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<< Alex BRITTINGHAM

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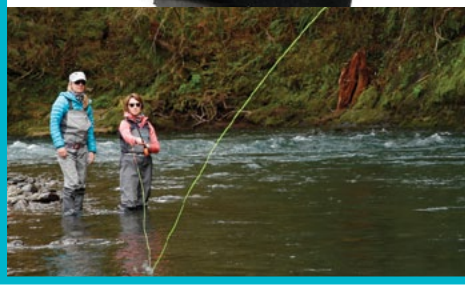

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editor's note

A BLAZE OF GLORY AND TRADITIONS

If fall isn't your favorite time of the year, then you're probably not into hunting much (laughs). Like most kids, summer used to be my favorite time because of school vacation, and I had the tannest skin to show for all my days at the pool. However, once I was out of school and started hunting, fall quickly took a whole new, much more important role in my life.

What I realize now is how precious fall is - a fittingly short season as it's a blaze of glory with beautiful colors, heavenly weather, endless activities and most of all, traditions.

Even with every person's activities being different, it seems fall tradition still holds true for all. Football, hayrides, pumpkin carving, Halloween parties, apple orchards (plus, cider and apple pie!), harvesting crops, jumping in piles of leaves, sipping hot chocolate, Thanksgiving meal, etc. - traditions galore!

And there's no exception to traditions when it comes to fall hunting seasons. From waking up to nature to waking up at deer camp and sharing stories to sharing a wild game meal, the traditions and memories are endless.

The biggest tradition for me is it's archery season. While bowhunting looks different today, when you think down to it, it's still a tradition that has been known to man since the beginning of our time. It's something that my great uncle taught my dad and my dad passed down to my brother and me.

While sitting in the tree by myself peacefully watching the sun rise or set, or while walking to or from the stand surrounded by gorgeous oak trees or tallgrass prairie, I can't help but think that God created a stunning fall just to show how precious the hunter is to him. God bless the hunter.

Jennifer Pudenz

ADVENTURESS

betheadventuress.com

Information and inspiration for the outdoor woman and country lifestyle

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FALL 2016

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Cover photo shot by Lee Thomas Kjos for Franchi.

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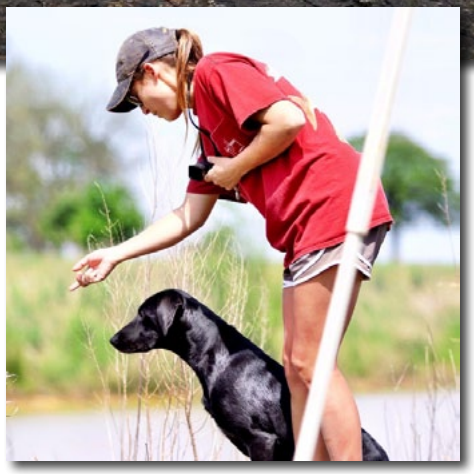
Cover Girl!

Meet Alex Brittingham



You might have already come across our fall cover girl, **Alex Brittingham**, from a wide variety of ways. To mention a few, she has most recently been gracing Franchi shotgun advertisements, but you also might know her as a former marketing coordinator for Prois Hunting & Field Apparel for women, as a semifinalist for the 2014 "Extreme Huntress" competition or as the daughter of professional hunter and hunting video producer Jack Brittingham of Jack Brittingham's World of Hunting Adventure.

Alex grew up in East Texas where she started hunting at the young age of 4 years old. She traveled around the globe in pursuit of various game animals with her family, harvesting a greater kudu at just age 7, leopard at age 15 and a hippo at age 16 with a 7-yard shot **(click to watch her hunt!)**.

Today, Alex has a passion for waterfowl and dogs. She is pursuing that passion with the start up of her own retriever training business. Follow her on **Instagram @oneshotlu** and **Facebook Alex Brittingham** to follow her adventures!

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SHARE YOUR PHOTOS!

We love seeing how you're getting outdoors! Submit your photos on the ADVENTURESS Facebook page or by using #betheadventuress on Instagram! Each of our social media pages is different from one another - so like, follow and join in with other outdoor women!

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farming and cooking. However, each of these categories is up to your interpretation! LABEL your high-res/original photos with your name and each category (example: firstlastname_Hunt.jpeg) and EMAIL them to inspire@betheadventuress.com. You must have a photo for all four categories to be entered - no less than four photos, no more than eight photos. You must be clearly in each photo. Do not send low-res social media copies of photos. DEADLINE: Sunday, December 18th. Watch ADVENTURESS social media for more!

FALL

Ann Driggers

Featured photographer

ASPEN LOVE

Colorado

"Colors were overwhelmingly gorgeous during the peak in the Roaring Fork Valley!"

See more of Ann's photos on Instagram ***@anndriggers***

PHEASANT HUNTING 101

By Kara Wattunen

Nadia Reimer, managing editor of *Kansas Wildlife & Parks* magazine, with a pheasant from Kansas.

So you've seen the magazine articles, watched the shows and are officially hooked on wanting to try pheasant hunting! Just like other types of hunting, where to actually start might be hard to find. I'll cover three key areas that are essential to having a safe and successful time in the field. From out of the field preparation to the day of your hunt, these pointers will be sure to help!

Gear

Many women's first thought goes right to gear. Being truly comfortable while hunting is essential! Most types of pheasant hunts are in some sort of cover. This might include sloughs filled with cattails or fields with heavy grass. Your footwear needs to be sturdy, with good traction, and I would highly recommend some sort of water repellency or resistance. My go-to boot is the **Cabela's** Women's Copperhead Snake Boot. This boot is a taller boot, which also protects your calves from debris.

