



SHERWOOD PARK FISH AND GAME ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2011

President's Report May 2011

Richard Rothwell, *SPFGA President*

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Winter seems to be over and spring is on the way. I'm sure most of us are tired of snow shovelling and are getting ready for spring and summer to come along. Here is an update of things so far this year that the Executive has been busy with. The trophy scoring in January went off very well. We had a good number of entries followed by the Annual Awards Banquet at the German Cultural Centre in March with around 160 persons in attendance, which was good, but it would be nice to see more members attend. The Awards night is a real fun event. Thanks to all of the members of the Trophy-Awards night committee for their time and efforts in preparation and organization for the event. Blaine Balak has volunteered to serve at the Trophy Chair and will be supervising the event next year.

Negotiations to establish a conservation easement with the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) on the property are still in progress. It should be completed sometime this spring. I have heard some strange rumours and misinformation about the process and its outcome. Be assured your Executive is not selling the property to the NCC. The purpose of the easement from our perspective is to maintain the conservation properties in their natural condition. The quarter section that contains

the firing ranges, clubhouse, campground, fish pond, archery range is exempt from the easement and business is as usual with no restrictions on us.

The ranges have been busy from January onwards. It is getting to the point where our ranges will be one of the few still operating in the greater Edmonton region. This year we hope to replace the roof of the shooting shelter at the Big Bore Range. Pete Beauvais will be organizing the Fun Shoot in August and seeking assistance of Dan Chow for a 22 silhouette shoot. Our Handgun Chair Gary Chambers also hopes to organize some shooting events. If you want to help contact either one of them by email through the web page.

The Spring Work Party is a little later this year on June 11th. Hope to see a good turnout again this year. We can always use all the help regardless of the weather. Last year it was a rain and snow event for the work party, but we still had a good turnout of 50-60 persons. We may also need a fall firewood cutting event in the fall like last year.

If you have any questions contact me or anyone else on the Executive through the web page or telephone. Hope you all have a good summer doing whatever.

Rich Rothwell



Range Orientation Sessions

9:00 AM Last Sunday of each month Contact Pat Harris or
email: to confirm attendance.

Hunting the Horizontal Way

CHRIS WEINTZ

Crossbows may be one of the fastest growing categories among elderly hunters today. Are you leading the pack, or will you be looking from the back wishing you had.

Alberta is one of the provinces that does not allow crossbow hunting during archery only season. Some elderly hunters like myself can no longer take the cold weather during the general season in November and can not efficiently operate a compound bow. Personally I would still like to hunt but can not physically draw a compound bow so would like to take advantage of the warmer weather hunting months of August, September and October, hunting during that time with a crossbow.



Crossbows are tipped with a broadhead the same as a compound bow and I believe they should be included in the archery season. I do not believe that a weapon with an effective off hand range of approximately 60 yards should be included in a firearm season simply

because it can be held at full draw mechanically. Many provinces have recognized this and have included crossbows in the archery season. Crossbows have not really impacted success rates during these archery seasons.

One of the arguments for using crossbows during archery season has always been their ability to be locked at full draw. However in both cases the arrows are propelled by a string, and are tipped with a broadhead, they are not propelled by gun powder.

In truth taking a crossbow to the field can still be challenging for seniors, however because there is no need to hold the crossbows at full draw, we can become proficient much easier. All hunters should be proficient with whatever weapon they choose, and owe this to the game they pursue.

Now is the time to set aside any doubts you may have and try one out for yourself. Crossbows are gaining acceptance across North America, as it is a reasonably "new" hunting weapon and a lot of hunters want to experience hunting with a "new weapon. If you have never hunted with a bow, but are looking for a new challenge the crossbow may be the perfect transition weapon for you.



The SPFGA has donated an older TV and VCR to Goodwill

AT THE MAY GENERAL MEETING SPFGA MEMBERS WILL BE ABLE TO PURCHASE THE NEW ALBERTA WILDLIFE TROPHIES BOOK FOR \$25.00 PLUS GST (Regular \$32.00)

THE NEXT NEWSLETTER WILL BE OUT ON AUGUST 15, 2011. IF YOU WOULD LIKE AN ARTICLE INCLUDED IN THE AUGUST NEWSLETTER PLEASE HAVE IT SUBMITTED BY JULY 31, 2011.

R A N G E N E W S A N D V I E W S

SPRING CLEANUP

Jun 11 9:00am to 5:00pm Work Party –
Spring Clean Up. Exclusive use of the facility.
Contact: Ken Sobkiw

Proposed plans (depending on funds) for 2011 are to continue improvements to the Shotgun and Archery Ranges and to renovate the campground to make some campsites larger, and keep a division between tenters and RVs. We are considering installing a cardlock system for the main gate entrance which should help reduce vandalism and non-member entry violations. Range cleanup has been scheduled for June 11 this year. We had a good turnout last year despite the nasty weather. There is lots of work to be done again this year so we encourage you to come out and lend a hand. Lunch and supper will be provided.

