

BLIND BANTER

Hoosier Creek Conservation & Retriever Association Newsletter



**SPRINGIN' INTO
ANOTHER YEAR OF
DUCKS, DOGS, AND
YOUTH INVOLVEMENT**

#KEEP IT LOCAL



Landing Zone

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hccra.club



info@hccra.club



facebook.com/HOOSIERCREEK

2026 HCCRA BANQUET GUIDE



BOTTOMLESS CUPS

BLIND
BANTER
QR CODE



\$30 - ENGRAVED HCCRA METAL CUP

INCLUDES: UNLIMITED BEER, WINE, SELTZERS, SODA & WATER

**INCLUDES - FREE ENTRY INTO GUN RAFFLE FOR BERETTA
A300 SEMI-AUTOMATIC 12-GUAGE SHOTGUN!!**



\$20 - RED PLASTIC CUP

INCLUDES: BOTTOMLESS BEER & WINE

**\$3 SELTZERS
\$1 SODAS
\$1 WATER**

**PURCHASE ALL
CUPS FROM THE
BAR AREA**

CASH ONLY

AUCTION BUMP GUN

GREAT ODDS TO WIN A GREAT GUN - ENTRIES LIMITED TO NUMBER OF LIVE AUCTION ITEMS
BROWNING SILVER 12-GUAGE SEMI-AUTO SHOTGUN
 EACH LIVE AUCTION ITEM WILL HAVE A 'BUMP UP' CHANCE

THE WINNER OF EACH LIVE AUCTION ITEM CAN PAY \$100 IN ADDITION TO THEIR AUCTION ITEM PURCHASE PRICE TO RECEIVE AN ENTRY INTO THE BROWNING SILVER RAFFLE. IF THE BUYER CHOOSES NOT TO PURCHASE THE 'BUMP UP', THE ENTRY WILL BE AUCTIONED OFF.



EARLY BIRD CARD

EARLY BIRD CARDS OR CASH:

- ALL GAMES
- GENERAL RAFFLE
- BUCKET RAFFLES
- TOP TIER RAFFLES
- 52 CARD RAFFLES

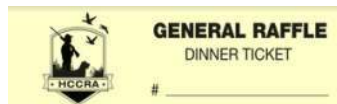
Hoosier Creek Conservation & Retriever Club	\$5	\$5	\$5	\$5	\$5
	\$5	\$5	\$5	\$5	\$5
\$100 Early Bird Punch Card	\$5	\$5	\$5	\$5	\$5

CASH ONLY:

- PRE-BANQUET RAFFLE TICKETS
- 50/50 TICKETS
- 30 ITEM RAFFLE**
- BOTTOMLESS CUPS
- BAR PURCHASES
- ENVELOPE RAFFLE



TICKET LEGEND



**\$1 - CHANCE TO
WIN VARIETY
OF ITEMS &
GEAR ON STAGE**



**\$10 - CHANCE TO WIN
RAFFLE PACKAGES
IN FRONT OF STAGE**



**\$20 - CHANCE TO WIN
ONE OF THREE GUNS
IN FRONT OF STAGE**

2026 HCCRA BANQUET INTRO



Welcome to the 2026 Annual HCCRA Banquet!

After months of donation campaigns, outreach, logistical planning, and collaboration, the 2026 Annual HCCRA Fundraising Banquet is finally upon us! HCCRA members have the last Saturday in March circled every year due to the high-energy, action filled evening with raffles, auctions, and giveaways galore that have become associated with HCCRA's largest annual fundraising event. Even though the evening is centered around fun, games, prizes, and incredible auction items, the underlying mission of HCCRA that this event financially supports is never forgotten by the banquet attendees. All money raised is directly invested into local waterfowl & habitat conservation efforts, retriever training equipment and events, and youth involvement/recruitment. In an era where wetlands are diminishing at an alarming rate, outdoorsmen and outdoorswomen numbers are dwindling, and available resources for the hunting and retriever handling communities are sparse, local events such as this are becoming increasingly vital to the outdoor world that we cherish. The reason that the annual HCCRA Banquet has become one of the top events in the region is the devoted group of members that support the organization and mission year after year. With nearly 500 annual attendees spending their hard earned money and valuable time showing up in full force to pack the banquet hall, it is evident that our local community is determined to support the cause that we care so much about; preserving, conserving, and enjoying the passion of ducks, dogs, and hunting for generations to come. Every dollar raised stays in our local community.

The Amana RV Park Building is once again a massive conglomeration of games, raffle prizes, auction items, and GUNS! This year, HCCRA is giving away over 60 GUNS! Not only is HCCRA giving away all those firearms, but the raffles are also full of high quality gear and equipment made possible by great sponsors and donors as listed in the back of this newsletter. Billy's Chicken Shack will once again be cooking up and serving a phenomenal meal that keeps HCCRA members craving more year after year. Our youth table is always a highlight as well with 15+ guns dedicated just to youth HCCRA members! Every youth member in attendance will receive a free prize! Additionally, HCCRA wants to make sure all of its female members have a great time as well, so a women's raffle is also set up with tons of great items, gift cards, baskets, and even a gun!

