

### **Table of contents**

President's report	1
Editor's note	2
SPFGA Board	3
October 8 virtual general meeting:	
Results of the membership fee ratification vote	3
2020 Awards Banquet	4
Mask wear, hand sanitizing and physical distancing: a reminder	6
Cowboy Action Shooting at SPFGA	7
The importance of having your own email address	8
Rifle report	10
Patterning your shotgun	12
Intro to winter camping	13
Member Disciplinary Committee (MDC) report	14
A big deal about birdhouses	15
From The Ketchamoot Discourse	22
Did You Know?	22
Operations report	24
Hunting is declining across North America—	
Except in Alberta. Here's how.	25
Communications archives	28
Facility rules updates	30
So, are range guests allowed yet?	31
"What are your hours?" Well, the answer to that varies	31
Range hours	32
Wildlife issues—who to call?	32
Before you leave home	32

### President's report

#### Good day to everyone

COVID-19 certainly presented some unique challenges to the SPFGA this spring and summer. Following Alberta's Chief Medical Officer of Health's Orders required developing plans of our own, which we were able to convey to the membership through our Safe and Sound facility safety and system message emails. The closing of our facility was the first in its history. With Alberta's Relaunch Strategy reaching Stage 1, we were able to move to Phase 1 of our own re-opening plan on May 19 and open the facility on a limited basis. On June 15, following the province moving to Stage 2, we moved to Phase 2 of our re-opening plan, the details of which can be found on the website: https://www. spfga.ca/reopen-plan/. We still have a long road ahead of us in continuing the operations of the SPFGA despite the challenges posed by COVID-19, and will continue to have to make changes.

One of these changes is that the Board now meets remotely using Microsoft Teams. Most of our communications are now via Teams, with topics being discussed before the meetings, making meetings more productive and shorter. Who said old dogs can't learn new tricks?

Another of these changes was the SPFGA's first virtual general meeting, held on October 8, 2020. From the feedback received so far, it appears to have been a success. The attendance was the one of the highest in the club's history, which is a real plus. Our first electronic vote, a ratification of changes to our membership fees, was conducted following this meeting. I am happy to say the membership vote was 85.1% in favor of supporting the AFGA in its financial struggle and of our membership fee increase.

The Board hopes that with moving more into the electronic age, we will be able to get more information to and involvement from our younger members. From the statistics gathered on our communications systems, we are seeing more and more usage all the time which is great. Again, I say hats off to all those involved in their efforts to make this happen.

At the facility, our biggest news is that we have hired a fulltime maintenance technician. Next would be that we purchased a lawnmower for him to keep the grass cut throughout the facility, a task we have previously contracted to an outside company. You will also notice that we have a new tractor with various attachments that will allow us to do our own road maintenance, maintenance of the walking trails, as well as snow blowing the parking areas and clearing



paths to the target boards instead of fighting a narrow trail. Now that we have the road damage due to trenching for the security system wiring fixed and sloped for better drainage, we can keep the roads in good condition. While this equipment was a large expense it was made possible by the Operations Director reallocating budget lines which were already approved but unneeded due to COVID-related changes and did not require the addition of new funds. As well, this equipment replaces the ongoing expense of contractor services to complete these tasks. We expect that the level of facility maintenance will reach even higher levels with these changes and that we will see the return on this investment within just a few years.

AltaLink completed their work replacing the powerline running through our properties in February and March. There are still some minor repairs to be done and this work is expected to be completed by the end of October. The pile of power poles by the road after you enter the property are planned to be used for bridge supports on trails on the new property southeast of the quarter section the ranges are situated on.

All the rain we had this summer and a surge in activity by the beavers on our properties caused flooding on the 3D archery trail and in two locations on the black powder trail. We are working on getting the culvert unplugged on the archery trail but have had to close the black powder trail until a solution can be found, however.

This year we have been able to maintain several shooting events despite the challenges the pandemic posed. The Outlaw Precision Rimfire Series events were able to proceed regularly through the summer and fall, Rimfire Silhouette shoots were held weekly, and of course our Weekly Trap Series. We also hosted a long range .22 rimfire shoot demonstration event by the Canadian Rimfire Precision Series, as well as a demonstration Rimfire Raceguns shoot. We have been able to hold several Mapleseed events, as well as a Black Badge course. An F-Class seminar was held in mid-October. It is nice to see all this activity! Check your email inbox for your semi-monthly edition of *Bullet Points* or the visit **the events calendar** on the SPFGA website for future evens you might like to participate in.

This spring we restocked our Fish Pond for your fishing pleasure. In addition to Rainbow Trout, we also stocked some Brown Trout, so I hope you had a chance to catch some of these too. The Fish Pond is for anglers of all ages – kids as well as adults – and is catch-and-release with the use of single barbless hooks (less harmful to the fish). Please see **the Facility Rules** for more information.

This spring, the Liberal government passed its **May 1 Order-in-Council**, **SOR/2020-96**, which resulted in 1500+ models of firearms becoming prohibited. The effect this has had on our members has been most unfortunate, prompting the SPFGA to donate to the Canadian Coalition for Firearm Rights (CCFR) to help with its charter challenge response to the Order-in-Council. Meanwhile, we remind members that each of you is responsible for determining the status of your firearms and the implications that has on your ability to transport and use them.

For the club youth and female members selected for going to the Narrow Lake camp this past summer, your position for going to the camp will be carried over to 2021. We are hoping the camp will be able to open next summer as it is a really great experience to learn, meet people and make new friends.

The AFGA has been the loud voice of conservationists, hunters, and fisherman for 112 years. It is respected by the Alberta Government and many of the suggestions it has provided, the Alberta Government has implemented. We had previously communicated that the AFGA is having some financial difficulties and the two options its executive has provided as solutions: restructure to provide core services or to dissolve. The results from the AFGA vote was 87.6% support of the special resolution for their fee increase. The AFGA Executive decided, following this vote, to forward with restructuring and will be creating several new committees to develop action plans to invigorate the AFGA. We would like to thank all of you for your overwhelming support in keeping the AFGA alive and functioning in our best interests of hunting, fishing, and conservation.

By the time this edition of Range of Thoughts reaches your inbox, we will be in the final stages of implementing changes we have been making to the membership portal over the past few months and are nearing readiness to begin the 2021 membership renewal process. We will be sending out a Safe and Sound email announcing when this is ready to launch.

We have begun preparing for our Annual General Meeting and association election, which will be held on December 3, 2020. Communications will be coming out over the next few weeks about which board positions are up for election this year. We encourage you to consider running for one of these.

The hunting season is upon us with lots of ducks and geese being seen on the ponds and in the fields. I hope you have a chance to get out, enjoy some of that good Alberta country air and if shooting straight, some tasty ducks and geese for the table.

I hope you all stay safe, healthy and look forward to seeing you at the range or out enjoying the country air.

Al Keeler

### Editor's note

#### Roland Coppens, Communications Director

Range of Thoughts, being our association newsletter, is intended as a quarterly publication. As it's worked out though, 2020 had other ideas.

Between the challenges COVID has posed for the club itself and things on other fronts for me personally, the Spring and

Summer editions of *Range of Thoughts* have had to be omitted. I offer my apologies for this - I know a good number of club members enjoy this publication—but this was unavoidable.

With this Fall edition however, things are back on track and moving forward. Please enjoy this edition and, if you like what you see, consider browsing through the **archive of back issues on our website**.

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### October 8 virtual general meeting: Results of the membership fee ratification vote

Our October General Meeting was held remotely on Oct. 8 via Microsoft Teams. Despite this being our first full-scale virtual event, things went quite smoothly and the meeting was well attended. Being sought at this meeting was ratification of the increase in 2021 membership fees, encompassing the proposed AFGA increase as well as our own. (A full detailing of the background may be found on the Eventbrite event that had been set up for meeting registration: https://spfga-oct-8-general-meeting.eventbrite.ca)

Ballots were sent out to the members attending the meeting and voting left open 48 hours. At the close of voting, **the** motion for the increase passed with 85.1% votes in support.

This was one of the most highly attended General Meetings and votes in the history of the SPFGA. Even more encouraging was the breadth of the mix of those attending —long-time members and new members, spanning a range

of ages, most attending a club meeting for the first time. We've invested a great deal of time and effort over the past two years as a club in member engagement, so this was very welcome to see.

As a result of this ratification vote, membership fees for 2021 will be:

Membership Type			
Regular	\$78		
Regular w/ Range	\$168		
Family	\$107		
Family w/ Range	\$221		
Youth	\$28		

### **2020 Awards Banquet**

Because of the pandemic restrictions and concern for the health and safety of our members, we cancelled our awards banquet year—the first time in the history of the awards banquet that we have had to do so.

