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Alberta Hunter Education
Instructors' Association

Conservation Education

The Voice of Conservation Education in Alberta

Magazine

Winter 2015

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Merry Christmas

and all the very best for a
happy and healthy New Year

from the

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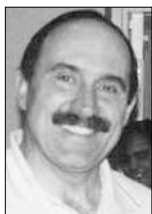
Matt Shaw
Camp Manager
Alford Lake Centre
Caroline, AB

President's Message



“ This past year saw fully booked camps and seminars, full classrooms with increased membership and volunteer members. ”

By Robert A. Gruszecki



Robert A. Gruszecki
President - A.H.E.I.A.

2015 was a time of intensive growth and some “troubled waters” in our province, which certainly affects Conservation Education. With economic troubles, coupled with the price of oil, massive layoffs and changes to political structures all a reality that we faced in the past year, that certainly qualifies as a recipe for turmoil. Clearly we have seen a reduction in donations, but our student count continued to grow.

There is no doubt that this has been a challenging year. New governments mean developing new working relationships. Down turn in our economy means people have reduced their donation budget and we have to be inventive about fundraising. Negative social media about “Cecil the lion” and hunting in general has raised many eyebrows. This all means we have to work even harder to get our messages sent and received. In light of all this, it is with great pleasure that we are able to report another successful year of furthering our mission: To make wildlife and wild places part of the value system of every Albertan.

This past year saw fully booked camps and seminars, full classrooms with increased membership and volunteer numbers. The National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP) continued to blossom with extremely well attended Provincial and National tournaments, and more teachers being made archery instructors each month. Citizens from all corners of the province are showing us, through their interest and involvement, that conservation education remains an important concern.

In 2015, A.H.E.I.A. engaged over 95,000 Albertans in a wide variety of programs. A revival in ‘outdoor culture’ and mankind’s hunting heritage has brought a considerable increase in traffic, both in person and online. Men, women and children of all ages have joined our extensive community of conservation focused, outdoor enthusiasts. As always, Safety and Conservation Education remain our priorities and, province wide, our graduate count increased. Our National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP) has exceeded expectations and reached in excess of 15,000 students in 2015. With over 140 new teachers certified in over 25 Alberta schools this year, it is clear that A.H.E.I.A.’s NASP program delivery is very positively received.

The Conservation Education Centres for Excellence in Calgary and Edmonton have had all firearms and hunting courses booked solid this year, another indication of the genuine need for

the programming A.H.E.I.A. offers. We continue to work with our partners in the Federal Government in providing the legally mandated Canadian Firearms Safety Course for both restricted and non-restricted licences, and A.H.E.I.A. instructors have graduated over 40,000 students so far in 2015.

In February, A.H.E.I.A. launched the newest addition to the ‘Essentials Series’: the Field Techniques App for Apple and Android devices. This app assists novice and experienced hunters alike as they enter the hunting field. It teaches proper care and evisceration of cloven hoofed animals, suitable equipment and their uses, anatomy, tagging, caping and more. It includes video as well as text and colour photos that will guide a hunter through the process of preparing meat for the table and a trophy for the taxidermist. A must for any hunter and available in the iTunes and Google Play stores now. Stay tuned for future apps for waterfowl, upland game, fish, fur bearing animals and more!

The Alford Lake Conservation Education Centre for Excellence had a tremendous year! This centre had over 10,000 students of all ages and levels of experience come out to try all the great outdoors has to offer. From shooting all types of firearms, safe instruction on riding ATVs and learning to safely use chainsaws, to picking wild edibles and cooking up your harvest (and many more topics), Alford Lake was able to open up a new world to many people who haven’t had the opportunity to spend much — or any — time outside of a city. It is very gratifying to have been instrumental in providing the next generation with the confidence and skills to be safe and independent. Seeing the looks of wonder and excitement on the faces of the men, women and children who attended the various camps and seminars there, was the highlight of the summer for our staff and volunteers. Our gratitude goes out to these fine, hardworking volunteers who sacrifice their own time to bring joy and share their knowledge with our campers. Thank you! A.H.E.I.A. is truly blessed to have a corps of dedicated volunteers like you.

The Calgary Firearms Centre rolled out the red carpet for 17 trap and skeet shoots, including various registered competitions, corporate functions and private events. Educational days were offered to the public, allowing us to showcase the shooting sports day on the range and this opens our facility up to a population who might never have known it exists. All graduates of our courses are invited to a day of safe and fun shooting instruction. More than 10,000 people visited this centre in the past year, with over one million targets thrown, making it the busiest centre of its kind in North America. Plans to expand the facility and its offerings in 2016 are proceeding.

It is with great excitement that we look forward to the 14th annual Conservation Education W.I.S.E. Foundation Awards and Banquet, to be held on Saturday February 6th, 2016 at the BMO Centre, Stampede Park. As always, the support you bring with your presence is incredible and shows our communities how much Albertans value the work of the WISE Foundation and A.H.E.I.A. We look forward to seeing you there again this coming year and remind you that the A.H.E.I.A. Annual General Meeting is also held the same day in the BMO Centre; all members are welcome to participate. The meeting will be held at 12:00 pm, upstairs in the Arabian Room. Just follow the signs.

Please remember that your membership has value. Including, but not limited to, the discounts at “Marks” (formerly Marks Work Wearhouse) where, by presenting your discount card, you can have a 10% reduction. You are also entitled to a 10% discount on regular priced merchandise at Camper’s Village when you show your membership card. A.H.E.I.A. membership gives you access to a number of useful resources which can be accessed on the ‘Members Only’ section of our website. To access this page go to: www.aheia.com/custompages/319_members.cfm, enter the user name aheia, then the password member2016BDTH. (Note that this password will come into effect in January 2016.)

We love your ‘Likes’ on Facebook! Don’t forget to check out our ‘Tweets’ on Twitter and find us on Instagram to get up-to-the-minute information on all our programs, events and contests. Visit www.aheia.com for this and other news and contacts.

On behalf of A.H.E.I.A. and the incredible number of students we continue to reach, I wish you and yours a very Merry Christmas. May the New Year bring you much peace and good health! We look forward to seeing you at the W.I.S.E. Foundation Awards Banquet, or one of the many other programs offered through your organization.

Sincerely,

Robert A. Gruszecki
President
A.H.E.I.A.



Alberta's Charitable Tax Credit Supports Giving Across the Province

Albertans are encouraged to take advantage of one of the highest charitable tax credits in Canada while supporting the province's outstanding charities.

By Jeremy Nolais

Press Secretary
Culture and Tourism

Culture and Tourism Minister, David Eggen, joined representatives from various charitable organizations, including a number of Santa’s helpers, to highlight the great work they do and the benefits charities and their donors receive through the Charitable Donations Tax Credit.

“Albertans are extremely generous, with donations levels that consistently exceed the national average. In tough economic times, taking care of each other is the Alberta way of doing things. This tax credit encourages Albertans to support the causes that matter to them. The credit is one of the most substantial of its kind in Canada.”

- David Eggen, Minister of Culture and Tourism

Contributions to charitable organizations peak during the holiday season, but Albertans can benefit from the tax credit on donations made any time of year. Albertans simply claim their annual donations to registered charities on their income tax returns, and the credit is applied to the overall amount owing or being refunded.

“We are very appreciative of the Government of Alberta's support. Albertans give generously, and the charitable tax credit is just one example of the government demonstrating its commitment to the not-for-profit sector.”

- Jenn McManus, Vice President, Canadian Red Cross
Alberta & Northwest Territories

“We see how much Albertans care every day through their support. And, while we find that most people base their decision to give on the desire to help others, we know that our province's generous tax credit is an additional reward for donating.”

- Myrna Khan, Vice President, Resource Development
United Way of the Alberta Capital Region

“The Salvation Army relies on the generosity of Albertans to support programs that assist men, women and children who are living in poverty. We are grateful that the charitable tax credit encourages those who can, to give to charities like ours.”

- Captain Pam Goodyear, Divisional Secretary
Public Relations & Development, The Salvation Army

“Many donors have utilized the charitable tax credit over the years to help their money go further. We encourage our readers to explore the tax credit as the true beneficiaries are the agencies and people who need our help.”

- Laura Linnell, Committee Chair, Calgary Herald Christmas Fund

“The charitable tax credit enables our supporters to deliver the spirit of Christmas to children in Edmonton while receiving the gift of a tax break in return.”

- Lana Nordlund, Executive Director, 630 CHED Santas Anonymous

Facts About the Charitable Tax Credit

- Budget 2015 maintains Alberta’s Charitable Donations Tax Credit at 21 per cent for total donations in excess of \$200, one of the highest such credits in Canada.
- When combined with the federal charitable tax credit of 29 per cent, Albertans receive a 50 per cent non-refundable tax credit for every dollar donated over the \$200 threshold.
- The first \$200 in donations receives a combined credit of 35 per cent.
- The tax credit reduces a taxpayer’s amount owing or increases the amount being refunded.
- Albertans gave approximately \$1.47 billion to charities in 2013. Of the provinces, Alberta tax filers had the highest median charitable donation in the country. (Source: Statistics Canada).

