

# LADY SHOOTER

## *Life Styles*





*feature*

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# *feature*

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A FAMILY ADVENTURE





## LADY SHOOTER *LifeStyles*

**Journal No. 11**  
***Holiday Issue 2023***

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LadyShooter LifeStyles is  
a digital and print subscription based publication.

ISSN pending.  
Subscriptions, address changes and all departments:  
LadyShooter LifeStyles  
[info@ladyshooterlife.com](mailto:info@ladyshooterlife.com)  
Printed in the USA

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HERE WE GO

# New Beginnings, Again x 2

RE-INTRODUCING BRANDY ELROD  
NOW TAKING ON AN OWNER ROLE

## Publisher's Foreword

It is funny how life happens. If you would have told my 15 year-old self I would own a magazine one day, first my 10th grade English teacher would have laughed in your face and mine...that was the relationship we had, and then I would have told you English was stupid. I hated English...I was not fond of my English teacher, and I know for a fact the feelings were mutual because she made it known to me as well. I was a bit of an academic nerd in high school and needless to say I did not believe in D means diploma or C'ing my way out of high school. Even a B was not an option for me, but my fate was set by my 10th grade English teacher as she gave me that faithful B when I wrote a paper on how English as a subject was useless. She did credit that I had very valuable points but my argument was asinine. Well jokes on her...I now own a magazine.

I want to thank everyone for your support! I am learning as I am going, but I am making damn sure that I am providing you ladies the absolute best shooting magazine written for you by mainly like-minded women. Let me know what you want to learn or read about! This magazine is for you...



My road to the shooting industry was not paved lightly. First obstacle...birth...being born a chunky baby and delivered by an incompetent doctor lead to my birth injury. I had to go about everyday task quite differently than everyone else. Simple things like putting on my clothes, tying my shoes, putting my hair in a pony tail, and even cutting a steak are not done in a "normal" fashion for me. Obstacle two...young parents...my parents were young barely adults raising a fiesty baby that also came broken'sh. My dad would try to help me and my mother threw me to the wolves, thankfully I had my grandparents to save me as well as to teach me about life and perserverance. Obstacle three...I was around firearms my entire life, I could use a rifle as long as it was on a bi or tripod but no one in my family outside of my dad really used shotguns. My grandmother and step grandfather were big game hunters, my Papa hunted hogs with dogs and my dad was a bird hunter. My dad was the one that taught me alot of everyday life skills but teaching me to use a shotgun was not in his wheel house of knowing where to start. In the 90's youth shotguns really did not exist and gunfitters were few & far between. During my youth years I rodeoed and played golf so the firearms industry was not even on my radar. Obstacle four...when I started teaching at a private school the students wanted a shotgun team. I started attending coaching classes but unlike some high school coaches I actually wanted to be able to truly understand the mechanics and technclality so I had to learn to shoot. Obstacle five...how am I going to shoot. My husband being an avid bird hunter and at the time he was competing in NSCA events started my journey which turned into my hobby, then passion, and now profession. Even though it took me a while and my road was full of potholes, here I am supporting you ladies living your best LadyShooter LifeStyle!

*Brandy*





*Mendi shot a .50 cal for her birthday!*



## *The Church Ladies Be Packin'*



*Sharon T aylor, Amanda Berger, Audrey Rodriguez, and Mandy Faulkne are the original four members of the group.*



# Packin' With Christ

WITH GROUP LEADER SHARON TAYLOR

I've grown up hunting with rifles and have used one as long as I can remember. The first firearm I owned, a Daisy Red Rider, came on Christmas Day when I was four. I may not remember what I had for breakfast yesterday, but I'll never forget that Christmas. Why? Because I got what every girl dreams of. A red bandanna, a pearl handled pistol and pistol belt, and the Red Rider BB gun. I'm upset with myself that I don't still have it, but it was lost in a move during my adult years.

## THE ADDICTION BEGINS...

Fast forward until my late 20's. I was working in an office dominated by men, but not wimpy men, manly men. I was in data entry, and the men would bring my work - this was mid 90's so email was not used to transmit work, they gave me "real" paper! In conversation, I learned one of the men had a handgun, I expressed an interest, and we went shooting. The first handgun I fired was a Pistolet Makarova, or Makarov pistol. It was the Soviet Union's standard military side arm, and fired a 9x18mm cartridge rather than the 9x19mm cartridge favored by NATO and the Western bloc. I was already versed in gun safety, so the only thing he really taught me was how to work the action. The Makarov was a heavy gun which helped me manage recoil, but from the first shot, I was hooked. As life tends to happen though, I changed jobs and lost touch.

It was eight years later when I found someone else who owned a handgun, another male, another coworker, of course. We lived on the side of town, so we became carpool buds. It was he who convinced me it was ok to purchase a handgun myself. But what? I'd only ever fired one handgun! I started looking for a Makarov which aren't common, and I'll admit while the salesman

was probably just trying to make a sale, he let me know the 9x18 would be very hard to find ammunition for and convinced me to buy a used Springfield SD in 9mm. I still have that gun 17 years later, it's my favorite range gun and I'm more accurate with it than any of my other handguns. I started

shooting by myself at an indoor range. I was blessed that the staff there (shout out to The Marksman Range in South Houston) were, and still are, amazing! At my first visit, I let them know I was a newbie. They explained the rules, and away I went.







## EDUCATE

Concealed Carry in Texas had been around for a few years, so when I was comfortable enough, I took the CHL class at Alvin Community College. The instructor advised us the college offered Continuing Education marksmanship classes, so I took the Basic and Advanced classes. As usual, I was the only female.

For years, I would shoot by myself, or sometimes with a couple of guy friends because I had no girlfriends to shoot with. In 2019, the church I attend, Life Church Houston organized small groups. Our pastor encouraged both biblical study groups and activity groups, so I approached him to let him know I was interested in leading a small group for Women and Firearms. I'll never forget his question, "Sharon, what qualifies you to lead this type of group?" Just because I have always used firearms, was I truly qualified to "teach" others? So I started researching.

Back up a bit. Since I first obtained my CHL, I've been a member of the United States Concealed Carry Association

(USCCA). For those not familiar with this, USCCA helps members prepare for what happens before, during, and after an act of lawful self-defense. They provide members with self-defense liability insurance. Short plug here, if you have a license to carry and do not have self-defense liability insurance, get some – I recommend USCCA. USCCA is not just insurance, they are a wealth of resources and offer a training program for

firearm instructors. I went through their two-day, in person course and became a certified instructor for Concealed Carry and Home Defense Fundamentals, as well as Women's Handgun and Self Defense Fundamentals. Now, I informed my pastor, I'm qualified to lead a women's' small group for firearms.

## AND SO IT BEGAN

My first group was Summer 2019. I had five ladies in the group - two had been shooting before, and one's husband owned a firearm, but she was not comfortable with it herself. We started. The first thing taught were the 4 Absolutes – the safety rules – treat every gun as if it is loaded; do not point a gun at anything

you do not want to destroy; know your target and what's beyond it; and, keep your finger off the trigger and outside of the trigger guard until you are on target and have decided to shoot. Next, I introduced them to a handgun. Or several – I forgot to mention that once I bought my first firearm, it became an addiction. Simply the sight of a "real" handgun made one of the ladies shiver. Why? Because it was an "unknown", something unfamiliar, something scary, it's a weapon!

But no, a gun is not a weapon. A gun is a tool. The weapon is YOU. I'm sorry Sharon, what did you say? I said the weapon is YOU, the gun is the tool. You're correct that I'm not speaking of the Webster's Dictionary definition of a weapon. I'm speaking practically. Think of it this way, you're sitting in a coffee shop writing a magazine article, someone comes through the door and at you as if they are going to hit you. You stand as they're coming, pick up the chair you're sitting in, swing at their head and knock them out cold. You were the weapon; the chair was the tool. You are the weapon, your gun is your tool. If you don't know how to use the tool, it's as useless as a the 'ay' in 'Okay'!

During our class session, we went through the basic mechanics of each firearm. First, I showed each lady that each





firearm was unloaded. I even went as far to make sure there were no live rounds of ammunition in the room. We talked through the parts of the firearm - what is a magazine, what is a slide, what is a trigger guard, what is a slide lock, etc. Using snap caps, we walked thru how to load and unload a firearm. Each lady manipulated their firearm, over and over. Load and unload. Load and unload. Nerves started to calm. Trepidation started to decline. Why? The ladies gained knowledge and understanding of simple mechanics.

After walking through eye dominance, grip, stance, and how to aim, it was time to go to the range. When we arrived, each filled out the range waiver (FYI, every range will have one), and I introduced the ladies to the staff. As they were when I was there my first time, the Staff was amazing. My ladies began shooting. Watching each other. Supporting each other. Absorbing every word of instruction and guidance I gave to each. When it was time to leave, each lady had a smile on her face. Each felt an air of empowerment.

During the summer of 2019, this small group of ladies went to the range weekly. It made me so happy to see this group's confidence grow. They remembered their mechanics and safety became second nature



but want to shoot with other females, keep asking other females. You will find someone who wants to learn. If you're a newbie who wants to learn but don't know where to go, I would encourage you to get Beth Alcazar's book *Women's Handgun and Self-Defense Fundamentals*. A book for women, by a woman. She breaks down firearm mechanics and shooting mechanics in a way that's easily understandable. Look up "A Girl and A Gun". There's probably a group that meets at a gun range near you. Don't let fear stop you.

Don't let being alone stop you. There is a way to learn. There is a way to find others just like you.

*Until next time – shoot straight!*

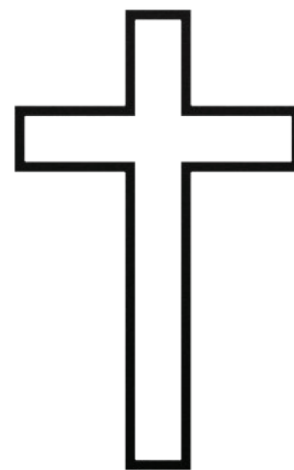


**POLICE SOULD BE HERE ANY MINUTE.  
UNTIL THEN, LETS TALK ABOUT JESUS.**

(gun is always loaded, finger off the trigger, muzzle safety, know your target).

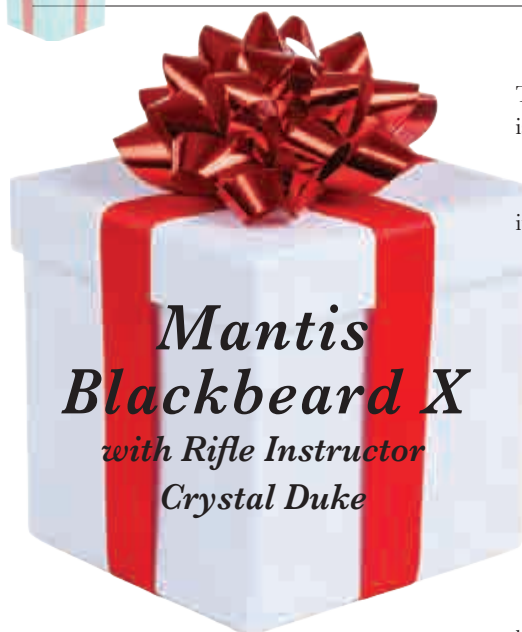
#### THE CONTINUATION

Since this first small group, I have led several more groups and have female friends to go shooting with. If you're an experienced shooter, feel you're by yourself



## *The three G's – God, Gals, Guns*





Their instructions were clear, but I still had a few issues before it would finally work. Again, that was a user error. Once it was installed correctly it was time to put it to the test. I ran it through a TON of drills. You must get to a certain number of shots before any data shows in the diagnostic area. After a lot more than the minimum shot count needed, it was time to analyze the data on the app. It seemed really accurate as to the errors I was making and gave tips on how to correct grip, trigger control, etc. There's a lot of data to look at and assimilate. As a data nerd, this is a pretty cool feature! The drills are varied and allow you to work on several things, even shooting while kneeling. The charge lasts a long time! I used it for hours before it needed to be charged. Next, the

Mantis recently sent me the Blackbeard X to evaluate. I already use their pistol system and the associated app. I love that system as it's a great diagnostic tool and has TONS of drills, skill builders, and daily challenges. Luckily, the Blackbeard X uses the same app and I just had to toggle between the two platforms on the app in settings. Even though familiar with it, it still took a bit to find how to switch between the two.

Upon receiving and unpacking it, the unit that looks like a 30-round magazine went straight to be charged. While it was charging, I reviewed the installation instructions. There was no mention of the app and how to use it in the packaging, so it was good I was already using the system for my handgun.

After charging, it was time for installation.



Blackbeard was used with some students. Two were experienced rifle shooters and one had never seen an AR-15 before. The two experienced users loved the tactile feel when you pull the trigger and felt it gave a realistic feel of shooting the rifle. One quote was "It ran like a live fire without the pow of recoil. I give it 5 stars". The other experienced shooter said, "It was very easy to use the system". The novice said, "I want to buy a rifle!"

Another time I ran through the Basic Rifleman course. It is 10 stages of different skills and drills that you must perform at a certain level or score to pass each level. It is also a lot of shots! In hindsight, this course should have been split up over several days. There were a lot of shots and my arms got very tired. I love that upon completion of each stage fireworks go off! It made me laugh and want to keep going.



Upon completion of the entire course, they mail you out an actual patch!!! The patch arrived inside of a week. That was definitely an added perk.

The performance measurement part has quite a few layers to it. It's interactive in some places where you can touch the red area and it tells you what you are doing wrong and how to fix it. I love the section where you can see how much your muzzle moves, and where the shot actually broke in relation to the bullseye.

One very big unforeseen benefit of using the Mantis Blackbeard X is stronger arms!!! I'm training with my rifle a lot more with the Blackbeard X than with live fire now. In short, this is a very beneficial diagnostic tool, practical tool, and training tool. I intend to keep using it very often and using it with students when they first start using the AR-15. I highly recommend Blackbeard X from Mantis. The price of the system is well worth it as you save much more in ammo costs than the system cost and get a lot of benefit from the practice time spent. In a time of scarce ammunition or expensive ammunition the Mantis Blackbeard X is a terrific investment in your training. to keep using it very often and using it with students when they first start using the AR-15. I highly recommend Blackbeard X from Mantis. The price of the system is well worth it as you save much more in ammo costs than the system cost and get a lot of benefit from the practice time spent. In a time of scarce ammunition or expensive ammunition the Mantis Blackbeard X is a terrific investment in your training.

**MANTIS**





KRIEGHOFF

## VICTORY RESTS IN HER HANDS

Aptly named after the Goddess of Victory, the K-20 Victoria promises women triumph in the field or on the range. Offering a beautifully designed and tailored stock for the female shooter, K-20 Victoria's graceful balance and lightweight barrels give any woman an unbeatable field companion.



krieghoff.com





Life has many opportunities if we just take the chance to try them out. I was in the early stages of learning about pistols when a friend asked me to check out what the three-gun shooting sport is all about. It just so happened that my oldest daughter Amber was very interested and wanted to learn too. So, we made plans to travel to Alabama that Spring. We packed our gear and set off for a new adventure to obtain information and actually shoot a three-gun event.

That brings me to the point of what is a three-gun event. It is a fun shooting sport activity where you actually shoot all three types of firearms, pistols, rifles, and shotguns. In each stage or bay, there is a specific course of fire for each type of firearm. Yes, there were a lot of different skill levels of the women attending this event. The primary purpose was to observe and gain knowledge of how the three-gun events take place. On the last day, Amber and I actually participated in a three-gun shooting sport event, ourselves.

This was all new to me, as I had learned several gun handling techniques, shooting skills, and the mechanics of the pistol. So, I said yes to the chance and opportunity to do something completely out of my comfort zone. Part of this education was the chance to see all the guns and gear that the shooters use in this type of sport. What they mull over when choosing a certain pistol, rifle, or shotgun to compete with. What calibers and gauges do they recommend for us novices to use? What did each stage, and bay

look like, and how did we move through the stage with each type of firearm?

The great news was we did get a couple of days of training in a classroom about guns, equipment, and why they use it over other types of gear and firearms. It was an opportunity for us



to see what they had before we went out to shoot the three-gun event. If you have ever been to any kind of shooting sport event it pays to get this type of training before starting out of the gate. After we got to try on the gear and work through the mechanics of safe movement we headed to the range. I have to tell you; it was a BLAST! Three-Gun is an Incredible shooting sport.

There was a safety briefing before we were

assigned different bays to shoot the different stages with all three types of firearms. This is where you get the true opportunity to work with each type of firearm. We started with the pistol-engaging targets, then proceeded to a table where our rifles were staged, bolts locked open waiting to be loaded and fired before moving on. As we finished the rifle portion we placed the rifle in a barrel, muzzle down, then headed for the shotgun to fire the final part of the course. Lucky for me this was an introduction not a timed event.

On the last morning, the air was full of excitement! We got to shoot a Three-Gun timed sport shooting event. We all still talk about it to this day! Since then, I have encouraged women to train and take the opportunity to travel seeing many different parts of this great country we live in. I am definitely in love with the fact that there are so many occasions for ladies to challenge themselves in the sporting use of firearms. Even a beginner or advanced shooter has several different types of shooting sports out there fashioned just for women.



## ECLIPSE HOLSTERS REVIEW

with Melonie Kennedy

A vital step to selecting a holster for a handgun is making sure it is well made and fits the make and model of your gun perfectly to assist with safe retention, no matter what your activities may be. For this reason, many handgun enthusiasts appreciate holsters made of Kydex® - myself included. Properly formed Kydex® holsters will fit your handgun like a glove, allowing it to click into place; the best provide additional retention assistance via adjustable screws. Appearance is the other reason such holsters are popular, particularly with women; Kydex® holsters offer an array of prints that range from simple colors to fun, flashy, and even holiday prints.

When offered the opportunity to review an Eclipse Holsters product, those many choices of Kydex® made things incredibly difficult. I finally chose the Intrepid Inside the Waistband (IWB) holster for my Glock 43. Eclipse states on their website that the Intrepid is their #1 best selling holster, and I quickly learned why! Specifically meant for beltless carry, the Intrepid includes the UltiClip waistband retention device - perfect for use with items where one doesn't have a solid carry belt to attach a holster with. I rarely wear clothing with belt loops and even in jeans I will often skip wearing a belt. A holster with an UltiClip is always

my preference, and I've incurred additional expenses on other holsters where I had to change out the clip separately by myself. Seeing the beltless clip on the Intrepid was an immediate win!

I chose the "Don't Be a Prick" print for my Intrepid; being an Arizonan, I couldn't resist the cactus print. The name is also a cheeky reminder that if we choose to carry a handgun, professionalism is still key. The colors of the print are clear and the design is perfect, with no misalignment. There are no burrs or rough points at the bends or edges of the Kydex®. My Glock 43 fit perfectly, and retention was quite firm, so I did loosen it slightly. (A card is included with very clear instructions for



adjusting retention, if you haven't worked with this type of holster before.) There's no question in my mind that my handgun is not leaving the holster unless I want it to. I took my carry gun to the range for training and even with plenty of movement while working with other pistols, I had zero issues with retention of my EDC. A good, solid grip and draw showed the Intrepid "who's boss" and I was clearing my holster and on target with my usual speed.

The only issue I noted with the Intrepid is that it is wider than some of my other IWB holsters and does not fit into the elastic strap section of my Alexo Athletica carry leggings without risking significantly stretching the elastic.



That's not a concern, though, thanks to the aforementioned UltiClip - instead of using the Intrepid trigger-guard style, I simply used it as a full IWB and went about my day. This is where the UltiClip, proper molding of the Kydex®, and adjustable screws are key, and Eclipse Holsters hit one out of the park!

All in all, I am incredibly pleased with my test of the Eclipse Holsters Intrepid IWB and I'm planning to add quite a few more of their prints to my holster collection. Whether you're looking for your first IWB holster or your fiftieth, I highly recommend supporting this small, veteran-owned business and getting your custom holster with a lifetime guarantee.

In our Vol. I 2024 Newsletter Tammy Stein will provide her take on the Eclipse Holster

[HTTPS://ECLIPSEHOLSTERS.COM](https://eclipseholsters.com)





# SYREN XLR5 WATERFOWLER WITH KATE AHNSTROM

EDITED BY BARBARA BAIRD / WOMENS OUTDOOR NEWS

FROM THE SYREN SAVVY COLUMN



September ushers in the long-awaited hunt season! Ladies across the country are gleefully headed to cut crop fields for doves and geese. This month, we take an in-depth look at the shotgun every lady should have in her hands, while readily glancing up for gray ghosts or sky carp.

Why the Syren Waterfowler? We take a closer look at a market that is grossly underserved, women in waterfowl, and pull apart what makes a Syren the superior choice. Whenever I pen an article, I always look for all sides of the conversation. Unfortunately, in waterfowling, the conversation is EXTREMELY one-sided, and women are all but left out. Yes, there are female duck/goose hunters out there. Fortunately,

clothing companies seem to be keeping pace with the demand from women that love chasing cans, greenheads and those crazy little swamp rockets. There are tons of options in patterns, sizes and warmth ratings. However, a Google search turns up dismal results on actual firearms for women for waterfowling.

Except for one: Syren. When Syren says, "No More Compromises," they mean it! No longer do women need to "make" a gun work for them. No longer do women have to settle for something in the hopes that it works "good enough."

There are obvious differences between men and women and those differences must be taken into consideration in gun fit. A few of the more common issues plaguing women trying to use an

ill-fitting shotgun include stock length, overall weight of the shotgun and eye alignment down the barrel. Unfortunately, the common answer to a woman requiring a better fitting shotgun is that most manufacturers will simply "chop-and-color" a man's gun and call it good enough. This greatly (and negatively) affects the weight and balance of the gun and the felt recoil. Plus, the kick in the pants is that it STILL doesn't fit correctly!

## THE NUTS & BOLTS OF THE SYREN WATERFOWLER

The Syren Waterfowler, like all shotguns in the Syren line, is specifically produced to fit a woman's physique and allow her to truly enjoy the shooting sports. Let's break down this multi-purpose packing firearm and sort out why it's superior to the old "chop-and-color" options.