Range use is starting to pick up with the better weather. From some of the traffic it appears members have new firearms to test out or just want to get outside and have some fun shooting. Please remember that safety at the ranges is important. The Executive follows zero tolerance for unsafe conduct and handling of firearms at the ranges. Read the signs at each of the ranges to familiarize yourself with the rules again. So far this year we reprimanded two members for poor conduct, and one member was suspended from the Association.

There appears to be some confusion about handling firearms while at the range. On arrival to any of the ranges carry your firearms cased to a shooting table or bench. If the curtain/flag is up you can remove your firearm from the case and get set up for shooting. When the curtain is down, the range is closed which means firearms are left on the benches with actions open and are not to be handled in any way. This is a safety requirement to insure the safety of people downrange tending targets.

Membership monitors will start to show up on weekends and randomly during the week to check memberships as required under the conditions of insurance for the range. Last

year we had a change in personnel and monitoring has been a lot better. The best way you can help the monitor is to wear your membership card so that it is highly visible. The monitors will have some lanyards for sale this year that work very well for displaying membership cards. The cost is one dollar.

Woodlot Management

SPRING IS HERE, THE GRASS IS RISING,
I WONDER WHERE THE BIRDIES IS

The Association's Bird Counts are on again. Come on out and join us. In 2010 over 40 kinds of birds were seen at the Range and Conservation Area.



Counts will be run on May 14, May 29, and June 4, starting at the main gate at 9:00 AM each day. Any members are welcome to join in. No

charge to learn a few birds. Expert guides will lead the team and are happy to share what they know. Don't be like the birds – don't be shy, be there. Bring your cameras, binoculars and whatever you want to eat or drink. Maybe a raincoat would also be a good idea. Each count will be done by noon so still lots of time for something else as well. An additional count may be on

June 9 if any of the above are rained out. For more information contact Gordon Kerr at





SPFGA Group A ctivities



Fun Shoot

Bring the family out to try your hand at the club trophy for best overall. Also, awards for 1st, 2nd and 3rd place adult and youth for each event.

Saturday August 27th 9am to 1pm.

Events include:

Big Bore Rifle : 300m freestanding rifle, 200m prone, sitting or kneeling with rest, and 100m prone, sitting or kneeling without rest.

Handgun: .22 handgun event (50 rounds). Loaner handguns may be available.

Shotgun: Round of trap (25 shots).

\$5/event. Prizes. Family friendly. BBQ. Bring your own ammo.

Meet at the Shotgun Range at 9am for registration.

Contact Pete Beauvais at _____ or Richard Rothwell at _____ to register.



Trap Shooting

Join Les Berry and his crew for trap shooting at the shotgun range from mid-May to mid-October. We challenge you to score a 25.

Sunday afternoon noon to 3pm. Les may bring out the rabbit or teal machine for an extra challenge after trap.

Wednesday evening 6pm to 8pm as long as there is light.

\$5/round covers clays and scoring. Bring your own shotgun and ammo.



Handgun Events

Come out to shoot handguns with Gary Chambers at the handgun range second Sunday of the month May through October.

May 15th 10am to 12pm Bullseye Style Competition

June 12th 10am to 12pm Rimfire Fun Event

July 10th 10am to 12pm Action Pistol

August 14th 10am to 12pm to be announced

September 11th 10am to 12pm to be announced

October 9th 10am to 12pm to be announced

Free. Bring ammo. Loaner handguns may be available for some events.

Contact Gary Chambers at _____ to register.



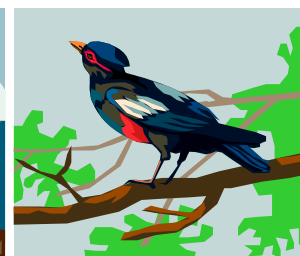
Bird Watching

Join the SPFGA and the Wildbird General Store to count warblers, waterfowl, raptors and more. We're hoping for good weather to count birds for 3 days between May 10th and June 20th.

Keeps your eyes on the weather for sun and on the events calendar for specific dates closer to the event.

Free. Wear comfortable shoes and clothing.

Contact Gordon Kerr at _____ or stop by the Wildbird General Store to register.



New to SPFGA ? Join Pat Harris the last Sunday of the month January through October at 10am for an orientation to our ranges. Free. Contact Pat at _____ or _____.