Pheasant hunting in Kansas. NADIA REIMER/KANSAS DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE, PARKS AND TOURISM.

Pheasant hunting is all about covering ground. You will want to have pants, bibs or chaps that you are able to move freely and not get stuck in the brush with. Chaps can go on easily over jeans and attach to your belt. One benefit of chaps is you can purchase ones with a built-in gaiter. This adds more protection to your feet as well. If you are looking for pants, you will need to find either a brush or field pant. Available through **Orvis** are two pants that might suit you. They offer a field pant, which is a bit lighter in weight, and an upland briar pant, which is a bit sturdier for heavier brush. If you have trouble finding the right fit, **Covey Charleston** can repurpose your own pants into custom field pants by adding briar-proof fabric, available in lighter or heavier weights as well.

Make sure you know what the regulations are in your state for how much blaze orange you need to wear while in the field. Most hunters opt to wear a vest for their hunter orange. These vests can come equipped with many different options, such as shell pockets, water bladder sections and, of course, a place to slide your birds into. They can range from $12 to $200, so it's just a matter of choosing the price range and options you'd like. Most importantly when searching for a vest, the fit is key. When you are walking and need to shoulder your gun

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quickly, getting caught in the fabric will slow your speed down and could cause you to miss the bird. There are some brands that offer vests specifically cut for women.

Hunting Ground

Securing land to hunt is a very challenging task. When asking for permission to hunt private land, you won't always hear a "yes." Do not let this discourage you, and don't forget to utilize public land.

Public land can be great! Most states have a list of management areas, as well as hunting regulations for each one. You will want to look for field or grassland to hunt. A large mistake new hunters make is hunting too close to marshy areas, which are more for ducks. This can be incredibly tough terrain, making the pheasants sit tight, if they are there at all. Stick to fields or tall dry grass first.

Abby Atol pheasant hunting in Montana.

The Hunt!

What's left? The day of the hunt! Your blood is pumping and the excitement levels are bursting through the roof, so hit the field!

Line up about 8 to 10 feet apart from your hunting partners before entering the habitat. This line will act as a barrier, pushing the birds forward or forcing them to fly, giving you a shot opportunity. If you have someone who is more comfortable with a more challenging shot, place him or her on an end of the line. For shooters who are a little more hesitant, place them more toward the middle, allowing them more time.

If you are unsure of the swing range in your position, hold your arms out in front of you, a little wider than your shoulders. This is your swing range. It should slightly overlap with each hunter on either side of you.

Once all shooters are in place, making sure your outside edge is at the very outer edge of the field, start to move at a walk into the field. Move too fast, birds will move fast as well; move too slow, the birds will know something isn't right. Keep watching your fellow hunters to make sure your line stays as straight as possible.

When nearing the end of your first pass, you will start to make a pivot motion with your line, with the person on the inner most of the field. Once your pivot is over, all hunters should be facing the way they came from in a whole new section. Continue this movement until you have covered the full field or filled your limits!

Now that you have a few starting places for a pheasant hunting adventure, gather your friends and get ready! Pheasant hunting is much more enjoyable with a field full of laughs and gunpowder.

Kara Wattunen is a freelance writer, blogger and photographer. Currently residing in Minnesota, she finds herself in the fields hunting or on the water chasing big walleyes and all other fish. Kara also is a tournament angler with Bass Pro Shops. Her favorite type of hunting is waterfowl in the flooded timber. Continue on to read a past story from Kara's first pheasant hunt.

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THE RUSH OF THE FLUSH

A story from Kara Wattunen's first pheasant hunt

"Stay in line!" "Hen!" "Swing," are words that echo through the cattails and tall grass when chasing the roosters while pheasant hunting. The word "hold" brings your feet to a stop as the dogs point into the thicket ahead. As you approach the dogs slowly, you can see the excitement in the pointer's body, which is instantly contagious.

The steel in your hand seeps into your skin as your finger moves to the trigger and you settle the gun ready to shoot. Each breath escapes slow and controlled as you stand next to the dog. With one nudge to the edge of the thicket, the rooster shoots into the air, close enough for you to hear each wing beat. "ROOSTER!" choruses down the line as you swing with the bird and take one shot.

Kara Wattunen pheasant hunting at Ringneck Retreat near Hitchcock, South Dakota.

Pheasant hunting is a world on its own, and it is a hunt that can be for all ages and abilities. Whether you are an experienced hunter or just a beginner, the rush of the flush is something you should experience. Also, pheasant hunting can be a group or a solo activity. The possibilities are endless for how you want your hunting experience to go. The states that thrive in pheasant hunting are also wide spread throughout the Midwest, offering a wide variety of landscapes and hunting opportunities that you can pick and choose which would be best for you.

December, one of the coldest months in the Midwest, is one of the most fun and

challenging times to hunt these birds. This is when I chose to take my first hunt a few years back. An ice storm moved through and coated everything in an inch and a half of ice. Our adventure was going to happen regardless of weather conditions. If we could walk the fields and sloughs, we would be hunting in the morning.

Upon arrival, we split the group into walkers and blockers. Since this was my first go, I chose to be a blocker so I could watch how it all shook out. Blockers stand at the other end of the field. This may sound boring, but it is the exact opposite! It is the blockers job to shoot the birds that come toward them if the walkers cannot get clean shots. So no matter where you are in the pheasant field, blocker or walker, you have the chance to harvest a rooster.