Alberta Government

Alberta Hunter Education
Instructors' Association
**Conservation
Education
Magazine**

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Front Cover Photo:
Don Kesler Nature Photography

The Conservation Education
W.I.S.E. Foundation and
Alberta Hunter Education
Instructors' Association
are pleased to present the



14th Annual W.I.S.E. Awards and Banquet

**Saturday
February 6, 2016**

**BMO Centre
Stampede Park
Calgary, Alberta**

**Tickets \$115.00 each,
\$870.00 for a table of 8
or \$1100 for a table of 10.**

**Silent Auction &
Cocktails 4:30 pm**

Dinner 6:00 pm

**Awards Program &
Live Auction to follow**

Contact info@aeia.com
or telephone

1.866.852.4342



**A.H.E.I.A.'s Mission:
To make Wildlife and Fish
part of the Value System
of Every Albertan.**

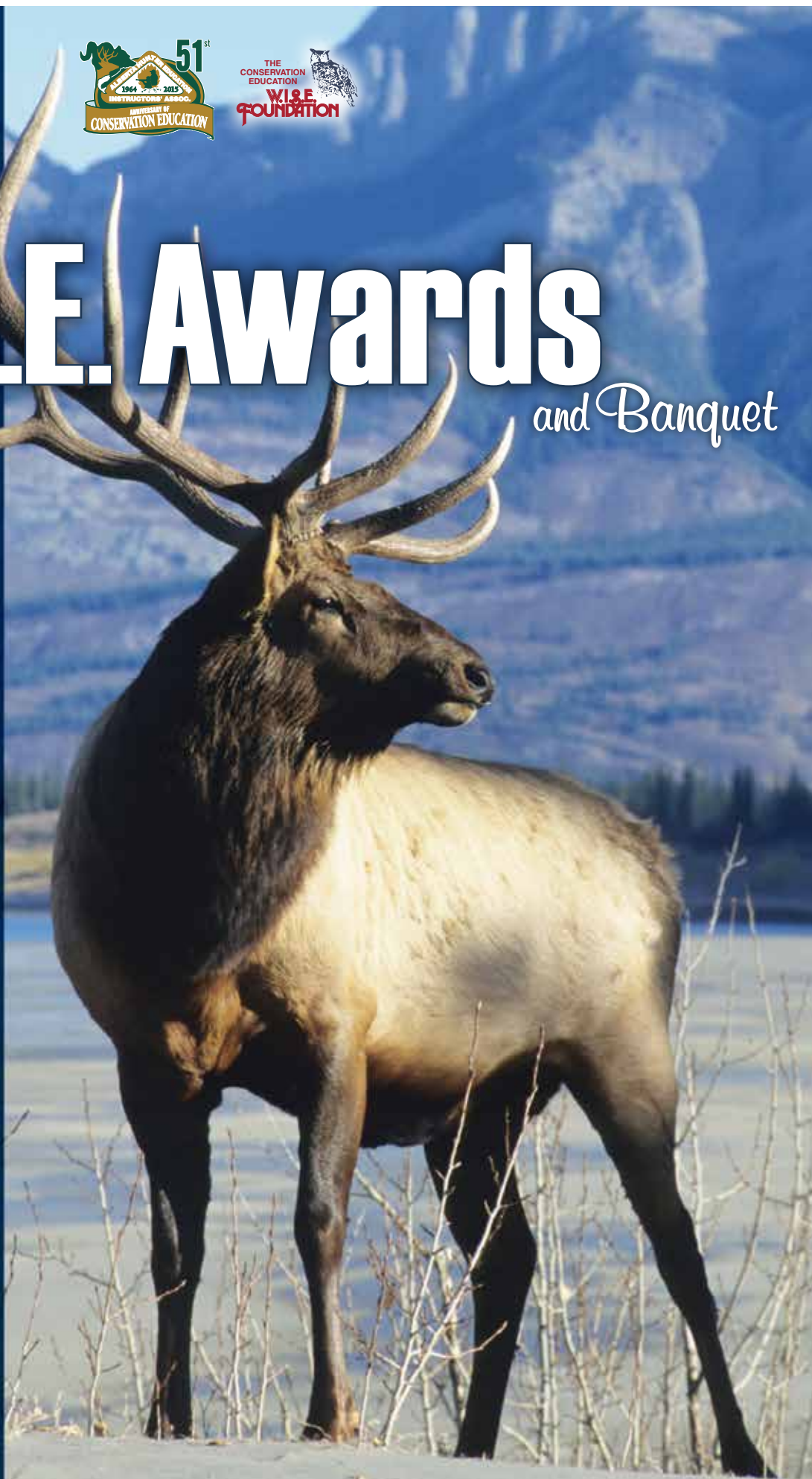


Photo courtesy of Don Kesler Nature Photography



W.I.S.E. Award Nominations Recognize Conservation Excellence

Nominations for the 2016 W.I.S.E. Awards are now being accepted.

Initiated 13 years ago, the W.I.S.E. Awards recognize outstanding achievement and commitment in the area of Conservation Education and Resource Management.

The Alberta Hunter Education Instructors' Association and the Conservation Education W.I.S.E. Foundation created the W.I.S.E. Awards. Both of these charitable foundations exist solely for the purpose of helping Albertans learn about Alberta's wildlife and the contribution that wildlife makes to the quality of our lives in Alberta. The goal is to make wildlife and fish part of the value system of all Albertans.

Three W.I.S.E. Award recipients will be chosen from the following four categories:

- W.I.S.E. Public Service Conservation Award
- W.I.S.E. Industry Conservation Award
- W.I.S.E. Volunteer Instructor Conservation Award
- W.I.S.E. Alva Bair Memorial Award

The awards will be presented at the A.H.E.I.A. banquet and fundraising auction held February 6, 2016, in the BMO Centre, Palomino Room, Stampede Park, Calgary, Alberta.

Please have your W.I.S.E. Award Nominations in as soon as possible for consideration.

For more W.I.S.E. Conservation Awards information and nomination forms visit the A.H.E.I.A. website at www.aheia.com or call 1-866-852-4342.

Conservation Awards Nomination Form

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Public Service Conservation Award | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry Conservation Award |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer Instructor Conservation Award | <input type="checkbox"/> Alva Bair Memorial Award |

Include with your nomination, details as to why your nominee should be selected, based on the general criteria listed for each award description.

Name of Nominee: _____

P.O. or Street Address: _____

Town or City: _____ Province: _____ Postal Code: _____

Phone Number: _____

Nominated By: _____ Signature: _____

Phone Number: _____ Date: _____

Please submit completed nomination form to:
Alberta Hunter Education Instructors' Association (A.H.E.I.A.)
911 Sylvester Crescent S.W., Calgary, AB T2W 0R8
(403) 252-8474 or 1-866-852-4342
E-mail: info@aeia.com

Submissions may be forwarded by mail or e-mail, or you may access this form electronically by visiting our website. Be sure to include all supporting materials.

Recognizing Conservation Excellence



The Alberta Hunter Education Instructors' Association

Our Mission:

*"To Make Wildlife and Fish Part of the
Value System of Every Albertan."*

Working Principles & Elements of A.H.E.I.A.'s Conservation Education Programs:

- Wildlife is part of the value system of every Albertan.
- Wildlife contributes to the quality of the lives of Albertans.
- Human activity impacts wildlife.
- The behaviour of each person is important to the future of wildlife.
- Conservation Education is people helping other people to understand the needs and value of wildlife.
- Conservation Education is people enjoying wildlife and introducing other people to wildlife related activities.
- Conservation Education is people involved in wildlife education programs in formal and non-formal settings.
- Conservation Education is people advocating wildlife values to their communities.
- Conservation Education is people developing and sharing wildlife related skills.
- Conservation Education is people watching wildlife.

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BMO Centre
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calgaryboatandsportshow.ca

EDMONTON BOAT & SPORTSMEN'S SHOW

March 10-13, 2016
Edmonton Expo Centre
Northlands
edmontonboatandsportshow.ca

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Firearms Education Report

Bill C-42: What It Means to Instructors

By Glenn McKay



Glenn McKay
Firearms Education
Coordinator
A.H.E.I.A.