For more information on club events please visit our website calendar at _____ phone call and email from time to time announcing these special events.

Also, Bill Missen will send out a _____

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) Surveillance Update:

March 23, 2011. (Updated from the SRD website, for more info see the SRD website)

All heads of deer and elk received to date from the fall hunting seasons have been tested, although a few heads continue to dribble into the lab. Herein we provide the summary of the 2010 fall surveillance. From September 1, 2010 to March 23, 2011 we tested 5062 heads (primarily deer heads) and detected nineteen (0.4%) new cases of CWD in wild deer in Alberta.

- Seventeen of the positive deer were mule deer: twelve males, five females
- The two remaining positive deer were white-tailed males
- All positive deer were harvested by hunters and were in very good to excellent body condition.
- All but one positive deer were adults. The remaining positive deer was a yearling in the early stages of infection.
- Many of the infected deer were near previous known CWD cases, largely in the Battle River and Ribstone Creek drainages in the north and the Red Deer River drainage in the south.
- A cluster of infected deer has been found north and west of Dinosaur Provincial Park in WMU 152 – a significant extension of the disease westward along the Red Deer River.
- Of particular significance, the positive yearling mule deer buck was the first case of CWD found in the North Saskatchewan River valley in Alberta. This is strong evidence of recent expansion of the disease into or within the valley.
- As anticipated, additional infected deer were found in CFB Wainwright in association with the Battle River valley.
- The 19 new hunter-kill cases are in addition to the road-kill case found in February 2010, thus the annual total for 2010 is 20 cases.
- Ongoing NEGATIVE test results are being posted to AlbertaRelm and made available to individual hunters. To date, approximately 50% of the test results have been read by the hunter.
- Ongoing POSITIVE test results are provided by phone directly to the hunter who harvested the infected deer
 - As in previous years, hunters who harvest a CWD-infected deer are given the options of :
 - Keeping the meat
 - Turning in the meat and receiving a replacement licence for this year (if the season is still open where the infected deer was harvested)
 - Turning in the meat and receiving a replacement licence for next year for the same species and location as the infected deer
- The total number of CWD cases detected in wild deer in Alberta since September 2005 is 94.

With the last of the snow quickly melting away, the ranges at SPFGA are wide open and, if my last visit is any indication, are going to be very active this year. I have already received a few inquiries about handgun activities, so I fully expect that pistol shooters will be a significant part of the overall action for 2011.



A question I have been asked multiple times in the last couple of months is, “what calibers are permitted on the handgun range?” so I thought I would take the opportunity to explain the range certification process a little. Our range is inspected regularly by the Alberta

provincial Chief Firearms Officer, comparing our range features against those outlined in a 160-page document prepared by the RCMP entitled “Range Design and Construction Guidelines” (this document is freely available online as a PDF). Once he has confirmed that everything is in order, the CFO issues a Shooting Range Approval that is valid for five years. A range approval does not list each caliber that may be used, rather they list “template groups”. A cartridge template group is a group of cartridges that are deemed similar to one representative cartridge for which a range “safety area template” has been developed. Simply put, the guidelines describe a range layout that is safe for use with one specific cartridge, then all other cartridges are listed as to which of those they are most similar to. The guidelines describe three safety area templates for pistol ranges, built around the .22 Long Rifle, 9mm Parabellum, and .357 Magnum cartridges. The SPFGA handgun range has been inspected and approved for all three of these templates.

So what handgun calibers are considered to be equivalent to these three? The short answer is all of them. The guidelines explicitly lists numerous calibers from .22 Short up to .44 Magnum under the various template groups, and since these three are the only template groups available for handguns, it stands to reason that any unlisted pistol cartridges must also fall into one of these groups. It doesn’t really matter what category they decide to lump the .399 EarRinger Special into, as we are approved for them all.

Feedback from people interested in handgun events indicates that Sunday morning may be more popular than Saturday, so we are going to try switching our planned events to Sunday morning at 10am. Come on out for the following Sunday mornings, then go see Les on the Trap range when we’re all through.

Sunday May 15th - Bullseye Shoot. Bring your most accurate pistol for careful, aimed shooting for points.

Sunday June 12th - Action pistol. Heat things up the day after the range cleanup work party (you are coming to the work party, RIGHT?) with your sleek centrefire autoloader and some fast paced targets.

Open water should be here by the time this letter reaches you and some of you may be contemplating purchasing a new boat. The great news is there are lots of choices out there, with models to accommodate every type of boating activity.



