

ISSUE 1 - WINTER 2025

THE TRACKER

MICHIGAN CHAPTER SCI



LION AND
**SHIELD
PROJECT**

WHAT TO
**DO THIS
SPRING**

KEEPING MICHIGAN
SAFARI MEMBERS
ON THE RIGHT TRACK

THE OLD RIFLE AND

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SCI'S PURPOSE AND INTENT

- A. To promote good fellowship among all who love the outdoors and hunting.
- B. To promote conservation of the world's renewable wildlife resources, recognizing hunting as one of the many management tools.
- C. To educate youth, sportsmen and the public in conservation of our wildlife and our forests, which are our natural heritage.
- D. To share our hunting experiences and information among our membership.
- E. To operate the association as a non-profit organization, consistent with its charitable purposes, while providing enjoyment for our members, always with the goal of helping to conserve the animals that we love to hunt today for those who will come to love the sport tomorrow.

SCI'S CODES OF ETHICS

Recognizing my responsibilities to wildlife, habitat and future generations, I pledge:

- A. To conduct myself in the field so as to make a positive contribution to wildlife and ecosystems.
- B. To improve my skills as a woodsman and marksman to ensure humane harvesting of wildlife.
- C. To comply with all game laws in the spirit of fair chase, and to influence my companions accordingly.
- D. To accept my responsibility to provide all possible assistance to game law enforcement officers.
- E. To waste no opportunity to teach young people the full meaning of this code of ethics.
- F. To reflect in word and behavior only credit upon the fraternity of sportsmen, and to demonstrate abiding respect for game, habitat and property where I am privileged to hunt.

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THE OLD RIFLE AND A BLACK BEAR

As every good story must, our tale began long before I actually walked into the wild. For me, it started with the traditions that built my family. Traditions that would help shape the man I am today.



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WHAT TO DO THIS SPRING?

Winter is now here, and the convention season is in full swing where many folks will buy a hunt. But, many people are anticipating golfing and boating too. Like me, you may be going to Africa this summer.





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LION AND SHIELD PROJECT

Teaming up with Ivan Carter and his foundation, our chapter has been an integral supporter of the Lion & Shield project at Zambeze Delta Safaris (ZDS) in the Coutada 11 area of Mozambique for nearly 10 years.

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STOOPING POWER



EDITOR'S NOTES:

Welcome to the Winter Issue of the Tracker. I'd like to give a big shout out to the members who have contributed to this issue. Without your contributions this magazine wouldn't have been possible. Ben Grooters submitted a great story about a U.P. bear hunt with Wild Spirit Guide Service. Dan Olsen once again brings us along on another adventure. This time to the wilds of Mozambique where he and fellow chapter member Todd Cook hunted with Zambezi Delta Safaris. Dakoya Greenman takes us on a dove and pigeon hunt in Argentina where fast action, comradery, luxury, and relaxation are the rule. Each of these hunts was with an outfitter who supports the work of our chapter and SCI International.

In this issue we will also be focusing on who we are and what we do as the Michigan Chapter of Safari Club International.

By the time this issue reaches you most of our North American hunting will be done. Did you have a memorable hunt this year? Maybe you went west or to Alaska. Maybe you took a young person on their first hunt. Maybe you finally closed the deal on that big old buck you'd been after for years. We'd love to read about it. Also, don't forget about our member picture pages. We'd love to see pictures of your trophies, adventures, and unique trail cam photos. This magazine is for you, our members, and is at its best when you contribute to it.

As always, we do reserve the right, in our sole discretion, to edit or refuse any submission. If you would like to submit an article or pictures, please send them to: trmoelker@gmail.com or 5132 20th Ave. Hudsonville, MI 49426, or call me at 616-889-1003.

Thank you,

Todd Moelker Editor

PREZ SEZ

SCI

**READY TO KICK OFF 2025 AT SCI MICHIGAN'S ANNUAL FUNDRAISER?
THIS EVENT SERVES AS OUR PRIMARY SOURCE OF FUNDING TO
PROMOTE, PROTECT, AND PRESERVE THE FUTURE OF HUNTING.**

Now, more than ever, hunting faces challenges both locally and globally. If you are concerned about your right to hunt, as well as the opportunities for your children and grandchildren to do the same, it's crucial to get involved.

Participating is simple! Here are some ways you can help:

- Attend the fundraiser
- Stay overnight at the hotel
- Bring a friend or invite another couple
- Bid on and purchase hunts and items
- Donate to the Michigan Chapter
- Volunteer at our events
- Join our Board
- Attend monthly meetings and events
- Bring guests to our monthly gatherings
- Share our events on social media
- Connect with businesses to sponsor our events and chapter
- Personally sponsor our events and chapter
- Spread the word

While many of you have participated in the past, the fight for hunting continues, and we still need your support! Together, we can unite under SCI and ensure a thriving future for hunting for generations to come. I look forward to seeing you at our next event. Thank you for the impact you have made and continue to make!

*Dr. Michael Kwast
President
SCI Michigan Chapter*

ATTENTION SCI Michigan Members

Important information for our members such as chapter events, meetings and membership renewals will be emailed to every member that we have an email address for. If you didn't get an email reminder of our last meeting we do not have your email address. Please send your email to mvghareeb@gmail.com so we can get all of our emails on the list.

MICHIGAN CHAPTER UPCOMING EVENTS

Thursday, January 9

Monthly Dinner Meeting *Big Buck Night*

Friday And Saturday February 7-8

2025 Fundraiser Convention

Thursday, March 13

Monthly Dinner Meeting *Youth Night*

March 22, 2025

Save The Date: Youth Pheasant Hunt

Thursday, April 10

Monthly Dinner Meeting

Thursday, May 8

Monthly Dinner Meeting: Buy Sell Trade Night

JULY 2, 2025

SCI Michigan Chapter Night at the Whitecaps

August 8, 2025

Save The Date: Long Range Shoot



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The Tracker magazine can be viewed on our official Michigan Chapter website by friends and nonmembers. website: www.scimichigan.org

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SCI-MI MEMBER DINNER

OCTOBER

About 70 adults and kids gathered to enjoy an evening of fellowship, networking, and tall tales about successful hunts.

There was more than one member proudly showing off pictures and telling stories about their Michigan bear hunts! Chapter president, Mike Kwast, opened with a few announcements and prayer. Jamie Flewelling led us in the Pledge of Allegiance. A hearty dinner of smoked chicken and pulled pork, with donuts for dessert, was enjoyed by all.

An exciting announcement was made relative to the growth of SCI and our continued efforts better facilitating conservation and hunter's rights around the world. A new umbrella organization has been formed to incorporate stakeholders from hunting and fishing conservation organizations around the world! Sporting Conservation International is the name of the new organization. It keeps the familiar SCI acronym and captures the essence and purpose of who we are and our goal of being even more effective as the world leaders in fighting for conservation. We were reminded that our SCI International and Michigan Chapter memberships are having a huge impact in West Michigan, throughout the United States, and around the world.