As you are no doubt aware, on June 18, 2015 Bill C-42 became law. Good, bad or indifferent, the Bill became law and, as a result, challenges to obtain a PAL are no longer available for the instructor or the student. This simply means that everyone attempting to obtain a firearms licence MUST take the eight hour

non-restricted course or the four hour restricted firearms safety course. To attempt to do both courses in one day is taxing for both student and the instructor and, in some cases, counterproductive. A.H.E.I.A. is constantly questioned as to how some instructor(s) can complete both in one day. To be honest, smaller classes and a very dedicated student may allow you to complete it in one day, but they will retain more after a two day session. If you consider 10 students doing both courses in one day with one or two instructors, they will be in your care for a minimum 14-15 hours. (12 hours to teach, 30 to 45 minutes for the written exams and 10 minutes for each practical). Any less, then the student is being cheated. There are some instructors that may not agree with the new law and that is fine as long as their opinion is not shared with the class. Remember, a student is asking for your expertise, so give it to them. If this law is so distasteful to the instructor, then you have the choice of teaching or not.

“... everyone attempting to obtain a firearms licence MUST take the eight hour non-restricted course or the four hour restricted firearms safety course.”

A.T.T.'s After September 02, 2015

There is a misconception that as soon as you receive your Restricted category on your PAL you automatically receive an A.T.T. A first time handgun owner must still provide a membership to a qualified range. Once they are in the system, it becomes easier to obtain an A.T.T. during the renewal of the PAL. The A.T.T. is not embedded on the licence; it is spelled out on the piece of paper that comes with the PAL. Make sure you have that piece of paper (or a copy) **with you when travelling with your restricted firearm.**

POL is Now a PAL

If the student has a valid POL, then the POL is treated the same as a PAL. If a person has an expired POL and they have an application into the system, they should be grandfathered into a PAL. If a person has an expired POL and no application into the system, then to obtain a PAL, they must take the course. If they wish to upgrade to an R PAL, the student/applicant must have taken the four hour restricted course.

These changes have seemed to cause some grief to the applicants, so take the time and explain it to them, or have them call me at the Calgary office and I will help them with their questions.

New Firearms Training Material

As you are no doubt aware, A.H.E.I.A. was informed by the federal Firearms Training Unit that new course material, examinations and paperwork were set to be rolled out in September 2015. This was pushed back until October and then into the "New Year". Although it was unfortunate this happened, life will carry on. What was noted is that if what was presented is followed through with, instructors will have to change the way they present the material. What we watched was a very good Power Point presentation, no video as the video was imbedded in the power point. Examinations reflected the new material and for the most part were a very good upgrade on the current examinations. What did become apparent (if it is followed through with), is that instructors will be teaching via Power Point, no overheads, which will require some instructors to obtain new aids to teach. In particular, a computer and wires for hookup to either a television or projector will be required. Some time will have to be taken to understand the new material and how it is to be presented. Once the new materials are received, A.H.E.I.A. will arrange training sessions for all current instructors. Hopefully this will make for a smoother transition from old to new. As soon as we know the timing, we will contact you for training sessions.

If an instructor has any questions or concerns, please give me a call or drop me a line at bgm@ahcia.com, telephone 403-252-8474 or toll free at 1-866-852-4342.



Notice

**Please place a special mark on your calendar for
Saturday, February 6, 2016**

The Alberta Hunter Education Instructors' Association Annual General Meeting will be held in Calgary at the BMO Centre, Stampede Park that day starting at 12:00 noon and ending at 3:00 p.m.

The W.I.S.E. Awards Banquet/Auction and a general celebration of this great cause will follow starting with a silent auction and cocktails at 4:30 p.m., followed by dinner at 6:00 p.m.

Edmonton Report



“ Program delivery is busier than ever with an increase in the number of courses we have been offering. ”

By Len Gransch



Len Gransch
Program Coordinator
A.H.E.I.A.
Red Deer - North

Where has the time gone? It seems like I was just celebrating the arrival of spring and here it is winter.

2015 has been a very busy time at the Edmonton office. Program delivery is busier than ever with an increase in the number of Firearms courses and Hunter Education courses we have been offering.

It hasn't stopped there. The number of schools being certified to teach the National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP) has been increasing dramatically. The number of new International Bowhunting Education Program (IBEP) courses has also been picking up steam.

Our specialty camps continue to be in high demand and sell out annually. The 2016 Outdoor Women's Program is set for August 3-7. The 2016 Youth Hunter Education Camps will run July 3-8, July 10-15, July 17-22 and July 24-29. Registration forms will be available for download on our website early in January. Our 2016 Outdoor Youth Seminar is slated for August 19-21. To be placed on our Advance Notification list, please email your request to edmontoninfo@aheia.com.

Those on the list will receive registration information prior to it being released to the general public. For more information on our Youth Survival Camp and the Youth Archery Camp, contact Ken Cook directly at ken@aheia.com.

The 2016 Edmonton Boat and Sportsmen's Show runs March 10-13, and is shaping up to be another great event, of which A.H.E.I.A. will continue to be a big part. Come out to see all the new offerings and give us a hand while you are there.

Please mark June 2, 2016 on your calendars. We will be holding our third annual Spring Fling Banquet in Edmonton on that day. For more information please contact me directly at len@aheia.com.

This is just a partial list of the events and camps we have scheduled for 2016. One of the key components in making them a success is volunteer assistance. Without the selfless dedication of our many volunteers, we would not be able to provide the quality and high standards demanded by our clientele. I would personally like to thank all who have helped over the past year.

Having said that, I would once again request your assistance as we move into 2016. If you are able to assist with any of our programs, please contact me directly and I will get the ball rolling. We will be expanding our reach for new volunteers in the coming year. If you have a friend

or acquaintance who might enjoy volunteering for A.H.E.I.A., please let me know and I can get them started. The more help we get the better.

There are a number of the Canadian Firearms Program instructors out there who still need to teach courses to comply with their commitment with the CFO. If you are having difficulty teaching the required number of courses per year, we can help. Contact the Edmonton or Calgary office and we will get you to assist with teaching one of our in-house courses. You might also like to attend one of our classes as a refresher; either way we could use the help and it is a positive situation for everyone.

On December 5 we held a Metallic Rifle Reloading Clinic in our office. Eight participants learned how to reload their own rifle cartridges during this hands-on session. Everyone enjoyed the clinic and were able to add a new skill set to their outdoor adventures.

Until next time.



*Take care and
enjoy the
Great Outdoors!*



The Conservation Education W.I.S.E. Foundation and Alberta Hunter Education Instructors' Association are pleased to announce the

Third Annual Spring Fling Banquet

Thursday, June 2, 2016 • Taliani Palace, 3223 Parsons Road (99 Street), Edmonton, Alberta

Tickets \$70.00 each or \$630.00 for a table of 10.

Silent Auction & Cocktails 5:00 pm • Deluxe Buffet Dinner 6:30 pm • Live Auction to follow • Casual Attire

For additional
information or to
purchase tickets
please contact:

Edmonton Conservation Education Centre for Excellence
#88, 4003 - 98 Street, Edmonton, AB T6E 6M8
Phone 780.466.6682 or Toll Free 1.866.282.4342
edmontoninfo@aheia.com

Calgary Conservation Education Centre for Excellence
911 Sylvester Crescent SW, Calgary, AB T2W 0R8
Phone 403.252.8474 or Toll Free 1.866.852.4342
info@aheia.com

A.H.E.I.A.'s Mission is to Make Wildlife and Fish Part of the Value System of Every Albertan

Photo courtesy of Don Kesler Nature Photography.



Pheasants Forever Calgary Chapter

Box 1659, Okotoks, Alberta T1S 1B5
Phone 403-995-9960 Fax 403-995-9920 Toll Free 888-602-3777
www.pheasantsforevercalgary.com

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Province: _____ Postal Code: _____ Phone #: _____

