

Spring 2012

# HUNTER EDUCATION INSTRUCTORS' NEWSLETTER



*The men and women who volunteer as hunter education instructors serve as teachers, mentors and coaches. The service they deliver is, quite literally, lifesaving.*

## Wes Blair Returns From Military Tour

Wes Blair, the Hunter Education Specialist for District 8, is back home. The U.S. Navy reservist returned from active duty in January after a year deployed to a base in the Middle East. It was his fifth deployment to the hot spot region since Sept. 11, 2001.

"I am assigned to a 34-foot gunboat unit from Charleston, S.C.," Blair said, describing his most recent service. "Our unit's primary missions are water-borne anti-terrorism operations and high-value asset protection."

During his pre-deployment training and work-up cycle, Blair assisted with the training and qualifying of more than 350 Navy personnel for weapons qualifications, patrol boat tactical operations, and counter IED (improvised explosive device). During his deployment to the Middle East, he served as the division officer for the unit's boat maintenance facility. He supervised a crew of 10, who were directly responsible for the immediate repair and maintenance of 19 Navy patrol boats as combat assets. Blair, a Navy Senior Chief, has also served as the command's senior enlisted leader, patrol leader, and patrol boat captain.

After settling in at home in Lenoir, he is also now back at work.

"I wish to express my sincere gratitude to the Wildlife Commission for the flexibility and understanding with my most recent recall to active duty with the U.S. Navy," Blair said. "I'm proud to serve an agency that supports the concept of citizen sailors and citizen soldiers."

The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission was recognized by the Department of Defense in March 2011 and presented the highest state-level award for support of personnel in the Reserves and National Guard, such as Blair and D-8 Capt. Ted Brothers, a U.S. Coast Guardsman. Blair was unable to attend the awards ceremony — he was deployed. Blair also was recognized as "Professional of the Year" by the International Hunter Education Association in 2010. The award was presented at the Association's meeting in Colorado for his hunting education efforts. His colleagues and friends are glad he is back, but not as much as his wife, Vickie, and daughters, Alex, 7, and Atlanta, 16. Thank you for your service, Wes Blair, and welcome home again.



Wes Blair, at the ready



Gunboats on patrol

## Chris Kent is the New District 2 Hunter Education Specialist



Chris Kent

Chris Kent has joined staff as the hunter education specialist for Pitt, Beaufort, Greene, Lenoir, Duplin, Pender, New Hanover, Onslow, Jones, Carteret, Pamlico and Craven counties. His immediate priority is meeting instructors and wildlife officers in the area.

"I want to reach out to a broader audience in the community to get them involved in the outdoors," Kent said. "I would like to see more people — folks from all backgrounds — being a part of hunting. Everyone should practice hunting safety."

Kent, from Danville, Va., and now living in New Bern, enjoys family activities, backpacking, wildlife photography, fishing and any winter activities that involve snow.

"I will get involved with schools as much as possible," he said. "And I will try to offer as many advanced hunter education courses as I can."

# Time Again for Becoming an Outdoors-Woman Workshop

The Becoming an Outdoors-Woman program will hold its annual weekend workshop on April 13-15 at the Eastern 4-H Conference Center in Columbia, N.C. The workshop includes expert instruction in activities ranging from fishing and target shooting to outdoor cooking and bird watching.

Cost is \$225 per person and will cover a choice of four outdoor skill sessions, all program materials and use of equipment, plus meals and lodging. Amenities at the Eastern 4-H Conference Center include climate-controlled living quarters, private showers and dining hall. The 250-acre facility boasts a spectacular view of Albemarle Sound and access to nearby woodlands, meadows, pocosin forests, wetlands and tributaries.



One-on-one instruction by Specialists and Instructors at BOW weekend

“It’s a beautiful setting — perfect for learning these outdoor skills,” said BB Gillen, the Wildlife Commission’s outdoor skills coordinator. “The boardwalks, nature trails and boat docks provide easy access to the surrounding natural areas.”

Space is limited and registration is on a first-come, first-served basis.

