 12-inch plastic pan. "I have tried several styles and materials in gold pans and have settled on a 12-inch pan because it is lightweight and doesn't take as long to work through a pan full of material. Another thing I like to do is add a drop or two of Dawn dishwashing liquid to my pan to help settle the material. The soap seems to settle things faster in the plastic than it does a metal pan." Caffee also likes the smaller pan size because it is easier to stow in his fishing gear in the event he runs across a promising looking stream while fishing.



PHOTOS BY THINKSTOCK





“...a rare earth magnet will pick up the iron sand, leaving the gold behind in the pan.”

Other Equipment

Besides a pan, a few basic tools will outfit your gold panning expedition.

Trowel: Packing a basic gardening trowel along helps to dig into crevices and cracks that might hold gold deposits.

Pick and shovel: Larger tools allow moving large amounts of material to get to the lower levels of streambeds. Miniature picks are helpful for loosening lodged rocks from tight areas.

Waders: You are going to get wet when you pan for gold in a stream. Waders help to keep you warm and dry when prospecting in cool or cold climates or seasons.

Jar: A small jar or other container with a tightly fitting lid makes a handy place to store any found gold.

Tweezers: A pair of tweezers helps pick fine flakes of gold out of the substrate. Cold, numb fingers aren't the best tools for picking up sand grain-sized flakes of gold.

Snuffer bottle: Like the tweezers, a snuffer bottle will help pick up fine gold. Snuffer bottles are small, plastic bottles with narrow necks. Simply squeeze the bottle, place the neck opening over the gold and release the pressure, sucking the gold up into the bottle.

Bucket: A five-gallon bucket with handle makes a handy transportation device for all of your gear. Once at the stream, the bucket can be used to scoop up large amounts of silt to run through your pan. James Caffee also says a couple of buckets come in handy during cold snaps when the weather is bad. “I like to find a promising area and scoop up a couple of buckets full of material to take home. That way, I can pan through it inside where it is warm when the weather is too nasty to be outside.”

Rare earth magnet: The black sand left at the bottom of a gold pan is mostly iron. Caffee says “a rare Earth magnet will pick up the iron sand, leaving the gold behind in the pan. It really speeds up the final part of panning.”

Where to Look

Even though most people automatically think of the western states and Alaska when it comes to prospecting, gold is found just about everywhere. The very first gold rush in the United States centered around Cabarrus County, North Carolina in 1799 when 12 year old Conrad Reed found a 17 pound nugget in the creek on the Reed Family Farm. Not realizing what they had, the Reeds used the nugget



as a doorstep for three years. One day, curiosity got the best of young Conrad's father, John, and he took the nugget to a jeweler for identification. The jeweler recognized the chunk was actually gold, but didn't relay that information to Conrad. He offered the paltry sum of three dollars and 50 cents for several thousand dollars' worth of gold.

Once John Reed realized he had been swindled, he formed a mining company with several partners and started the first commercial gold prospecting company in the state. For several years, the gold prospecting activities spread throughout the area. By 1832, there were more than 50 active mines in the area, employing thousands of people.

Since that time, gold has been found, at least in small amounts, in every state with the exception of Hawaii. The geology departments at state universities can provide advice on where to look in your state. Check into state and federal laws containing mineral extraction in the areas you plan to prospect. Depending on location, panning on private land may require separate permissions from both the owners of the land and the owners of the mineral rights to a particular area if they have been sold in the past.

The source of the gold may vary according to the topography of your area. Some areas have naturally occurring gold deposits, others have gold that was carried from another area in glacial deposits and dropped as the glaciers melted. Still other areas have gold deposited by



(opposite) Newer gold pans are often constructed from a plastic material because of its light weight and durability., attributes that will be appreciated after a long day on a stream bank.

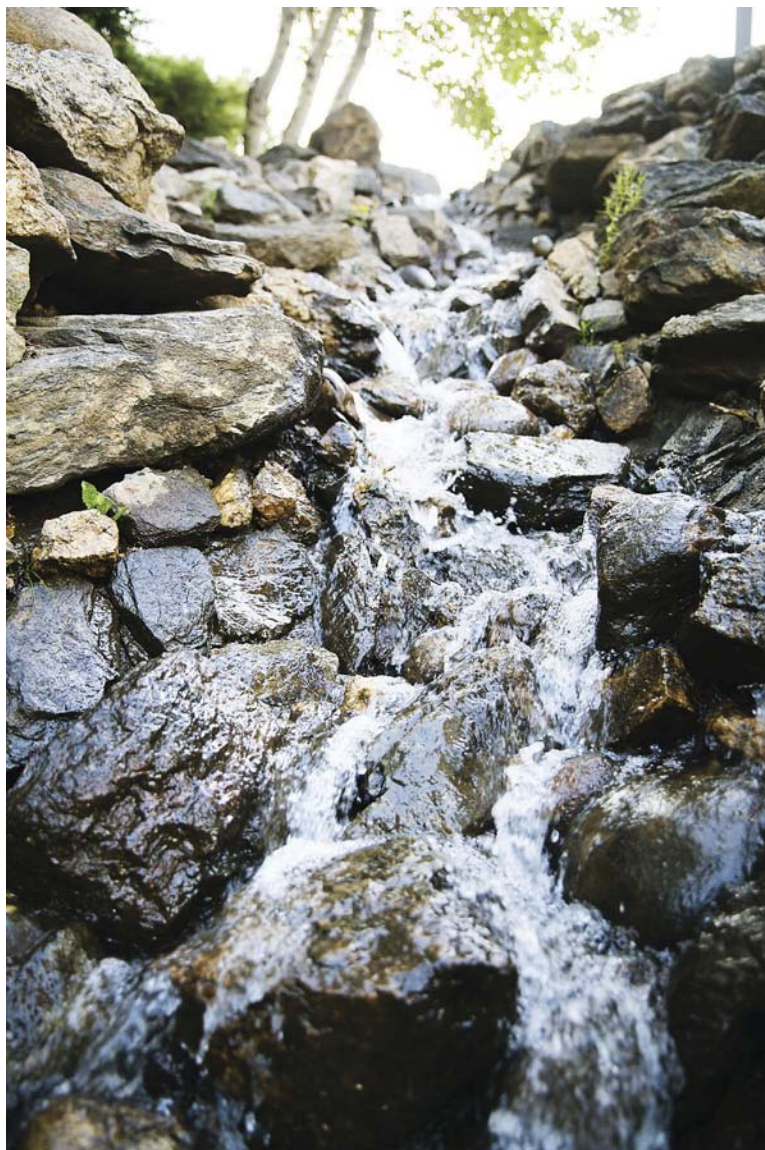
(top, left) Modern gold pans often have ridges molded into the side of the pan to help catch small flakes of gold that might easily wash over the lip of a smooth pan.