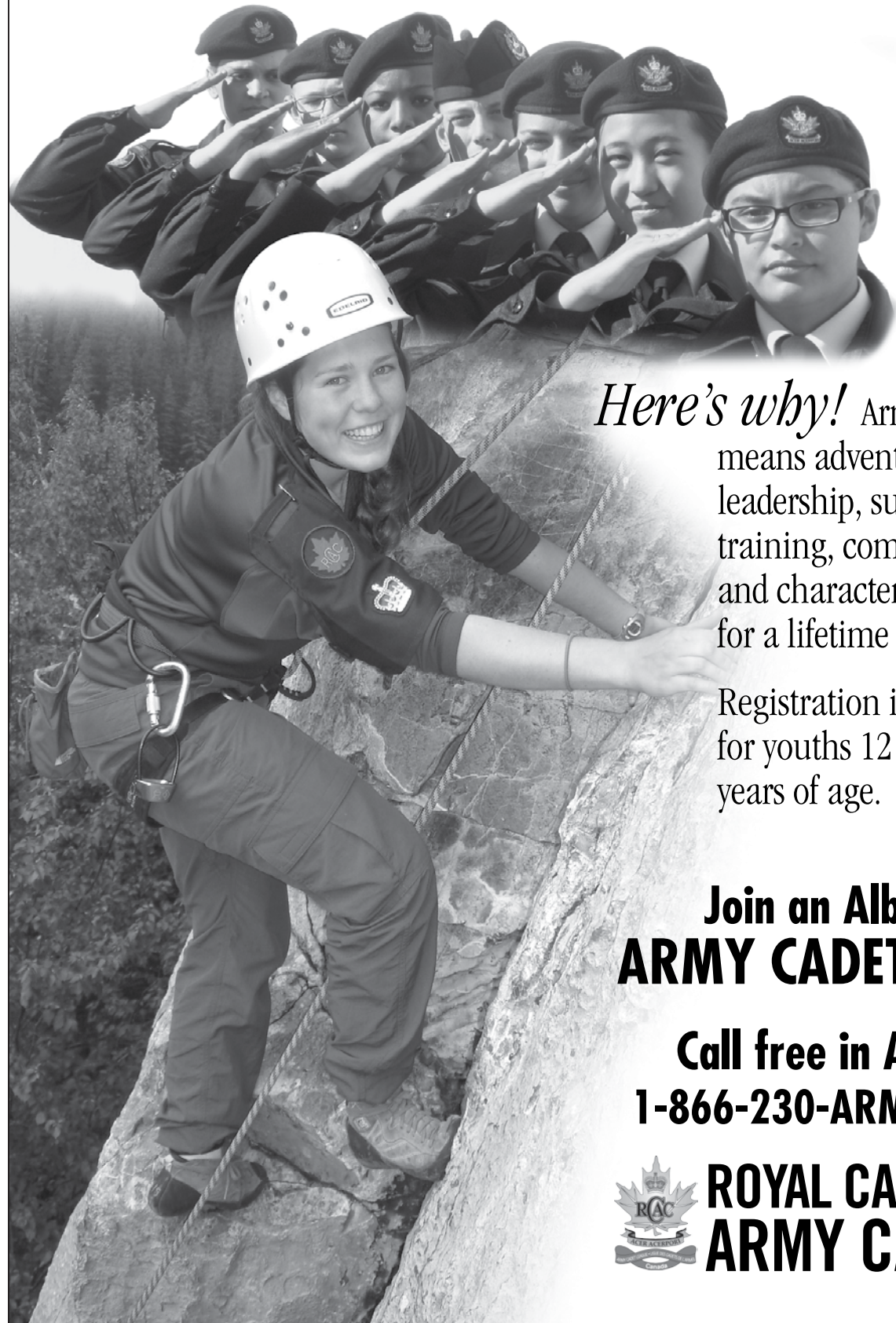
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Membership: \$35.00/year

Charge my: ☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard ☐ Amex Card #: _____

Expiry Date: M _____ Y _____ Signature: _____

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**ROYAL CANADIAN
ARMY CADETS**

Above and Beyond

"From time to time, we hear of an event that is given without thought of compensation, without a thought of what 'they' get out of it other than simply doing the 'right' thing."

By Glenn McKay



Glenn McKay
Firearms Education
Coordinator
A.H.E.I.A.

Throughout the course of a year, instructors for the Canadian Firearms Program are asked to help out in their communities. This help is in the form of advice, information on how to obtain a firearms licence or to do a course. From time to time, we hear of an event that is given without thought of compensation, without a thought of what

"they" get out of it other than simply doing the "right" thing. Here is a quick story on one of these events.

Friday, October 23, 2015 in Grande Prairie, Kevin and Stephen O'Toole hosted a free youth firearms safety clinic. We were thrilled that 16 kids from 6-12 years old joined us for a pizza supper and some basic firearms safety for youth. We focused on the A.H.E.I.A. model: **STOP; MOVE AWAY; TELL AN ADULT.** Plus we added some scenarios that kids might encounter, even going so far as to place some deactivated /dummy ammunition on the washroom floor to get a reaction. The youngest of the group, a seven year old boy and a six year old girl came and told immediately. It was very cute. They were so proud of themselves. We had a couple of safety movies depicting events that might affect the kids. (What would you do if you went to your friend's and they brought out Dad's new gun?) Then Kevin instructed the children in some ba-



Cathy and Kevin O'Toole presenting a donation cheque to RCMP Victims Services, Grande Prairie, Alberta.

sic safety of keeping their finger off the trigger and the muzzle pointed in a safe direction, but only if being instructed by a responsible adult. (parent or parent-approved adult). Some of the kids experienced handling a firearm for the first time. Others have been exposed to the culture and have had some good coaching from parents already, or maybe they will be able to teach their parents something.

At the end of the class we gave out certificates of completion, as well as had the kids pledge to never touch a gun or ammunition without help from an adult.

In lieu of payment, we asked for an optional donation to the RCMP Victims Services. We ended up donating \$250.00 to Victims Services. That makes us very proud.

We are very excited to be hosting another of these clinics in the spring. It was an extremely rewarding experience for us. We also had an abundance of positive feedback from the parents after the course.

Many thanks to the O'Toole's for carrying the firearms message into their community. Well above and beyond!!



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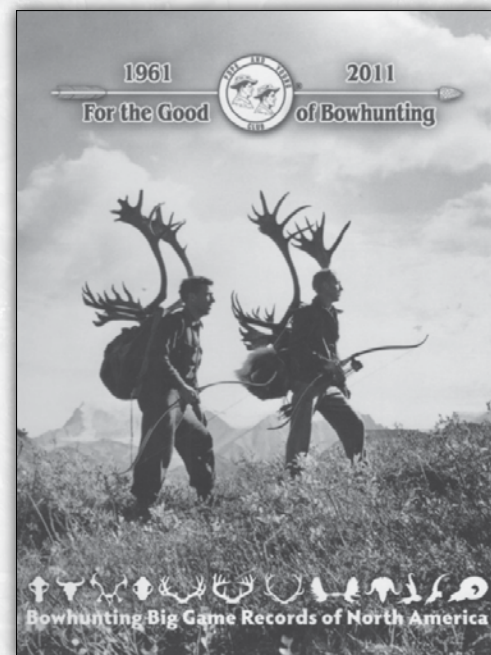
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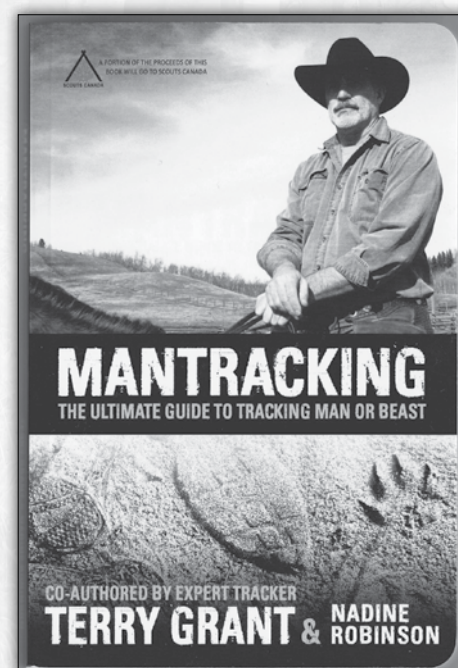
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A Successful Hunt

"Clearly there are many things that will happen during a mentored hunt that will make it successful. Harvesting an animal is always just a bonus of a day full of excitement and learning."

By Glen Pickering



Glen Pickering
Assistant Conservation
Education Coordinator
A.H.E.I.A. Red Deer - South

What is the definition of success? After returning from a mentored hunt, usually the first question I am asked is, "Were they successful?" My answer 100% of the time is yes. During a day in the field with a new hunter, there can be many highs and lows in their emotions as they learn the skills needed to harvest one of the many bird game or big game animals available to Alberta hunters.

Learning to handle and operate a firearm safely and being able to look down a scope and find a target can be the first challenge. Then, being able to hold the gun steady and gently squeezing the trigger while on target are all skills that need to be learned.

Next, learning to spot and clearly identify the game and how their movement patterns change throughout the day, will add to the confidence and sense of accomplishment for first time hunters. Experienced hunters do not have better eyes, they have just learned to watch for movement and objects which look out of place, or they can identify certain areas where game are more likely to be found.

Learning to have the patience to sit motionless on the edge of a clearing, observing wildlife, can be the most successful part of any hunt. For example, when watching a golden eagle flying overhead scanning the area for its prey, it is easy



to get an appreciation of what wild animals go through in order to survive and the skills they need in order to avoid their many predators, including hunters. On a recent mentored antlerless deer hunt, the most successful part of the day was watching two white-tailed bucks rubbing their scent glands on a overhanging branch and making a scrape not more than 80 yards away, unaware that they were being watched.

Finally, when a shot presents itself, a missed shot can be defined as successful if a new hunter is able to learn what it takes to overcome "buck fever" and how to concentrate on your target as you calmly squeeze the trigger in a controlled manner.