“The camaraderie of BOW is great and the no-pressure learning environment makes it fun,” Gillen said. “A gift certificate is an ideal present for any woman wanting to explore nature and expand her knowledge and skills.”

Becoming an Outdoors-Woman is an international program for women, 18 and older, to learn outdoor skills through hands-on experiences in a variety of outdoor instructional activities, such as archery, paddling, wildlife photography, outdoor cooking, tracking and map-and-compass work, or orienteering. In North Carolina, the program is administered by the Wildlife Commission. For more information, contact Gillen at 919-218-3638 or [bb.gillen@ncwildlife.org](mailto:bb.gillen@ncwildlife.org). BOW gift certificates may be purchased online at [www.ncwildlife.org](http://www.ncwildlife.org).

## Rick Venable Promoted to Captain in District 2, Supervisor for an Eastern Area

The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission has promoted Rick Venable to District 2 captain, where he will manage and supervise enforcement operations for hunting, inland fishing and boating, and coordinate boating safety and hunter education programs. He began in the role Feb. 1.

Venable was previously a lieutenant in the district, which covers Pitt, Beaufort, Greene, Lenoir, Duplin, Pender, New Hanover, Onslow, Jones, Carteret, Pamlico and Craven counties. His predecessor, Capt. Preston Tyndall, retired on Jan. 31.

“I plan on working for all constituents and making their priorities, our priorities,” Capt. Venable said. “Working together with sportsmen and wildlife enthusiasts, we can achieve our shared conservation goals.”

Venable and his wife, Donna, live in New Bern with their two children, daughter Allison, 10, and son Brady, 5. A 26-year veteran of wildlife enforcement, Venable’s first duty station was Graham County in the westernmost part of the state. He brings more than 19 years of supervisory experience to the position, including almost 15 years as lieutenant in D-2.

“Capt. Venable knows the coastal and coastal plains region, its resources and its people as well as anyone,” said Maj. Todd Kennedy, supervisor for field operations across the state. “He has my congratulations and full confidence that he and the wildlife officers will continue to meet the high standards set for them.”



Capt. Venable, wife Donna, with Allison and Brady

## Wildlife Commission Expands Use of Social Media for Outreach Efforts

Hunters, anglers and wildlife enthusiasts now have more ways than ever to receive the most up-to-date information about the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission. Constituents can now “like” the Commission on Facebook, follow on Twitter and circle on Google+ to see news releases, photos, get updates on fishing and boating, learn of new regulations or just find out about wildlife and the outdoors. The efforts join a blog started in December and existing videos on its YouTube channel. All social media options are posted on the bottom, right corner of the agency’s newly redesigned website, [www.ncwildlife.org](http://www.ncwildlife.org).

# Number of Women Hunters Steadily Increases in Our State

The number of women hunters in North Carolina keeps increasing, statistics from the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission show. While overall hunting license sales have fluctuated somewhat in recent years, the number of women buying hunting licenses in the state has steadily gone up, according to Harvey White with the Commission's Administrative Services Division. This can be attributed to numerous factors, but there are a couple we'd like to acknowledge and promote:

- The Becoming an Outdoors-Woman program. This program for women 18 and older provides hands-on experiences in a variety of outdoor instructional activities, including hunting. The next big activity is a weekend workshop on April 13-15 at the Eastern 4-H Conference Center in Columbia, N.C. The workshop includes expert instruction in activities ranging from fishing to bird watching, shooting sports and hunting remain a big part of this program.
- The Hunter Education Program. This means YOU! The instruction you provide as dedicated volunteers is the heartbeat of hunting in North Carolina. "Instructors deserve so much credit for the increase in women hunting, youth involvement and improved hunting safety," said Geoff Cantrell, public information officer for the Hunter Education Program, among other things. "Instructors give up personal time to teach and to be taught, because being updated in training and teaching techniques is a requirement for certification. And it is worth pointing out that many of our instructors are women. Conservation is better for any increased involvement, regardless of gender or age bracket or whatever. I hope the trend continues."