(top, right) It really doesn't take much to be an effective gold panner. Some basic knowledge and any old pan will do.

moving water as it passes through natural deposits in the ground. Understanding where the gold in your area came from can help you narrow down your search areas. "The gold is where you find it" is a popular quote among prospectors, but knowing the best areas in your location can significantly narrow your search. Again, geology departments at local and state universities can be invaluable sources of information. If nothing else, they can point you in the right direction to search for old mine locations that might have been in your area.

The most popular areas for panning often include creeks, streams and rivers. As the water passes through bedrock, it dislodges small pieces of gold. This gold rides downstream on the current until it hits calm areas where its weight causes it to sink to the bottom. Over a period of years, other sediment also drops in these slack areas, burying the gold particles. Good areas to target include flat areas at the end of steep declines in the stream bed. Other areas of interest include long sand bars that slow the current as it passes over. Be sure to investigate slack water areas behind large boulders where the current wraps and swirls its way behind the blockage.

In his area of Kentucky, James Caffee likes to search the small creeks that feed into the Ohio River. "I look for black sand and quartz along the banks of rocky creeks," says Caffee. "If I find an area with quartz and black sand, I will spend an entire day there." James likes to look for moderate sized boulders in these creeks. "I



(above) Pools at the bottom of waterfalls or steep drops in stream elevation make prime locations for searching out gold.

(far right) A gardener's trowel, pick ax and shovel are handy tools to take along on your prospecting adventure, as is a bucket for transporting tools, panning material and water.

carry a small pry bar and use it to help move these boulders so that I can pan the undisturbed material underneath." He also likes to look for deep holes just beyond a set of riffles. "A pair of waders allows me to get down to deeper stream bottoms, even in cool water."

Pay particular attention to crevices and cracks in the bedrock of a stream bottom. Over the years, heavy gold particles will fall down into these cracks and get covered by silt. This is where the trowel and pick ax come in handy. Dig any loose material out of the crack and run it through your pan.

Water doesn't always follow the same course over the years. Look for high gravel benches with rounded stones that indicate the stream bed might have flowed in a different area hun-

dreds or thousands of years ago. Use your bucket to bring water to the gravel bar and pan some of the silt from the area. As with active stream beds, look for large boulders in these gravel flats that might have blocked the stream's flow, then dig and pan the sediment behind them. Use your shovel to dig deep into these beds and locate material that hasn't been searched before.

The Method

Once you have located a promising area, begin your panning. Although exact techniques vary from prospector to prospector, the basics are fairly standard. Begin by scooping a double handful or so of stream sediment into your pan. Cover the sediment with water and begin to swirl or agitate the material back and forth. As the pan moves, the water will allow the smaller, denser particles to sink to the bottom and the larger sediment will remain on top. As the material stratifies, keep rinsing the large material at the top of the pan over the lip. Each time you rinse large material over the side of the





“Look for high gravel benches with rounded stones that indicate the stream bed might have flowed in a different area hundreds or thousands of years ago.”

pan, refill and begin the agitation motion over. After several minutes at each stage, you will be left with only very fine particles, also known as black sand, in the bottom of the pan. Add a bit of clean water and swirl the remaining material to spread it over the bottom of the pan. Any gold should be visible at this point.

Caffee says, “It takes quite a bit of practice to get good at swirling the pan. The more you practice, the faster you will get.” Don’t get discouraged if your first attempts end up with all of your material washing over the lip of the pan, the process will become second nature after a little time.

While many experienced prospectors do their panning at the stream’s edge, be aware a rogue wave or a slight bump in your pan will cause you to lose your entire load back into the stream before it has been worked down. Because of this, many people like to do their panning over a plastic tub that will catch the material should it fall out of the pan before it has been picked clean. A small piece of carpet is often placed at the bottom of the tub to fur-

ther help catch and retain any gold particles that might have been missed or lost during the panning process.

Where to Sell Your Gold

What do you do with your gold if luck shines your way and you find some? Most gold dealers, jewelers and larger pawn shops will buy gold. There are also several online gold brokers that specialize in buying gold from prospectors, regardless of size and amount. Research the broker before finalizing the deal and compare offers. There is often a large variance in pricing from one dealer to another.

While very few people ever get rich by panning for gold, there is always the possibility you might. Gold panning is a fun and inexpensive hobby that has the potential to pay for itself. Even if you don’t strike it rich, gold panning offers the reward of being out in nature. Many amateur prospectors include their gold panning equipment in their gear when they go on vacation for a fun family activity everyone can enjoy. **MP**

(top) Gravel beds along stream bottoms are excellent places to locate gold that has been deposited over the years as the gravel slows the current.