Stalking a wild animal in its environment and overcoming its senses by "playing the wind", can only add to the success and accomplishments of the day, regardless of the outcome. Clearly there are many things that will happen during the day of a mentored hunt that will make it successful. Therefore, the true indication of a successful hunt can easily be judged by the smiles you will see on the hunters' faces as they experience the adventure of a first time hunt. Harvesting an animal is always just a bonus of a day full of excitement and learning.



To register as a mentor or mentorship participant, please visit the **Hunting for Tomorrow website at**
www.huntingfortomorrow.com
for more information.



Introduce someone new to an incredible adventure!

From Banquet to Buffet

By Glenn McKay



Glenn McKay
Firearms Education
Coordinator
A.H.E.I.A.

At the February 2015 A.H.E.I.A. Wise Awards Banquet one of our sponsors donated a 10 bird pheasant hunt complete with guides and dogs. Attached to this prize was a Fabarm Shotgun donated by the Shooting Edge from Calgary. The lucky winners of this event were Derek and Melissa Hodgson who were first time participants at our banquet. Dates were discussed and we decided to try our luck on October 10, 2015. I picked up the winners and headed off to the Patricia area to meet up with the guide, dogs and the birds. Driving to the area from Calgary gave us the chance to talk about the upcoming hunt, any previous hunts and most importantly their expectations for the day. I learned that Melissa had

“ Shots were taken, birds were collected, and the dogs were having as much fun as the rest of us. ”

taken the Canadian Firearms Safety Course from A.H.E.I.A. at our Calgary office, so it was a treat to be able to see if the “practical” application of the course could be put into play in a real scenario.

We were blessed with absolutely great weather, awesome dogs and the perfect hosts for the hunt. So birds were released and it was game on until lunch. Shots were taken, birds were collected and the dogs were having as much fun as the rest of us. A lunch-time break gave us time to collect more stories and go over the morning hunt in a bit more detail than one would expect. It was great to watch the expressions of the shooters and how they replayed each shot they took, how the dogs pointed or flushed and how they felt the hunt was going.

After lunch we headed back to the field for the second release of birds. We found that the wind had picked up considerably, which would prove to increase the difficulty of the shots. There was absolutely no fear shown by the shooters and they worked very hard at chasing the birds. As a bird would get up, it would catch the wind and start heading towards cover a good quarter of a mile away. Shots were made, some connecting, some not, but the smiles were consistent throughout.

At the end of the day, we all pitched in and cleaned the birds, and then came the handshakes for the guides and shooters, a belly rub for the dogs and we were on the way back to Calgary. At the end of the drive, it was very satisfying to me to be able to say that the whole experience was fulfilling, safe and, dare I say, a lot of fun! Everything being equal, I hope to be able to do it again next year! I want to thank both the guides, Harold and Nat Fukuda (Aspen and Zoey) and Kathy McKay for their help, friendship and laughter which made this a day to remember.



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Thank you to all who purchased tickets.

Ladies Firearms Raffle

Drawn August 16 2015. License #399646.



Prize #1:
Browning Semi Auto Shotgun
Roxanne Hiller
of Three Hills, Alberta.



Prize #2:
Browning Bolt Action Rifle
Pat Bader
of High River, Alberta.



Prize #3:
Browning Semi Automatic Pistol
Sheila Bonin
of Okotoks, Alberta.

Upland/ Waterfowler Raffle

Drawn August 22, 2015. License #399024.

Prize:
Benelli Super Vinci 12GA 28" Semi Auto Shotgun & Franchi Instinct SL 12GA o/u Shotgun
James Dauphinee
of Grande Cache, Alberta.



First Time Hunt

By Sage, MacKay and Tamara Spence

For our first hunt, we're sure glad we went on the A.H.E.I.A. mentored waterfowl hunt. It was a great experience. We met our mentor Matt Shaw in Oyen on a Friday afternoon in October. He showed us to our camp, then we practiced our shot by trap shooting and in the evening we went bird spotting. Early Saturday morning we went to a small lake in a farmer's field, where Matt taught us how to set the decoys and blinds up, then we jumped into the blinds and waited out the waterfowl. By 11:30 am we had 14 geese and two ducks. Later that evening, we went out again for ducks, but weren't so lucky, and just spent a nice evening by a small lake. Later, Matt showed us how to prepare our geese.

Overall, the hunt was a lot of fun and an amazing experience; we met some great people and learned the basics of waterfowl hunting. Matt was a great mentor, very patient and encouraged us a lot. Thank you A.H.E.I.A. and Matt Shaw (aka goose hunting god).





Great Meals from the Harvest

with *Len Gransch*



Len Gransch
Program Coordinator
A.H.E.I.A. Red Deer - North

Fish Burgers

1 1/2 cup fish fillets - ground or minced
1/2 teaspoon pepper
1 cup canned tomatoes - crushed
1 cup cracker crumbs
1 tablespoon butter - melted
1 large egg - beaten
1 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon hot sauce
1 medium onion - minced
1/2 clove garlic - minced
Oil for frying

In a bowl, mix all ingredients except for the cracker crumbs and the oil for frying. Form into patties. Coat with crumbs and shallow fry until golden brown. Serve with your favourite condiments and tartar sauce.

Tartar Sauce

1 tablespoon chopped pitted green olives 1 cup mayonnaise
1 tablespoon chopped parsley 1 teaspoon lemon juice
1 tablespoon sweet green relish Dash of hot sauce

Combine all ingredients well by hand. Chill and serve with your fish burgers.

Pistachio Pudding Cake

Courtesy Ashley Postenbring

1 box white cake mix 5 large eggs
1/2 cup milk 1/2 cup water
1/2 cup cooking oil 2 packages pistachio pudding

Combine all ingredients and stir until combined. Pour into a non-stick or greased and floured 9"x13" cake pan and bake at 350°F for about 45-60 minutes or until a toothpick pushed into the centre comes out clean. Allow to cool prior to frosting.

Frosting

1 - 8 ounce tub Cool Whip
1 cup milk
1 package pistachio pudding

Gently fold all ingredients until well incorporated. Once the cake is frosted, cover and place in the refrigerator overnight. Serve cold.



The APOS Hunting Heroes Program

Sponsored by the Alberta Professional Outfitters Society to honour our heroes, the men and women of the Canadian military, who have sacrificed so much on our behalf.

This initiative matches up wounded Canadian veterans with Alberta's professional outfitters to partake in a professionally guided hunting experience.

For more information contact APOS at 780-414-0249
or via email at info@apos.ab.ca



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would like to thank

Wildlife Habitat Canada



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Since 1985, Wildlife Habitat Canada, a national, non-profit, charitable conservation organization, has invested over \$50 million to support hundreds of conservation projects on private and public lands across Canada, through its granting program. Wildlife Habitat Canada works through partnerships with communities, landowners, governments, non-government organizations, and industry to conserve, enhance, and restore wildlife habitat. To learn more about the projects that Wildlife Habitat Canada has funded or to see our annual report, please visit www.whc.org.

Without habitat ... there is no wildlife. It's that simple!

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First Timers Pheasant Hunt

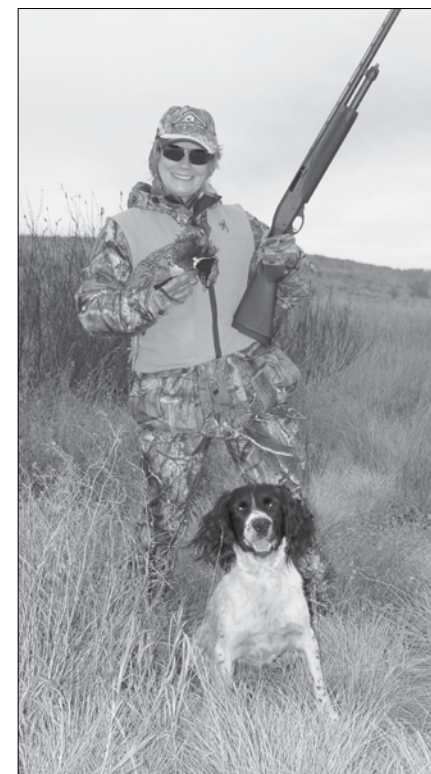
By Ken Cook



Ken Cook
Program Assistant
A.H.E.I.A.
Edmonton

On Thursday, October 29, 2015 at about 4:00 pm, David Cloke, Eileen Bourne, Leanne Rafuse and I left Edmonton on our way to Camrose, Stettler and on to Oyen for the annual First-Time Mentored Hunt program. This is a partnership between A.H.E.I.A. and the Big Country Rod and Gun Club. Our quarry for this hunt would

be pheasant, gray partridge, sharp-tailed grouse and chukar partridge. Our first stop was at the A&W in Stettler. Supper is on the menu; great



fun food. This was probably a great stop as I am sure I heard a few snores from the back seat. After supper we were once again on our way to meet up with everyone else at Oyen and then to hunting camp about 25 kilometres east of Oyen.