Your membership and participation are vital to protecting and increasing hunter rights and conservation.

Pete VanderArk was surprised with a special Outstanding Member Award for his many years of service to the Chapter. Pete's years as copy editor of the Tracker magazine are especially appreciated! Thank you, Pete. It is volunteers like you who make our Chapter what it is!

After dinner we were treated to a very interesting program by Sam and Danielle Fahl. They spoke about their "piece of heaven" named Paradise Canyon Ranch. It is in Old Mexico. As various videos and pictures scrolled on the screen, Sam told us about how enjoyable it is to observe and study the various wildlife interactions in an unpressured environment. The 18 square mile property is home to whitetail deer, mountain lions, black bears, javelina, and Gould's turkey as well as cattle. If you would like to learn more, Sam and Danielle have a Facebook page. Just search Paradise Canyon Ranch to locate them.

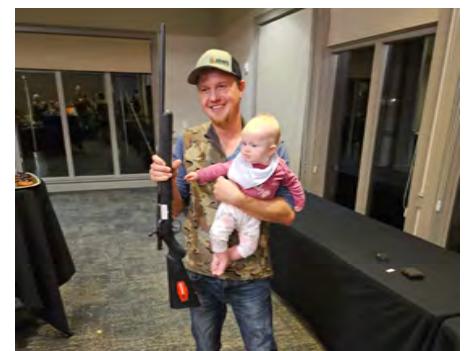
As usual, the evening wrapped up with a bunch of door prize winners as well as the youth, gun, and jewelry raffle winners:

Lilly Naber, our youngest youth member to win a gun, won the youth gun for the second month in a row! If she's as lucky hunting as she is winning guns, she'll be a trophy awards winner by the time she's five! Annabelle Rimbey won the jewelry. A beautiful amethyst necklace and earrings!

Bill MacDermaid won the Ruger American in 450 Bushmaster. Join us next month for another great evening of food, fellowship, and fun. There will probably even be a few hunting stories swapped!



Thank You Pete!



Lilly Naber wins again!



Annabelle Rimbey won the jewelry





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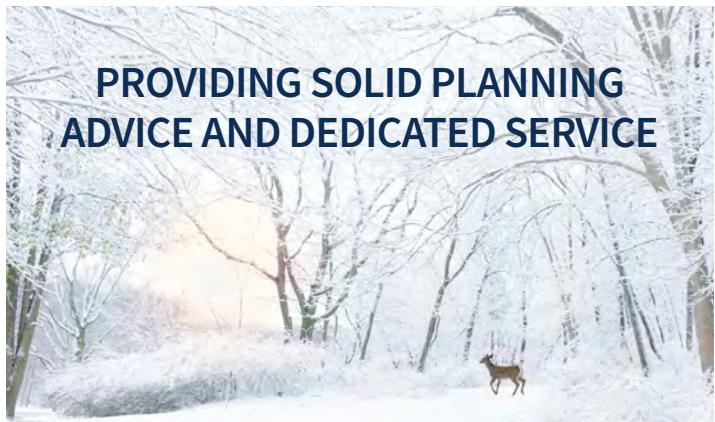
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Looking back on trends and changes from the 2024 deer season, a couple of things come to mind that made a real impact on how we hunt.

STORY BY PETE MIEDEMA LONG RANGE ARCHERY AND FIREARMS

Probably the biggest impact came from how we elevate to get above the deer's line of sight. This is year 3 of the saddle hunting explosion. For those not familiar with saddle hunting, it is the latest craze to hang from a tree supported by a cloth seat. The equipment needed to saddle hunt, is a set of light weight climbing sticks, a platform for your feet, and a cloth sling (saddle) to hang and pivot from a tree, supported by ropes. We wonder how many hunters are still in the market that have not tried saddle hunting yet? Researchers have concluded that there will likely be one more year of

growth and then the market will be driven by replacements and upgrades. As our hunting population continues to age, we also see a shift from tree stands and ground blinds to ladder stands and hard sided blinds. Both of these options add ease of use, comfort, and safety to our hunts. As you look forward to 2025, will you be changing up your gear for improved ease of use, safety, comfort, or flexibility to roam? Whatever gear you choose, if you're hunting off the ground, make sure that safety lines are a part of your kit!





TERRY BLAUWKAMP

WHAT TO DO THIS SPRING

Winter is now here, and the convention season is in full swing where many folks will buy a hunt.

But, many people are anticipating golfing and boating too. Like me, you may be going to Africa this summer.

Regardless of whether you are heading to Africa or going on a North American hunt, your ammo and bullet choices will depend on what you are going to shoot, and under what conditions. I am constantly asked the question that if I had to choose, would I take a light and fast bullet, or a heavy and slower one? Throw that one out when sitting around the campfire some night and hang on, because that discussion will last all night! One must certainly consider several factors. The basic factors are what game animals are we hunting and under what conditions.

I certainly would not take slow and heavy if I were going after antelope on the wide-open prairies, nor would I take a light and fast bullet if I were hunting whitetails in the swamps and woods. You need to find a common medium for the conditions in which you are going to hunt.

Energy, (i.e. ft. lbs.) is not a true guideline as to what gun or ammunition to use. Push a light bullet fast enough and it will give you incredible numbers. Get a bullet heavy enough and you do not have to push it very fast to get the same ft. lbs. as the light fast bullet. Then factor in bullet construction and it all changes again.

Extraordinary circumstances also come to mind. A fellow just recently called to ask what he should take to Africa for the little duikers and steenboks. He was thinking of a .243 Winchester or a .22 Hornet with light recoil. I will take the opposite position in that I want a slower and heavier bullet for the little guys just like I want for the big guys. Right about now, I'll bet that statement has many of the readers sitting up straight and wide-awake. The reason I say this is because the meat and hide destruction on any animal with an impact velocity of over 2,800 fps is awesome.

I have shot those little animals with a .308 Winchester using 150-grain bullets plus several calibers on up to a .375 H&H Magnum with 300-grain bullets. I have found that a 300-grain bullet with a muzzle velocity of 2,400 fps will do a lot less damage than a .308 Winchester with 150-grain bullets at 2,800 fps.

Why? Because bullet construction coupled with velocity are the major factors. The big 300-grain bullet is designed to penetrate big animals like eland, Cape buffalo, brown bears, etc. It will just punch a hole through a little animal, sort of like a solid.

If you would like to chat about your specific upcoming trip, you can contact Terry at BlauwkampT@gmail.com or call 616-669-9464.

Now for another factor. Taking a 7mm STW or 6.5 Weatherby in the woods for a 100-yard shot is not my idea of the way to go either. Because that super-fast bullet will really do some serious meat damage, and most hunters love their venison.