Home Canning Venison

FOLLOW THESE SEVEN SIMPLE
STEPS FOR PRESERVING YOUR
OWN FRESH VENISON.

By Darryl Quidort





To begin with,
prepare the meat
by cutting it into
two-inch cubes.

Preserving meat has been a problem for man since his earliest days. If it was cold, he could freeze it. If it was hot, he could dry it. Otherwise, he ate as much of it as possible before it spoiled. Today we have much better options. Home canning preserves meat safely and is so easy even a cave man could do it. If he had a pressure canner, that is. We use the “raw pack” method for canning our venison. The following seven steps explain the procedure.

STEP 1: PREPARE MEAT

Remove any fat and cut away any gristle or membrane from the meat, leaving clean, lean meat. Cube it into about 2-inch chunks for fitting into pint jars.

STEP 2: PREPARE JARS

Wide mouth pint jars make packing easier. Wash the jars, then fill them half full of hot water and sterilize them in a microwave oven for about 7 minutes.

STEP 3: PREPARE LIDS

Boil the lids in a pan with enough water to cover them. Leave the lids in the hot water until used. They must be hot to seal properly.



Prepare the
lids by boiling.

“Home canning preserves meat safely and is so easy even a cave man could do it.”



Fill the hot, empty jars with meat.



Seasoning is added to each jar.

STEP 4: FILL JARS

Pack meat loosely into the hot jars. Do not add any liquid to the jars.

STEP 5: ADD SEASONING

Add $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon of beef base or bouillon crumbles to each jar.

STEP 6: ADJUST LIDS

Wipe the rim of the jar clean. Remove a lid from the hot water and place it on the jar. Then screw the ring on snugly.

STEP 7: PROCESS

Place the jars in a pressure canner with several inches of water in the bottom. Process for 75 minutes at 10 psi pressure. Then turn off the stove. After the pressure goes down, remove the jars and set them out to cool.

“Add $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon of beef base or bouillon crumbles to each jar.”

There is a certain satisfaction in hearing the lids pop as the jars cool and knowing your meat is now safely preserved for future use. After they are cool, the rings can be removed from the jars, leaving the lids in place. The rings can then be reused.



Canner allows meat to be preserved in convenient glass jars.



Process meat at 10 psi for 75 minutes.



Canned venison and noodles is a favorite dish for the author's family.

Home canning is a regular occurrence around our household. My wife proudly uses her grandmother's pressure canner, an old "Made in Manitowac, WI, USA" product, which was handed down to her.

Canned venison can be used in many ways: sandwiches, venison barbecue, or venison gravy over potatoes. One of our favorites is venison and noodles. Simply cook the noodles according to the directions on the package. Stir in canned venison. Add any preferred additional seasoning. Heat it and eat it. **MP**

Spring Fever

By Jason Houser

FOR A FUN-FILLED WAY TO HIKE AND ENJOY THE OUTDOORS MUSHROOM HUNTING IS HARD TO BEAT.



"If you are new to the sport, expect to do a lot of walking to find them unless you are lucky enough to have someone show you."

There is nothing else like being in the woods during early spring when the transition from a dull brown to a lush green is taking place. When deer season comes to a close and before turkey starts, it is the perfect time to hunt for morel mushrooms. It is estimated 15 million Americans hunt morels. This is truly a beautiful time to be in the woods. Mushroom hunters range from the full-time 'shroom hunters in Alaska to the weekenders in Illinois to the once-a-year hunters in Kentucky.

Mushroom hunting is for anyone with the stamina to do some walking. There is no required hunter-education class, no fees for a mushroom license, no expensive hunting equipment is needed and no minimum age requirement imposed by the state. Mushroom hunting is truly a sport for everyone.

When and Where to Hunt

A morel mushroom hunter will only have about 10 days of hunting before the mushrooms are gone for another year. If you happen to catch the tail end of mushroom season, go ahead and harvest those mushrooms you find, even if they have some dry spots on them. They can easily be cut off, saving the rest of the 'shroom.

It takes plenty of rain and warm weather before mushrooms are available. Do not expect to find a lot of mushrooms if you are experiencing a dry spring. Because it takes warm weather for mushrooms to grow, the southern regions of the country will have mushrooms before the north does. This past season, I was finding mushrooms the first week of April on the Illinois/Kentucky border, in the middle of April in central Illinois and the first week of May in northern Illinois.

My parents use to follow the mushroom growing season starting in Tennessee and continuing up to Wisconsin and Michigan. Most places they hunt are open to the public. By checking out mushroom hunting sites on the web you can plan your own road trip. It is a good way to find lots of mushrooms you can freeze for year-round use.



Finding Mushrooms

It was not all that long ago a hunter had to walk through the woods to see if mushrooms were up yet or not. I still do it that way, but the Internet will help you out if you need it. Hunters post mushroom findings on one of the many mushroom hunting blogs. It is a good way to find out if mushrooms are up in your area. However, do not expect to be told exactly what woods they are in; that is totally up to you to figure out.

Mushrooms can be difficult to find. If it seems like they pop out of the ground overnight, it is because they do. If you do not find them one day, the next day they could be everywhere. The key is to keep looking. If you are new to the sport, expect to do a lot of walking to find them unless you are lucky enough to have someone show you. Normally, when you ask a mushroom hunter where to find mushrooms the best answer you can expect to get is, "in the woods." Once you find a patch of mushrooms remember where you found them and keep it a secret. You will likely have the same patch for many, many years.

(above) It's critical you know how to identify safe eating mushrooms. A good field guide will provide pictures and specific descriptions and details that will help you delineate safe mushrooms from poisonous species. With morel mushrooms, avoid the half-free (small cap) morel at the top of the stem. These are known to cause severe stomach cramps.

