

BLIND BANTER

Hoosier Creek Conservation & Retriever Association Quarterly Newsletter



THE HOME STRETCH...

Landing Zone

- First Shots - Catchin' Up (Pg. 1)
- HCCRA News/Updates (Pg. 2)
- 2023 HCCRA Youth Hunt (Pg. 3-4)
- Late Season Honker Hints (Pg. 5)
- HCCRA Gear Issue (Pg. 6-7)
- The Bird Man Commeth (Pg. 8)
- Creeker's Kitchen (Pg. 9)
- Honorary Blind Seat (Pg. 10)
- Sponsor/Donor Appreciation (Pg. 11)
- Sponsor Spotlight (Pg. 12)



FIRST SHOTS



CATCHIN' UP

With the tough and turbulent 2023 waterfowl season experienced by many HCCRA members, most hunters looked forward to the next rainfall just as much as the next cold front. This year's drought forced many members to scout for new and unfamiliar bodies of water to hunt rather than some of our favorite familiar small pockets and potholes. While this made for some incredible frustration, intense struggles, and a larger than usual gas bill, the successes were all the more rewarding. Venturing out to find new areas to hunt also brought clarity to the importance of one of HCCRA's primary missions; to conserve, preserve, and restore **LOCAL** wetlands. As all our members know, the dollars they give to HCCRA are directly invested into local conservation efforts. These dollars provide local hunters with local hunting areas and local opportunities. Every minute, dollar, and ounce of effort donated by HCCRA's members contribute to ensuring local waterfowl, hunters, retrievers, and youth are thriving. The HCCRA Committee is gearing up again for the biggest fundraising event of the year with the 2024 Annual HCCRA Banquet. Stay tuned to future issues for more information on all details for the **ONLY LOCAL BANQUET!**



The Home Stretch...

Though the duck season is over, there are still some incredible goose hunting opportunities that lie ahead. Sore backs, leaking waders, broken gear, and disgruntled spouses may make you feel like the end of the season is already here. But the mild start to the winter is providing some great chances to get out after those big Iowa Honkers. Keep scouting, keep hunting, keep grinding, and keep on reading to see what some of our HCCRA members recommend to shoot more birds this winter (Page 5).

*Best Wishes for 2024 from
Hoosier Creek Conservation & Retriever Association!*

BLIND BANTER FORUM

Have a question for the HCCRA committee members about waterfowl hunting, dog training, upcoming/past events, or project details? Have a comment or question about a past newsletter article? Send us your thoughts at hccra18@gmail.com to get an answer in our next newsletter!

YOUNG HUNTER FEATURE

Are you 18 years old or younger and have a hunting, retriever training, or conservation story to tell? Are you a youth that learned something afield that you would like to share with the HCCRA community? Send us your stories or articles over to hccra18@gmail.com for a chance to be featured in the next newsletter!

HCCRA NEWS/UPDATES



2024 ANNUAL HCCRA BANQUET

HCCRA's biggest fundraising event of the year is almost here! The 2024 Annual Banquet is slated to be the biggest and best yet. There will be tons of guns, prizes, auction items, and great food and drinks. Get your tickets now before the limited tickets are sold out via hccra.club or from any committee member!



- Saturday March 30th, 2024 - Doors @ 4:00 PM / Dinner @ 6:00 PM
- Amana RV Park - 3850 C Street, Amana, IA 52203
- General Raffle, Gun Raffle, Bucket Raffle, Ladies Raffle, Youth Raffle, Live Auction, Silent Auction and more!

HCCRA CAN-AM RAFFLE

Who wouldn't want a chance to win a brand new 2023 Can – Am Defender XT all while supporting HCCRA's mission of raising money for local waterfowl conservation efforts?! With help from CR Metro Harley-Davidson Suzuki Can-Am, HCCRA is making this chance a reality. Committee members are currently selling raffle tickets (1 for \$10 or 6 for \$50) until tickets are sold out. HCCRA supporters will be anxiously awaiting to hear their name called at the drawing to be held at the 2024 Annual HCCRA Banquet on March 30th, 2024. If you are at the banquet and your ticket is drawn you will receive an additional \$150 just to sweeten the deal! Seek out any of the HCCRA Committee members, email the organization at hccra18@gmail.com, or visit the website at hccra.club to purchase tickets. All proceeds go directly to local youth, retriever, and waterfowl conservation efforts.