For all the winners, don't worry as you will still get your chance to shine. We are tentatively planning to hold our 2021 awards banquet in March, public health orders permitting. 2020 award winners will be sent tickets for the 2021 banquet.

We will present 2020 awards at that time along with those winners for 2021. It should be a great evening, so mark it on your calendar!

For those that purchased tickets for this year's banquet, we have issued full refunds. For the sponsors, they will receive four tickets for next year's banquet instead of the usual two in compensation.

The award winners for this year are as follows:

	Merit Awards for service	a above and be	wond
Wildlife	Alexa Watt		McBain Camera
Scenic Photography	James Parton		Tim Horton's Sherwood Park
Warm Water Fish	Max Snow	73.00	Dean MacKenzie Family
Junior Fish -13 – 17 Years	No entry		SPFGA
Junior Fish -12 Years & Under	Max Snow	57.00	SPFGA
Cold Water Fish	Gaetan Richard	18.00	The Fishin' Hole
Pheasant	Dwayne Zuzak	101.60	Shawcor
Duck	Pat Harris	1.71 kgs.	Mr. & Mrs. Pat Harris
Goose	Al Keeler	5.73 kgs.	TPS Machining & Welding
Master Hunter Big Game	Kris Skelly	320 4/8	Abalone Construction Services Ltd.
Junior Big Game – Under 18	Russell Kalashnikoff	125 3/8	Mr. Dean Bromberger
Largest Big Game Crossbow	Brad Fenson	147 4/8	Gordon Kerr
Largest Big Game Black Powder	Luc Preteau	18 6/16	Edmonton House Brigade
Largest Big Game Archery	Kris Skelly	320 4/8	Jim-Bow's Archery
County of StrathconaBig Game	Craig Temple	123 2/8	Mr. & Mrs. Doug Burton
Black bear	Gord Nuttall	20 5/16	D Valves Ltd.
Bighorn Sheep	No entry		Home Hardware Sherwood Park
Pronghorn Antelope	Jarett Crosley	70 6/8	Kerr Interior Systems Ltd.
Canada Moose	Gary Temple	165 6/8	Southtown Auto & Industrial Supply
American Elk	Vincent Duffek	326 6/8	W & R Foundation Specialists Ltd.
Non-typical Mule deer	Joe Winter	178 3/8	Canuck Industrial Sales (19820 Ltd.
Mule deer	Paul Kalashnikoff	178 1/8	Encore Trucking & Transport
Non-typical Whitetail deer	Darren Grab	146 6/8	Widynowski's Sausage House
Whitetail deer	Cory Pawl	151 3/8	Butcher Block & Smoke house Ltd

Darren McCann Conroy Kluyts

## Mask wear, hand sanitizing and physical distancing: a reminder

With COVID-19 cases and virus transmission on the rise, it's important to make some reminders about the importance of the recommended mitigation strategies.

First: if you are feeling unwell—regardless of the reason—STAY HOME.

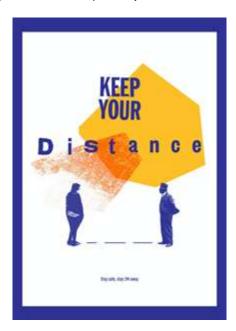
Following that, **the current evidence** is that SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, is transmitted in three main ways:

- Contact transmission, where someone comes into direct contact with an infected person or touches a surface that has been contaminated.
- Droplet transmission of both large and small respiratory droplets that contain the virus, which would occur near an infected person.
- Airborne transmission of smaller droplets and particles that are suspended in the air over longer distances and time than droplet transmission.

These transmission methods are the reason for our mitigation strategies: physical distancing, mask wear, hand sanitizing, and surface disinfection.

### **Physical Distancing**

**Recent evidence** has demonstrated greater risk for virus transmission in enclosed spaces—18.7 times greater—yet outdoor transmission is still possible. Making sure that you maintain the 2 m (6') distance between yourself and anyone you don't reside with is the simplest and most important measure you can follow to protect yourself and other members.



This requirement extends to carpooling to the property: if you do not live with the people you will be at the property with, please consider travelling separately. If you must travel together, because it is impossible in most cases to physically distance inside a vehicle please ensure that everyone in the vehicle is wearing a mask.

#### **Mask Wear**

A covering of the mouth and nose, whether a reusable non-medical cloth mask or a disposable medical mask of non-woven and/or melt-blown fabric, **has been shown to be effective** at preventing virus transmission. If you are unable to physically distance 2 m from other members who you do not live with, masks wear is mandatory. The exception to this is when you are on the firing line.

The important thing to understand about masks is their purpose: they are source control methods, containing your respiratory droplets and reducing the odds of virus transmission if you have been infected but have not yet started having symptoms. While masks do somewhat reduce your chance of becoming infected, this is not their main purpose—they are a measure you engage in for the benefit of fellow members.



### **Hand Sanitizing**

The use of alcohol-based hand sanitizers with 70% or higher alcohol content **have been demonstrated** to be effective at inactivating a broad spectrum of bacteria and viruses, including SARS-CoV-2. Use of these products are recommend upon arrival to the facility, periodically throughout your stay if interacting with surfaces other members may have touched, and just before departing.

We have provided pump dispensers at locations throughout the facility for your use. We encourage you to bring your own as well if you would rather use yours.



#### **Hard Surface Disinfection**

Members are reminded to wipe down common-touch surfaces (benchtops, the safety curtain crank handle and portable toilet doors are good examples of this) with disinfectant or disinfectant wipes that you supply.

Eliminating chairs from the range sheds and picnic tables throughout the property has been a strategy we have employed to limit the abundance of common-touch surfaces. When coming out to the property, please bring your own chair to use. Please bring this chair home with you when you are done. An increasing number of chairs are being left behind after members depart and there are enough of these now that we will have to begin disposing of them soon.



### So, OK, why are we mentioning all this over again?

We've been noticing that compliance with these measures has been slipping. Members often disregard physical distancing, mask wear has been dropping, hand sanitizing rates are falling.

Look, we get it—everyone is done with this stuff. We are too. But, done or not, the virus isn't done and transmission rates are increasing. We all share a responsibility to keep ourselves and our fellow members safe, and the best way to do that is to follow these measures. No one method is sufficiently effective alone as they work best when used together, so they all need to be followed.

So, from this point forward, non-compliance with these measures will be considered a member disciplinary matter and handled as such.

We recognize this stance is strong, but the last thing we want is our facility to be identified as a source of virus transmission. First, because we don't want you becoming sick. Second, because that happening may result in the facility being closed, and that's an outcome nobody wants.



### **Cowboy Action Shooting at SPFGA**

#### Bernie Engel, SPFGA Cowboy Action Shooters

This colourful and extremely enjoyable sport originated in 1982, and quickly spread around the world with numerous active clubs across Canada. The Single Action Shooting Society (SASS) provides us with the rules and safety regulations. The emphasis of this sport is first placed on SAFETY, then the costumes and FUN! It is very common to spend the day competing with 1870's miners, bankers, cowboys, soldiers, gamblers and desperadoes.

Winning is secondary to the fun and camaraderie of a Cowboy Action Shooting (CAS) Match. Competitors and spectators alike, get caught up in the 'Spirit of the Game' and a good time is had by all. Join in as a stranger and leave with a new shooting family.

CAS consists of using three different types of guns: singleaction handguns, lever-action pistol caliber rifles, and shotguns (either double barrel or pump action with external hammer, Winchester model 1897 only), in various courses of fire which are not revealed until the day of the practice. A typical CAS shooting stage could consist of hitting up to ten pistol targets, cranking out eight to ten rounds from your rifle and then wrapping up by engaging steel targets with your shotgun. What it all adds up to, is a whole lot of fun! CAS events are being held all over the country.

Please refer to the **events calendar** on the website to see the CAS practice schedule.

If you require more detailed information on Cowboy Action Shooting, please visit the SASS website: https://www.sassnet.com

Until further notice, due to COVID-19, specific Health & Safety Guidelines will be followed at all practices. If you are coming out, either to practice or just to watch, please bring an appropriate mask and hand sanitizer.





### The importance of having your own email address

#### **Roland Coppens, Communications Director**

We regularly get autoresponses from members when we send out club communications. These autoresponses are usually coming from their work email address.

This is a problem—staying informed about club matters, particularly facility safety—related information we send out via *Safe and Sound* emails, is challenging if you're only receiving our messages during the workday when you aren't on vacation.