This article will focus on the boats that are used in the many lakes and reservoirs in Alberta. The first consideration you should have is what you are going to be using the boat for 80% of the time. You will also want to consider how many people are normally going to be riding in the boat at one time and how much gear you are going to be carrying. All boats will have a designated carrying capacity which will aid you in selecting the size of boat you need, and the horsepower of the motor you require. I will suggest that you do not under-power your boat, especially if you are going to be using it for skiing or wakeboarding, or if the majority of time you will be boating on large water.



Some of our larger lakes and reservoirs can get rough very quickly and you want to insure that you can return to shore quickly and safely if the need should arise.

Now that you have decided what size of boat and motor (all manufactures will have the maximum HP rating on the inspection plate, do not exceed their rating for that boat). you need, the next decision will be if you want a fiberglass or an aluminum boat. There are pros and cons to each style of boat, with the aluminum models being lighter and more resistant to scratching if you are beaching your boat frequently. Aluminum boats being lighter usually require a horsepower rating of 25% less size to achieve the same speed as compared to the fiberglass boat. Fibreglass boats being heavier are usually a little more stable in larger waves, although with the construction and design of the new aluminum boats that is not much of an issue anymore.



If you will be using your boat for fishing the majority of time, there are a few things to consider. I recommend that regardless of what style of the boat you purchase, that you equip it with a sonar, or better yet a sonar-GPS unit. These units are invaluable, not only for locating fishing structure, but units equipped with GPS become a safety tool for marking shallow water, navigating in watersheds with numerous islands, or returning safely back to

camp in fog, or if darkness should fall before you get back to the launch.

Boats that are going to be used for fishing should be equipped with rod holders (for fishing and storage). Many rods have been broken because they were set down and then stepped or sat on, or caught on a pier when returning to the dock. There are many boats that are equipped with rod storage lockers and if you are going to be fishing the majority of the time this is something you will want to consider when you are purchasing your boat. If the boat you consider does not come with rod holders or rod storage there are numerous after market holders available for almost any application. Other accessories that may not come with your boat but are convenient are cup holders, net holders, tackle holders, bimini tops, magnetic tool holders, kicker motors, electric trolling motors and downriggers.

Another boat option that is really gaining popularity is the Pontoon Boat. "Toons" are great options for large families, or persons confined to a wheel chair. These units can be rigged to fish very effectively, with lots of room to cook lunch or go on a supper cruise as well.



The design of these boats makes them very stable and they encounter very little, if any movement as people walk

around the boat. Most anglers will anchor and jig while fishing from these units but we used my buddies pontoon boat last year at Waterhen lake, and were very effective at trolling bottom-bouncer spinner rigs for walleye.



Boating is an excellent family activity, whether you are skiing, wakeboarding or fishing, whatever boat you decide on be sure to get out and experience the great adventures that await you. Everyone have a great summer and we will see you on the water!

MEMBERSHIPS

Deanna Loewen, Membership Chair

Membership classes and fee schedules for the Sherwood Park Fish and Game Association (and affiliation with the Alberta Fish and Game Association) are shown on the front cover of membership books for new members to see when applying for membership.

The Sherwood Park Fish and Game Association is an organization composed of various types of members. We have a variety of age groups, special interest groups, target shooters, hunters, fishermen/women, bird watchers, conservationists and many others. These individuals come together to enjoy and use the property and facilities provided by membership in the club/organization. We can enjoy nature, assist with conservation efforts, improve the facilities and have fellowship with those of similar interest. At appropriate places on the property we can hike, camp, participate in archery, and use firearms (rifles, handguns, shotguns, black powder guns). Youth under 18 years of age can learn how to fish in the stocked fish pond. We do these activities in a responsible manner with respect to other club members and neighbors.

In pursuing these activities, we must abide with club rules. Many of these rules deal with standard procedures and conduct related to handling and care of bows and arrows and firearms. When violations of these rules occur it is not only a danger to the individuals involved but to the association itself. Many of you will know that some members of the general public do not share our enthusiasm for our chosen activities. Sherwood Park Fish and Game Association cannot tolerate any behavior that would compromise the safety of our members, neighbors or the general public. In addition to general rules regarding firearms and ammunition (see material supplied by firearm manufacturers and ammunition manufacturers), the club has other rules that define where and when we can enjoy our activities. Shooting at appropriate sites and times are important and necessary.

Benefits of Membership

There are many benefits to membership in the association. One of the major benefits is our affiliated membership in the Alberta Fish and Game Association. Part of your dues to the Sherwood Park Fish and Game Association are paid to Alberta Fish and Game Association. This provides members with insurance (while using the range), other insurance benefits, the Outdoor Edge Magazine, discounts at various businesses, and a combined voice on matters of common interest to government and other groups.

