



Idaho Fish and Game Encourages Youth Hunting

When it comes to hunting, national statistics show that youth are not as excited about hunting as previous generations.

The percentage of young hunters taking up the hunting tradition has been declining for several years. It is crucial to understand that our hunting heritage will sink into oblivion unless an interest is sparked in the next generation.

Idaho Fish and Game determined that of about 9,000 youths who graduate annually from Idaho's hunter education program only slightly more than half buy a hunting license the following year. In addition, the percentage of graduates who continue to buy licenses declines each year.

To determine what keeps these new hunters from buying hunting licenses, Fish and Game in 2007 surveyed recent graduates and their parents. Of 200 questionnaires sent out, 83 youths and 82 parents responded. Though this sample size was small, the survey did shed some light on why beginning hunters chose not to hunt the year following their graduation.

Two common reasons youths in the survey cited were they simply did not want to hunt, and they were busy with other activities. Parents most frequently cited that their child was not ready to hunt, or that they themselves did not hunt. Several parents said that lack of opportunity and lack of time were reasons they did not take their youths hunting.

When asked what would make it easier for youths to go hunting, many parents said there was nothing that Fish and Game could do. Others said that reducing costs and providing mentors, youth hunts, more guidance on where to hunt and more accessible hunting areas could help.

To promote hunting as a safe, enjoyable family-oriented activity, Fish and Game offers reduced price hunting licenses

and tags for resident and nonresident youths and several youth-only controlled hunts for deer, elk and pronghorn

In addition, youths aged 10 to 15 who complete a hunter education course and buy a hunting license and appropriate permits can hunt turkey, waterfowl and pheasant during special hunts before the general seasons open. Fish and Game staff members and others often volunteer to help youths with what may be their first hunt.



A young hunter brings home a wild turkey after a successful hunt.
IDFG Photo

The Idaho Fish and Game Commission has adopted rules beginning January 1, 2013, that establish a mentored hunting program. This program would allow people to hunt temporarily while accompanied by an adult mentor, without having to complete the mandatory hunter education course or buying a hunting license.

Instead, the new hunter must obtain a special mentored Hunting Passport to participate. Though it is valid one calendar year, the passport is not a license, and individuals born after January 1, 1975, would need hunter education certification to buy a hunting license after participating in this program.

The new hunter must be accompanied by a mentor who holds a valid Idaho hunting license and is at least 18 years old.

While there is no upper age limit to participate, mentored hunters must be at least 8 years old to get a Hunting Passport, and may participate by hunting game birds, furbearer, predatory or unprotected species that do not require tags. They must be 10 years old to hunt turkey and sandhill crane and 12 to hunt big game. Appropriate tags, stamps and permits also must be purchased.

Fish and Game does not provide mentors. But this is an opportunity for family members and friends or other experienced adult hunters to mentor someone.

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Fish & Game Offers a Variety of Programs to Foster Interest in the Outdoors

Nowhere at Idaho Fish and Game is the effort to get young people unplugged, outside and engaged with nature more visible than at the Morrison Knudsen Nature Center in Boise.

The Nature Center's 4½ acres include wildlife habitat with waterfalls, streams, ponds, fish-viewing windows, gardens and a visitor's center.

The center's mission is to inspire love, appreciation, and stewardship of our natural world. It is at 600 S. Walnut Street, Boise, behind the Idaho Fish and Game headquarters. The MK Nature Center offers educational programs and group tours year round.

The StreamWalk is the Nature Center's signature program. It is also the most popular program, providing the perfect introduction to habitat, adaptations, niche, food webs, and life cycles focusing on aquatic animals.

Wildlife educators instruct students about Idaho wildlife and the importance of habitat in a short classroom session coupled with a guided walk along the Nature Center path that follows the man-made stream.

The Nature Center also offers regularly scheduled programs for a variety of grade levels at a nominal fee per student.

Specialized programs feature hands-on activities in a variety of subjects, including owl pellets, aquatic insects and fish, composting, native plants and more.

