

Fall 2022

Alberta Hunter Education  
Instructors' Association



# Conservation Education

The Voice of Conservation Education in Alberta

Magazine



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## President's Message

“ ... it was gratifying to see our facilities full of activity once again. ”

By Bob Gruszecki



Bob Gruszecki  
President - AHEIA

As we near the end of 2022, it's time to reflect on a year filled with challenges and a multitude of victories. Last year at this time I expressed my optimism for the future, hope for the end of difficult times and our return to "normal". The pandemic has been the main driver of how we have lived our lives, but

we have risen to its challenges and, I believe, come out the other side more supportive, inclusive, and stronger.

Throughout the year we heard from many people how wonderful it was to be back to our unrestricted slate of in-class programming, camps, and special events, and it was very gratifying to see our facilities full of activity once again. We continue to be very diligent with disinfection and protective procedures in our classes, but things are finally returning to some semblance of normalcy. It has been a successful year for AHEIA, and I'm pleased to share some highlights with you.

The Calgary Firearms Centre (CFC) was extremely busy this summer. In June, shooters travelled from across Canada to participate in the Canadian Trapshooting Championships. It was an exciting week hosting over 150 participants, and we are very proud of our local shooters who took home top prizes in their shooting categories. Participation in the other registered shoots throughout the summer was impressive as well, and the extended warm weather had the public coming out to shoot late into the fall. The Women's and Youth Shooting Leagues were also well attended this year, with coaching provided to new and returning members, and accommodating many levels of skill. The new Women's

and Youth Archery Leagues, held in spring and fall, quickly became one of the most popular programs of the summer at the CFC and, by the conclusion of each session, the archers were quite proficient in hitting their targets. Next year we plan to offer a third session to accommodate the interest in the sport. If you would like more information about any of the leagues, or are interested in volunteering, the registration information and 2023 dates are available on our website or you can call the Calgary Firearms Centre at (403) 256-0665.

The grounds at the CFC have seen some changes this year, including a berm that runs the length of the west and south boundaries of the property. This has been created in advance of the sporting clays course that is being developed. We are also excited to be making headway on an addition to the existing clubhouse, which we anticipate will be under construction this winter/early spring. With this new addition, we will be able to accommodate even larger groups for private functions, such as birthdays, fundraising shoots and bachelor/bachelorette parties, as well as hold classes that seat up to 100 students at a time.

“ Throughout the year  
we heard from many people  
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in-class programming ... ”



The Canadian Firearms Safety Courses are always in constant demand and both the instructors who teach the courses, as well as the AHEIA in-class courses, have been going strong all year. Now that COVID restrictions have been lifted, and to keep up with the demand, so far this fall AHEIA certified 37 more instructors to deliver the non-restricted and restricted courses. The federal government has implemented restrictions on the sale or trade, import or export of restricted firearms, but the need for restricted firearms classes remains and we continue to deliver this training, province wide.

The AHEIA Hunter Education Program is also widely taught throughout Alberta and despite budget cuts at many school divisions, the student kits that have been ordered are on par with previous years. This indicates that the program is widely integrated into school curriculum and is being taught either in the classroom or on-line supported by teachers. We are nearing the end of the re-write/update project on our Hunter Education manual and are excited to be able to share the new version soon in the new year. Alongside Hunter Education, schools have been including the AHEIA Alberta Fishing Education Program in their teachings, and it is exciting to know we are providing the next generation of anglers the knowledge to better understand all aspects of sport fishing in Alberta.