## Past Five Years, North Carolina Hunting Licenses Sales

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Total Licenses Sold</u>	<u>Licenses Sold to Women</u>
2006-07	270,091	12,994
2007-08	261,973	14,466
2008-09	257,708	15,317
2009-10	252,365	15,743
2010-11	253,712	17,058

# Call for Volunteers to Assist Events at State Tournament

The 2012 North Carolina Youth Hunter Education Skills Tournament takes place Saturday, April 28, and we need your help. For a smooth, well-managed event that can see more than 3,000 in attendance, we need some folks who are willing to be unsung heroes and behind-the-scenes movers and shakers.

All Hunter Education Instructors should have received a volunteer form by now. If you haven't, please contact your Hunter Education Specialist or Nancy Boykin in the Raleigh office at 919-707-0031.

Camp Millstone 4-H Center, near Ellerbe, has housing onsite, mostly cabins equipped with bath facilities, heat and air conditioning. If you would like to stay there, there is no cost to you. However, you must bring your own bedding and bath linens. A confirmation packet, which includes a shirt, hat and pin, will be sent to all registered volunteers, along with directions to Camp Millstone, a list of nearby hotels and event confirmation.

A work day will be held Friday, April 27, beginning at 1 p.m. There will be a Steering Committee and Subcommittee meeting that evening, beginning at 4 p.m. in the dining hall. If you would like to arrive earlier to help with setup, please indicate on your form. Dinner will be provided at 5 p.m. Let us know if you plan to join us for dinner on the form. Saturday will begin with breakfast at 6 a.m. A brief meeting will be held at 6:30 a.m. The Hunter Education Program appreciates your involvement. We couldn't do it without you.

## District Hunter Education Specialists

- D-1 David Denton, 252-482-7105 david.denton@ncwildlife.org
- D-2 Chris Kent, 252-521-5190 christopher.kent@ncwildlife.org
- D-3 Hilton Best, 252-291-2863 hilton.best@ncwildlife.org
- D-4 Kevin Crabtree, 910-648-4034 kevin.crabtree@ncwildlife.org
- D-5 Carissa Shelton, 336-455-0292 carissa.shelton@ncwildlife.org
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- D-7 Tim Lemon, 336-957-4382 tim.lemon@ncwildlife.org
- D-8 Wes Blair, 828-726-1160 wes.blair@ncwildlife.org
- D-9 Darrin Ball, 828-891-4093 darrin.ball@ncwildlife.org





# On Target with the Hunter Education Program

The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission has recognized nine volunteers who teach hunting education as the agency's "Instructors of the Year." The instructors, each representing one of nine districts statewide, were presented a commemorative model Henry Golden Boy .22 caliber rifle in tribute to their service in ceremonies held in their home communities.

Reading over the nomination forms, it is more than apparent to me that these nine volunteers provided exemplary service in the past year and deserve this recognition. They and the nearly 800 other instructors currently active in North Carolina have earned our gratitude and respect, while making huge contributions to conservation.

In these lean economic times with diminished funding, it is worth pointing out how their selfless commitment saves the state considerable money while also saving lives.

I always have been in awe of the work done by this program's volunteers. It may be a labor of love, but make no mistake. It takes committment. So it is difficult to single out any one individual. No trophy, or knife or rifle, will ever repay the debt that wildlife resources, hunting safety and outdoor traditions owe to volunteer hunter education instructors. Thank you for your commitment to hunter education and conservation. Until next time, keep your muzzles high and powder dry.

*Travis Casper, state hunting education coordinator*



D-4 Tony Gaw, Jr.



D-6 Stony Rushing, with HES Randy Thomas



D-1 (from left) Capt. Norman Watts, Lt. Tim Hardy, Randy Taylor Sgt. Mark Cagle and Wildlife Officer Brian White



D-8 Eric Storey



D-9 Joe Taylor



D-7 Rick Shelton



D-5 (from left) Officer Nathan Green, HES Carissa Shelton, Clint Richardson, Lt. Robert Sharpe



D-3 Ron Penney



D-2 Ray Deal, flanked by Sgt. David Jordan (left) and Lt. Todd Radabaugh (right)



The inscription engraved on the District 3 rifle

# Youth Hunter Skills Tournaments Scheduled

The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission has set the schedule for the 2012 Youth Hunter Education Skills Tournaments, marking the 34th year for popular statewide shooting sports events.

