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# FIRST HUNT

## Mentor Manual

### Mentoring: The Joy of Passing on Our Waterfowling Heritage

By Delta President, Rob Olson

Few things as a waterfowler will give you more long-term satisfaction than passing on our hunting heritage to your son or daughter, friend or family member. Even the young kid down the street you barely even know.

At Delta, we take immense pride in mentoring new waterfowlers. I personally derive more pleasure watching a complete novice shoot his or her first duck than actually hunting myself. Ear-to-ear grins tend to make a mentor's small sacrifices completely worthwhile.

When it's waterfowl-hunting season, Delta staffers and volunteers are busy introducing newcomers to the glories of waterfowl hunting.

Delta's mentored hunting program is part of a larger initiative to recruit and retain waterfowl hunters. It's called First Hunt, our way of addressing declining hunter participation across North America.

Over the last decade, Delta Waterfowl's mentored hunts and hunting skills days have introduced countless men, women and children to our rich waterfowl-hunting culture. Our experience has taught us a lot, and now we've designed a program that we believe will give interested hunters (old and new) the educational tools they need to become the best mentors they can be.

Such help is needed today more than ever.

Why, you ask?

Because the latest statistics on hunter participation paint a grim portrait: from 2001 to 2006, U.S. waterfowl-hunter numbers dropped a whopping 27 percent. In Canada, roughly 70 percent of waterfowl hunters have left the heritage since 1978. The average age of waterfowl hunters in both countries hovers around 57 years old – this must change.

If we don't shore up hunting participation, and soon, the hunter-generated conservation dollars (hunting license and stamp fees, excise taxes on equipment, etc.) that prime the pump for habitat work will dry up. And if those dollars do in fact dry up, or even slow to a trickle, we could be staring down the barrel of a full-blown conservation crisis. Moreover...this heritage is too grand, too wonderful and too important to our social fabric in North America to allow urbanization to continue to erode it. Not on our watch.

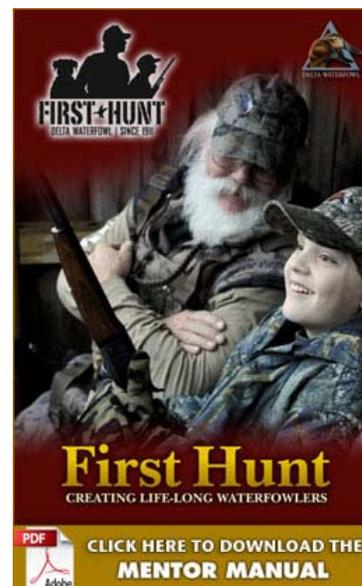
Shoring up hunter participation won't be easy, but it can be done. The problem is a complicated sociological puzzle with no silver bullets or magic antidotes. Demographic and social changes seem to be conspiring against hunter participation at every turn. For example, the demographic trends responsible for the decline in hunter numbers are the same reasons they're not likely to rebound any time soon—the aging of the baby boom generation, urbanization and the declining proportion of the population of rural males.

But our research (not to mention our long tenure putting on mentored hunts) has taught us that we can successfully target non-traditional demographics: adult women, university students and even entire families. And the same disconnections to the natural world – and hunting – stemming from urbanization, have created an unforeseen opportunity: urbanites are craving something real and looking for ways to gather their own fresh, organic, local meat. Have we got a deal for them!

Bottom line: We need more mentors, and this handbook is one step in making that necessity become a reality. Consider this an invitation to change someone's life and to secure a personal legacy that is unsurpassed for hunters like you and I. If you're willing to be a mentor, we're willing to help you become the best one you can be. Won't you join us?

### What is First Hunt?

Delta's First Hunt program has been developed to recruit and retain waterfowl hunters. It's for everyone—young or old, male or female. Education is at its core.





**Teachable moments are abundant with First Hunt Participants.**

This is the culmination of more than 10 years of Delta Waterfowl's experiences in mentoring and training new waterfowl hunters. First Hunt is a collection of resources to help new hunters safely and successfully learn the craft of waterfowling. It will also help experienced hunters become great mentors.

First Hunt resources include this manual, [one-of-a-kind instructional videos](#) and a unique collection of online learning resources. Our website is the home of First Hunt. These resources are free, thanks to our many wonderful [sponsors and donors](#).