Through our extended partnership with our colleagues at the Alberta Conservation Association and the provincial government, AHEIA is now responsible for the education outreach component of the Report A Poacher (RAP) Program. AHEIA staff visit events and schools with the RAP trailer, which is outfitted with static displays and videos, to provide a greater awareness of the program, but also an increased awareness of AHEIA and our associated programs. Educational modules

Continued ►

Alberta Hunter Education  
Instructors' Association

# Conservation Education Magazine

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Front Cover Photo by  
Collin Toews Photography  
([collintoews.com](http://collintoews.com))

“ With 2023 quickly approaching, we are excited about developing new educational programs and the opportunity to chart new paths for learning. ”

have been created, including Ice Fishing, Waterfowl and Wildlife Management, and are presented to the students. The program is extremely popular, and many schools have requested that we return with new modules on a regularly scheduled basis. In 2022 we have helped educate over 25,000 students with this new element of training, and bookings are well underway for next year. We also attended sportsmen shows, conferences, outdoor fairs and events with the trailer, and requests for our attendance at new venues are rapidly increasing as well. This is an exciting addition to our outreach!

The Alford Lake Conservation Education Centre for Excellence was back in full swing this year with group bookings and AHEIA run camps and events. Despite the fact our camp and surrounding area was hit with a tornado, an army of staff and volunteers worked hard to right nature's wrongs and get the camp back to operational standards. We never missed a beat! The four weeks of youth camps in July hosted very excited 12-17 year olds, some who had waited two years due to shutdowns to attend the Youth Hunter Education Camps, and the women who attended the Outdoor Women's program were thrilled to be in nature, learning skills and enjoy-

ing the camaraderie of others during the five-day camp. Many improvements and repairs were made to the Alford Lake facility this year, and more are slated this winter and next spring.

This September our second 100 for \$100 Raffle concluded, and once again it was tremendously successful. The funds generated from the ticket sales will go a long way to helping us to continue operating, upgrade facilities and introduce new conservation education programs. Thank you to everyone who supported the raffle, whether through purchasing tickets or donating prizes. Your generosity has helped us navigate through the economically difficult times we have experienced, and are still facing, and allows us to continue to advocate for those who wish to learn and develop outdoor interests through a wide range of learning and hands-on opportunities.

We are very excited for the return of the WISE Awards and Banquet, being held on Saturday February 11, 2023, at the BMO Centre at Stampede Park in Calgary. This will be the 19th anniversary of the event, and we hope you will come help us honour this year's WISE Award winner and celebrate being back together with friends

and supporters of conservation education. You can purchase tickets through our Calgary office, (403) 252-8474, or online through our website, aheia.com.

With 2023 quickly approaching, we are excited about developing new educational programs and the opportunity to chart new paths for learning. It is evident, and never taken for granted, that our many volunteers who help carry our message and assist with events, and instructors, who deliver AHEIA programs to the highest standards, are making a difference in our province. We are grateful for your commitment to conservation education! We are also thankful to you, our members, for your continuing support of our cause.

In a few short weeks we will reach the end of the year and get a much-needed chance to catch our breath. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you for your continued support as together we tackled the challenges of an amazing year. On behalf of everyone at AHEIA, and from my family to yours, I wish you all God's continued blessings, a very Merry Christmas, and all the best in 2023.

Robert A. Gruszecki  
President, AHEIA



**AHEIA's Mission:  
To Make Wildlife and Fish  
Part of the Value System  
of Every Albertan.**



The Conservation Education  
W.I.S.E. Foundation and  
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# 19th Annual W.I.S.E. Awards and Banquet

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BMO Centre, Stampede Park  
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**Dinner 5:30 pm**

**Awards Program &  
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# Firearms Education Report



“ As expected, the reaction from the firearms community has been an unprecedented increase in handgun sales. ”

By John Morrissey



John Morrissey  
Firearms Education  
Coordinator  
AHEIA

As we moved through the summer months and have now entered our fall and winter season, we have seen a decrease in overall class numbers. Given the good weather and vacation period during the summer months this is quite normal. As we move into the fall and winter months the numbers

of Albertans seeking the PAL course should once again increase. To put this into perspective, October of 2021, 20,657 students completed the CFSC, with 11,244 completing the CRFSC, for a total of 31,901 students. For September 2022, 14,549 students completed the CFSC, with 7,475 completing the CRFC for a total of 22,024 students completing the courses.