Problems

We must have proper insurance coverage to utilize the range facilities. When you purchase a membership in the club, your membership fee includes a portion for insurance that is paid to Alberta Fish and Game Association. Your membership class must conform with the classes of insurance coverage.

The major problem the club has is with persons who apply for some form of family membership because some dependants are not eligible under the Family Range Membership. To eliminate the problems, all Family Range Members and all Family Regular Members must submit a written application to the club. The application can be mailed or emailed to memberships@spfga.org. Members can call the Membership Chair or the Membership Co-Chair."Please note our classes of membership.

Family Regular Memberships shall constitute one regular member, a spouse or partner and all dependent children under 18 years of age (cost \$70 per Year) with no access to shooting ranges.

Family Range Memberships shall constitute one range member, a spouse or partner and all dependent children under 18 years of age (cost \$130 per Year) with access to shooting ranges.

Family Range Memberships and Family Regular Memberships DO NOT INCLUDE grandparents, aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, cousins, friends and in-law relations.

Dependent includes a spouse or partner and sons or daughters under 18 years of age.

Youth Membership is open to all young people under 18 years of age

Memberships

Deanna Loewen, Membership Chair

Membership fees for 2011 are as follows:

Range	\$90
Family Rang	\$130
Regular	\$50
Family Regular	\$70
Youth	\$20



- Family Range Membership includes the Range Member, the spouse/partner and their children under 18 years of age.
- Family Range Membership does not include brothers, sisters, grandparents, aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews.
- Family Range Membership does not include students over 18 years of age even though they are living at home.

Memberships are available at General Meetings or you can mail an Application Form to:

Sherwood Park Fish & Game Association
PO Box 3098, Sherwood Park, AB T8H 2T1.

SPFGA Memberships may be purchased directly from:

MilArm Co. Ltd. 10769 – 99 Street, Edmonton (780) 424-5281	Sherwood Park Archery Lanes Inc. 429 Sioux Road, Sherwood Park (780) 464-0017
Wholesale Sports - North 12610 St. Albert Trail, Edmonton (780) 477-3737	Sabre Sports & Cycle 52 Brentwood Boulevard, Sherwood Park (780) 464-3100
Wholesale Sports – South Common 2033 – 98 Street NW, Edmonton (780) 461-2001	Alberta Field and Stream 4932 – 51 Avenue, Tofield (780) 662-0077
P & D Enterprises 10552 – 115 Street, Edmonton (780) 420-6419	
Alberta Fish & Game Association 6924 – 104 Street, Edmonton (780) 437-2342	

If you change your address, please:

- send an email to: membership@spfga.org
- or call Deanna Loewen (
- MEMBERSHIP AS OF APRIL 12, 2011.....1686

Sherwood Park Fish and Game Association

Affiliated with Alberta Fish and Game Association
PO Box 3098, Sherwood Park, AB T8H 2t1

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Regular	\$50	Member benefits for one person without range privileges	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> NEW
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Family Regular	\$70	Member benefits include spouse/partner, dependent children under 18 years of age, without range privileges	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> RENEWAL
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Range	\$90	All privileges for one person including range privileges	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> MALE
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Family Range	\$130	Member benefits include spouse/partner, dependent children under 18 years of age with all privileges	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> FEMALE
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Youth	\$20	Open to any young person under 18 years of age, who is supervised by a Range Member	<div>BIRTH YEAR</div>

Name

Mailing Address

Town/City.....Province.....Postal Code.....

Phone (.....).....Email.....

To be used only for emailing Club information such as notices of Meetings. NO SPAM advertising will result.

PAYMENT METHOD

<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> CHEQUE	Please make cheques payable to <i>Sherwood Park Fish & Game Association</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> VISA	Name On Card.....
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> MASTERCARD	Card No.....
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> AMEX	Expiry Date.....Signature

Amount Enclosed
\$

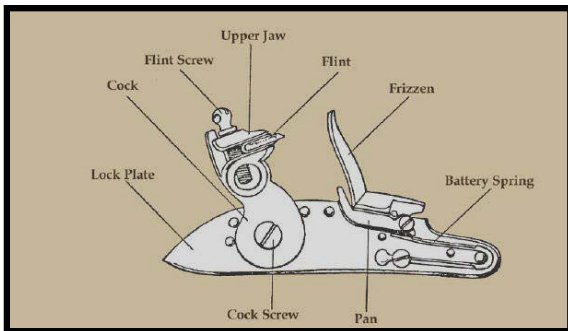
NAMES AND INFORMATION ABOUT ALL DEPENDANTS LISTED UNDER FAMILY REGULAR AND FAMILY RANGE MEMBERSHIPS

This information is essential for dependant members under Family Memberships to qualify for Club Insurance.