Consider the fall hunting seasons here in North America. Odds are that many hunters will be after elk or moose on the large side of the coin, and Texas deer, or Wyoming antelope on the flip side of the coin. For the elk-size game, I certainly recommend a .30-06 Springfield or any of the .300 Magnums, with 180-grain bullets being my first choice. For those going only for deer, be it whitetails or mule deer, conditions will vary again as they can be in the thick woods or on the plains like an antelope. My first choice would be to use a .270 Winchester or a 7mm Remington Magnum for long range hunting, but most important is to use a gun you can place the first shot accurately at 200+ yards.

Would you like a few more questions that will keep you around the campfire all night? What is the best bullet for deer, impala, springbok, or kudu, etc? A Nosler Ballistic Tip, Nosler Partition, or maybe a Trophy Bonded Bear Claw or Barnes TTSX bullet? These are four distinctly different bullets and construction. Each has its place.

If you really want to get the discussion going around the campfire some night, ask your guide or PH if they would rather have a bullet stay in the animal or would they rather have it pass through? Those are two completely different schools of thought. One idea is to have the bullet expend all of its energy INSIDE the animal and the other one says they want a pass through to create a better blood trail. The attached picture shows just why I want an exit hole. It bleeds well and the recovery trail is usually quite short.

Other questions constantly asked of me are, "What is the best case lube?" and "What is the best primer?" Also, "Who makes the best brass?" and "Why does my .270 Winchester shoot 130-grain bullets well, and shoot 150-grain bullets so poorly?"

There is just absolutely no end to the questions that are sent in. Most questions boil down to what is the easiest, fastest, or cheapest anything. There are no free rides in shooting. Haste makes waste and the faster the bullet goes the quicker the barrels wear out.

When purchasing reloading equipment, you also get what you pay for. So, buy the best equipment you can afford, as you are not likely to ever wear it out.

All bullets are good. But, all bullets are different as are primers. Use lots of common sense in all that you do.

Odds are, you have at least one gun in the rack that will do what you need. So, take it and spend time practicing with it. Use ammo and bullets designed for the job at hand. It doesn't matter if you reload or use some of the fine stuff that the factories now have available; nothing beats bullet placement.



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Who are we? What do we do?

STORY BY TODD MOELKER



We started as a club, as the name suggests. A group of hunters who got together to enjoy the camaraderie of fellow hunters. As the club grew and expanded it also began to focus on conservation and hunters' rights. Today, we are the world leader in lobbying for conservation and hunters' rights. It is a pitched battle for science-based conservation and hunters' rights, and we are leading the way. But we are also still a club, where fellow hunters meet to enjoy company, camaraderie, and events. We also impact communities from right here at home to around the world with our humanitarian efforts. Following are thank you notes from some of our humanitarian efforts along with recognition of the big win we were instrumental in achieving, in Colorado, where the cougar hunting ban was defeated by a wide margin. There are also pictures of two schools we helped build in Zambia. Schools that are still teaching hundreds of children. So then, who are we and what do we do? We are hunters actively engaged in the battle for conservation and hunter's rights as well as a club of members who enjoy each other's company at the various events we hold each year while also having a humanitarian impact around the world.



Just a few years ago Michigan Chapter members supported the building of two schools in Zambia under the supervision of Johnny Du Plooy. The chapter board at that time supported one teacher's salary for a year (\$2000). Since that time both schools are still functioning and one of them has been taken over by the Government's Department of Education. This means it will continue into the future completely funded. Please reflect on this when you think of the many ways our club helps others and that if our chapter never existed neither would either of these schools.

PROTECT THE FREEDOM TO HUNT



1. Anti-Hunters Waste No Time After Loss in Colorado With Their Next Petition in Arizona

Coming on the heels of a devastating ballot initiative loss in Colorado in which Safari Club International played a pivotal role, the anti-hunting establishment is wasting no time during the holiday season with forum shopping their next hunting ban. The Center for Biological Diversity, Mountain Lion Foundation, Sierra Club Grand Canyon Chapter, WildEarth Guardians, Lobos of the Southwest, and Wildlife for All, filed a petition with the Arizona Game and Fish Commission to prohibit recreational hounding – using hunting with dogs to take mountain lions, bobcats, black bears, foxes, coyotes, coatis, ringtails, and other mammals. The petition must be acted upon within 60 days, likely placing the issue on the January Commission meeting. As was done in Colorado, SCI will continue to fight for the freedom to hunt and oppose the behavior of those who seek to destroy what we cherish. SCI is always FIRST FOR HUNTERS.

Chapter members, congratulations on a job well done! Our Michigan Chapter and SCI International were instrumental in the successful fight against the ballot initiative to ban mountain lion and bobcat hunting in Colorado. We won with 55.5% of voters saying no to this ill-advised ban in what is otherwise a very blue state! But the battle continues. We must remain actively engaged and your continued help is needed.

FISHING CHARTER UPDATE

Hello Denny,

Our students loved getting to go charter fishing with Powderhorn Fishing Charters! It is such a great opportunity for our students to get to try something new that they most likely wouldn't have an opportunity to do. The whole experience from start to finish is awesome. Whether we are catching a lot of fish or hardly any, the kids have a blast. Captain Tim and Rosie make it the best experience with their many different stories. They are great with the kids and they love them. The excitement and smiles on their faces when they get to reel in a fish is priceless! Thank you to everyone at SCI that help make this possible for our students to go on these trips.

Here are some comments from the students about the fishing trip:

"Riding on the boat was so much fun! I got to pretend to 'surf' the waves." - Anthony

"I liked learning how to catch big fish and watching the fish finder with Captain Tim. It was so relaxing that I fell asleep on the boat." - Ben

"It was cool to see the variety of different talents that Captain Tim and Rosie have that when put together provides students with an enjoyable experience for all on the boat."

- Mike, Teacher

"Going to Doc's house afterward for lunch was fun because we got to see all his cool animals and hear the many different stories that he has from his trips. The food was also yummy!"

- Charlee

"It was fascinating to see fish on the fish finder and how the temperature plays a part in catching fish. I loved watching the excitement on everyone's face when they got to reel in their fish." - Eli

-MacKenzie Westra

WE THANK YOU

9/18/24

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Stacey -

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Ruth



Greetings,

Michigan Outdoor Wishmakers' mission is to make outdoor adventures come true for children, young adults, and veterans that would otherwise not be able to experience them due to life threatening illness and/or disabilities. Once again, this year we did our "American Heroes Spring Turkey Hunt" for two American veterans. We took out Adam and Chad. They both were successful in harvesting a turkey, but to say it was easy would not be the truth. Year after year we learn so much about these elusive birds. In the Fall we took out 3 young people, Dylan, Levi, and Sam on our third annual "Friends of MOW Memorial Whitetail Hunt." All three of them had an amazing experience and brought home some nice deer as well. Our last hunt for the 2023 was our "American Veteran's Whitetail Hunt", where we took Ron, Chris, and Lois. All three of our hunters were deserving Vietnam veterans. Each of our events in 2023 ended with great success. As always, we don't measure our success by the harvest, but by the experience!