Similarly, having your own email address is necessary for virtual meeting attendance and participating in remote voting. Meeting virtually and voting remotely will be a requirement for at least the next year. And even when inperson meetings can resume, these things are here to stay. Ensuring that we remain relevant to our younger members —who, after all, will run the club after we've moved on—is important and these measures better suit them and the modern world we live in.

So, to better participate in that modern world each member really does need their own email address. We encourage you to obtain one for yourself if you don't have one, then receive club messages there instead. There are many options for

setting up a free email available (here are nine, just as an example), and we encourage you to explore these.

Once you've set up an email address for yourself, you simply update your details yourself in the member portal by **logging into your profile.** 





### Rifle report



### Tom Opgenorth, Firearms Director (Rifle)

Greetings to all members of SPFGA. For anyone who doesn't know me, I'm Tom Opgenorth. I was elected to the position of Rifle Director in the 2019 election and perform assorted IT (information technology) duties for the Board. I would like to update you on some of the goings-on at Ketchamoot Creek on our rifle ranges and mention some ideas for 2021.



Before I go any further, I would like to point out that SPFGA is a volunteer organization, and none of the events or leagues could have happened without the motivation and selflessness of key members. On behalf of the Board, I would like to express our deep gratitude to our volunteers this year. Your time and energy has made a real impact.

First, let's look at 2020, which started out with a lot of promise. There were grand plans that focused on marksmanship fundamentals, safety, and fun events for our members. With support from the Alberta Federation of Shooting Sports we hosted two RSO (Range Safety Officer) courses in January and February for our members. In mid-March, we had the first Outlaw Precision Rimfire Series (ORPS) event. It was snowy and cold, but we did it anyway.

Then COVID-19 happened, and all the fun had to stop. With the easing of restrictions at the start of the summer, SPFGA could move forward on some things.

So, what happened in 2020? I don't have the space here to explain everything in detail, so if you have any questions

about these please ask them on our Facebook group *The Ketchamoot Discourse*. This way, others who might have a similar question can benefit.

- Throughout the summer, SPFGA hosted several Project Mapleseed events. **Project Mapleseed** is a national organization with the goal of teaching the fundamentals of marksmanship.
- The Rimfire Silhouette league met faithfully every Monday night, rain or shine. Those who have shot Silhouette know that it can be a bit of a pain having to search for the metal targets once they are hit. So, this year we purchased larger targets, which should make things easier for newcomers to the sport. The Rimfire league also mixed things up a bit. Some nights they stuck to the rules, other nights they would move to the 50 m Range and do their own course of fire.
- A Bullseye Pistol league sprung into existence, all on its own. A small group met on Monday afternoon on the pistol range. I didn't attend these, and I don't know much about Bullseye Pistol other that what a Google search tells me.
- The monthly Outlaw Rimfire Precision Series (ORPS)
  matches continued, and even expanded a bit. In
  addition to the published course of fire, there are some
  "long distance" stages where you can try your skill and
  equipment out to 200 m. ORPS happens the last Saturday
  of the month on the Big Bore Overflow range, regardless of
  the weather.
- We hosted a Canadian Rimfire Precision Series match for our members. Given the current situation with COVID-19, I was very thankful that volunteers drove to SPFGA from as far away as Quebec to put on this competitive event for us. I believe we had almost a dozen SPFGA members, include two youths attend. Personally speaking, it was gratifying to get hits with a meagre .22LR out to 290m (with the help from a little bit of math).





In the "something new" department, we also hosted a
 Rimfire Raceguns event, sponsored by Vortex Optics.
 In a nutshell, this is a fun event for all ages using .22LR
 firearms (pistol and rifle). The idea is to hit six steel plates at
 distances from 7 to 35 m as quickly as possible. This was a
 great event for families.





### Rifle report (continued)

- Mark Lowry, our Pistol Director, did all the work to bring in a top-notch instructor for a **Handgun Fundamentals** course. If you're looking for tips and help to improve your pistol skills, I would strongly recommend taking one of these courses.
- Mark also arranged for our very first Black Badge Course, held in September.
- With the support of an SPFGA member, an Introduction to F-Class seminar was held. If you're curious about the sport of shooting full-bore rifles up to 900m, please let us know.

So, what's being looked at for next year? That is hard to say because we cannot predict the future and what will happen with COVID-19. Also, I don't want to assume that the current volunteers have the time or availability. But thinking positively and hoping that all works out, here is what I have in mind:

- RSO courses. Safety on the range is important to use all,
   I would really like to get these happening again.
- · Rimfire Silhouette and ORPS will continue.
- We will have another official Canadian Rimfire Precision Series event.
- We will have more Project Mapleseed events. I can say this
  with some degree of confidence, as this year I was accepted
  as a full instructor by Project Mapleseed. The fact that SPFGA
  can provide an instructor, a range, and has a lot of interested
  members goes a long way to securing more of these.
- Rimfire Raceguns was so much fun that we ordered a set of steel targets for Rimfire Raceguns and we should see this as a regular event in 2021.
- I'd like to work with our Pistol Director to establish
  a "dynamic shooting" night on the 50m range that
  incorporates both rifle & pistol.

I'd like to explore the possibility of a Stangskyting event. For those who don't know that that is, it's a style of shooting that is very popular in Scandanavia. A target is placed at 200 to 300 m, and you have 25 seconds to hit the target as many times as you can with a bolt action rifle. It's basically a Nordic version of the "mad minute" that Commonwealth armies used to practice at the start of the 20th century.

All in all, I'm hopeful for what 2021 holds at SPFGA, but a lot of this is dependent on you, the member. It's great to see members helping and it is really the only way to sustain these events. If you like to volunteer to help, or if you have any ideas, questions, or thoughts about any kind of shooting event at SPFGA, please feel free to email me (rifle@spfga.ca). My inbox is always open.

#### Addendum

The national leaderboard for ORPS has been updated for September's match at https://outlawrimfire.com/monthly-club-race-standings/. I have to say, it's pretty cool to see SPFGA members in the top 5 for Open Division (Jim Lepp at #5), production division (Sergii Martsynkevych at #1), and Youth (Ben Lowry at #5).

It's also interesting to me that we're the only club from Western Canada that shows up in the top 10. Our season isn't over, and I'm really excited to see what next year brings!

A huge shout-out to Jordenne Prescott for organizing and managing ORPS this year and setting up extra stages that give us chance to practice outside of the ORPS parameters and improve our skills!





### Patterning your shotgun

#### Keith Lacey, Firearms Director (Shotgun)

Ever wonder what that 4' x 6' sheet of AR steel hung up on the shotgun range is for?

Well, that is our SPFGA shotgun patterning board. This is a very useful tool to have available to you as members so you can see exactly how your shotgun is performing and help to diagnose how you might ever maybe possibly be missing those few extra clays on the trap field, how that prairie chicken up and flew away after pellets danced all around it, or all those ducks and geese that go full matrix through your pattern and leave you wanting to toss your gun in the pond and go home.

Every shotgun is a little bit different. There are many generalizations and similarities that can apply to many brands/models but each one still has its own quirks. This can be due to the ammunition and equipment used. Everything from choke size, barrel length, shot #, shot composition, and powder charge. And that's not even mentioning how the individual shooter fits, holds, and aims their gun can all affect the point of impact and pattern distribution. So it is important for YOU to pattern your own shotguns, with the shells and choke you intend to use and understand how they work, keeping in mind as with most aspects of the shooting sports doing things consistently is key.

Just like big game hunters sight in their rifles before hunting season, serious water fowlers, upland bird hunters, and competitors in sport shooting disciplines like 3-Gun confirm the performance of their shotguns.



So, let's talk about the steps to patterning your shotgun:

### \*Note that single projectiles and buckshot are not permitted for use on the SPFGA Patterning Board\*

- Ensure the range is safe: No range control flag or other ceasefire condition exists. Inform any others that are shooting that you're going to use the patterning board. You're standing downrange of the electronic thrower or spring throwers when using the patterning board, so no other use of the shotgun range is possible while the patterning board is in use.
- 2. Prepare the board: Walk up to the board and on the back side, there is a bucket of grease and a large paint brush. Take the brush and use it to smear grease to "erase" all the shot marks from the front side of the board. Mark/place a center aiming point, I like to use a Leaf or a corner of paper/shell box, anything really will work, it just needs to stick to the grease.
- 3. Retrieve your shotgun and go stand on the yellow paving block by the Pattern board sign. This block 25 m from the patterning board.
- 4. Align your sights on you aim point as you would under any other circumstances and fire one shot.
- 5. Make safe and stow/rack your firearm
- 6. Go check your results: you are looking to see where most of your pattern hit in relation to where you aimed. As well you're looking to see if there are any irregularities in your pattern like large holes or gaps. Ideally what you are after is a nice even distribution of pellets to the left and right of the aim point. Typically, it will not be centered in the vertical axis as most shotguns tend to have most of the shot land above the center point. This is so that when shooting you don't cover your target with your sights, you more place the target just above your sights.
- 7. Rinse and repeat. As necessary, change chokes, shot size, shot material (lead and steel can and will pattern differently even being shot through the same choke tube) to make sure you fully understand how your shotgun will behave out in the field or in competition with the loads you'll be using.