Name	Birth Year	Relationship

I once met a well-known and respected anthropologist who had published a number of extremely learned papers on the fur trade. She felt the assessment of the impact of guns on the lifestyle of Native peoples had been tremendously exaggerated. This hypothesis was based on a single demonstration at which a group of interpreters had taken well over a minute to load their guns and then all five of them had missed a six inch target at fifty yards. Our scholar remained sceptical when I explained that fur trade guns were smoothbores, not rifles, and so could be loaded much more quickly. I point out that a British infantryman was trained to load and fire his musket four times a minute, and that at fifty yards there is very little difference between the accuracy of a musket and a rifle. Having been brought up on tales of the American Revolution, the Battle of New Orleans, and those "Kentucky Rifles", the anthropologist remained firmly unconvinced. This was my introduction to the fact that some academics know little or nothing about firearms, ballistics or even being out in the bush.

One of the objectives of living history is to temporarily recreate way of life, to actually see and do and feel the things our forebears did. Through this process we begin to learn some of the things they took for granted. One area routinely given short shrift in the journal record is details about the guns used in the fur trade.



Northwest trade guns were around in relatively huge numbers compared to any other gun.

There were in

production longer than any other gun in history. Despite what is written in modern black powder publications, it was the Northwest trade gun which was by far the most common firearm in the Canadian Northwest, the Rocky Mountains, and the Missouri River fur trade. Because they were around for such a long time, a number of myths sprang up about Northwest guns. The main ones are: Northwest guns were deliberately made with unnecessarily long barrels because their price was a pile of beaver pelts the same height as the gun; Northwest guns had a large-bowed trigger guard so that they could be fired by someone wearing mittens; Northwest guns were substandard, shoddy weapons which were notoriously unreliable and they often exploded injuring or killing the shooter. I have read each of the statements in books and articles about the fur trade. They are not usually backed up by any references but are presented as the kind of fact that "everybody knows". It was only after I had built a Northwest gun of my own and began using it to shoot both shot and roundball that I realized it was to re-enactors to rescue the reputation of these fine weapons.

Let us start by examining the myths mentioned above in the

light of practical experience. First, the pile of beaver pelts. Both the Northwest Company and the Hudson's Bay Company operated a standard of trade. This meant that the price paid to the trapper for this fur stayed the same from year to year, no matter what was happening in the European fur markets. The price of a gun was between twelve and twenty "made beaver", and this remained the price right up to the first years of the twentieth century. Strangely, the story of piling up fur is only told about the Hudson's Bay Company. For a time I lived in the Northwest Territories and I heard this story from many of the Native trappers, especially the elders. However, I never actually met anybody who could say "It happened to me" or I watched it happen to so and so. All I ever found was hearsay evidence. The HBC, or course, have always denied it. My conclusion is that, while it may have happened, it was not common practice. Was this the reason for the long barrel? The answer here is a definite no. Many guns produced in the eighteenth century had barrels equally long and even longer. Fowlers with barrels of 54 inches were not uncommon. Originally, Northwest guns came in barrel lengths of 48 and 42 inches (four foot and three and half foot guns). Ballistic theory at the time held that the longer barrels produced greater accuracy, more power, and better shot patterns. I have guns of both 42 and 36 inch barrels, and at the ranges I shoot, there is no discernible difference in the accuracy of a single ball or in the power (i.e the aiming point, or "hold" I use). Sometimes the shot patterns do seem a bit tighter with the 42 inch barrel. Modern ballistic techniques can prove that there is not appreciable increase in power or accuracy for barrels longer than 33 inches, however a number of traditionalist remain unconvinced.

Next the mystery of the large-bow trigger. I have read many documents about why the Northwest gun had such a large trigger guard but I doubt that the myth "to be able to shoot with mitts on" holds true as I have tried to fire one with mitts on, and you can't do it. Some more recent authorities have begun to refer to a "gloved hand". Although this is much more practical, there is no documentary of material evidence of anybody wearing winter gloves in the fur trade period. Another story is that Northwest guns had mainsprings which were so fierce that they could only be fired by pulling the trigger with two fingers. However there is little documentary evidence for this either and I would suspect nobody else does for sure. The trigger guards were not welded but were bent out of a bar of iron, probably they were stamped out.



BLACK POWDER

cont'd

The final myth about the poor quality of Northwest guns is the most damaging of all. However, if these guns were as bad as some historians claim, then why were they kept in production with almost no changes to the design for a hundred and fifty years? Even at the height of competition between HBC and Northwest, neither tried to change the design or the quality of the guns. There were a number of factors which conspired to create this bad reputation, but I believe the people of the eighteenth century meant "economical" or thrifty when referring to these guns as cheap.