As the walkers started, it was like a choreographed dance, moving through the corn and tall grass. The line pressed through and moved like a snake, pushing birds out left and right, while the dogs worked and ran. The dogs are like machines! Their job is to find the birds, hold them and retrieve, which these did flawlessly.

When the walkers reached the blockers, the hunt for that field is finished, and it is time to switch jobs and move to the next field. I was more than nervous taking on this field, which had a frozen pond to the south and cattails coated in thick layers of ice taller than me by at least 8 inches.

When the lined started, I pushed my way though, making sure I stayed with the group. Due to the ice, the pheasants were "sitting tight," which meant they weren't moving until we practically tripped over them. Soon enough I flushed one and shot. Miss. When I say miss I mean missed three times.

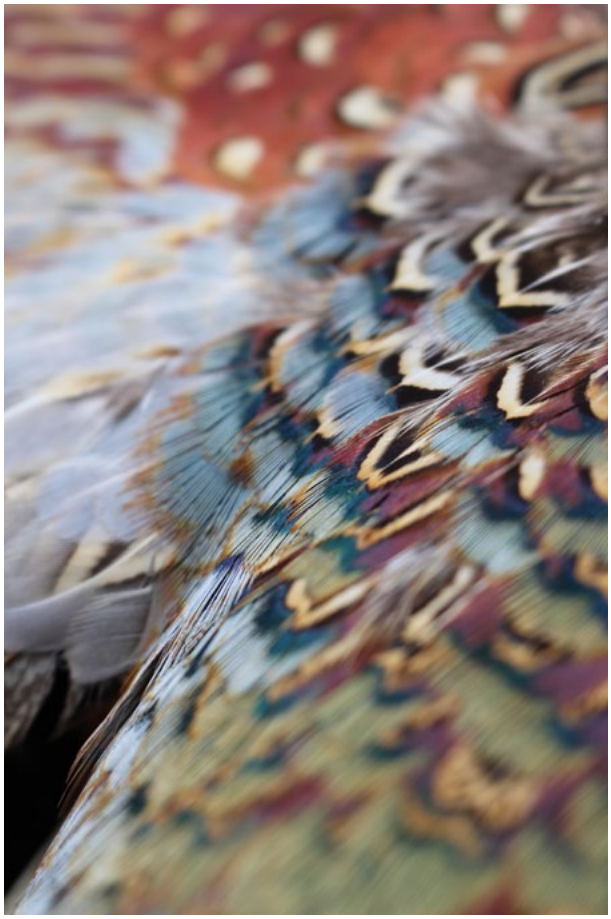
We had even shot trap the day before so I have no idea what I was doing wrong, but it wasn't working. Receiving some suggestions, we moved forward and I got my second chance. Again, miss.

I was hot and cold all at the same time, sweat was starting to build from pushing through the terrain and my frustration started to climb. We continued through, slowing down because of how still the birds were sitting. Finally, I felt the rush of the flush up my left leg and heard the boys yell, "Rooster!" I lined up, took a breath and BOOM! I had my first ever rooster!

One of the dogs retrieved the bird and brought it right back to me. I was even more excited to hold onto the bird and look at it.

The colors of pheasants are nothing short of spectacular.

As we finished the field and approached the trucks, I was able to really take a look at all the details within these amazing animals. The stark difference between the muted browns and whites from snow and ice cattails and the vibrant greens and reds of the roosters was jaw dropping. Each feather on these animals is just like a snowflake, completely unique to itself. The green on the back of the heads also shines an iridescent hue as it moves in the light. A rooster's tail feathers are like trophies for the harvest, which are long and have an amazing pattern on its entirety.



With each field, the passion for pheasant hunting grew, and I knew this was something I could share with my family and friends when I returned home from our trip. That is exactly what I did.

My mom, who loves to bird hunt, immediately wanted to go see what the flush was all about. We ventured not too far north of Minneapolis to fields we could pheasant hunt on. As we walked the fields, the first bird went right up my mom's leg and she screamed! I screamed as well, but it was "MOM! It's a rooster! Shoot, shoot, shoot!"

Needless to say, she was so startled that we watched the rooster glide away and hide in the corn field about 50 yards in front of us. It took us awhile to get all the giggles out before we moved forward through the fields, but that is what hunting, and pheasant hunting especially, is all about. The laughter, the fun and the teamwork all plays into the skills needed to make your pheasant experience.

We managed a few pheasants that day, but most importantly, it was sharing of a tradition. She now loves to pheasant hunt alongside others and myself whenever she can. As part of the harvest, we also try new recipes for pheasant other than the typical, but delicious, wrapped in bacon.

Pheasant hunting gives you the capabilities to bond over what I call "field to table" conversations. You can carry on a conversation as you walk, while you harvest, prepare your game and then enjoy with others.

The rush of the flush is exactly that. It is a true rush. From the rush of adrenaline up your body when the bird appears to cheers of excitement of a harvest and then sitting down to enjoy the harvest as your meal makes your hunt come full circle in just one day. No matter age or ability, pheasant hunting can be an amazing experience to not only enhance your hunting skills, but to build and foster growing relationships that last a lifetime.

~ Kara Wattunen

BBQ PHEASANT PIZZA

By Jenny Nguyen - foodforhunters.com

Here is a new twist on BBQ Chicken Pizza -- BBQ Pheasant Pizza! The pheasant came from Nebraska, a gift to us from family, so we wanted to do something different with it - pizza and wild game came to mind.