One of the more noticeable attributes of the Waterfowler is its Monte Carlo stock, which might be considered a bit of an odd thing on a gun that just might have to pull double duty as a boat oar. A woman's shoulders physically sit lower than a man's. Women also tend to have higher cheek bones. A Monte Carlo stock allows a shooter to stay fairly upright to "get into" her gun and makes the insertion on a bird (clay or feathered) faster. Obviously, this is a really good thing! It also keeps the buttstock of the gun properly positioned on the shoulder, preventing a shooter from raising the butt too high, which can cause the toe to "dig" into a shoulder. Eye alignment is paramount for a shotgun shooter. If

### SPECIFICATIONS

Model: SYREN XLR5 WaterFowler

Gauge: 12 gauge

Barrels: 28"

LOP: 13.5"

DAC: 1.5"

DAH: 2.5"

CAH: .125"

CAT: .25"

Pitch: 7 degrees

Grip length: 4"

Weight: 7lbs 1oz

Chokes: 5 INNER HP™ Choke Tubes

Warranty: 5 years

Suggested retail: \$2,225 RH, \$2440 LH



SYREN





you can't see it, you can't kill it. Ideally, the bottom of the iris will sit flat and centered on the rib of the shotgun. The Monte Carlo stock assists a shooter in achieving this fit.

The average man's shotgun is meant to fit the average-sized man. Well, I know several female waterfowlers and they are certainly anything but average! As a matter of fact, they're pretty amazing. The average LOP (Length of Pull-the measurement from the center of the trigger straight back to the center of the buttstock) is between 14.25 inches and 14.5 inches, but for women, it should typically be around 13.5 inches. If the gun is too long, the felt recoil is more intense and the shooter sees too much gun out in front of them. If the gun is too short, it's almost impossible to quickly and smoothly mount the gun correctly and ascertain the necessary sight picture.

This is why the Syren Waterfowler has a standard LOP of 13.5 inches, so that the majority of women will be able to easily use this gun and have it fit well. That single inch or so on the LOP may not seem like a big difference. At least, not until you are desperately craning your neck to try and make the gun work for you.

Also, to note, there is 7 degrees of pitch in the gun, which slightly turns the toe outward. By doing this, Syren makes it so the buttstock will fit more comfortably into the pocket of a woman's shoulder and not jam against the mammary gland or other portions of her anatomy.

Adding into the "comfort" of the Waterfowler is the amazing Soft Touch coating that is applied.

This not only feels great in between your hands, but also makes gripping the gun in even the most adverse weather conditions a breeze. Finally, the gun weighs slightly more than 7 pounds. This is huge in an autoloader, as most are pushing 8 pounds. That extra pound will catch up quick and, in a hurry, and you'll fatigue before you ever get started. It should also be mentioned that if you can't swing the gun smoothly and confidently with the correct sight picture, you will not only miss, but also, you won't understand how to correct and connect with your next bird.

All of these components make the Waterfowler the number one pick for women serious about chasing feathers plus, it is just as deadly for

upland and clays!

## HOW TO PUT IT ALL TO USE

Now that you have a great gun, it's time to put it to use. Let's dive into some great tips and tricks to help you drop more doves, ducks and geese.

- One of the most common mistakes wing shooters will make is assuming that since they are chasing feathers that they are not obligated to follow the fundamentals we normally implore on the clay course. As my elementary school math teacher would constantly remind us, there is math in everything we do. The dynamics of shooting involves a plethora of geometry with a heavy smattering of physics. What this means to you is that you must move your gun in agreeance with these terms versus against them.
- Wild birds have a pretty strong self-preservation mechanism and will flare at the slightest movement or glint off a shiny barrel. Patience and efficiency in motion is mandatory for success. As you see birds coming in, be ready. Have your muzzle in your line of sight and allow the birds to get within range.

Since your muzzle is in line with your eyes (producing a hold point) you only need to push forward mounting your gun and inserting onto the bird as appropriate. Being able to track the muzzle (not looking at it!) along with the bird as soon as you see the bird coming sets the "computer" to work immediately, making thousands of split-second calculations. Having the muzzle low at the beginning puts the dog at risk and puts the muzzle out of control.

- Practice like you play. My students are always encouraged to bring their gear to the lesson right before the hunt. They shoot from dove stools/buckets, benches to simulate being down in a pit and I have been known to bring a beach towel or blanket for a layout simulation!
- Don't be caught off guard walking into your hunt. Know how your birds fly and where they prefer to fly. A dove group will also prefer to enter the field through a pinch point off a hedgerow so if they are spooked, they can quickly change course and fly over the hedgerow as a shield.

No matter what you hunt, where you go or how often you get to hunt, always make sure that you have the best gear possible. The Syren Waterfowler is hands-down that gear.





# GIFT GUIDE FOR THE SHOTGUN ENTHUSIAST

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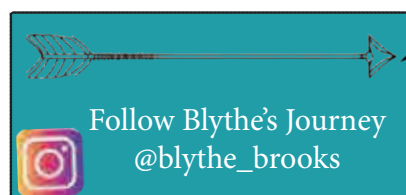
IF YOU WERE WONDERING,  
I AM A SIZE PURPLE GUN SLIP...





**B**lythe Brooks is another young talented shooting sports athlete who excels not only in the competitive world but also in hunting. I attended high school with Blythe where we shot on the shotgun team together. For two years, I got to watch her grow as a person and also as an athlete. She has grown in her abilities as an athlete which has coincided with her hunting abilities that she enjoys. She most recently joined the 1000 club after harvesting 1,000 dove in one day during her hunting trip to Argentina. Blythe has had the opportunity to harvest a variety of animals, for her senior trip she will be going to Africa to hunt. She is looking forward to harvesting a Kudu.

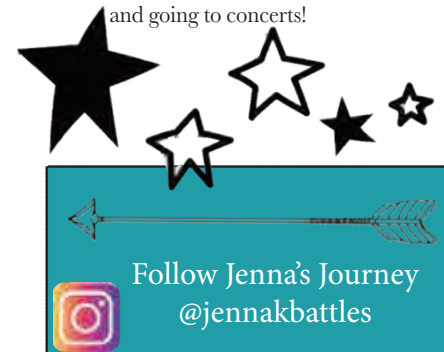
- Her favorite animal to hunt/harvest are White-tailed deer
- Her favorite item to use while she is hunting is her binoculars.
- Her go to rifle when hunting is her 6.5 Creedmoor.
- Besides hunting and competitive tournaments her hobbies include being outside and staying active.
- A fun fact about Blythe is that one of her dreams is to shoot for the USA team.



# The Future

WITH SHELBY SIVADON

- Her favorite shotgun to shoot is any Beretta!
- Her favorite item in her shooting bag is her lucky rabbit's foot because it was awarded to her for running a double rabbit station at the Rodeo Houston tournament.
- If she is not shooting she is probably jet skiing or knee boarding.
- Fun Fact: She loves listening to music and going to concerts!



**J**enna Battles is one of those young athletes that everyone should keep their eyes on. She has developed immensely as a shooter in the past three years. Jenna went from never picking up a shotgun to becoming a leader on the Lone Star Select Shooting Team located in Houston, Texas. She is an active athlete in the sporting clays (NSCA) portion of shooting along with fitasc, skeet, and five stand. Much like other previous youth shooters, I have also been able to shoot with Jenna for two years and watch her dedication to this sport. She is a hardworker on her game and it is reflected in her performances.

- Her favorite discipline is FITASC because of the variety of targets within each round.





# SHOOTER VISION

WITH INSTRUCTOR CRAIG D. PORTER; PART I

Vision and how it relates to sports or daily tasks like driving is a complicated subject. Anyone who has swung at a ball or tried to catch one knows what happens when you take your eye off the ball. If you want to be fast on the racetrack, learn how to keep your eyes ahead and drive where you are looking. If you have done any clay or bird shooting, you should have figured out how important it is to focus on the target. Robert Churchill wrote about focusing on the bird in the 1900s. Scientists have done a lot of work on vision in sports and shotgunning, in particular—more on that later.

This is a basic non-scientific approach to understanding shooter vision and what to do to make it better.

## THE VISUOMOTER SYSTEM

Don't confuse vision with eyesight; the eye is just a "camera." Vision occurs after the brain processes the "camera" data. Nerves pass the data from the eyes to the visual cortex, which processes the data from the eyes into information the brain can use; decisions are made, nerves are activated, and muscles move. Dr. Vickers calls this the Visuomotor System. The Visuomotor System can actually be trained.

Humans have two modes of processing vision: focal and ambient. Ambient mode relies more on peripheral vision to help a person

understand their space and surroundings. Focal mode, which helps you see details, relies more on central vision. Ambient vision is a super-power that allows the Visuomotor System to work.

## HOW THE EYES WORK

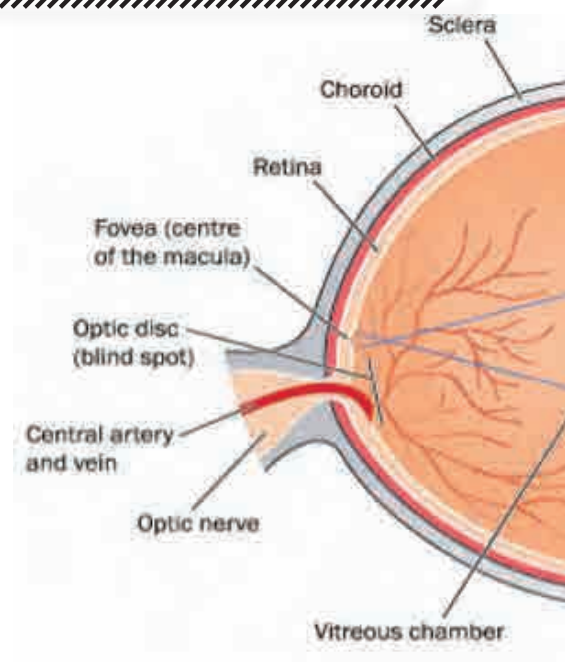
Six main extraocular (external) muscles control the movement of the eye, three intrinsic (internal) muscles control focus and one (the levator palpebrae superioris) keeps the upper eyelid open. Figure 1 Exterior Muscles Of The Eye shows the extraocular muscle layout.

The eye has three intrinsic (internal) eye muscles, the ciliary muscle, the iris sphincter, and the radial pupil dilator. The external (extraocular) muscles control the movement of the eyes, and the intrinsic eye muscles focus the eye. Intrinsic eye muscles also control how much light enters the eye (control pupil size). Extrinsic muscles are controllable, while intrinsic muscles are automatic.

## TYPES OF VISION

The eye has two types of vision, focal and peripheral (primary and secondary). The Retina provides peripheral vision while the Fovea provides focused vision. Take a look at Figure 2 Internals of the Human Eye. Notice how small the Fovea is—it's only 2-3 degrees!

The brain interprets the data from these two



vision parts through different methods. Vision is wired directly into the brain through the optic nerve, into the visual cortex. The visual cortex translates data from the eyes into information the brain uses to make decisions. Focal data is processed almost instantaneously. Peripheral vision relies on pathways through different layers of the visual cortex to get to the brain. Peripheral data other than movement, takes longer to get to the brain and is processed differently. This means that trying to get information about objects in focus and the peripheral arrive at different time,

The field of view for peripheral vision is plus 60° and minus 60°-70° vertically and about 110° each direction horizontally while focal vision is only 2°-3°. Figure 3 Focal vs. Peripheral Vision shows a comparison of the two types of vision.

What does having two types of vision mean to the shooter? Objects that are in "hard focus" are seen in real-time. A shooter with a hard focus on the leading edge of the target knows precisely what is happening out there. Items that are in peripheral vision are delayed by processing. If the shooter focuses away from the target, information about that target is delayed up to 0.3 sec.

What happens if the shooter changes focus from the target to the gun?

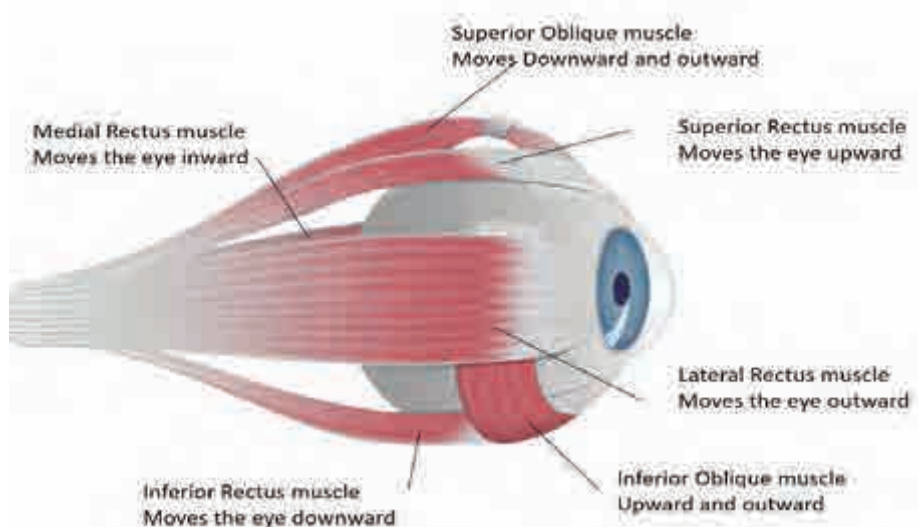
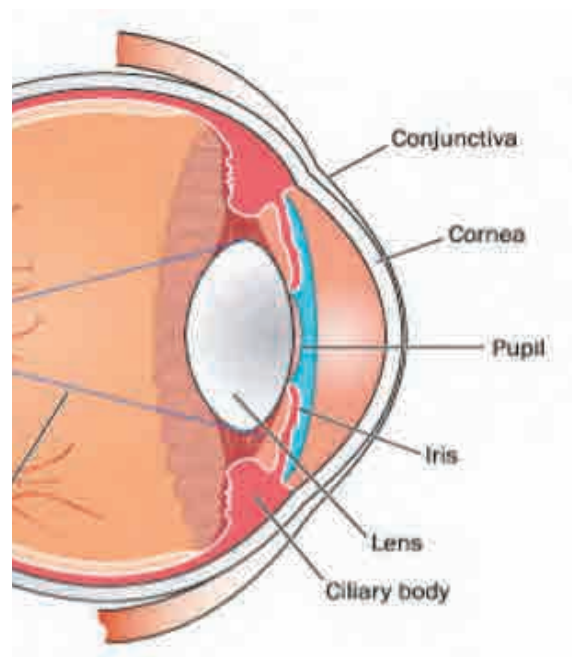


Figure 1 Exterior Muscles of The Eye

*Craig has an extensive resume as a NRA (Pistol/ Shotgun instructor/National Development team staff, training counselor, chief RSO), NSCA Level III certifying instructor, and USAS advanced instructor.*

**Figure 2 Internals of the human Eye**



- Data about the target now lags up to 0.3 sec behind data from the gun.
- It takes time to change focus, and the shooter loses direct connection with the target (about 0.05 sec or less).
- The target is no longer clear and the shooter must “guess” where the target is going.

Let's figure out what this time delay in vision means to the shooter. Assuming a constant shot velocity of 1200fps, we can approximate how far a skeet target (46-46.9mph/67.5fps per NSSA website) moves before the shot hits it (both slow down so it's not exact). Assuming only a 0.05-second delay in shifting focus from the target to the gun, shooting from Station Four, the skeet target will move 3.375 feet or about 40 inches. At many of the ranges skeet targets are shot; the pattern is 24 inches or less. This means the target could move two or more pattern diameters in the time it takes to change eye focus. Combined with the distance the shot takes to get to the target and the distance it moves when the eye goes to the barrel. It's no wonder people miss when they shift focus from target to gun! As soon as the shooter moves their focus from the target to the gun,

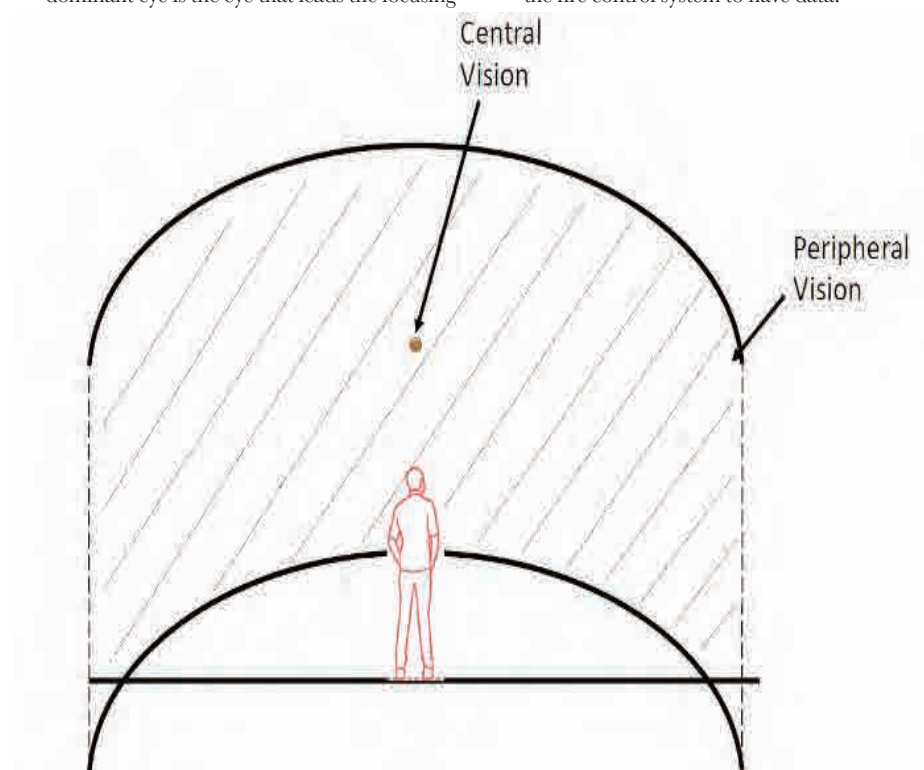
the target is in peripheral vision. If a 0.3-second delay occurs, the target moves 20.25 feet or about eight patterns. This is why shifting the eye from the target to the gun can cause a miss of anywhere from two to eight or more patterns. Vickers and Causer et al. have shown the effects of what Vickers calls the Quiet Eye on shooter performance. The Quiet Eye is the hard focus time on target and always starts sooner and lasts longer in elite versus non-elite shooters. The elite shooter moves to and synchronizes with the target better than the non-elite shooter and breaks more targets.

## FOCUSING THE EYES

The vision system is the fire control system; it controls gun motion, lead and timing. Vision is a complicated process involving data collection and processing to give the brain information about background and target flight characteristics, including distance, velocity, target path, and target attitude. There are many scientific books and reports about how vision works. According to Martin, our hard focus cannot happen until accommodation and convergence occur. This means that each eye individually focuses on the target (accommodation) and then they converge together into a single point. The dominant eye is the eye that leads the focusing

process, getting its accommodation (focus) first. Close (20 feet or less) accommodation and convergence are relatively easy—most of our day-to-day activities are “close.” Getting that hard focus at longer distances involves more work and practice.

The eye has many different movements; scientists call one saccades and another pursuit. The saccade movements could be called jerky movements, and the pursuit smooth. Saccadic movements occur when the eye “jerks” to the target when it first appears or when the eye moves from the target to the barrel. Different parts of the brain are activated with each type of movement, and the brain cannot directly collect data during saccadic movements. The other time the eye cannot collect data is during blinking. The shooter must reduce jerky eye movement by focusing on a point beyond the target line and holding the eye and gun still (Quiet Eye). Holding beyond the target line is critical as the eye focuses from far to near ten times faster than near to far. The saccadic (jerky) movement occurs when the vision system acquires the target, then using the pursuit component of vision, the eyes converge on the target and tracking begins. Remember that no data about the target is available during saccadic movement, so a hard focus on the target is required for the fire control system to have data.



**Figure 3 Focal vs. Peripheral Vision**



The conscious mind has only one job during the shooting process: coordinating muzzle and target movement until the proper point of convergence is met and the correct forward allowance (lead) is obtained, and the trigger is pulled. The target breaks as long as the conscious mind doesn't interfere with the vision system and the subconscious lead computer.

## EYE DOMINANCE

Eye dominance is a critical issue that seems to be a stumbling block for some shooters. Many shooters, instructors, and coaches know that shooting from the dominant eye is essential but they may not understand why. This section briefly discusses why eye dominance is important. The dominant eye leads the focusing process, functionally controlling the point where the eyes have "hard focus" on the target. The "hard focus" establish the Quiet Eye (target lock) needed to hit the target.

Unfortunately, humans don't fall into either the left eye category or the right eye category for eye dominance. Some people have binocular or center ocular dominance where neither eye is dominant. People may have a center ocular shift where one eye is "kind of" dominant, or eye dominance shifts depending on other factors.

Once the dominant eye is determined as best as possible, it seems a simple issue—shoot from that shoulder. Unfortunately, many shooters will not or can not change shooting sides if the dominant eye is opposite their dominant hand. If

this occurs, we have a cross-dominance situation. I had a client who shot trap with her father for about 20 years with her non-dominant eye. Her typical score was around 10-12 targets. She tried changing shoulders and her first round was a 19. She now shoots consistently in the 20's.

Also note that the dominant eye may switch sides:

- If the shooter becomes tired.
- If a target is picked up by the non-dominant eye first.
- For other reasons that may be challenging to determine.

If we made some assumptions about how far apart the eyes are and how long the distance is from the eye to the end of the barrel, trigonometry could tell us that at 20 yards, we could be missing the target by a pattern or more if the gun is shot from the shoulder under the non-dominant eye. An alternative to trigonometry can show why eye dominance is important. Try the following exercise:

1. With their gun-eye closed, have the student mount on a target on the safe wall in the classroom or a distant object on the range.
2. After doing this, ask them to open their eye over the gun and note how far they are off the target.

## DETERMINING EYE DOMINANCE

Optometrists have many ways to determine eye dominance. There are pointing methods, tube methods, and others. One of the best ways to determine eye dominance is to see an instructor. One simple way is to take a sheet of paper with a 1/2" hole in the center, look at a distant object, bring the paper up looking at the object through the hole and bring the paper slowly back to the face. The eye looking through the hole is the dominant eye.

Once the dominant eye is determined, the best approach is to shoot from the dominant eye's shoulder. Shooting from the dominant eye shoulder has several advantages, including:

- The targets will appear larger and slower.
- It is easier to maintain a hard focus.
- Estimates of distance are better.