Our hunts were held at beautiful Allen Creek Ranch again, where we get to enjoy nature and each other's company. We were in the blinds hunting every morning and evening. Afternoons consisted of yard games, archery instruction and target shooting, a hayride, a shed hunt, and even took the kids of our memorial hunt out for some afternoon fishing! Once again, we had a lodge full of people to include the hunters, a parent or guest for each hunter, the board members, the ranch owners, our volunteers, and even some of our sponsors stopped in for a visit. All these people add a warmth to the lodge that cannot be described. Not one person went hungry due to the amazing meals that were provided by you, our generous sponsors.

On the last night of each hunt we do our "Round Table". The whole group sits down in the lodge or around the bonfire and each person shares with the group how their experience was and their favorite part of the trip. This is a time for everyone to reflect on their story, their struggles, and their joys. We share lots of laughs, tears, and hugs during the conversation. This is the point when complete strangers, who have been building friendships through the hunt, become family. Michigan Outdoor Wishmakers is so happy that our family has grown through these hunts. After the round table our hunters go around and have everyone sign a shed antler and our veterans receive challenge coins. These are meant to be keepsakes from the adventures to remind them that they are now part of this bigger family, the Michigan Outdoor Wishmakers' family.

Hunt 2 Heal
3230 Jefferson Ave SE,
Grand Rapids, MI 49508

February 13, 2024

Safari Club International Michigan Chapter
PO Box 1807
Grand Rapids, MI 49501

Dear Safari Club International Michigan Chapter,

Thank you for your generous gift of \$5,000.00 that you made on 2/13/2024. Every act of your generosity helps us further our mission. Your gift will help us get more people back into the outdoors to experience nature, camaraderie, and emotional and spiritual well-being.

Your gift is allowing us to realize a dream. It's great to get back out into the woods. All that I have wanted to do is to share the hunting experience that gave me my life back so that I can help as many others who might also be experiencing a life-changing disability. It was the thing that helped me more than anything else.

Thank you again for your most generous support and your willingness to make a difference.

Sincerely,

Carson Nyenhuys
Founder

Hunt 2 Heal

If you have any questions, please contact Kim Monks, Executive Director at:
(616) 610-0252
kim@hun2heal.org
3718 28th St. SW
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Hunt 2 Heal is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation. No goods or services were provided to you in return for your donation. Charitable contributions are tax deductible to the extent provided by law. Please keep this written acknowledgement of your donation for your tax records.



April 17, 2024

SCI Friends
Safari Club International
PO Box 1807
Grand Rapids, MI 49501-1807

Sincerely,

Ashley Van Zee
Ashley Van Zee
Development Director

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STORY BY DAKOYTA GREENMAN

Hunting stories often carry adjectives like “daunting,” “perilous,” or simply “difficult.” I’ll admit, I am drawn to those narratives. They evoke a sense of adventure and accomplishment that transcends our mundane daily lives. There is an undeniable link between the level of suffering endured and the overwhelming feeling of achievement. I’m as much a victim of this allure as the next person. My quest for hunts takes me to some of the most remote, logically complicated locations, and sometimes even to pursuits where success seems improbable.

Most hunters, I assume, who are a part of Safari Club International (SCI) and who may be reading this, find joy not only in the final harvest of game but more so in the preparatory work and time spent in the field. It’s as if the journey itself becomes the reward. Perhaps this sentiment is ingrained in the very fabric of our Michigan hunting community. Or maybe it stems from shared experiences on State Land, where the familiar conversation echoes “Did you see anything today?” The response, if not “no”, invites both admiration and playful banter.

To set the stage, this hunting trip was the complete opposite of the ones I previously described. Before I dive into the luxurious experience we had with HP Wingshooting Adventures, let me take you back to the night this adventure began, in February 2022, at our annual SCI Michigan Chapter fundraiser. After winning the bid for just over \$200, I faced the task of selecting the hunters who would join me. While it sounds simple, you either invest time in choosing the right team from the start or spend the hunt wishing you were elsewhere. Fortunately, I had the perfect team in mind.



When they couldn't make it, I decided to bring along my Uncle, Dan Mack, from Kalamazoo, Michigan. We were also accompanied by my lifelong friend, Adali Ladd, from Grand Rapids.

I presented Dan with the invitation through a gift certificate on his 50th birthday. It formally invited him to be a part of this expedition to include pigeon, dove, and golden dorado fishing. At the time, I thought myself quite clever for the idea, not only for the certificate, but doing it in a public setting so he couldn't say no. Upon later reflection, I think it was more in parallel to providing him with a bill he didn't want for an experience he didn't ask for. But, if you talk to Dan today and ask him about it, I have no doubt you will be met with a warm smile. He will happily regale you with stories from the trip with extreme gratitude for being a part of it. Adali, on the other hand, was much easier to plan for. He only needed a simple prompting of the question "I have a bird hunting trip in Argentina for 7 days; do you want in?"

For those who have not had the pleasure of going to South America (specifically Argentina), there are some fundamental aspects in their culture which we ascertained through our observations

and were reflected in our hunt. First and foremost, their roasted meats are unlike anything I have ever tasted. Secondly, while punctual, the culture embraces a leisurely pace that feels romantically foreign compared to our stress-filled schedules in the States. Lastly, and this was a consistent theme throughout our trip but particularly evident during our experiences with HP Wingshooting Adventures, the people of Argentina are incredibly hospitable and accommodating.

Our first day hunting pigeons on the ranch was an experience none of us will soon forget. Argentina is cattle country. Large swathes of the land in Central/Northern Argentina are dedicated to these cattle ranches. This has given rise to an avian population that has exploded to biblical proportions over the past few decades. This situation is currently destroying up to 60-70% of the nation's crop yields. The first flight on the ranch that greeted us were the parakeets. They numbered in the millions and flew in a symphonic rhythm. Not only did this mesmerize our imaginations, it provided an almost deafening level of chirps. We then progressed to the edge of the field. There, we were greeted by our shell guides for the day. They had arrived at the field hours before us and constructed a makeshift blind of local shrubbery and set a spread of pigeon decoys.



As this was my first real bird hunt, I was amazed by the sight before me. It was like a shift change at a factory. Thousands of parakeets leaving the pastures were eagerly replaced by pigeons. Even with the sheer number of birds, it took time to feel comfortable with finding the right shot rather than just any shot. The variations in the birds' speed, angle, and distance were initially overwhelming. With three cases of shells at my feet, I had some leeway to be more liberal with my shot attempts. It was fascinating how quickly we adapted to spotting the silhouette of a pigeon amidst a swarm of birds; a mixture of species we had never seen before.

