

CATEGORY: FISHING, HUNTING AND WILDLIFE VIEWING

ACTIVITY — YOUTH HUNT

Description —

In a highly controlled environment, some chapters host fun, hands-on events to introduce novices or youth to sport hunting — the practice of pursuing wild animals with modern firearms. A very popular form of outdoor recreation, hunting is regulated by state and federal fish and wildlife agencies as a necessary component of modern wildlife management.

Benefits —

Youth hunting events are excellent opportunities for the public to learn about your chapter's conservation work, attract potential members, introduce children to the joy of outdoor recreation, and teach participants safe and responsible hunting techniques. Through this one-day event, your chapter will also educate participants about managing wildlife populations and the role hunters play in promoting conservation practices. Organized youth hunts may also be used to reward recently successful hunter education course graduates.

Key Steps —

- Select your date and set up a structured, guided hunt on chapter property or on other private or public lands that allow first-time hunters to experience hunting in a controlled, supervised environment.
- Make a hunter education course a prerequisite of the hunt. Refer to the sample **Hunter Education Course** outdoor recreation and activity sheet.
- Ensure that hunters have any required licenses, and that they bring their own firearms and ammunition whenever possible.
- Consider additional safety instruction and hands-on training on the day of the event to test and refine shotgun skills. Refer to the sample **Firearms Education and Training** outdoor recreation and activity sheet.
- Recruit volunteers with safe shooting and hunting experience for the event. League members can serve as instructors, trap or skeet station attendants, and live-bird hunt mentors or coaches.
- Arrange for stocking of live game birds (such as pheasants, quail, chukars, huns) for the event from a private propagator, your state fish and wildlife agency, or from your chapter's own rearing operation.
- Your chapter should consider providing meals, snacks, and beverages.
- *Closely* monitor firearms handling and use.
- On the hunt, it is best to have a one-to-one ratio of young hunters to hunt mentors at all times. Require the use of safety orange hunting apparel (vest and cap), and protective ear and eyewear.

- If you plan additional live-firing of firearms, have adequate shotgun shooting ranges and range safety officers available along with shooting vests, shooting gloves, and protective ear and eyewear.
- Be sure to have a first aid kit on hand.

Who Can Help —

Volunteers: If the event involves pre-hunt shooting, some volunteers should be National Rifle Association-certified instructors. Plan to have one volunteer instructor per two shooting participants, and at least one range safety officer in control of live-firing at all times. For the hunt, you should begin with 25 volunteers. They will serve as instructors, shooting coaches, hunt mentors, first aid station monitors, hunt registration administrators, guides, helpers, and other positions as needed.

Partners/Sponsors: Local (town, city, township, county) governments and state fish and wildlife agencies, local sporting goods retailers, other chapters, and local conservation organizations (such as Pheasants Forever and Quail Unlimited).

Technical and Other Support: State fish and wildlife agency game bird biologists.

Dollars and Cents —

Expenses: Youth hunts can start with a budget of \$1,000. Depending on the state-controlled hunting regulations, this amount can cover live birds, promotional materials, meals, snacks, beverages, and additional literature. Participants should bring their own equipment.

Revenue: To offset expenses, your chapter may become a state hunting/fishing license sales agent. Additional fees can then be added to license fees that will generate revenue for a youth hunt. Grant funding may also be available, or you can charge a nominal registration fee.

Getting the Word Out —

Advertise through the chapter newsletter and Web site and with your state's fish and wildlife agency outdoor/hunter education program. Circulate fliers at local sporting goods retailers and send a pre-event news release to local media. Send a post-event news release to local media with photos of youth participating in the hunt. You will need to obtain parents' permission to use photos of children in your public relations efforts. Provide youth and their parents with information about the League's mission, your chapter's accomplishments, and membership. Take advantage of those non-members attending by promoting the League and recruiting them as new members.

Chapters With Successful YOUTH HUNT Activities —

Martin L. Davey, OH
Cortland, NY
McCook Lake, SD

Lancaster Red Rose, PA
Boone Valley, IA
North Manchester, IN

Cass County, MN
Michigan City, IN
Mahaska County, IA

Note: For the most current specific chapter contacts, refer the *IWLA National Directory* or IWLA Web site (www.iwla.org).