There are many resources available online that can explain a lot of the nuances of this subject better than I can, and if this subject interest you I highly recommend looking some of them up.

Happy shooting!



### Intro to winter camping



You move across a frozen landscape, the air still and crisp, snow crunching underfoot. The sun is setting, unveiling the wonder of the night sky. The smell of a wood stove warms your senses as you reach your home for the night: a beautiful canvas tent, set up and waiting for you like an old friend with the porch light on.

Instructed by Dragan Uzelac, SPFGA member and owner of Niko Wilderness Education, this two day, one night **Intro to Winter Camping** course will leave you feeling more comfortable and confident in all your winter travels.

Covered topics include:

- · fire lighting
- knife handling
- stovemanship
- axe use and safety
- saws

- winter travel
- · clothing
- animal tracks
- survival
- · bushcraft skills

All with the comfort of canvas tents, warmed by wood stoves. Full COVID-19 precautions are being taken, including upgrades to the sleeping arrangements.

SPFGA member rate: \$350.00 per person

Held on the 700+ acres of our Ketchamoot Creek Facility on February 20 & 21, 2021 this members-only turn-key course for up to six participants will provide everything required, including quality high-end camp meals, kitchenware, tents, and snowshoes.

Attendees need only provide winter clothing and sleep systems (winter rated sleeping bag and sleeping mats).

To register: https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/copy-of-introto-winter-camping-tickets-125758062751



### Member Disciplinary Committee (MDC) report

#### Matthew Meier, 1st Vice President

When situations where the need for correction of member behaviour is identified, per item 2.5 of the bylaws the matter is referred to the Member Discipline Committee (MDC) for review. The primary objective of the MDC is member education rather than punitive action. All efforts are to be made to find productive ways to engage with members when issues arise and to achieve mutually beneficial solutions.

The purpose of this section is transparency and accountability, reporting back to the membership in a meaningful summary that respects member confidentiality.

Pursuant to section 2.4.2(a) and 4.3.3.3 of our Bylaws, the Member Discipline Committee (MDC) is convened when member discipline issues are brought forward in relation to a Member. It has always been the intent of this Committee to evolve its process over time using a continuous improvement approach. As such, we took some time early this year to review and have made some incremental but important changes to the process. These are the result of many discussions about the overall process, research, and changes to the tools we have available. These changes include:

- Re-evaluating how our defined consequences are aligned with our core mandate of education and not punishment;
- Some adjustments to the overall scoring approach and how that impacts the consequences;
- A substantially more formal and professional communication style with the members in question; and
- Utilizing some new tools as part of Office 365 that make Committee collaboration and record keeping easier.

For the first half of 2020, the MDC has investigated 4 separate incidents. Each case is evaluated thoroughly and includes follow-up on the initiating complaint and any other issues identified during the investigation process. In descending order of precedence, these matters have dealt with:

- Handling of an uncased firearm while the safety curtain was in the down position;
- Handling of an uncased firearm while not maintaining safe muzzle control:
- Handling of ammunition while the safety curtain was in the down position;
- Being ahead of the firing line while the safety curtain was in the up position;
- · Use of unacceptable targets;
- Not observing proper COVID protocols as per our Facility Re-open Plan;
- · Using a handgun on the Big Bore Range;
- Handling of uncased firearms while not maintaining safe muzzle control;
- · Lack of direct supervision of a junior member; and
- Vaping in a shooting shed.

The investigations into these incidents have resulted in:

Two one-month suspensions of membership; successful completion of a Level 2 Orientation required for reinstatement; and

Two temporary suspensions of membership; successful completion of a Level 1 Orientation required for reinstatement.





### A big deal about birdhouses

#### Roland Coppens, Songbirds Director

One of the conservation actions the SPFGA has engaged in for some years now is providing nesting boxes (birdhouses) on our properties for breeding pairs of songbirds to nest in and raise their young. These were built and installed by my predecessors in this role, most particularly Ron Durstling. You've probably noticed these nesting boxes, installed on trees and fence posts throughout the property. These nesting boxes are specific to tree swallows.

#### **Tree Swallows**

(Content and some photos in this section drawn in part from birdsandbloom.com, Wikipedia, and my article on page 13 of the 2020 Winter newsletter)



Tree swallows (*Tachycineta bicolor*) are a migratory member of the family Hirundinidae, ranging from 12 to 14 cm in length and 17 to 25.5 g in weight. The male has glossy bluegreen upperparts, white underparts, and blackish wings and tail. The bill is black, the eyes dark brown, and the legs and feet pale brown. The female is generally duller than the male, sometimes with a brown forehead.

You've probably seen the tree swallows who call Ketchamoot Creek their summer home, flying about and dining on our abundance of mosquitos. One great site to watch their acrobatic flying in a small area is the Fish Pond, where nesting boxes are located on posts around the pond's perimeter.

If you're out for a walk on the hiking trails during the summer months and you stop and listen, you'll often be able to hear their vocalizations, which consists of three parts: **the chirp**, **the whine**, and the gurgle.

Tree swallows breed in Canada and the US, and winter along southern US coasts, the Gulf Coast, Panama, and the northwestern coast of South America.

Among the hardiest of swallows, tree swallows arrive in Canada each year in early spring. Prior to the emergence of insects, tree swallows subsist on a diet of overwintered Myrica gale fruit (being one of few avians adapted to gaining sustenance from its energy-rich but waxy coating) and by prizing seeds from pond ice.

Tree swallows nest in natural or artificial cavities, either in isolated pairs or loose groups, with breeding beginning as soon as early May. This bird is generally socially monogamous, with high levels of extra-pair paternity.

An aerial insectivore, the tree swallow forages both alone and in groups, eating mostly insects, in addition to molluscs, spiders, and fruit. The nestlings, like adults, primarily eat insects, fed to it by both sexes.

A common subject of avian research, the tree swallow is considered a **model organism** for study, with discoveries from its study being used in generalization to other swallow and avian species.

Tree swallows are protected in Canada by the Migratory Birds Convention Act, and in the US by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918.

Because of its large range and stable population, the tree swallow is considered to be of **least concern** by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Despite this, **a study published in the journal Science in October 2019**, demonstrated avian populations including the tree swallow have experienced staggering declines in population over the last five decades. This swallow is negatively affected by human activities, including habitat loss from deforestation, reductions in calcium sources with waterbody acidification, and the use of neonicotinoids as demonstrated in **this study published in the journal Science in September 2019**. It is to address habitat loss across their breeding range that the SPFGA maintains nesting boxes for this fascinating and important species.

### Nesting boxes on the Ketchamoot Creek property

Being new to the role this year, I set out in April with the help of my son to get the nesting boxes ready for the season, the nesting material from the previous year's occupants needing to be removed before the arrival of the new occupants. We also mapped and inventoried the state of our nesting boxes as we went along.



The bulk of the existing inventory of our nesting boxes—I would estimate around three-quarters—can be found along the red lines in the map of our properties below, most being mounted to posts along fence lines. The remainder is located in various spots throughout the 'home quarter' the ranges, fish pond, clubhouse & campground are located on.



Approximately two-thirds of our nesting boxes are of the following design, appearing to be a version of the design promoted by avian biologists from the Beaverhill Bird Observatory.



The remaining third of our nesting boxes appear to be based on the design promoted by the **Golondrinas de las Americas (Swallows of the Americas**), an ornithological study project coordinated by Cornell University.



A high percentage of the older Beaverhill design were noted to be in poor repair, the plywood in some being brittle enough that the screw and cup washer could be pulled through the material with a sharp tug. The plywood has begun delaminating in some, and in others wear from cumulative years of use has resulted in widening of the entry hole. Some were noted to have experienced damage, possibly because of predation.



### A big deal about birdhouses (continued)

Additionally, there were some instances of nesting boxes of a 'birdhouse-shaped-object' appearance with unclear species suitability.



Based on these findings, I set about examining the considerations that need to be involved with updating our nesting box inventory and replacing service boxes that had reached the end of their service life.

#### Key elements of tree swallow nesting box design

I invested a good deal of time over the spring and summer researching optimal nesting box design, intending to identify evidence-proven designs that also facilitated scientific study.