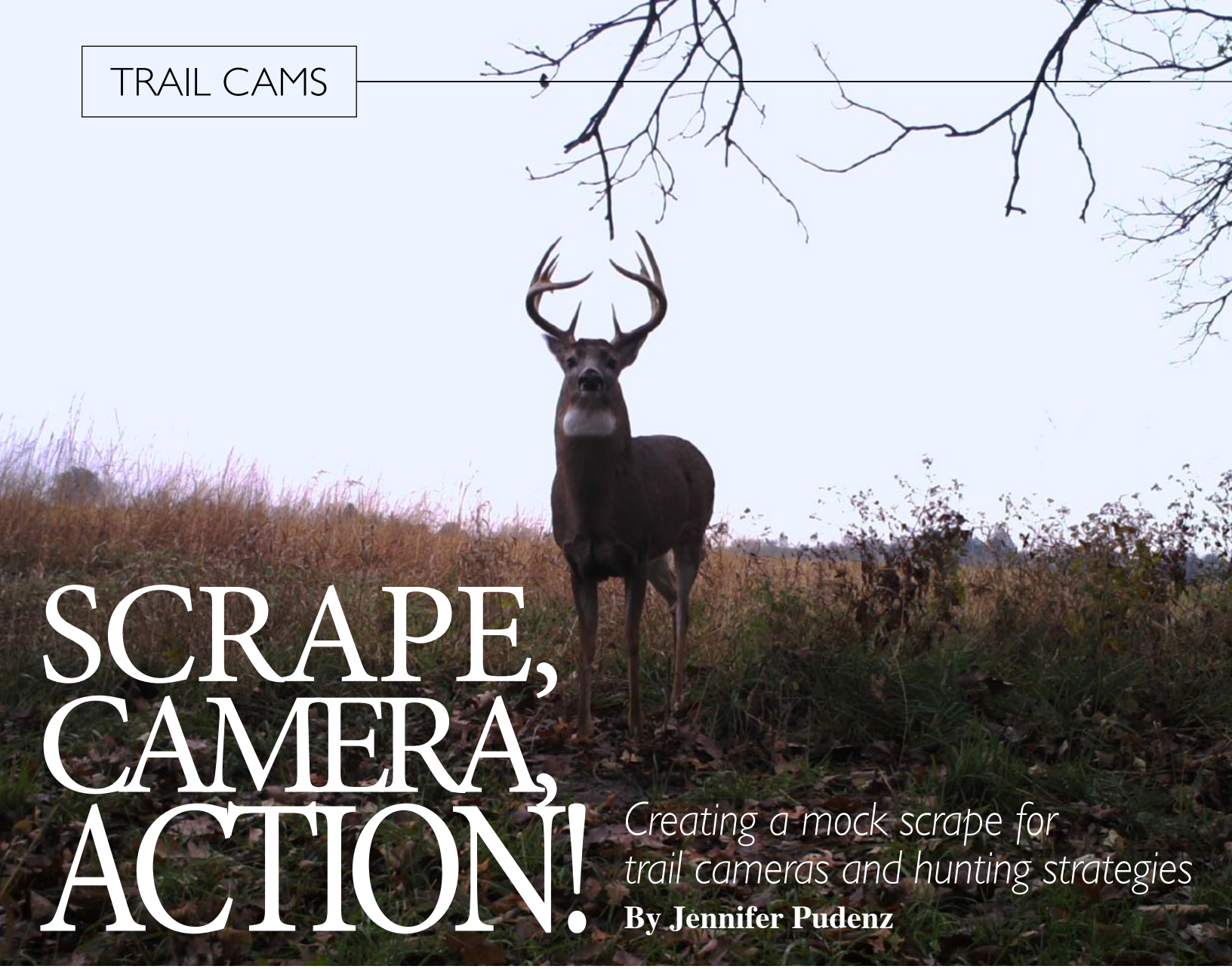
I referred to **The Pioneer Woman**'s cookbook on how to make basic pizza dough, but you may use whatever recipe you like or buy ready-made crust. In addition to juicy, grilled pheasant breasts, we baked the pizza with lots of gooey fresh mozzarella cheese, sautéed red onion, smoky barbeque sauce, scallions for a touch of color and fragrant fresh cilantro. We hope you will enjoy this recipe as much as we do!

Ingredients:

- pizza crust (homemade dough, dough mix or ready-to-bake crust)
- breasts of 1 pheasant
- salt, enough for light sprinklings
- 1/2 cup barbeque sauce, divided
- 1/4 cup pasta/pizza sauce
- 10 ounces of fresh mozzarella cheese
- 4 to 5 green onions, white and light green parts chopped
- 1 tablespoon of olive oil
- quarter of a red onion, thinly sliced
- 1/4 cup of fresh cilantro, chopped
- red pepper flakes, to taste

Directions:

- If using homemade pizza dough or a dough mix for crust, prepare ahead of time and follow directions. **(Click to view this recipe at foodforhunters.com for the pizza dough used and more photos!)**
- Run pheasant breasts under cold water and pat dry with a paper towel. Use a very sharp filet knife to remove the breasts from the bone.
- Place pheasant breasts into a small container. Lightly sprinkle salt on all sides. Then squirt some BBQ sauce to coat all over.
- Prepare the grill.
- To make the pizza sauce, combine 1/4 cup of BBQ sauce and 1/4 cup of pizza/pasta sauce.
- Slice fresh mozzarella thinly. Set aside.
- Chop white and light green parts of green onion.
- Heat olive oil in a pan. Sauté sliced red onion, stirring often for about 5-7 minutes, or until soft and translucent.
- Once grill is ready, cook pheasant breasts for about 5 minutes on each side, or until just cooked through. DO NOT OVERCOOK! Baste with the rest of the BBQ sauce.
- Preheat oven to 500 degrees F., or as directed by your dough or crust instructions.
- Lay crust out on a cookie sheet.
- Lightly sprinkle some salt over flattened dough. Then spread BBQ/pizza sauce mixture over it, saving some to use as a topping as well.
- Then top pizza with sliced mozzarella cheese, pheasant, the sautéed red onion and chopped green onion. Drizzle leftover BBQ/pizza sauce mixture over the top of pizza.
- Then bake in an oven on the lowest rack for about 12-15 minutes, or until cheese is melted and crust turns golden brown.
- Garnish with chopped cilantro and red pepper flakes. Enjoy!



SCRAPE, CAMERA, ACTION!

Creating a mock scrape for trail cameras and hunting strategies

By Jennifer Pudenz

When it comes to pursuing or monitoring whitetail bucks, one of my favorite ways is through scrapes. Scrapes are a great way to initiate a reaction and cause a distraction whether that's for getting the perfect shot on your trail camera, a perfect shot from your tree stand or both.

Luckily, you don't have to find a scape in an ideal spot, you can create your own scape, called a mock scape, quite easily. And what's great about setting up your own scrape is you really don't have to perfect it – all you have to do is fool just one little, young buck and -ta dah!- your mock scrape is now a REAL scrape! Get ready to fool even your most mature bucks and watch their frustration unfold!

Field Edges

Before you start, take a minute to think like a buck and think of real scrapes you've noticed in the past. Tree-lined field edges are a prime example. Whether a crop/food plot field or a grass field of some sort, the edges of fields are a main place to find many scrapes. Bucks know fields are a gathering spot for many does, so they will cruise these areas looking

for does as well as let go of frustration on scrapes and leave their scent to try to stake out their territory.

Find or make a field edge scrape also where a popular deer trail runs through the timber perpendicular into the open field and set your trail camera right in the timberline, pointing out toward the open field. This will not only give you some really beautiful scenic photos, it will also catch deer in the background of your photos and give you a less busy background. The clearer background is important for targeting bucks for photos so you don't have trouble zooming in and seeing what is a tine and what is a twig from a timber background.

Set the camera at angle so you not only catch bucks on the scrape, but also can catch deer walking by on the trail. If you set it too square, you'll get more blurred photos as deer walk by your smaller frame of view. You'll also want to watch that you don't have the camera angled directly into the rising or setting sun.

If wanting to set a tree stand or blind in this area, set it inside the tree line so you're less viewable and can shoot both the field and your popular deer trail. Then deer are likely to be distracted by the scrape and scents while you prepare to shoot.

However, keep in mind that scrapes are often visited at night. So you might want to hunt further off the field into the timber, though you can use the scrape to lure them by still.

With scent-free boots, use the bottoms and heels to break up dirt for a mock scrape.

Ridges

Another key land feature to focus on is ridges, as bucks often use them as travel corridors. However, since bucks don't like to be fully out in the open, they often cruise through a third of the way down the hill from the ridgetop so they can still be up high to see and smell while not feeling over exposed.

You can have a really great ridge trail camera and tree stand combination setup. Focus on a main deer trail that crosses a ridge and find a tree that is 20 yards down the hill from the top of the ridge and shooting distance from the crossing trail. Then going further downhill on the other side of the tree, set up a scrape within shooting distance. This now puts you in place for deer to move around you with shots to several areas: the ridge in front of you, the trail beside you and the scrape behind you.

The area I harvested my buck last year during bow season is a prime example of this. Sitting in a large oak tree, the ridge was a 20-yard shot in front of me, with mowed paths/trails on both sides of me within 10 yards and 15 yards behind me is another trail moving with the direction of ridge and with a scrape. I'm at a location the deer are naturally going to be moving through and I can take shots anywhere. And since I'm on a hill, I just have to choose days that my scent blows over everything down hill.

Early in the morning, my 5-1/2+-year-old buck came cruising up from downhill behind me. As he sniffed the scrape and deer scents, I double checked to make sure he was a shooter for me. Then as he began to walk again, he

chose the trail to my right to cross over the ridge. I pulled back while he was behind some tree limbs and let him walk up the hill a little more, presenting me with an excellent angle that wasn't steep and was quartering away. I said "maht" to stop him and released the arrow quartering into his lungs.

While not all hunts play out perfectly, this is one I'll remember how it did, and that's thanks to having a setup that all works together.

Pull leaves off the end of your licking branch and apply scent.

Licking Branch

Besides your prime location, there is one other key for setting up a scrape and that is having a branch hanging down at the proper

height. While bucks scrape at the ground, they also love to reach up and smell and rub a branch. Once I have my target area to create a scrape, the right branch is the very next thing I look for. You just need a small low-hanging branch or two to create some magic. If the branches have leaves on them, you can pull them off on the ends and also snap one of the branches so it's still connected but hangs straight down, just like the real deal.

All this action makes scrapes also a perfect time to set your trail camera video mode or photo/video mode sometimes. However, this will take up more of your camera card space and batteries, so you don't want to do video mode unless you're going to be able to check it enough. Using a larger camera card, such as a 16 GB, and having your camera on the way to your tree stand is a great way to handle this.