(opposite) Some mushrooms grow directly from the ground, while others grow atop dead or dying trees.

“A morel mushroom hunter will only have about 10 days of hunting before the mushrooms are gone for another year.”



(above) The author grew up hunting morel mushrooms, tagging along with his parents from state to state as they searched the hills for these natural gems.

(left) Here's a prime batch of morel mushrooms, ready for the cooking pot.

Public vs. Private Land

Public land offers possibilities for the mushroom hunter. The problem is everybody has access to this ground. If you are not one of the first hunters of the season you might do a lot of walking for nothing.

Check with park officials before picking mushrooms. I know state parks in some states do not allow mushroom hunting. Do not forget to be mindful of spring turkey hunters on state

ground. At times, mushroom hunting might coincide with turkey season. During turkey season always wear bright colors so you are noticeable but stay away from color like red, white and blue, as they are too similar to the colors of a gobbler. You do not want to be mistaken for a longbeard.

Always respect the property of others. Mushroom hunters are a serious bunch when it comes to their mushrooms. Just like any other hunting adventure always ask permission before entering another person's property. It is also a good idea to share some of your harvest with the landowner if you have enough.

Mushroom Tournaments

Tournaments for mushroom hunters are all the rage now. Besides having the chance to win some cash while having fun, participating in a

tournament is a good way for the newcomer to learn more about hunting morels and a chance for the experienced hunter to hunt new ground. It is not only the hunting that is so great at these events, but also the fellowship shared with other people that have similar interests as you do. The land that is used for a mushroom tournament is off-limits to hunting until the day of the tournament. For this reason it is very possible to find lots of mushrooms.

Do not forget about all of the vendors that show up at one of these tournaments. Everything the mushroom hunter could possibly think of can be found at a tournament. Need a good walking stick? Maybe a mushroom reproduction is what you are looking for. A bag designed to let the spores of a mushroom fall to the ground can be found there. How about a book on mushrooms? Whatever it is you need can be found at a tournament.

A hunter has the option to either keep or sell the mushrooms they find during the tournament. Most tournaments hold an auction after the event for any hunter wanting to sell his or her mushrooms. I attended an auction after a recent tournament and witnessed mushrooms being auctioned off for \$60 per pound. Not a bad payday.

Mushroom Market

Any time you happen to find more mushrooms than you want to eat yourself there is a good market for mushrooms. During the past spring I read an ad in the newspaper. The owner of the ad was selling mushrooms for \$50 per pound. A few days after seeing the ad my curiosity got the best of me and I called the number. The man told me he had more than 100 pounds of mushrooms and he ran out in four days. Wow!

If you do not know what a morel looks like I would advise you to purchase a field guide. If you pick the wrong one and eat it you could become very ill. Never eat any mushroom until you know exactly what it is.

An edible mushroom has a hollow stem and the bottom edge of the sponge-like cap is attached directly to the stem. Always cook morels before eating.

Just like any hunter, mushroom hunters need to be ethical in their hunting practices. Do not pull a mushroom up with its roots intact. Pinch the stem off one-half inch or more above the ground. This will help with re-growth the following year. Always use a mesh bag to carry your mushrooms in. I use an old onion bag. This allows the spores to fall to the ground throughout the woods. Again, this will help with growing mushrooms the following spring. **MP**



A clean pocket knife is needed to cut the mushroom off at the base.



PHOTOS BY THINKSTOCK

· HOW-TO ·

Campfire Recipes

MAXIMIZE THE TASTE WHEN COOKING OVER AN OPEN-PIT FIRE.
By Michael Pendley



I am not sure why, but campfire food just tastes better. Maybe it is the open fire, or maybe the clean air and increased activity whets our appetite. Whatever the reason, there is no denying campfire meals are some of the best food around.

Cooking over a fire is as old as mankind. Modern tools and ingredients make the process easier and the menu more varied, but the techniques used are old school. What worked for the early pioneers works just as well today.

Campfire Cooking Gear

Cast iron: Nothing cooks on fire like cast iron pots and pans. From low simmers to super-hot searing temperatures, cast iron can handle any camp cooking task. Lodge Cast Iron is turning out quality cooking utensils that rival any cast iron ever made. A Dutch oven with lid can cook stew, make biscuits and desserts, or fry fish with ease.

Aluminum foil: Believe it or not, a roll of heavy weight aluminum foil is one of the handiest tools you can pack when it comes to camp cooking. Use it for wrapping foods to cook directly in the coals, lining grills for fragile or small foods that might otherwise fall through, covering pots as a makeshift lid and even to form small bowls in which to cook liquid-based foods.

Grill grate: A round or small square grill grate from any hardware store is a handy item to have on a camping trip. Rest the grate on a rock ring and it will provide a large surface area for pans or a direct cooking surface for grilling meat or fish. Building your fire to one side of the grate allows you to control cooking temperature by sliding the pans closer to or farther away from the heat.

Cast iron tripod: A tripod over the fire works perfectly for suspending a dutch oven over the heat when cooking beans, stews, or burgoo. Look for a model with a chain and S hooks that allow the pot height to be adjusted up or down for heat control.

PHOTO BY THINKSTOCK

Leather gloves: Cooking over fire is hot work. A pair of heavy leather work gloves makes camp life a lot safer and less painful.

Long handled cooking utensils: Long spoons, forks and tongs keep hands away from fire and allow a lot better control of food over standard length models.

Small steel rake: A rake makes pulling hot coals from the fire over to the cooking area a snap. They are also handy when it comes time to put your fire out. Use the rake to stir the coals as you pour water over the fire or to rake soil over the fire.