Competition is conducted on senior (high school) and junior (middle and elementary schools) divisional levels, with overall team and overall individual awards based on aggregate scores in all events. The tournaments are an incentive component of the state Hunter Education Program, provided as an opportunity to showcase outdoor skills and demonstrate safety, with events in rifle, shotgun and archery marksmanship, as well as an orienteering challenge and a wildlife knowledge test. Teams are organized within public and private schools, while home-schooled students and teams representing organizations such as 4-H or FFA also can compete, provided they meet eligibility requirements. Nine district-level competitions will be held in March, with hundreds of middle school and high school students taking part:

- District 1 March 31 at Eastern 4-H Center in Columbia
- District 2 March 10 at New Hanover LE Officers Assoc. Range in Castle Hayne
- District 3 March 24 at Rose Hill Farms near Nashville
- District 4 March 28 at the Coharrie Shooting Range near Clinton
- District 5 March 3 at the Alamance Wildlife Club near Graham
- District 6 March 17 at Camp John J. Barnhardt in New London
- District 7 March 24 at Hunting Creek Preserve in Harmony
- District 8 March 17 at Catawba Valley Wildlife Club in Hickory
- District 9 March 17 at Polk County Gun Club near Columbus

Winning teams will advance to the state championship tournament, held at the Millstone 4-H Center near Ellerbe, to be held April 28.

“These events are a demonstration of skills covered through instruction by the Hunter Education Program and are instrumental in securing the future of the hunting tradition,” said Travis Casper, state hunting education coordinator. “To pass this heritage along, we need to ‘Hunt Like the Future Depends On It,’ and share the enjoyment and fulfillment of shooting sports and conservation.”

Now in its 34th year, this youth shooting sports event has emerged as a national example for such competitions, providing a good example of statewide participation, event organization and conservation outreach.

“Something we stress to media and the general public is that the tournaments are a component of the Hunter Education Program,” Casper said. “Not all these kids hunt or will hunt. But they see the value of hunting, the importance of stewardship and how there is a shared responsibility for managing natural resources. Safety and conservation are the main messages of the Hunter Education Program, along with enjoyment of the outdoors, and they get it. They demonstrate all those principles and become ambassadors for shooting sports.”



Steady aim in rifle range competition



Coaches confer with an event volunteer

## Hunting Feral Swine at Night With a Light Now Legal, With a Free Permit

The Wildlife Commission now allows hunting of feral swine at night with the aid of light, by special permit. Under this policy, archery and firearm hunters with a Commission-issued permit in addition to a hunting license may hunt feral swine after normal shooting hours (½ hour before sunrise until ½ hour past sunset) where local law allows; except by firearms on Sundays. The permits are valid through March 31.

Free permits to hunt feral swine at night with aid of light are available through the Commission’s online services at [www.ncwildlife.org](http://www.ncwildlife.org). The permit does not grant access to any property. Landholders must grant permission to enter private or public property lawfully. The permit does not grant access to take feral swine on state game land.

As of Oct. 1, 2011, all hogs in the wild became classified and managed as feral swine, with no closed season and no bag limits. The intent is to make it easier to remove feral swine from the landscape, as these exotic non-native animals compete with native wildlife and pose significant threats to the environment and agricultural operations.

When hunting feral swine at any time, hunters must have a valid hunting license unless otherwise exempt and wear hunter orange as required for appropriate seasons. Hunters should reference the N.C. Inland Fishing, Hunting and Trapping Regulations Digest for all rules associated with hunting feral swine during normal hunting hours.

# North Carolina Hunter Education Program – Communication and Outreach

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## Comments and submissions are welcome.

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North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission

Hunter Education Program

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