A Special Thanks to Metro Harley-Davidson Suzuki Can-Am



HCCRA NESTING PROJECT DAY



It is nearing the time for the annual HCCRA Nesting Project Day. Tentatively scheduled for February 3rd, 2024 (pending ice conditions), HCCRA members and volunteers will gather to observe and record nesting statistics from over 156 nesting structures installed by HCCRA that were available for 2023 waterfowl nesting. Additionally, volunteers will repair/replace damaged structures as well as install new structures. HCCRA has nesting structures at Atherton Wetlands, Lake McBride, Coralville Reservoir, Wakpicada Natural Area and other locations in Johnson and Linn Counties. If interested in helping with these efforts, check out the HCCRA Facebook page for announcements.

2023 HCCRA YOUTH HUNT



September 30th and October 1st marked the dates for one of HCCRA's most rewarding and enjoyable events of the year; the HCCRA Annual Youth Hunt. This event is one that the HCCRA committee has circled on the calendar and looks forward to annually, because it is crucial to one of our most important missions as an organization. Youth involvement is essential to promote hunting, conservation, and habitat management to be preserved for generations to come.

This youth-dedicated weekend is intended to bring the waterfowl hunting experience full circle for our younger HCCRA members (9-16 years old) by hosting this free weekend of waterfowling (sponsored by Master Plumbing) . On Saturday, September 30th, the youth HCCRA members went to the Hawkeye Wildlife Shotgun and Archery Range with several HCCRA committee members and volunteers. The youth first received a lesson on shotgun use and safety from a DNR Range Officer. After the education lesson when the kids felt comfortable and safe handling the firearms, it was time for the clay pigeons to fly! Each youth participant had their opportunity to lock in on some trap targets to familiarize them with the the wing shooting they were anticipating for the following morning.

On the following morning of October 1st, the hopeful youth hunters put on their camouflage, recalled the skills they had learned the previous day, met up with their HCCRA adult guides, and set out on a duck hunt for the Iowa Central Zone Youth Duck Season. With drought conditions and a warm front, the duck hunting was tough. But thanks to the scouting of the HCCRA guides and the keen eyes/sharp shooting of the youth hunters, there were still a few ducks that were dropped from the sky. Many smiles, laughs, memories, and new skills were enjoyed during the HCCRA Annual Youth Hunt. The HCCRA guides and youth hunters had a great time, and we are already looking forward to next years' hunt. If you know of any youth that would be interested in participating, please keep an eye peeled next fall for posts about Youth Hunt Registration, or contact any HCCRA Committee member. HCCRA is always excited about opportunities to broaden its impact on the youth community!



2023 HCCRA YOUTH HUNT



LATE SEASON HONKER HINTS



After an early teal season, an early metro goose season, and a 60 day duck season, waterfowl hunters are usually stretched thin, frustrated, and dog-tired by the time December/January rolls around. However, the late season Iowa Honkers are out on the feed and still providing great hunting opportunities even after the duck season has closed. These late season birds present a unique set of challenges themselves though. They are big, they are tough, and they are smart after surviving most of another hunting season. HCCRA sat down with a couple of its committee members and Canada Goose hunting experts to shed some insight on tips and tricks to help you be more successful this late season. .

CHARLIE REID



Longtime Honker hunter and HCCRA Member Charlie Reid says that while late season geese can be tricky, he has noted several tips for success throughout his many years of hunting....

- Small decoy spreads work wonders. You don't need to put out every decoy when trying to attract late, wary geese.
- Although its fun to invite all of your buddies, remember that just means you have to hide all of your buddies. The less people, the better your hide will be.
- If you haven't already, check out panel blinds. They are easy to assemble in the field and are incredible at concealment. Avoid layout blinds if possible, geese have learned to identify the profile of layout blinds on the ground.
- Subtle flagging when geese are a long ways away is great, aggressive flagging when geese are close generally just flares the birds.
- Avoid gimmick decoys. Just use high quality, basic decoys. They will get the job done.
- Park your vehicle farther away from your spread than you think. Drive to where you think you should park, and then drive further.

JJ WOMBACHER

JJ Wombocher, avid waterfowl hunter and tenured HCCRA member, said goose hunting is often about the little things you can do to set yourself apart from other spreads in the area...