Camp shovel: Used for digging fire pits, shoveling hot coals onto the lid of Dutch ovens, and covering fire pits when you are finished with them, a small steel camp shovel is an indispensable tool.

“Start your fire an hour or so before you want to start cooking and let it burn down to a nice bed of glowing coals.”

Lid lifter: A lid lifter is a handy utensil to have when cooking with a Dutch oven. It consists of a hook shape at the end of a long handle. To use one, simply slide the hook under the handle of a Dutch oven lid and let the lid rest solidly. Lid lifters help keep hot coals and ashes from falling into food and make picking up a hot lid safer.

Fish basket: Tender, flakey fish or small vegetables can be tough to cook over an open fire. A long handled locking fish basket makes it a snap. Just lightly coat the basket with oil, put in the fish or vegetables, and suspend the basket over the coals. The open weave metal mesh is tight enough to keep everything contained but open enough to let the flavors of the open fire through to the contents.

Fire starting tabs make starting a camp fire, even in damp conditions, much easier. These non-petroleum cubes light quickly and burn odorless. They burn hot enough to light even damp tinder.

Tips and Tricks

Cook with seasoned hardwood. Start your fire an hour or so before you want to start cooking and let it burn down to a nice bed of



(top) The best part about a camping trip is the fire. Whether you are cooking over it, or just sitting around it, a good fire makes every camping trip better.

(bottom) The beauty of a cast iron skillet is that it will hold enough heat to keep your food piping hot while you serve it. These breakfast burritos are a favorite at our deer camp.

glowing coals. Cooking over coals instead of open flame makes it easier to control heat and less likely to burn.

Make your fire pit large enough to keep both a bed of hot coals for cooking and an open fire to provide more coals if needed. A long narrow trench style pit is a shape that allows plenty of room for each without being too large.

Do as much prep work as possible before you start cooking. Whether you do it at home before heading out and pack the prepped food in zip-style bags, or at camp before actually putting food to fire, try to get all peeling, cleaning, chopping and measuring finished beforehand. Cooking over fire requires attention. Not having to run back and forth to the prep area helps.

A light coat of cooking oil on grill grates will keep meat and fish from sticking. A pot of water heated over the fire as you eat makes after dinner clean up much easier. **MP**

RECIPES

Kentucky Burgoo

Burgoo is similar to Brunswick Stew, both are a hodge-podge mixture of meats and vegetables in a tomato-based broth cooked long and slow over an open fire. I have tried a bunch of different recipes, and they have all been good, but this is the one I have settled on after years of experimenting. Burgoo is great for cleaning out the freezer. Don't be afraid to add squirrel, rabbit, venison, or just about any wild game to the mix.



A Dutch oven full of Kentucky Burgoo is a great way to clean out your freezer. Toss in a squirrel, a rabbit, some waterfowl or venison, or just about any other meat, and simmer slowly over a fire for a filling meal at the end of the day.

INGREDIENTS

2 pounds beef, bone in shanks work well, but any roast cut into one or two inch chunks will do
1 pound smoked, pulled pork
1 medium sized chicken, cut into pieces
8 ounces bacon, cut into chunks
3 large potatoes cut into 1 inch pieces
2 cans of whole kernel corn
1 clove of garlic, chopped
2 medium yellow onions, rough diced
3 carrots, peeled and sliced
1 can of butterbeans or lima beans
1 green bell pepper, diced
2 cups of okra, cut into rings (frozen works well)
1 quart of tomato juice
1 tablespoon of Cajun seasoning
4 quarts of water (more if burgoo is too thick)
Salt and pepper to taste

Begin by rendering the bacon down in the bottom of a Dutch oven suspended over the fire or nestled into hot coals at the edge of the fire pit. Once bacon is crisp, remove it from the pot and add beef and chicken then season with salt and pepper to taste. Brown the meat well on all sides in the bacon grease. Add water and pulled pork and simmer slowly with the lid on the pot for two hours.

Next, add in potatoes and onions and simmer another half hour. Add all other ingredients and simmer, covered, for two to four more hours. Stir occasionally and add water if stew is too thick. Serve with cornbread.



Have fun when you cook over a fire. Making campfire chili? Toss in a pack of hot dogs for the best chili dogs you will ever eat.

Deer Camp Chili

2 tablespoons of vegetable oil
1 or 2 onions, diced
2 to 3 pounds of coarsely ground venison or ground beef
Chili powder to taste, split into two portions. We generally use four to five teaspoons total in a pot.
Salt and black pepper to taste
A 28-ounce chopped tomatoes or two 14 ounce cans of Rotel diced tomatoes with green chilies.
A can of beer or beef broth
1 or 2 cans of chili beans, hot or mild, or one of each.

Heat the vegetable oil in a Dutch oven. Sauté the onions till soft. Next, add in the beef or venison and brown with the onions. Add all other ingredients and bring to simmer. Add two teaspoons of chili powder and stir.

After the chili has simmered an hour or so, taste and add more chili powder, salt and pepper to taste. As the chili powder cooks, its flavors change and mellow, adding it at two separate times helps to build additional layers of flavor in the chili. Simmer for 15 to 30 additional minutes and serve.

Caveman Steak

Ribeye or chuck beef steaks, ¾ to 1 inch thick, or any wild game steak
Kosher salt
Cracked black pepper
Cavender's Greek Seasoning
Butter

Season steaks well on both sides with kosher salt, cracked pepper and Cavender's seasoning. Set steaks aside to rest and come to ambient air temperature.

Build a bed of glowing hot hardwood coals. Lightly oil the surface of your cooking grate and lay the grate directly on the coals.