There are many kinds of hunting "events" that can be used to introduce new folks to our spectacular waterfowling heritage. A First Hunt "event" can be as simple as viewing our online mentoring videos, or as involved as a field day in conjunction with an actual mentored waterfowl hunt. Here are some examples of First Hunt events:

- **Waterfowling Field Day:** Mentored field days help participants learn and develop waterfowl-hunting skills before they go on an actual hunt. Activities include waterfowl identification, duck and goose calling, equipment tips/tactics, gun safety, shotgun patterning, clay target shooting and an overview of waterfowl conservation.
- **Education Expo:** Education expos engage participants in one or two waterfowl-related activities. They include duck or goose calling demonstrations and how-to clinics on building Hen Houses or wood duck boxes. Expos are typically shorter than field days
- **Shooting Sports Days:** Trap, skeet or sporting clays are important First Hunt activities because they help participants become better, and safer, wing-shooters—a critical waterfowling skill that's honed over time. Since Delta's First Hunt program is aimed at new hunters, shooting sports days must include a gun-safety refresher. Safety is the most important aspect of all First Hunt activities.

**Remember take things slow and adapt towards your participants needs.**

- **Specialty Seminars:** Specialty seminars are a great "next step" when basic topics have already been covered. Typically, these seminars cover more advanced techniques and tactics, such as advanced-level duck calling, dog training and hunting methods.
- **Local Outdoor Projects:** Local outdoor projects are a great way to make waterfowling a year-round activity. Stewardship activities include local nesting-structure initiatives (Hen Houses and wood duck boxes) and garbage clean up at a local waterfowl refuge.
- **First Hunt Waterfowl Hunts:** The ultimate event experience getting new hunters into the field to fully experience a hunt. Harvested birds are cleaned and cooked to fully connect new hunters to the experience.



**First Hunt memories will last a lifetime.**

## First Hunt support from Delta Waterfowl

Delta Waterfowl provides numerous resources for First Hunt events. They include...

- **Staff Expertise:** Delta Waterfowl has two full-time staff members available to help make your First Hunt event a success. Our Director of Hunter Recruitment and Education is located in Bismarck, North Dakota (1-888-987-3695). Our Canadian Hunter Recruitment and Education Coordinator is located in Winnipeg, Manitoba (1-877-667-5656).
- **First Hunt "Mentor" Manual:** The ultimate guidebook to help you successfully mentor new waterfowl hunters. Focuses on planning and executing successful events for new hunters where you live.
- **First Hunt "Participant" Handbook:** New hunters are provided with a comprehensive manual introducing them to the fundamentals of waterfowling. Hopefully, it helps inspires them to continue the pursuit we all enjoy.
- **Participation Forms:** A variety of forms are included at the end of this manual to help you secure information about each First Hunt participant. If

you are holding an event that includes non-family members, parental consent and release forms are also available.

- **First Hunt "Consumables":** Thanks to industry partners, Delta will provide materials for all First Hunt events: shotgun shells (both lead and non-toxic), ear protection, waterfowl identification booklets, and shotgun-patterning targets.
- **First Hunt Videos:** [Instructional videos are available for viewing on our website.](#) Examples include Delta's Participant and Mentor Tips, *Gun Safety*, *Shooting Tips*, *Bird Cleaning* and *Waterfowl Recipes*.
- **First Hunt Complimentary Membership:** We feel very strongly that Delta Waterfowl is "the" home for North American duck and goose hunters. As such, we are providing each and every First Hunt participant with a complimentary membership to Delta Waterfowl. This includes a Delta Waterfowl hat, duck call and decal. Each participant will receive periodic waterfowl and waterfowl-hunting informational updates. To receive complimentary memberships, all registration forms must be mailed to either of the following addresses:

#### U.S. First Hunt Events

Delta Waterfowl  
1312 Basin Ave  
Bismarck, ND 58504

#### Canada First Hunt Events

Delta Waterfowl  
Unit 22-62 Scurfield Blvd  
Winnipeg, MB R3Y 1M5

- **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. For more information contact Delta Waterfowl's Director of Hunter Recruitment and Education (1-888-987-3695).

Appropriate paperwork must be filed prior to each First Hunt event to receive additional insured coverage. Please contact Delta Waterfowl to ensure that First Hunt insurance is extended to your event.