All of us eventually found our shots. With every pigeon we downed it seemed to have something of Greek Hydra DNA in it as it seemed to only produce more. I was surprised that in such a vast and remote land, there was so little life outside of the birds and cows. As we started shooting and downed some of the pigeons, we began seeing foxes taking our fare. They had absolutely no fear and came within feet of us to grab the pigeons. I was astonished by how another species has learned how to leverage the hunters to provide a food source. Before it gets asked, yes, at the end of the hunt and after a few cervezas, we all walked around the hunting field collecting both shells and birds to be eaten by our team and distributed amongst the local towns.



The smiles on our faces after that first morning would make you a billionaire if you could have a magic potion that replicated it. In true HP WingShooting Adventures form, they were not done with the mornings mantra of abundance. Already set up under a tree, we were met with a fully trimmed out dinner table with a setting better suited to a five-star restaurant. There were bottles of amazing red/white wines and roasted meat which had been slowly cooking for quite some time. We regaled ourselves for the next few hours with tales of missed shots, great wine and meat, eventually loading into the truck for the hotel. This repeated itself for the next few days until we decided to forgo dorado fishing due to weather and added an extra day of dove.

As you drive through Argentina you see a building style that stresses functionality over opulence and extravagance. This honestly played perfectly into the relaxed nature of the people. As we approached the HP Shooting lodge, we were all caught off guard by what we were provided. To note, this is a family business. While I have seen it go both ways, seeing the HP Wingshooting team includes the Father, Mother, Sons, Daughters, In-Laws, etc. was quite charming. The lodge itself was as welcoming as it seemed out of place. It was almost palatial in relation to the surrounding homes. It was the perfect place to rest after a hunt. Besides both being covered in feathers and tasting good, the similarities between the pigeon and dove ends shortly after that. With our minds keyed in on pigeons which are slower but larger birds, we were woefully unprepared for the small very fast doves. With an easterly wind gusting to over 30 mph, and a target the size of a baseball which can fly up to 55 MPH, we experienced a lesson in shooting humility. But, like the pigeons, we found our shots and began to connect as we would have hoped. There is a funny side though with that type of hunting. As they group up at times in the hundreds and fly quite close, you can empty your entire magazine and not touch a feather. Then you can have a single bird which you would swear followed the same route find your pellets and eagerly pursue the ground. It happened more than I care to recall. I have no idea why!

After 4 days of shooting, we each fired nearly 2,800 rounds and each took approximately 1,600 birds. The story would be slightly hollow if I didn't address the question. The answer is yes, I did shoot the most birds. We reflected that last night at the lodge and many nights since, on how truly transformational a hunting trip could be that did not necessarily conform to the time-tested structure of a "good hunt". The ability to be in an entirely stress-free environment for a week allowed a veil to be lifted off of our subconscious and in turn allowed more youthful optimism to take its place over what we had awaiting us in the States.

There will never not be a pursuit of dangerous or difficult hunts, but I can assure you that Argentina and especially the team at HP Wingshooting Adventures will forever hold a special place in our heart and will be a place that will be on our calendars for decades to come.

I wanted to express a sincere thank you to my family and the families of Dan and Adali as they provided the needed support to be able to go on this hunt. Their ability to pick up our slack makes a weeklong trip around the world possible. I would be remiss if that were to go unrecognized!



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Carson Nyenhuys - Founder and President

Dear Safari Club International Michigan Chapter,

Thank you for your generous gift of \$5,000.00 that you made on 2/13/2024. Every act of your generosity helps us further our mission. Your gift will help us get more people back into the outdoors to experience nature, camaraderie, and emotional and spiritual well-being.

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Thank you again for your most generous support and your willingness to make a difference.

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LION & SHIELD PROJECT

STORY BY DAN OLSEN

Teaming up with Ivan Carter and his foundation, our chapter has been an integral supporter of the Lion & Shield project at Zambeze Delta Safaris (ZDS) in the Coutada 11 area of Mozambique for nearly 10 years.

First, with a \$125,000 donation over 5 years assisting with the purchase of a John Deere tractor for tilling. Then, \$100,000 over the next 5 years to purchase seed and fertilizer. The last of these payments will be made in mid-2025. I am optimistic the chapter's board will decide to continue supporting this project with another long-term commitment. The goal of the project is to incentivize the local villagers to stop destroying the forest via a technique called "slash and burn". Due to the area's sandy soil, the ground does not hold nutrients for more than one growing season and the villagers lack the financial means to purchase fertilizer. Accordingly, the villagers employ "slash and burn" to grow crops. They slash down several acres of forest, burn it (which, in turn, provides limited, short-term nutrients), and then plant crops. However, the villagers repeat this process annually. It destroys approximately 100 acres of wildlife habitat every time.

When Todd Cook and I were at ZDS for a safari in September 2024, we spent a morning with our PHs visiting the project so we could report back to you. The 126-acre field is about a half mile from the village and about 4 miles from ZDS. In mid-October, ZDS, which stores the tractor on

its premises when not in use and burns the old grass making the field easier to till. ZDS then spends 8 days and about 30 gallons of fuel daily to till the massive area. ZDS divides the field into 126 sections; equal to the number of wives in the village. Each wife is assigned a one-acre plot. ZDS then gives each wife seed (rice and maize) to plant. Most of the seed is rice. It is important that the villagers have some skin in the game and do some of the work themselves. Upon completion of planting, ZDS then provides the wife with a 110-pound bag of fertilizer. She harvests only as much food as she needs for a short span of time (3-5 days). As she uses the rice and maize, she returns to her section of the field to harvest more. While annual rice harvest totals are heavily dependent on rainfall, the average is approximately 2 tons per acre, with the best year being 3 tons.

It is conservation projects like this that make a real impact not only on the villagers, but also on the wildlife for future generations of hunters and conservationists to enjoy. ZDS's owner, Mark Haldane, wishes to personally thank each and every one of you for our chapter's continued financial support and dedication to this significant project.



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STALKING DEEP INTO THE DELTA

STORY BY DAN OLSEN



Imagine the stale smell of wet gym socks sitting in a laundry bin fermenting for a week. That smell engulfed my nostrils as I followed my PH, Julian, and tracker into chest-deep, muddy, hippo, and croc-infested marshy waters deep in the Zambeze Delta. We were stalking cape buffalo also known as “black death”. The tracker bravely, but cautiously, led the way. He tested the muddy bottom with his bare feet gauging how far we would sink. Within 3 short steps, he was submerged nearly to his shoulders. In one hand, he held his backpack and flip-flops high overhead. In his other hand he suspended his shooting sticks in the air. This was all while simultaneously and methodically zigzagging his way through the papyrus, sawgrass, and green lily pads. Just moments earlier, I had watched a bird gracefully prance right over Julian as he followed the tracker with me in tow. I forcibly pushed into the recesses of my mind the possible lurking, life-threatening danger that could be hiding just below the murky surface. After all, we started the stalk by following hippo tracks that had been freshly stamped in the greasy, black mud path. We had to make this “clothes sopping” detour to avoid the shifting, unfavorable breeze that threatened to compromise our position. Before entering the water, I removed my cell phone from my shirt’s top pocket. I placed it securely in my binocular case held high above my head in my left hand. In my right hand was my 375 mag. I could not afford to have either of them fall into the abyss where they would disappear forever. All I hoped for, at the conclusion of this stalk, was a cape buffalo materializing in my crosshairs.