HCCRA also prides itself with forming relationships with local businesses and artists that believe in the mission of HCCRA enough to make generous donations to help raise money for local conservation efforts. Year after year businesses such as TSTR Wood Working, Country Stone Masons, Tim Lawson, and many others create unique custom pieces that they donate to support HCCRA. The incredible auction slate made possible by local members always creates an intense auction environment with many bidders hopeful to take the one-of-a-kind items home!

HCCRA thanks its volunteers, donors, sponsors, and members for another amazing banquet!

The 2026 HCCRA Fundraising Banquet will fund:

- Nesting Structures / Wood Duck Houses
- Equipment and Gear for HCCRA Youth Academy
- Gear for HCCRA Annual Youth Hunt
- Equipment for AKC, NAHRA & HRC Hunt Tests
- Kirkwood Community College Scholarship
- Future conservation projects and strategic partnerships



FIRST SHOTS



CATCHIN' UP

Even though we are only a few months into 2026, HCCRA has been heavily involved with outreach, conservation, and fundraising events to move full throttle into the rest of the year. More information on these events will be discussed in detail later on in this [Blind Banter](#), but in summary HCCRA has already held its annual HCCRA Nesting Day, annual HCCRA Straight Slush UTV Poker Run, Retriever Training events, and attended Iowa Outdoors Day at the Iowa State Capitol. The intentions of these events range from improving local waterfowl habitat and duck numbers, fundraising for future HCCRA projects, and networking/collaborating HCCRA's efforts and mission for notoriety by representatives, government employees, other conservation groups, and the public to broaden the impact of HCCRA!

Furthermore, HCCRA is continuously looking to further assist, engage, and improve the local outdoors community. With nesting structures, conservation projects, retriever hunt tests and training, youth hunt and academy, Kirkwood scholarship, and other big projects the club is working on, HCCRA hopes its members are able to experience the impact that the money raised contributes to the local community. As the club expands and aims to provide more events and activities for its members, it is always looking for more active members and volunteers to help with planning and executing events throughout the year. HCCRA is full of like-minded volunteers of all ages and backgrounds that are motivated to share their passion for hunting, retriever handling, and conservation. Please reach out to a committee member or contact the club if you are interested in helping with HCCRA events.

2026 UPCOMING HCCRA CALENDAR



HRC HUNT TEST

MAY 2 - MAY 3, 2026
LEGACY ACRES HUNTING CLUB IN PARNELL, IA
(RSVP AND MORE INFO AT HCCRA.CLUB)



AKC HUNT TEST

MAY 16 - MAY 17, 2026
LEGACY ACRES HUNTING CLUB IN PARNELL, IA
(RSVP AND MORE INFO AT HCCRA.CLUB)



NAHRA HUNT TEST

MAY 30 - MAY 31, 2026
LEGACY ACRES HUNTING CLUB IN PARNELL, IA
(RSVP AND MORE INFO AT HCCRA.CLUB)



YOUTH ACADEMY

AUGUST 7 - AUGUST 9, 2026
CONTACT COMMITTEE MEMBER FOR MORE DETAILS
(REGISTRATION DATE TBD)



YOUTH HUNT

SEPTEMBER 26-27, 2026
CONTACT COMMITTEE MEMBER FOR MORE DETAILS

ANNUAL HCCRA BOARD OF DIRECTORS NOMINATION MEETING: OCTOBER 13, 2026

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 info@hccra.club 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 RETRIEVER TRAINING

Don't forget, HCCRA offers retriever training days to fit everyone's needs and assist both the retriever and the handler! As always, HCCRA meets on the 3rd Saturday of every month. Meet up location can vary, so stay up to date by subscribing to the HCCRA email list and following the HCCRA Facebook page for training location updates. Start time is 8:00 am, and everyone is encouraged to arrive 15 minutes ahead of time to help with set up. Due to the cost of birds, HCCRA will charge a \$5 per dog fee to help cover costs. A sheet containing the rules will be handed out, reviewed, and be available on all training days. If enough people attend these events and everyone puts in the time, HCCRA can review and possibly weigh the option of adding another day.

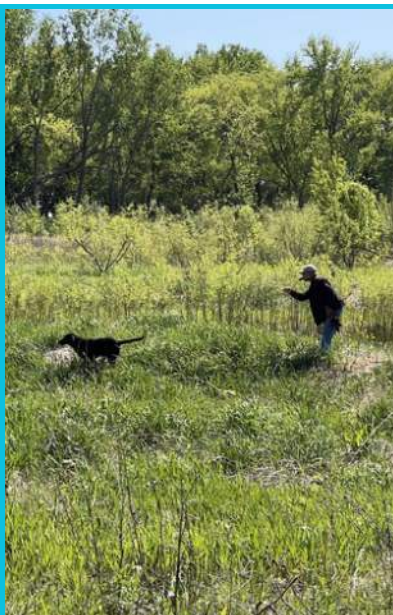
Training sessions will be divided into 3 skill groups. This will give handlers more opportunity to focus on their dog and what stage it's at in training. This will also help for not overcrowding and give people more of a one on one opportunity. HCCRA's goal is to give everyone the best opportunity to train at their dog's level. HCCRA will be pleased to work with you and your dog to find which of the 3 levels it will fit. Some may need to advance and it also might be recommended that you drop down a level. HCCRA is starting to focus more heavily on drills. This will help streamline training and help handlers with particular items they need to focus on. Training days are short and not always as often as we want, but these drills will give handlers an opportunity to work with their dogs outside of training days as well to further advance their retriever's skill set to meet their desired goals.