- **Waterfowl Heritage Fund (WHF):** Delta Waterfowl fundraising chapters may direct a portion of the annual funds they raise towards local projects or events such as First Hunt. WHF can be used to offset locally incurred costs (examples: facility fees, food, clay targets, etc). Please call Delta Waterfowl (888-987-3695) for a further explanation of WHF.

## Teaching the Basics at First Hunt Events

Whether you've been a waterfowl hunter for 40 days or 40 years, there's always something new to learn. First Hunt participants will face a steep learning curve, and that's why this manual sticks to the basics. It introduces four basic waterfowling principles we recommend for all First Hunt events: gun safety, shooting instruction, bird cleaning and cooking.

As an accomplished waterfowl hunter, you can instruct First Hunt participants on waterfowl-hunting principles and skills, such as hunting regulations, waterfowl identification, calling, decoy placement, hunter ethics and etiquette. At the conclusion of this manual are First Hunt Participant and First Hunt Mentor Tips. It's a great idea to highlight these tips to every mentor and participant involved in your event.

## Gun Safety

- The foundation of First Hunt is safety. For First Hunt waterfowl hunting events, participating hunters must have successfully completed a state or provincial hunter education course.
- Identification of Shotgun Components. Detail shotgun components and their differences (pump, semi-auto, break action).
- Basic Shotgun Operation. Instruct participants on the proper operation of each shotgun type and how to safely load and unload each.
- Control firearm and body. Create obstacles that a hunter could encounter afield and teach participants how to safely negotiate them. For example, safely crossing streams, fences, or getting in or out of blinds.



## Shooting Instruction

Shooting is likely the most difficult skill for new waterfowl hunters to learn. Mentors should teach shooting basics so participants have a reasonable chance of bagging their first duck. Below are the four shooting basics that should be covered:

- **Eye Dominance:** Before any shooting is done, we start by determining which eye is dominant. This ultimately determines whether the new hunter shoots right or left-handed. To determine eye dominance...

- 1) Face an object about 10 feet away.
- 2) Extend your arms straight out in front of you
- 3) Form a small triangle by overlapping your hands—and look through the triangle with both eyes.
- 4) Focus on the object.
- 5) Without moving your hands, close one eye at a time.
- 6) The eye that keeps the object in the center of the triangle is your dominant eye.



- **Proper Shouldering Technique:** Instruct participants to place the stock of an unloaded gun against the cheek first, and then shoulder the gun. Keep this order and it will shoulder in the same position every time.
- **Stationary Target:** This allows participants to get 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 at this point: the safety, gun loading and muzzle control. This activity also shows participants how distance affects pattern density and the shotgun's effective range. Note: targets for patterning will be provided for all First Hunt events. If you don't have paper targets simply place a clay target on the ground.
- **Sitting, Kneeling and Standing:** Get participants to shoot a firearm 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 the entire group. Following the demonstration, allow participants to shoot pattern targets to see the differences in shot string and pellet count. Point out how pellet density is reduced at greater distances—reducing your overall knockdown power.

### Remember safety first! Offer assistance and praise throughout First Hunt activities.

- **Clay Target Shooting:** 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 travels beyond effective range
- **Straightaway and Incoming Targets:** Start with incoming and straightaway targets. They're the easiest to hit. Allow each participant to shoot at ten clay targets, if not more. Highlight when to take the shot for maximum effectiveness. Start by practicing tracking targets without firing to warm up the shooter and to reinforce foot placement and shouldering. We recommend teaching the "blot out" method for incoming birds, which simply involves swinging through the target from underneath and pulling the trigger when the target disappears behind the muzzle.
- **Crossing Targets:** This exercise is designed to teach participants how to lead crossing ducks or geese. New wingshooters often point and shoot directly at crossing birds. They don't swing through them. The result is they shoot behind the birds. Try this 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. Same goes when "leading" a bird while shooting.
- **Shoot Targets Crossing From Both Sides:** Release targets from both the left and right without firing to allow the participant to practice swinging. Allow shots on crossing shots and provide instruction to help them to hit the targets. We recommend teaching the swing through method: swing through the target and pull the trigger just as you pass the target
- **Create Local Shooting Scenarios:** Create shooting stations that mimic local field options, like shooting out of layout blinds or pits.
- **Demonstrating Proper Shooting Lanes:** Discuss safe shooting lanes when hunting with multiple hunters; identify how far left and right each shooter can swing their shotgun when shooting.



## Bird Cleaning

Following the hunt, mentors will 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 and be sure participants are legally transporting game.