- Focus on your hide/concealment before anything else. Brush in your blind until you cant possibly fit anymore brush on it.
- Less calling is generally better than more calling. Hunters tend to think they are better callers then they actually are. No calling is FAR better than bad calling.
- Keep in mind comfort is a major part of an enjoyable hunt. Bring an extra pair of socks on the hunt. After brushing in the blind and setting decoys, you are going to be sweaty regardless of how cold it is. The last thing you want are your wet sweaty socks to freeze. Before sitting down to hunt, switch your socks out.



The holidays are over, gifts have been exchanged, and the weather is growing colder. Perhaps you received some gift cards, cash, or just have noticed all of the end-of-year sales by many major waterfowl hunting retailers. In this year's HCCRA Gear Article, several HCCRA members shared some of their favorite hunting items that you may want to look for the next time you are wanting to make a purchase. Some of these items might even be given away at the 2024 Annual HCCRA Fundraising Banquet!

Tanglefree

Charlie Reid: "My favorite item of hunting gear is the Tanglefree Panel Blind. It is a game changer, and can be placed anywhere you want to hunt. It's really comfortable to hunt out of since seated also."



Mark Groth: "I love the MoMarsh dog products, especially the InvisiLab and Dog vest. The InvisiLab is versatile with the adjustable legs and is easy to conceal. And the dog vest works great in all weather."



MOMARSH
HUNT HARD. HIDE EASY.

Eric Steffes: "Stahls Kalls are my go to calls on my lanyard. The 'L-Train' and 'Branta Max' are my favorites to blow. They get loud when I need them to, they have incredible range, and the tone is the best I've heard. Great calls, and they perform even in the worst weather conditions."



BLACKSTONE

Matt Docker: "My favorite hunting item is the Blackstone Adventure-Ready Griddle. Duck hunts are even better when you get a warm breakfast to go with the sunrise."



GunDog OUTDOORS



Jeremy Stolba: “The Field Trauma Aid Kit from GunDog Outdoors is always with me. A lot of hunters don’t think ahead to what would happen if their retriever had a traumatic injury. As long as I have the Trauma Aid Kit with me, I know I have everything I would need. It’s super convenient.”



Dake Dietrich: “Dive Bomb makes a great line of products. I love their silhouette decoys because they are so light-weight and compact. I can carry and pack a ton of decoys and they work great too. I love their dog vests too.”



Lucky Duck

Zach French: “I always have the Lucky Duck Agitator in my decoy spread. The added realism from the decoy movement and wave action is killer on wary birds, especially on no wind days.”



rogers

Curt Schroeder: “I love the Rogers 2-in-1 insulated breathable waders. They are so versatile by having the removable liner. With the liner removed, they are great for warmer season hunting and make me sweat a lot less than neoprene waders. In colder conditions, the liner keeps them nice and toasty.”



banded

Devin Lawson: “I wear my Avery/Banded Shell Vest every waterfowl hunting trip. Regardless of my hunting conditions, I love having my shells accessible in front of me and a game tote behind me to keep my hands free”



THE BIRD MAN COMMETH



Bobby Pearson, an original HCCRA member, a valued volunteer, and a regular contributor to HCCRA's efforts and mission, was unanimously elected to fill the vacant Game Steward position on the HCCRA Board of Directors on June 13, 2023. If you've attended any of HCCRA's retriever training or hunt tests, you've probably seen Bobby working his own dogs and assisting with the event. His positive attitude, constant willingness to assist in all capacities, and determined work ethic were all realized by the voters who elected Bobby onto the Board. The role of Game Steward is defined in the HCCRA bylaws as being 'responsible for obtaining birds for field tests and other training events held throughout the year, insuring their humane use and making sure they are dried and stored or properly disposed of at all events.' The position had previously been vacant, and duties were handled by several members in the group. HCCRA wanted to introduce Bobby's new role to the HCCRA community so we sat down with him for a Q&A interview. If you see Bobby at our next HCCRA event, please congratulate him and thank him for his efforts!

Q: So to start with, when did you become involved with HCCRA, Bobby?