Wait 10 minutes for grate to come to the same temperature as the coals. Put the steak directly on the cooking grate. Don't worry if the meat touches the coals directly. Cook three minutes without moving the steak. Flip and cook an additional three minutes on the opposite side. Remove steaks from the heat to a warm plate and dot each steak with a pat of butter. Cover loosely with foil and let the meat rest for 10 to 15 minutes.



A caveman steak seared directly on a bed of hot coals will rival anything a steakhouse can produce. The coals are so hot it only takes a couple of minutes per side.

Dutch Oven Peach Cobbler

FRUIT INGREDIENTS

2 16-ounce cans of sliced peaches in heavy syrup

½ cup baking mix (I use Bisquick)

⅓ cup of sugar

½ teaspoon cinnamon

Topping ingredients

2 ¼ cups of baking mix

¼ cup sugar

½ cup milk

½ stick of butter, melted

Pour the peaches, with syrup into Dutch oven. Stir in baking mix and sugar. Dust with cinnamon.

For the topping, combine baking mix, butter and milk. Stir to form loose dough. Drop golf ball sized pieces of dough onto the peach mixture. Sprinkle with sugar and cover tightly with lid.

Rake a small bed of hot coals out of the fire. Place the Dutch oven over the coals (use small rocks to hold the Dutch oven up if yours doesn't have built in legs). With your camp shovel, add more coals evenly in one layer around the lid of your Dutch oven. Let the cobbler bake for 40 minutes then remove from coals. With your lid lifter, carefully and slowly remove the lid from the oven, taking care not to drop any coals or ashes into the cobbler. If the top is lightly browned, the cobbler is ready to serve. If it still looks a bit doughy, replace the lid and add fresh hot coals for another five minutes.

A Dutch oven peach cobbler is a quick and easy dessert that will amaze your campmates. A few coals placed around the lid of your Dutch oven will do a great job of browning the top.



Cheesy Breakfast Scramble Burritos

12 eggs, scrambled

1 pound breakfast sausage, crumbled

1 onion, diced

1 cup cheddar or pepperjack cheese, shredded

Optional: 1 tomato, diced

Flour tortillas

In an iron skillet, brown the crumbled breakfast sausage. Remove excess grease and toss in diced onion. Cook till onion is soft and translucent. Pour in scrambled eggs and stir till eggs are just about set. Add in cheese and tomato, if desired. Serve wrapped in warmed flour tortillas.

A finished breakfast burrito makes for a fine start to the day.

MP

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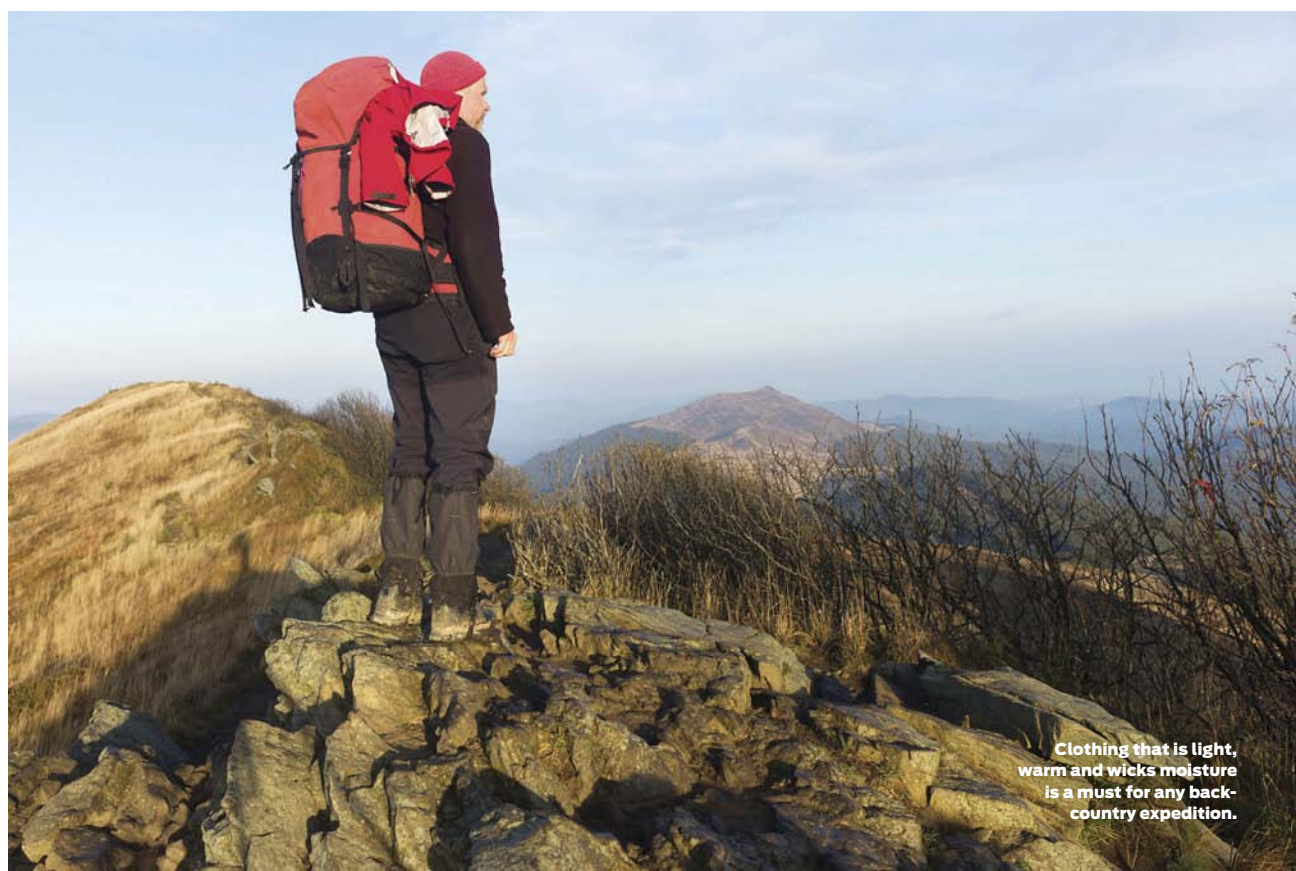
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Wilderness Garments

Here's the lowdown on the best garments for the backcountry. > By **Joe Bell**



Clothing that is light, warm and wicks moisture is a must for any backcountry expedition.