Researching this question led to the determination of the key aspects of tree swallow nesting box design:

A floor space no smaller than 12 cm x 12 cm (5" x 5"). Tree swallow broods are of up to seven young. While tree swallow pairs may accept boxes with smaller internal volumes, nestlings are placed at risk of increased stress from overheating if they cannot separate to cool. Insufficient space may interfere with proper bone and feather development due to continual contact with broodmates and the inability to open their wings.



- An entrance hole 3.5 to 3.8 cm (1-3/8" to 1-1/2") in diameter, excluding larger birds.
- Entrance holes centered 18 cm (7") above the floor, giving sufficient interior volume.
- Roofs that slope down toward the front, ideally overhanging at the sides and front, reducing rain exposure, and increasing the difficulty for predator species such as corvids from having access to the interior.
- Absence of an outside perch at the entry hole—this is not needed by tree swallows but can assist access by predator species.
- Easy opening of the box interior for annual cleaning and easy viewing of its nestlings (ensuring the ability to engage in scientific study of our birds is a high priority of this project).
- The inside of the front side be roughened, kerfed or cleated to provide the nestlings footholds to the entry hold.
- · Located along open areas with proximity to a water source.
- Unpainted, unstained, and untreated.
- · Constructed of exterior-grade materials

Songbird nesting box designs abound on the Internet. Common ones you'll find will be versions of Peterson, Gilbertson, Gilwood, and Troyer designs. It is important to note that these are nesting boxes for bluebirds and are completely unsuitable for tree swallows.



### **Nesting box replacement project**

Consulting the literature to determine if an evidence-proven superior design with the features mentioned above existed, I found a March 2017 study conducted by the University of Saskatoon published in the journal Ecosphere (Ecosphere 8(3):e01746. 10.1002/ecs2.1746) that offered a head-to-head comparison between the Golondrinas design and another design used in ornithological study in Canada promoted by the Long Point Bird Observatory in Ontario. This study demonstrated that nestlings raised in the Golondrinas box rated higher on several measures of body condition, attributed by researchers to the cooler box interiors and less dramatic temperature fluctuations afforded by the venting inherent to the design.



Following that, I contacted the Beaverhill Bird Observatory (BBO) and discussed the project with Sara Pearce-Meijerink, the BBO Head Biologist and Geoff Holroyd, the BBO Chair. They offered plans for their group's preferred nesting box design. Geoff was interested and supportive, proposing that the SPFGA and the BBO conduct a joint research project and compare the Golondrinas and BBO designs head-to-head to determine whether one design could be shown to be superior one for tree swallows nesting and breeding in the Beaverhills Biosphere.



This was an intriguing idea to me, and discussions with Ashleigh Emerson (SPFGA Youth Director) and Kelly Annesty (SPFGA Programs Director) followed. Youth involvement in club activities has been an area of focus for the Board this year and has been a focus for me personally with the Songbirds role. A basic plan of approach for involving youth in the project emerged, with some adjustments for the unique requirements of COVID-19 being necessary.

The plan involved creating kits of the two designs and, through contacts with various youth groups (Cubs, Scouts, Junior Forest Wardens, etc.), distributing them to be built. Then, enlisting the aid of these groups, these boxes would be installed on the property.

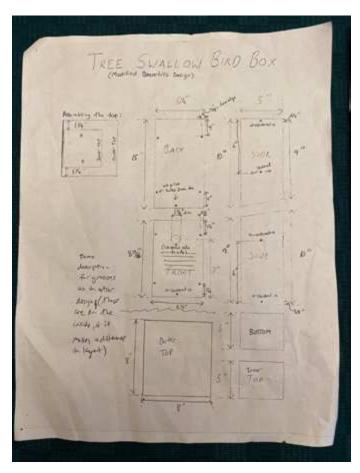
As each new box was put up, its Global Positioning System (GPS) coordinates would be recorded. The next year, as part of an orienteering exercise, each youth would locate the nesting box that they had built using the GPS coordinates for their house.

Following that, these groups would be involved with data collection through the summer, recording nesting box occupancy and the number of nestlings in each box. The intent is to pool these data with data from the BBO to support the submission of one or more scientific papers for publication, which we would co-author with the BBO.

### A big deal about birdhouses (continued)

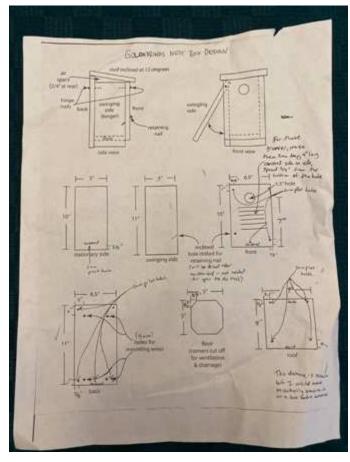
### Making the nesting box kits

I made several adjustments to each of the Golondrinas and BBO nesting box design plans to permit their construction by young people with simple tools and limited experience.



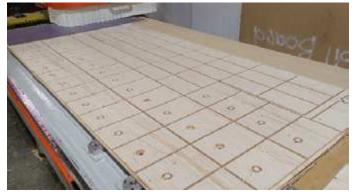
Drawing on feedback from my younger daughter, who had built a nesting box in shop in school the year prior, I appreciated the need to think about the nails. In order to ensure nails are correctly located and drivable by small hands, I added pre-drilled holes to the design, allowing nails to be driven through the faces of components (this is typically the challenging part where nails either bend or go off-track) into the plies of the piece being joined to. To





optimize this, I made several adjustments to components in each design.

As the plan was to construct a couple of hundred boxes for this phase of the project, I sought the assistance of Pro Spec Woodwork, a local cabinet-making shop with a computer numerical control (CNC) mill to cut out the parts this would require.



After some adjusting of the plan based on the initial prototypes, a full-scale cut of all the components was done—1,135 pieces cut from 16 sheets for the two designs.





These were organized and laid to permit assembly of individual build kits. Again, because COVID needed to be considered, tables were organized so that they could be accessed from either side while still permitting physical distancing.





### A big deal about birdhouses (continued)

I assembled 25 kits to test the processes. Then, Programs Director Kelly Annesty organized the kit assembly bee for the main bulk of the work. Participating were Kelly's husband, Nick, Youth Director Ashleigh Emerson and her mom, Kathleine, former Political Action Director Barb Nickerson, and SPFGA member Kathy Bowen. This crew assembled 75 Beaverhills kits and 75 Golondrinas kits. Ten kits were distributed to our local Junior Forest Warden Group for assembly, and Kelly Annesty undertook the monumental task of organizing the distribution and retrieval of 150 kits to the 203 Sherwood Park Scout Group.





To facilitate these builds, I prepared a set of build instructions for each design that each youth will use to build these houses for us:



http://bit.ly/GolondrinasDesign



http://bit.ly/BeaverhillDesign

We assigned a unique number to each house. As part of her thoroughly organized process, Kelly set up collection forms so we could record which youth had built that house and a link to the build instructions for that house's design.

...continued in the Winter 2021 edition, due out in February: building the boxes and installing them!





### **From The Ketchamoot Discourse**

**The Ketchamoot Discourse** is our private Facebook discussion group. It was created as a members-only social media space where we can gather and speak with one another or where members can talk with the Board. (Not part of The Ketchamoot Discourse yet? **Join here!**)

#### SPFGA member Darrell Portz asked this question:

Is the campground considered the "Range" with respect to the transportation/storage of a restricted firearm (handgun)? If I am camping and wish to be able to shoot, am I within the law to securely store my firearm (trigger lock and locked case in a locked vehicle) when not shooting and at a campsite?

An excellent question we thought, and one many members have probably asked themselves.



A good conversation of some length ensued (**link**), with Darrell eventually looping back with the response he'd gotten from the CFO:

I spoke to the CFO and here is what I was told. The ATT is sufficient to allow you to keep your restricted firearm with you in a camper/hotel while at a shooting competition within your own province. If you wish to travel outside your province for competition, you need to apply for a short term ATT. The CFO advises that keeping your firearm in a camper at any campground or hotel, on the range or not, is not allowed for recreational shooting. The key here is that you need to be at a competition.

Good information to know, and an important distinction to keep in mind.

It's worth recognizing however that enforcement of the law is not the role of the SPFGA or the Board. Our facility rules are safety rules, and in some cases, rules intended to keep things organized & neighborly. It's not within our purview to interpret the law. Instead, we understand that each member has taken the effort to know and understand the law pertaining to use and transportation of their firearms and governs themselves accordingly.