On Friday morning we start the day with breakfast. The weather is cool, but no snow on the ground, unlike some previous years. We all gather for a safety briefing, followed by getting all participants fitted for, and comfortable shooting, the 20 gauge pump action shotguns. All participants are matched up with a mentor, then all the participants with their mentors practice shooting some clay pigeons. Pretty soon all the participants are hitting the targets and ready to go.

The dog handlers are ready and want to do a live demonstration so that everyone can see how the dogs work and respond. A bird is planted and the dog is on the scent. Unfortunately, the bird is not cooperative. The dog retrieves the bird which did not flush. Another attempt is made with the same results. Oh well, it is time to hunt.

Everyone is feeling anxious and ready to hunt. The dogs are full of energy and you can feel the anticipation of the next few hours. We start the hunt chasing pheasants and chukar, with the chance we may run into some sharptails. The large group is split up into two smaller groups, each group having a working dog. Each participant is matched with a mentor. The walking was good this year with no snow, but we still had to keep up with the dogs. After a few misses, the participants start to connect, and we did manage to pick up a few birds. There will be pheasant or chukar at a few households this weekend. We all gather for lunch and a much needed rest, including the dogs.

After lunch we head out for some more of the same. After walking many more slough bottoms and coulees, we have one tired group of hunters. I am sure all slept well that night.



Looking for something creative
to do with all those sheds
you've been collecting?

Amazing!



A.H.E.I.A. Mentored Hunts

**"One of the adults said to me, 'You guys are changing lives'...
What a wonderful endorsement for what we do!"**

By Allan Orr



Allan Orr
Assistant Conservation
Education Coordinator
A.H.E.I.A. Red Deer - South

This fall we undertook a number of mentored hunts throughout the province. From my perspective, these hunts are some of the best opportunities we have to introduce new and nearly new hunters to the sport we love so much. Our mentored hunt opportunities included pheasant, waterfowl and antlerless deer. I can tell you about the hunts I was involved in this fall in order to give you a taste of what we do.

In October, as a kick-off to the Taber Pheasant Fest, A.H.E.I.A., along with several partner organizations, holds a first-time pheasant shoot near the town of Taber. The new hunters (and in some cases, new shooters) are pre-registered, showing up bright eyed and bushy tailed at around 0830, ready to let fly with some lead! The first shooting that all participants do is supervised by certified A.H.E.I.A. shotgun instructors at some clay targets. Once the instructors are confident the shooters can be safe and have a reasonable chance of hitting what they are shooting at, they are sent over to where the live birds are housed. Once there, they are paired with another coach and taken for a short walk, where they will have a placed pheasant fly up for them to shoot at. Participants are given the opportunity to shoot two pheasants, which they are



then given the opportunity to clean and prepare for the table under the capable supervision of an experienced wild game cook. Taking home a bag of fresh pheasant always leaves a smile on the participants' faces.

I was also fortunate to be involved in some mentored deer hunts. Each year, Fish and Wildlife provides A.H.E.I.A. with some antlerless deer tags which are in addition to those normally obtained through the special draw system. When we know that tags are available (and how many), we select our most deserving candidates to fill these tags. We look first for young hunters who have no experience, so we can give them a good start to their hunting life. If we don't have enough

young hunters, then we look at adults who are just getting into it, or have not had the opportunity to learn how to hunt from someone else.

This year I was very pleased to be able to take out three young people and three adults, all of whom were new hunters and all of whom, with the exception of one young lad, were successful in bringing home their first deer. Without exception, helping someone harvest their first deer is the greatest joy I have with A.H.E.I.A. One of the adults said to me, "You guys are changing lives," after both he and his son were successful. What a wonderful endorsement for what we do!

I can't talk about mentored hunts without mentioning the landowners without whom there would be no mentored hunting program. We have partnered with some exceptional people and organizations to be able to offer these opportunities. They seem to get as much pleasure out of seeing a first deer down as I do and nearly as much as the new hunters themselves. How wonderful to be able to work together to make a new hunter's dream come true.

Now we are looking to expand our mentored hunt program. We have a lot of interest in hunting, but we are looking for mentors and, most importantly, we are looking for landowners who are interested in helping out. A landowner who hosts an A.H.E.I.A. mentored hunt can be assured of responsible and appreciative use of his/her/their land. All mentors follow A.H.E.I.A.'s strict guidelines as to what it means to be an A.H.E.I.A. mentor and are instructed on their responsibilities and obligations prior to matching them with a new hunter.

If you are interested in volunteering as a mentor, or if you are a landowner who would like to help a new hunter harvest their first pheasant/duck/goose/deer, get ahold of us and let's talk!



Chronic Wasting Disease: Management in Alberta

"CWD is the most significant disease concern facing big game populations across the continent."

Article courtesy Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development

Alberta began addressing surveillance and management of CWD in 1998. The program evolved to have three primary objectives: detect CWD in wild cervids, try to limit the spread of CWD in wild cervids, and learn about CWD in Alberta landscapes and Alberta ecosystems. In 2012 Fish and Wildlife produced a summary of the programs. The full report is available on the CWD pages of the Wildlife Diseases website www.esrd.alberta.ca/fish-wildlife/wildlife-diseases/.

What follows is a brief overview of the surveillance program and current data.

Hunter harvest samples are the backbone of the wild cervid surveillance program, in addition to opportunistic samples associated with ongoing Fish and Wildlife activities such as responding to found dead,

road-kill, and emaciated cervids. In over 51,000 heads tested, 297 cases of CWD were detected: 257 mule deer, 39 white-tails, and one moose. This includes 86 cases identified in 4163 heads in 2014 (2.1%): 74 mule deer and 12 white-tails. The disease occurs predominantly in mule deer, males, and proportionately more in deer collected during disease control programs conducted 2005-2008. Using weighted surveillance measures based on patterns in the Alberta data, prevalence in hunter samples is increasing over time with the overall prevalence in mule deer reaching 3.6% in 2014 (up from 2.0% in 2013).

Overall proportion of infected wild cervids remains low; however, as an indication of change over time, in 2011 prevalence in mule deer males in infected WMUs ranged 3-6% with an outlier of 29% in WMU 150; in 2014 the average prevalence in 19 infected WMUs was 10.9% and in four units the prevalence was 16-27%.

Highlights of analyses to date include the following. Risk models reveal increased geographic spread, largely in relation to riparian areas and proximity to previous cases. The Battle and Red Deer/South Saskatchewan watersheds are at the highest risk of CWD occurrence (although CWD now also occurs in Bow and Milk River drainages). Mandatory designation significantly increases the number of heads submitted. Approximately 50% of the At Risk WMUs met the criteria for sufficient surveillance for detecting CWD prior to the first report of the disease in that unit. These units were on the immediate periphery of units with previous cases. The results imply that CWD spread into these WMUs. The remaining At Risk units had insufficient surveillance to be assured that the disease could be found prior to its actual detection in the WMU. In other words, CWD may or may not have been there before we found it. Major surveillance gaps were identified in CFB Suffield (WMU 732) and Cypress Hills (WMU 624), areas in close proximity to know cases of CWD but with limited sampling effort to date (although we are now sampling many of the elk from WMU 732).

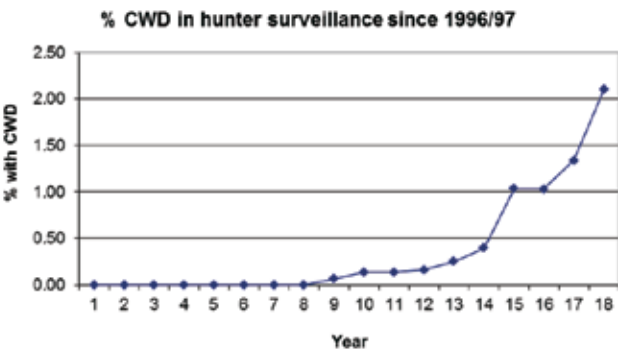
Many wildlife managers and stakeholders across North America agree that Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) is the most significant disease concern facing big game populations across the continent. It destroys the brain and results in premature death of all infected deer. Long-term monitoring of local deer populations in established disease areas indicates infected populations slowly shift towards younger deer, lower productivity, and fewer trophy males. The declines are attributed directly to the effects of CWD as the disease becomes more established. In Saskatchewan CWD is the single greatest cause of death in adult deer in an infected local population along the South Saskatchewan River.

The patterns of disease are consistent within the CWD risk areas (= mandatory WMUs); however ongoing surveillance improves our ability to track the occurrence and extent of the disease. With better information big game managers can more fully understand the potential effects of the disease, and hunters concerned about CWD can make fully informed decisions about their hunt.

Note that while there was a case of CWD in a road-kill moose near Medicine Hat in 2012, this is considered spillover from infected deer in the area. Thus deer remain the best surveillance sample to indicate disease occurrence. However, as always, the program will test the head of any cervid harvested in Alberta.