PHOTO BY THINKSTOCK

For the last 10 years or so, I've really gotten into backpacking remote wilderness country. This has given me solid knowledge on what works and what doesn't. In the clothing department, what doesn't work very well is cotton, as most of you know. Yes, it's very comfortable, but as it soaks up sweat, it begins to bind against the skin, gradually becomes heavier as it takes in more sweat and then takes forever to dry. Once the sun goes down, this can spell pure trouble. This is why cotton is a big no-no in the backcountry.

The best fabrics are made out of man-made synthetics (polyester blends) and wool. I use both, depending on the applica-

tion and garment. Here are my top choices for under garments, and early fall mid- and outer-layers. Backpacking in late fall/winter requires a lot more gear, which I'll cover in another column.

Under Garments

While backpacking the Nevada wilderness two years ago, I brought along a few different undergarments: one made of polyester and one made of high-grade Merino wool. As far as comfort goes, I preferred the wool by far. It's soft, stretchy and warm, and just feels better against the skin overall. It also soaks up the sweat a bit better than polyester.

However, I noticed that by the next day, the wool garments were still damp, while the Sitka Core fabric garments (made from polyester BI-component fabric) were already dry. For this reason, for fairly warm-weather hunts, where I'll be sweating a lot, I prefer the lighter polyester fabrics for my undershirts. On rainy days, I can't afford a damp under shirt, as cold fronts can strike suddenly in the high country. Also, the polyester fabrics are a bit lighter and more compressible. I can usually pack along an extra short-sleeve T without even knowing it. That's nice.

For bottoms, I've been using Cabela's boxer shorts for 10-plus years and they sim-

“On rainy days, I can’t afford a damp under shirt, as cold fronts can strike suddenly in the high country.”

ply work perfectly. They are a bit warmer during the hot part of the day, but the support, sweat-wicking ability and comfort against the skin has proven itself year in and year out. I have a hard time switching to anything else.

When my backpacking takes me into mid-September, I’ll take along a set of thermal bottoms. My favorite is the Sitka Core thermals, and for a bit more warmth, the Cabela’s Thermal Zone bottoms.

Midlayers

My favorite midlayers are by far Sitka Gear pants. They come in various versions, but my favorite is the Ascent pants for warm-weather summer/early September exploring or hunting, and Mountain or Timberline pants for mid-September timeframe trips. These pants are unbeatable in the comfort department, since they feel a bit like sweat pants on your legs. Yet, they wear like iron. They are made from a polyester stretch-woven fabric that not soaks up sweat well, resists tears and the wind, but it dries very quickly.

I remember using one set of Ascent pants for an entire week of hard backpacking, eventually washing them in the creek at midday. About two to three hours later, they were ready to put back on for an evening hunt. I believe I couldn’t have done that with any other pants. Of course, this same quality could prevent you from getting hypothermia in bad weather. I can’t speak enough for their quality and function.

Depending on weight, my back-up set of pants (I now insist on taking an extra set) is an additional Ascent or Mountain pant, or if I need to keep weight to a minimum, I opt for the lightest, thinnest, sort of emergency-use pants I can get my hands on. I have a set of Columbia nylon zip-off leg pants that roll up into the palm of my hand and serve this purpose perfectly. This way, at least I have some pants to wear while my main set gets washed in a creek and hung to dry throughout the day, depending on weather conditions.

My mid-layer top nowadays is usually made of Merino wool with a 1/4-zip down neck. This type of garment is lightweight, warm and perfect for regulating heat as I climb mountains. Right now, my favorite is the Cabela’s Thermal Zone top. It’s a five-star product.



Cabela's Thermal Zone 1/4-zip top is an excellent choice to consider for an under or mid-layer garment, as it's made from high quality Merino wool, which is soft against the skin, stretchy and outstanding at wicking moisture. This garment also has special mapped-fabric zones, for better regulating body heat.



Outerlayers

When I think of outerlayers, I think of heavier stuff to cut the chill, the wind or the rain and snow. In this area, I pack along three levels of protection, depending on weather: an ultra-lightweight nylon jacket filled with Primaloft insulation (like the Sitka Kelvin Lite jacket), thin fleece pull-over, and Gore-Tex-lined rainwear (the lightest stuff I can get my hands on).

Armed with these layers, I can handle all weather the timberline can throw at me during mid/late September. The Primaloft jacket weighs about 3/4 pound, and works as a pillow once rolled up into a game bag.

I insist on quality raingear, as I've seen some leak, and a leak you cannot spare in the remote wilderness. High-quality lightweight choices I've used with great success are the Sitka Dewpoint and Cabela's Space Rain gear. These layers double as wind barriers when you're walking across ridges out in the open, or sitting to glass a remote section of woods for game.

Exploring the wilderness requires the lightest and the best gear available. The garment choices outlined here are proven for keeping you comfortable, warm and ready for hiking action. **MP**

Sitka's Ascent are the best trekking pants the author has ever used to date.