### **Did You Know?**

These **Did You Know?** articles, suggested by you as a source of quick reminders, highlight specific facility rules & briefly explaining their reasoning.

This *Did You Know?* deals with Etiquette. Did you know that the *Facility Rules*, in the Etiquette section, state that prior to departing, targets must be removed from target boards and spent casings picked up as well, using the brooms, magnets and dustpans provided?

It takes just a few moments to tidy up after yourself when you're packing up and leave things in the state you'd like to find them in when you arrive. It's everyone's responsibility to ensure the facility is maintained in the excellent shape we'd like to find it in.



### **Operations report**



**Chris Russell, Operations Director** 

#### **SPFGA Tractor**

With the hiring of Deryk Emerson as our full-time maintenance technician (announced in the **August 29 edition of** *Bullet Points*), we gained the capacity to bring in-house more of the facility maintenance work we've traditionally outsourced. Additionally, mostly due to the COVID shutdown and in part due to the purchase of our own mower, areas of the maintenance budget were identified as not being required. We reallocated these already-earmarked funds towards the purchase of a tractor, and in **doing so did not require the commitment of additional funds**.

The tractor and implements selected will be able to perform a broad variety of tasks, some of which we've traditionally contracted out externally, not regularly done, or simply not done at all:

- Rough-cut mowing trails and property fence lines, which require regular attention to keep the brush from encroaching into these spaces which would otherwise require a mulcher to come in.
- A box blade, rear blade, and front-end loader with a supply
  of gravel will allow us to maintain roads and parking areas,
  being able to stay ahead of ruts, potholes and gravelpacking leading to the formation of muddy areas. In the







past, when this work has been needed it has typically been in the spring when road bans are in place, driving costs up. Having the materials already on hand and the equipment to perform the required work will keep the state of our facility at a continuously high level.

- A grapple will allow us to safely manage fallen trees which have become hung up, clear debris beavers have placed to block culverts, and build bridges across low areas on hiking paths.
- A PTO-driven snowblower will allow us to clear areas not readily accessible to the county grader, such as the road to the archery range, parking areas in front of the firearms sheds, the clubhouse parking lot, the campground loop, and even clear paths to the target boards on the firearms ranges.
- A fork attachment would have a variety of uses, including easing the lifting and moving of deadfall blocking roads or trails so it can be safely cut, or rotating our picnic tables through a regular regimen of repair and maintenance in the garage during winter months.

The purchase committee, after having reviewed a number of quotes, ended up selecting a competitively priced package for a Kioti DK4210SE model with a variety of implements from Elk Island Sales, taking delivery on October 7. With some rearrangement, the tractor, mower, and Gator all fit in the garage, negating any need for additional storage.

Deryk and I look forward to using this equipment to raise our already well maintained facility to an even higher standard. In fact, we have already used the gravel box to touch up the road from the turn to the archery range to the campground entrance, the campground loop, and the road to the archery range. We are already seeing how valuable this tool will be to keeping our roads in their best shape.

### Bollards at the front gate

We will be installing bollards at the scan pad posts at the front gate to prevent damage to them from arriving and departing vehicles. High visibility bollard covers will be







installed on each of these so they can be easily seen.

### Problem trees on the property

Deryk and I have gone through the property and flagged several trees of concern using a two-color system: red flagging for potential hazard to members and their property, and green flagging for trees of concern in need of monitoring. If you've seen this flagging and wondered – this is what's going on. We've also cleared branches starting to encroach onto roadways that could present a hazard to trailers as they traveled through the property.

If you have any questions or have spotted areas on the property that need attention, please contact me by email at **operations@spfga.ca**.



### Hunting is declining across North America— Except in Alberta. Here's how.

#### Jordan Sillars, May 6, 2020

Reproduced with permission from The MeatEater: https://www.themeateater.com/hunt/whitetail-deer/hunting-is-declining-across- north-america-except-in-alberta-heres-how

The number of hunters is declining across North America and the anxiety has reached a fever pitch among industry experts and wildlife conservationists.

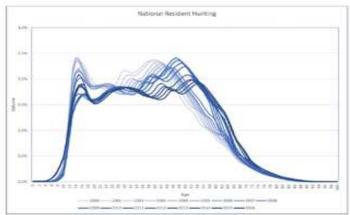
At this year's Shooting, Hunting, and Outdoor Trade Show—the largest of its kind in the world—the marquee press conference revolved around recruiting, retaining, and reactivating hunters in the United States.

"This is the show's most important press conference," Jim Curcuruto of the National Shooting Sports Foundation told the group of reporters. "This could change the world."

But while the title of the press conference oozed with optimism (A Million Hunters are the Way), the tone remained grim. Speakers outlined various initiatives aimed at coaxing urban adults into the field, but it's unclear whether these recruiting efforts will bear fruit.

The declining numbers are "pretty darn scary" and some believe that reversing the slide is impossible, said Joel Brice, Delta Waterfowl's vice president of waterfowl and hunter recruitment programs.

Urbanization, changing demographics, and aging Baby Boomers all contributed to a 23% per-capita decrease in the hunting population between 1991 and 2016. If this trend continues, state wildlife agencies and conservation organizations will face "great challenges in revenue shortages, loss of political capital, and shrinking social relevancy" by 2032, according to the Council to Advance Hunting and the Shooting Sports.



Conscientious hunters are aware of the problem, but no state has proven an effective, long-term recruitment strategy. Some might eventually show results, but so far only one North American jurisdiction has more hunters per capita now than it did 10 years ago: Alberta.

Alberta's resident hunting license sales average has grown from approximately 115,000 to 122,000 in the last 10 years. It peaked at 128,000 in 2015, Jason Penner, communications advisor for Alberta Environment & Parks, told MeatEater. The per-capita growth rate on a 10-year average is positive, and Penner claims that Alberta is the only governing body in North America to show any such increase.

The numbers look even better on a longer timetable. The province only sold 85,932 resident hunting licenses in 2005, which means sales have increased by 42% (36,000 licenses) between that year and 2019.

The current highs don't meet the historic high-water mark of about 160,000 resident licenses sold in the early 1980s, but Alberta's data do suggest that the precipitous drop in sales continent-wide can be turned around.



#### **Alberta Adventure**

Provincial officials and conservation organizations have leveraged a wide array of strategies to boost the province's hunting population. But one messaging point stands out to activists and hunters alike: the adventure of harvesting food.

Like in many Western states and provinces, game-heavy hunting grounds are less than an hour's drive for most Alberta residents, but accessing and harvesting on those remote landscapes can be especially challenging. That's exactly what many hunters are looking for.



"There's no doubt that there is a portion of the population that is very keen on that kind of idea," Todd Zimmerling, president and CEO of the Alberta Conservation Association, told MeatEater. "The challenge of 'doing it myself."

Two such sportsmen are Steve Elliott and Dan Peacock. When asked for their best hunting story, both long-time hunters reveled in the treacherous nature of their experiences and focused not on the kill but on the harvest.

"The foothills of Alberta will eat your lunch. You could die out there if you're not well-prepared," Elliott, 68, told MeatEater.

During one trip along the Bull River in the 1990s, he shot a big mule deer in -20 degrees F weather and watched in dismay as the deer gathered enough strength to jump into the river and drown. The antlers were the only part that remained visible among the ice floes as it floated away.

Elliott considered alternatives (which included lassoing the horns while the animal passed under a bridge downriver), but he soon realized what he had to do.

"My friend Dan says, 'Only one way you're getting that deer out. You gotta go get him,'" Elliott recalled.

He stripped down, walked a half-mile in the frigid, shallow river, and managed to pull the carcass by its antlers back to the shore where another hunter had parked his truck with the heater blasting. While Elliott recovered in the truck, his hunting partners quartered the buck, and he brought it home to his family.

#### **Harvest Your Own**

The province has recruited and retained hunters like Elliott and Peacock, in part, by highlighting the challenge, adventure, and joy of harvesting wild game. Officials dedicated a separate website to hunting, angling, and trapping called **My Wild Alberta**, and the ACA has seen success recruiting new hunters using a website they call **Harvest Your Own**.

Zimmerling said the Harvest Your Own program started by reaching out to marketing experts who weren't part of the hunting community. They realized that appealing to hunting tradition and heritage would not resonate with Albertans who had not grown up in the field.

"It's really hard to convince a mom who's never done this before to take her 8-year-old out and kill something," he said. "That doesn't click with someone who's never done it before." Keeping these new hunters in mind, they tried to emphasize the aspects of the hunting experience that might appeal to anyone. Instead of featuring images of slain animals, for example, the Harvest Your Own website highlights Alberta's natural beauty, the emotional benefits of hunting, and the challenge and reward of harvesting wild game.