A: Well, I'm not sure how many years its been, but I was involved with the group back before HCCRA was even created. I was with the EIHRA (Eastern Iowa Hunting Retriever Association) back before the merger of EIHRA and the Hoosier Bay Delta Waterfowl Chapter happened.

Q: So you were more involved with retriever training components of the group rather than the hunting aspects?

A: Yes, I am heavily involved with the retriever training. I also do a lot of pheasant hunting, but not much waterfowl hunting.

Q: How many retrievers have you trained?

A: I've trained three different retrievers. I love working with the dogs, and have gotten a lot of help from the guys in the group.

Q: Do you have any favorite memories or moments from your time training your retrievers or being involved with the group?

A: Any time I take my family out hunting is one of my fondest memories. I grew up hunting with my Uncle, and I want to keep that family tradition alive by hunting with my own family. I love it.

Q: What is your favorite event that HCCRA holds?

A: I love the dog events. The training and hunt tests are my favorite since I get to watch so many talented dogs work, but I also love meeting and socializing with like-minded individuals that share a passion for retriever training.

Q: Is there anything else that you'd like the HCCRA community to know about you?

A: I guess just how much I love being a part of HCCRA. The entire committee is full of great guys who are willing to help with any questions. It's just a really fun group to be a part of, and I enjoy every minute of it.



CREEKER'S KITCHEN



Creeker's Kitchen is devoted towards the culinary art of waterfowl, and providing the HCCRA community with a diverse range of recipes to try with their harvested birds. If you have a favorite recipe, feel free to email it to us for a chance to be featured in the next issue.

This Quarter's Recipe: Smoked Fowl

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 Gallon of Water
- 1 Cup of Brown Sugar
- 1/2 Cup of Kosher Salt
- 1 Cup of Seasoning/Rub
 - Authors Choice: Kinders Black Cherry Chipotle
- 1/4 Cup of Worcestershire Sauce
- 2 Tbsp of Garlic Powder
- 2 Tbsp of Onion Powder
- 6 Goose Breasts or 12 Duck Breasts
- 2 Cups of Yellow Mustard



PREP PROCESS:

BRINE

- Mix 1 Gallon of Water, 1 Cup of Brown Sugar, 1/2 Cup of Kosher Salt, 1/2 Cup of Seasoning/Rub, 1/4 Cup of Worcestershire Sauce, 2 Tbsp of Garlic Powder, and 2 Tbsp of Onion Powder together in a large pot.
- Stir the brine until mixed thoroughly.
- Heat the brine until boiling, stirring frequently. Once boiling temperature is obtained, let the brine cool.
- While brine is cooling, trim the breasts of all bloody areas, membrane, or fatty deposits.
- Once brine is at room temperature, place the trimmed breasts into the brine mixture and refrigerate for 12 hours.

DUCK/GOOSE BREASTS

- After brining for 12 hours, remove the breasts from the brine. Gently and briefly rinse under cool water and pat dry.
- Place breasts back in the refrigerator in a dry bowl for 4-6 hours.
- After refrigerator drying period is complete, remove the breasts from the refrigerator. Coat breasts with yellow mustard as a binder. (The mustard will be tasteless after smoking, but help seasoning/rub adhere to meat.)
- Add a fair amount of seasoning/rub to the breasts until lightly covered.
- Flip breast over, apply mustard binder and seasoning/rub as in previous steps.

SMOKING PROCESS:

- Set smoker to 225°, and add cherry wood or pellets.
- Smoke breasts until 140° IT (usually 3-4 hours). Flip breasts at 1.5 hours and spritz with apple cider vinegar/water mixture.
- Remove breasts and wrap in butcher paper or tin foil.
- Let breasts rest for 1 hour prior to cutting/serving.
- Slice breasts into thin slices and serve.