The Three levels will be as follows:

Puppy to Started: At this level we will work on socializing, creating drive, basic obedience, Collar Conditioning, and Started Level marks. This will entail everything needed to get you ready for a starting level. We can also work together to help anyone working on Force Fetch.

Intermediate: This is a level that will follow up after force fetch and move into force to pile, T Drill, and Double T Drill, then move into swim by. This will also be where we start working on doubles.

Advanced: This is a level where you'll be working on running cold blinds, multiple marks, poison birds, etc. Drills for this will include off-line Y drills, crisscross, dual crows foot, KR D, ABCD drill, angle entry, converging marks, bridge marks etc. This is also a good time to establish a 5 leg Pattern blind field. If there are any other drills you would like to practice, please let us know!



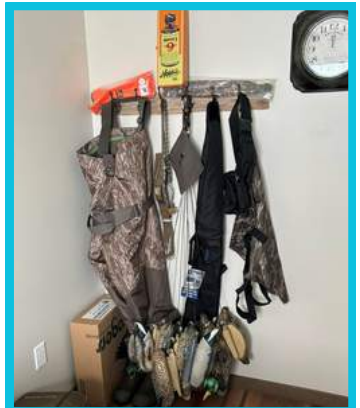
2025 HCCRA YOUTH ACADEMY



HCCRA hosted its second annual Youth Academy on August 8th – 10th, 2025 after an incredibly successful inaugural event in 2024. HCCRA has been dedicated to youth involvement and recruitment to the outdoors since the creation of the organization. Every year HCCRA focuses efforts and dollars towards events that focus on youth involvement such as the annual HCCRA Youth Waterfowl Hunt. The Youth Academy was an idea derived by the club to make an even more meaningful impact on local youth to provide them with gear, memories, and skills they can utilize afield for the rest of their lives.

After significant planning for the 2024 Youth Academy, the event was very well received by the youth participants and the Committee. HCCRA prides itself on keeping locally raised funds local, so after a successful initial year it was with no hesitation that the Committee agreed to host a 2025 HCCRA Youth Academy. Since the initial year, Legacy Acres allowed HCCRA to host the Youth Academy at their grounds in Parnell, Iowa which provided access to incredible lodging arrangements and also space for indoor/outdoor seminar areas, a shooting range, several ponds, and vast areas to hold hands-on workshops. 10 local youth were allowed to sign up for the 2025 HCCRA Youth Academy, with requirements of being at least 12 years of age and having completed their Iowa Hunters Safety Course. The quota of 10 youth participants was met in short order upon opening enrollment once word had spread about the success from the 2024 event. There were 9 young men and 1 young woman that enrolled for the Academy, all with varying degrees of experience within the outdoors.

One of the huge benefits of this Youth Academy made possible by fundraising dollars from our annual events such as the banquet and UTV run is outfitting these youth participants with significant amounts of gear so they can be successful in applying their skills and knowledge learned at this event in the field. Each participant was equipped with a gun case, gun sling, gun cleaning kit, lanyard, Dean Downer custom made duck call, duck tote, canvas shell bag, and decoy bag to go along with their dozen Texas rigged decoys. Each attendee even got to go home with their very own new pair of waders to set them up for a successful start of their hunting journey.



2025 HCCRA YOUTH ACADEMY



Day 1 - August 8, 2025

After weeks of planning, collaborating, and strategizing, youth attendees started arriving to Legacy Acres for a weekend full of fun and learning at 10:00 am on August 8th. The attendees were able to mingle with each other, hang out in the lodge, and select their lodging for the next three days. One of the requirements for this Youth Academy is that all phones must be turned-in so the attendees can focus and immerse themselves in the learning environment while avoiding distractions. After an orientation of introductions, rules, safety regulations, and agenda outline, the weekend of learning commenced.

Friday's schedule of events was dedicated to firearms and archery. An extensive gun safety training seminar kicked off Friday's activities presented by the Williamsburg Trap Team to provide the attendees with life-long safety knowledge as well as safety skills for the remainder of the weekend since firearms would be involved in many of the subsequent workshops. Once the gun safety session was completed, attendees were able to use their shotguns and .22 rifles out on the Legacy Acres shooting ranges to start the Youth Academy with a fun few rounds of shooting sports. Additionally, the Solon Archery Team presented on archery and allowed the attendees to use their equipment to shoot some arrows downrange. Once the several hours of shooting and archery were completed, the HCCRA committee provided a seminar on Gun Cleaning Basics. Within the first afternoon, the youth attendees experienced the full realm of firearms training, all the way from fundamental safety knowledge, to shooting moving targets, to maintenance and cleaning of their dirty firearms.