Despite the introduction of Bill C-21 on May 30, 2022, “An Act to amend certain Acts and make certain consequential amendments (firearms)”, The Canadian Restricted Firearms Safety Course is still offered to students. The CRFSC remains a vital part of firearms safety training and education.

Not sure what Bill C-21 refers to? Well, in short, Bill C-21 will prevent the sale or trade of handguns in Canada to duly licensed individuals. This would stop all sales, trade or inheritance of handguns in Canada.

Our current Federal Government has stated it is their intention to have Bill C-21 passed in late September or late October 2022. However, at the time of this article, only the importation and transfer of handguns has been implemented.

As expected, the reaction from the firearms community has been an unprecedented increase in handguns sales. It has been estimated over 200,000 handguns have been sold over the past few months. This has also created a huge backlog of work for the Canadian Firearms Centre, which has also caused frustration with firearms owners nationwide attempting to transfer a firearm, update their PAL, or move their firearm to a new address.

The Federal Government’s reaction to this buying frenzy: A temporary importation ban on handguns into Canada, with the expectation to have it permanent once Bill C-21 receives Royal Assent.

At this time we do not know how this will effect access to handguns for the CRFSC.

Other changes we need to be aware of, as of May 18, 2022, as per the Canadian Firearms Program Website:

**“Licence verification and business record-keeping for non-restricted firearms”**

Individuals and businesses will be required to obtain a reference number from the Registrar of Firearms confirming the validity of the transferee’s (buyer’s) firearms licence before transferring a non-restricted firearm. A “reference number” may be obtained through our Individual Web Services or Business Web Services portals.

Firearms businesses will also be required to retain sales and inventory records related to non-restricted firearms for a minimum of 20 years.

This is not the return of the Long Gun Registry. The records created by businesses will be held by businesses—not government—and the police will require judicial authorization to access them.

Of note is the “reference number” does not identify the firearm an individual is purchasing, or the number of firearms purchased from the same seller. Once the reference number is obtained, both the seller and buyer will receive a “Notice: Reference number issued” via email from the Firearms Centre.

As firearms owners we may have some challenges to face in the coming months. However, that being said, as always, we will persevere.



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Please call our Calgary office as gift certificates are issued from our head office:

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Gift certificates can be picked up in Calgary, at the Calgary Firearms Centre, or mailed.



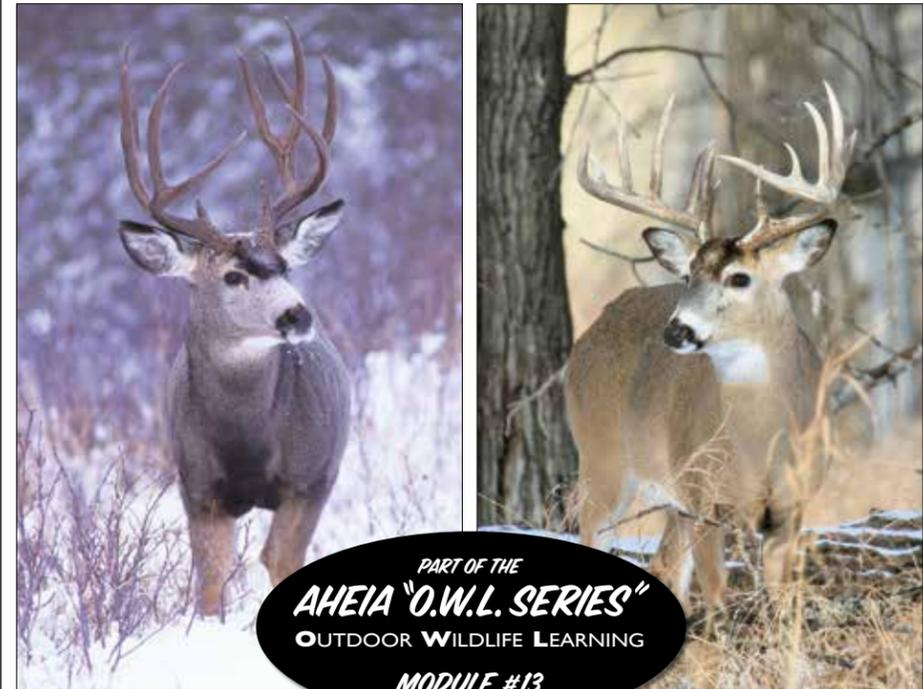
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# Edmonton Report