Ongoing support from the public, and hunters and outfitters in particular, is essential to CWD surveillance.

For more information on CWD contact your local Fish and Wildlife Office or visit www.esrd.alberta.ca/fish-wildlife/wildlife-diseases/.



yr	1996/97	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
yr #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
# tested	75	186	185	385	800	1059	1231	1302	1660	2965	5170	4347	4817	5091	3194	3402	3667	4163
# positive	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	7	7	12	20	33	35	49	86
%	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.06	0.13	0.14	0.16	0.25	0.39	1.03	1.03	1.34	2.1

How to Take Your Best Shot: Position and Holding Pattern

"... you are looking to establish a position that provides the best possible holding pattern."

By Linda K. Miller
MilCun Training Center



Linda K. Miller
MilCun Training Center

Everybody has heard of marksmanship principles, few have heard what they really mean. Here are the ones we use when we teach our rifle marksmanship courses.

The slide we show at the beginning of the marksmanship lecture says it all:

Marksmanship Principles

Position and holding pattern

Alignment - natural body alignment

Sight picture and breath control

❖Mental program

Trigger release & follow through

But the devil is in the details and we take our time going through the marksmanship principles, first in the classroom and then out on the range.

PAS*T: "P" is for Position

The first thing is position. We teach a relaxed, straight-behind-the-rifle prone position, and we



Supported standing.



Supported sitting.



Supported kneeling.

emphasize fitting the rifle to the shooter. Linda's "rule of thumb" is that when the shooter is in the prone position, the thumb of the trigger hand should be approximately under the nose. Of course this does vary from person to person, but the idea is to get the receiver as close to the shooter as practical, and so the first "fitting" adjustment is the stock length. Most buttstocks are too long, so the best thing is to just shorten them as much as possible. It's not the length of the arm that matters, it's the distance from the shoulder to the eye. The next step is to adjust the cheekpiece to support the head. The cheekbone should rest comfortably on the stock to support the weight of the head. The cheekpiece should be positioned so that the shooter's head is level and the eye is right in line with the scope. The scope then should be positioned so that the eye relief is correct. In prone, the shooter's eye should be just on the forward edge of the available eye relief so that in standing, the eye

will be within the range of eye relief. There are more details, but those are the key things: "rule of thumb", length of buttstock, and position of cheekpiece all done prior to the final positioning of the scope.

Holding pattern is the amount of movement the shooter sees on the target when looking through the sight. The total pattern is called "area of aim" and this is the amount of movement around your "point of aim". How small the area of aim is what the shooter works on to improve marksmanship. All well-fired shots fall within the area of aim. A holding pattern that is smooth, slow and small will produce the greatest opportunity for a small group.

In prone, the holding pattern is usually small and stable, so it's a good position to use when you're developing the rest of your marksmanship skills. The other useful positions are sitting, kneeling and standing, with or without supports. For hunting and other precise shooting, we recommend using a support, even if it is as simple as a pole or stick. For most tactical shooting, you need to be able to move quickly and so unsupported positions may be the best answer. Many competitions have rules about the positions you're allowed to use. In all cases, you're looking to establish a position that provides the best possible holding pattern.

Next issue, we continue with the marksmanship principles, focusing on Natural Body Alignment.

Linda K. Miller and Keith A. Cunningham are the authors of *The Wind Book for Rifle Shooters* and *The Secrets of Mental Marksmanship*. Both books are both available at www.amazon.ca and <http://theshootingedge.com>.



We teach a relaxed, straight-behind-the-rifle prone position.

Waxwings

These beautiful nomadic birds are a common sight in Alberta.

Cedar Waxwing (*Bombycilla cedrorum*)

Description

Cedar waxwings are a medium-sized bird approximately 6-7 inches (15-18 centimetres) long and weigh roughly 30 grams (1.1 ounces). They are smaller and more brown than their close relative, the Bohemian waxwing (which breeds farther to the north and west). Their colouring and markings have been described as a "silky, shiny collection of brown, gray and lemon-yellow, accented with a subdued crest, rakish black mask, and brilliant-red wax droplets on the wing feathers." These birds' most prominent feature is this small cluster of red wax-like droplets on the tips of secondary flight feathers on the wings, a feature they share with the Bohemian waxwing (but not the Japanese waxwing). The wings are broad and pointed, like a starling's. The tail is typically yellow or orange depending on diet. Birds that have fed on berries of introduced Eurasian honeysuckles while growing tail feathers will have darker orange-tipped tail-feathers. The tail is somewhat short and square-tipped. Adults have a pale yellow belly. The waxwing's crest often lies flat and droops over the back of the head. It has a short and wide bill. The waxwing's black mask has a thin white border. Immature birds are streaked on the throat and flanks, and often do not have the black mask of the adults. Males and females look alike.

The flight of waxwings is strong and direct, and the movement of the flock in flight resembles that of a flock of small pale European starlings. Cedar waxwings fly at 40 km/h (25 mph) and at an altitude of 610 m (2,000 ft).

Distribution and Habitat

Preferred habitat consists of trees at the edge of wooded areas, or "open" forests, especially those that provide access to berry sources as well as water. They are frequently seen in fruiting trees. Waxwings are attracted to the sound of running water, and love to bathe in and drink from shallow creeks. In urban or suburban environments, waxwings often favour parkland with well-spaced trees; golf courses, cemeteries, or other landscaping with well-spaced trees; bushes that provide berries; and a nearby water source such as a fountain or birdbath. Also look for them near farms, orchards and gardens, particularly ones with fruiting trees or shrubs.

Outside the breeding season, cedar waxwings often feed in large flocks numbering hundreds of birds. This species is nomadic with erratic winter movements, though most of the population migrates farther south into the United States and beyond, sometimes reaching as far as northern South America. They move in huge numbers if berry supplies are low.



Bohemian Waxwing (*Bombycilla garrulus*)

Description

The Bohemian waxwing is a starling-sized bird 19-23 centimetres (7.5-9.1 inches) in length with a 32-35.5 centimetre (12.6-14.0 inches) wingspan, and an average weight of 55 grams (1.9 ounces). It is short-tailed, mainly brownish-grey, and has a conspicuous crest on its head. The male has a black mask through the eye and a black throat. There is a white streak behind the bill and a white curve below the eye. The lower belly is a rich chestnut colour and there are cinnamon-coloured areas around the mask. The rump is grey and the tail ends in a bright yellow band with a broad black border above it. The wings are very distinctive: the flight feathers are black and the primaries have markings that produce a yellow stripe and white "fishhooks" on the closed wing. The adult's secondaries end in long red appendages with the sealing wax appearance that gives the bird its English name. The eyes are dark brown, the bill is mainly black, and the legs are dark grey or black. In flight, the waxwing's large flocks, long wings and short tail give some resemblance to the common starling, and its flight is similarly fast and direct. It clambers easily through bushes and trees but only shuffles on the ground.

The female Bohemian waxwing is very similar to the male, but has a narrower yellow terminal band to the tail, a less defined lower edge to the black throat and slightly less distinctive wing markings.

Distribution and Habitat

The Bohemian waxwing has a circumpolar distribution, breeding in northern regions of Eurasia and North America. The North American subspecies breeds in the northwestern and north central areas of the continent, its range extending southwards beyond the United States border in the Rocky Mountains.

This waxwing is migratory, with much of the breeding range abandoned as the birds move south for the winter. Migration starts in September in the north of the range, a month or so later farther south.



Photos courtesy audubon.org

The Alberta Aquatic Invasive Species Program



Quagga mussels on a boat motor at Lake Mead, Nevada.
(Photo courtesy US National Park Service, Lake Mead)



Flowering rush at Lake Isle.
(Photo courtesy Alberta Environment and Parks)

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What is the Issue?

Aquatic invasive species (AIS) pose one of the greatest threats to freshwater resources and are one of the leading causes of biodiversity loss in the world. As many of us have experienced, Alberta can be a tough place to thrive in those brutal, long winter months — but, despite this, many invasive species think otherwise and could actually do very well in our climate. Let me first introduce you to a few of these critters that pose a high risk to Alberta's waters...

Zebra and Quagga Mussels

These freshwater mussels are filter feeders that can drastically change the entire food web in aquatic ecosystems, posing great threats to native species. While they remove the vital "good nutrients" we need for our native fish to thrive, they have now been linked to causing toxic blue-green algae blooms in the shallow waters as well. They pose very real threats to infrastructure, recreation and native species with their ability to attach themselves to everything from docks to dams to native mussels and crayfish.

Evidence from jurisdictions across the United States and Canada show the cost of managing invasive mussels to be significant. Although these mussels have not been detected in Alberta to date, \$75 million is a conservative estimate of what it would cost government and stakeholders annually if they did become established in Alberta's waterbodies.