"We start with an image of a nice roast and work backwards from there," Zimmerling said.

It's also a powerful message for retaining experienced hunters.

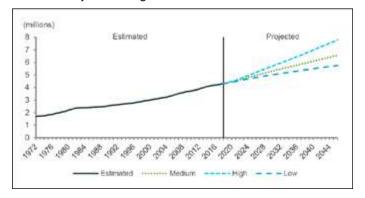
"I enjoy the adventure. I enjoy going to a place where there's no one and just wandering to see what's over the next hill," Peacock said. "Having a rifle or a bow so there's a possibility of bringing a meal back just adds another dimension to it. It's a bonus to be a provider, to bring back meat."

#### A Team Effort

These aren't the province's only strategies, of course. Regulation and policy changes over the last 10 years have allowed residents to access wild spaces more cheaply and easily.

You might be wondering if the province has simply dropped license prices in order to artificially inflate sales. **Some states have done that**. Penner admitted that the province has begun offering some senior and youth licenses at a reduced cost, but the **data since 2014** indicate that adult licenses are responsible for the increase in sales (youth purchases have actually dropped slightly).

Some hunters might argue that Alberta's population boom has driven increased sales more than the efforts of hunting-related departments and organizations. While it's true that the province's population has grown over the last 10 years, the population also grew while the number of hunters was shrinking in the 1990s. If population growth was the only factor, one would expect the hunting population to have been steadily increasing for the last five decades.



### Hunting is Declining Across North America—Except in Alberta. Here's How. (continued)

Rather than simply reducing the cost of licensing, the province has used a variety of strategies to increase real participation.

Penner identified strong youth recruitment through organizations like the **Hunting for Tomorrow Foundation** and the **Alberta Hunter Training Instructors Association**. These groups have worked together to implement a variety of youth programs and hunting camps, including a hunting mentorship program.

Alberta also offers an abundance and diversity of special license draws for big game species across the province, with a significant increase in tags available for elk and moose in prairies and parkland areas. Over-the-counter tags and under-subscribed special licenses are available for whitetail deer, bighorn sheep, mule deer, moose, and elk every year.

Mentorship and tag programs no doubt contribute to the province's success. But conservationists, provincial officials, and hunters say that two priorities have set Alberta apart from other states and provinces: access and cooperation.

Alberta offers a great deal of both public and private hunting grounds, but Elliott noted that much of the public land is difficult to access and even more difficult to hunt. The best land is often held privately by individuals or is leased out by the government to ranchers. But unlike many states with little huntable public land, Alberta does not allow landowners or land leasers to charge a fee to hunters.

"[The province] has done a very good job of preventing the pay-to-hunt model," Zimmerling said.

In addition, conservation organizations have banded together to purchase hunting sites for public access. The ACA put together **a guide** of these sites for prospective hunters, including over 800 locations spanning 300,000 acres that do not require hunters to secure permissions.

These purchases were possible, Zimmerling explained, through close-knit cooperation among conservation organizations.

The ACA is a member group consisting of **ten conservation associations** that run the gamut from education, to outfitting, to species-specific advocacy. This diversity of expertise and audience allows the nonprofit to run initiatives that would be impossible for one organization working on its own

"Because each of these groups sits on our board there is a significant amount of coordination with respect to promotion of hunting, mentoring programs, training programs, etc.," Zimmerling said.

Ultimately, Alberta's success cannot be attributed to one or even two factors. It required a focused, coordinated effort between the government, landowners, hunters, and conservationists to capitalize on the province's abundant natural resources to recruit and retain hunters. Increased access, mentorship programs, tag policies, and effective marketing have all played a critical role, and officials hope to maintain the success in the years ahead.

#### On the Ground

Peacock and Elliott have noticed the uptick. Elliott told MeatEater that he started to see more hunters starting even in the early 2000s.

"There were spots in the 1990s where we wouldn't see another person all day. That was common. We wouldn't only be the first people in the field—we'd be the only people in the field," he said. "In 2003, we went to the usual spots, and there were already guys in there."

People are drawn to Alberta's hunting grounds in increasing numbers for the same reason Peacock keeps going out: not for the thrill of the kill but the chance to slow down and enjoy the natural world.

"There's something almost spiritual, if you will, that I find hugely pleasurable," Peacock said. "It gives a person time for their mind to stop racing and just enjoy what God's created. I see the synchronicity in all of it, and it just kind of makes the world make sense."



### **Communications archives**

#### Roland Coppens, Communications Director

Did you know that the emails that we send out are all maintained in their own archives on the website?

### **Range of Thoughts**

Range of Thoughts is our club newsletter email (you're reading it right now!), published quarterly in e-zine format. Back issues dating back to 2009 can be found in the Range of Thoughts Archive.





#### **Bullet Points**

Bullet Points is the club's semi-monthly news & information. Bullet Points came into existence in January 2020 and every issue can be found in the **Bullet Points Archive**.



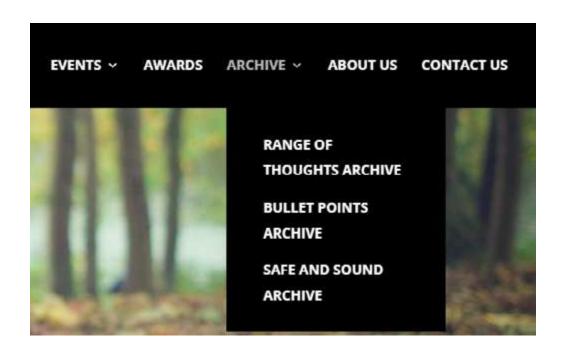


#### Safe and Sound

Safe and Sound is the club's facility safety and system message email, sent out at need throughout the year. Facility closures, election announcements, and information about membership renewals are all subjects of Safe and Sound emails. Safe and Sound also came into existence in 2020 and every back issue can be found in the Safe and Sound Archive.









### **Facility rules updates**

#### **Roland Coppens, Communications Director**

2020 has brought its fair share of challenges. Along with those though, it has brought opportunities as well. One such opportunity has been for the Board to re-examine various Facility Rules and determine whether they still hold relevance in the current era.

### Display of membership cards no longer mandatory

An older rule primarily driven by our past use of Rule Enforcement Officers, this was intended to filter against nonmember range use which, at the time, was against our rules.

We now follow a different process for member discipline and no longer employ Rule Enforcement Officers, and since mid-2019 have had a supervised range guest process (currently suspended due to pandemic-related challenges).

As such, at the May 12 Board meeting we amended the Facility Rules regarding membership cards as follows:

All members must display their membership card on their person and are required, on request, to make their card available for inspection by any other SPFGA member. Members are asked to be courteous in making these requests and in complying with them.

**Interpretation:** You are required to have your membership card with you when you are on the property and are required to produce it on request, but you do not have to have it on display on your person.

### Holster rules update

With the May 1, 2020 Order in Council, **SOR/2020-96**, the Liberal government set a new low bar for the confiscation of a Canadian's property. The Board recognized that SPFGA members likely have a limited amount of time to enjoy their remaining firearms and that they should have the liberty to use the remaining time to enjoy their still-legal property in the safe and responsible manner of their choosing.

While the Governor in Council, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, is seemingly of the opinion that Canada's gun owners are inherently unsafe with their property, the Board believed our members are not the problem. Nor should they be punished for the actions of others or for safety incidences that occur in a very different environment than our facility.

Given that our mission statement includes promoting the safe and responsible practice of the shooting sports, that the use of a holster is integral to many shooting sports, and that the safest place for a pistol is in a holster, the Board recognized at the May 12 meeting that our existing facility rules are inconsistent with our mission and amended the Facility Rules as follows:

#### **Knowledge and Skill** < new in GENERAL FACILITY RULES >

Members must ensure they have the knowledge and skill necessary to conduct themselves in a safe manner for all activities being undertaken on SPFGA property.

#### **Holster** <edited in DEFINITIONS>

A device worn on a belt or attached to the body designed for the carrying of a pistol, and that is equipped with a fastening device that can securely retain the pistol firearm that completely covers the trigger and holds the firearm securely attached to the body.

#### **Holstered** < new in DEFINITIONS>

Means a firearm that has had the manual safety applied (if equipped) and securely placed in a holster.

#### **Holster Use** < deleted from DEFINITIONS>

The storage, withdrawal, or return of a pistol to a holster. The simple act of wearing a holster does not in and of itself constitute use.

#### **Holster Use**

<deleted from RIFLE & HANDGUN RANGES GENERAL RULES>

Holster use is permitted on SPFGA ranges ONLY under the direct supervision of a Qualified Range Officer during organized events or by uniformed Law Enforcement Officers.