“ We are making a concerted effort to increase the number of younger people who are willing to volunteer to assist us ... ”

By Len Gransch



Len Gransch  
Program Coordinator  
AHEIA Edmonton

The COVID situation has been improving steadily and the general public is starting to look for any excuse to start interacting with other individuals. This is a very positive thing and I have really noticed this when it came to our camps, outdoor youth seminar, Provincial Hunting Day and the Edmonton Boat and Sportsmen's Show. I believe this encouraging trend will continue.

The only downside is that our volunteer help has been dropping off. I feel this is because some individuals are still leery of COVID and also that our volunteer base is just simply getting older. Oops, I mean more mature! We are making a concerted effort to increase the number of younger people who are willing to volunteer to assist us with our numerous programs and events. If you, or someone you know, is interested in lending a hand, we would be pleased to welcome you into the AHEIA family. Simply contact me and I will get the ball rolling.

A special thanks to all the volunteers for their selfless effort in being part of an important movement and impacting future generations by

their positive interactions. Without the assistance of our fabulous volunteers we would be hard pressed to offer the quality exhibited in all of our conservation education courses and numerous events.

Enjoy some well-deserved companionship in the great outdoors. Take a drive, walk or hike, have a wiener roast, try some photography, hunt grouse, try fishing or whatever it takes to get you out there. Remember to take a youngster or two with you.

'Til next time, and enjoy your family and friends while you can.



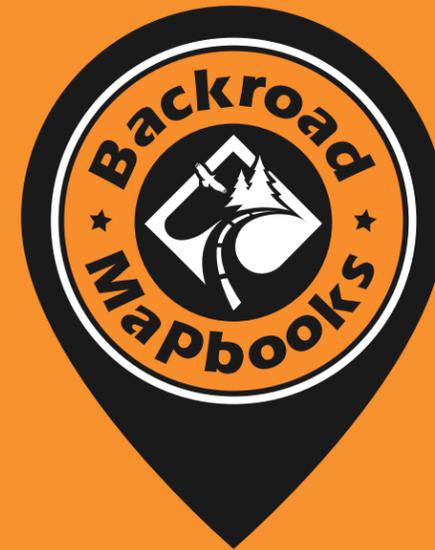
## Built Rambo Tough

The Rambo Roamer comes with a 48-volt Samsung battery allowing travel up to 56 km on one charge. This bike has plenty of power with a 750W high torque mid-drive motor.

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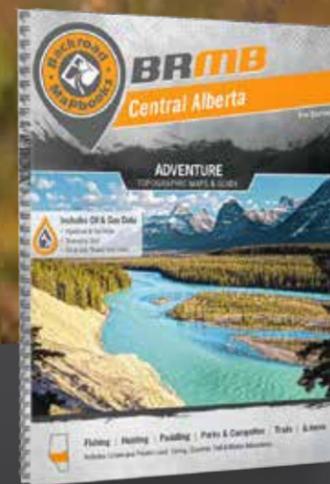
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**“Thanks to all the parents, grandparents and guardians who volunteered at our camps. Without your tireless dedication and effort these camps would not be possible.”**

# 2022 Youth Hunter Education Camps

By Len Gransch



Len Gransch  
Program Coordinator  
AHEIA Edmonton

Our Youth Hunter Education Camps continue to be very popular events. The interest in the outdoors and hunting-associated activities continues to remain of interest to our young people. This is very inspiring, considering this modern era of social media and other electronic distractions.