If you want to bring a group, but don't



In a hands-on stream ecology class, students collect aquatic insects, fish, crayfish and learn what a healthy freshwater habitat looks like and why salmon are important to Idaho's ecosystems. *IDFG photo*

need a tour leader, please call in advance. Groups of 10 or more must schedule their self-guided visit. Your call will help avoid conflicts with other groups and ensure a pleasant visit. There is no charge for unguided groups, but donations are encouraged.

To schedule a program, call 208-287-2906 or 334-2225, or see the Nature Center's web page under Education at <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/>.

Fish and Game also operates three other educational nature centers.

The Lewiston Wildlife Habitat Area's five acres provide a place to observe wild birds, mammals and aquatic creatures. Deer, coyotes, raccoons, rabbits, skunks, amphibians, reptiles and at least 98 bird species have been observed here.

The WaterLife Discovery Center is a self-guided educational facility on Lake Pend Oreille near Sandpoint. It includes 3.5 acres of interpretive exhibits and a 6.5 acre forested wetland with trails, and it is home to white-tailed deer, moose, muskrat, mink and river otters.

At the Edson Fichter Nature Area in Pocatello paths wind through 40 acres of riparian vegetation and native gardens.

Fish and Game also participates in other youth oriented educational programs.

Project WILD is a national program, which in Idaho is offered through Idaho Fish and Game. At workshops, teachers learn ways to incorporate wildlife and ecological concepts into the subjects they are already teaching. Wildlife is the tool that gets the students excited about learning.

The goal of Project WILD is to develop awareness, knowledge and skills that lead to responsible behavior and constructive action for wildlife and the environment.

Educational activity guides provide information and projects

on topics such as:

- The appreciation of wildlife.
- Human values and wildlife.
- Wildlife and ecological systems.
- Wildlife conservation.
- Cultural and social interaction with wildlife.
- Wildlife issues and trends.
- Wildlife and responsible human actions.
- The values of hunting and fishing.

For upcoming workshops see the Fish and Game website at <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/public/education/?getPage=215>

Fish and Game also is one of the founders of "Be Outside, Idaho!" a coalition which now numbers close to 150 partners, working together to connect children and families to Idaho's great outdoors.

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Youth-only Seasons Aimed at Passing on Hunting Traditions

When hunter education graduates were asked why they did not go out hunting, the most common answer was that they didn't know where to go.

Idaho Fish and Game wants to help.

In the past few years, a number of new hunting opportunities have been created to make it easier for budding new hunters to take to the field.

When looking for a place, it is important to find a place without competition from veteran hunters. And a place where the game isn't gun shy already.

Fish and Game offers a variety of opportunities for young hunters to get into the field.

Special youth hunting seasons have been created for waterfowl, pheasants and turkeys for hunters aged 15 and under. They have their own time to hunt before the general season opens.

A pheasant youth hunt is open statewide for all licensed hunters 15 years of age or younger. All youth hunters must be accompanied by an adult 18 years or older. But one adult may accompany more than one youth.

Special youth waterfowl hunting days are open to licensed hunters 10 to 15 years of age. Duck, goose, snipe, and coot hunting is open for two days only, usually the weekend before the general season opens in early October. At least one nonhunting adult 18 years or older with a valid

hunting license must accompany each youth hunting party.

Youth hunts are also available for turkeys. A hunter must be 10 to 15 years of age to hunt in the general season youth hunt. A hunter applying for a controlled hunt open to youths only must be 10 to 15 years old on the opening date of the hunt for which they are applying. All youth hunters must be accompanied by a licensed adult 18 or older.

Youths aged 9 to 11 may buy a youth small game license and then purchase

older, more experienced hunters.

Any resident youth 12 or older with a hunting license may hunt big game. Nonresident youth hunters 12 to 17 must be accompanied by a licensed adult.

Hunters 12 to 17 with a valid license and tag may hunt youth-only deer hunts. Fish and Game also offers youth-only pronghorn controlled hunts.

Another opportunity for youths to improve their odds is an antlerless deer "season" especially for them. This is not a separate season set aside just for

youngsters, but it allows youths the opportunity to harvest a deer of either sex in areas across the state. Check the current big game season and rules book for details.

