

SPRING 2009

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.

Tips for Safely Hunting Wild Turkey

By Fred Rorrer

Hunting can be an exhilarating and exciting experience, especially when hunting turkeys. The wild turkey has a keen sense of sight and can easily detect movement and colors that are out of place in the woods, making hunting turkeys quite a challenge.

But along with this challenge comes the associated risks with hunting turkeys, the most prominent being mistaken for game. To protect yourself and other hunters around you it is recommended that you practice defensive hunting, much like defensive driving. Make sure you are being safe, and that you are prepared for other mistakes or dangers that other hunters around you might make.

The following are some tips, for both amateur and experienced hunters, which will help you to get the most out of your hunting experience while making sure that it is a safe one, both for you and other hunters around you.



Part of the adaptability of wild turkeys lies in the variety of foodstuffs on which they are able to subsist. When available, acorns are a favorite; but a wide array of mast, buds, fruits, grasses, seeds, insects, green vegetation and small animals are consumed regularly.

Clothing and Camouflage

- Never wear clothing, even something as simple as socks, that contains the colors red, blue, black and white. These colors are predominant in the male turkey's plumage and if a nearby hunter catches a glimpse of these colors, he could mistake you for a turkey and fire upon you.

- When waiting in your position for a turkey to come by, dress in total camouflage. This should include a face mask or face paint, and gloves. If only dressed in partial camouflage, first a turkey will be more likely to see you, but more importantly, increases your chances of being mistaken for game. Another hunter may only see parts of you and mistake you for a turkey. Your gun should be camouflaged as well, since blued steel looks black from a distance.

- When moving in the forest or on hunting grounds, make sure to wear hunter orange clothing. This is to ensure that you are visible to other hunters that may be in the area. Also, when transporting a turkey, wrap it in a hunter orange vest so that other hunters do not mistake it for a live turkey and fire upon it.

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The Grasshopper And The Geezer

By Bill Stancil

A chill is in the air as I sit in the porch swing and admire the fall colors between my perch and the Tar River flowing slowly just a few yards away. It's fall and it's supposed to be cold in the late afternoon. Besides, the hot coffee I'm sipping buffers the chill, and I am enjoying the spectacle as Mother Nature changes her clothing.

My hunting blood is surging, but I'm not hunting because other duties have prevailed. So, I'm sitting here engaged in a hunter's multi-tasking project (my wife calls it "sulking")...watching for deer that frequently come to the river, and listening to the sounds of squirrels making a late-evening rummage for acorns in the fallen leaves. Just before dark, the geese will honk a passing "hello" as they wing their way to a nearby roosting place. And as the shadows gather, I'm thinking about my hunting heritage, among other things.

The time was when I hunted right here in my yard and in the woods that surround it when we bought the place forty-two years ago. And here I scratched my itch to hunt and fish, and raised my children to love nature and respect the wild things and to enjoy them as much as I do, if possible.

The other things I'm thinking is that my grandson has turned 12 years old and it doesn't seem possible. It also seems impossible that I have a granddaughter in college and another in high school. How did they get that old while I haven't aged all? My mirror tells lies!

My grandson calls me an "Old Geezer," probably because he knows I am wiser than him...although others claim it's because he knows I'm old. Therefore, I have dubbed him "The Grasshopper" because he's young and inexperienced, and due to an old TV show about an elder master teaching a youngster about life.

"Try to grab these pebbles from my hand before I can close it and you will be a man, Grasshopper," the old master would tell him, but the boy was too slow. Finally, one day the youngster was faster than the teacher and succeeded in taking the pebbles from his hand.

My grandson has spent a lot of time with me while he has been growing, and I have taken every opportunity to impart my great knowledge of things to him...not all of it, of course, for his ears are yet too tender to take it all in. There is so much of it, you know. He has become very adept at fishing, as have both my granddaughters, in spite of my legendary instruction.

But the Grasshopper takes a back seat to nobody in using the theory of "Stretchanomics" in fishing. For the unenlightened, that's the phenomenon that makes a two-pound fish gain another pound between the time you catch it and you tell a friend about it. The one that got away gains even more weight and size as time goes by. It's been claimed by some folks that I developed that theory, but my humility naturally prevents me from claiming that distinction.

Recently, we were deer hunting from a box stand and I decided to test his reaction speed one more time. I placed two 20-gauge buckshot shells across my palm. "Try to grab these from my hand before I close it, Grasshopper," I offered. He was too slow. "Not yet, Grasshopper, but...someday, perhaps."

Soon the stand became uncomfortably warm, so I opened the windows. Suddenly, we were under attack by wasps from a nearby nest that I had not seen. We ducked and slapped at them as they flew in and out of the windows. Soon, they were alighting on our caps and shoulders.

"Quick, give me that can of bug repellent, Grasshopper," I ordered. He laid the can across his palm.