I am extremely pleased to report that we have another keen group of new youngsters who joined the hunting/outdoor fraternity. Welcome aboard! The latest group to pass through our Alford Lake facility showed a great deal of interest in the subject matter and were very anxious to do well, so that they could pass the courses and make their parents and grandparents proud. They definitely accomplished that.

Some of you might not be aware of what our Youth Hunter Education Camp consists of. The camp is a five-day event of fun-filled learning activities. Experts share their knowledge and provide instruction in the Alberta Conservation and Hunter Education Program, the Canadian Firearms Safety Course, and much more.

The cost for the 2022 Youth Hunter Education Camp was a great value at \$395.00 per person plus GST. This fee included lodging, breakfast, lunch and supper Monday through Thursday, and breakfast on Friday. Also included were all instruction, course handbooks and testing for the various certifications as well as an AHEIA camp T-shirt. Upon successful completion of the appropriate exams, students were certified in the Alberta Conservation and Hunter Education Program and the Canadian Firearms Program. They then qualify to apply for their Wildlife Identification Number (WIN Card) and were able to apply for their Minors Permit for firearms.

Thanks to the Alberta Conservation Association for their ongoing program which offers WIN Card reimbursement to youngsters under 18 who successfully complete the Alberta Conservation and Hunter Education course.

Our 2022 Youth Hunter Education Camps ran July 3-8, July 10-15, July 17-22 and July 24-29. If you missed out on our 2022 camps and wish to be placed on our 2023 notification list, please email us at [edmontoninfo@aheia.com](mailto:edmontoninfo@aheia.com) and we will make sure you are included next year.

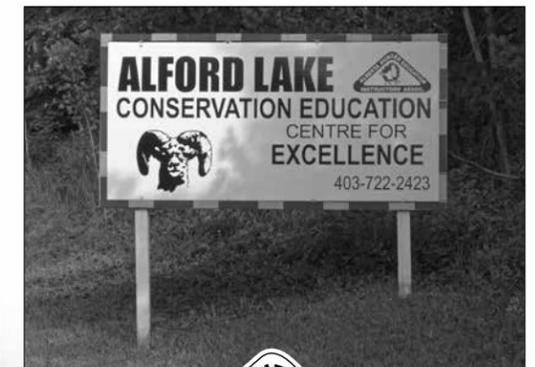
The 2023 camps will run July 2-7, July 9-14, July 16-21 and July 23-28. We are considering offering one of these weeks as an Advanced Youth Hunter Education Camp. Many parents are asking for an upgraded version of our regular Youth Hunter Education Camp which would provide advanced training in numerous facets of hunter education, while still making it a fun experience. Upon successful completion of the appropriate sessions, students will be certified in the Advanced Youth Hunter Education Program. Students will receive advanced firearms training including shotgun, centerfire, rimfire, black powder and firearms maintenance. Other components could be field techniques, map, compass and GPS skills, upgraded survival training (including an overnight stay in the woods), wilderness first aid, game care, blood trailing, scents and game calling, use of blinds, and much more. If you are interested please let me know ASAP.

Thanks to all the parents, grandparents and guardians who volunteered at our camps. Without your tireless dedication and effort these camps would not be possible. A special thanks to all the CFP instructors who volunteered to help with the firearms handling and practical exams.

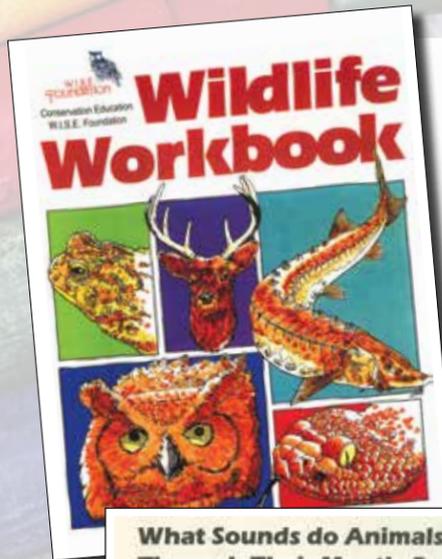
On July 27 we had a special guest attend the camp. Alberta Chief Firearms Officer Teri Bryant dropped by for a visit. Dr. Bryant was interested in seeing how the Canadian Firearms Program was affecting our youngsters. She was introduced to the students, parents and volunteers, whereupon she had a question and answer session just before lunch and was quite impressed with the process.