**Interpretation:** Members can use holsters outside the structured environment of organized events or the direct supervision of a Range Officer. Each member has the individual responsibility to ensure that they have the necessary knowledge and skill for safe holster use, just as they are required to be knowledgeable and skillful in any other activity they undertake on SPFGA property.

### Pistol-caliber carbines (PCCs) now approved on the handgun range

The SPFGA has historically limited the Handgun range to pistols. This has made it so the 50 m range was the only place PCCs could be used.

There however has been a surge in interest in recent years for PCCs, both in terms of "cowboy" lever-action firearms and



more modern sporting designs. In addition, some organized shooting sports now allow PCCs to shoot the same course of fire as pistols.

As a single distance of 50 m is not ideal for PCC use, the SPFGA Shooting Committee recommended that the Board amend the Facility Rules to allow PCC use, so long as the PCC is chambered in a cartridge the Handgun range is approved for.

The Board reviewed this recommendation at the August 11 meeting and approved this change to the Facility Rules.

Interpretation: PCCs are now approved for use on the Handgun and 50 m ranges, so long as their cartridge is approved for use on that range.

### Target rules updated

The Board, at the September 22 meeting, recognized that our facility rules should:

- · provide guidance on matters of member safety
- ensure member activities on club amenities are within the club's certifications for use of those amenities
- protect the club's amenities from misuse
- be as unambiguous as possible, making compliance easier and the discipline process simpler
- be compatible with the club's purpose as expressed in our mission statement, which includes promotion of the shooting sports.

As the language regarding target restrictions served none of these ends, the following section was struck from the 'Targets' portion of the 'Rifle and Handgun Ranges' rules:

Acceptable targets include bullseye targets or animal silhouettes.

Unacceptable targets include human silhouettes, clays, balloons, fruit, plastics and explosive targets.

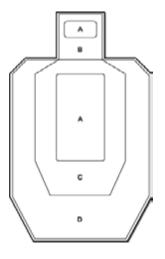
Exceptions to the use of human silhouettes are granted by the Board to police officers, conservation officers and sheriffs as part of their training and certification programs. Law enforcement personnel participating in such activities are required to wear their service uniforms to identify themselves to SPFGA members.

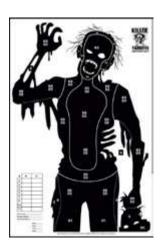
It was replaced with the following verbiage:

Unacceptable targets include:

- photographs or likenesses of actual persons, whether living or dead
- clays, balloons, plastics
- · fruits, vegetables, or other food stuffs
- explosive targets.

**Interpretation:** This means that the IPSC Metric Target, targets depicting zombies or humanoid monsters, and even military 'fritz' style targets are now permitted on SPFGA ranges. Photos or likenesses of *actual persons*, whether they are alive or dead, are not permitted, however.





### Air guns now approved on all ranges

The Board, at the September 22 meeting, recognized that air rifles and pistols are particularly suitable for younger members who are new to shooting to learn on. These younger members are our future for firearms ownership, so the intent was to be sure they have the best environment in which to be exposed to firearms use.

The Handgun range, with its shorter distances, was felt to be particularly suitable for the education of younger members.

In addition, the only range air powered rifles and pistols were able to be used on was the Rimfire range. A common member request was to make their use official on other ranges.

The Rifle and Handgun section in the Facility Rules were updated to specifically allow air powered rifles on all ranges, and air powered pistols on the Handgun and 50 m ranges.



### So, are range guests allowed yet?

This is one of the most common questions that members have been asking. The TL;DR (short) answer is: No, we're sorry—not yet.

The longer answer involves looking back to the start of the public health orders in March and moving forward from there. Our supervised range guest policy was suspended along with everything else that folded up with the Chief Medical Officer of Health's orders that closed the facility in March. When we were able to open again in May, our re-opening plan was timed in sync with the stages of the province's relaunch strategy, with the understanding that COVID-19 restrictions would likely expand and contract with the rate of virus transmission.

The Ketchamoot Creek facility re-opened at Phase 1 on May 19 and moved to Phase 2 June 15. We are still currently at Phase 2. Moving to Phase 3 will follow the province moving to Stage 3 in its own plan, and reconsideration of the supervised range guest policy will occur here.

Guests are still welcome on all other areas of the property though.

When we make our transition to Phase 3 of the re-opening plan, we will review guests on the firearms ranges again and will announce updates here.

This restriction of guests at the ranges seems arbitrary, but the necessity for it becomes clear when you think about the kind of direct within-arms-length supervision necessary with either a new shooter or someone not oriented to our facility safety rules, where you must be close enough to observe and promptly intervene and stop or change the actions of your guest under supervision. This means you must be well within the 6' physical distancing bubble. Your guest, for reasons of safety that we realized were necessary early on, will not be wearing a mask while on the shooting line. The purpose of masks being to block the spread of respiratory droplets which may contain virus, you are now at significant risk of viral transmission by virtue of your direct supervision. In other words, the elements of our facility safety policies that we require you and your guest to observe place you at increased risk of contracting COVID-19.

It is for this reason that we have suspended the supervised range guest policy. We recognize the importance of growing the shooting sports and maintaining Canada's proud firearms tradition, we really do. After all, this is the same Board who pushed hard to create the policy in 2019 in the first place...we want it up and going as much as anyone. At the same time though, we also recognize the importance that it be done safely.

Now, there are obviously subgroups of guest scenarios that could be teased out of the larger whole and pointed to as being of reduced risk. We are considering those.

Once we get the renewal process for 2021 up and going—which will be very soon—we will have more to offer on that topic. For now though, your guests are welcome on all parts of the facility—except at the firing line.

# "What are your hours?" Well, the answer to that varies...

Members often ask about our hours, looking for clarification.

The **membership office** is open 9 am - 4 pm Monday to Friday each week.

The **Ketchamoot Creek facility**—the property where the ranges and our other club amenities are located—is open and accessible 24x7x365 unless there's a reason we need to

close it (which, this year, happened far too often).

The **firearms ranges** themselves have their own hours—shooting can begin at 9 am daily throughout the year, and the end time varies with the time of year. Range hours are listed in the *Range Hours* section here in the newsletter (it's a few pages forward from here) as well on the website on the **Facility Rules** page.



### Range hours

Shooting hours begin at **9:00 a.m.** daily and end according to the following:

2nd Sunday in March – April 14	6:30 p.m.
April 15 – September 21	8:00 p.m.
September 22 – 1st Saturday in November	6:30 p.m.
1st Sunday in November – 2nd Saturday in March	4:30 p.m.

- · All firing must cease at the posted hours.
- These times are posted at the gate, on the website and in the newsletter.
- In the case of disagreement in times posted, the information on the website is to be taken as correct.

### Wildlife issues—who to call?

Fairly regularly, we receive questions in the office regarding who to contact regarding issues with wildlife. To the right is a contact list based on animal type:

For issues with migratory birds (e.g. ducks, geese), contact Canadian Wildlife Services at 1-800-668-6767

- For issues with large wildlife (e.g. bears, cougars, moose, etc.) contact Report a Poacher at 1-800-642-3800
- For issues with smaller animals such as squirrels or skunks—these are dealt with on your own, or a third party animal removal company can be help with the issue.



We have many amenities at our facility that members use. It's fairly common for us to have received bookings for them, so to avoid frustration or surprises, make sure you've checked the Events Calendar on the website before leaving to come out: https://www.spfga.ca/events.









## The Harvest *Aristophanes*

Oh, 'tis sweet, when fields are ringing With the merry cricket's singing, Oft to mark with curious eye If the vine-tree's time be nigh: Here is now the fruit whose birth Cost a throe to Mother Earth.

Sweet it is, too, to be telling,
How the luscious figs are swelling;
Then to riot without measure
In the rich, nectareous treasure,
While our grateful voices chime,
Happy season! blessed time.



### Join us on social media!

SPFGA is active on **Facebook, Twitter** & **Instagram** and would we'd love to see you come and join in with us. Go to the **spfga.ca homepage** & click on the social media buttons or click the links below to connect to us.

**Please like & follow** us to receive news, updates & information about upcoming events. Invite family, friends and other association members to do the same!

If you have social media-related questions, or questions about the website, please contact the **Communications Chair** by email or by direct message

### Feel proud: You make this possible!

As SPFGA members, each of us also has membership in the AFGA. Take a moment to look at some of the conservation projects we all make possible through our involvement:

https://www.facebook.com/ letsgooutdoorsca/videos/723164378084733/



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