"Try to grab the can from my palm before I close it, Old Geezer," he said, as he exited the stand. Hurriedly following him out the door and down the ladder, while slapping furiously at the wasps, I yelled "Give me that can, Grasshopper!"

He stretched out a can-laden palm, then jerked it back as I grabbed for it.

"Not yet, Old Geezer...but someday, perhaps."

I rooted for the wasps to catch up to him.



Bill Stancil is a hunter education instructor from Rocky Mount.



On Target With the Hunter Safety Coordinator

Please fill out your Cover Sheet reporting forms completely and accurately, and then turn them in promptly. I know bookkeeping chores usually aren't anyone's favorite thing to do, but it is very important for the Hunter Education Program. Keeping track of volunteer instructor time aids in obtaining grant assistance, as well as Pittman-Robertson funds, and determining needs for materials. It also helps with planning and scheduling for future course offerings and activities. Make Cover Sheets a top priority.

When asked about age requirements for hunter education, you must respond that in North Carolina there is no minimum age to attend a hunter education class or become certified. You should explain that classes are taught at a sixth grade level and students must demonstrate safe fire-arms handling skills and pass a written test to successfully complete the course, but do not say or imply there is an age requirement.

The Southeast Regional meeting for Hunter Education Coordinators was held Feb. 3-4 at Wrightsville Beach. Topics included the use of Internet courses, an update on new federal assistance paperless grants and reporting initiatives, plus audit findings related to hunter education programs. The importance of stressing tree stand safety was the focus of a session led by N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission and the Treestand Manufacturers Association, which featured the behind-the-scenes of making our broadcast public service announcement.

As always, thank you for what you do.

Capt. Chris Huebner



Becoming an Outdoors-Woman Upcoming Events

This popular outdoors workshop program for women has several events schedule in April, May and June worth checking out. Learn turkey call techniques, field dressing skills and improve accuracy with rifle and shotgun, plus much more. Becoming an Outdoors-Woman is an international program in which women 18 and older learn outdoor skills through hands-on experiences. Visit www.ncwildlife.org or contact BB Gillen, outdoor skills coordinator, at (919) 218-3638 or bb.gillen@ncwildlife.org.



Volunteers Needed for the NRA's Youth Hunter Education Challenge

This year's competition will be held July 27-31 at the NRA Whittington Center, located in Raton, N.M. Recognized as the most comprehensive youth hunting program in North America, YHEC is the NRA's "graduate studies" program in outdoor skills and safety training for youth. The program is conducted under simulated hunting conditions to provide the best practical environment for reinforcing and testing a young hunter's skills in rifle, bow and muzzleloader shooting at life-sized targets, to wildlife identification, to map-and-compass orienteering and more. For more information, go to www.nrahq.org/hunting/youthed.asp

Lodging and meals provided by the NRA. For an application and further information, contact Jan Taylor, 703-267-1523 or jtaylor@nrahq.org

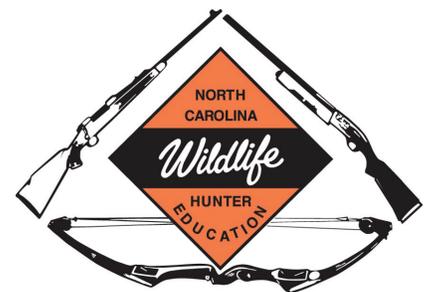
About Hunter Education Program Communication and Outreach

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Positioning and Calling

- Never stalk a turkey. It is almost futile and will only increase your chances of being mistaken for game.
- Position yourself with your back against a tree that is wider than your shoulders. This will help camouflage your outline as well as protect you from accidental shootings from behind. Never position yourself such that you cannot see clearly around you without moving.



Photo courtesy of National Wild Turkey Federation and Mossy Oak.

- Place an orange ribbon around the tree in which you are positioned to alert other hunters of your presence.
- Never use a turkey call, move or wave to alert another hunter of your presence. Instead, yell or shout “STOP” in a clear voice to get their attention and remain still while doing so. Remember, if another hunter is walking in the area, more than likely, any turkeys will be gone so shouting will not be detrimental to your hunt.
- Once in position, remain still, especially when calling a turkey. This will help guard against other hunters firing prematurely at your own movement, especially after you have made a turkey call. Never assume you are the only hunter in the area.
- Be careful when turkey calling and use it as little as possible. Not only can calling attract turkeys, but it can attract other hunters as well.

Target Selection

Before shooting at a turkey, make sure that it is a legal turkey. Check at least twice and do not go on instinct when you think you have spotted a turkey. Assume that every noise, movement or call that you hear is another hunter. If there is any doubt, DON'T SHOOT.

Fred Rorrer is the Hunter Education Specialist for District 5.

North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission

Hunter Education Program

Be Courteous, Be Careful, Be Seen, Be Safe

Division of Enforcement

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