

Wisconsin Waterfowl Association Learn to Hunt Waterfowl Program

Wisconsin has been a national leader in Learn to Hunt Programs. The first Learn to Hunts (LTH) were initiated almost 20 years ago to fill the need to recruit new hunters into Wisconsin's Hunting Heritage. Hunting license and state stamp sales tell us that waterfowl hunter numbers are decreasing at an alarming rate. Reduction in hunters also correlates to a reduction in available funds to continue conservation work in Wisconsin!

Fortunately, Wisconsin's Learn to Hunt Programs are available to introduce the sport to new interested hunters. It is easy to do with the help of WWA and WDNR.

Pick a date, apply and file the required paperwork, recruit new hunters to attend your class/hunt, hold the course, report the results and request reimbursement from WDNR for your work! The planning sheet will help you get your LTH program off the ground.

WWA has been holding a waterfowl Learn to Hunt class for over 10 years. During that time we have learned a number of things since that first class in 2008.

- Try to focus recruitment of hunters to young adults. Youth students are very interested, but many do not have the parental support or means to continue their involvement. Young adults usually have that means and support.
- Young women, single moms and young adults from non-hunting families have shown the greatest interest in LTH's recently and have good retention.
- Choose a date after you are able to confirm qualified mentors for the hunt. WDNR rules require a 1 to 1 hunter to mentor ratio.
- Involve your local WDNR Conservation Warden and a Certified Hunter Safety Instructor to assist you with presentation and other resources.
- 4 hours of classroom and range time is required by LTH rules. Curriculum for training includes safe firearm handling, waterfowl ecology and hunting methods.

- Attendees do not need a hunting license or a Hunter Safety certificate (over 16 requires a Federal Waterfowl stamp).
- You will need a location with classroom seating to accommodate your class size, access to a power point projector, laptop and screen (usually the Hunter Safety Instructor has these tools), as well as the ability to shoot clay birds on a range (hunt club or sportsman's club).
- Usual scheduling includes a Friday evening classroom and range training, followed by a Saturday mentored hunt and closeout meeting. This can be adjusted to fit your needs.
- The waterfowl LTH must be scheduled during the open season for waterfowl or during the approved state youth hunt season (federal requirement).
- We have seen that including training for firearm cleaning and game cleaning and processing seems to be a big hit with the students.

The link to WWA's Learn to Hunt Planning sheet gives a step by step guide to get your first Learn to Hunt off and running. If you have questions, feel free to contact me (Bruce Urben), WWA President at burben@netnet.net or by phone at 920-660-2773.

Most mentors confirm that their involvement with the Learn to Hunt programs is the most fulfilling part of their lives. I hope your experience is also memorable!

Bruce Urben
President, WWA