

Summer 2011

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.

Technology and the Traditions of Hunting

Hunter education professionals and volunteer instructors are charged with two main objectives, to reduce hunting-related injuries and fatalities and to ensure the future of all hunting traditions. Can technology assist in achieving these objectives?

The answer is yes and this article will attempt to clarify how technology can enhance the hunter recruitment process and benefit students in the hunter education classroom.

Hunting is built on tradition and technological evolution but hunters have always looked at technology with questions. With the influx of technology, there have been questions on whether society's new gadgets have been a hindrance or a benefit to the outdoor experience.

In 2008, Richard Louv explored the effects of limited exposure to the natural world on children and society. He wrote "Children between the ages of eight and 18 years old spent an average of nearly 6.5 hours a day plugged in electronically - 45 hours a week." About a quarter of this time young people were engaged in the use of more than one electronic medium simultaneously, leading him to call them "Generation M," with the "m" standing for multitasking. It also reflects the shift in how discretionary time is spent.

If hunter education professionals are serious about reaching Generation M, technology must be embraced and explored. It was reported by a marketing firm in attendance at the 2009 Archery Trade Association Education summit that 95 percent of travel and recreation decisions being made by consumers are researched via the internet. People are using the internet as an information source to make informed decisions. The existence of a wildlife agency or a volunteer instructor organization on the web only increases the online presence of hunter education and increasing the likelihood of this information being found by interested individuals.

Many hunting forums and videos on video sharing software platforms are on the internet. A recent search of "deer hunting" on YouTube returned about 684,000 results. So, this medium is being used by hunters and could be a source of information for individuals interested in exploring hunting.

Traditionally the knowledge of hunting has been passed down within a family or by close personal friends. Hunting is a tradition and in some areas the passing of the heritage is a rite of passage. Today's society is mobile. Careers, life, and other personal pursuits have made it more transient than society was just a few years ago. Individuals are not around their nuclear family for traditional knowledge to be passed down. If a child from Ohio is now living in North Carolina and he/she wants to learn about turkey hunting where would they turn for the basic knowledge? Short video vignettes might be a solution.

Today's generation is attached electronically. Short how-to videos on the types of calls, equipment, decoy set-up, and safety information can be basic knowledge that is easily conveyed through video.

Technology does not just have its place in recruiting new hunters, it can be beneficial in the hunter education classroom as well. Students and adults alike are conditioned to learn via many different delivery methods now. Many hunter education classes are taught through lecture distributed by a few DVDs and some practical hands on activities. One simple way an instructor can use to enhance their presentation is by implementing video, PowerPoint presentation or other formats during the course.

Taken from an excerpt of an academic paper by Travis Casper, the state assistant hunter education coordinator



The Hunter Education Program has increased video and social media for hunter heritage promotion, safety messages and instruction in recent years. Here, filming for a tree stand safety advertisement by a professional production crew is underway.

Another Successful Youth Tournament

The 2011 Youth Hunter Skills Tournament, conducted by the Hunter Education Program of the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission, was held under ideal conditions on April 30 at Millstone 4-H Center near Ellerbe.

Nearly 600 students from 52 schools participated in this year's tournament, which determined state champions in team and individual categories.

Senior division champions are Forbush High School's Red Team, of Yadkin County, while Stanly County's Park Ridge Sharpshooters are the junior division champions.

The inaugural Fred Rorrer Trophy, recognizing sportsmanship among competitors, was presented to Gray Stone Day School of Stanly County. The annual award is named in memory of the longtime hunter educator and sportsman who passed away in October 2010.

The competition is an incentive component of the state Hunter Education Program. It provides 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.



Rorrer Trophy



Senior Champions



Junior Champions

North Carolina Hosts the IHEA Annual Conference



The International Hunter Education Association's annual conference was held June 1-4 at Wrightsville Beach. The IHEA is the professional association for 67 state and provincial conservation agencies. Delegates from five countries and 38 states were in attendance.

Clockwise from left is Cape Fear historian/performer John Golden; Bob Davis of the NRA; and Dave Butz, former Washington Redskins and All-Pro lineman who played in three Super Bowls. The theme of this year's conference was "Home From The Hunt Begins With Hunter Education."



Incoming IHEA Board



Outgoing IHEA Board



On Target with the Hunter Education Program

As you can see from this newsletter it has been a busy couple of months. The district and state Youth Hunter Education Skills Tournaments are behind us and, as you read this, several North Carolina teams are preparing for the NRA's International Youth Hunter Education Challenge to be hosted at the Whittington Center in Raton, New Mexico, on July 24-29. I am sure these teams will well represent the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission and the Old North State.

It was also an honor to host the 2011 International Hunter Education Association conference at Wrightsville Beach on June 1-4. The conference was productive and thought provoking. With five nations and 38 states represented, there are many different views on hunter education but as hunter education professionals and volunteers we must be conscious of the two goals of hunter education, to reduce hunting related injuries and fatalities and to ensure the future of all hunting traditions. This conference let us look at different tools and avenues we all can take as we strive to meet these goals. I would challenge you to use these as a litmus test to all hunter education-related activities to ensure we are heading down the right road.

As the heat and humidity grip us in North Carolina, we start to long for the cool autumn mornings and evenings that are just around the corner. In about 45 days, August will have returned and with it the fall's rush of hunter education courses. I hope you find my article on technology useful and the challenge each of you to look for ways to enhance your classes.

This fall, the hunter education program will begin implementing "Event Manger" software. This software will allow for instructors enter their class location onto a database. This database also lets the student sign up for their classes. There will be a mapping capability that will assist everyone in finding class locations. The student information will only be collected one time and it will be easily exported to cards for printing. Coversheets and student addendums will become electronic, which will assist the agency with the required federal reporting and expedite the process of getting students in the license database. I encourage you to attend the fall advance workshop and your district incentive banquets to learn more.

Until next time keep your muzzles high and powder dry.

Travis Casper, state assistant hunter education coordinator

A Hunting Season of Memories and a Different Kind of Success

Bob Johnson of Henderson County had the hunting experience of a lifetime last season – and he never fired a shot. He was a hunting mentor for Austin Laughter, his grandson, and together they experienced a variety of hunts, along with plenty of excitement, success and assorted learning opportunities and challenges.

"Austin did all the shooting. We hunted turkeys in the spring, doves in September, bucks with a muzzleloader in the fall, and ducks over decoys late in the season," Bob said. "It was more fun than I'd ever had before."

One experience in particular stands out. Austin shot a goose during waterfowl season that had been banded the year he was born. It was a fun and thought-provoking discovery.

Bob remembers how he was introduced to the outdoors and it just followed he would do the same for someone. So he called Martin Lewis, the wildlife commissioner representing District 9, about the bonds forged through these outdoors experiences under the Hunting Heritage mantle.

"This is exactly what we need to see happening," Lewis said. "And the way Bob describes those hunting trips, you can tell how much he and his grandson got out of it. Everybody wins with a season like that, including the Wildlife Commission."

This is the success that the "Hats-On" mentoring campaign of the Hunting Heritage Program had in mind all along. Started prior to the 2010-2011 hunting seasons, "Hats-On" is an effort to introduce anyone who has not previously hunted to the safe and popular outdoor recreation.

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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

Be Courteous, Be Careful, Be Seen, Be Safe

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