Not everyone can or is willing to shoot from the shoulder under the dominant eye...

- Be prepared to use some chapstick or tape on the glasses to block the end of the barrel from the dominant eye. I prefer a small piece of frosted tape for this purpose. Just enough so the end of the barrel is blocked from the dominant eye. Sometimes more tape is needed if the shooter struggles to shoot the target with the eye that is not over the gun.
- More experienced shooters may have other options, but the effort required to overcome this situation is high.





## Triangle Method

Extend your arms out in front of you. Create a triangular opening between your thumbs and forefingers by placing your hands together at a 45-degree angle.



With both eyes open, center this triangular opening on a distant object — such as a wall clock or door knob. Close your left eye.



If the object stays centered, your right eye (the one that's open) is your dominant eye. If the object is no longer framed by your hands, your left eye is your dominant eye.



## Pointing Method



Extend one arm out, holding the index finger of that hand in an upright position.

Keeping both eyes open and focused on a distant object, superimpose your finger on that object. (It will look like your finger partially disappears)

Alternately close one eye at a time. The eye that keeps your finger directly in front of the object while the other eye is closed is your dominant eye.





## THE FALL SWEEP

### WITH PROIS FOUNDER KIRSTIE PIKE

There is nothing like the anticipation of hunting season. I mean, seriously. Tags are drawn. Plans are made.

Space is being leveraged on the wall for new taxidermy. It's not just anticipation, it's almost an addiction. Ok, it IS an addiction. The hunting season anticipation is akin to an annual holiday minus the decorations.

All joking aside, it does take a lot of forethought and planning to get ready for your fall hunting season. It's time to do "the sweep". The Sweep involves systematically working through all of the equipment and clothing you may need for your upcoming hunt and ensuring that each item is in optimal condition to aid in the success of your hunt. With so many variables involved in each and every hunt, it is paramount to ensure that all of your equipment is in prime condition.

### OPTICS

Good optics are essential for any hunt. I am a big believer that if a hunter is going to splurge, splurge on good glass. Prior to your hunting season, go ahead and pull out your binoculars and range finders. Give them a good cleaning. Then use a lens cleaning cloth for all lenses. Check for cracks and scratches. Often, optics

companies have decent warranties. Take advantage of those if you find any damage. Check the battery on your range finder and replace it if necessary. The last place you want to find out that your battery is dead is when you are trying to range that giant buck on opening day. Lastly, check your rifle scope. Clean your scope thoroughly and use a lens cleaning cloth on the glass. Check for any scratches or cracks. Follow up with a few shots at a target to ensure your firearm and scope are still sighted in. There, now your optics 'sweep' is complete!

### FIREARM

Whether you use a shotgun or a rifle for your hunting season, ensuring that it is ready for use is wildly important. This is a great time to clean your firearm according to manufacturer's recommendations or personal preference. I recommend taking extra time to clean the action of your firearm to ensure smooth firing and ejection. Take care to clean the barrel and bore thoroughly. A light dose of gun oil on parts of the rifle that are subject to high pressures and wear. Specifically, the rear of the locking lugs on the bolt. Once done with your firearm 'sweep', store your firearm where it will be protected from

moisture and dust.

### FOOTWEAR

Footwear is not often thought of as a key piece of equipment on a hunt. However, if you want to ruin a hunt quickly and painfully, try using boots that are not up for the job. Check your boots for wear and rub points. Honestly, if you are having rub points, it may be time to purchase new boots. Rub points do not typically disappear and will result in blisters and skin injury. This is a good time to replace your laces if necessary. I for one have had my laces fail during a hunt and I do not recommend that for anyone! I also recommend applying waterproofing such as Scotchgard or NIX wax. Take a spin around the neighborhood wearing your boots WITH the socks you will wear for your hunt. If at any point you are uncomfortable, try different socks and



make a mental note to use them for your hunting season. I recommend merino wool or bamboo-based socks. Both block odor and dry quickly. Do not, I repeat, DO NOT use cotton socks of any sort. They retain moisture which leads to skin breakdown and cold feet. Neither of these are optimal while hunting. Now, your footwear 'sweep' is complete!

## PACK

This sweep is essential. Dig through your hunting pack. Remove everything inside and take inventory of what is in there. While it is empty, check all straps, clamps, and zippers to ensure they are in good shape. If any of these components are failing, you will have trouble on your hunt when you need your pack to function 100%. I typically wash my pack with a scent-free detergent before the season starts. My pack is typically quite stinky from use as well as old blood that I didn't clean at the end of the season. Air dry your pack thoroughly to avoid mildewing. Repack your pack taking care to place items that you may urgently need in outer pockets or places you can easily access without removing your pack. Ensure knives are sharp, calls are clean and functioning, knife sharpeners are in fact there (story for another day), and additional ammunition is present and accessible. I recommend bringing nylon cording, zip ties, extra gloves, and a pen for signing your license as well. Once you have your pack all set and ready, store it somewhere clean and dry. Now your pack 'sweep' is complete!

## CLOTHING

This is a great time to go through ALL of your hunting clothing and weed out anything you haven't used over the last two years. Decide what

gear you are going to need for your upcoming season and pull it all out. ALL of it. I throw mine in the wash with a scent-free detergent at this point. It is important to inspect all of your clothing for

tears or wear. I also highly recommend trying on all of your items. Let us face it, our bodies change constantly and you want to ensure that your clothing fits comfortably before opening day. Fighting with ill-fitting hunting gear is frustrating and uncomfortable. I recommend layering up and ensuring all of your layers fit well and work together comfortably before the season starts.

Double-check your gloves, beanies, and any other accessories you may be using as well. If any of these items are worn out or do not fit, replace them now. Once you have ensured all of your gear fits and is in good shape, store it in a scent-free tote until the season starts. Your clothing 'sweep' is now complete!

## GPS MAP APPS



Not everyone uses a GPS Map app, but I am personally a huge fan of ONXmaps. I check my app before the season starts to make sure it is up to date. I know this to be important because one year my credit card had expired and with it so did my ONXmap subscription. The backcountry is NOT the place to learn this. Ensure you do not need to do any updates on your phone as well. Once you have ensured your app is functioning properly, your GPS Map App 'sweep' is now complete!



## SATELLITE TRACKING/SAFETY SYSTEMS.

While this doesn't necessarily pertain to all hunters, I highly recommend using a system such as InReach or SPOT. These systems provide satellite GPS tracking and access to emergency services should



the need arise. I personally use SPOT, so I make sure to charge the unit and check to see if there are any updates necessary at this point. Also, ensure your subscription is updated as you have the option to turn the service off during months when you are not using it. I recommend taking the unit out and testing it in a few locations to ensure it is working efficiently. Now, your Satellite System 'sweep' is complete!

That, my friends, is called the 'sweep'. Taking the time to inspect and care for all of your equipment, clothing, and gear before the season will indeed save you a lot of unnecessary heartache and frustration. As well, it will also help best ensure your safety in the backcountry. At this point, all that there is left to do is scout and dream of your next Boone & Crockett!

*Kirstie is the founder/CEO of Prois a ladies clothing company that specializes in hunting gear. She is also an avid hunter and recognizes the importance of quality gear and making sure that it is taken care of.*



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## *A DAY IN THE LIFE OF JULIA STALLINGS*

### *WITH SHELBY SIVADON*

Julia Stallings has made a name for herself in the shooting sports community not only with her talented skills but also her presence on social media. Her presence on social media allows for her to educate her audience on what it is like to own a firearm of any sorts. She has posts from tips when struggling with shooting, to trick shots, to educating on how to correctly conceal carry, and so many more educational purposes. Julia also has become a role model for many females of all ages in the shooting sport community. When I first started shooting, I was captivated by her talent, confidence, and how she carries herself at matches. She has inspired so many more females to be confident and pursue a sport that has seen

male dominance for much of its time. I got the wonderful opportunity to interview her to obtain some insight into how she became who she is today.

Julia grew up in Memphis, TN in a small suburb called Rossville. She has a very outgoing family who loves to travel as much as she does. Her dad still waterskies at a national level and her mom is a Pilates instructor. She has one brother who is in college, who waterskies for the University of Louisiana, Lafayette. Julia started shooting late in high school for an all-girl school highschool team, however it was more for fun than as a competitive sport. At the time she was really into waterskiing and playing basketball; she tried to join new teams to meet people because she switched

highschools in the middle of the school year. She became more active in shooting when she went to the University of Alabama and joined their club team. From there she got to try sporting clays and absolutely fell in love. Her early days of shooting was kind of like any sport she participated in. She always wanted to do the best she could, so she really tried to learn the game and take on a lot of knowledge from the older guys at the gun club. Besides shooting she loves to hike, travel, learn about new cultures, and waterskiing. She loves just getting outside and enjoying what the world has to offer. She started trying trick shots during the

Covid pandemic of 2020. Businesses were not open, so she spent a lot of time at her range goofing around. She was very bored and living with her best friend when they decided to post a trick shot video and it went viral on social media. Adding fun dresses and other aspects to her trick shots happened when she took on a bet challenge for Valentine's Day. One of her friends said she not complete a trick shot in heels, and she took that bet completely on, going completely all out for it. Her favorite trick shot by far is shooting over her head. She thinks it's just super cool and it is always her favorite to perform.

### **FUN FACTS ABOUT JULIA:**

- Julia's favorite shotgun discipline is probably sporting clays because it is like golf with shotguns. She loves shooting this discipline because it is relaxing, but it can also be a great way to host a fun meeting with potential business clients. She always finds business groups love sporting clays and it is a good way to get out of the offices.
- Her favorite country that she has shot in is Italy. It is just always so pleasant to visit and shoot in. The facilities are always great and professional and well we all know the food is amazing!
- She absolutely loves the other firearm disciplines and honestly probably could not pick a favorite between rifle or pistol. The



one favorite thing she looks forward to shooting non-shotgun is getting to shoot steel targets instead of clays. They have such a different effect where you get the instant gratification of hearing you hit a target; it is just enjoyable. She guesses she just loves the sound of smoking the steel.

- She thinks that her most interesting characteristic is her personality. She has a very bubbly and outgoing personality. She tries to never be in a bad mood, she loves being social and enjoys life.
- She was nominated for a Gundie Award which is a huge honor. She said it honestly feels great to be nominated for a Gundie Award. She loves the fans out there who have supported all her adventures and videos. She really appreciates everyone who has supported her but also supported the shotgun and shooting sports community. It is great to know her videos help advocate the shooting sports community and hopefully makes it knowledgeable, safe, and fun for the next generation of shooters.
- She can't deny it, but turkey hunting is probably the most favorite hunting/animal she has harvested. Turkeys are just so challenging, smart creatures, they make yummy turkey nuggets, plus you get to use your shotgun so it's a win-win all around.
- If she got to go back in time and tell herself anything about shooting/hunting, she would tell herself its ok to do those things and still be girly. She was super self-conscious about the way she looked or if she went hunting because she felt like she couldn't also be girly or have a little flare. Starting out it was kind of the stigma at her school that only the "weird" girls shoot and



hunt. She learned over the years; she can do both: flaunt it and still be girly.

She has multiple businesses she partakes in. She coaches highschoolers for clay target shooting, runs social media marketing, and pairs up with multiple great companies to promote products.

Julia's preferred firearms for each discipline:

- Shotgun Shooting: Krieghoff K-80 Pro sporter
- CCW: Sig Macro/Glock 43x
- Hunting: Benelli SBIII, Bergara 6.5 Creedmoor, Remington .30
- Shooting for fun: Desert Eagle, Sig Legion, The HK .22 Rifle (for Die Hard moments)

A little fun fact about her: As much as she is a social media guru, she is the world's worst phone

user/even keeping her phone charged. She is 90% always outside unless it is cold. She is more of a tropical princess that hates being on her phone even though that is her job. After getting to interview her I have learned so much more about her that I think is so valuable. Social media can only tell us so much about a person, with that being her job I think it is easy to make assumptions about her, but I feel like this conversation allowed for her true self to be revealed. She has become a very relatable role model to so many females that are starting out in shooting or have been shooting for some time. She has shown to females that there really is no set mold of what you are supposed to be like to be a female athlete in this sport; she uses her social media to enhance that point to so many females in the sport.





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# Rollin' with my Homie

## Part 1

BY NATALIA GONZALEZ

I don't remember the exact moment the idea for a month-long road trip alone with my 12-year-old son formed in my mind, but I have to say it was a stroke of pure genius. What started as a desire to visit our friends in Louisiana, Florida, and Ohio turned into a cross-country, month-long adventure. During this time, my son and I would share in laughter, joy, learning, some tears, and a bonding experience that I never could have imagined in my wildest dreams and will forever alter the course of our relationship.

The planning of this road trip was almost as fun as the actual trip. The months of anticipation, the calculation of car time between destinations, but most of all, the nights spent sitting at the dining room table with paper and pencils detailing our excursion. Like seasoned explorers, we carefully calculated each step of our journey. Our first big decision together was to select a kickoff date, and we both agreed upon July 7th. Our goal was to keep all driving legs to a maximum of six hours to ensure that a general feeling of leisure was maintained throughout the month. We also knew that we wanted some flexibility built into the trip so that if we were having too much fun in one location, we were not pressured to leave but instead enjoy the direction of the changing tides. Using these parameters, we got to work on the remaining details of our plan, including which gun clubs we would visit along the way. Our top priorities were to fish and to shoot in between visiting our friends.

Budget was also a concern. Not only would we be spending money on this trip, but I would also not be making any money. One of the best things about working for myself is that I don't have to request time off; one of the downsides is that I don't make money when I don't go to work. We printed a calendar to fill in, spoke with our friends and the gun club destinations, and minimized our hotel stays to nine nights. The rest of our accommodations would be provided by our friends. Without this generosity, I don't think this month-long adventure would have been possible.

With planning starting in mid-May, the anticipation during early summer was a driving force for me to work hard, save money, and book as many facial clients as I could. I worked all of my monthly clients into a schedule where their July facial took place in late June or early August, and every one of them was incredibly supportive of this adventure. The week of our planned departure, I ended up getting quite a few facial requests and was quickly blessed with a full schedule on Friday, July 7th, so we ended up delaying our start date until the next day. Leaving on July 8th, we were already off schedule, but without a care in the world, which was really the whole point of our schedule - for it to be loosely based on reality. We even threw caution to the wind and had one last hurrah before leaving, going to see the new Indiana Jones movie very late on Friday, getting home in the early morning hours before our road trip departure.



The morning of July 8th, we turned my SUV into a truck; we laid down all the seats and loaded up. Two suitcases, three fishing poles, two shotguns, eight flats of RC Cartridges shotgun shells I had picked up in Dallas at Clay Shooters Supply, an ice chest full of snacks, two shooting gear backpacks, and our hopes and dreams. We downloaded movies and shows on our iPad and set off to our first destination, Macy's home in Houma, Louisiana.



HOUSTON, TX-HOUMA, LA 344 MILES

You may recognize Macy as our fashion writer since the inception of this magazine or you may recognize her as the strong and courageous woman who has fought hard to regain her lifestyle after a life-altering car accident that left her in a wheelchair, but to me she's just Macy. Macy is a badass lawyer with a badass attitude from southern Louisiana who has brains and a personality to match. Macy has two children whom Lawson had never met, and he was honestly a little worried. He kept asking me what

her kids were like because he has been forced into play dates in the past and it hasn't always ended well. Sometimes he was bored out of his mind; other times, the kids were just not his vibe nor was he theirs. All his worries immediately dissipated when he met Fiona and Cullen - they hit it off instantly. They fished, swam, and walked to the Sonic down the street; meanwhile Macy and I began to catch up on life.

Being the moms that we are, we were both correcting our kids when they did something crazy. Macy kept telling Fiona to use her critical thinking skills, which I thought was hilarious because that's exactly what kids need to learn these days. One of my favorite moments from this time together was when Lawson and Macy got into their own conversation, and she gave him valuable advice about life. He was able to ask her questions about what life was like in a wheelchair and she openly discussed the less than obvious challenges. We even went into her room and she showed him the lift that she uses to get in and out of bed. Of course, Lawson had to try it and as he's swinging from the ceiling and goofing off getting in the bed, I saw the genuine empathy behind his smile as he realized how precious and fragile life can be.

The next day we went on a swamp tour and I got to finally drive a Tesla. I know that sounds silly, but I've always wanted to and Macy has a special Tesla that has been modified so she can drive it. It was also my first time attempting to help Macy get in and out of a vehicle, coordinate the wheelchair, and how to get her over loose dirt and gravel onto a dock and then onto a boat. Needless to say, it was a feat best accomplished with at least one other helper. Thankfully, one of her friends that sometimes helps with caregiving duties was available to come on the tour with us, and as I watched her lift Macy in and out of the vehicle, I was inspired to get stronger so that the next time, I would be the one that could help in this way. The swamp tour was majestic in its nature. Seeing the scary wild beasts do tricks like trained pets and the beauty of Louisiana's native swamplands was just heavenly. The weather cooperated to the point that we were almost afraid it was going to rain and even heard loud

thunder minutes before leaving, but instead, the cloud cover provided the perfect shade and lighting conditions for the best photos. After the swamp tour we were hungry and decided to go to a restaurant that was just a mile past the infamous site of the accident that left Macy forever altered. It was very emotional for me to see this, imagining the horror that took place that fateful night. Macy has probably driven past it hundreds

of times since, but it seemed to still bring a slight chill to her face. After the most amazing Cajun seafood meal, we began to say our goodbyes. Lawson recently developed an obsession with going to Dollar General to hunt for Hot Wheels, so I took him before leaving and he found a Tesla just like Macy's and gave it to her as a parting gift. This wholesome experience at Macy's

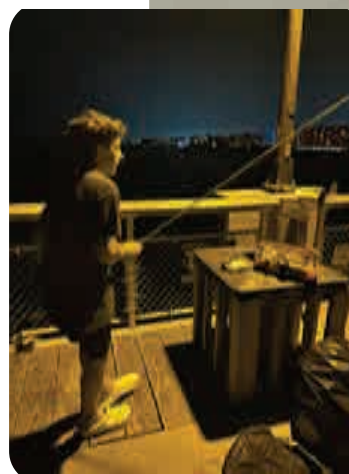
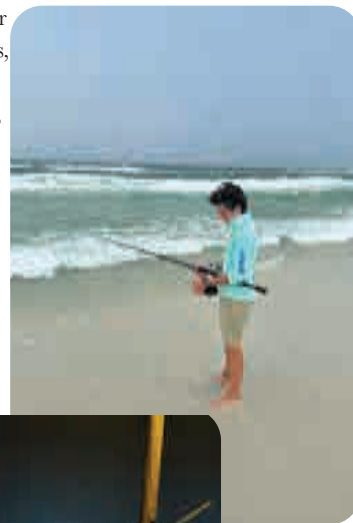
was the perfect place for a first stop. He hugged me a little harder that day.



## HOUMA, LA - DESTIN, FL 303 MILES

As we drove to our next destination, the excitement could be felt in both of our souls. We were headed to Destin, Florida, to spend a night or two just enjoying the white sand beaches, the sun, and pier fishing (Lawson, not me). Without knowing it, I had booked the perfect beachfront hotel right next to a fishing pier. We arrived around 11 pm and of course, Lawson could not

wait until the next day to fish, so off we went walking down the beach to the pier next door. It smelled like fish guts and there was nowhere to sit because every bench had been used to filet fish for eating at some point recently or in the past; the evidence was abundant. I was exhausted but I did not complain. I enthusiastically watched him do the thing he loves most in this world and waited for him to call it a night. I spent the next day laying on the beach next to the pier, listening to the waves, and watching Lawson carefully guard his three fishing poles as they awaited the bite of a large fish or any fish. Alas, none would take the bait, but he persisted nonetheless and we were out on the pier two nights until almost 1 am.



## DESTIN, FL - STUART, FL 535 MILES

Try as we might to keep our travel days to six hours or less, Florida is a big state and our next destination was all the way down the peninsula in Stuart, Florida. My best friend and one of Lawson's first best friends, awaited us anxiously. Many phone calls with them throughout the day kept us entertained and anticipating the end of our eight-hour road trip. Michelle Miles and her three kids, Miles, Jameson, and the not so new baby Logan greeted us joyfully as we arrived just in time for dinner and a swim. Michelle is also a part of this magazine as a wellness writer. I had been looking forward to this leg of the trip



with much enthusiasm because I knew I would get delicious home-cooked, healthy food, and hopefully some exercise and yoga; she's the best yoga teacher. This would also be a week-long stay and our first time busting out the shotguns.



Our week was filled with rain, sunshine, the beach, a lagoon, and most of all: a trip to South Florida Shooting Club. One of the most prestigious shotgun clubs in the country, this club is an exclusive members-only establishment nestled in the tropical terrain of southern Florida. With five sporting clays courses to choose from, ranging from easy to professional level targets, covered shooting stations, and a massive clubhouse, there isn't anything lacking at this destination. This would be my first time shooting with Michelle and all four kids. Granted, Michelle and I have been shooting together for the better part of 10 years, but the last time we shot together, both of us only had one kid each! Since then, she moved to Florida and had two more children.

With her youngest still being a baby, the younger two kids required a lot of attention. Being a mother of young children is absolutely a challenge when you want to do something like shooting clays, but not impossible! We ended up

shooting some sporting clays, but Michelle has



never shot the game of Helice and I have been saying for over a year now that she must shoot it with me. Even though her father's gun club back in Arizona had a helice ring, and even

though she's been shooting for over 10 years, she had never tried it. Since I am currently on the path of making Team USA for Helice, and aspire to win a world championship one day, it is pretty much all I want to shoot lately. We shot two

rounds of Helice while the little ones played with toys they had left at the gun club on a previous visit. And just like the old days, the two of us were there with our two boys, but this time the boys had their own guns, which was such a surreal moment for me as a mother. I still tell

Michelle every so often that I can't wait until we are 80 years old, driving around the sporting course together doing what we love. The week went by quickly and ended with another special treat. I used to take both boys, Lawson and Miles, to do things all the time when they were younger. Museums, the zoo, ice

skating, you name it. I finally got to spend time with my two favorite kiddos at the beach. Michelle stayed home with the little ones so that the big boys could have uninterrupted fun. We spent an afternoon on Jensen Beach, body surfing the small waves. I can't remember the last time I

went to the beach and spent the entire time in the water. There's something about the rhythm of the ocean waves and the negative ions it produces that leave me feeling healed of all worry and stress. Our beautiful afternoon was cut short when a storm rolled in, shocking I know, and the



lifeguards put up the double red flag, thus closing the beach. As we rinsed off the sand before getting back in my car, we all just looked at each other and smiled. Man, how I missed this little man, Miles.