**Tag: Have your tools organized before the activity takes place.**

- **Bird Processing Tools.** Knives, game shears and other essential or helpful tools should be shown to First Hunt participants. Identify each and explain how and why they're used.
- **Storage Options.** Identify various storage options for transportation and bird processing (freezer bags, vacuum sealers, etc).
- **Bird Processing.** First-hand cleaning demonstration of hunter-harvested ducks or geese. Demonstrate various cleaning techniques, like skinning, plucking and breasting.

## Cooking

In our opinion, this final phase is as important as any First Hunt activity. Participants need to understand that ducks and geese taste great. Simple, easy-to-prepare recipes debunk the tired myth that waterfowl tastes like "winged liver" and isn't fit for human consumption.

Many mentored hunts unfortunately stop short of this critical "food" step. Preparing and eating what you harvest is a critically important step in the formation of a hunter. It teaches respect for game and promotes discussion of hunting's larger issues such as ethics and conservation.

Cooking waterfowl can also be a lot of fun. First Hunt participants should be involved throughout the cleaning and cooking process. Most new hunters take immense pride in preparing a meal from the birds they just harvested. It's a powerful connection that can "set the hook" for prospective waterfowlers.

Below are four simple waterfowl recipes that you can prepare for your First Hunt event. We have found these to be the easiest and tastiest in our 10 years of running recruitment hunts. If time is short, First Hunt organizers can donate previously harvested waterfowl to be prepared and served to participants. If participants are sent home with waterfowl, we strongly recommend the recipes are too.

We also recommend that parents or guardians be invited to share the event's final meal, which is a tremendous source of pride for participants. It brings the event full circle, creating a life changing moment for all.



### Determine what you plan to prepare and purchase your grocery needs in advance.

#### Stuffed Duck Breasts

**Ingredients**

- Duck or Goose Breast (sliced open)
- Seasoning to Taste
- Sliced Bacon, Cheese and Onion
- Pickled Jalapeño Peppers (optional)
- Sliced cheese or spreadable cream cheese

**Tools:**

- Toothpicks: 2 per bacon wrap
- Charcoal or Gas grill
- Tongs
- Paper towels
- Plates and Forks

Cut breast meat away from breastbone. Wash breast meat and pat it dry. Create a pocket in the breast by slicing it open parallel to the cutting board. Coat liberally with any seasoning available. Marinade if desired, we recommend store bought teriyaki for ease. In the "gap" place the cheese (or spread it), onion and jalapeño. Wrap each breast half with bacon and secure with a toothpick. Grill over a VERY HOT charcoal fire or gas grill until the bacon is crisp. Serve immediately.

**Duck Sandwiches for Lunch or Breakfast****Ingredients**

- Duck Breast (cut in thin slices)
- Bacon - diced into small pieces
- Onion
- Butter
- Hamburger Buns
- Mayonnaise
- Butter or oil
- Swiss Cheese (optional)
- Eggs (optional)

**Tools:**

- Kitchen or portable stove
- Spatula
- Tongs
- Paper Towels
- Plates and forks
- Frying pan

Cut breast meat into thin slices and slice onion. Put pan on grill or stovetop and get piping hot. Melt butter and cook onions thoroughly (or as much or as little as you want). Set onions aside. Add breast slices to pan and fry until medium-rare. Do not overcook. Fry eggs over easy if desired. Build sandwich by adding mayo, onions, cheese and duck meat to bun. Place egg on top if you are going for a breakfast sandwich. Yolk provides a sauce effect. Enjoy.

**Duck Kabob****Ingredients**

- Duck Breast
- Marinade (Italian dressing or other)
- Onions & peppers
- Pineapple (optional)
- BBQ or teriyaki sauce

**Tools:**

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



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

**Duck or Goose Fajitas****Ingredients**

- Duck or goose breast
- Marinade (Italian dressing or other)
- Pepper, other desired seasonings
- Shredded cheese
- BBQ or teriyaki sauce
- Tortilla wraps
- Salsa and sour cream
- Oil if frying

**Tools:**

- Grill or portable stove
- Frying pan
- Tongs
- Paper towels
- Paper plates & forks
- Cutting board

Cut the meat into strips. Marinade (Italian dressing, teriyaki, etc) if you have time. Cook the pieces over a medium-hot fire on a 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 a row and let participants build their own fajita to their liking. Fast, easy, fantastic.