After dinner, the youth attendees were able to unwind a bit from the fun afternoon with some survival skills. The group worked on fire starting techniques to be prepared in case they ever find themselves in a difficult situation. To end the evening, the kids and committee members had a camp fire and played lawn games, and prepared themselves for Saturday's full day ahead.

Day 2 - August 9, 2025

Saturday was slated as an action-packed day for both the youth attendees and the committee. The day started out with Hunting Safety & Laws with a presentation from Iowa DNR's Brad Baker who discussed waterfowl hunting rules and regulations in addition to boat laws & safety. Additionally, the HCCRA committee had waterfowl specimens provided by the Iowa DNR to discuss waterfowl identification with the attendees. The knowledge shared during this session as well as the following Q&A period provided invaluable information and knowledge to the attendees.

Next up was the waterfowl hunting breakout sessions of the Youth Academy. The 10 attendees broke into two groups so they could get more hands-on time with committee members in each waterfowl hunting component. The first component was waterfowl hunting over water and the second component was waterfowl hunting over a field.



2025 HCCRA YOUTH ACADEMY



Day 2 - August 9, 2025 (Continued)

In each section, attendees listened to knowledge from the Committee members as well as actually going through the steps and stages of a simulated hunt, by setting up a blind, setting decoys, and shooting blank rounds at thrown duck dummy's. Discussions in both components were had regarding scouting, hunting location selection, wind directions, blind type selection, blind placement, blind set-up/brushing, decoy types, decoy placement, gun safety, wading safety, shot calling, calling methods, dog accommodations, dog safety, and many other elements of a successful hunt. The Committee always enjoys discussing the insight of these hunting elements, and watching the kids apply these skills towards the simulated hunt.

After the waterfowl hunting segment, Lucky Duck's Ben Blood presented on Predator Management as well as hunting photography. Ben discussed species of predators as well as the importance of predator management, along with what types of firearms and technology (infrared, electronic calls, range finders, etc.) are used to successfully hunt predators. After Ben's presentation, all the youth attendees were able to fire Ben's high powered rifles with suppressors at simulated targets.

Following up on predator management was a presentation and workshop on Trapping with Mark from the Iowa Trapper's Association. Mark gave the attendees a thorough discussion on the art of trapping and thought processes required to successfully trap an animal. Mark also demonstrated a step-by-step process of actually setting the traps themselves. The youth participants had the opportunity to set jaw traps after learning about the mechanisms and processes involved with different trap types.

In conclusion of the full afternoon of learning new information and skills, the kids kicked it back a bit to enjoy a fishing derby. It was rapid action throughout the contest with each attendee trying to land a bigger fish than the next, while knowing there was a Largest Fish award up for grabs. Largemouth Bass, Bluegill, and even a few Crappie were caught. After dinner prepared by the Legendary Chef Mike (which everyone in attendance was incredibly appreciative of for all of the tremendous food), HCCRA Committee members demonstrated knife safety and how to clean the fish that the kids had caught earlier in the day. The group enjoyed another evening campfire together with more lawn games and campfire deserts, and it was evident that the bonds and relationships were starting grow amongst the group based on the experiences they had already shared to this point.

Day 3 - August 10, 2025

The first two days of the 2025 Youth Academy went by in a blur, and the group was ready to make the best of their third and final day with still plenty of information left to learn. Sunday's focus was on retrievers and upland hunting. The day started up with seminars from HCCRA's committee members that are heavily involved in retriever training and hunt tests. The youth attendees then had had the chance to try casting HCCRA Retrievers to marks through several drills that they had learned during the morning session. All parties involved including the Committee,



2025 HCCRA YOUTH ACADEMY



Day 3 - August 10, 2025 (Continued)

dogs, and kids all had a blast. Following up on the retriever training was Retriever Care and First-Aid presented by Dr. Christine Wilkins from River Basin Veterinary. Dr. Christine discussed in great detail the many health issues that dog handlers could experience in their lifetime of owning a dog, and how handlers/owners can resolve or temporarily 'fix' these issues if encountered in the field prior to making it back to professional help. Dr. Christine brought her own dog to the event so that youth attendees could visually see and understand the many health factors they were discussing during this session.

The final breakout session of the weekend split the group into two workshops; upland hunting and duck/goose calling. The upland hunting session allowed for a presentation on upland hunting methods, safety, and working dogs. Following the seminar, the youth attendees were able to engage in a simulated upland hunt and shot live-birds for the dogs to retrieve! The duck/goose calling session finally gave an opportunity for the kids to learn how to successfully operate the calls that had been distributed to the kids on Day 1. These calls were graciously made and donated by Dean Downer for each kid in attendance! Throughout the weekend, the kids had been tooting on their calls sporadically, but after the HCCRA Committee gave an in-depth presentation on the correct calling sounds and methods to achieve these sounds, the kids were able to "successfully" mimic the sounds of waterfowl.