We all went out to eat together to have our last supper, and it was a perfect ending to a perfect visit. Sure, there was chaos around us constantly with a baby, a rambunctious toddler,

construction (I forgot to mention that Michelle's father and two young family members were working on an outdoor construction project), and two preteen boys constantly needing to be entertained, but we rocked it like we always do. Many evenings the boys had gone out on the One-Wheels and gone to the neighborhood dock to fish the St. Lucie River. Only one One-Wheel accident was had with no major injuries.



## STUART, FL - AMELIA ISLAND, FL | 278 MILES

The next morning, we loaded up our car with a heavy heart and a soul full of new memories. We drove away with our dearest friends in the rearview mirror, watching as Jameson chased us down the street as long as he could. With a relatively short driving day, we headed north towards Amelia Island. Once again, we were on our own for about a week and really looking forward to our one-on-one bonding time. We arrived in the late afternoon at Amelia Island Shotgun Sports, owned by Dawn Grant, a leading authority on mental training and hypnosis. I had met her back in 2016, and had followed her articles and posts since then. A few friends had been talking to me about how much her program for clay target shooters had helped them improve their performance, so I was very excited to kick off my journey into her program with an in-person meeting. You can read about my mental game training journey and the 21 Lesson program next year. We pulled

into the beautiful, heavily wooded club and said our hellos, then headed out to shoot. We were ready to stretch our legs and shoot some clays. The only negative thing about this entire experience was the weather. It was hot and humid, which is nothing new in Florida, however on this day, it

felt particularly stifling. Despite the weather, we had the most amazing time. One of the unique things about this club is the setup at each station. You have two different stands, one for easier presentations and one for a bigger challenge. The target setter, Dawn's son, did an amazing job of giving the shooter the ultimate experience of choices. We were able to start on the easy one, then walk over to the harder one and discuss the differences, and also see a target from multiple angles.

This gun club is also unique because it offers a quaint, refurbished horse trailer that has been converted to an Airbnb rental. With a bohemian vibe and a water trough for a bathtub, it feels like you stepped back in time and became a gypsy traveler. We quickly unpacked, changed, and headed to downtown Amelia Island to shop and eat, our two favorite activities besides shooting clays.

We spent quite some time in a small bookshop looking through books on the island, the historical homes and the history. This made me so happy that he wanted to look through books and not just buy random tourist merchandise. I came to the conclusion that I was too tired to decide what to eat, so I gave him full control of choosing a dinner spot. He learned the power of Google Maps and reading reviews. He chose a great little restaurant that was in a converted, old Victorian home. I finally started to feel a little exhausted for the first time on this trip. All I could think about was getting back to that little horse trough bathtub in the trailer. Over the course of dinner, we decided that we wanted to skip the second

night's stay, since Amelia Island Shotgun Sports was not open for shooting the following day. We decided to head to Savannah after my meeting with Dawn the following morning. As is usual for children of a certain age, when presented with the opportunity to drive a golf cart through a whimsical looking forest, the moment we got back to the trailer, Lawson took off for a night joyride. I was presented with a very long break from being with my child 24/7. Though nothing had been particularly stressful or

irritating, I still felt the NEED for a nice, long hot bath with some Netflix on the iPad. From this experience, my iPad would make its first rice bag attempt. It fell in the tub due to my lack of poor bathtub proximity placement, but I got it out fairly quickly. This provided a great opportunity to practice kindness and forgiveness for myself, but most especially patience. I still enjoyed a nice long bath, and when Lawson got back from his joyride, I delivered the great news. We now needed to go to Walmart to buy a bag of rice for the iPad, but this also meant that he got to go Hot Wheels hunting. After a restful night, I got ready to meet with Dawn and Lawson got to

sleep in. I drove to the clubhouse and had the greatest chat with Dawn. We talked about life, men, shooting, children, and of course, mental game. I left feeling inspired and motivated to begin her program as soon as Lawson started school.



## AMELIA ISLAND, FL - SAVANNAH, GA | 127 MILES

With a short drive to Savannah in our future, we picked out some tunes (because the iPad was sitting in a bag of rice) and hit the road. We arrived at our hotel in Savannah with just enough time to change and hit the beach on Tybee Island. Little known fact: I got engaged to my first husband on that same beach. We thought we were going to body surf and have a ball like we did down at Jensen Beach, but we were sorely disappointed. The water was dark and the sand was spiky from all the broken sea shells that made up the muted tone beach. We still had fun just being in the water and made the best of the time together.

After a one hour break back at the hotel watching Outer Banks on Netflix, which often features the nearby seaside town of Charleston, South Carolina, we were ready to head out and explore historic Savannah. Our first stop was the park where the infamous movie quote, "Life is like a box of chocolates..." came from. There is no park bench as portrayed in the movie Forrest Gump, however at that exact spot at the exact moment we were there, the most wonderful pedicab tour guide invited us for an enlightening spin about town. While sharing with us his vast personal knowledge of the rich history and rehabilitation of the city of Savannah with the locally founded Savannah College of Art and Design, he also discussed my most favorite topic: where to go for dinner. We ended up at the infamous Paula Deen's family style dining restaurant a few blocks from our hotel, called The Lady and Sons. The food was everything you could ever want in southern cooking and the price included dessert. We discussed all the things we wanted to do the next day based on what we learned on the tour. Plans were made. Scooters were reserved.





The next day brought us seasonally on-point warm temperatures and a humid climate, but the idea of exploring Savannah on a scooter all day with my son was pretty much the most exciting thing to happen in a long time. The whole day was spent in the sun, wrapped up in history, learning, experiencing, and a little shopping. We only took one

picture together and it was perfect. I know he appreciated the fact that I didn't make him stop and take pictures; in fact, this was even his idea. As a parent, I know I get wrapped up in my life, with stress, doubt, and worry, and then there's work, meal planning, cooking, and sports, both his and mine. It's a lot. Being able to completely disconnect on this trip, but especially on this day was nothing short of healing. It healed the parts of my motherhood that I had been telling myself I was bad at. I am doing the absolute best that I can every day and it's a process. We were healing together from the past year of bad grades, moving neighborhoods, new school, new husband/stepfather, new, new, new. Sometimes even good changes can be scary and overwhelming. This trip was all about getting down to our roots. At our core we have always played and talked. We played all day long outside, ate really good food, and talked all about life, growing up, my history, his hopes and dreams, and what we wanted out of our relationship moving forward.

## SAVANNAH, GA - GRIFFIN, GA | 219 MILES

Having satiated our thirst for exploring some American history, we continued to our next stop, one we had both been anticipating with great enthusiasm, our stop at Cherokee Rose in Griffin, Georgia. This was going to be our day of shooting, no interruptions or time constraints. Originally developed in 1981 as a private place to entertain, Cherokee Rose has grown to have



skeet, bunker, star shot ("back in the day" this game was filmed by ESPN on site), and most recently, a Helice ring. After Dave and Jean Dalton bought the property in 2019, they immediately got to work on this fixer-upper. With a sprawling 124 acres to play with, they have created one of the most beautiful sporting clays clubs I have ever seen. With two massive courses, each with 16 stations housing four traps per station, it is a shooter's dream come

true. Dave gave us a tour and showed us all the improvements that had been made and were currently in progress. With the ability to add many additional layouts for larger NSCA shoots, the only thing they needed was more parking. They solved this by purchasing an extra 25 acres across the street. They have plans to add a restaurant, which in my opinion, is the greatest idea of all time. In case you hadn't noticed, I love food. The rolling hills, towering trees, and perfectly made paths make exploring this

property a dream come true for a 12-year-old that loves driving golf carts. In fact, it was here that we had our first fight, as in an escalation of emotions on opposing sides of an issue. Lawson only wanted to drive around the course and was less interested in shooting, whereas I was starry-eyed and giddy watching every target fly throughout the terrain. Every single target was fun, challenging, and entertaining, which as some of you may know is really hard to accomplish. Target setting is truly an art form that can make or break your shooting experience; kudos to



Quinn O'Brien, the target setter here at Cherokee Rose, bravo! Once I promised Lawson he could drive around for as long as he wanted after we shot the course, he got back with the program. I was able to give him a good lesson



because we pretty much had the place to ourselves. The mild heat and the canopy of trees provided shade throughout most of the course, yet the

stations themselves felt wide open, like little meadows in the middle of the forest. We both made some incredible shots and blew through a good amount of our RC Cartridges. We didn't keep score but we both knew we were shooting well. Our final station was this gorgeous wooden deck overlooking a big ravine below, a sight rarely seen in our home state. I don't quite know how to describe it, but it was a

moment. One of those moments that becomes a core memory, and you look back on it years later and every detail is crystal clear. With our sporting clays shooting at an end, I let Lawson drive around while I checked some of the content we had attempted to film and checked my messages because I always put my phone on silent when shooting. When his need for speed was satisfied, we saw a sign directing us back to the clubhouse and took that road out of the enchanting woods. Looking back, I wish we could have stayed there all day. However, it was time for the game I dream about at night and wake up thinking about:

Helice. Cherokee Rose has one of the most picturesque Helice rings I've seen thus far. It sits lower on the ground and has a small staircase leading you down to the shooting line. It has the perfect layout for filming and spectating. I went first after I taught Lawson how to score Helice, as this was his first time shooting it without a trapper. He had shot at a few Helice before, but never a full round. Even in Florida he only shot 10 birds and called it because he didn't hit many with his 20-gauge Beretta. I shot 4/5 and I walked away feeling pretty good. We had decided that this game



would score better if Lawson shot my gun, as it requires tight chokes and I had not packed the chokes for his 20-gauge. Lawson went to the line and awkwardly loaded the gun, closed it, and tried to push the button for the microphone. I cringed as I told myself, "I forgot to tell him to load the shells, push the button, then close the gun." I let him get the first one out of the way, dead on the first shot. I thought, "Okay, as long as he's being safe, I won't interrupt him." Second bird, dead on the second shot. Third bird came out fast and low, lost bird. Fourth and fifth, dead on the first shot. He realized he had just tied with me and the smile on his face as he turned around for approval said it all. He was hooked. He ended up shooting a 9 out of 15, which is quite amazing for a first time, or any time. I have shot an 18 out of 30 in competition before; it's not a score to be embarrassed about at all. I had a proud mama moment and as we hugged, I could feel that he was proud of me too. It brought me back to when he was in 3rd grade and had to do a Mother's Day project of writing and drawing

about when mom was the happiest. He had drawn me with a shotgun and said I was happiest when I was shooting. Well, now I was happiest when I was shooting with him, and I know he felt that. The hour was getting late, and we were getting hungry, so we packed up and went to the clubhouse to say our thank yous and goodbyes.

### GRIFFIN, GA - ATLANTA, GA | 32 MILES

Our next stop was the original Chick-fil-a, also known as the Dwarf House, just south of Atlanta. As any mother with a child in the south, Chick-fil-a and its delicious food and reliable playgrounds have been a cornerstone of our lives together. Countless evenings have been spent with me sitting on a laptop inside a Chick-fil-a, while Lawson made a new "best friend" whose name he would never know and whose company he would never again encounter: a single serving friend. We opted to sit on the old diner side of the restaurant, which had a totally different menu, featuring things like chicken melts and fried okra.

I am not sure Lawson had ever been to any type diner, so he was pretty excited to sit and watch them cook. We both tried the chicken melt and loved it; his of course, no onions. I made a note to put "learn to make a chicken melt" on my list of things to do. of diner, so he was pretty excited to sit and watch them cook. We both tried the chicken melt and loved it; his of course, no onions. I made a note to put "learn to make a chicken melt" on my list of things to do.

est.  1981

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## ATLANTA, GA - CHATTANOOGA, TN | 125 MILES

At this point in our trip, we were sort of floating. We weren't expected in Ohio for a few days, and we only had the Corvette Museum on our list of things to do, so we made a plan for how to spend the next few days. At this point, we were feeling lazy and just ready to chill for a bit, so we ended up driving to Chattanooga as it was a good halfway point to The Corvette Museum in Bowling Green, Kentucky. We had a movie night, got some good sleep, and contemplated exploring Chattanooga, but decided to move on as we were both very excited for this next stop. We got ready and packed up in the morning, then headed out to see some really pretty cars.



## CHATTANOOGA, TN - BOWLING GREEN, KY | 199 MILES

I have been taking my son to museums since maternity leave. I was always fascinated with the carefully curated collections of art, history, rocks, gems, artifacts, and treasures that one sees in a museum, and I know I instilled that in my son. Luckily, as he was trained by me, we have the same "museum pace." We spend about the same amount of time looking, taking pictures, and reading the placards. We don't linger too long, but appreciate the things most interesting to us. We read what piques our interest and skip the rest. After months of anticipation and build up, we managed to get through the museum in less than two hours between exploring and shopping in the gift shop. Another bucket list item crossed off the list.



## BOWLING GREEN, KY - LOUISVILLE, KY | 109 MILES

By this time, we were running on empty like the gas tanks in the museum cars. We headed to a familiar spot, Louisville, Kentucky. We had already done all the touristy things to do in that town, so we found a comfortable Residence Inn by Marriott and parked for two days while we waited for the Blake family to be ready for us. With this trip taking up a huge chunk of our summer as well as putting us back in Houston just a week before school started, we decided that we should get some back-to-school shopping out of the way. Seeing my son go from mud and food stained, not a care in the world outwardly appearance, to suddenly wanting matching Nike sets and cologne was a huge moment for me. He also finally convinced me to watch Cobra Kai on Netflix. We spent the whole evening with our door dashed food and a teenage karate show.

The hotel also had a basketball court where I attempted to play horse with him. I haven't thrown a basketball in 20 years and it showed. Another note to self,

## LOUISVILLE, KY - RICHMOND DALE, OH | 206 MILES

We were halfway done with the trip as we began a familiar drive to Richmond Dale, Ohio. It may seem to be a random place, but it is home to some of our favorite family friends: Jen Blake, Derek Dumont, and Jen's super cool sons, Issac and Wesley Blake. We made our first trek to Richmond Dale, Ohio, in the summer of 2021. After meeting Jen at an event (Fall Festival 2020) hosted by A Girl and A Gun organization, we became friends - not the single serving kind, but not the instant best friend type either.

Instead, we did what normal adults that meet at events do; we followed each other on social media. We continued to build a friendship over time through comments, likes, and DMs, and eventually a few phone calls and facetimes. The conversation always flowed and the laughs were plenty when we talked. Our first trip to Ohio in 2021 was successful to say the least; the boys hit it off and we continued to build a real friendship.

This trip was poised to bring even more bonding as we would be spending the whole week together at Jen's home, instead of traveling around Ohio like we did previously. Lawson and I had both been looking forward to this leg of the trip the most, and we were finally here.



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# GUNS, GIRLS, and PEARLS

With Brandy Elrod; Photos by Amber Shumake

**D**iamonds are a girl's best friend...or are they? If you ask a shotgun enthusiast, she may say her shotgun is her best friend. Add a set of pearls and the right attire into the scenario, now you have the perfect combination to attend a lady's tournament.

The Guns, Girls, and Pearls tournament held at Defender Outdoors in May was honestly one of the most fun ladies' only tournaments that I have ever attended. Betsy Price (former mayor of Fort Worth) and Linda Halbouty, definitely know how to throw a party. The ladies hosted the tournament benefiting the United Way of Tarrant County's Women United,

raising \$35,000 in their first year. Per the United Way of Tarrant County's website: Women United has harnessed the power and dedication of women leaders across Tarrant County who see the need for deeper and more meaningful investments in the lives of women and girls in our community. Each year,



philanthropic investments are given to life-changing programs. Single mothers receive job training allowing them to provide a better life for their families, low-income girls become first-generation college students, and victims of abuse find safe spaces to escape their situations—these are just a few examples of the impact of Women United. The \$35,000 the ladies raised will definitely go a long way in providing for







the Women United programs.

The tournament was held at Defender Outdoors in Fort Worth, Texas. There were 140 ladies in attendance. Betsy and Linda informed me 10 days before the tournament there were only 40 ladies signed up. The ladies of Defender started working their networking magic and within a week the event reached the 140 mark, made up of all women. Ladies had two options for competing: new shooters shot 50 targets in groups of four with an instructor. The instructors included Master Class shooters, NSCA Instructors, and everyone's favorite trick shot guru Travis Mears. Everyone else shot the 100 target cowtown course. The

at a time, as well as a nice, covered pavilion.

The hospitality of the tournament was definitely one of the best I have witnessed at a benefit tournament. When you checked in, you were offered eye & ear

protection if you needed it, as well



as a strand of pearls. What tournament labeled, "Guns, Girls, and Pearls," would be complete without everyone wearing pearls? Even the instructors were wearing pink t-shirts, with tuxedos and pearls printed on

them. You know if Travis Mears is wearing pearls and a pink printed tuxedo t-shirt, that



targets were definitely charity level in nature, but they were great for all the ladies, because every target was definitely achievable. Defender provides a variety of accommodations with an easily walkable course as well as covered stations. There are plenty of items to look at throughout the course with signs from ranges of the past, a very large covered 5-stand that can host over 20 people





you are going to have fun. There were many vendors...because who does not love shopping? The vendors included Casey and Company, Ida Mae Home, and Ceasar Guerini displaying Syren Shotguns that were available for demo. Who doesn't love a good shotgun demo? While shooting we heard a mariachi band. I personally thought this was just music playing from a radio, but no it was an actual high school mariachi band from Castleberry ISD which was very talented. Unfortunately, the tournament was running about one hour behind (they only planned for 75-80 ladies, not 140) so we did not get to listen to the mariachi band during the hors d'oeuvres hour. We did, however, stop to listen for a few minutes when we had to transfer from station 12 to station one. This delay for the enjoyment of the band was likely the source of the back up on the course as many other groups were doing the same thing.

The decorations were very cute, with flower arrangements, tablecloths, and pearls. We were wine and dined. A mobile open bar was set up in a two-horse trailer by The Rockin' Horse mobile bar.



This was definitely one of the coolest bars I have ever seen, and the drinks were very tasty. The bartenders knew how to make a good Paloma, so I was impressed. The food was provided by The Meat Board. They served Charcuterie, two types of delicious sandwiches, and 6666 chili. My favorite of the drinks and food portion was the custom-made shotgun cookies with pearls. I definitely helped myself to a few.







Editor note: This was by far one of the neatest tournaments I have ever been to. The hospitality was top notch. You cannot go wrong with pearls, guns, your best girlfriends, a mariachi band, and a horse trailer bar...



The awards, auction items, and ladies attire were awesome as well. The auction items included a fun sporting clays getaway to Greystone Castle, a basket full of goodies and gift cards, as well as custom made boots. The awards were custom champagne flute sets with the placing etched on the flute. The ladies were dressed in their best. Many of the ladies' teams matched in custom shirts, wild rags, to die for boots, and of course any Texan loves a cowboy hat. A fashion show could have easily occurred during this tournament.



I am hearing rumors that there will be three courses next year, a bigger and better tournament, and room for more participants. Sign me up, because I will be attending once again, and you should too on **May 16, 2024.**





# WING & CLAY

Life



*#IYKYK2024*

Are you going on an  
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The Eve Long Sleeve Shirt from Ditale is  
not only comfortable, but it is UV  
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durable odor control.



Check out our review in the  
Vol. I 2024 Newsletter where we  
put the Eve to the test in the blind,  
on the range, and in the field!

#### Beretta Covey Field Pant:

- Water repellent
- Cotton
- Anti-abrasion inserts
- Elastic waist
- Great for mild climates



#### Beretta Retriever Hunting Vest:

- Water repellent
- Front-load capable
- Game bag with water-proof lining
- Anti-abrasion inserts on the shoulders.

#### Schnee's Kestrel Boot:

- Comfortable
- Supportive
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- Breathable
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# SKINCARE BALANCE FOR THE CHANGING SEASONS

WITH LICENSED ESTHETICIAN NATALIA GONZALEZ

If your summer looks anything like mine, it was filled with lots of sunshine. Summer is a popular time to get outside and explore nature, especially if you are a fan of water. Water and sunshine are literally my whole summer vibe. Then comes the fall. A season for hunting, football games, and God willing some sweater weather. For me, the fall season brings some bi-polar weather in Texas. Some days are still hot and humid, some days are dry and hot, some days are cool and some days you get 4 seasons in one day. This can really wreak havoc on your skin.

Our skin is our shell, its main purpose is to keep all of our water inside our bodies, hence it is actually challenging to get skincare products to go into our skin. It's barrier like properties make it a challenge to penetrate. When you add the crazy mood swings of the weather and the heaters in your house and car, the a/c, the leftover summer

skin, it all adds up to some potentially strenuous skin conditions. This can lead to unexpected breakouts, feeling oily and dry at the same time, or even feeling super dry. If you are up for treating yourself, this is the perfect time to find

a licensed esthetician and get a good gentle chemical peel.

Maintaining a proper balance is the key to beautiful skin year round. I have a few routines that I follow based on the weather and what my skin is doing. What I eat, how much water I drink and even how much sleep I get all affect how my skin looks and feels. One of the best things you can do is have a product line that you can trust and have multiple options for different needs. Just because you have 7 skincare products doesn't

mean all 7 need to get used every day. But it's important to have that one product that your skin needs when it's breaking out for example, maybe during your cycle or when experiencing an overload of stress. This stress could be caused by the changing weather or just life. Either way, it's important to know your body, know your skin, find products that help you maintain the balance and knowing when to use them but

not over use them.

The most important aspect of skincare is ingredients. Always read the labels. I am a big fan of medical grade skincare as it is a

classic example of you get what you pay for. Our editor here, Brandy, is a perfect example of the other best option which is to make your own natural products. Everything in between those two options can pretty much be flushed down the toilet in my opinion. Our current economy is based on the bottom line and unfortunately in skincare it is rampant how much manufacturers could not care less about you or your health or even the results promised by their false advertising. Medical grade skincare is not only results driven but free of all the bad ingredients like fragrances and preservatives. Natural home made skincare is amazing but not all of us have the time so you just have to find your comfort level and your path to beautiful healthy skin.

