

RESPONSIBLE HUNTING IN LEEDS-GRENVILLE

By Lorraine Payette

September arrives in Ontario and with it come thoughts of getting outdoors to hunt. Whether small game like rabbits and grouse, waterfowl like ducks and geese, or larger animals like deer and bear, the true hunter looks forward to the season year round, and is always ready to get out and go.

There's more to hunting than picking up a firearm or bow and taking off into the woods. Whether well seasoned or new to the sport, there are certain things that you need to do.

Always have a plan and hunt with a buddy. Just as a pilot would never take off without registering a flight plan, you should always tell someone where you are going, how long you intend to be away, and have an emergency contact available. Accidents happen and no one is immune to trouble. Carry a walkie-talkie, cell phone or radio as well as a personal emergency survival kit, and be sure you know how to use it. Bring

a friend or relative with you when you head out. Not only does this lend a little camaraderie, but you can help each other as you go.

Make sure you know how to use your equipment properly. Whether gun, bow or snare, tents, sleeping bags, mosquito netting, etc., it's important to know what you need. High or low tech, it isn't going to do you any good if you aren't familiar with it.

Check with the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters (OFAH) to find out where you can get the courses you need. New hunters must pass the Ontario Hunter

Education Course and even the most experienced hunters may learn something new from the program. The Canadian Firearms Safety Course will stand you in good stead for years to come. You don't have to renew the courses, but refreshers are a good idea if you don't get out very often. Programs are held several times a year and can be found through your local gun clubs and stores. Attend a real hands-on class with an instructor and stay away from on-line programs. The extra experience can make all the difference in whether you have a successful trip or not.

Get all the proper licenses for the game and area in which you plan to hunt. There are many seasons and tags for different prey. Every hunter needs an Ontario Outdoors Card which can be purchased at gun shops throughout the area. Have a copy of the Ontario Hunting Regulations Summary (OHRS), and read it so you understand it thoroughly. The electronic version can give you the latest updates, but it won't work in the bush. Follow all the rules and only hunt your game in season with the proper equipment.

To hunt in Leeds-Grenville, check out the available hunting areas and get the necessary

John Sideris, Wings Bait & Tackle in Lyndhurst, ON, will help with rules, licenses & firearms.

permissions. Maps are available on-line for crown land as well as in the OHRS, and there are hunt clubs and lodges in the area.

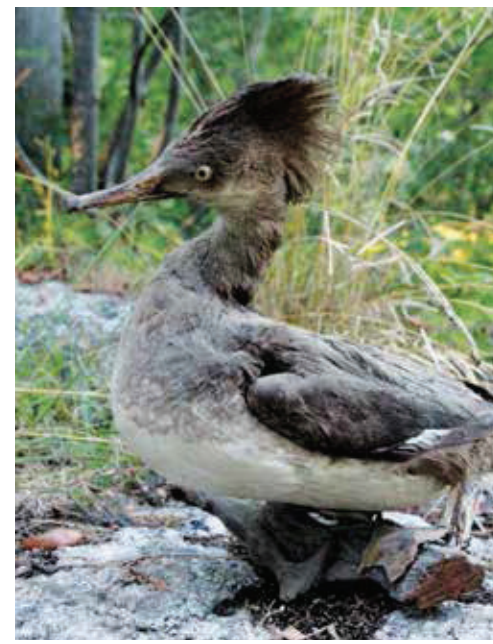
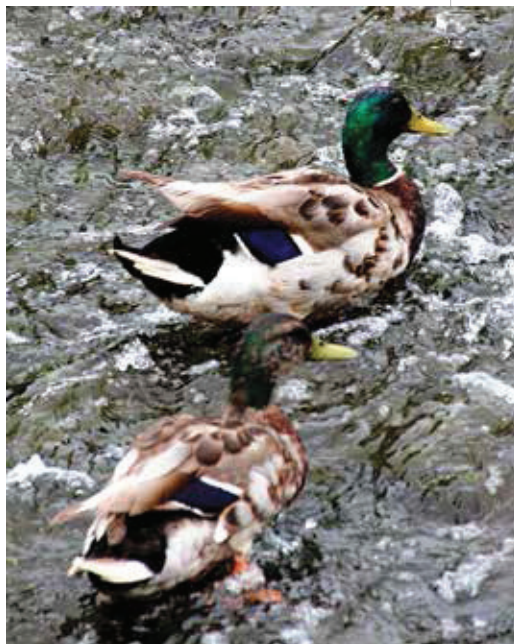
Land may be posted as “no hunting” and/ or “no trespassing”, and may have different markings to indicate this. Red circles 10 cm in diameter indicate “no trespassing” and must be respected. If you wish to hunt on private land, speak with the landowner or tenant-in-residence before entering whether it is posted or not. If you don’t have permission, don’t hunt there. In order to keep hunting as a viable sport, it is important to respect other people’s rights and opinions.

Research your area and find out everything you can about it. Gun shop owners and hunt club members can not only help you find the best hunting grounds for the game you are seeking, but can check your equipment and let you know whether you have everything you need. They can also help you find what is exactly right for you, and hook you up with qualified taxidermists who can mount your trophies after the hunt.

Choosing your firearm or bow depends highly on the game you prefer to go after. The experienced hunter will already have preferred tools, but the new hunter could benefit from shopping around. Try consulting professional hunters, gun club members or others who know the different guns and bows to find out which will be the best fit for you.

Wearing the right clothing is as essential as an emergency pack or supply of food. When hunting large game, always make sure you can be properly seen, stick to all requirements under law for blaze orange and remember that it’s your friend. A hunter in an orange vest is far less likely to be shot accidentally than one who blends in perfectly with the environment. When hunting birds, different rules apply and you’ll want good camouflage. Wear layers and make sure to have extra dry clothes handy.

Go out and have fun. You can learn a lot about yourself and nature, whether you bag any game or not. Hunters have contributed hugely to preserving our wetlands, grasslands and woodlands, helping to ensure that animal populations are abundant and that endangered species are nurtured and looked after. They have contributed to safety networks and to the education of people, everywhere, about all the outdoors has to offer. Be sure to follow that example and help keep hunting the free, legal sport that it is today. **LH**



To find OFAH, go to www.ofah.org. For useful information on hunting in Ontario, please check www.ontario.ca/travel-and-recreation/hunting.