The 2025 HCCRA Youth Academy was once again an incredible success, with all youth attendees seeming to enjoy their time learning and experiencing many different aspects of the outdoor world. The HCCRA Committee itself always walks away from this event with a new rejuvenation and sense of appreciation for the younger generation that is striving to be stewards of the outdoor world. The Committee also takes away an abundance of knowledge and new skills learned from the expert presenters throughout the weekend.

HCCRA wants to thank all of the youth participants for attending the annual HCCRA Youth Academy. Your involvement, enthusiasm, cooperation, passion, interest, and desire for learning is what keeps HCCRA striving to support local youth involvement. HCCRA also wants to thank the participants parents for trusting in HCCRA and committing to their kids to experience the Youth Academy. HCCRA also wants to thank Legacy Acres and Chef Mike for the incredible lodging, grounds, accommodations, and food that was available throughout the weekend. Also a massive thanks and nod of appreciation to all the presenting experts that volunteered their time and shared insight at the Youth Academy! Lastly, HCCRA wants to thank its members and volunteers for the help and money raised throughout the year for efforts such as this Youth Academy. A 3-day event such as this is not an easy task, and it is made possible only through the fundraising campaigns that HCCRA members always show up for in full force. So, thank you to all of the people out there that made HCCRA's Annual Youth Academy possible. Though one of HCCRA's newest events, it has quickly become one of the most important elements of HCCRA's mission for local impacts to the outdoor community.



2025 HCCRA NESTING DAY



February 7th, 2026 marked the annual HCCRA nesting day where volunteers congregated at the Atherton Wetlands site to strategize, prepare, and embark on one of HCCRA's most important and enjoyable days of improving local waterfowl habitat! This year had one of the best volunteer turnouts that HCCRA has ever experienced, with nearly 40 participants ranging from life-long participants to new-comers! HCCRA was amazed by the outpouring of support for this great opportunity to directly impact local duck nesting. The volunteers broke into several different groups to delegate HCCRA's nesting structures over the vast region of coverage. Excitement is always high as the groups depart with the opportunity to see the results of last years' efforts, as well as knowing the importance of the task at hand to local duck numbers. HCCRA has nesting structures at many wetland locations across east central Iowa, including Atherton Wetlands, Lake McBride, Coralville Reservoir, Wakpicada Natural Area, Pinicon Ridge, Goose Lake, Chain Lakes, Palo Marsh, Ellis Park, the Bird Preserve, Rock Island Preserve, and several other locations in Iowa, Clinton, Muscatine, Louisa, Johnson, and Linn Counties available for the upcoming nesting season. Tasks for volunteers were to clean out structures of old nesting material, eggs, and any debris and replace with new bedding to provide a safe and effective nesting area. Volunteers also were to inspect and record the usage and egg count for each nesting structure. Existing structures were also to be evaluated for damage and repaired/replaced if possible. Volunteers headed off to their respective areas with jet sleds, ice augers, hammers, fence post drivers, drills, wrenches, DuckHuts, bedding material, metal posts, and a bunch of energy and excitement for a busy day ahead! Also in regards to Atherton Wetlands, HCCRA replaced the water control gate for improved management in 2025! This gate project will help with controlling water levels in the complex.



2026 HCCRA NESTING DAY



From 2022 to 2026, HCCRA has more than doubled their available nesting structures to a current number of 218 available for the 2025 nesting season. The high level of participation from HCCRA members and volunteers make a world of difference for maintaining this volume of nesting structures. HCCRA Conservation Chair Eric Harris has led this initiative and analyzed the data since 2015. Since 2015, there has been an astonishing 3,036 total eggs laid in HCCRA's nesting structures, with 617 eggs laid in 2025 alone! Utilization rate of HCCRA Nesting Structures in 2025 was 50%, which is a solid use rate. That number leads to an exponential increase of waterfowl in the region, all thanks to the donations and efforts by HCCRA members. These nesting structures are so critical because nesting waterfowl encounter predators and dangers on a daily basis. These dangers include anything from animals, to humans, to environmental factors. Common predators in Iowa including coyotes, fox, racoon, skunk, mink, possum, crows, hawks, eagles, and many other animals or birds that look at nesting waterfowl as vulnerable targets. Flooding or drought conditions also can disrupt nesting patterns though as well. Therefore, Eric Harris strategically plans where HCCRA's nesting structures are located to provide a safe nesting area for waterfowl, as well as being located in areas with abundance of habitat for the nesting hen to remain close to the nests. HCCRA primarily uses DuckHut boxes for nesting structures, and typically observes better success in these boxes when compared to wooden structures due to structural integrity, longevity, air vents, and overall solid construction. The DuckHut boxes are easier to maintain and inspect compared to traditional wood structures also.