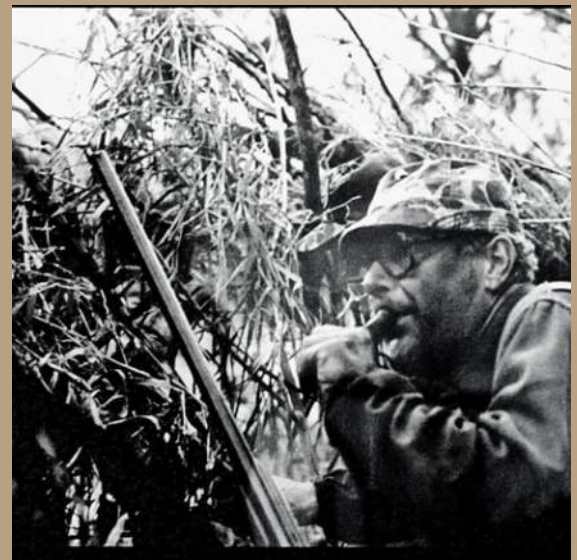
HONORARY BLIND SEAT



When we think about waterfowl hunting and the lifestyle we all love, we often think about decoying mallards, the smell of gunpowder, watching the sunrise over a spread of diver decoys, or the piercing sound of a goose call. While all of these thoughts and moments are major contributors in why we love the world of waterfowl hunting, we might not always immediately think of one of the largest components...the people. We all have one or several individuals in our life that provided mentorship, companionship, and fellowship in our waterfowl experiences. Perhaps they are your current hunting buddy or maybe a grandfather that took you on your first duck hunt. We all know someone that has made a profound impact on us as individuals, and also on the quality of waterfowl and waterfowl hunting itself. This section is dedicated to highlighting specific individuals who have improved waterfowl hunting and have left a lasting legacy on the waterfowl community. This quarter's Honorary Blind Seat is reserved for:

WENDELL CARLSON

Legends in the waterfowl world are few and far between in today's era. In a modern world with commercialized mass produced products, the decoy carvers, gunsmiths, artists, and call makers are fading more and more each day. These individuals added their influence and unique flare to the historical significance and heritage of waterfowl hunting that has made it into the sport and lifestyle that we all love today. Without these legends and influential personalities, the waterfowl world would be much different than the one we know. As 2024 begins, the waterfowl world has one less legend that we lost on September 11, 2023. Wendell Carlson of Cedar Rapids Iowa passed away at age 87 after a lifetime devoted towards many passions, including waterfowl hunting and duck call making. Born in 1936, Wendell was a U.S. Airforce Veteran, an electronics technician, a national waterfowl magazine contributor, a singer among many other things, and most famously a innovator in the waterfowl call industry. In 1969, Wendell began work on a prototype for a waterfowl call under his business of 'Carlson Championship Call Company'. Though he sold his business and patents in 1998, the Company is still operating today. HCCRA is proud that a legend such as Wendell Carlson resided in this area and allowed us to experience many features of the waterfowl community that are available to us due to his contributions.





SPONSOR/DONOR **APPRECIATION**



This page is dedicated to show our appreciation of our 2023 Sponsors and Donors. HCCRA wouldn't have the ability to impact, habitat, waterfowl, retrievers, and the local community the way it has since 2018 without your time, effort, and contributions.

HCCRA THANKS YOU!

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Zach French

**Please support and thank our sponsors and donors
that make the mission of HCCRA possible!**

If interested in being a sponsor/donor, please reach out to HCCRA at hccra18@gmail.com

SPONSOR SPOTLIGHT



The 'Sponsor Spotlight' is dedicated to showcasing one of our great sponsors/donors that make such a significant impact on HCCRA's ability to benefit local habitat, waterfowl, youth, and retrievers.

TSTR WOODWORKING

TSTR Woodworking is a business owned and operated by **Todd Nelson** based in Solon, IA. For the 2023 Annual HCCRA Banquet, Todd constructed and donated a beautifully crafted Bourbon Barrel Table that was auctioned off during the live auction. The auction for Todd's hand-crafted table was a competitive session, as many bidders wanted to return home with his beautiful piece of furniture.

Todd has been woodworking for 31 years, since 1992. He is a one-man crew who focuses on custom woodwork projects. Custom kitchens are Todd's specialty and his favorite projects. As Todd's table indicated, the quality of his work is incredible.

Not only does Todd attend HCCRA's banquets, but he owns a German Shorthair that he enjoys upland hunting with. Todd's dad was also an avid waterfowl hunter. Todd became affiliated with HCCRA from knowing Vice President Jeremy Stolba for many years. Todd is a valued HCCRA member and a great friend of the club.

If interested in any custom woodwork projects, call Todd at (319) 631-0242. Also, give him a big **THANKS** for his donations to HCCRA which are a big part of the organization's success.



*TSTR
WOODWORKING*