Ground

The next step is to tear up the ground right below the hanging branch into a patch of dirt. While you can use tools, I usually just rub the bottom of my (scent-free) boots to break up the grass and use the heel of my boots to expose

Apply scent to the open dirt of your mock scrape or previous scrape.

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the dirt. Once it's open to the ground, I like to grab a stick and run a bunch of vertical lines as you see in real scrapes from deer pawing at the ground.

Scent

Your scrape is now set! It just needs one finishing touch – scent. Choose your scent depending on what time of the season it is. I like to create pre-season scrapes to start getting some bucks worked up for what's to come. However, rutting buck or estrous doe scents aren't a life-like scenario for this time. This is when I use a general deer scent such as Deer Dander (my favorite) or EverCalm. Once you get to pre-rut or the rut, this is when you can start to use dominate buck scents and estrous doe urine.

While this might not be for some people, I'll still throw it out there – male or female, you can even pee on the scrape yourself! Studies have showed there is no real difference in urine and hormones. Animals can't tell the difference between their urine and human urine – they just smell the same testosterone and estrogen hormones!

Have Fun!

I've created or added to previous scrapes for years and it's always something I get a kick out of. I will admit that it makes me feel a little ornery as I prepare branches, tear up the ground, add scent and throw in a comment, "Oo, that's going to really piss the bucks off!" but in the end, it's a serious hunting tactic to add to your arsenal and prepare yourself for some amazing trail camera photos!

Jennifer Pudenz is founder and editor of ADVENTURESS magazine.

By having your trail cameras near your tree stands, you can easily check them on the way in or out while hunting.

Women's ADVENTURESS 2nd Annual Trail Camera Contest

RESULTS!

Each winner received:
~ Covert DLC MPE6 Trail Camera
~ Stic-N-Pic Mini Tree Mount &
Stic-N-Pic Mini Ground Mount
~ Trophy Rock, bag of Four65,
Trophy Rock flashlight, hat & shirt

Non-Deer WINNER:
NANCY RODRIGUEZ!

Thanks to our sponsors!!!

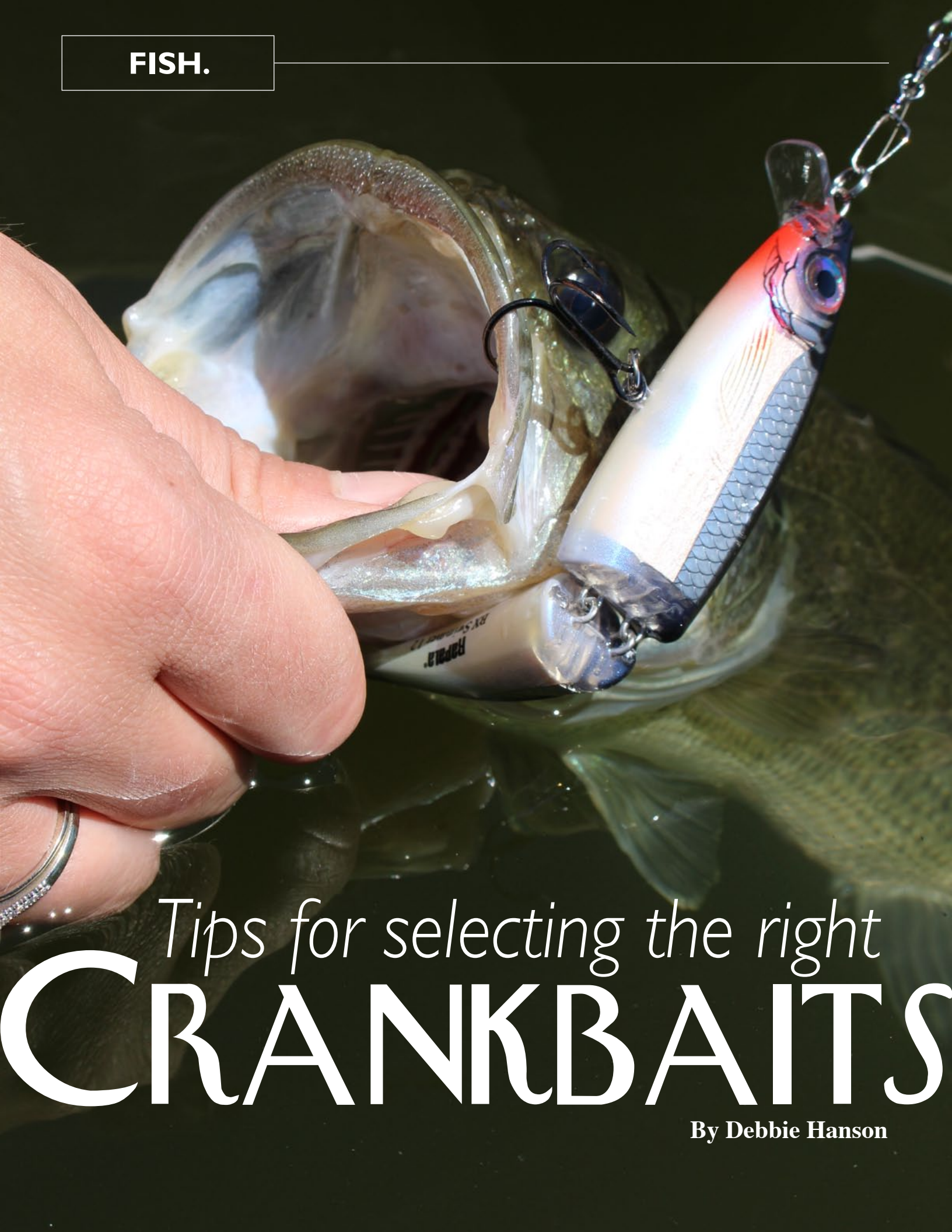
TROPHY ROCK

COVERT SCOUTING CAMERAS

Stic N pic

Find more photos highlighted on the ADVENTURESS Facebook page!