The most expensive part of building a gun, both then and now is the builder's time. After building these guns, some of the features such as a straight and butt plate, which is nailed on, the lack of a ramrod entry-pipe, and the lack of a trigger plate, the ramrod thimbles and trigger guard, surface mounted instead of inlet into the stock, were all done to save the builder's time. Like all guns built in England they were tested before being sent to the Northwest company. Gun barrels were "proofed" by firing a standard size ball, loaded with four times the normal charge of powder. Once a gun had passed with a viewer's examination it was

stories when I got the ramrod jammed. After giving it an extra sharp tug I managed to pull off the ramrod tip which was then stuck halfway down the barrel. No problem, the elders told me, they would simply take the barrel out of the stock and lay it across a fire until it was red hot. The patch would burn up allowing the ramrod tip to fall out! Most modern steels won't take that kind of abuse, let alone an eighteenth-century barrel with a lap weld along the bottom. It is no wonder so many Northwest guns had short, brutal lives.

Significantly, all of the elders had very fond memories of their old muzzleloaders. They had the reputations as guns which never missed. At demonstrations at Fort Edmonton I enjoy telling visitors that there is no modern gun that can do what my versatile Northwest gun can do. Light enough to carry all day long, a 24 or 20 gauge (.58 or .62) has a large enough bore to kill big game animals, but it can also be loaded with shot and used to take small animals like muskrat or ptarmigan. There, finally, is the reason for the longevity of the Northwest gun. They were the first guns designed and made specifically to be used in North America, the design evolved until it fit the market demand perfectly.



stamped with a viewer's mark on both the barrel and lockplate. On English guns this mark was a fox. Official proof marks were also stamped into the top of the barrel at the breech end.

The second cause of problems with Northwest guns was the treatment which they received. They were designed for everyday use by people born into a Neolithic hunting culture. Never cherished or cared for, many of the surviving guns in museum collections show incredibly hard use. Although designed to take hard use there is some abuse which no gun can withstand. Once I had my gun at a Native camp in the Mackenzie Mountains in the western NWT. The very presence of the gun was encouraging the elders present to reminisce about their own guns. Many of them had begun hunting in the early part of the century using muzzle loading guns. They told me stories of having only three musket balls to last for the whole winter. If an animal was shot at and missed they would ignore the animal and go digging through the snow to retrieve the ball. Big game such as moose or caribou were shot in a fleshy part so that the ball could be recovered in the skinning process, without being flattened or distorted. Hunters could not afford to fire or unload their guns each night, so they stayed loaded for many days with predictable corrosive effects on the touchhole and breech plug. They were seldom cleaned and hardly ever cleaned properly.

Since these guns were carried loaded every day there was a good chance that the ball would be dislodged and move away from the powder charge. Also, guns were fired when the barrel was plugged with snow. Either of the conditions would cause the barrel to burst. I was clearing my gun while listening to these

By the early eighteenth century, the trading companies had established rigid requirements for the Northwest guns. The full-stocked, smoothbore trade guns varied little in shape and style, but underwent changes in barrel lengths. By the late 1820's, the 30-inch barrel had become popular. The overall length of a standard Northwest gun with a 30-inch barrel was 45.5 inches. A distinctive feature of these guns was the dragon or serpent shaped side plate. Most Indians would not trade for a gun that did not have the serpent plate. The earliest record of these guns is dated at 1805.



This article was copied in part from an article written by William Stewart, a member of the Edmonton House Brigade

2011 Calendar of Events



MAY

May 10 7:00pm Executive Meeting - Chamber of Commerce (100 Ordze Avenue), Sherwood Park

May 15 10:00am to 12:00pm Handgun Event – Bullseye Style Competition Contact: Gary Chambers

May 15 1:00pm to 3:00pm Trap Shooting at Shotgun Range starts – Every Sunday afternoon mid-May to mid-September (May 22, 29)

May 18 6:00pm to 8:00pm Trap Shooting at Shotgun Range starts – Every Wednesday evening mid-May to mid-September (May 25)

May 26 7:30pm General Meeting - Old Log Cabin (50 Spruce Avenue), Sherwood Park

May 27-29 (Weekend) Edmonton House Brigade Black Powder Shoot – Exclusive Shotgun, Handgun, Rimfire, and Overflow Ranges and Black Powder Trail. Non-exclusive use of clubhouse. Contact: Neil Usher

May 29 10:00am Range Orientation Session – Last Sunday of the month. Start at SPFGA Big Bore Range and work around to other ranges. One hour. Contact: Pat Harris, ,

