

BASIC OUTDOORS SKILLS SERIES



HUNTING



Basic Outdoors Skills Series



A Program of the
Alabama Wildlife and Freshwater
Fisheries Division
Alabama Department of Conservation
and Natural Resources

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Foreword

Hunting is one of America's popular participation sports. "Basic Hunting" introduces hunting skills to the public. "Basic Hunting" is one of four skills taught in the Basic Outdoor Skill Series produced by the Alabama Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division. The other skills in this series include "Backyard Wildlife", "Basic Fishing", and "Preparation, Care, and Cooking of Wild Game and Fish". General tax revenues were not used to produce this series. License fees and excise taxes contributed by anglers, hunters, and other lovers of wildlife made these courses possible for the public to enjoy. Designed to promote the ethical enjoyment of wildlife, the Alabama Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division wishes you a lifetime of outdoor experiences that can begin with "Basic Hunting".

Hunting is enjoyed for many reasons. It offers a chance to relax outdoors while simultaneously being part of nature. For many, the greatest joy of hunting is being away from the fast pace of life so you have a chance to get to know your hunting partner better. Many hunting trips bring friends together and last a lifetime through memories they evoke.

The hunting portion of the "Basic Outdoor Skill Series" was prepared by Assistant Chief of Law Enforcement William G. Fuller, Conservation Enforcement Officer Supervisor Richard Reed, and Conservation Enforcement Officer Steve Pinson. Visual portions of the program were produced by Dennis Holt and the Media Section.

GOAL

To introduce the novice to the basic skills and knowledge needed to begin the sport of hunting.

OBJECTIVE

Upon completion of the course, the student should have a basic knowledge of the equipment and techniques used to hunt various game in Alabama.

INSTRUCTIONAL AIDS

Videotape depicting various types, styles, and methods of hunting.

(Video should depict persons hunting using as many of the following methods as possible; deer by stalk and stand, turkey, dove, waterfowl, upland game bird and various small game.)

INTRODUCTION

Our objective in this course is to provide information in the basics of hunting.

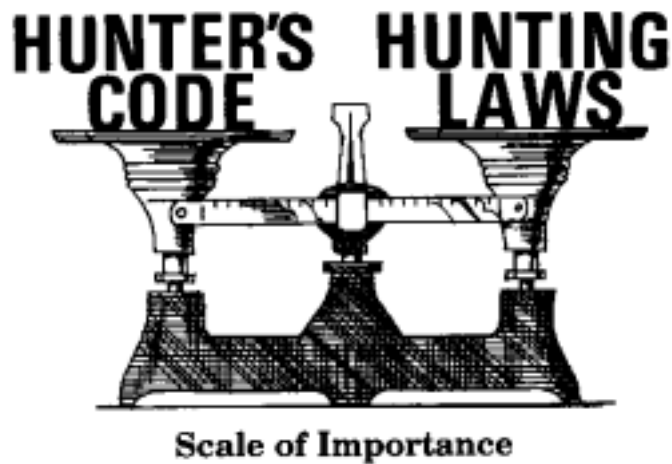


CONTENT

I. Before You Hunt

A. Ethics

Hunting ethics encompasses all the responsibilities a hunter has toward other hunters, landowners, the general public, and the game. Governments require certain, generally accepted, forms of ethical behavior through hunting laws and regulations. In most cases, it is up to the hunter to decide what is right and what is wrong, and to hunt according to these standards.



If you find another hunter at the place you've planned to hunt, leave and find another site. Try to pass on responsible hunting behavior to fellow hunters. Don't litter; leave areas cleaner than you found them. Be considerate and don't disturb others in the area. Most hunters have deep feelings for nature and the peace of mind they find while hunting; don't violate those feelings.

Always get permission before hunting on any private property. Always approach a landowner with courtesy, not only because you will have a better chance of getting permission, but also because we all have a responsibility to promote the image of a good sportsman.

Another duty the hunter owes the public is to insure the enforcement of all laws. Hunters must abide by the laws and report those who trespass, poach animals, shoot road signs, or otherwise vandalize property.

All game animals deserve the greatest respect a hunter can give. Hunters who do not feel a deep reverence for the animal and an obligation to conserve the resources are missing the essence of hunting.

Today there are more than 20 million Americans who love the outdoors, have close ties with traditions, and help conserve and protect our natural resources. These are the same individuals who help pay for the abundant resources that we now enjoy. Hunters and fishermen pay for hunting licenses, taxes on sporting goods, ammunition, equipment, and the list goes on and on. These outdoor enthusiasts are among the very few groups that pay for their sport.

B. Safety

Responsibility for safety is not limited to the field, but must be practiced at home also. A hunter safety course is recommended for all hunters and required for any license buyer if they were born after August 1, 1977.

Hunter safety courses are taught in a majority of high schools and various locations throughout the year. You may call our **TOLL FREE NUMBER 1-800-245-2740** for the date and location of the next hunter safety course near you.

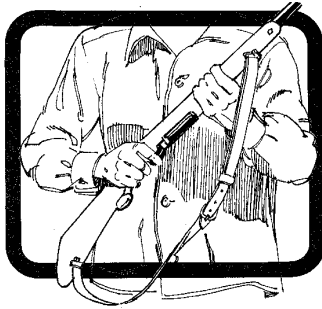
1. Firearms

Treat every firearm like a loaded firearm. Check any firearm that you handle to make sure it is unloaded. Always leave the action open when not hunting.

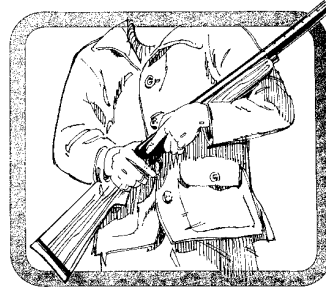
Always control the muzzle of your firearm. Keep it pointed in a safe direction and keep your finger off the trigger.

Be sure of your target and what is beyond it. Never shoot at sounds or movement. You should always positively identify your target as being the legal species of game that you are hunting.

Always carry firearms in a safe position with the muzzle pointed in a safe direction. Some of the safe carrying positions are double hand, cradle, elbow, shoulder, sling and trail.



Double Hand



Cradle



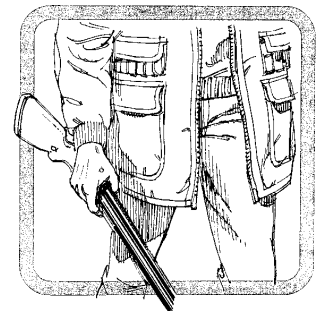
Elbow



Shoulder



Sling



Trail

2. Bow Hunting

Always keep arrows in a secure quiver. Never walk with a notched arrow and keep your arrows in a safe place when not in a shooting situation.

3. Tree Stands

Always inspect your tree stand before each use. Look for loose bolts and damaged or bent support members. Always use a safety belt when in a tree stand. Use a pull-up rope to raise and lower equipment. Always remember to swing items lowered to one side as this could lessen your injury if a fall occurs.

4. Survival And First Aid Kits

Every hunter should carry a personal survival kit for use in emergencies. The items in your survival kit should be chosen for your particular area, weather, and use.

C. Laws And Regulations

There are many laws and regulations governing the seasons, bag limits, times, places, methods, and equipment used to hunt game. Each species of game usually has its own set of guidelines. The novice hunter should make a special effort to research and learn the rules that go along with the type of game he selects to hunt.

The regulations are published in the *Alabama Regulations For Game, Fish, and Fur Bearing Animals* and the laws are found in Title 9 of the *Code of Alabama*.

D. Clothing

Clothing used when hunting is usually a camouflaged type suited to match the terrain or conditions encountered. (A woodland pattern when hunting in heavy vegetation or a tree bark pattern when hunting in large timber etc.)



The clothing must enable the hunter to be comfortable at all times. Warm insulated clothing when sitting for long periods in cold weather is essential. When temperatures are expected to be warmer, lighter more breathable type clothing should be worn.

Alabama regulation requires that all persons hunting any wildlife species (except waterfowl, turkey, and mourning dove and any legal species during legal nighttime hours) during dates and in areas open by regulation to gun deer season are required to wear an outer garment above the waist with a minimum of 144 square inches of **hunter orange** or either a full size hunter orange hat or cap.

A small logo and/or printing is permitted on the front of hunter orange caps; otherwise, hunter orange must be of solid color and visible from any angle. The various shades of red as well as camo orange are not legal.

II. Types of Hunting

A. Deer



1. Characteristics

Whitetail deer are large vegetarian mammals that inhabit most of the United States. These animals have extremely good hearing and senses of smell, and although they are colorblind they detect movement very well. They mainly inhabit the thick brush but move out into the open to feed in the early morning and late evening.