All products on the next page can be purchased on my website

[estheticianskin.com](http://estheticianskin.com)



[estheticianskin](http://estheticianskin.com)

e s t h e t i c i a n { s k i n }





Here's some of the medical grade products from my line that have helped hundreds of clients and friends keep the pesky minor breakouts away.



#### **Breakout Defense**

This product contains just the right amount of Salicylic acid and Glycolic acid to gently control oil production and exfoliate the top layer keeping breakouts away.



#### **Juicie Serum**

This magical blue juice is a hydrating dream. It is mostly hyaluronic acid which penetrates deep within the skin to draw moisture in and hold it there. I call it daily liquid filler. It leaves skin looking younger and more firm as well as softer and more hydrated.



#### **Skinnie Moisturizer**

This is my personal favorite. I don't like the emollient feeling left behind on some thicker moisturizers so this one is perfect. After you apply it, it fully absorbs into your skin leaving only happy hydrated skin behind.

#### **Acne Killer Cleanser**

This is perfect as a daily for someone with intense breakouts but this is also one of those products that a lot of my under 35 clients love to use **ONLY** the week leading up to their period. With a 10% Benzyl Peroxide blend and soothing aloe vera it kills any breakouts forming and soothes at the same time.



#### **Glowie Serum**

This is liquid gold. A triple duty antioxidant formula that helps to brighten the skin, support healthy collagen production and protect against damaging free radicals and HEV (blue light). You really can't ask for more out of a vitamin c product.



#### **Thickk Moisturizer**

This rich and creamy classic is for the type of person that enjoys the silky layer left behind from a good moisturizer.



For the ladies experiencing the post summer dryness from all the good times had in the sun, I am a huge fan of this hydrating combo. This is part of my daily morning routine (when I actually do it which is not everyday because surprise! I am not perfect)

Last but not least a girl needs a good moisturizer. Moisturizer is the key to sealing the deal on your skincare. I like to think of my options here as being very simple. You are either one or the other and it's all personal preference.

*As always I am here if you ever have questions about your skin. If you are struggling to find something that works, or if you are just ready to level up on your skincare. I specialize in helping you avoid over complicating things as my motto at Esthetician Skin is "skincare made simple."*



**A**s a responsible parent, ensuring the safety of your children is your number one paramount concern. While speaking about safety often revolves around ensuring road rules are understood, how to spot stranger danger, and what to do when it comes to fire safety, it is equally important to educate your children about firearm safety. By instilling this knowledge and respect for firearms, you can help protect your children and prevent accidents or issues. In this article, we will analyze practical tips and strategies to teach your children about firearm safety.

## OPEN COMMUNICATION

Building open communication is critical when teaching children about any topic, including firearm safety. Create an environment where your children feel comfortable discussing their interests or concerns concerning guns. Encourage questions, actively listen, and provide age-appropriate answers.

## LEAD BY EXAMPLE

Children learn from observing their parents and caregivers. Be a responsible role model by always using safe behavior around firearms. Practice proper storage, handling, and respect for firearms in their presence. Always follow safety rules, such as keeping guns unloaded and locked away when not in use. By showcasing responsible behavior, you will pass on valuable lessons that your children can remember for a lifetime, and possibly pass it down to their children.

## EDDIE THE EAGLE FROM THE NRA “STOP, DON’T TOUCH, LEAVE THE AREA, TELL AN ADULT” VIDEO & RULE

The NRA has a great video that can teach your children the four basic steps to follow when encountering a firearm: Stop, Don’t Touch, Leave the Area, and Tell an Adult. This simple rule affirms the importance of avoiding direct contact with firearms and seeking adult assistance immediately. Reinforce this rule through frequent discussions, role-playing scenarios, and reminders until it becomes second nature to your children.

## POTENTIAL DANGERS OF FIREARMS

While it is important to educate children about the safety rules, it is equally crucial to discuss the possible dangers associated with



## TEACHING YOUR KIDS ABOUT FIREARM SAFETY: A CRUCIAL RESPONSIBILITY WITH FIREARMS INSTRUCTOR LISA LUDWIG

firearms. Explain the irreversible consequences and repercussions that mishandling or unauthorized use of firearms can have on themselves and others. Explain that firearms are not toys and should never be treated as such. By instilling a sense of responsibility and respect, children will understand the seriousness of firearm safety.

## AGE-APPROPRIATE CONTENT

Adjust your approach to your child’s age and maturity level. Younger children may benefit from simple concepts like “guns are dangerous” and “only adults can touch guns.” Older children can be gradually introduced to more engaging topics such as proper handling, storage, and the importance of gun-free zones.



## PRACTICE FIREARM SAFETY RULES:

Teach your children the cardinal rules of firearm safety, which are universally recognized:

1. Treat every firearm as if it were loaded.
2. Always point the muzzle in a safe direction.
3. Keep your finger off the trigger until ready to shoot.
4. Be aware of your target and what lies beyond it

## ADDRESS CURIOSITY APPROPRIATELY

Children are naturally curious about firearms, especially if they happen to see them in media or through peers. Acknowledge their curiosity and address it proactively. Explain the differences between real firearms and those depicted in movies or video games. Help them understand the potential harm behind mishandling any firearms and their potential consequences to avoid unnecessary panic or misunderstandings.

## CONSISTENTLY REINFORCE SAFETY RULES

Consistent reinforcement is crucial in embedding firearm safety rules in your child’s behavior. Remind them periodically about the “Stop, Don’t Touch, Leave the Area, Tell an Adult” rule, its importance, and severity. Use everyday situations or news stories as teachable examples that will help to reinforce the

importance of responsible firearm handling. By consistently revisiting these safety rules, you help solidify them in your child's mind and promote a responsible attitude towards firearms.

### EMPHASIZE SAFE STORAGE

Teach your children the importance of proper firearm storage. Explain that firearms should always be locked in a secure container, such as a gun safe or lockbox, with ammunition stored separately (and locked up separately, depending on your state laws). Explain that they should never attempt to access or handle firearms without adult supervision, even if they know the location of the keys or combination. By stressing safe storage practices, you further decrease the likelihood of incidents happening.

### REPORTING OF UNSUPERVISED FIREARMS

Empower your children to speak up if they come across unsupervised firearms outside your home. Teach them the importance of notifying a trusted adult or authority figure immediately in such situations. They need to understand that seeing a firearm open, on a table, and unsupervised is wrong, and give them the power to do something about it. By fostering a sense of responsibility and understanding the potential



danger, you equip your children to make the right choices when faced with unsafe firearm encounters in their environments.

### CONCLUSION

Teaching your children about firearm safety is a crucial responsibility that should not be overlooked. By engaging in open communication, leading by example, and establishing clear safety rules, you can equip your children with the

knowledge and respect necessary to navigate potential encounters with firearms. Remember to tailor the information to their age and maturity level, reinforce safety rules consistently, and encourage responsible behavior. By prioritizing and taking proactive steps to ensure your children's safety when they are with you, or not, will help minimize the risks associated with firearms and promote a culture of responsible gun ownership.



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*Lisa is the President and Lead Instructor for She Trains You. Lisa is also a certified NRA Pistol Instructor, Rifle Instructor, Chief Range Safety Officer, Glock Armorer, Armed Guard, and Martial Artist.*





# *In the Kitchen*

## *with Holly Hearn*

**I**t's no secret that the Holidays are my favorite time of the year. With the focus of the season being food and family, I enjoy being able to show off my culinary skills as well as prepare wild game dishes for my family that are somewhat fancy and make them feel special. Throughout the course of history, in cultures all over the world, it was commonplace to serve wild game during holiday feasts. On top of that the holiday season and hunting season, at least here in the United States, coincide. This makes serving wild game a great seasonal option, especially for those who have had an excellent hunting season. Featured in this article are several of my favorite holiday dishes from years past. These dishes range from traditional sides prepared in time-saving manner to more creative and unique dishes featuring.

### THANKSGIVING

Traditionally our Thanksgiving spread always includes mac-n-cheese, braised greens, and as an alternative to turkey, ham however the past two years we have made it a tradition to serve braised wild pork instead. Braised wild pork is a great alternative to ham for a few reasons; there are no chemicals or additives, it can be made in advance and frozen, and the leftovers are incredibly versatile. Leftovers are the best part of Thanksgiving. My favorite thing to do with the leftover braised wild pork is to make sandwiches. I've included the recipes for my ultimate leftover sandwiches, mac-n-cheese, braised wild pork as well as my favorite greens.

## *Braised Wild Pork*

### A CHANGE UP FROM A TRADITIONAL HAM

Serves: 6-8  
Total Time: 2.5-3 hours

Braised wild pork is one of those dishes that is simple in terms of ingredients and cooking technique but comes out delicious. While this is not the speediest dish to cook the flavor packed in this dish is a nice change up from the traditional holiday ham whilst not straying too far away from those traditions.

I love to make this dish because it rarely seldom goes to waste. There are a million ways to repurpose these leftovers. You can throw a big scoop of this on top of leftover mac-n-cheese the next day or you can check out my recipe for the ultimate leftover sandwich.

## INGREDIENTS

- 2 pounds wild pork shoulder or leg, cut into 2-inch cubes.
- 8 pieces of bacon
- 1 large onion, diced.
- 8 cloves garlic, minced.
- 2 carrots peeled and chopped.
- 2 celery stalks, chopped.
- 1 cup orange juice
- 1.5 cup red wine
- 2 cups homemade venison or beef stock
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 2 bay leaves
- 2 sprigs fresh thyme
- 1 sprig fresh rosemary
- Salt and pepper to taste

## DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 325°F
2. Pat the wild pork pieces dry with paper towels, and season them with a generous amount of salt and pepper and set aside for at least 30 minutes.
3. In a large Dutch oven or heavy-bottomed pot, cook bacon starting in a cold pot until all the fat has rendered out and remove from the pot. Brown the wild pork pieces on all sides until they develop a nice golden crust. Work in batches if necessary, so you don't overcrowd the pot.
4. Once the pork is browned, remove it from the pot and set it aside. Reduce the heat to medium.
5. In the same pot, add the diced onion, garlic, carrots, and celery. Sauté the vegetables until they become tender, and the onions are translucent, about 5 minutes.
6. Deglaze the pot by pouring in the red wine and orange juice, and scraping the browned bits from the bottom with a wooden spoon. Let the wine simmer for 2 minutes to reduce slightly.
7. Stir in the tomato paste, your preferred stock, bay leaves, thyme, and rosemary. Bring the mixture to a simmer.
8. Return the browned wild pork pieces to the pot, making sure they are submerged in the



liquid. If needed, add more broth or water until the pork is almost covered.

9. Cover the pot with a lid and transfer it to the preheated oven. Braise the wild pork for about 2 to 2 1/2 hours, or until the meat becomes fork-tender and easily pulls apart.
10. Remove the bay leaves, thyme, and rosemary sprigs from the pot. Taste the sauce and adjust the seasoning with salt and pepper if needed.
11. Serve over your family's favorite Thanksgiving starch. IE mashed potatoes, polenta, or even my mac-n-cheese as previously suggested
12. If you desire a thicker liquid, place 1 tablespoon of flour in a small bowl and make a slurry, add it to the pot 5-7 minutes before you plan to serve

## Mac-n-Cheese

### KEEPING IT SIMPLE

Serves: 4  
Total Time: 45 minutes

Arguably the best part of the holidays is mac-n-cheese. Mac-n-cheese is not only my favorite holiday dish but my favorite dish of all time. While mac-n-cheese recipes are a dime a dozen, I developed this one specifically for the chaos of holiday cooking. This recipe is a no-bake recipe that comes together in less than 45 minutes and is made in one pan. You might notice from the picture that I do not use the traditional elbow-shaped pasta in my mac-n-cheese. I find that the texture of the elbow shape doesn't always hold up to the gooey white cheddar sauce. Pasta shape is more of a personal preference in my opinion and if you are unable to find Trotolle, an open spiral-shaped pasta, anything rigged such as penne or shells works beautifully.

gamegirlgourmet@gmail.com



IG: @gamegirlgourmet FB: Game Girl Gourmet TW: @gamegirlgourmet

LADYSHOOTER LIFESTYLES



## INGREDIENTS

- 1 pound of Trotole (or penne)
- 3 cups shredded sharp white cheddar cheese.
- 1.5 cup whole milk (or half-and-half for a creamier texture)
- 2 tsp of Dijon mustard
- 4 tablespoons butter
- Salt and pepper to taste

## DIRECTIONS

1. Cook pasta according to package directions. Drain and set pasta aside
2. In the pot you cooked your pasta in add 4 tbsp of butter over medium heat
3. Once the butter is melted add your milk or half-n-half and your Dijon mustard.
4. Heat the milk until it is steaming but not boiling.
5. Gradually add the cheese to the pot and stir until fully melted, once fully melted add your pasta back to the pan and fold it into the cheese sauce.

## Bacon Braised Collard Greens

### THE FORGOTTEN VEGETABLE

Serves: 4

Total Time: 35-45 minutes

Traditionally no one gets excited about greens, however, these greens are very different! While they might seem unassuming, they never last on our family's table. The fatty and smoky bacon serves as the perfect cooking fat to balance the occasionally bitter collard greens which I also tamper with a splash of balsamic vinegar right before I pull them off the heat.

## INGREDIENTS

- 6 pieces of thick-cut bacon
- 2-3 bunches of collard greens, washed & roughly chopped
- 1 white onion diced
- 5 cloves of garlic minced
- 1/2- 1 tbsp of balsamic vinegar
- Salt and pepper to taste

## DIRECTIONS

1. Place your bacon in a large skillet BEFORE turning your stove to medium-low.
2. Render the bacon until crispy. Remove from the pan and set aside.
3. Turn the heat to medium add diced white onion to the pan and sauté until almost translucent. Add a little salt at this step to aid in the cooking process.
4. Once your onions are sautéed add your greens to the pan, don't be alarmed if they don't all fit, they will cook down a lot, and stir until the greens begin to wilt.
5. After about 5 minutes add your garlic and stir to incorporate. Turn the heat to low add a bit more salt to taste and cook for about 15-20 minutes.
6. Once your greens have softened add your balsamic vinegar and cook for 5 more minutes
7. Chop your bacon and sprinkle on top before serving.

The Spode Woodland Collection provides the perfect dinnerware to serve your Holiday feast on.



## Ultimate Leftover Sandwich

### AVOIDING LEFTOVER BURNOUT

Serves: 4

Total Time: 20 minutes

Traditionally no one gets excited about greens, however, these greens are very different! While they might seem unassuming, they never last on our family's table. The fatty and smoky bacon serves as the perfect cooking fat to balance the occasionally bitter collard greens which I also tamper with a splash of balsamic vinegar right before I pull them off the heat.

## INGREDIENTS

- Pretzel buns (leftover rolls)
- Leftover Cheese board cheese (I used gouda)
- 1/2 white onion
- Braised wild pork
- Salt Lick BBQ sauce
- Bread and Butter pickles

## DIRECTIONS

1. In a small skillet place a bit of butter over low heat, once melted add onions to the pan and cook until fully caramelized. Stirring occasionally. This process can take quite a while, but a sprinkle of sugar will expedite the caramelization process.
2. Heat your pork to the desired temp and toss in BBQ sauce, how much BBQ sauce is entirely personal preference. Place the pork on your bottom bun or roll.
3. Place several pieces of cheese on top of the pork and place under the broiler until fully melted.
4. Add your caramelized onions, two bread & butter pickles to the top of your sandwich, enjoy!





## CHRISTMAS

Truth be told I prefer cooking for Christmas over cooking for Thanksgiving. There are several reasons for this. One is that historically, around the Globe, wild game has been served at Christmas and secondly, it has always felt like the holiday to try something fancy and exciting. While I love the tradition of a formal Christmas meal in recent years, my favorite part of Christmas day has been enjoying a quiet breakfast with my fiancé before the family comes over. I've included two of my favorite Christmas dinner entrees as well as my favorite Christmas morning meal.

### *Christmas Breakfast Frittata*

#### NO-FUSS BREAKFAST

Serves: 4-6

Total Time: 40 minutes

If you have ever hosted Christmas at your house, you know that things tend to get crazy quickly on the morning of Christmas! Whether you're busy opening presents from Santa or enjoying some quiet moments with your significant other before

the family arrives, starting Christmas morning with a great breakfast sets the tone for the day. One of my most requested breakfast dishes by clients, for any occasion, is my wild game breakfast frittata. This is a great Christmas morning breakfast dish because you can prepare it the night before and then pop it in the oven the next morning for an easy no no-fuss breakfast that will hold everyone over until the big meal. This is also a great place to use up any bits and pieces leftover from prepping other recipes.

#### INGREDIENTS

- 1 pound wild game breakfast sausage
- 2 tbsp cooking oil
- 8 eggs
- ½ cup heavy cream
- ½ cup caramelized onions
- 1 cup shredded white cheddar cheese
- 1 ½ cups chopped spinach
- ½ cup sliced baby Bella mushrooms
- 1/8 cup Sundried tomatoes
- Salt and pepper to taste

#### DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat your oven to 400°F
2. In a medium nonstick skillet heat 2 tbsp of high-temperature oil and add your ground

wild game plus 1 ½ - 2 tbsp of the breakfast sausage blend, stirring well to ensure the spices are well incorporated. Remove from heat as soon as the pink has been cooked out of the meat.

3. In a medium size bowl whisk together eggs, cream, salt, and pepper, then set aside.
4. Spray a 10-inch cake pan with steep sides and place a layer of caramelized onions, cheese, sundried tomatoes, mushrooms, spinach, and wild game sausage mixture, pour ½ egg mixture into the pan and let settle. Repeat with another layer of your vegetables, meat, cheese, and the remaining egg.
5. Bake for 18-20 minutes or until set in the middle. Serve immediately or store in an airtight container for up to a week.



*Need a table decoration?  
A combination of pompas grass,  
Pheasant feathers, velvet & bronze  
filler leaf sprigs make for a great  
floral arrangement that will take  
you through fall & winter.*



# Rabbit Confit

## A FRENCH METHOD OF COOKING

Serves: 4-6

Total Time: 12+ hours

If impressing your guests is the goal few dishes stun the way rabbit confit does. This dish is not only visually impressive it is also a dish not frequently seen on many menus. If you aren't familiar with the classic French method of confit, in terms it means to slow-cook something in its fat. Rabbits are not inherently fatty animals, for that reason I use a combination of duck fat, olive oil, and avocado oil for the cooking fat. Cooking the rabbit in the fat produces a succulent, tender, and delicious product that can be served alongside a multitude of side dishes from tender roasted potatoes to delicious gnocchi in a brown butter sage sauce as pictured. No matter what you decide to serve this showstopper with it will be sure to put your guest in a festive mood and provide a holiday dining experience unlike any other.

### INGREDIENTS

- 2-3 pounds of rabbit cut into pieces.
- 2 cups duck fat
- 1 cup of olive oil
- 1 cup of avocado oil
- 2 white onions
- 2 whole lemons
- 12 garlic cloves, crushed.
- 7 sprigs of fresh thyme
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 tablespoon black peppercorns
- Coarse Sea salt
- 2 3-inch pieces of cinnamon
- 2-star anise pods
- 2 cloves

### DIRECTIONS

1. The first step in the confit process is to generously season the rabbit pieces with kosher salt, ensuring they are evenly coated. Place the salted rabbit in a large sheet pan, cover, and refrigerate overnight (at least 12 hours). This process enhances the flavor and tenderness of the rabbit, be sure not to skip this step.
2. Preheat your oven to 200°F (95°C).



3. Once you are ready to cook your rabbit, remove it from the refrigerator and rinse off the excess salt. Pat the rabbit pieces dry with paper towels.
4. In a heavy-bottomed ovenproof pot or Dutch oven, combine the different fats (the most important step is to ensure that the rabbit is completely submerged in fat.) Next add crushed garlic, cloves, fresh thyme, bay leaves, black peppercorns, lemons, anise pods, cinnamon, and clove.
5. Place the pot over low heat and warm the fat mixture until it is completely melted but not boiling. The temperature should be around 180°F
6. Gently place the dried rabbit pieces into the warm fat mixture, again making sure the rabbit is fully submerged. If needed, add more fat to cover the rabbit entirely.
7. Cover the pot with a lid or aluminum foil and transfer it to the preheated oven. Let the rabbit confit cook slowly at a low temperature for about 2 to 3 hours until the meat becomes tender and easily pulls apart. The cooking time may vary depending on the size and type of rabbit you're using.
8. Once the rabbit is done cooking, carefully remove it from the fat and place it on a plate or dish. Allow the rabbit to cool slightly.

Notes: Rabbit confit is traditionally served warm or at room temperature. You can enjoy it as is or sear the pieces briefly in a hot skillet to add some crispy texture to the skin. Serve it alongside roasted potatoes or over brown butter sage gnocchi. Pro-tip save and strain the cooking fat for use in other dishes, this oil is excellent to use in foods such as scrambled eggs or simply making a grilled cheese.