I was very pleased with the quality of questions the students asked Dr. Bryant. She stayed for lunch, then was given a tour of our facility. A very positive experience for all involved.

*Take care and enjoy the Great Outdoors!*



# Colour the Wild Contest



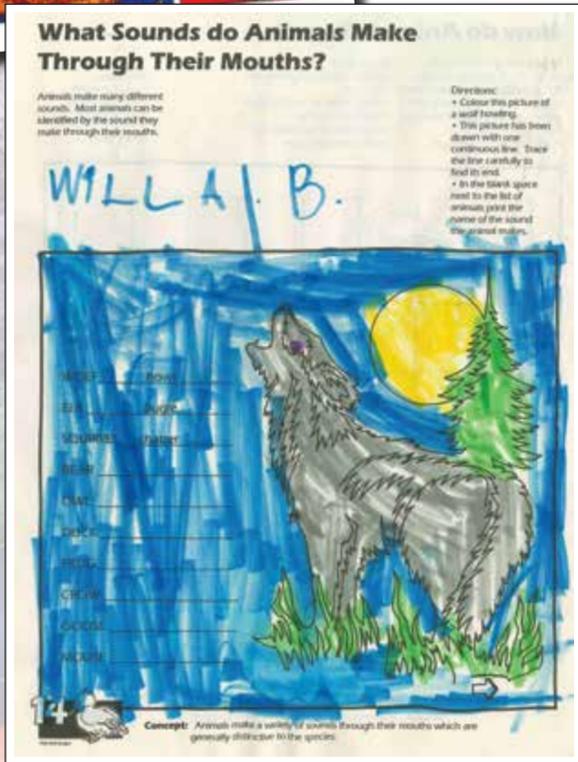
AHEIA has been handing out the Conservation Education W.I.S.E. Foundation's *Wildlife Workbook* to children for years. There is now a new contest we are calling *Colour The Wild* in which youngsters can submit their coloured masterpieces to us and we will choose one submission to be featured in each of our future Conservation Education magazines.

**Whoever's art is chosen will receive a starter set of binoculars!**

Entry is easy. Simply submit your young artist's work to us via mail or a scanned copy via email. Please include the child's first name, age and a contact number we can reach you at if your child's submission is chosen.

**Mail or email submission to:**

**Colour The Wild Contest  
AHEIA, 911 Sylvester Crescent SW, Calgary, Alberta T2W 0R8  
info@aheia.com**



*Good Luck!*

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### Mark Your Calendar!

Alberta Hunter Education Instructors' Association  
**Annual General Meeting**

Sunday, January 29, 2023 • 3:00 pm  
Calgary Conservation Education Centre for Excellence  
911 Sylvester Crescent SW

This will be an in-person meeting.  
Beverages and light snacks will be available.

*We hope to see you there!*

“The seminar is a two-day event filled with exciting and educational activities. Numerous specialists share information and instruction in various outdoor pursuits.”

# 2022 Outdoor Youth Seminar

By Len Gransch



Len Gransch  
Program Coordinator  
AHEIA Edmonton

It really looked like many people were sick and tired of being cooped up due to COVID issues. It was evident that a great number of people were ready to get back to doing some normal activities again. This was definitely obvious when it came to our Outdoor Youth Seminar. The event sold out in record time, a couple of months sooner than normal.