NESTING SEASON	HOUSES AVAILABLE FOR PRODUCTION (#)	UTILIZATION RATE (%)	TOTAL EGG PRODUCTION
2025	218	50	617
2024	144	50	512
2023	144	52	536
2022	98	55	407
2021	104	58	428
2020	107	50	98
2019	63	62	113
2018	44	13	64
2017	41	22	168
2016	38	44	63
2015	17	44	30

2026 HCCRA NESTING DAY



2026 HCCRA NESTING DAY

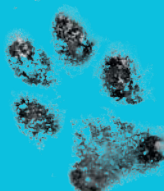


**HCCRA THANKS ALL OF THE VOLUNTEERS FOR THEIR TIME AND EFFORT IN ANOTHER OVERWHELMINGLY SUCCESSFUL HCCRA NESTING DAY!
#LOCAL CONSERVATION**

HCCRA DOG DAYS OF SUMMER



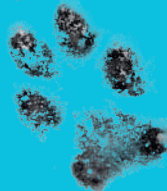
On May 3rd-May 4th, 2025, HCCRA (led by Vice President Jeremy Stolba) hosted the HCCRA 2025 Spring HRC Test at Legacy Acres in Parnell, IA. On May 3rd, there were 27 Finished Entries, 9 Seasoned Entries, and 12 Started Entries. On May 4th, there were 28 Finished Entries, 8 Seasoned Entries, and 11 Started Entries. Judges were Mark Leahy, Royce Meyenburg, Mark Raskie, Jeff Hunke, Doug Powell, Josh Osborn, Gene Figge, and Dean Lange.



HCCRA DOG DAYS OF SUMMER



On June 7th and 8th, 2025, HCCRA (led by NAHRA Chairman Dake Dietrich) hosted the HCCRA NAHRA 2025 Hunt Test at Legacy Acres in Parnell, Iowa. There were 11 Senior Entries, 2 Intermediate Entries, and 2 Started Entries on both event days, and 1 Hunter Entry on June 7th and 2 Hunter Entries on June 8th. Judges were Adam Ackerman and Brandon Smith. There were 23 passed entries over the course of the weekend!

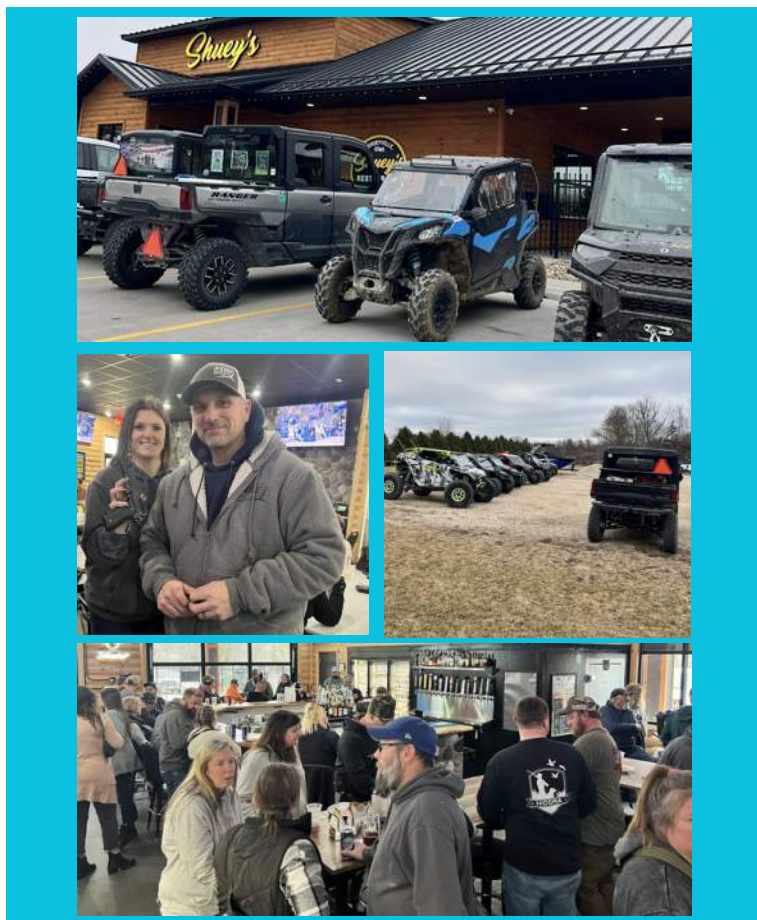


HCCRA would like to extend a huge thanks to all the participants, judges, and volunteers that made the 2025 Retriever Test season a great success. There is a lot of planning and effort that is needed to host these events, and without the help and participation, the tests wouldn't be the overwhelming successes that they are. Also, a MASSIVE thanks to Legacy Acres in Parnell, Iowa which has been hosting HCCRA hunt tests the last couple years. They have been outstanding partners and supporters of HCCRA, and their incredible facilities and staff have been a great asset to the mission of HCCRA. Please thank them for their contributions and check out their great services for your next outdoor adventure!