2. Methods Of Hunting

a. Stalk Hunting

Stalk hunting deer usually entails a camouflaged hunter moving slowly through an area stopping and watching every few feet. He attempts to detect a deer before he is detected by the deer. This method usually takes a large amount of time to cover a small area if done properly.



b. Stand Hunting

Stand Hunting deer usually involves the hunter concealing himself in an area where he believes there is game and waiting for the game to appear. Shooting houses and tree stands are two types of stands used.

c. Dog Hunting

Dog hunting deer involves the use of one or more dogs to chase the deer out of cover and hopefully give the hunter an opportunity for a quality shot. This method most commonly involves a group of hunters “standing” an area where the dogs are released.

3. Equipment Used

a. Weapons

There are many types of firearms used to hunt deer depending on method, habitat, and personal preference. Large centerfire rifles are used when the hunter is expecting open shots from medium to long ranges. Shotguns with buckshot or slugs are used when hunting in heavy cover or when shots are expected to be close to medium range.



Some hunters prefer the added challenge of hunting with muzzle-loading or black powder weapons and some prefer to hunt with handguns only.

Many hunters choose to hunt deer with a bow and arrow. This method requires a high level of skill due to the close ranges involved. (30 yards or less)

b. Stands



Elevated stands are used to place the hunter above the line of sight of the deer. They also keep the hunter's scent higher than the deer's nose.

A ground stand such as a shooting house or blind is used to conceal the hunter from the game also.

There are many types of elevated stands. One type is a self-climber that enables you to climb a tree and remain on the hunting platform.

Another type is a ladder that has a platform attached to the top and is placed and secured against a tree.

Still another type is a permanent platform constructed in a tree.

c. Calls

There are several calls manufactured for use in the breeding season to imitate the grunts of a buck deer. The hunter uses the call, in hopes of attracting a buck that is trying to defend his territory, to within bow or gun range.

Other hunters sometimes "rattle" a pair of deer antlers together to imitate the sounds of two bucks fighting to attract a deer into range.

B. Turkey

1. Characteristics

Wild turkey are the largest upland game bird in the United States. They live in mixed hardwood forests with scattered openings. These large birds have extremely good hearing and vision and see color very well. Their sense of smell is not well developed.



2. Methods Of Hunting

The most common type of turkey hunting occurs in the spring and takes advantage of the gobblers desire to find hens and mate. The hunter must be heavily camouflaged to offset the turkey's extremely good eyesight. A gobbler is usually located by hearing his "gobble". The hunter moves to a position close to the gobbling turkey but not so close as to alert him to the hunter's presence. The hunter then positions himself in a way to conceal his location and uses a turkey call to imitate the sounds of a hen. With a lot of luck and skill on the hunter's part the gobbler is enticed into gun or bow range.

3. Equipment

a. Weapons

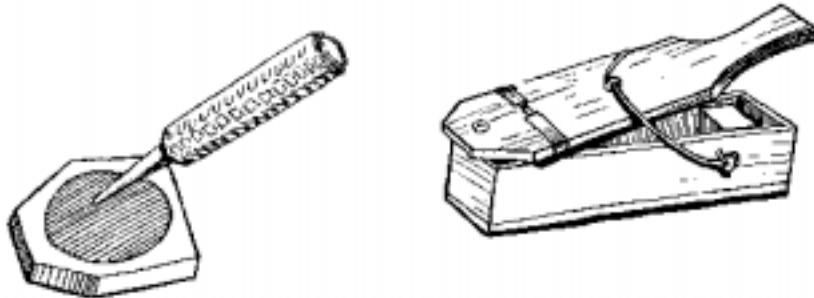
In Alabama, the legal firearms used to hunt turkeys are shotguns, 10 gauge or smaller using No. 2 shot or smaller. Handguns using centerfire, mushrooming ammunition w/ open metallic sights only (no scopes) may also be used.

Bows and arrows are also used to legally hunt turkeys, greatly increasing the difficulty.

b. Stands

Normally the only stand utilized to hunt turkeys is a lightweight, portable, cloth blind used to conceal the movements of the hunter. Some hunters prefer to use natural blinds constructed of limbs and branches.

Other hunters prefer no blind at all. They will sit in front of a large tree that breaks up their outline.



c. Calls

There are numerous types of turkey calls used to hunt turkeys. Most are designed to imitate the inviting sounds of the hen. Others are designed to imitate the sound of another gobbler, intended to induce the gobbler to defend his territory.