JUNE

Jun 1 6:00pm to 8:00pm Trap Shooting at Shotgun Range starts – Every Wednesday evening mid-May to mid-September (Jun 8, 15, 22, 29)

Jun 5 1:00pm to 3:00pm Trap Shooting at Shotgun Range starts – Every Sunday afternoon mid-May to mid-September (Jun 12, 19, 26)

Jun 11 9:00am to 5:00pm Work Party – Spring Clean Up. Exclusive use of the facility. Contact: Ken Sobkiw

Jun 12 10:00am to 12:00pm Handgun Event - Rimfire Fun Event Contact: Gary Chambers ,

Jun 26 10:00am Range Orientation Session – Last Sunday of the month. Start at SPFGA Big Bore Range and work around to other ranges. One hour. Contact: Pat Harris, ,

JULY

Jul 3 1:00pm to 3:00pm Trap Shooting at Shotgun Range starts – Every Sunday afternoon mid-May to mid-September (Jul 10, 17, 24, 31)

Jul 6 6:00pm to 8:00pm Trap Shooting at Shotgun Range starts – Every Wednesday evening mid-May to mid-September (Jul 13, 20, 27)

Jul 10 10:00am to 12:00pm Handgun Event – Action Pistol at the Overflow Range Contact: Gary Chambers

Jul 31 10:00am Range Orientation Session – Last Sunday of the month. Start at SPFGA Big Bore Range and work around to other ranges. One hour. Contact: Pat Harris, ,

AUGUST

Aug 3 6:00pm to 8:00pm Trap Shooting at Shotgun Range starts – Every Wednesday evening mid-May to mid-September (Aug 10, 17, 24, 31)

Aug 7 1:00pm to 3:00pm Trap Shooting at Shotgun Range starts – Every Sunday afternoon mid-May to mid-September (Aug 14, 21, 28)

Aug 14 10:00am to 12:00pm Handgun Event – To Be Announced. Contact: Gary Chambers ,

Aug 27 9:00am to 2:00pm Fun Shoot – Big Bore Range, Handgun Range, Shotgun Range, Clubhouse. Contact: Pete Beauvais or Richard Rothwell, ,

Aug 28 10:00am Range Orientation Session – Last Sunday of the month. Start at SPFGA Big Bore Range and work around to other ranges. One hour. Contact: Pat Harris, ,

SEPTEMBER

Sep 4 1:00pm to 3:00pm Trap Shooting at Shotgun Range starts – Every Sunday afternoon mid-May to mid-September (Sep 11, 18, 25)

Sep 7 6:00pm to 8:00pm Trap Shooting at Shotgun Range starts – Every Wednesday evening mid-May to mid-September (Sep 14, 21, 28)

Sep 8 7:00pm Hunter's Night - ACT Aquatic and Recreation Center Boardroom Rundle Park (2909 113 Avenue NW), Edmonton. Contact: Dave Hollingshead

Sep 11 10:00am to 12:00pm Handgun Event – To Be Announced. Contact: Gary Chambers ,

Sep 13 7:00pm Executive Meeting - Chamber of Commerce (100 Ordze Avenue), Sherwood Park

Sep 25 10:00am Range Orientation Session – Last Sunday of the month. Start at SPFGA Big Bore Range and work around to other ranges. One hour. Contact: Pat Harris, ,

OCTOBER

Oct 9 10:00am to 12:00pm Handgun Event – To Be Announced. Contact: Gary Chambers ,

Oct 11 7:00pm Executive Meeting - Chamber of Commerce (100 Ordze Avenue), Sherwood Park

Oct 27 7:30pm General Meeting – Old Log Cabin (50 Spruce Avenue), Sherwood Park

Oct 30 10:00am Range Orientation Session – Last Sunday of the month. Start at SPFGA Big Bore Range and work around to other ranges. One hour. Contact: Pat Harris, ,

NOVEMBER

Nov 1 WINTER SHOOTING HOURS IN EFFECT 8:30AM TO 5:00PM

Nov 8 11 7:00pm Executive Meeting - Chamber of Commerce (100 Ordze Avenue), Sherwood Park

DECEMBER

Dec 1 General Meeting – Election Night - Old Log Cabin (50 Spruce Avenue), Sherwood Park



BECOMING AN OUTDOOR WOMAN (BOW)

July 13 – 16, 2011

Narrow Lake Conservation Centre (Athabasca)

This program is designed for women 18 years of age and older to learn outdoor skills usually associated with hunting and fishing, but useful for many outdoor pursuits. Registration fee is \$175 and payments are due by June 15, 2011.

For further details contact Robyn Butler at . Email: