

DELTA  WATERFOWL.

FIRST HUNT

Mentor Handbook







FIRST HUNT MENTORS:

Securing the Future of Waterfowl Hunting

The latest waterfowl hunter statistics paint a sobering picture: North America has lost a significant number of waterfowlers since the 1970s. While these numbers should already concern anyone who cares about waterfowl conservation, some people have suggested that one day there will be few duck hunters left at all. Our message to them is simple: Not on our watch.

In 2000, Delta Waterfowl conducted its first mentored duck hunt at Manitoba's famed Delta Marsh. That inaugural hunt spawned what's now North America's largest waterfowl-specific hunter recruitment program — First Hunt — introducing thousands of new hunters every year to the sport.

As a prospective First Hunt mentor, your interest in sharing our waterfowling heritage with the next generation, while providing a safe and enjoyable experience, is honorable. We think you'll find that you enjoy watching a novice hunter shoot his or her first duck far more than taking a bird yourself, and the ear-to-ear grins to follow are sure to make your volunteerism worthwhile.

So, consider this your invitation to join us in our efforts to secure the future of waterfowl hunting. By becoming a First Hunt mentor, you'll not only play a critical role in this larger mission, but you'll also help new hunters of all ages begin a lifetime of waterfowling memories. Think of it this way: What would your life be if, years ago, nobody had cared enough to take you duck hunting?

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WHAT IS FIRST HUNT?

Delta's First Hunt is an educational program developed to recruit and retain waterfowl hunters. It's for everyone — young or old, male or female.

A variety of First Hunt events are used to introduce newcomers to waterfowling, from local Delta chapter "field days" to actual mentored waterfowl hunts. Types of First Hunt events include:

WATERFOWL HUNTS

The ultimate First Hunt event entails helping new hunters to fully take part in an actual waterfowl hunt. Harvested birds are cleaned and cooked to bring the experience full-circle and teach these additional, important skills.

WATERFOWLING FIELD DAYS

Mentored field days help participants develop waterfowl-hunting skills before they go on an actual hunt. Activities include waterfowl identification, calling, equipment tips, gun safety, shotgun patterning, clay target shooting and an overview of waterfowl conservation.

EDUCATION EXPOS

First Hunt expos engage participants in waterfowl-related activities, such as duck or goose calling demonstrations, and building Hen Houses or wood duck boxes. Expos are typically shorter than field days.

SHOOTING SPORTS DAYS

Trap, skeet and sporting clays are important First Hunt activities. They help participants become better and safer wingshooters — critical waterfowling skills that are honed over time. Safety is the most important aspect of all First Hunt activities.

SPECIALTY SEMINARS

First Hunt seminars are a great next step when basic topics have already been covered. They cover more sophisticated techniques, such as advanced duck calling, dog training, and hunting methods.

LOCAL OUTDOOR PROJECTS

Stewardship activities, such as removing garbage from a local waterfowl refuge or installing Hen Houses and wood duck boxes, are a great way to make waterfowling a year-round activity.





First Hunt Resources

Delta Waterfowl provides numerous resources to support First Hunt events, including:

STAFF EXPERTISE

Delta Waterfowl has dedicated staff members available to help make your First Hunt event a success. In the U.S., call (888) 987-3695; in Canada, call (877) 667-5656; or email FirstHunt@deltawaterfowl.org.

PARTICIPATION FORMS

A variety of forms are available to help you secure necessary information about each First Hunt participant, and if applicable, obtain parental consent.

FIRST HUNT EVENT LIABILITY INSURANCE

Delta Waterfowl purchases liability insurance that covers Delta Waterfowl staff, chapters, and recognized volunteers. Additional liability coverage is available for an individual or facility, but appropriate paperwork must be filed prior to each First Hunt event. For more information and to ensure that First Hunt insurance is extended to your event, call (888) 987-3695 or email FirstHunt@deltawaterfowl.org.

WATERFOWL HERITAGE FUND (WHF)

Local Delta Waterfowl chapters may direct a portion of their annually raised funds toward First Hunt events, offsetting such costs as facility fees, food, and clay targets. For more information, call (888) 987-3695 or email FirstHunt@deltawaterfowl.org.

FIRST HUNT CURRICULUM

When you've been a waterfowler for many years, the fundamentals can become so second nature that they're difficult to recall. That's why this manual sticks to the basics. It introduces four essential waterfowling principles we recommend for all First Hunt events: firearm safety, shooting instruction, bird cleaning, and cooking.

As an accomplished waterfowl hunter, you can also instruct First Hunt participants on hunting regulations, waterfowl identification, calling, decoys, hunter ethics, and etiquette. At the conclusion of this handbook, you'll find First Hunt Participant and First Hunt Mentor Tips. It's a great idea to especially highlight these at your event.

Shotgun Safety

Overall safety, including with firearms, is a fundamental skill taught at First Hunt events.

IDENTIFICATION OF SHOTGUN COMPONENTS

Discuss in detail shotgun parts and the various action types, such as semi-auto, pump-action and break-action.

BASIC SHOTGUN OPERATION

Instruct participants on the proper operation of each shotgun type, including how to safely load and unload them.

SAFE FIREARM HANDLING

Teach participants how to safely negotiate streams, fences, blinds, and other obstacles while handling shotguns.



Firearm Safety

Firearm safety is crucial to prevent accidents and ensure the well-being of everyone around. Here are the fundamental steps for firearm safety:

TREAT EVERY FIREARM AS IF IT IS LOADED: Always assume a firearm is loaded and handle it accordingly.

KEEP THE MUZZLE POINTED IN A SAFE DIRECTION: Never point the firearm at anything you do not intend to shoot. This means always keeping the muzzle pointed in a direction where an accidental discharge would not cause injury or damage.

KEEP YOUR FINGER OFF THE TRIGGER UNTIL READY TO SHOOT: Only place your finger on the trigger when you have made the decision to fire. Until then, rest your finger outside the trigger guard.

BE SURE OF YOUR TARGET AND WHAT IS BEYOND IT: Always identify your target, and make sure you know what lies beyond it to avoid accidental injury or damage from missed shots or bullets that pass through the target.

USE THE CORRECT AMMUNITION: Ensure that the ammunition matches the specifications for the firearm you are using.

WEAR APPROPRIATE EYE AND EAR PROTECTION: Protect your eyes and ears with suitable gear to prevent injury from gunfire and debris.

CHECK THE CONDITION OF YOUR FIREARM: Regularly inspect your firearm to ensure it is clean and functioning properly. Do not use a firearm that appears damaged or malfunctioning.

STORE FIREARMS SAFELY: When not in use, firearms should be unloaded and stored in a secure location, such as a locked safe. Ammunition should be stored separately from the firearm.

KNOW AND FOLLOW LOCAL LAWS AND REGULATIONS: Be aware of and comply with all local, state, provincial, and federal firearm laws and regulations.

GET PROPER TRAINING: Seek out and complete a certified firearm safety course. Practice regularly to maintain and improve your skills.



Shooting Instruction

Practicing the basics of shooting provides First Hunt participants with a more reasonable chance of harvesting their first ducks. Below are the four shooting fundamentals to cover:

EYE DOMINANCE

Before any shooting is done, help each participant determine his or her dominant eye. This, of course, informs whether the new hunter should shoot right- or left-handed. To determine eye dominance, follow the steps on the right.

PROPER SHOULDERING TECHNIQUE

Instruct participants to place the stock of an unloaded gun against the cheek first, then shoulder the gun. Continue this order. It will shoulder in the same position every time.

STATIONARY TARGETS

Get participants used to the recoil and noise of a firearm without trying to hit a moving target. It is key to reinforce the operation of the firearm at all times: safety, gun loading, and muzzle control. If you don't have paper targets, simply place a clay target on the ground. This also allows new shooters to visualize the pattern of a shotgun at given distances.

DETERMINING EYE DOMINANCE

- Face an object about 10 feet away.
- Focus on the object.
- Keeping both eyes open, extend an arm to point at the object.
- Without moving your hand, close one eye at a time.
- The open eye that keeps your finger pointed at the object is your dominant eye.



SITTING, KNEELING AND STANDING

Prepare participants for future experiences afield through shooting while sitting, kneeling, and standing.

VARY THE DISTANCE

We recommend that the mentor shoots targets at varying distances, starting close and working out to 40 yards. Communicate the results to everyone present. Following the demonstration, allow participants to shoot pattern targets. Note the differences in shot strings and pellet counts, pointing out how pellet density (and velocity) is reduced at greater distances — reducing the lethality of the shot.

CLAY TARGETS

Breaking a clay target can be a real confidence booster. Start by releasing single clay targets, without shooting. Demonstrate effective range by telling the participant when the target has traveled beyond an appropriate distance to shoot a duck or goose.

STRAIGHT-AWAY AND INCOMING TARGETS

Start with incoming and straight-away targets — the easiest to hit. Allow each participant to shoot at 10 or more clay targets. For maximum effectiveness, tell participants when to take the shot before it's their turn. We recommend teaching the “blot out”





method for incoming birds, which involves swinging through the target from underneath, pulling the trigger when the target disappears behind the muzzle.

CROSSING TARGETS

New wingshooters often point and shoot directly at crossing birds, resulting in missing behind the intended target. Try a visual demonstration. Have someone jog in front and across you at right angles. Throw a football directly at the person. The ball will miss and pass behind the receiver. Next, throw the ball in front of the receiver. With a proper lead, the ball will be caught. The same principle applies when leading a bird while shooting.

Release targets from both the left and right without firing to allow the participants to practice swinging. We recommend teaching the swing-through method: Swing through the target and pull the trigger just as you pass the target.

DEMONSTRATE SHOOTING LANES

Discuss safe shooting lanes when hunting with multiple hunters. Identify how far left and right each shooter may swing their shotguns. Start with incoming and straight-away clay targets to boost participants' confidence.

HUNTING SCENARIOS

Create shooting stations that mimic local options afield, like shooting out of layouts, pits, or boats.



Bird Cleaning

Following each hunt, teach First Hunt participants how to properly clean and care for harvested birds. If the birds aren't going to be cooked, mentors must review regulations on how to legally transport game.

BIRD PROCESSING TOOLS

Knives, game shears, and other essential tools should be shown to First Hunt participants. Identify each and explain how and why they're used

STORAGE OPTIONS

Demonstrate various storage options for transportation and bird processing, such as freezer bags, vacuum sealers, and more.

BIRD PROCESSING

First-hand cleaning demonstrations of harvested ducks or geese are highly beneficial. Demonstrate various cleaning techniques, such as skinning, plucking and breasting.





Cooking

The final phase of the hunt is as important as any First Hunt activity. Many non-Delta mentored hunts stop short of meal prep, but eating the harvest is a critical step in the formation of a hunter. It teaches respect for the harvested game, celebrates the experience, and promotes discussion of hunting's larger issues such as ethics and conservation.

Cooking waterfowl is also a lot of fun. First Hunt participants should be involved throughout the cleaning and cooking process, providing a powerful connection to the birds.

If time is short, First Hunt organizers can donate previously harvested waterfowl to be prepared and served to participants. We also recommend that spouses, parents and guardians be invited to share the event's final meal. It is a tremendous source of pride for participants and can be a life-changing moment for all.

Four excellent, simple recipes are listed on the next pages, and more are available at deltawaterfowl.org/recipes.

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Duck Wraps

INGREDIENTS	TOOLS
Duck or goose breast (sliced open)	Toothpicks: 2 per wrap
Favorite seasoning	Charcoal or gas grill
Sliced bacon, cheese and onion	Tongs
Pickled jalapeño peppers (optional)	Paper towels
Sliced cheese or spreadable cream cheese	Plates and forks

Cut breast meat away from breastbone. Wash breast meat and pat dry. Slice breasts in half. Create a “gap” in each half-breast by slicing open parallel to cutting board. Coat liberally with any seasoning. Marinate if desired; use store bought teriyaki for ease. Place cheese, onion and jalapeño in breast gaps. Wrap each breast-half with bacon and secure with toothpick. Grill over very hot charcoal fire or gas grill until bacon is crisp. Serve immediately.

Duck or Goose Fajitas

INGREDIENTS	TOOLS
Duck or goose breasts	Grill or stove
Marinade (Italian dressing or other)	Frying pan
Pepper, desired seasonings	Tongs
Onions & peppers	Paper towels
Shredded cheese	Paper plates
BBQ or teriyaki sauce	Forks
Tortilla wraps	Cutting board
Salsa and sour cream	Oil, if frying

Cut meat into strips. Marinate if you have time. Cook strips over medium heat on grill, or alternatively, fry. Slice onions and peppers in strips and place in piles on paper plates. Lay out meat, veggies, wraps, shredded cheese, salsa and sour cream in row and let participants build fajitas to their liking.

Duck or Goose Kabobs



INGREDIENTS

Duck breast
Marinade (Italian dressing or other)
Pepper, other desired seasonings
Onions and peppers
Pineapple (optional)
BBQ or teriyaki sauce

TOOLS

Charcoal or gas grill Paper towels
Wood skewers Paper plates and
Tongs forks
Kabob skewers

Cut meat into one-inch pieces. Marinate (Italian dressing, teriyaki, etc.) if time allows. Put pieces on kabob skewer, alternating meat and veggies or fruit, and cook over medium-hot fire. Grill kabobs on each side until bacon is done. Add barbecue or teriyaki sauce towards end as desired.

QUICK TIPS FOR FIRST HUNT SUCCESS

Over two decades of experience guides this handy checklist for ensuring a safe, gratifying First Hunt event.



BEFORE THE EVENT:

- Establish a committee and designate roles for each First Hunt mentor.
- Invite guest speakers, such as a game warden, hunter safety instructor, biologist or other experts in your local community.
- Obtain registration and emergency contact information.
- Obtain parental consent forms, and mentor and participant release waivers.
- Verify Hunter Safety completion for each hunter.
- Determine ammunition needs.
- Determine equipment needs, including waders, warm clothing and shotguns.
- Create a schedule. Share it with First Hunt participants and parents/guardians.
- Identify participants who do not have an opportunity to hunt outside of the First Hunt event. Pair them with mentors who are open to mentoring on an ongoing basis.
- Limit First Hunt events to a manageable size, ensuring mentors spend adequate quality time with each participant.

IN THE FIELD:

- Keep participants within an arm's reach of mentors at all times.
- Distribute only one shotshell at a time.
- Bring plenty of snacks and refreshments.
- Don't spend too much time in the field. Stop hunting at a predetermined time.
- Make sure all hunters are properly dressed for the day's weather. Be sure to check the forecast.
- Make some memories. Take lots of photos!
- Review First Hunt's Top 10 Mentor/Participant Tips

The Goal: Lifelong Waterfowlers

The primary goal of First Hunt is to create lifelong waterfowl hunters. So, we recommend you prioritize your efforts on individuals who have never waterfowl hunted before. After that, you can focus on novice hunters who are looking for more experience. Your mentored hunt is important social reinforcement.

Quality mentoring is the key to securing the future of waterfowl hunting. A one-time hunt is valuable, but if we hope to foster dedicated new waterfowlers, mentorship needs to be an ongoing process.

At the beginning of your event, try to pair hunters with mentors who are willing to take them out again. If it is a youth hunt, try to connect the parents with the mentor to increase comfort levels. The First Hunt experience may spark a fire but ongoing mentorship is the key to keeping it going.

Involve Parents

The consent, support and trust of participants' parents is imperative to the success of your First Hunt event. To increase the comfort level of parents, we recommend involving them in your event's activities by:

- Inviting family to your First Hunt committee meeting.
- Inviting family to your First Hunt event.
- Getting to know the parents.
- Promoting family and community involvement in your First Hunt event through social media, email, local news, radio and advertisements.
- Staying connected with participants after the event.

Recruit Close to Home

Look close to home when recruiting for First Hunt activities. Nieces and nephews, and the children of close friends make excellent hunt candidates. You may even discover that some of your friends who hunt don't take their own children waterfowling.

Don't overlook inviting adult participants, either. Mentoring an adult is the fastest way to create a new hunter, as he or she has transportation, disposable income and the freedom to travel to hunting locations at will. Delta has seen a vast number of adults take to waterfowling after only one hunt.

Don't forget the importance of inviting mothers and daughters. Not only is female hunter participation on the rise, but studies also show that if a mother hunts, her children are far more likely to hunt, too.



FIRST HUNT CRITERIA AND REQUIREMENTS

Recruiting new waterfowl hunters is a rewarding experience — a process that should be fun, yet taken seriously. Here are the criteria and requirements of Delta Waterfowl's First Hunt program for youth and adult participants.



ALL EVENTS:

- Alcohol is prohibited.
- Parents/guardians are encouraged to attend youth-oriented First Hunt events.
- Delta Waterfowl must be notified about the event in order to provide insurance coverage. This is done through submitting a WHF request.

HUNTING EVENTS:

- Participating hunters must complete a state or provincial hunter education course and the required firearms licenses before the event.
- All participating hunters must strictly adhere to all hunting regulations.
- Adult mentors may supervise up to two hunters at one time.
- Participants are allowed only one shotshell in their shotguns at any time.
- Mentors should not carry firearms afield, even when legal to do so.
- Mentors should focus their attention on First Hunt participants.
- First Hunt forms must be completed and returned to Delta Waterfowl. They include:
 - a. Participant waiver and release
 - b. Parental consent waiver and release
 - c. First Hunt registration
 - d. Emergency medical authorization
 - e. Mentor conduct guidelines

First Hunt Top Ten Mentor Tips

Thanks for stepping up as a First Hunt Mentor! We're certain this will be one of your most rewarding experiences as a waterfowler. Here are some useful reminders to help you get the most out of the experience:

1 SAFETY FIRST

Establish the rules of the hunt right away. If you feel the new hunter can't handle the situation, the hunt stops, without exception.

2 STAY CLOSE

Stay within an arm's length of a new hunter whenever he or she is holding a gun. You'll be better able to reinforce safety and shooting skills.

3 SLOW IT DOWN

There are moments in waterfowl hunting when things happen quickly. Slow it down for safety. It's OK to let birds pass if the hunter is not quite ready.

4 KEEP IT COMFORTABLE

Make sure new hunters are warm, dry and comfortable. Remember, we want them to hunt again.

5 FIND TEACHABLE MOMENTS

This will be a day of many firsts, with a new waterfowler wanting to soak up as much information as possible. Explain everything, even small details, as the hunt unfolds.

6 HAVE FUN

Mentoring is a great way to re-discover why you fell in love with waterfowling in the first place.

7 EXPLAIN HUNTING'S ROLE IN CONSERVATION

Help the new hunters understand that waterfowling has deep connections to family, heritage and conservation. It's an honest way to sustainably harvest fresh, local food, and it provides essential funds for migratory bird conservation.

8 KEEP THE SHOOTING SIMPLE

Teach the fundamentals of wing-shooting. Demonstrate a good body position and smooth gun mount. Build from there.

9 TEACH RESPECT FOR BIRDS

Show participants how hard hunters work to retrieve every bird. Help them identify and learn about the various duck and geese. Teach them about the effective range of their shotguns so they take only ethical shots.

10 ALWAYS PUT MORE BACK

Delta was founded on the principle of putting back more birds than we take. Help the new hunter understand that when hunters harvest a bird, most feel morally obligated to give back to the waterfowl resource.

Delta's Top 10 Participant Tips

Share this list with your First Hunt participants to ensure a safe and enjoyable experience.

1 SAFETY FIRST

Always maintain control of your firearm. Whether the gun is loaded or unloaded, the muzzle never points at another person.

2 LISTEN TO YOUR MENTOR

Your mentor can teach you from years of experience and is there to ensure a safe and enjoyable hunt.

3 ASK QUESTIONS

This is your chance to learn everything you've always wanted to know about duck hunting. Mentors love sharing their knowledge.

4 DRESS FOR THE WEATHER

Often, the best hunting is in the worst weather. Check the forecast and bring an appropriate number of layers. It's always easier to take clothing off.

5 SPEAK UP

If you get tired, hungry or thirsty, tell your mentor. He or she wants this to be a great experience for you.

6 TAKE PHOTOS

Hunting is about stories and memories. Don't be rushed. Take the time to capture the experience.

7 BE HELPFUL

One of the best ways to get invited back for another hunt is to help out. If you assist with decoy set ups, clean up empty shells and do whatever else you can, without being asked, you'll be a popular hunting partner.

8 RESPECT LANDOWNERS

Future access on private land depends on treating landowners with respect. Shut any gates, pick up garbage, and go back to say "thank you" after the hunt. It's the very least you can do.

9 RESPECT THE BIRDS

It is a waterfowl hunter's legacy, and responsibility, to appreciate the birds. Work hard to retrieve any bird you bring down, know your ethical shooting range, and above all, eat what you shoot.

10 RELAX AND HAVE FUN

It takes time to become a skilled waterfowler. Ducks are fast and often hard to decoy. Stick with it. It will come with time.



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