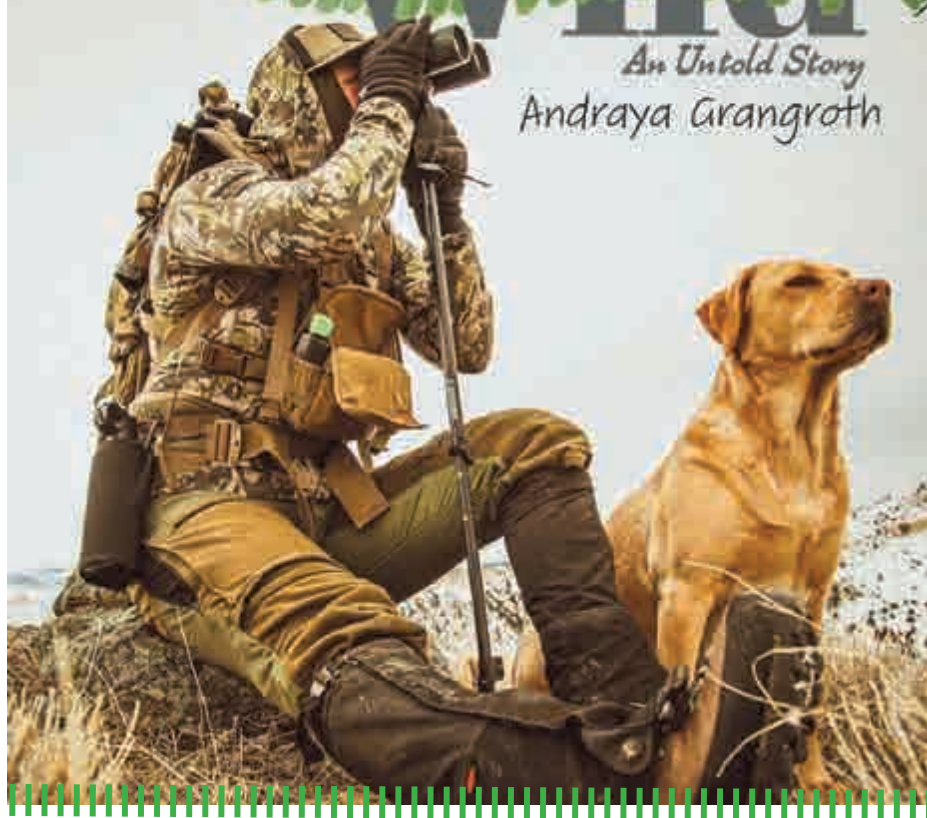


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# What's Her Wild

*An Untold Story*  
Andraya Grangroth



Andraya Grangroth was born into a family reliant on hunting, and harvesting of the land. It didn't take her long to find her place among the rows in the garden and in the rainforest looking for deer and elk. Wild places soon became her place of learning, discovery, and escape. Having suffered sexual trauma at a young age, Andraya often took flight to the tall ferns and evergreens behind the house. Here she cultivated a deep connection, which she now shares in her

autobiography, *What's Her Wild, An Untold Story*.

After fifteen years of suppressed memories Andraya finally speaks her truth, unraveling layers of trauma, the ultimate test of strength and resilience. She hopes to inspire others to make their healing a priority in their lives, to spend more time outside, and to fuel the fire of passion that simmers within each one of you.

As Andraya started to heal from her trauma she felt a strong pull to share the wild places with others. After harvesting a mature mule deer buck all on her own she was confident she had the skills to become a professional hunting guide. In those empowering moments of packing out the entire mule deer all on her own, she found her calling. Going on year seven of guiding Andraya has found great success in her career and is here to share some tips on finding a reputable outfitter and guide.

*Andraya is a survivor, hunting guide, owns a clothing company, and best of all she is a woman empowering other women. Her autobiography is a must read and a great gift for our ladies living their best LadyShooter LifeStyle.*

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT ANDRAYA HERE:

Websites:

<https://www.whatsyourwild.net>  
<https://ridgepatrol.com>



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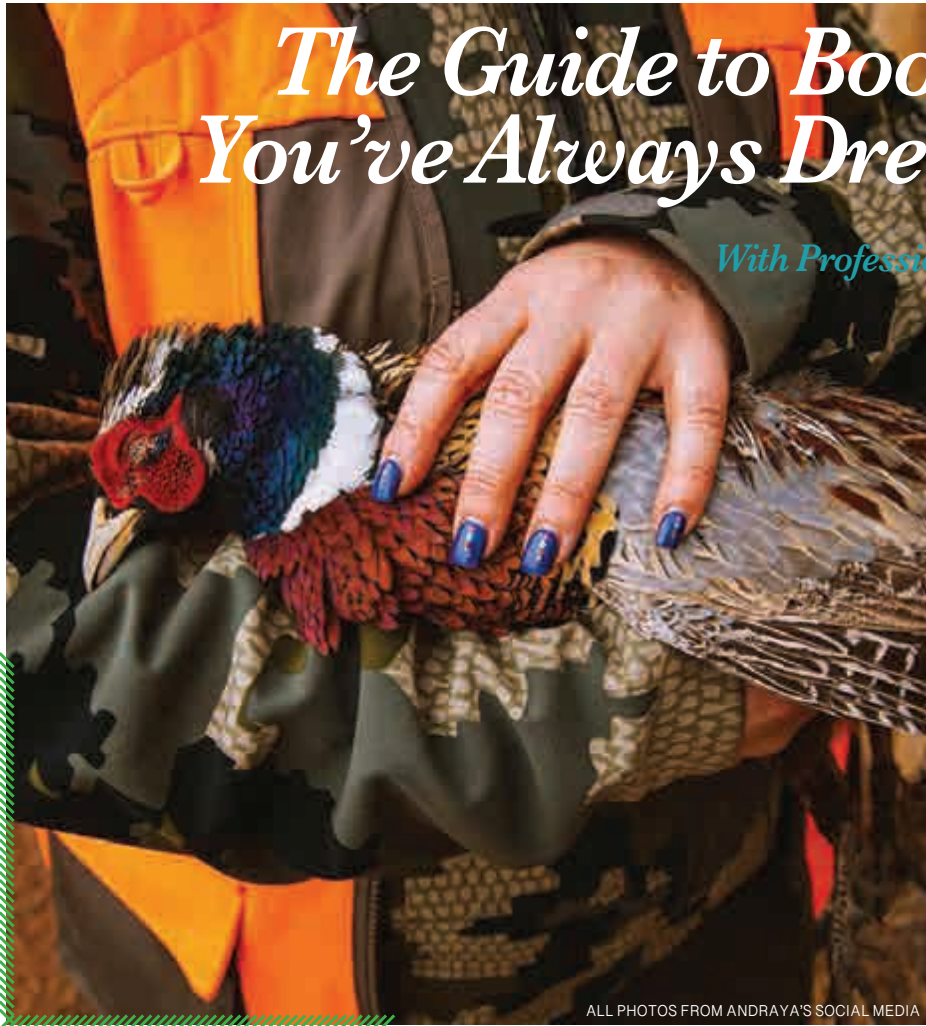
**RIDGE PATROL**  
**OWN THE LIGHT**

Andraya provides us great insight on how to find the best guide for your needs on the next page.



# The Guide to Booking a Hunt You've Always Dreamed About

*With Professional Guide Andraya Grangroth*



ALL PHOTOS FROM ANDRAYA'S SOCIAL MEDIA

**A**s a seasoned professional hunting guide, I know firsthand what goes into a hunt, starting with the planning, the hunt, and even after the hunt is over. It's been a way of life for as long as I can remember, and I feel it is my duty to share this way of living with others who seek it. Whether that is through guiding hunts, leading classes, or as you find it here, through writing. Being a hunting guide entails more than just getting the client an animal, and being the client on a hunt entails more than having a successful harvest. Providing a successful and enjoyable hunt for a client involves an awareness of their needs and capabilities, experience in the field, and knowledge of the animals you pursue. One's ego must be put aside and if it's not, the client will most likely not return to hunt with you.

I have heard from hundreds of women how hunting in general is an intimidating sport to get into. There's a lot to learn, confidence to be gained, and an overwhelming amount of gear to choose from. Having not grown up around it

makes it even more challenging. From one woman to another, I encourage you to book yourself a guided hunt, attend a women's hunting course, purchase that weapon learn how to shoot it, and go on that solo hunt safely. The confidence that blossoms when you do so will propel you forward to your next hunt, and in life. Here's the thing: we are just as worthy of these experiences as our fathers, husbands, brothers, and sons are.

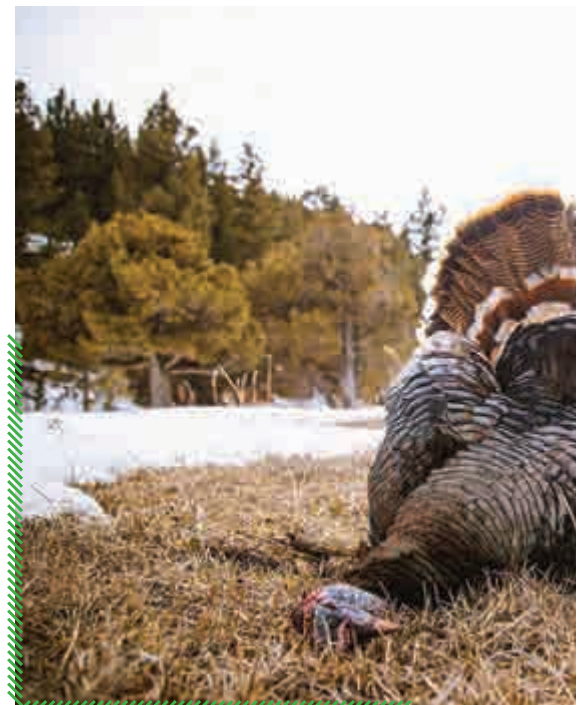
The phrases, "I don't know where to start" and "My husband always ends up going with his buddies" are most commonly heard. It doesn't have to be difficult as long as you have the right resources and grit to chase your hunting dreams.

What makes a good guide? First off, do your research and find a reputable outfitter. Having worked for a handful of outfitters and having friends who have as well, not all of them operate the same way. Find an outfitter that has returning staff. If someone returns to work a seasonal (few months long) job for several years, that tells you the outfitters treat their employees well and offer

an enjoyable and safe work environment. Second, read reviews. Testimonials are everything.

Reputable outfitters will only employ top-of-the-line guides. The current outfitter I work for, Upper Canyon Outfitters believes, "they are only as good as their staff." That statement alone says a lot about the reputation of Upper Canyon. I have worked for both great and not-so-great outfitters and have seen firsthand the difference in the client's and guide's experiences. I too have experienced the toxic energy that comes with an outfitter that cares more about the money that's coming in and not about their guide's experience and most importantly the guest experience. This made for many uncomfortable conversations with clients in the field as they complained to me.

Typically when booking a big game hunt with an outfitter there will be many conversations happening in preparation for the hunt. During this time ask them about their guides. If they have a guide you feel you will connect with, go ahead and request that guide for your hunt. Once you secure your guide, get their contact information





and start building up the relationship with them before the hunt. Pick their brain on how to best prepare physically and with your gear. Building up a connection with your upcoming guide will help make for a more comfortable introduction and experience.

Find a 5-star outfitter and you'll find 5-star guides. So what makes up a top-of-the-line hunting guide? A guide that can read their client, understand their physical capabilities, and respect them is paramount. The amount of life-changing moments I have shared with clients in the field is more than I can count on both of my hands. These tear-jerking moments didn't necessarily involve the harvest of an animal nearly none of them did. When all is still and you're sitting on a mountainside overlooking the vast country, all the stresses of the world fade away when the true connection happens. Having a guide who knows when to slow down, to appreciate the bigger picture of the hunt, to take a breather, and to soak it all in makes for a much more enjoyable hunt for the client.

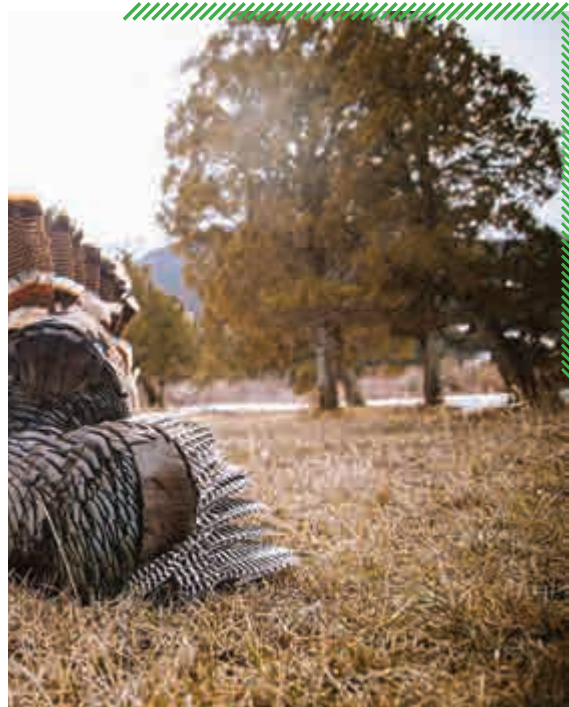
We all know physical excursion is inevitable, especially on a big game hunt, but you don't have to race to the top of the mountain to make an impression on your client. They will despise you for the remainder of the hunt and will walk away caught up in the frustrations of how they were not in good enough shape for the hunt. I have had the privilege to guide multiple older and



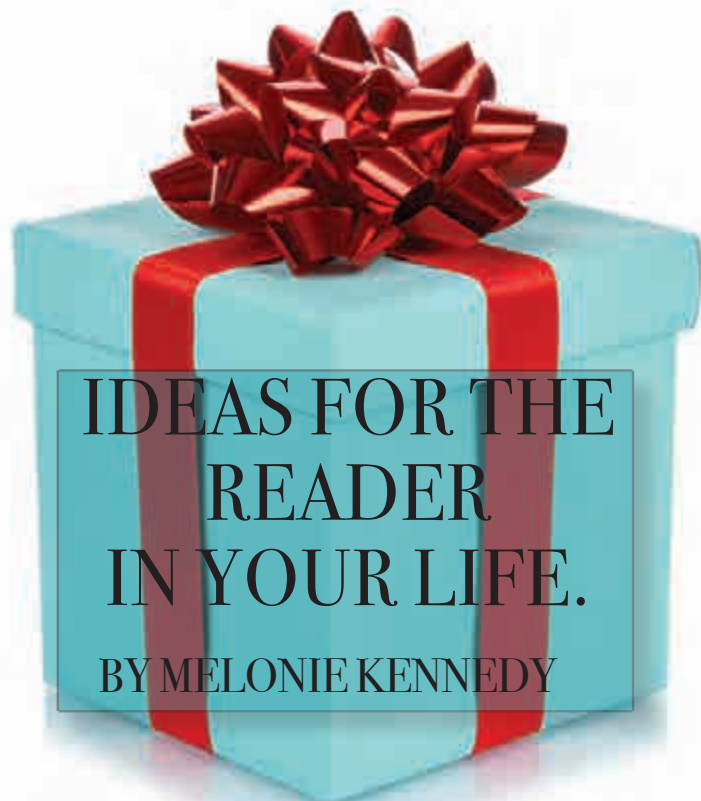
slower clients over the years. Truth be told, those are some of my most memorable hunts. Because of their lack of physical ability to run up a mountain, I was forced to slow things down and in doing so was able to give my client the experience they were looking for. The bond between my client and I was forged in those moments of stillness and in the challenge of pushing on. Having a guide that knows when to slow down, rest, drink water, have a snack, and warm up by the fire can be what keeps the positive morale going.

There is very little you can control during a hunt which is one of the reasons why I love the sport so much. Going into your hunt with a positive attitude and a willingness to learn automatically sets you up for success. Sure you can prepare as much as possible but the weather and the animals don't care if you are struggling up the mountain, you didn't bring the proper gear, or if your shooting isn't dialed in. I know for a fact that most hunting guides are going to go the extra mile to also be prepared. And I bet your guide wants to find and get you an animal more than you do. Trust their judgment and skill in the field and in return, they will naturally connect with you easier. Hunting with others involves teamwork, so please go into your hunt as a supportive and positive team player.

My life too has been changed from those I have guided. My clients have taught me just as much as I have taught them and for that I am grateful. So as you plan your next hunt, embrace the adventure of it. Don't be too hard on yourself, trust your guide, tip your guide, and remind yourself, that hunting is a space to learn, discover, and be present. It sure beats sitting in an office somewhere or being stuck in traffic. Soak in the small moments, feel your breath heavy and loud in your lungs, and know that in that moment, you are living. Know that your guide will make mistakes in the field too. It is a privilege to be a hunter, to pursue wild animals in their habitat. And remember it's your attitude that will make the hunt, not the guides. I can guarantee you your guide wants you to be successful just as much as you if not more.







LOOKING FOR A GREAT GIFT FOR YOUR FAVORITE READER THIS HOLIDAY SEASON? START WITH THIS LIST:

## FICTION:

### *New Madrid Earthquake*

BY BOBBY AKART -

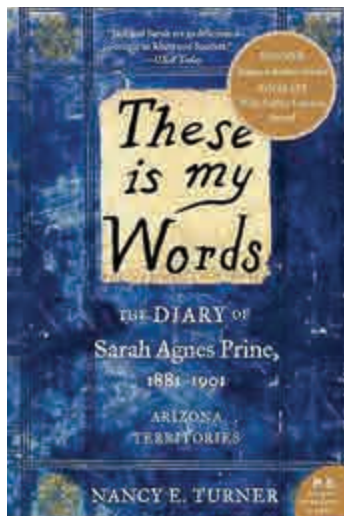
Does your recipient adamantly state that Die Hard IS a Christmas movie? This disaster thriller is going to be a winner! When the New Madrid fault zone shreds to pieces, a family tries to reunite - and your reader might need a hankie as they wait to see who will make it home for Christmas.



### *These Is My Words: The Diary of Sarah Agnes Prine*

1881-1901 BY NANCY TURNER -

As the first in a trilogy set in the Arizona Territories, this book pulls readers into the frontier world as seen through the eyes of a strong woman set on preserving her history for her legacy. Inspired by the author's own family, the entire series is perfect for the Cowboy Action, SASS shooter, or any American history buff in your life.



### *Havoc in Wyoming* SERIES

BY MILLIE COPPER -

Caldwell's Homestead kicks off this seven-book "cozy" apocalypse set that draws in those who constantly wonder "what if?" Focused on family, community, and faith, this series will be for the reader who wants to learn while losing themselves in a storyline.



### *Pink Pistol Sisterhood* SERIES -

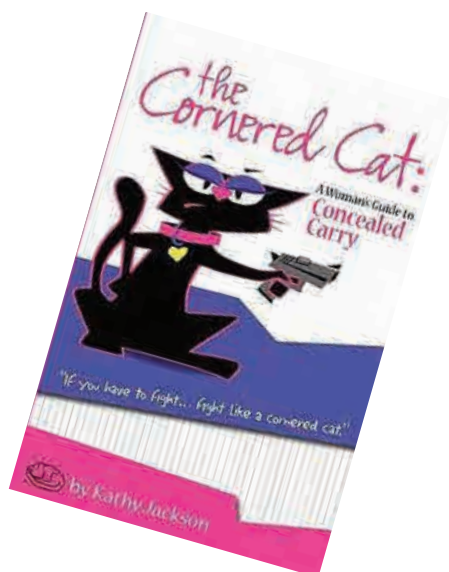
Whether your recipient is into Westerns, sweet romance novels, or generally loves anything for gun girls, this series will pique her interest. Historical fiction stretching across multiple eras, a pink pistol gifted to a young lady by Annie Oakley herself brings a whole new view of offering "the little lady" a pink pistol!



## NONFICTION:

*The Cornered Cat: A Woman's Guide to Concealed Carry* BY KATHY JACKSON

Whether she's new to firearms ownership or looking for new insights for improving her carry habits, this title has her covered. An experienced instructor, Jackson doesn't sugar coat; she shares her wisdom with a balance of hard truths and humor.

*Sharp Women* BY KELLY SAYRE -

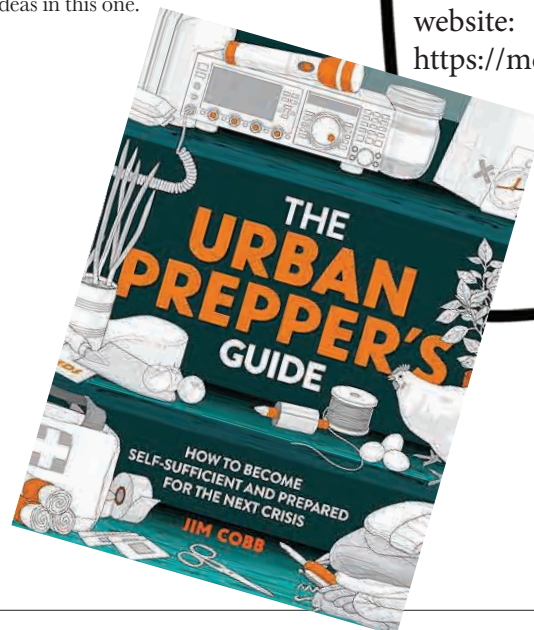
The founder of the Diamond Arrow Group walks women through the process of learning to trust their intuition, build their situational awareness skills, and move into living life aware, but unafraid. Applicable for ladies of all ages, and men too!

*Yes, I Hunt: One Woman's Hunting Adventures* BY DAWN V. BRECHT -

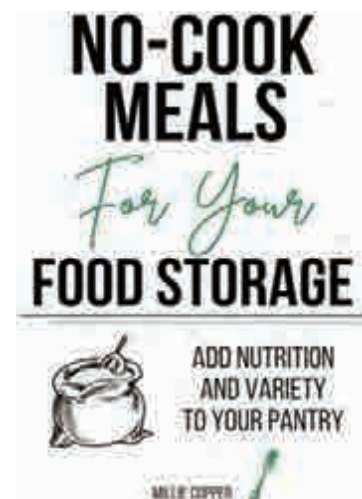
A vegetarian ER doctor joins her beloved on a hunt - and there's no punch line! Obrecht shares stories of her outdoor adventures, hunting how-to's, and even recipes. Perfect start for the future huntress.

*The Urban Prepper's Guide: How to Become Self-Sufficient and Prepared for the Next Crisis* BY JIM COBB -

Recent years have many folks looking for preparedness resources, and this author's many years of expertise will offer insights for beginners and veterans to self-sufficiency and preparedness. No compound or acreage necessary, but if your recipient plans to move to the country, they'll still find plenty of great ideas in this one.

*No-Cook Meals for Your Food Storage* BY MILLIE COPPER -

This one's for the cook who loves to test out her pantry, the camper who doesn't always stay on the grid, and the gal who battles the heat of summer or a smaller kitchen. Who can say no to healthy, no-cook recipes that can be made with so little work?



Melonie is an NRA-certified shooting instructor and freelance writer.

To learn more about Melonie visit her website:  
<https://meloniek.com>





***Join Sharon on a  
day in the blind...  
SERIES 1***



# *In the Blind with Sharon Taylor*

**I**n the Summer 2023 edition, you read an article about Texas Women's Outdoors, and met its amazing founder, Kelly Godfrey. I found TWO in the fall of 2021 and have had many spectacular adventures with this group. They opened my opportunities after the family farm I hunted was sold. Before TWO adventures, I hunted public land in the Sam Houston National Forest. I enjoyed this, unfortunately, it was simply too far from my home to hunt with any regularity. It was also disappointing one morning after getting up early, getting to the Sam, packing all my gear into my spot, getting in the climbing stand and making it up the tree, only to be blown out just after daylight, by a troop of Boy Scouts hiking around in the track I was hunting.