C. Upland Game



1. Characteristics

Upland game includes small animals such as rabbits and squirrels which live in various types of habitat, from mixed forests to clear-cuts to farmland. Upland game also includes quail and dove that utilize the same varied habitat.

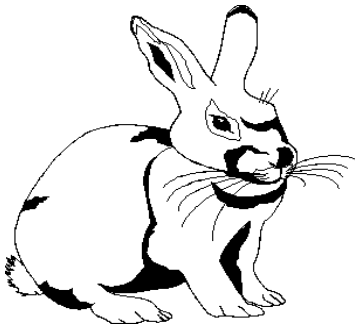
2. Methods Of Hunting

a. Stalk Hunting

Stalk hunting for small game is similar to stalk hunting deer. A hunter slowly moves through an area where there is a known population of the selected game.

b. Stand Hunting

Stand hunting is used to hunt mourning doves. A camouflaged hunter conceals himself in an area that is frequented by doves and waits. The hunting area may be a grain field where doves come to feed or a water hole used by doves or simply a natural flyway.



c. Dog Hunting

Sometimes a dog is also used in small game hunting. When hunting squirrels, rabbits, or quail the dog uses his natural abilities to detect their presence and alerts the hunter in some way. Sometimes by barking such as a hound chasing rabbits or assuming a certain stance such as a pointer indicating the presence of quail.

Sometimes a dog is used to retrieve downed game only, as with dove hunting, or a combination of detecting and retrieving as with quail hunting.

3. Equipment

a. Weapons

A variety of weapons are used to hunt small game depending on the species and state regulations. Normally for small game such as rabbits or squirrels one can use .22 caliber rimfire rifles, shotguns using No 4 shot or smaller, bows and arrows or handguns.

Dove hunting requires the use of a shotgun incapable of holding more than three shells.

b. Stands

Normally no special equipment is needed to hunt small game.

Dove hunters sometimes utilize natural materials or small lightweight blinds similar to a turkey hunter's to help conceal their location.

c. Calls

Normally no calls are used to hunt small game. Varmint / predator hunters sometimes use a call to imitate the sounds of a small animal in distress to lure a bobcat or coyote in to range.

D. Waterfowl



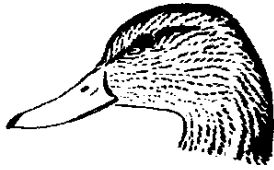
1. Characteristics

Waterfowl, including ducks and geese, as the name implies, inhabit areas with abundant water. They have excellent vision and see color well. Some species like shallow water and marshes while others prefer larger open bodies of water.

2. Methods Of Hunting

Waterfowl hunting is a type of stand hunting. Waterfowl feed in and around water and the hunter should establish his stand near these areas. In shallow swampy areas a hunter can wade to a likely position but in deeper water a canoe or boat must be used.

3. Equipment



a. Weapons

Waterfowl may be hunted with shotguns, 10 gauge or smaller using steel shot, T-size or smaller. The gun must be incapable of holding more than three shells as when hunting any migratory birds.

Waterfowl may also be hunted with long bows or compound bows.

b. Stands

Some waterfowl hunters construct elaborate blinds camouflaged with natural materials in wetland areas that are used repeatedly. The blind may be above or below the water level and usually has a cover or top that can be rapidly moved to allow a shot when waterfowl come into range. Other hunters may rely on concealing themselves in natural cover.

c. Calls

Calling is an important part of waterfowl hunting. Duck calls are used to imitate the sounds of ducks. This is done to entice other ducks into shooting range.

d. Specialized Equipment

Specialized equipment is needed for waterfowl hunting mainly due to the close proximity of water. Boats or canoes are sometimes needed and waterproof waders are a must. A specially trained dog is a plus when it comes to retrieving game that has been downed over water.

Warm waterproof clothing is also a must when one is expecting to be standing in icy water all morning.

Decoys are used to take advantage of waterfowl's tendency to flock together and to also induce a false sense of security.

III. Game Care

A. Field Dressing

Most game must be field dressed to preserve the integrity of the meat. This process involves the removing of the entrails and allowing the meat to cool. This procedure can be a simple job as with doves or can be a major undertaking as with a large Whitetail deer.

B. Transporting

Transporting game from the field to your home or butcher must be done with care and consideration. The meat must be kept free from dirt, heat, and moisture.

Large animals such as deer such not be transported on the hood of a vehicle or open tailgate of a truck. This practice may be shocking or insulting to members of the public that do not hunt and their feelings should be respected.