Finalists:



Tips for selecting the right

CRANKBAITS

By Debbie Hanson

Ashley Rae of **shelovestofish.com** having crankbait success with smallmouth bass.

The first time I went to my local tackle shop to add a few crankbaits to my bass fishing arsenal, a million and one questions started swirling through my head. There were literally hundreds of different sizes, different bills, different colors, some with rattles, some without rattles, crankbaits that would sink and crankbaits that would float. How in the world would I weed through the myriad of lures hanging in front of me to find a handful of truly productive crankbaits that would work well for my fishing situations?

While the answers most often come through experience and time on the water, the good news is you get the benefit of a head start. The following are some simple tips that will help you decide which crankbaits are likely to work best given the area you plan to fish and the conditions.

1. Keep in mind the bigger the "lip" or "bill" (clear plastic or metal piece on the front of the lure), the deeper the lure will dive. If you plan to fish deeper water, such as reservoirs or phosphate pits with depths of 15 to 20 feet, you will want to look for crankbaits with large, round bills.

2. If you plan to fish shallow areas with cover, you can select a few medium or shallow-running crankbaits with square bills. Square bills are excellent for bumping off structure.

3. Lipless 1/4-ounce crankbaits are a good option to try when fishing shallow water (2 to 5 feet) because of the sound and vibration they put off.

4. Do your best to balance line diameter with the depth you are fishing and the size of lure. Most lure manufacturers will include the line diameter and depth details

A largemouth bass lured out of a mossy bed with a Rapala Clackin' Rap 08 featuring weight, rattle and an extended tail hook.

right on the lure package.

5. Focus on 'match the hatch.' Although this term is most often used in the world of fly fishing, it can certainly apply to crankbaits as well. For example, when I'm fishing a freshwater lake system and bluegill are present, I try to select crankbaits in bluegill-imitating colors. Or, if I'm fishing in an area where I've noticed schools of shad, then I select crankbaits that resemble that type of prey.

6. When it comes to choosing between a tight-wiggling crankbait and a wide-wobbling crankbait, consider the fact that the wide-wobbling cranks will generally be more effective when the water is cloudy (the extra motion will help bass locate your lure) or when the fish are aggressive. Tight-wiggling crankbaits are better for cool, clear water conditions when bass aren't as willing to expend the energy needed to pursue more active prey. During the late summer and early fall, try wide-wobbling cranks. While tight-wiggling cranks are often more effective during the late fall through early spring months.

Think of what bait bass are already actively feeding on. Each of these different crankbaits can 'match the hatch' from bluegill to crawfish to minnow and shad colorings. Try different colors and styles to see what crankbaits get the best reaction on that given time and day!

7. Pick colors of metallic gold or chrome on sunny days when the light can reflect off the lure and attract the fish. On days that are cloudy or when the water is muddy, try using white for a color.

8. Crankbaits with rattles are good to use when the water is a bit discolored

or muddy. If the fish seem pressured or if the water is clear, add a fluorocarbon leader to reduce line visibility and use a crankbait without a rattle to avoid spooking your quarry.

You'll find crankbaits are a lot of fun to fish with due to their versatility and ability to cover a wide area. Stumps, timber, brush piles, ledges, docks or rock piles are all ideal places to test these lures out. Ideally, you want your crankbait bumping off some sort of structure or cover to create an erratic motion that causes a reaction strike from a bass.

Just don't be afraid to cast near cover for fear of getting hung up. You have to throw those crankbaits as close as you can to structure in order to get strikes. Once you've hooked up with a big bass, then you can figure out how to retrieve your lure. That's a good problem to have!

Debbie Hanson is an avid angler, freelance writer, and website publisher who resides in Estero, Florida. Her website, ***shefishes2.com****, offers educational fishing and boating information for women.*

When Life Hands You Lemons

Creating a unique item from your own harvest

By Joni Marie Kiser

In 2012, I took a Pope and Young Record Book brown bear with my bow. A brown bear hunt is on the 'bucket list' for many hunters, and certainly was a once in a lifetime experience for me! I hunted in a "predator control" area of Alaska. This area was only accessible by small bush plane, and I camped out there for a week to harvest my bear.

It's called a predator control unit because in this area there is an overpopulation of bears and the State of Alaska's Fish and Game Management is trying to bring back the

Joni's Pope and Young Record Book brown bear from Alaska.

moose population. Due to the excessive number of bears there, moose calves are killed before they can mature and the moose population is drastically suffering from it. They are seeking to manage the number of bears in the area to allow a good balance of moose and bear overall. I wasn't looking for a trophy-sized bear, but was looking to participate in the predator control program of Alaska, which I strongly believe in.

After the drying period on the skull, and once it was measured and I found out it was going to make the record book, which was an amazing bonus/end to my adventure, I was also told I was only the 6th woman on record to ever take one with a bow. This was a shock to me and really made me extra proud of my accomplishment. My father is a retired big game hunting guide in Alaska, well-known for his guided bear hunts, and I never got the chance to bear hunt with him myself. He has been very ill for many years now and is no longer able to go on hunts.