## MLDP

Thankfully I have a friend who hunts an MLDP lease. For those unfamiliar with this, MLD is the Managed Land Deer Program. This program is meant to assist landowners with management and stewardship of private land. The landowner can receive help from a Texas Parks and Wildlife biologist to manage and maintain a healthy deer herd and the biologist will make recommendations of how many deer should be harvested. The advantage of participation in this program is not only that the landowner learns to steward their property, but they also have an extended hunting season. MLDP doe season runs from September 30th to February 29h, archery opens September 30th, rifle opens November 4th, but runs through February 29th.

I'm not used to hunting in January but I have a holiday on Monday for MLK day so I have the opportunity for a long weekend. I



was invited by my buddy to come to his lease to harvest a doe to add to the freezer as the members of the lease had some doe tags left that they did not fill. I will say, he told me before we came, "Sharon, this is a hunting camp, we have a camp house with a bathroom and shower, but it's a hunting camp!" I have no problem with a "hunting camp". I'm just not a "tent camp" type girl (that's a whole other story). I had a bed and there's a restroom - ok, I could see under the house through the hole in the floor of the restroom, but I'm not complaining.

## GOT MY SNACKS!

This morning, the group got up at 5am (I'm not the only visitor in camp but I am the only female!). I managed to get in the restroom first so I could get dressed before the guys rolled out of their bunks. In the kitchen, coffee made, and thermos filled. Snacks packed - mini powdered donuts and oatmeal cream pie, trail mix, and water - because it's ok if you don't have other things, but you can't go hunting without Little Debbie! Finally, the guys are up and ready. Time to load up and get us all dispersed around the property.

Finally in the blind. Today I'm in a box blind set just at ground level. Not exactly what I'm used to - I'm used to having to climb up a ladder into a stand mounted on a frame up in the air! Today, all I had to do was get out of the truck, walk a few feet and

open the door - kind of nice not having to fight lugging stuff up in the air!

It's not as cold as I expected it would be for a January morning. The high today is expected to be 68 degrees, in stark contrast to the low of 24 degrees yesterday! But of course, I'm dressed for a snowstorm, I don't like to be cold! My theory is you can always take it off if you get hot, but you can't put something else on when you get cold if you leave it at home!

After I get things in order - gun loaded, shooting windows open, snacks organized, coffee thermos open - I open the door of the blind and just look out to see what I can see. It's dark, but the stars. There are so many! Living in the city, I see very few stars. But here. Wow. Just wow. There are millions of little lights in the sky, almost bright. But the breeze is blowing just a little too much, I'm getting chilled, so I turn around and close the door. The chair in this blind is nice, someone's discarded office chair, but it leans back! It's pitch black, and since I don't expect much light to see by for another 45 minutes or so, I kick back in the chair, rest my head against the back wall and ..... wake myself up, snoring.

## IN THE STAND

It's somewhat light now. There's a feeder about 80 yards from my blind that I can see, sort of. It's just a dark shadow down the



way. I can see the terrain closer to me and I understand why this blind is on the ground. While I don't know exactly what kind they are, in contrast to the pines and oaks of east Texas, the trees here are more shrub-like. Short, not dense at all. I can see there are cacti scattered around in the rocky ground. Now I understand why the blind is at ground level and not elevated. If it were elevated, one would be looking down onto the tops of the trees. At ground level, you simply look through them.

### I THINK I MISSED?

It's 7am now. The feeder goes off. Though I can't clearly see it with the naked eye, I pick up the binoculars for a peep. Lookie there! Two does have come to the feeder. Sorry girls, it's not going to be a good day for one of you. They're not in a hurry, just grazing in the corn. I study them and figure out which is the oldest. I pick up the trusty Remington 770, 308. Look



through the Vortex Diamondback scope. Crosshairs are placed just behind the right shoulder as she stands broadside, ever so slightly quartered away. Boom! Unfortunately, she doesn't drop in her tracks. I don't see her. The questions flood my mind, and the self-doubt starts. Did I miss her? Did my scope get knocked off on the drive to the blind? Did I hit her? 30 minutes of self-torture! I watch the sun rise. A reminder of the only guarantee when hunting, the sun will rise, and the sun will set. What happens in between is just a bonus. I can wait no longer; I need to know – did I hit or miss.

### ON THE TRAIL...

Walk down to the spot where I believed her to be when I fired. Yep, hair and blood. A drop here, a drop there. And another, and another! And....

nothing else. No! Back up, watch your step! Look around and around. What's that white spot over there? Put the bino's up, it's a rock. Keep looking. Focused on the ground. Keep walking. Hallelujah! Here she is (I almost tripped over since I was so focused on the ground looking for blood). Maybe 20 yards from where I shot. Thank you, Ms. Doe. I appreciate your sacrifice. It's gonna be a while before the guys come back to get me so I get busy and drag her back toward the feeder so we can load her up. On another note, did you know when you fall onto a cactus while dragging a deer, the thorns will go through hunting pants layered over flannel lined jeans and prick your butt!? They will! And they hurt!

Settle back in the blind. Maybe a hog will come out. The sun is now shining bright. It's up to 58 degrees. After getting my doe back to the feeder, I spent some time walking around. I found a shed. Not a monster, but it makes me happy. There is a slight breeze. While neither mighty nor rushing, its force can still be heard rustling the leaves.

No animals have been seen in about an hour.

Wait...SQUIRREL! Seriously, I'm not just going off in a tangent. Just darted across the clearing in front of me and up a tree! I think he's chasing his girlfriend because they're doing circles and jumping from limb to limb. The world is awake, the leaves are rustling, the birds are singing, and the bugs are alive doing only what bugs do. (What DO bugs do by the way?)

I hear the truck coming off in the distance. Time to pack it up, load my deer, and start the real work of cleaning and butchering.

*Until next time, shoot straight.*

*To learn more about an MLDP program in your area check out [TPWD.gov](http://TPWD.gov). Sharon will be providing us information on hunting public land in the next issue of Lady.*





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#### THE HUNT CHILDRENS BOOK

The Hunt, is a short read or fun  
bedtime story for any young  
hunter and their family to enjoy!

Written By: Stephanie White

@ WelcomeToOurFarmLife

Illustrated by: Dustin Dattilio

@ DustinDattilioArt





I didn't grow up eating venison. My dad hunted when he was young, but once he got married and moved away from home, he just never took the time to hunt anymore. The first time I had some venison for dinner was at a friend's as an adult. I thought it was disgusting! Gamey, tough, just not what I was used to.

Fast forward a few years. I met my husband, a good ol' farm boy and hunter. I tried venison again and I still didn't like it. I wanted to; I did! I thought maybe it was me, I didn't know how to prepare it. After a while, I just started to make him and the kids a meal using the meat and I would just eat something else those nights.

Then, one day I was talking to my grandma about this, and she told me to try canning it. She said they always processed their deer at home, the meat was cut straight off the bone and put into the jar. Everything was canned and ready for the cellar shelves within a few hours. My grandma

would just add a teaspoon of salt to each quart jar. The next time we got a deer, I tried it her way and it was better, but still not something I wanted to eat regularly.

I knew there must be something out there to make it tastier. So, I started researching and what I am going to share is by far my favorite way to can and eat venison! It comes out so tender and flavorful. Whether it's ground into burger, cubed meat, or delicious backstrap. I now enjoy venison for dinner!

According to the USDA, all canned meat must be pressure canned. The method below is approved by the USDA as safe. I prefer the raw-pack method for all my meat canning. It doesn't look as pretty, but it is much faster, and as a busy homeschooling, homesteading momma, the quicker the better!



#### STEP 1:

Wash your jars well in hot soapy water. No need to sterilize, as the pressure canning will take care of it during processing. Do not use jars with chipped rims.





### STEP 3 & 4:

Wipe rims and place on lid and ring. Only tighten finger tight! Place jars in the pressure canner and process pints for 70 minutes and quarts for 90 minutes!



### FUN FACT:

The All American Pressure Canner got its name because it has been manufactured since the 1930's by the

Wisconsin Aluminum Foundry

### STEP 2:

Place one beef bouillon cube in each jar (I prefer to use Better Than Bouillon paste) and a few thin slices of onion. In my house, I usually assign my 3-year-old the job of dropping in the onions, my 6-year-old the job of putting in the Better Than Bouillon paste, and my 14-year-old the job of packing the meat in on top, leaving 1-inch headspace. They all love being a part of the process!



### TIPS:

I have learned through trial and error over the past few years of learning how to use a pressure canner:

- Be sure to heat up the canner slowly to avoid siphoning of juices in the jars while getting the canner up to pressure.
- Once it is time to turn off the burner, do not remove the weight until the gauge is 0. This also helps to avoid siphoning.
- Once the gauge is off, let the canner sit another 5 to 10 mins before removing the lid.

By doing these three things, I have had significantly fewer failures to seal than when I first started. I also have started using a thicker brand of lid with a blue seal and this has helped tremendously as well. Just be sure to simmer your lids if you are using the thicker ones.





# HOLIDAY SITUATIONAL AWARENESS & SAFETY

WITH REFUSE TO BE A VICTIM INSTRUCTOR

MELONIE KENNEDY  
ZENDIRA PHOTOS: DIEGO DAVAZT

The term “situational awareness” is one that most of us will come across at some point if we are focused on self-protection or emergency preparedness. In plain terms, situational awareness (or SA) simply means being aware of what is going on around us and whether someone or something is a potential threat to our safety. Having a good idea of what’s going on around us at any given time, in any given location, can help us be proactive in responding to many situations.

Clearly SA is something we should be thinking about all year - so why would it matter more during the holidays? Starting in late fall, many of us have a calendar chock full of events and trips. More people are out shopping, cash and credit cards in hand and packed into huge crowds. With so many folks traveling, we face more traffic, longer lines, and stressed-out fellow travelers who may act out inappropriately. We also see an uptick of those who prey upon others in such target-rich environments.

Expanding our situational awareness during the holidays can generally be broken down into two major needs: time at home and time away from home.

## HOLIDAYS AT HOME

Many of us already try to practice the basics of home safety and security, such as locking doors and windows, and analyzing our home for entry points bad guys could use against us. Come holiday time, though, we need to amp things up, as criminals know families are stacking up goodies worth stealing.

Consider these holiday tips for home security:

- Don’t display gifts in view of windows where passersby, including burglars, can see them.
- Consider having purchases sent to your office or placed in a parcel locker so package thieves can’t scoop things up before you get home.
- Don’t discuss holiday events and travel when strangers may be listening. If someone must know your plans, share information via email or when you’re not in public.
- Don’t share plans online, especially if you’re traveling. Save the pictures from

your events and share them on your socials after you’re done with all the holiday adventures. Your followers will be excited to help you relive the fun later!

- Deal appropriately with boxes from big ticket purchases; piles of boxes from expensive items are a dead giveaway when they are stacked outside your home waiting for trash day! Consider keeping them indoors until pickup day, taking them to work for disposal, or carrying them to the local refuse center for recycling instead.
- Watch the neighborhood. An unfamiliar SUV full of giggling folks in festive “ugly sweaters” in your neighbor’s driveway is expected this time of year; a truck full of burglars will stand out if you know that neighbor mentioned thawing out in Bermuda over Chanukah.
- Watch for the mail carrier or delivery driver - the real ones and the fakes! While these folks are super busy during the holidays and may have some very late deliveries, it’s important to be aware of what you have ordered and when it is due to arrive. If the doorbell rings at 9 PM and you know you don’t have a package on the way, safety dictates leaving the door locked and assessing the situation.

Since so many of us host guests and do a lot of cooking this time of year, our safety plan needs to take into account common causes of injury and illness. Make a note of the chimney that has some creosote build-up and schedule a cleaning before cold weather hits; test smoke and carbon monoxide (CO) detectors to make sure they are in good working order. Be sure to follow industry standards for extension cords and chaining Christmas tree lighting to prevent electrical fires! Ask your local fire department or utility company to do an assessment for you or work down a checklist yourself. There are great lists for holiday and year-round safety assessments through the National Fire Protection Association (<http://www.NFPA.org>),



the Electrical Safety Foundation International (<http://www.esfi.org>), and the International Association of Certified Home Inspectors (<http://www.nachi.org>).

## SHOPPING

Each year, millions of people head out into the infamous retail fray known as Black Friday. Obviously, one great option for personal safety and security is to skip the lines and chaos and shop holiday sales online - bonus points for being able to kick back in your pajamas! Just research good cybersecurity practices first; your bank and local police department will likely have some great insights. However, if a big part of your holiday fun is to get out and about to do your shopping, stay aware and safe with the following habits:

- **Gear up.** Whether your everyday carry is a firearm, a TASER, or something else, have it on you and make sure you've practiced accessing it, especially if you're bundled up due to winter weather.
- **If possible, go shopping with a buddy.** Even if you split up inside a store, meet up before heading to the parking lot and approach your vehicle together. Communicate with loved ones where you are going and when you should be back, as well as at what point "late" turns into "I need help".
- **Consider a babysitter if you have young children;** this keeps them safe from the crowds and allows you to focus more on your surroundings. If a sitter isn't an option, make a plan with your shopping buddy for keeping an eye on the kids together. This is particularly important in transitional spaces like parking lots; one of you can load the car while the other buckles up the children.
- **Map out your route to/from the stores and plan for alternate routes** in case of bad weather, horrible traffic, or other issues. Know the layout of the store(s) you are going to; look for emergency exits as you shop in case you need to leave quickly.
- **Keep your head up and your eyes sharp!** Many of us are working from lists for gift buying, but being aware of your surroundings means not burying your nose in your phone. Mark items off your list quickly, then scan the aisles around you.



- **Keep your hands free as much as possible.** If you carry a purse, consider using a sling or cross body style versus something you must hold while shopping. This also allows access to self-defense tools should you need them. And remember, NEVER leave your purse sitting in a shopping cart!
- **When leaving a store with multiple packages, use a cart.** This saves your back and shoulders from overload and keeps hands free should you need them. If you're approached by someone with ill intent, the cart provides a bit of a barrier and even gives you something to ram them with, if need be.
- **Check out your vehicle as you approach, load purchases quickly, then get into your vehicle and lock the doors as soon as possible.** If you see someone loitering near your car, go back into the store for assistance, such as an escort from store security or law enforcement. Listen to your intuition when it says someone isn't just waiting

for a fellow shopper or trying to find their car keys.

- **Check your mirrors!** This busy time of year means more cars in parking lots, more runaway shopping carts, and more little ones potentially running around vehicles. Make sure the area is free of hazards before leaving your parking spot. Being aware in parking lots also helps you notice if thieves are following you from one shop to another or home from the mall.

## ATTENDING HOLIDAY EVENTS:

As you've probably surmised, these opportunities for celebration are the perfect time to incorporate some of the above ideas! If you are going to a holiday parade, you now know to learn as much as possible about the routes to and from the parade venue, where the safe parking is, and where your emergency exits are. . If attending with a group, choose a meeting point should you be separated. If the event is far from home,





wear or pack sturdy shoes and socks in case you need to walk to safety in an emergency. Designate a driver if you drink alcohol and never leave any type of drinks unattended. (If you carry a firearm, stay sober. It'll help you stay aware and eliminate a potential legal issue should you be forced to defend yourself.) Keep with your group and listen to gut feelings about any activity that throws up a warning flag. Communicate your planned schedule to loved ones and stick to it.

deer are edging toward the road, and when that snowfall changes and you should take the next exit to find a hotel for the night. Consider shipping gifts to your final location; this leaves room in your vehicle for emergency supplies and makes it less tempting if you don't have a fully covered storage space to keep gifts out of sight.

Flying or taking other public transport? Consider the following:

valuables, but it could also lead to legal issues if someone reports your behavior as suspicious.

- **If traveling out of your usual region, know embassy locations and how to be a good guest.** Try to learn as much as you can to communicate effectively, blend in, and dress/act appropriately so as to not offend or create legal problems. Know what behavior is common for the region you plan to visit, so you can better recognize potentially dangerous situations, such as carjackings, muggings, abductions, or terrorist activity.
- **Research the weather and natural disaster risks of your destination and watch for warning signs.** Situational awareness means being aware of what is going on around you, and it's not limited to the behavior of human beings.

There are many resources available on the subjects of situational awareness and personal safety; Kelly Sayre's *Sharp Women* and Gavin deBecker's *The Gift of Fear* will give you a great start. Check with local law enforcement, colleges, or outdoors stores for the NRA's Refuse to Be a Victim program and similar personal safety courses. A huge part of self protection is knowing what is going on around us and having a plan in place for how to deal with it. Keep researching and learning throughout the year so that you continue to be a hard target!

*Melanie Kennedy is a freelance writer passionate about building personal and community resilience. She is an NRA-certified Range Safety Officer and Refuse To Be A Victim, Pistol, CCW, & Rifle Instructor. She can be contacted via LinkedIn*

## EXTENDED HOLIDAY TRAVEL:

Traveling further from home by car? Safety dictates checking the weather report, planning your route, wearing your seatbelt, and staying off the phone (particularly texting) while driving. Keeping your eyes on the road means you'll know when traffic on the freeway slows, when a herd of

- **Remember: head up, eyes sharp!** People watching is fun and very common at locations such as airports and train stations, so it's the perfect place to practice your situational awareness skills. Who is leaving their bag behind to go fill their water bottle - is that really all they are doing? Now is a good time to work through a plan for yourself; if they leave behind a suspicious package, how should you react?
- **Never leave belongings unattended;** doing so could mean a theft of your



   
@authormelanie  
meloniek



***The Friday Concealed Carry Belt Bag by Zendira***

Magnetic access to a dedicated concealed carry pouch designed to clip in a trigger guard of your choice. Adjustable cut resistant strap.



***Sig Sauer P238***

Low recoil, smooth trigger, easy to handle, fits in small purses!  
Editor Note: Ladies, this gun fits in my LV bum bag and is perfect for my fellow lefties.



***Sabre Dual Stun Gun***

compact, easy to conceal, with built in flashlight.



***Surefire Stiletto***

Radically sleek and slim profile, and light weight for easy concealment. Well-rounded MaxVision Beam® illumination, which projects a wide flood beam that's ideal for situational awareness



***Sabre quick release pepper spray***

compact, easy to conceal, with quick release key chain.



***EDC Knife GMKT2***

Carry friendly at 2.75-inches. Assisted opening action with flipper mechanism.

***Kubaton***

The Kubaton Pen with Smooth Grip is a versatile tool that can be used for writing or self-defence purposes.





# GERMAN SHORTHAIR POINTER

## THE ALL-PURPOSE GUN DOG

WITH KENNEL OWNER & UPLAND GUIDE TAYLOR BENNINGFIELD

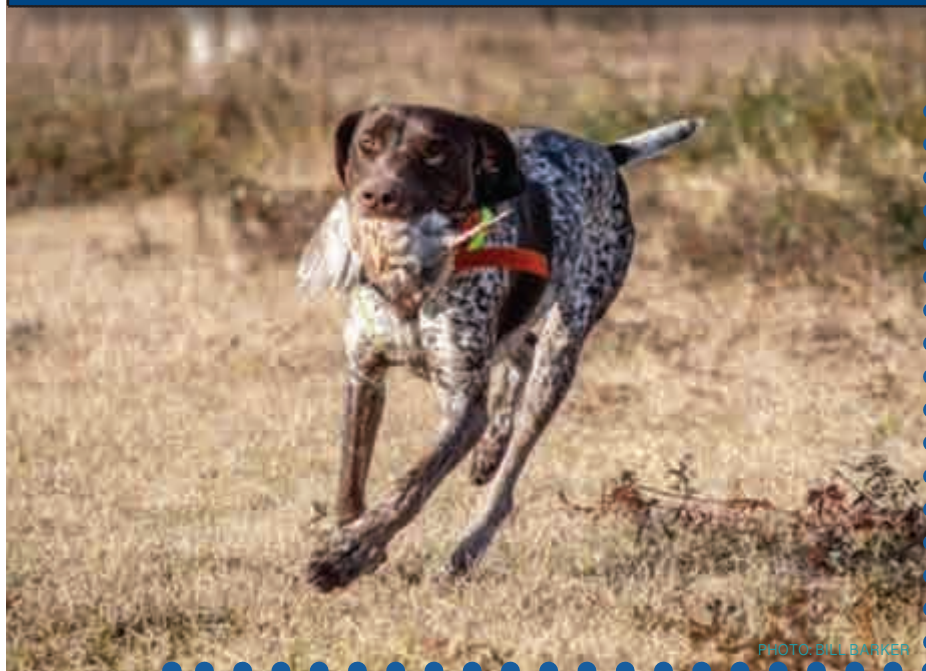


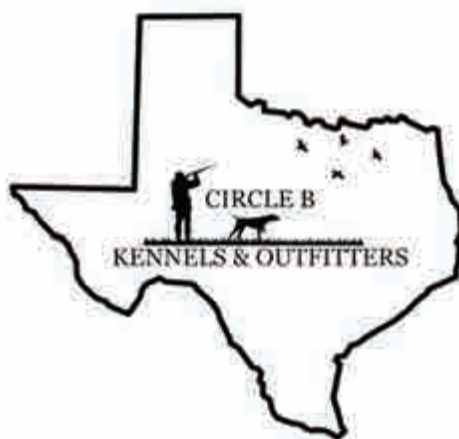
PHOTO: BILL BANKER

Growing up I spent a lot of time outdoors with my dad whether we were hunting or fishing! In 2020 I purchased my first German Shorthaired Pointer 'Calleigh', I did my research and completely fell in love with the breed! After having Calleigh for a little over a year and half, I decided it was time to get another Shorthair, so I purchased Huxley.

Long story short after I got Huxley in 2021, I completely went down the rabbit hole and purchased more shorthairs.