HCCRA UTV POKER RUN



March 7th, 2026 marked the third annual HCCRA 'Straight Slush' UTV Poker Run, with all proceeds benefitting Hoosier Creek Conservation and Retriever Association. After two incredibly successful events in years prior, HCCRA didn't hesitate in planning a third annual Straight Sligh UTV Poker Run. Registration started at 10:00 AM at Shuey's in Shueyville, Baxa's Sutliff Store & Tavern in Sutliff, or Wild Hogs in Walford. Subsequent stops were scheduled for Buff's, Black Squirrel, Mikey's, Star Bar & Grill, House Divided, Whitey's, Bill's Tap, Bully's Angle Inn, and Swisher Club 671 (Legion). All money raised from poker hands went directly to HCCRA, where the money will be used for local waterfowl and habitat conservation, retriever training and hunt tests, and youth involvement/recruitment. It was a chilly, but great day of riding and poker hand dealing, that also helped to support the participating businesses! Participants could purchase poker hands, and the highest hands dealt would win some great prizes at the end of the ride! Up for grabs was a handgun, yeti cooler, and many other outstanding items. There were 50+ UTV's that registered for the ride and many Poker Hands purchased for a chance at the grate slate of prizes! After yet another great ride, HCCRA fully expects to have another 'Straight Slush' ride next year, so mark your calendars for early March and be ready to hit the trails to support local conservation in 2026!



HCCRA thanks all of the local businesses, bars, restaurants, volunteers, and supporters for another incredibly successful HCCRA Straight Slush UTV Poker Run!

DR. CHRISTINE'S CORNER



Dr. Christine Wilkin of River Basin Veterinary Service has been an outstanding and valued supporter and partner of HCCRA for years. She has provided HCCRA members with incredible knowledge on retrievers from a veterinary perspective, and is now sharing insight with members through our **BLIND BANTER** section called '**Dr. Christine's Corner**'. HCCRA is excited to share her expertise with all of our readers!

When Days Turn Grey; Hunting the Senior Dog

Watching our bird dogs age is such a blessing. There is no greater joy than experiencing our dogs perform as expected after countless hours and years of training. But it is inevitable that our hunting companion will age and become less resilient and exhibit signs of wear and tear. Although a grey muzzle doesn't mean our hunting days are over; if the body and drive is there, keep on hunting. But we need to be conscientious owners and understand that our devoted senior companion will need some accommodations and limitations.

Most hunting breeds have an average life span of 10-14 years. At seven years of age our hunting companion is considered a senior. With that said, genetics, stress, comorbidities or illness and body condition are all variables that can influence the aging process. Teaming with your veterinarian for annual or biannual senior exams and discussion on health concerns along with some modifications will help facilitate more days hunting with your senior dog.

Health concerns that need to be monitored and addressed in our senior dogs are the digestive system, weight, mobility, vision, hearing, and internal organs like heart, liver, and kidneys.

Digestive System

The digestive tract starts with teeth and dental care is an important part of digestive health. Have your veterinarian perform an oral exam for dental tartar, bacterial infection, tooth fractures, and oral cancer. Dental issues can result in poor mastication or chewing, resulting in weight loss. Bacterial infections can lead to a systemic infection effecting the heart, liver and kidneys.

Close attention to body condition is important in all dogs but especially our senior dog. Senior dogs can tend to gain weight as the metabolism slows and mobility issues develop. With the aging process the gastrointestinal tract can develop the inability to digest and absorb nutrients resulting in the thin senior dog. Feeding a high quality, highly digestible diet and consulting with your veterinarian or a canine nutritionist is advised especially if encountering a change in body condition.



Mobility

Joint, tendon and ligament wear and tear are common place in our sporting dogs. Slow and subtle changes will occur first: hesitation to jump or use stairs, slower using stairs, slower gait, and stiffness or shorter stride. As mobility issues progress we start to appreciate muscle atrophy or loss, notable lameness or favoring a leg, and difficulty getting up. Maintaining a healthy weight is beneficial in addition to a conversation with your veterinarian about pain management. The mainstay for arthritis has been non steroidal anti inflammatories (NSAID's) and joint supplements. Both are still the foundation of treatment, but new modalities are always becoming available to help keep our companions comfortable. Librela is a newer, monthly injection that is a canine anti nerve growth monoclonal antibody that is indicated for the control of arthritic pain. Other modalities include intra articular or in the joint injections. Several different products maybe injected in the joint to relieve pain; steroids, stem cells, osteocushion products, and plasma rich platelets to name a few. Also available are shockwave and laser therapies, physical therapy and rehab, chiropractics and acupuncture. Consultation with your veterinarian can help determine which modalities may be most beneficial.

Vision and Hearing

A gradual loss of vision and hearing are a natural sequela to aging. Vision can be nuclear sclerosis in which the lens get bluish or advances into a cataract. These lens changes can result in decreased vision in dark areas and changes in depth perception. Labrador retrievers can also develop progressive retinal atrophy which is an inherited eye disease that will lead to blindness.

Hearing will also potentially gradually fade, with the hunter noting "selective hearing", perceived disobedience or a dog slow to recognize commands, being startled, failing to wake up or heavier sleeping.

With these changes owners need to make accommodations to maintain the safety of their senior dog, like visual commands and monitoring location.