## What is the Outdoor Youth Seminar?

This event was designed to increase awareness of outdoor recreational opportunities. The Alberta Hunter Education Instructors' Association (AHEIA) held their 17th Annual Outdoor Youth Seminar on August 19-21. The event is designed for young outdoor enthusiasts (ages 7 and up) and their parent(s) or guardian(s) to attend together. All youngsters have to be accompanied by at least one adult. The seminar is a two-day event filled with exciting and educational activities. Numerous specialists share information and instruction

in various outdoor pursuits. All participants registered for their favourite four sessions from a variety of activities, including archery, crossbow basics, rimfire rifle shooting, centerfire rifle shooting, black powder shooting, beginners shotgun, intermediate shotgun, outdoor cooking, introduction to trapping, fly fishing basics, introduction to fishing, and a survival walk.

We are considering adding the following to our list of sessions: introduction to canoeing, photography basics, firearms maintenance, GPS/geocaching, waterfowl 101, blood trailing, plus a few more.

Saturday breakfast, lunch and supper, as well as a Sunday breakfast, were included. The overwhelming favourite meal is the Saturday whole pig roast with all the trimmings.

The 2023 Outdoor Youth Seminar will be held at Alford Lake on August 18-20, 2023. If you missed out on this year's event please contact us at [edmontoninfo@aheia.com](mailto:edmontoninfo@aheia.com) and we would be pleased to add you to our 2023 notification list.

Would you like to volunteer? Please contact me directly at [len@aheia.com](mailto:len@aheia.com) to discuss the opportunities.



# FIREARMS WANTED

**AHEIA accepts firearms as donations to support our Conservation Education programming.**  
We will provide a tax receipt for the donation value.

For more information and to donate call  
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<p><b>Parks Canada Discovery Passes*</b> (Annual)</p> <p>Family/Group ..... \$145.25 (up to 7 adults traveling together)</p> <p>Adult Individual (ages 18-64)..... \$72.25</p> <p>Senior Individual (ages 65 or more) ..... \$61.75</p> <p><small>* Discovery Passes are valid for a minimum of one full year from date of purchase, expiring on the last day of the month in which it was purchased.</small></p>	<p><b>National Park Entry Passes**</b> (Daily)</p> <p>Family/Group .....\$21.00</p> <p>Adult Individual .....\$10.50</p> <p>Senior Individual..... \$9.00</p> <p><small>** Daily Entry Passes expire at 4pm the day after entry date indicated on pass.</small></p>
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The purpose of the Bugle is to inform you of our upcoming events, courses, and programs so you never miss out on what's going on here at AHEIA! Delivered monthly right to your inbox! Subscribe today!



## HUNTING FOR TOMORROW




To register as a mentor or mentorship participant, please visit the Hunting for Tomorrow website at [www.huntingfortomorrow.ca](http://www.huntingfortomorrow.ca) or [www.aheia.com](http://www.aheia.com) for more information.



## Alberta Hunter Education Instructors' Association

Presenting Conservation and Hunter Education to Albertans



- > Alberta Conservation and Hunter Training
- > Alberta Fishing Education Program
- > Outdoor Camp Programs
- > First Time Hunter Mentor Program
- > Canadian Firearms Safety Courses
- > Pleasure Craft Operator Training
- > International Bowhunter Education Program
- > Bighorn Sheep Essentials Online Training
- > Archery Essentials Online Training
- > Identification of Alberta's Game Fish Quiz
  - > Outdoor Women's Program
  - > Outdoor Youth Seminar
  - > Wildlife Seminars
  - > Fishing Seminars



[www.aheia.com](http://www.aheia.com)

For more information on any of our programs, contact us at:

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# AHEIA FUNDRAISING RAFFLES

## CALL OUR OFFICES TO PURCHASE TICKETS!

You are not required to be present to be eligible to win. Tickets cannot be sold to persons under 18 years of age.