Then, I started Circle B Kennels & Outfitters towards the end of 2021: breeding shorthairs, offering guided upland bird hunts along with hatching and raising upland game birds! We mainly raise birds for our dogs training maintenance along with our guided hunts! Bird hunting brought me so much joy on a whole different level. This year will be my second season doing guided upland bird hunts! I work

alongside two ranches in the Texas Hill Country offering guided upland bird hunts with lodging or day hunts! I absolutely love guiding hunts, allowing others to experience excellent hunting opportunities and of course see my shorthairs work the field like they were bred to do! I love watching my shorthairs work the field from them



using their nose to find birds, pointing, backing, retrieving to shooting and cleaning birds! It's such a pleasure to hunt behind shorthairs, with them being so versatile they have a wonderful on and off switch! I currently own twelve German Shorthaired Pointers and one English Cocker Spaniel!

Since starting my business I've had three litters of puppies, and we have some litters planned for the upcoming year! The ultimate dog to me is one that is independent, versatile, steady, and confident out in the field. German

Shorthaired Pointers were bred to be all-around hunting dogs. Shorthairs have a high drive in the field and are loyal in the home. German Shorthaired Pointers are unique, highly intelligent, energetic, powerful, obedient, versatile, and a will to please. GSP's have a high drive for birds, excellent sense of smell, exceptional ability to go, affectionate and a silly personality. The versatile, medium sized German Shorthaired Pointer is a very intense bird dog of all trades, who flourishes with exercise, positive training, and a lot of love! When picking out a shorthair to purchase for my breeding program and guide hunts, the focus is bloodline, genetics, size, personality, and of course hunting and training ability. When selecting or picking out your next dog, you always want to make sure their characteristics are right fit for you.

*Circle B Outfitters not only raises GSP's but you can also go on upland guided hunts (chukar, pheasant, and quail) in the beautiful Texas hill country. Circle B offers 1/2 day hunts or stay for 1-2 days and go on multiple hunts. If you are looking to purchase eggs or live birds Circle B's upland game farm offers these services.*

Check out Circle B Kennels & Outfitters at:

<https://circlebkennels.org>

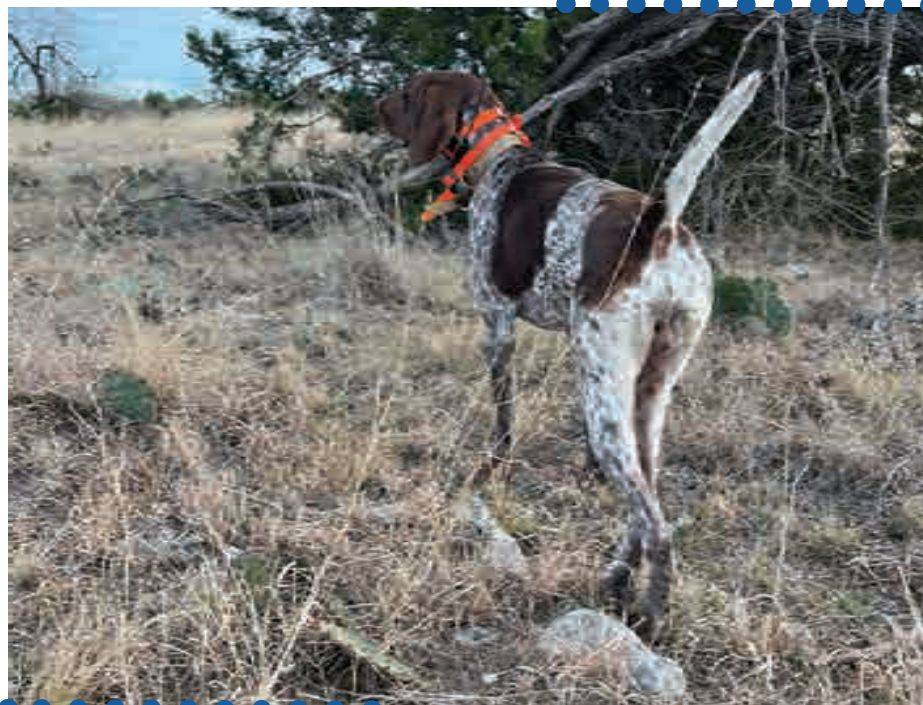






## HISTORY:

- The earliest records of the GSP date back to the 17th century in Germany.
- The GSP was known as the German Bird Dog.
- The GSP was developed by breeders crossing various tracking hounds and pointing dogs.
- Prince Albrecht zu Solms-Braunfels was instrumental in the development of the characteristics of the breed.
- In the early 19th & 20th century Germans bred GSP's for biddability. Their stance, style, and nose were later added into their desired breeding traits.
- In March of 1930 the American Kennel Club started registering the GSP.
- In March of 1941 the first show was held in Chicago at the International Kennel Club Show.
- In May of 1944 the first field trials were held in Minnesota.



## APPEARANCE

- Medium Size
- Males- 23-25 inches, 55-70 lbs.
- Females- 21-23 inches, 45-60 lbs.
- Short and thick coat, that feels rough to the touch.
- Must have high set docked tails, that are 40% of the original length.
- Colors: Liver, Liver & White, Liver Roan, White & Liver, Black & White, Black, and Black Roan
- Markings- patched, ticked, patched & ticked
- Their coat is low maintenance but you do need to brush them to limit shedding. However a GSP does not require daily grooming.

Olivia S.

*"I love the always down for anything attitude. Stroll through the park, Yes! Car ride? Yes! Snuggle on the couch? Yes! 20 mile hunt? YES!!"*

Gabriela U.

*"The personality. The attachment. The brain. The everything I love the size, the maintenance, the willing to work, the sturdiness, they are just awesome."*

Jessie M.

*"I now train and hunt with a ton of breeds and my GSPs keep going and going, they forgive my mistakes, and they keep trying everything they can to figure out how to make me happy. Plus physically they can range temperatures from -10 to 90, never get snow balls, never get burrs, and always feel soft."*

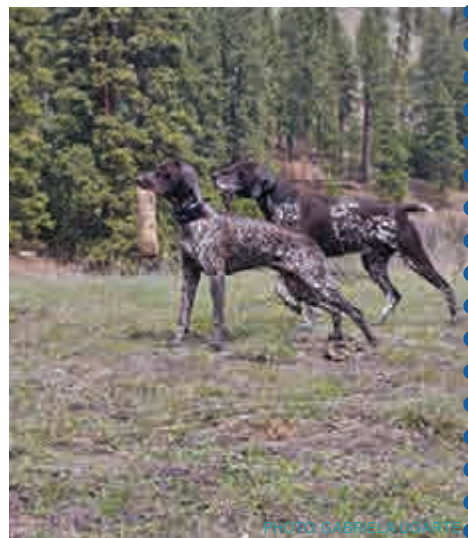
## WHY OWN A GSP?

Sara C.

*"I don't think it gets any more versatile than a GSP to be honest. I love that mine can excel in the field and waterfowl hunting but can do just about anything else I ask them, and with a smile! From obedience to disc to weight pull to dock jumping to skijoring to even bitework, mine have taken me on some very grand adventures."*

Micaela M.

*"Goose, my 5 year old has never let me down in any way. He stays consistent and doesn't fear anything. The off switch both of mine have its outstanding and not only are they great in the field, they are awesome family pets."*



LADYSHOOTER LIFESTYLES



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 soothe reduce stress DETOXIFY physiotherapy immune system  
 mobility nourish DEEP TISSUE rejuvenate relief shiatsu  
 relax remedial RECOVERY MASSAGE acupressure  
 repair SPORTS trigger point  
 TONE posture AROMATHERAPY  
 THAI ANATOMY therapeutic  
 circulation neuromuscular  
 lymph drainage hot stone SWEDISH  
 energy muscle soft tissue touch

# Not your Mom's Massage...

WITH LICENSED MASSAGE THERAPIST REBECCA THREAT AND BRANDY ELROD

The beating our bodies take as shooting athletes can be very detrimental. As an instructor I watch young athletes push their bodies to the limits but do nothing to take care of it. Sixteen-year-old me wishes she would have listened to the early signs of deterioration of my spine both lower lumbar and cervical. In my early thirties I started paying the price from my youth rodeo and golf days, and I added to the degeneration with my newfound sport of shotgun within the last ten years. I have a team of holistic and medical professionals that I work with in order to stop the deterioration and gain mobility back. Most recently I have added an amazing ART/Sports massage therapist that I see every three weeks.

Rebecca is one of the owners of The Studio Wellness Center in Huntsville, Texas and in less than a year she has helped me regain mobility in both of my elbows, decrease the burning that radiates from my C5/C6 down my left arm as well as helped increase mobility in my neck, and lessen my sciatica symptoms. All my cervical issues have started within the last two years and are a combination of my birth injury and shooting. There is only so much one can do to lessen the recoil of a shotgun, eventually if you have an old injury your body is going to let you know.

## BENEFITS TO ART/MASSAGE THERAPY FOR A SHOOTING ATHLETE

Any repetitive motion activity is going to take a toll on the body, specifically the soft tissues (think muscles, tendons, and ligaments) that are affected directly by overuse. For instance, shotgun athletes tend to have very tight shoulder, and neck musculature. The repeated impact of the action of even a mild recoil can be an obvious issue, but the constant muscle tension used to support the gun itself can also be damaging.

In addition, the trigger arm suffers from a lack of range of motion at the elbow due to overuse of the forearm and hand muscles. This may lead to pain, numbness, and tingling anywhere from the neck down to the hand. Symptoms may be similar to carpal tunnel syndrome, which is often used as a catch-all term for numbness in the hand. Shooters can also fall victim to facial and scalp tension from the imbalanced use of facial muscles.

Do you close one eye extensively as you aim? Do you put your tongue in a specific way as you shoot? Do you clench your jaw? These are all small actions that add up to tension in the face and scalp that can result in headaches, migraines, ear pain, jaw discomfort, and even balance issues. The spine and hips can especially feel the effect of twisting repeatedly or for a prolonged period of time, causing lower back pain. Left untreated, these imbalances can permanently affect your posture and cause chronic muscle and nerve pain.

## WHAT IS ART?

Active Release Techniques (ART) is a soft-tissue management system that is utilized by highly trained and credentialed professionals to address muscle, tendon, and ligament dysfunction. The approach is logical, specific, and geared to solving the problem, not just treating the symptoms.

Your ART provider will assess your symptom patterns and treat the corresponding soft-tissue structures. The treatment typically involves a directed pressure and directional force, usually with the thumbs, while the patient actively moves the muscles through the full range of motion. Some degree of relief is usually instant but it can take a couple of treatments to feel totally better. Ongoing activity typically means an ongoing need for treatment, though with a provider familiar with your issues the treatment will only take about 15 to 20 minutes in most cases. Chiropractors, physical therapists, athletic trainers, and massage therapists are all eligible to be trained in this modality.



Providers can be trained in lower body, upper body, spine, full body, or nerve treatments. My recommendation would be to find a provider with full body or nerve training.

### MEDITATIVE RELIEF

Massage therapy is not just for luxury living. Massage has moved into the mainstream of society as a source of relaxation, soft tissue rejuvenation, chronic pain relief, and anxiety treatment. These days your massage therapist can provide everything from a relaxing spa treatment to serious soft-tissue work. Massage works much in the same way that ART works but takes a more general and holistic approach. Your treatment with a massage therapist may include stretching, joint mobilization, and the typical rubbing friction called effleurage. The mechanical process of a massage is the physical manipulation of your muscles in order to create a controlled inflammation by breaking down the tissue. This controlled inflammation increases blood flow to the areas of manipulation and kicks your body into healing mode. The heat involved in this process relaxes the muscle while the mechanical aspect breaks up adhesions (or knots) in the muscle fibers. In the case of skin-to-skin contact, your brain (and interestingly enough, your therapist's brain) spurs the production of

hormones like oxytocin, serotonin, and dopamine. This hormonal shift leads to a relaxed and meditative feeling. Your therapist may use tools to help with treatment such as cups and

muscle scrapers, or he/she may have access to ultrasound and electronic stimulation.

Contrary to popular belief, you do not have to undress. In fact, if your therapist specializes in ART or sports therapy, they will likely want you to arrive at your appointment dressed comfortably in active wear. Your session will likely

take at least an hour and it is a good idea to make sure that you are well hydrated in preparation for the

impending muscle breakdown. It will help prevent soreness in the days following.

### HOW OFTEN SHOULD I SEEK THERAPY?

If you are active, you should be on a maintenance schedule with a provider with whom you feel comfortable and who listens to you. This is usually on a monthly or twice-monthly basis. If you are in a heavy season of activity, you should consider weekly treatment to stay on top of issues as they arise. In treating all athletes from Ironman triathletes to competitive high schoolers I always recommend a monthly full-body Swedish massage in addition to whatever acute care may be needed. The rest and meditation that can happen during a massage will put your mind at peace and allow you to feel more positive as well as sleep better. This in turn promotes healing and gives you a competitive edge.

Here are some important things to note as you seek out a massage therapy provider:

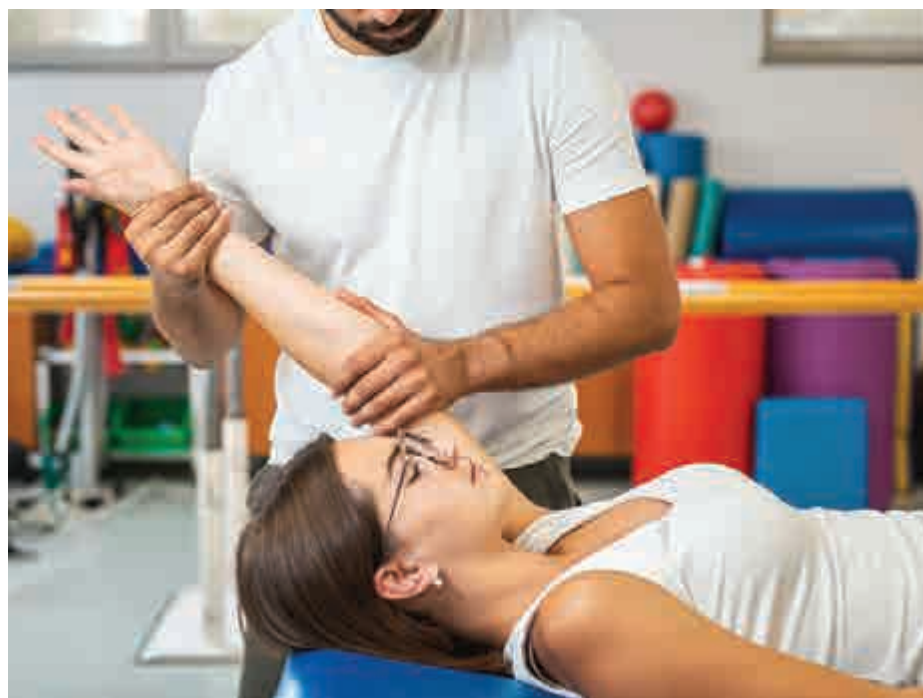
- Ensure that your therapist is currently licensed in your state. Most states have a website where you can search by provider name to verify this.
- Feedback is important! Make it clear what your expectations are and what you hope to accomplish. Are you looking for pain relief, increased range of motion, relaxation? Do you want light pressure, deep pressure? Do you want to keep your clothes on? Communicate that to your provider and if

he/she does not deliver the expected results, discuss that with him/her. If you don't feel heard, find someone else.

- There should be no happy endings! If the place looks shady, it probably is, report any suspicious activity to the local authorities.

If you are looking for a provider, visit [www.activerelease.com](http://www.activerelease.com) to find one local to you.

I am so thankful Rebecca chose to leave her career in the corporate sector and become a massage therapist. When you are searching for a massage therapist find someone that has educated themselves on proper practices to help you in healing and protecting your body. Do not get me wrong I love a soccer mom fluff massage, but if you are trying to relieve your muscle tightness and aches/pains in order to prevent deterioration of your body than make sure you are seeking out the services of a licensed professional that specializes in functional movement and myofascial issues to help alleviate pain.





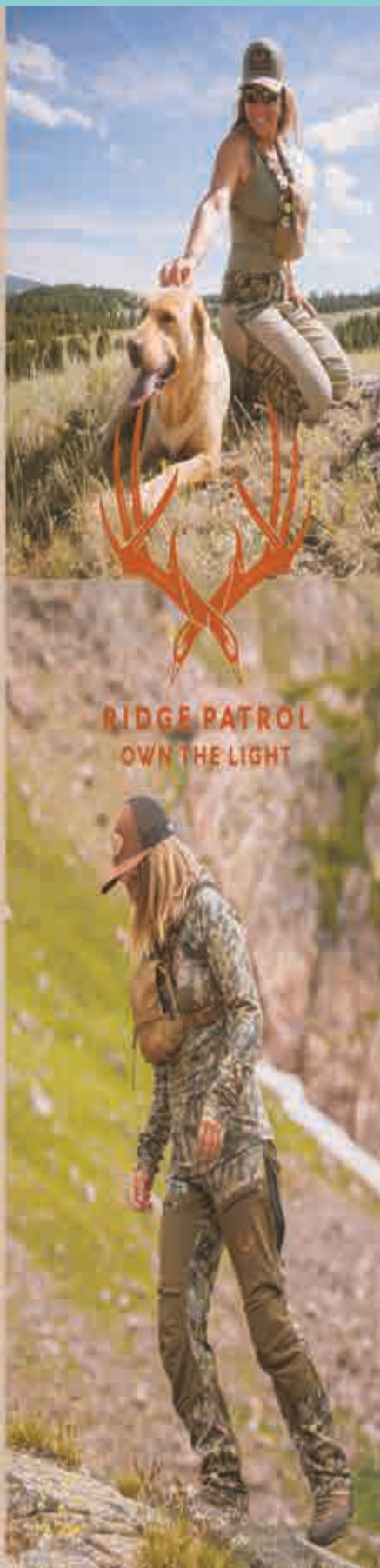
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Our writers have put these products to the test and here are there recommendations.



**Beretta Suojella Fleece:**

- Lightweight but warm
- Breatheable
- Use to layer
- This is my new favorite jacket to wear while shooting or to yoga
- True to size

**Beretta VisEle Tech Legging:**

- Combination athleisure comfort & compression
- Tip- order one size up, extreme tummy control



**Breaker Jacket:**

Ice lined  
Water resistant  
Hidden vents for  
comfort



**Beretta Ciel Tech T-Shirt:**

- Strategic mesh inserts under arm and side panels to aid in breathability.
- UPF 50 sunblock
- Odor Control
- Insect control is based on fabric weave.
- Very comfortable, order one size up





# *Social Media*

## *Friend or Foe?*

*Do you ever wish to go back to the days before phones?*

**BY MATTHEW GAY PHOTOS BY THADDIUS BEDFORD**

**T**he world has changed immensely in the 47 years I have spent on this planet. I remember, fondly I might add, the days when you got your phone messages upon returning home. Now, it's almost a source of anxiety if one leaves the house and forgets their phone. We have grown accustomed to instant everything. Turn by turn directions, news and social interaction with the whole world now is instantly available via a small device we carry in our pocket.

The advent and employment of social media can be either a blessing or a curse. The reality is that it gives people a platform from which they can say anything they like, without facing the real-world consequences had they said the same to someone in person. Unfortunately, those same

individuals feel the need to opine on each and every thing they find objectionable, despite the fact it has absolutely no impact on their lives. There is likely some psychological pathology at work there, but I'll leave that to the PhD types to dissect.

### ***The Bad***

The Second Amendment seems to be a topic where all bets are off and all the above activity is tolerated by the moderators, most of which honestly would be unemployable if it weren't for social media. Bullying, threats, doxing and even swatting has become a popular methodology by which some of these keyboard clowns have attacked anyone with a differing world view. This has so often been perpetrated on hunters, particularly

female hunters, who have posted a picture of their harvest on a social media page, only to have half-witted miscreants call them "murderers" or in some cases they've gone as far as to suggest the individual should commit suicide. It's truly sick and demented.

There have been instances where a mother's post showing her children at the range target practicing has generated a call to protective services from some anti-gun nut. Not because the complainant thought a child was in danger, but because they despise the idea that firearms are used legally and responsibly. The fear resulting from the thought of such attacks on law-abiding individuals is, in and of itself, a result of such bullying and buffoonery. One may refrain from sharing a perfectly legal activity simply to avoid the potential of any grief created by

some mouth-breathing lunatic on the fringe of society.

While it is understandable that we sportsmen and women should be cognizant of what we post, so as to not reflect negatively on the lifestyle as a whole, it's just as important to maintain visibility in the mainstream of society. As we all know, those in the outdoor lifestyle are among the most patriotic and law-abiding citizens in the country. Therefore, why hide? Children who are raised with proper instruction on firearms are more responsible and respectful of life as a whole. We should be able to brag a little when our child shoots their personal best score or harvests their first deer, without fear of retribution if some whack job sees the post and sets their mind to causing grief or bullying one online.

### *The Good*

Although the above sounds grim and depressing in terms of the impact on the outdoor lifestyle community, the reality is that many great things have resulted from its use by those of us in the lifestyle and industry. There are so many positive stories that have been put out for all the world to see which highlight the positive benefits of the



sport we so enjoy. Stories of healing and newfound passions abound amongst the many millions of people out there who may have never been exposed to the sport if not for the reach of social media. Our ranks have increased in number and breadth of diversity, thanks primarily to the free flow of information, despite the efforts of the social engineering types on the other end of the moderation desk. With this platform we have been able to demonstrate that these sports

are within reach of nearly anyone who wants to put in the effort.

The interwebs have also brought people of common interests together. Many youth and ladies' events and organizations have been created or expanded participation in the various outdoor pursuits to an extent not possible without the wide audience available on social media. From fundraisers to benefit breast cancer research to opportunities for disabled individuals to participate in specially equipped hunting or shooting events, this media sounding board makes dissemination of information fast and efficient.

### *The Ugly*

I believe the haters on social media are to be taken about as seriously as the "do not remove" warning on the mattress tag. A random keyboard warrior, on FaceSpace or wherever, should have no impact on your life, no matter how nasty their rhetoric. Just block them and move on. Although the urge to respond and attempt to educate should always be the first impulse of anyone in the shooting lifestyle, save yourself the wasted time. Anyone capable of being so verbally nasty to a perfect stranger is completely devoid of the required capacity to learn or reason. If that urge to respond is too overwhelming to resist, take a note from our friends in the south and offer up perhaps the politest rebuttal known to man, "well, bless your heart."





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