Internal Organs

Your veterinarian will exam your senior hunting dog not only for body condition, mobility, vision and hearing but also internal organs. The heart needs to be assessed for a murmur or arrhythmia, lungs for a cough, increased respiratory effort and laryngeal paralysis. The abdomen will be palpated for any enlarged organs or palpable cancer. Blood work may be recommended to monitor for anemia, infection,

DR. CHRISTINE'S CORNER



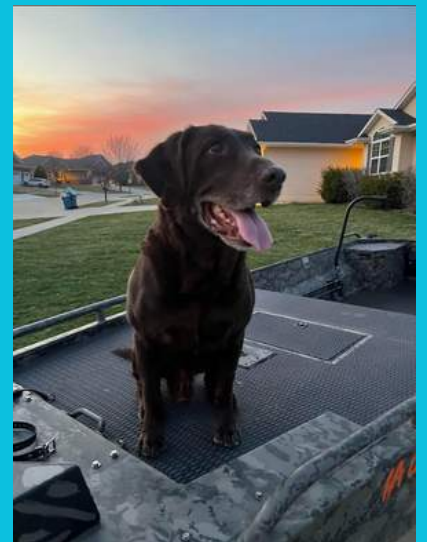
and decreased function of liver, kidneys, and thyroid. If the veterinarian suspects an issue radiographs or an ultrasound may be recommended to further investigate. There are also blood screens now available to screen for certain cancers.

Accommodations

The duration and intensity of hunting with the senior dog will need to be adapted to prevent over exertion, joint strain and injury. While the senior dog may still have the drive, their energy and stamina are not like the young dog, so may have to shorten the hunt or offer longer recovery breaks. Pay close attention to subtle changes that your companion maybe exhibiting during the hunt and make adjustments as needed. Be mindful that older dogs cannot thermoregulate as well, so hydration is very important. If upland hunting, realize that thick grass or difficult terrain with hills will add a toll to our old dog, so monitor for exertion and overheating (excessive panting, red dry gums, thick ropy saliva, fatigue). In the cold months duck hunters will need to monitor dogs for hypothermia (dilated pupils, trembling/shaking, fatigue). Provide neoprene vests, warm area to recover and avoid ice and fast currents.

Conclusion

Taking good care of our companions over their lifetime can play a role to prolong their longevity and active hunting years. Hopefully your senior dog will have the drive and grit to continue to hunt, but realize that their bodies and brain are slowly changing. To help maintain enjoyable retirement years with your senior hunter have an annual veterinary exam, continue a healthy diet, strive to maintain an active weight and provide controlled exercise.



CREEKER'S KITCHEN



Creeker's Kitchen is devoted towards the culinary art of winged game, 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: **SESAME DUCK STIR FRY**

INGREDIENTS:

- ~1.5 lbs of boneless, skinless duck breasts
- 10 - 15 oz of Cookie's Korean Stir Fry Sauce
- 1-2 Tbsp of Sesame Oil
- 1 Tbsp Soy Sauce
- ½ Tsp of Sesame Seeds
- ½ Tsp of Choice of Seasoning (Recommended Meat Church Holy Gospel)
- 2 Tbsp of Minced Garlic
- ½ Tsp of Black Pepper
- 1 Crown of Fresh or 1 Bag of Frozen Broccoli
- 8 Oz of Fresh or Frozen Snap Peas
- 1 Large Yellow Onion
- 1 Red Bell Pepper
- 1 Green Bell Pepper
- 1 Cup Thinly Sliced Carrots
- 2 Celery Stalks
- 1 ½ Tsp Cornstarch (mixed with 2 Tbsp of water to form a cornstarch slurry)
- 3 Tbsp of Tallow or Lard
- 1 Package of KA-ME Udon Noodles

PREPARATION:

- Legally harvest ducks, clean, and let breasts soak in water solution 1 - 2 days.
- Remove breasts from water solution, rinse, and pat dry.
- Thinly slice breasts on cutting board, while carefully examining breasts for remaining bird shot.
- Tenderize duck breasts (check out a Jaccard Knife Tenderizer, highly recommended!)
- In a large bowl, add duck breasts and Cookie's Korean Stir Fry Sauce, sesame oil, soy sauce, choice of seasoning, minced garlic, and black pepper. Cover and let rest in refrigerator for 2+ days and stir daily.

COOKING:

- When ready to cook, preheat your cooking device (griddle recommended) to a medium heat.
- As cooking device is preheating, slice bell peppers and yellow onion into strips as well as cut heads off of crown of broccoli and dice up celery, then mix together with sliced carrots and snap peas.
- Add tallow/lard and a dash of sesame oil along with vegetable medley to cooking device. Cook until fork tender.
- Prepare cornstarch slurry and add to duck breast mix along while vegetable medley is cooking.
- Once vegetables are cooked, move to the side or place in a large bowl.
- Sear duck breasts for ~1 minute on a high heat, do not overcook duck breast.
- Along with the meat, add in Udon noodles and cooked vegetable medley on a medium / low heat.
- Add remainder of Cookie's Korrean Stir Fry Sauce to the mixture.
- Cook noodles for 1-2 minutes.
- Garnish the stir fry with sesame seeds, plate, and serve! (Recipe feeds ~4 people).



Recipe Credit: Eric Harris



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MARCH 2026

ISSUE 7

BLIND BANTER

Hoosier Creek Conservation & Retriever Association Newsletter