This was just one of many adventures I had hunting with longtime chapter supporter Zambeze Delta Safaris (ZDS) over the course of my 10-day safari in early September 2024. I was fortunate enough to harvest a cape buffalo, bush pig, hippo, waterbuck and baboon. Chapter board member, Todd Cook, who harvested a suni, red duiker, cape buffalo and baboon, joined me on this trip. Mark Haldane is the owner of ZDS. With the help of many, including our chapter, he has transformed this portion of the delta nestled in Coutada 11. It is located in eastern Mozambique (100 miles northwest of Beira). It has become a haven for buffalo, waterbuck, zebra, nyala, hartebeest, elephants, hippos, and lions, to name just a few. With an anti-poaching team comprised of over 30 local villagers and two choppers flying anti-poaching surveillance flights several times a week, I can personally attest that this is the most game-rich area I have ever visited on my hunting adventures. The conservation efforts of many are proving successful beyond anyone’s wildest imagination. It was like Disney’s Animal Kingdom on steroids and hard to believe these were all free-range animals.

The marsh where we found ourselves submerged up to our armpits in, separated two slivers of “islands” located in the middle of the delta. They are called islands as they are just high enough to not flood during the rainy season. The herd of buffalo munched on grass at the far end of one island, oblivious to our presence. Initially, we hoped to make a stalk directly at them. We bounced between a few small palm bushes as cover. To keep our feet dry, Mark recommended Converse sneakers (swamp footwear) as they drain easily.

I had picked up a purple pair on Marketplace for \$15 just a few weeks before the hunt. As the herd moved left to right, Julian determined that our scent would soon blow right into their noses. Accordingly, he improvised. Soon the 3 of us found ourselves trudging for approximately 20 minutes through the marsh. We were trying to avoid falling and naturally grasped onto the sawgrass, which would instantly slice your hand wide open. The water depth fluctuated from knee to chest deep. As we neared the grazing buffalo, we had to be intentional not to slosh through the water for fear they would hear us and stampede off.

As we inched closer, we initially pinpointed the location of the buffalo by watching white birds flutter just above the black backs of the buffalo. The closer we got, the quieter we were forced to make our steps as the buffalo were now so near I could hear them snort and breathe. They have a way of getting a hunter's adrenaline pumping like no other animal. Peering through the tall reeds, we periodically caught glimpses of them. One time, with 3 of them looking in our direction, seemingly aware of the intruders, their eyes were slicing right through the reeds like lasers. I thought our cover was blown. Julian assured me they were merely looking in our direction because they likely wanted to get a drink in the hot, late morning sun.

Now standing in thigh-deep water, Julian inched closer for a look through his binoculars. He quickly motioned me over while simultaneously setting up the shooting sticks. It was go time. He whispered to shoot the bull standing broadside at less than 50 yards directly in front of us. I set my crosshairs on its shoulder and squeezed the trigger. The old bull stumbled forward before turning to run directly away. Julian instructed me to reload and "shoot it up the ass!" I obliged and squarely hit him, stopping the bull dead in his tracks. As we exited the water, Julian informed me of where to place the insurance shot, which I did. As we approached, I could not believe the buffalo's sheer size—2,000 pounds of pure muscle. He was a magnificent animal. My first cape buffalo which provided the most unique stalk I have ever had. It was certainly one for the ages and will be hard to top--giving me a lifetime of new and exciting memories.



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- Tracker Magazine full page sponsorship in 4 issues (1 year)
- Logo on front page scimichigan.org website for 1 year
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- Logo display on all member emails and written communications for 1 year
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November

On November 7, plaid clad members, kids, and friends, enjoyed a great dinner and program.



Our chapter president, Mike Kwast, made some opening remarks and then we were led in the pledge of allegiance and prayer by Will from Numzaan Safaris. After dinner, Mike brought us up to date on some of the exciting changes and work being done by our chapter and SCI International. SCI is in the process of transforming from its beginnings as a club to a broader focus as the leaders we have become in the fight for hunters' rights and scientific wildlife management worldwide. We just saw a great example of this fight and our effectiveness in protecting hunters' rights in Colorado where the antihunting proposition 127, which would have ended hunting for mountain lions and bobcats, was soundly defeated, (55.5% to 44.5%), in an otherwise blue state! Our chapter played a part in that win with the money that you donated.

Our program for the evening, presented by Mike Kwast, (our president had a busy night!), covered a lot of ground. He started with the story of how an eco-tourism lodge in South Africa was transformed into a hunting concession by just a simple conversation with the lodge manager who had been paying shooters to cull excess wildlife. After this conversation, Numzaan Safaris was contracted to provide guided hunts to manage the game populations. This was a win win situation! Mike went on to tell a tale of the highs and lows of hunting. The story involved his daughter shooting a white blesbok but not making a good shot. Unfortunately, we all know what this low is like! But, then as the hunt drew to a close, she shot what was thought to be a different white blesbok but it turned out to be the one she had wounded a few days earlier! What a great ending to a great safari!

The Highs and Lows of Hunting

Numzaan Safaris, South Africa

Dr. Michael Kwast

SCI Michigan President



As always, there were many door prizes and our normal gun and jewelry raffles.