Resident elk hunters aged 12 to 17 who purchase a youth general elk zone tag, may participate in any A or B tag elk season within the specified zone, regardless of whether they purchased an A tag or B tag. All other season, weapon restrictions and rules apply.

Controlled hunts are excluded.

Generally, youths have to be 12 to buy a license that allows them to hunt big game – except an 11-year-old may buy a license to apply for a controlled hunt, but he or she must be 12 years old at the time of the hunt.

A youth small game license, available for hunters aged 10 and 11, is not valid for big game.

Each year, Fish and Game employees across the state organize special hunting opportunities to help youths get started right. Some volunteers take youngsters out on mentored hunts. And some physically-challenged or young hunters in special situations have gotten one-on-one assistance bagging their first turkey, deer, pheasant, duck or quail.



Volunteer instructors and mentors teach young hunters about safety, ethics and conservation, in addition to the essentials of the hunt.

IDFG Photo

a turkey tag and apply for a controlled turkey hunt, but they may not hunt until they are 10 years old.

Turkey hunting requires special attention to safety in the field.

Hunting information and safety tips are found on the turkey pages on the Fish

and Game website: http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/public/docs/rules/upland_Turkey.pdf.

Fish and Game also offers a number of youth-only hunts that let youths hunt without the pressure and competition of

Idaho Fish and Game Policy

Idaho wildlife management policy is set by seven volunteer commissioners. The Idaho Fish and Game Commission's policy decisions are based on research and recommendations by the professional staff of the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, and with input from the governor's office, the state Legislature, hunters, anglers and the public.



Fishing Opportunities Help Get Children Outside

Children today spend as much as 30 hours a week dialed into video games, computers, mobile devices and other technology.

To help improve their physical, mental and emotional health, get them off the couch; take them fishing.

A resident child younger than 14 doesn't need a fishing license. They can buy a two-pole permit, and they can buy a salmon or steelhead permit so they can catch their own limit of steelhead or salmon. They need not be accompanied by an adult holder of a fishing license.

But how do you get them started?

Anyone can join in the fun at one of Fish and Game's many "Take Me Fishing" trailer events during the spring and summer. It's free. Fish and Game supplies everything. No reservations are needed; just show up and have fun.

Stocked with equipment and information, the trailers travel to local ponds across the state. Wrapped with vibrant fish illustrations, they're hard to miss. During the summer months, they are set up at local ponds, stocked with equipment and staffed with knowledgeable people ready to help kids and parents start fishing.

At each event, fishing poles and bait are available at no charge. Those who are new to the sport don't have to worry about not knowing how to fish. Angler experts are on hand to teach casting and knot tying. They will give tips on everything from reeling in a catch to cleaning a fish.

Adults and children can join the fun. As long as they sign in at the trailer, they don't need a license to fish at the event.

The whole family, even the grandparents, can fish for free as long as they sign-in. Before and after the event, a fishing license is required for anyone 14 years and older.

Events are planned across the state and most are at fishing ponds in or close to towns and cities.

To find where the fishing trailers will be, look on Idaho Fish and Game's website at <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/public/fish/?getPage=80>. To learn more



Free Fishing Day brings out the whole family at Parkcenter Pond in Boise.

IDFG photo

about fishing go to <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/public/fish/?getPage=154>.

Idaho Fish and Game is committed to helping everyone learn to fish. To make it a bit easier, Fish and Game can provide school groups with an educational fishing permit to use during a Fish and Game sponsored trip. Complete an Educational Fishing Permit form and take it to the local Fish and Game office for approval. One current fishing license holder is

required for the permit to be valid.

Fish and Game also identifies Family Fishing Waters to help folks find places where rules, access and short time between bites make it easier to get children and other folks into fishing.

Idaho Fish and Game can offer special opportunities for youths, but their parents, friends and family can play an important role in getting young people outside, in touch with nature.



Take Me Fishing trailers, with all the gear young anglers need, come to ponds across the state during the summer.

IDFG photo

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