Based on calcium data and habitat suitability, most waterbodies in Alberta could support zebra and quagga mussel populations. It is critical that boaters CLEAN, DRAIN and DRY their boats and equipment after each use.

Eurasian Water Milfoil

This aggressive rooted aquatic invasive plant is found throughout the west but has not been detected in Alberta at this time. It spreads by fragmentation, so any tiny leaflet that breaks off from the parent plant is capable of starting a whole new colony. It has been found as deep as 30 feet and is known for its rapid expansion and ability to reach the surface of the water in one growing season. It prevents recreational boating, decreases property values, and impacts fish habitat by creating a dense monoculture of plants where many native plants previously thrived. It is believed to have been introduced as a result of the



Prussian carp removed from Western Irrigation District canals.
(Photo courtesy WID)

aquarium trade where its robustness makes it a popular aquarium plant.

Flowering Rush: Present in Alberta

This invader has been introduced through the horticulture industry. It is both an emergent plant along shorelines and a submersed plant in lakes and rivers. It is an incredibly aggressive plant whose dense stands can interfere with recreational use, water access, native plants as well as fish and wildlife habitat. There are few known successful control options at this time.

Unfortunately, flowering rush has been detected in Alberta — in Lake Isle, Chestermere Lake/Western Irrigation District canals, in a creek near Innisfail, in the Sturgeon River and in the Bow River. Flowering rush is a prohibited noxious weed in Alberta — illegal to import, possess and transport.

Asian Carp

Four species of Asian carp are considered to be highly invasive across North America — the silver, black, bighead and grass carp. They are filter feeding fish that consume plant and animal plankton, which impacts the available food for native species. They are a long-lived, fast-growing species that can reach 100 lbs, making it hard for any predator fish to eat them. They are voracious eaters, consuming 5 to 20 percent of their body weight each day! Their threat to Alberta's waters is growing as the (jumping) silver carp have made their way up the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers and threaten to infest the Great Lakes. Silver carp can jump up to 10 feet in the air, scared by the sound of boat motors. Small wonder they are nicknamed "the flying fish." Some of these fish weigh more than twenty pounds. They land in boats, damage property,



Goldfish removed from an urban stormwater pond in High River.
(Photo courtesy City of High River)



Black bullhead removed from a manmade pond near Fort McMurray.
(Photo courtesy Alberta Environment and Parks)

and injure people. Silver, black and bighead carp are a prohibited species in Alberta — illegal to import, possess and transport.

Bullheads

Bullheads are closely related to catfish; they eat a variety of aquatic invertebrates such as crayfish, freshwater mussels, snails and insects. They will also eat other fish, fish eggs and plants. They will eat almost anything that can fit into their mouths. They are able to tolerate turbid or murky/muddy water that many fish cannot. Bullheads are able to survive in water with low oxygen content and often occur in large numbers in lakes where winter kill eliminates other fish. In short, bullheads can live in just about any aquatic habitat. Bullheads have a single large, sharp spine at the leading edge of their dorsal and pectoral fins. When bothered, they lock these spines in a straight-out position making the fish very hard to swallow. They also produce a mild poison that runs down the spines and into the wound of a victim punctured by one of these spines. Black, brown and yellow bullheads are a prohibited species in Alberta — illegal to import, possess and transport.

I'm happy to report that all of these aquatic invasive species (and many others) are now prohibited in Alberta — this includes importation, possession and transport. For a list of all the species listed as prohibited, see the Fisheries (Alberta) Act on the Alberta Queen's Printer website (www.qp.alberta.ca/documents/Acts/F16.pdf, page 36).

The Alberta Approach to Aquatic Invasive Species

The Alberta Aquatic Invasive Species Program is a provincial program focused on the prevention and management of aquatic invasive species (AIS). In 2012-2013, a prototype was launched that focused on the "Crown of the Continent Ecosystem" in the southwest portion of the province in order to address the risks of zebra/quagga mussels and Eurasian water milfoil. It became increasingly evident there was a need to expand the program due to the large ecological and economic risks facing the entire province. The program now addresses all of Alberta. It includes:

- 1) Policy and legislation,
- 2) Monitoring,
- 3) Education and outreach,
- 4) Response and control, and
- 5) Watercraft inspections.

Continued ➤

The Alberta Aquatic Invasive Species Program *cont.*

The AIS Program is much more than a government program. An AIS Committee comprised of cross-ministry partners has worked very closely with national and international agencies, regional groups, local stakeholders and the public to create a cohesive program able to capitalize on the experience of others while making efficient use of available resources. With the passing of robust legislation, the operation of 12 mandatory inspection stations this season (2015), the monitoring of over 65 lakes and reservoirs annually, two high profile education campaigns, and prolific public and stakeholder support, Alberta has recently become a leader in the prevention of AIS in Canada.

Since the AIS Program was developed, there has been progress, including:

- The monitoring of over 60 Alberta lakes and reservoirs for invasive mussels annually.
- Recent amendments to the *Fisheries (Alberta) Act* that provide for all watercraft inspections to be mandatory (which has improved compliance by more than 20 percent already); the creation of a prohibited list of 52 aquatic invasive plants, invertebrates and fish; and enhanced authority to mitigate the risk of AIS and respond rapidly if these invasive species are detected in an Alberta waterbody.
- Implementation of province-wide mandatory watercraft inspections, the most likely source of introducing invasive mussels (among other species). The inspection stations target the highest risk locations (major entry points and highly trafficked recreational lakes) with seasonal watercraft inspections. This year, three detection dogs, which have been trained to sniff out mussels on boats, have been added to assist with inspections as well.
- Development of an Early Detection/Rapid Response (EDRR) plan for all aquatic invasive species is close to completion. A species specific EDRR Plan for invasive mussels (in the event they are found in an Alberta waterbody) will follow this format as well.
- The launch of two high-profile education campaigns targeting personal actions and behaviour responsible for the introduction of AIS: “Clean, Drain, Dry Your Boat” which targets boaters and anglers and “Don’t Let it Loose” which targets all non-watercraft sources of introductions (aquarium dumping, intentional release, ceremonial release, etc.).

While it is often difficult for government to take a preventive approach, the momentum and support provided to this effort promises that progress should continue. This is a high priority issue that is gaining national attention.

From the development of the prototype in 2013 until today, the AIS Program has achieved great success that will only continue due to the commitment of the AIS Committee and the many supportive partners. This season, over 21,000 boats were inspected, resulting in 16 interceptions of mussel-fouled boats, and countless citizens were educated on the risks of AIS and the need to “Clean, Drain, Dry Your Boat.” We have also seen a rise in the number of public reports of AIS in waterbodies, including Prussian carp, flowering rush, goldfish (in urban stormwater ponds) and just recently, black bullhead, a species of catfish that is prohibited in Alberta. These reports demonstrate that the public is becoming more knowledgeable about the issue and the harmful threats posed by AIS.

In 2012, if you had asked a Summer Village or Irrigation District what a zebra mussel was, most would have likely shrugged their shoulders and brushed off the issue without much thought. Today, these same organizations are standing side-by-side with the Alberta government in a fight to prevent harmful AIS from becoming established. In 2014, several non-government stakeholder organizations even passed formal resolutions urging the government to continue efforts to prevent AIS. Together, we can protect Albert’s freshwater resources from aquatic invaders!

What Can You Do?

- Tell your friends. This is one of the greatest threats to our native species.
- If you have a boat of any kind, even kayaks and canoes, make sure you stop for an inspection when passing our stations — they are mandatory for all watercraft. And don’t forget to CLEAN, DRAIN, and DRY your boat after each use. Our personal actions play a huge role in curbing the spread of aquatic invasive species.

- Never release aquarium species into the wild. Introduced species can cause a lot of damage to aquatic ecosystems, habitats, and the native species that live there. If you have unwanted aquarium pets, return them to the retail store, give them away, or dispose of them properly (e.g. kill and bury or put in the garbage). The release of fish into public waters is an offence and individuals face penalties up to \$100,000 and a year in prison. DON’T LET IT LOOSE!

For more information or to report AIS, see our website (<http://esrd.alberta.ca/recreation-public-use/invasive-species>) or call our AIS Hotline (1-855-336-BOAT [2628]).



Detection dog at inspection station.
(Photo courtesy Alberta Environment and Parks)

CLEAN + DRAIN + DRY YOUR BOAT

Props, boats and natural ecosystems can be ruined by zebra mussels and other aquatic invasive species. Take a few simple steps to preserve our lakes and fisheries: **CLEAN** off the plants and debris, **DRAIN** bilges and ballast, and **DRY** any wet areas of your boat.

ZEBCA MUSSELS

2.0 cm

QUAGGA MUSSELS

2.5 cm

EURASIAN WATERMILFOIL

DON'T LET THEM CATCH A RIDE STOP AQUATIC HITCHHIKERS

TO REPORT INVASIVE SPECIES:
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