Jane Barnes, Oregon's First lady

> By Darryl Quidort

In 1811, just five years after Lewis and Clark reached the Pacific Ocean on their Journey of Discovery, a group of American fur trappers and traders built a small fort at the mouth of the Columbia River. Astoria, named after its financier, John Jacob Astor, was the first United States community on the Pacific coast.

Astor was a businessman, investor and fur trader who had founded his *American Fur Company* only three years previously. He was already well on his way to becoming the first American multi-millionaire. Astoria was his plan to shortcut the fur trading route from America to China without going through his New York export business. Mr. Astor never visited Astoria, preferring a life of luxury in New York.

Meanwhile, life in Astoria wasn't so wonderful. The work was hard, the food poor, the natives somewhat hostile, and the extremely wet weather caused many of the men to become sick. When war with England broke out in 1812, Astoria found itself isolated from the rest of the United States. The log walls of the fort would never withstand an attack by a British warship. When the 26 gun British sloop-of-war, *Raccoon*, anchored off shore in 1813, Astor's men were forced to sell out, at a loss, to the British owned, *Canadian North West Company*.

The *North West Company* appointed Donald McTavish as governor of their new acquisition on the Columbia River. As his ship was loading for the long journey, McTavish passed the time in a nearby tavern, The Shovelers Arms, in Portsmouth, England. There, Miss Jane Barnes, "a lively, flaxen-haired, blue-eyed daughter of Albion" was a comely barmaid.

Being a gentleman of amorous temperament, McTavish asked her to accompany him on his journey, under his "protection." In a "temporary fit of erratic enthusiasm," she agreed. They then visited the finest stores in Portsmouth to purchase necessities for her voyage. So, without much difficulty, McTavish added her to all the comforts of home which he had loaded onto the ship, including bottled porter, excellent cheese, and prime tinned beef. Listed as a seamstress on the ship, *Isaac Todd*, it was believed she was also mistress of McTavish.

This bit of history brings us to April 17, 1814 when, after a 13-month voyage, the

Isaac Todd finally reached the mouth of the Columbia River. Upon arrival, Miss Jane Barnes became the first European woman to set foot in the Oregon Country. Her story is "more interesting than inspirational" according to one historian, and her "First Lady" status is "derived solely from chronology, not pedigree" according to another. Her arrival in Astoria caused a very exciting summer to say the least.

Astorian clerk Ross Cox recorded that not only were the fort employees in awe of Barnes but she was "the greatest curiosity that ever gratified the wondering eyes of the blubber-loving aboriginals of the Northwest coast of America". Barnes was quite a sensation. Cox wrote, "she had rather an extravagant wardrobe, and each day exhibited her in a new dress, which she always managed in a manner to display her figure to the best advantage...One day, her head, decorated with feathers and flowers, produced the greatest surprise; the next, her hair, braided and unconcealed by any covering, excited equal wonder and admiration."

Rather than living in the crowded fort, Barnes and McTavish shared a stateroom on the *Isaac Todd*, which was at anchor offshore. As mistress of McTavish, Barnes gained the dubious title of "First Lady of Oregon". Barmaid, now First Lady, Jane relished the attention. She often strolled through the fort or along the sandy beach in her fine clothes.

NWC Clerk, Alexander Henry (the younger), often went aboard the ship to conduct business with McTavish. The clerk was quite taken with Barnes. Since McTavish needed to make an overland trip to Montreal soon, it was Henry who would become "protector" of Miss Jane. When she next came ashore, she was on the arm of Henry. The exact nature of his protectorship is unclear, since he had a wife and children back in England. In his journal he wrote, "My part is mainly to protect her from ill usage. Affection is out of the question." That was apparently to clear his name for history, however, as she shared Henry's quarters in the fort.

On May 22, 1814, barely a month after Barnes arrived in Astoria, both of her protectors drowned while attempting to cross the dangerous Columbia River.

Ross Cox recorded that, "Henry, McTavish and six voyageurs embarked in an open

boat to cross the Columbia...It blew a stiff gale; and about the middle of the river, owing to some mismanagement of the sail, a heavy wave struck the boat, which instantly filled and went down."

Miss Jane's future was now in question. However, many men at the fort were enamored by her. Her next suitor was the fort's physician, Doctor Swan. Jane declined his offer. Her appearance had influenced the native men as well as the white men at the fort. Cassakas, the son of the Chinook Chief, Comcomly, was smitten with Jane. Drenched in whale oil and red paint, he offered her 100 sea otter skins, an abundance of salmon, elk, all the tobacco she could smoke, and superiority over his other four wives if she would become his bride. Cassakas left the fort spurned.

The rejection of Cassakas caused diplomatic problems and made Jane's presence at the fort a liability. Rumors of Chinook plans to overtake the fort caused the NWC businessmen to put her on the next available ship. Before autumn of 1814, she left Astoria aboard the merchantman, *Columbia*, headed for Alaska, China and back to England.

Barnes married the wealthy captain of the ship, *Columbia*, Anthony Robson. As the wife of a ship's captain, she sailed trade routes around the world with him. They eventually had two children. It was said she visited the Columbia River again in 1818 on a trade mission.

A cloak of mystery and scandal still encompasses Jane's summer at Astoria. It is understandable why most historians chose to ignore her. Some even mocked her for being poorly educated and ill-mannered. George Quimby is the one historian who saw Barnes as a "strong woman able to adapt to circumstances in a challenging world dominated by men." He wrote in a 1980 *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* article that, "In terms of gaining upward mobility within the rigid class circumstances of early 19th-century England, Jane Barnes Robson was a tremendous success. For her day she was certainly a liberated woman...She had the ability to endure and even enjoy that which she could not change, and she knew how to use men, the only option open to a woman who seems to have had a zest for life." **MF**



“Look deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better.”

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