THE HIDE HAD GOTTEN CAUGHT UP IN EQUIPMENT AT THE TANNERY AND WAS RIPPED IN SEVERAL PLACES, HAD BURNS AND WAS COMPLETELY RUINED. THERE WAS NOTHING USABLE ON IT.

It bothers me deeply I will not ever get the opportunity to share that experience with him. However, getting to take a brown bear with my bow and then coming back to tell him the story was incredibly meaningful and quite emotional for me. So it is no exaggeration when I say receiving news that the tannery had ruined my hide left me totally devastated. I was planning on doing a life-size mount of the bear and putting it in the archery shop that I owned/operated with my husband.

The hide had gotten caught up in equipment at the tannery and was ripped in several places, had burns and was completely ruined. There was nothing usable on it. My taxidermist spent a good deal of time trying to figure out how he could do anything to salvage it. I received the torn up hide and a baggie full of the claws and couldn't even look at it. I put it away and didn't look at it for a month.

However, I am someone who really tries to live my life by finding the positive in things, so I started to think that maybe I could turn lemons into lemonade. I found a leather artist to help me. She had to buy special needles (many of which broke while she was sewing) in order to make something of the thick hide. It was definitely a material she had not used before, but she was up for the challenge.

Using buffalo leather to supplement the torn hide, she created an incredible purse for me. Several of the bear claws hang from the front and sides of the bag. It really turned out beautiful.

I have some great photos and most importantly - I have some incredible memories of my hunt with dear friends and of sharing that story with my father. Nothing can take

Joni's purse was created by leather artist Stacy Leigh.

that experience away from me.

I've certainly realized that I don't have to have the mounted bear because those memories will be close to my heart forever. But, that all being said.... I also have a pretty cool, one-of-a-kind brown bear purse from a bear that I took myself with a bow! So this is a cherished item I will always be very proud of!

Another purse by leather artist Stacy Leigh.

Bearfoot Furs headband by Skye Goode.

Your Inspiration

Feeling inspired to do something with hides from your own harvests? If they are already tanned, you are halfway there! If not, you can have them tanned professionally or you can tan them yourself. While there are how-to videos online about doing your own tanning, there are many different ways, so if you are new to tanning, I would recommend professional tanning or having experienced guidance.

Once you have your tanned hides, you can find a local leather artist or online to start to design your item or you could do the sewing yourself! I have friends who have made everything from mittens, hats, wallets, quivers, pillows and furniture from their hides.

Whether you are sewing by hand or machine, you will need much thicker/stronger needles than normal. If your hide is very stiff (for example, if you tanned it yourself) you might consider getting some additional supplementary leather from a supply store to use on difficult areas of your project. On my purse, we used buffalo leather on the bottom and strap, anywhere that had to bend and hold a shape.

A great option that might be available in your area is to take a fur sewing or tanning class in advance so you are prepared to DIY when you harvest an animal. I suggest contacting the Becoming An Outdoors Woman Program in your home state. This is offered through your State Fish and Game office and covers a wide range of subjects throughout the year - plus an annual workshop event where you can take a wide variety of courses.

Many local craft stores that sell bulk leather also offer classes in sewing furs and leather, or possibly your local sewing store does as well. Additionally, there are lots of online tutorials from some very knowledgeable folks that you can follow along at home. Pillows and furniture from your hides are an easy and fun way to put them to use, with less-complicated patterns!

If you choose to work with an artist instead of doing the sewing yourself, here are a few suggestions of folks you could contact:

- **Glacier Wear** specializes in making mittens, earmuffs, vests, hats, pillows and more from hunters' tanned hides. They have a very affordable price list posted on their website.

Note: In order for them to accept your hide, it must be professionally tanned first (not home tanned). **www.glacierwear.com**.

- Leather artist **Stacy Leigh** makes beautiful purses from deer, elk, moose and other tanned hides. Prices are an investment (like many other purses these days), but offers unique designs and excellent quality! **www.etsy.com/shop/stacyleigh**.

- If you are looking for a place to purchase additional hides or scraps to put together with your tanned hides, **Moscow Hide and Fur** has everything you can think of available. Additionally they also have an "ideas" page showing examples of things done with finished hides and some contacts for artists you can hire. **www.hideandfur.com**.

- **Leather Unlimited** sells wholesale leather, another good online source if needing to supplement hide for your project. They sell goat, deer and more at **www.leatherunltd.com**.

- Skye Goode of **Bearfoot Furs** can make you a beautiful hat, headband or keychain from your own tanned hide or theirs! Lots of examples of their work are posted on the **Bearfoot Furs Facebook page**.

Taxidermy on your wall is always a wonderful reminder of the experience you had on the hunt. However, there is also something special about a custom-made piece from your harvest. While I hope you don't have a bad tanning experience like mine, it's also reassuring to know if something does happen like that, you can still turn lemons to lemonade and enjoy!

*Joni Marie Kiser is an avid bowhunter, founder of **Rockstarlette Bowhunting**, National Pro Staff for Xpedition Archery, Prois and HHA Sports.*

A MILLION STAR HOTEL

Colorado

"This night shot was taken early fall. After pitching our tent, I went mushroom hunting and found many, many King Boletus and cooked them up on my stove with garlic for dinner. Yum!"

ANN DRIGGERS

See more of Ann's photos on Instagram ***@anndriggers***

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