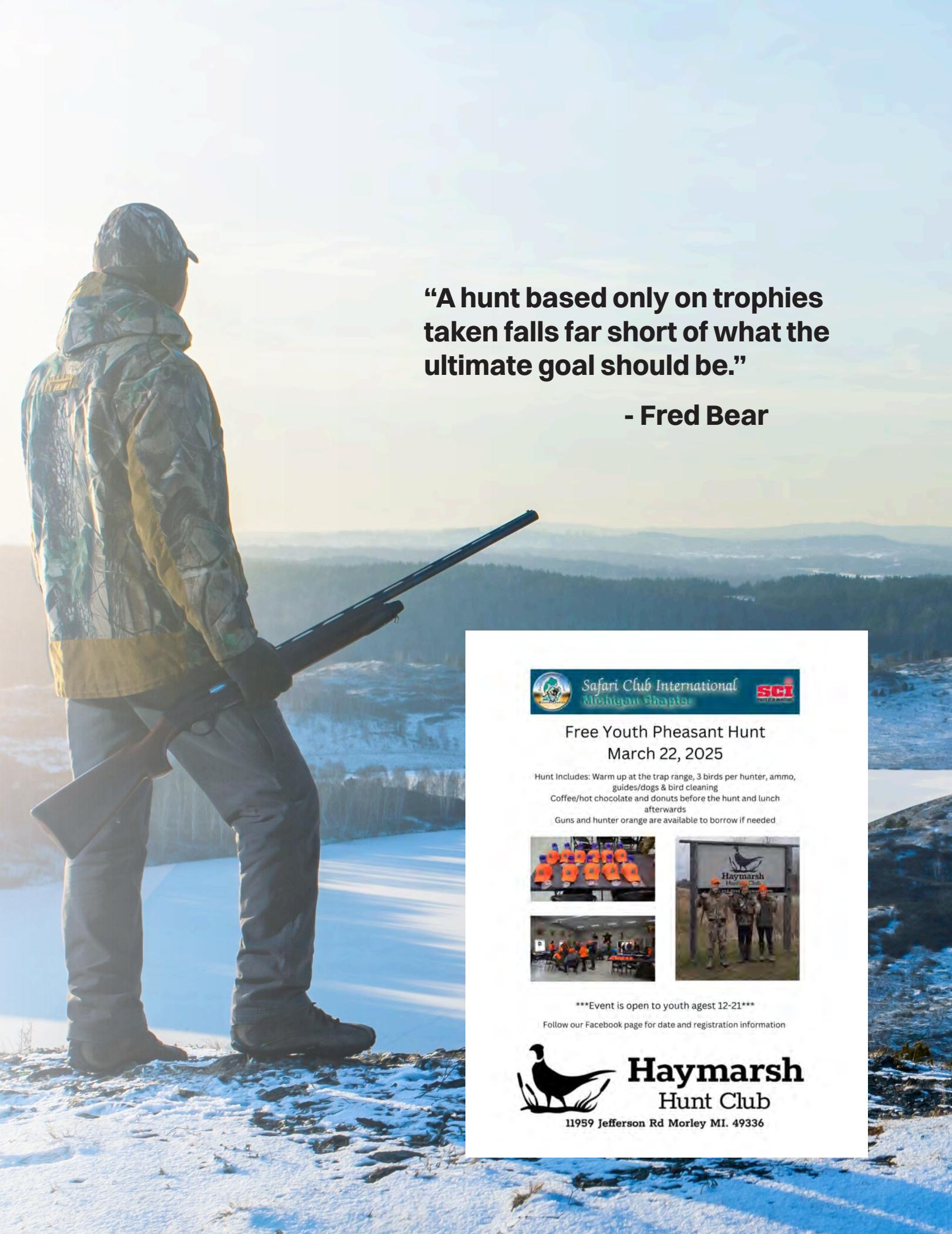
Susan Galer won the amethyst necklace and ear rings.



Connor Hollister won the youth gun, a Rossi 22 rimfire



Bob Mills won the Mossberg Patriot [a fitting name for election week!] a 270 Winchester



“A hunt based only on trophies taken falls far short of what the ultimate goal should be.”

- Fred Bear



**Free Youth Pheasant Hunt
March 22, 2025**

Hunt Includes: Warm up at the trap range, 3 birds per hunter, ammo, guides/dogs & bird cleaning
Coffee/hot chocolate and donuts before the hunt and lunch afterwards
Guns and hunter orange are available to borrow if needed



Event is open to youth agest 12-21

Follow our Facebook page for date and registration information



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WANTED

SHARE YOUR TROPHIES FOR OUR CONTEST!

It's time to share your trophies
and adventures at our Annual SCI Fundraiser.



FEBRUARY 7TH — 8TH, 2025



All entries must be received by Friday January 10 2025 by 5:00PM. (No exceptions)

A photo of the trophy must accompany the score sheet & must be scored by Certified SCI Measurer.

Submit your SCI Score Sheets to:

Jim Naber • Phone (616) 455-2880 • Naberstaxidermy.com • Email: Jnaber@naberstaxidermy.com
Or Mail To: Naber's Taxidermy Studio, 34 - 76th St. SW, Grand Rapids, MI 49548

You can find a list of SCI Scorers and Master Measurers in the membership directory of the Tracker Magazine. Any animal may be entered but only those meeting the SCI minimum will be judged.

Trophies entered must be exhibited at the fundraiser (no exceptions).

Please bring your trophies to the Muskegon Convention Center

Friday February 9 2025 between 9AM and 4PM

All Best of Species awards will be presented Friday at the Outfitters' Night.

Best of Continent and Best of Show will be presented at Saturday's fundraiser.

The following criteria will be used in judging the February 2023 Michigan Chapter SCI Trophy Contest.

1. CATEGORIES OF ANIMALS:	2. CATEGORIES OF AWARDS:	3. CATEGORIES OF METHOD OF TAKE:
a. Free-ranging b. Estate	a. Best of Species b. Best of Continent c. Best of North America Estate d. Best of Show e. Most unusual (no score required)	a. Rifle b. Bow c. Crossbow d. Muzzle loader e. Handgun

CONTEST RULES...
1. All entries must meet SCI minimum score.
(Except "Most Unusual")
2. Trophies must have been taken "fair chase" and within the past three years.
3. Trophies entered must be exhibited at the annual fundraiser.
4. North American Estate animals cannot win Best of Show.
5. A specific animal may be entered and judged only once.
6. Must be a Michigan SCI member to enter.

Best of species for each category is awarded to the animal with the highest score in its category.

Best of Continent and Best of North American Estate is awarded to the animal that scores closest, numerically, to the top score in the International Record Book. To find this score, the rank of the entered animal is divided by the total number of ranks in the International Record Book.

Best of Show is awarded to the animal with the highest numerical score for the species in the SCI Record Book.

Pursuant to the SCI Record Book, "Estate Animal" and "Estate" is defined as:

An "Estate Animal" ... is any game animal kept for a long time within an Estate ... even if taken outside of the "Estate."

An "Estate" will be any property that uses an artificial or unnatural restrictive barrier, in most cases a fence, which restricts or confines the movement of game animals.



Safari Club International

Michigan Chapter



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New & Renewal

SCI Membership

- \$65 One-Year Annual Membership (New & Renewal)
- \$150 Three-Year Membership Special (New & Renewal-\$45 savings)**

SCI Michigan Chapter

You must be an International SCI Member (see above) to join a Chapter (both memberships need to be in sync)

- \$25 One-Year Annual Membership
- \$50 Three-Year Membership Special (\$25 savings)**

Join the SCI Michigan Chapter as a Life Member

You must first be a Lifetime Member of SCI (Regular-\$1,500.00, Seniors 60+ \$1,250.00) before becoming a Lifetime MI Chapter Member

- \$300 one time due; if age 59 and below
- \$200 one time due; if age 60+
- \$1,500 SCI Life one time due; if age 59 and below
- \$1,250 SCI Life one time due; if age 60+

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Please make checks payable to "SCI Michigan Chapter".

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SCI Michigan Chapter

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Grand Rapids, MI 49501

THE OLD RIFLE AND A

STORY BY BEN GROOTERS

As every good story must, our tale began long before I actually walked into the wild. For me, it started with the traditions that built my family. Traditions that would help shape the man I am today. My Grandpa, William Grooters, born on 08/11/1932, started hunting and fishing at a young age and hasn't slowed yet. I grew up hearing stories from him and others about grand adventures in Alaska, cold nights in a tent camp during Michigan rifle season, fishing trips into the backwoods of Canada, and countless other heroic tales. It doesn't take much to imagine my upbringing was based on the wild and the adventures it can bring to those willing to pursue them.

My weapon of choice for this adventure was my Grandpa's Old Marlin 30-30, which I used to take my first whitetail deer during the rifle season of 2000. My little brother also used it to take his "Biggest Public Land Whitetail", a 3-year-old 8-point, back in 2015. This rifle has seen many stories. I am happy to be a small part of its history. I drew my first Michigan bear tag in the summer of 2024 for the Gwinn Management Unit. It is smack dab in the middle of nowhere; more Wisconsin than Michigan. While I am an avid whitetail hunter, I had never been on a bear hunt before. I didn't have a clue what I was doing.

After some research and help from our SCI Michigan Chapter, I found a guide that would fit the bill. Dan, the owner/guide/bear expert from Wild Spirit Guide Service, is based about 20 miles west of Escanaba. Dan is an accomplished guide and has supported our

chapter for many years. He helped me locate lodging not far from the hunting grounds as well as helped set me up with a list of resources to make my hunt a success.

As the summer drew to a close, I had the opportunity to spend a few days fishing on the northern edge of the St. Joseph Channel out of Bruce Mines Canada. We caught a huge variety of fish and had a great time sharing stories around the bonfire. But, that is a story for another day. After the fishing trip, we set out on the road, heading to the start of my very first bear hunt.

I had drawn my tag as part of a Party Hunter Application. My cousin, Matt, and our good friends, Jim and Bruce, were along for the ride as well. We loaded up a pair of quads with 3 tree stands, 4 people, and enough food to feed an army and headed north. After a long 12 hours on the road we arrived at our camp; a small cottage on Norway Lake. The "Bear Man" (Dan) was there to help us run bait and hang stands for the following day's hunt.

Opening morning came and went with little to no action. After a quick lunch, we set Bruce up on a more active bait site and we were finally able to hit the woods. I was hunting about 5 miles off the road near an old logging trail. I was very happy to have a quad. This was some of the thickest swamp I have ever seen. It would have taken the paint right off my truck.

I sat on my cheap metal ladder stand. I was about 25 yards from the baited stump and I waited. I tried to make myself as comfortable as possible, but after this adventure, we all decided to buy nicer stands with comfort in mind. These bones aren't as young as they once were.

I had fresh bait, was brushed in, and well camouflaged. I was ready, but the night started slowly. There was hardly any wind to stir the HOT air. I could hear every little sound. Not being used to the conditions or the game, every sound became a 1000-pound grizzly in my mind, and it was invigorating. Even the woods smelled different to me. It had an almost sweet honey like musk. It is a moment I will never forget no matter how long I live. A quote from the great Fred Bear came to mind and really captured how I felt at that moment.

"When a hunter is in a tree stand with moral values and with the proper hunting ethics and richer for the experience, that hunter is 20 feet closer to God."

About 2 hours into that evening's hunt, a young bear (not yet a year old) came in from behind me and worked its way to the bait

LACK BEAR

stump. While this little guy was obviously not the prey I was after, he sure was fun to watch! He tried hard to free the bait by toppling the hollow stump, but he just didn't have the strength to get it done. Eventually, he gave up and laid around basking in the sunshine for almost 30 minutes before getting run off by a mature boar.

A bigger bear followed the same path the little one had. It stopped short in a clearing for a moment before charging at the small cub. He bounded in with 3 big bounds and a huge grunt that said, "I'LL EAT YOU!" The cub quickly disappeared.

With the area all to himself, the big boar moved into sight and made quick work of the bait stump. While he devoured Lucky Charms and Pretzels, I worked to properly age him. I couldn't get a good look at him, let alone a clear shot, but I had several trail cam pictures from the past few weeks. I had a good idea of what bear I was looking at. I snapped a picture with a short video to compare with the trail cam pictures. I was pretty sure this was the bear I was after. I just needed a better look.

The Old Marlin has a 2-stage hammer and it was yet to be cocked. I pulled the hammer back into stage one, hoping the noise would make him put on a show. But, the big bear didn't move. I pulled the hammer back into the firing position, and the resulting loud click made the bear take a big step forward. With the beast now in the perfect position, I made the final call and time stopped.

As he slowly looked away, I was able to shoulder the Old Marlin and fire. With a crack and a well-placed shot, the bear jumped and took off running. I knew the shot was good. I had no doubt he was finished. A moment later, I heard the crash as he broke through the last of the brush onto the old logging trail and dropped.

I ran after him and located him quickly. Because he was already on the trail, there was no dragging needed. I made quick work of cleaning him up. I still had about an hour before sunset. I then sat back and read a book while I waited for my hunting party to arrive a little after dark. We loaded the bear onto the front rack on one of the quads and headed back to camp. We raced around the back country roads for over an hour in the dark in search of ice. We finally made it and quickly packed the bear with the ice before collapsing into our beds for a well-earned rest. It had been a long day and the next



morning hunt was quickly approaching for the rest of the party. Matt and Bruce headed out the next morning before daybreak but had no luck. Shortly after lunch, we met up with the Bear Man (Dan) to get the bear processed and into the freezer. Wild Spirit Guide Service offers in-house taxidermy, which was the obvious choice for me.

That evening Jim had a good look at a mature bear. Sadly, it never presented the opportunity for a good shot. From that point in the week forward, the temperature continued to rise, slowing all activity in the woods, and lowered our chances. Thankfully for me, our cottage overlooked Norway Lake, which is loaded with bluegill and perch. I spent the better part of the next three days camped out in a lounge chair on the end of the dock with a pole in my hands and a smile on my face.

While I fished, the rest of the guys were hard at work out in the woods. Thankfully, the bear that had remained obscured on the second night made another appearance. This time it offered a clean shot, allowing us to seal the deal. This left us at 2 out of our allotted 4. By then, our time in the wild had drawn to a close.

Looking back at my first bear adventure, and my own contribution to the legend of that Old Marlin, it brings to mind another Fred Bear quote. "If some of our teenage thrill seekers really want to go out and get a thrill, let them go up into the northwest and tangle with a grizzly bear, or polar bear, or brown bear. They will get their kicks, and it will cleanse their souls."

HUMANITARIAN DONATIONS 2024

We would like to thank all of you who donated to our Humanitarian Fund this year. All monies donated go directly to causes that support events for challenged youth and adults, veterans, others with special needs, and organizations that support our mission and goals. Your continued support enables us to help so many in so many ways!

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year's Annual Donor Drive as well as to the other fund drives held during the convention.
We are very thankful for each donor. Your donations make the important work of SCI and SCI Michigan possible.*

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*If we missed recognizing or thanking anyone, we apologize.
Please let us know so it can be corrected in our next Tracker magazine.*

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