**Building First Hunt Success**

We've learned a lot over the past decade. Here are some of the things to do before the event...

- Establish a committee and designate roles for each First Hunt mentor or instructor.
- Invite guest speakers: game warden, hunter safety instructor, biologist, or other mentor-type speakers in your local community.
- Obtain registration and emergency contact information.
- Obtain mentor, participant and parental consent and release waivers.
- Verify Hunter Safety completion for each hunter.
- Determine ammunition needs.
- Determine equipment needs (waders, warm clothing, shotguns, etc).
- Create a schedule and share it with each First Hunt participant and parents.
- Identify participants who do not have an opportunity to hunt, outside of the First Hunt event and pair them with mentors who are open to the potential of mentoring after the First Hunt event on an ongoing basis.

**Mentors within arm's length of participants will be able**



### to offer guidance and support.

- Mentors should strive to be within arm's length of participants at all times.
- Distribute ammunition one shotshell at a time to participants.
- Bring along plenty of snacks and other refreshments.
- Don't spend too much time in the field. Stop hunting at a predetermined time.
- Make sure all hunters are properly dressed based for the day's weather. Be sure to check forecast.
- Make some memories and take lots of photos!
- Review First Hunt Tips for Mentors and Participants



## Strategic Mentoring

The primary goal of First Hunt is to create new, lifelong waterfowl hunters. As a result, 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. Remember that kids, especially girls, may not know anyone else who hunts. Your mentored hunt is important social reinforcement and cannot be overlooked.

## Ongoing Mentorship Is Critical

Quality mentoring is the key to keeping our beloved culture healthy. A one-time hunt is valuable, but mentoring should not stop when the event is over—it must continue well into the future if we hope to make lifelong waterfowl hunters.

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.

## Parents Are Key

You need the consent, support and trust of the parents to be successful. To increase the comfort level of parents or other family members with your efforts, we recommend that you try to involve them in your First Hunt activities. Here are a few suggestions how:

- Get parents involved.
- Invite family to your First Hunt committee meeting.
- Invite family to your First Hunt event.
- Get to know the parents so they feel more comfortable with you as a mentor.
- Promote family/community involvement through the media such as newspapers, radio, ad posters, e-mail and social media sites.
- Stay connected after the event.

## Recruit Close to Home

Look close to home when recruiting youth for First Hunt activities. You will likely have the social license to take a nephew or child of a close friend hunting. Even with adults, it is more reasonable to take someone you know.

When we started our recruitment hunts, we reached out to groups like Boy Scouts and 4H. It turned out that we were missing hundreds of candidates within one or two degrees of social separation from ourselves. Many of our hunting friends did not even take their own kids hunting.



## Don't Forget the Adults

Mentoring an adult is the fastest way to create a new hunter. They have transportation, disposable income and the freedom to travel to hunting locations at will. We have launched countless adults into waterfowl hunting after only one hunt. It's like planting full-grown trees or stocking six-pound trout in a lake.

## This One's For the Girls

In the old days, waterfowl hunters often left daughters at home. That's all changed... for the better. Female participation is on the rise. If Mom hunts, the kids are more likely to hunt too. Women often value the hunting experience differently than men. If you want to do something great for waterfowling, take a keen female in your close social circle hunting.

## First Hunt Criteria & Requirements

Recruiting new waterfowl hunters (or reuniting old waterfowlers with the culture) is a rewarding experience—a process that should be fun, yet taken seriously.

Below are the criteria and requirements of Delta Waterfowl's First Hunt program, which includes both youth and adult "participants."

### For all First Hunt events:

- Alcohol is prohibited.
- Parents or guardians are encouraged to attend each youth-oriented First Hunt event.
- Delta Waterfowl must know about the event before insurance coverage can be extended.

### For First Hunt waterfowl hunting events:

- Participating hunters must have successfully completed a state or provincial hunter education course.
- All participating hunters must follow all hunting regulations for the jurisdiction in which they are hunting. Consult your state or provincial hunting regulations for details.
- Adult mentors may supervise up to two hunters at one time.



- Participants are allowed only one shot shell in their shotguns at any time.
- Mentors should not carry their firearms afield—even when it's 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 the following:
  - Participant waiver and release
  - Parental consent (waiver and release)
  - First Hunt registration
  - Emergency medical authorization
  - Mentor conduct guidelines