### 3 GUN RAFFLE



*1st Prize*    Retail Value: \$997.49

**Browning A Bolt III Stalker Rifle**  
Chambered in 6.5 Creedmoor, free-floated target crown barrel on synthetic stock. Includes Nikon Buckmaster 4x12 scope with rings and bases—factory mounted/boresighted.



*2nd Prize*    Retail Value: \$914.00

**Stoeger M3500 Shotgun**  
12 gauge, 2<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>", 3", 3.5".  
28" barrel. Blued receiver and barrel, black synthetic stock.



*3rd Prize*    Retail Value: \$370.00

**Winchester Wildcat .22 LR Rifle**  
Semi auto, composite stock, 10 round mag.

**Draw Date: Friday, March 24, 2023**  
Calgary Conservation Education Centre for Excellence  
License #618491 • 5,000 Tickets Printed

### E-BIKE RAFFLE



**Rambo Roamer**  
750w, 48 volt, high torque, mid-drive motor, 19" frame in Woodland Camo, 80mm wide rims and anti-puncture 26"x4" tires.

**Draw Date: Friday, March 24, 2023**  
Calgary Conservation Education Centre for Excellence  
License #618495 • 4,000 Tickets Printed

## SPECIALTY SHOTGUN RAFFLE



Retail Value: \$3150.00

**Benelli Ethos Super Sport Shotgun**  
12 gauge, 2<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>" and 3" shells, ported barrel, fiber optic sights, mid rib bead, 5 extended choke tubes, synthetic stock with ComforTech 3 recoil reduction system.

**Draw Date: Friday, March 24, 2023**  
Calgary Conservation Education Centre for Excellence  
License #618990 • 750 Tickets Printed

Calgary Conservation Education Centre for Excellence  
911 Sylvester Crescent SW, Calgary, Alberta T2W 0R8  
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[edmontoninfo@aheia.com](mailto:edmontoninfo@aheia.com)



# Outdoor Women's Program



At the beginning of every August, AHEIA offers a five-day Outdoor Women's Program (OWP) at the Alford Lake Conservation Education Centre for Excellence, just west of Caroline, Alberta. This year, with COVID restrictions lifted, we were able to have a full camp and offer a full compliment of sessions once again. It was wonderful to have so many women experience activities from canoeing, fly fishing, orienteering, archery and firearms, just to name a few.

Many attendees did not realize that two days prior to camp, a severe storm went through the area and downed many large trees on the camp property. Due to the very hard work of our camp manager and some volunteers, the trees were removed and camp readied for the program volunteers and participants to arrive. Amazingly, there were no buildings damaged during the storm, but we did lose a tree stand, six canoes and our canoe storage rack. Thankfully, our friends at the Rocky Mountain Canoe Club brought us canoes to use and this popular session was able to go ahead.

Although cooler temperatures prevailed throughout the week, it did not hamper anyone's enthusiasm. It also meant that without a fire-ban in effect, evening campfires could take place, allowing an opportunity for the women to connect with each other and develop new friendships. On the last evening, both the Saturday night pig roast and the Alford Lake Olympics were once again highlights of the week. 11 teams of four people competed to see who would be the first to successfully accomplish outdoor tasks they had learned throughout the week, while the remainder of participants and volunteers cheered them on. It was a fantastic way to celebrate the last full day of the program.

This year we welcomed some new volunteer instructors, along with the many volunteers who so generously attend every year, to teach participants skills pertaining to the outdoors. We could not have such a successful program without our dedicated group of volunteers, and we thank you all for helping to make this year's camp one of the best yet!



## Carmen Cornelius

This summer was the second year that Carmen attended the OWP as a volunteer instructor, leading both the Overnight Survival Skills Session and the Wilderness and Survival Skills Walks.

At a young age Carmen was exposed to archery, canoeing, hiking, and fishing while attending Bible Camps at Moose Lake. She grew up loving the outdoors and even spent her honeymoon fishing in BC! Carmen was a teacher for over 30 years and, aside from traditional subjects including Biology, