



**MORE THAN  
80,000**  
BEGINNERS INTRODUCED  
TO WATERFOWL HUNTING



## Delta Waterfowl Works to Secure the Future of Waterfowl Hunting

The Duck Hunters Organization leads the way in recruiting hunters and defending the hunt

Take a minute. Close your eyes. Imagine your perfect day of duck hunting.

Think about how the sun and sky look. Take in the shapes and colors of your favorite ducks slicing through the air over the decoys. Hear the sound of their wings, the waves on the water or the rustling of the cane or cornstalks. Feel the sun, the wind, the sleet on your face. Smell the foxfire in the marsh, the wet dog or the ocean. Taste the cattail fuzz you didn't realize had collected in your call, hot black coffee from a thermos or the cinnamon buns for brunch baking in the blind.

Consider the companions with whom you're sharing the day.

As The Duck Hunters Organization, Delta Waterfowl is home to committed waterfowl hunters and conservationists across the United



**ONLY 3 IN 10 WILDLIFE  
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT  
UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ENTER  
COLLEGE OR GRAD SCHOOL  
WITH ANY EXPERIENCE IN OR  
CONNECTION TO HUNTING**

States and Canada, so the number of variations on the vision of a perfect day of duck hunting likely equals — or even exceeds — the number of Delta members and supporters. (Most duck hunters can probably conjure up two or three or more ideas of a perfect day.)

### The Perfect Day for Delta's Missions

Two missions drive The Duck Hunters Organization. They are:

- ▶ Produce more ducks.
- ▶ Secure the future of waterfowl hunting in North America.

So, close your eyes again and imagine another perfect day along with us ...

A Delta volunteer-mentor shares a blind with a first-time duck hunter participating in a Delta First Hunt or a University Hunting Program event. They've prepared together for this sunrise. The mentor's dog whines anxiously as legal shooting time arrives and the actions "snick" shut on their shotguns.

Together they watch the wetland come alive. Ducks and geese begin to move. A small flock of mallards makes a swing, showing interest. A little judicious calling convinces them. They make a final turn, and put their feet down and wings into reverse.

The mentor says, "Get 'em!", but stays seated to watch the new hunter rise, mount the gun and fire. A single young drake cartwheels from the back of the group. The hunter lowers the shotgun and stares, mouth open, at the source of the ripple rings spreading through the decoys.

The dog is sent. A retrieve is made. A beautiful bird comes to hand. The creation of a new waterfowl hunter has begun.

Neither mentor nor mentee could know it, but this particular mallard was hatched six months ago in a Delta Hen House in the prairie pothole region of Canada.

And for the mission of The Duck Hunters Organization, that brings the "perfect day" full circle.

### HunteR3

The name given to Delta Waterfowl's efforts to secure the future of waterfowl hunting in Canada and the United States is HunteR3. It's built on the "three Rs" critical to the future of hunting and conservation: Recruitment, Retention and Reactivation of hunters.

The primary Delta programs of HunteR3 used to secure the future of waterfowl hunting are:

- ▶ First Hunt
- ▶ University Hunting Program
- ▶ Defending the Hunt



### First Hunt

Since its inception, Delta First Hunt events have introduced more than 80,000 beginners to duck and goose hunting. That makes it, far and away, the world's largest and most successful waterfowl hunter recruitment program. Delta Waterfowl chapters and volunteers conduct a wide variety of educational and hands-on events throughout the year geared to sharing the joys of waterfowl hunting with thousands of newcomers.

There's no denying that restrictions and cancellations because of the pandemic curtailed the number of in-person First Hunt events offered during 2020. However, if there was a silver lining, it was allowing time to reflect on past successes, brainstorm alternative events and delivery options, and plan for even greater successes once COVID-19 is behind us. Delta especially sees great opportunity for

First Hunt to invite more college-age and older participants as well as newcomers from a more diverse range of demographic backgrounds.

"The pandemic has shown that now is the time to double down on investments in hunter recruitment programs that are attractive to the general public," said Joel Brice, Delta's vice president of waterfowl and hunter recruitment programs. "When we truly attract people to hunting and light the fire, they stay. That's good for conservation. It's good for ducks. It's how Delta will secure the future of waterfowl hunting."

In the seasons ahead, you can count on Delta volunteers to lead many thousands more newcomers to the joys of waterfowling through the experience of "perfect days" on First Hunt events.

### University Hunting Program

The Delta University Hunting Program

seeks to stem a trend with potentially grave impact on wildlife management – and thereby waterfowl hunting. It’s estimated that 70 percent of university students pursuing degrees in wildlife sciences have little or no experience – or even connection – with hunting. These are tomorrow’s wildlife managers and policy makers. Delta’s UHP collaborates with university professors and wildlife science departments to invite these students to experience hunting first-hand. The students take hunter education training, acquire hunting licenses, participate in a range day to become familiar with the guns and what to expect in the blind, go on a real duck hunt and follow it up with a meal including the day’s bag.

To date, Delta UHP classes have been offered with great success at 25 universities across Canada and the United States, graduating 725 students. Most say they look forward to hunting again, and even those who don’t take with them a newly discovered appreciation of the hunters’ roles in and commitment to sound wildlife management.

Following a UHP event at Auburn

University, Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources regional hunter education and mentored hunt coordinator, Justin Grider, summed up the goals of the program.

“It was really neat to see these young ladies step out of their comfort zones and essentially become advocates for hunting in a very short time,” he said. “If we didn’t turn them into license buyers, we at least turned them into advocates.”

Popularity and success of the University Hunting Program grew well beyond the most optimistic expectations in the 2019-2020 hunting seasons, with 24 schools participating to graduate a whopping 612 participants.

Again, COVID-19 was a massively limiting factor during the 2020-2021 season, but the prospects look bright after the pandemic subsides in the year ahead. Delta Waterfowl has identified 494 universities as strong prospects for UHP in the next few years. All it will take is support of Delta members, donors and volunteers to help introduce these students to their own “perfect day.”



“Delta’s University Hunting Program courses at 25 schools have graduated 725 students whom had little or no connection to or experience in hunting before this introduction.”

Scott Petrie,  
CEO, DELTA WATERFOWL





2020 SAW THE EXPANSION OF HUNTING AND FISHING OPPORTUNITIES ON MORE THAN 2.3 MILLION ACRES AT 97 NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES. MORE THAN A DOZEN REFUGES SAW WATERFOWL HUNTING AVAILABLE FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THE 2020-21 SEASON.



### Defending the Hunt

Defending the Hunt is the HunterR3 initiative that defines Delta Waterfowl as the “voice of the duck hunter” throughout North America. Through these important efforts, Delta works to retain current waterfowl hunters by vigorously defending threats to duck hunting opportunities anytime and anywhere. It also seeks to recruit, retain and reactivate waterfowl hunters by expanding hunting opportunities through advocacy and policy work.

In 2020, Defending the Hunt supported the expansion of hunting and fishing opportunities on 2.3 million acres at 97 national wildlife refuges. That included 10 areas on the priority list provided by Delta Waterfowl to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Additionally, more than a dozen refuges saw waterfowl hunting available for the first time in the 2020-2021 season.

Delta’s Defending the Hunt Program sprang into action in February when legislation was being considered by the Maryland Assembly to prohibit all forms of waterfowl hunting other than body booting on the Susquehanna Flats. Such restriction would severely limit access by most waterfowl hunters. Delta Waterfowl sent a letter to legislators strongly opposing the bill, and informed members through

a Delta Action Alert. Swift, decisive opposition led to the bill being removed from consideration.

In Canada, 2020 Defending the Hunt advocacy included the new sandhill crane season in Alberta, expanded Canada goose limits and snow goose seasons in Ontario, and merganser season changes in Newfoundland Labrador. Work continues on modernization of waterfowl hunting regulations across Canada,

increasing duck stamp revenues to keep up with inflation, and expansion of Sunday hunting opportunities in eastern Canada.

Another important component of Defending the Hunt is “Action Alert” emails sent to Delta supporters in states and provinces impacted by pending regulation changes, legislation and policy initiatives. They detail direct actions concerned members can take to influence local decisions.

**Your support of The Duck Hunters Organization makes recruitment by Delta’s HunterR3 programs and maximizing hunting opportunity through Defending the Hunt possible and effective. Backing these programs with financial and in-kind gifts show how much waterfowl hunting means to you and demonstrates your commitment to the future of conservation. Please help Delta deliver more “perfect days” of duck hunting now and far into the future.**



DELTA  WATERFOWL

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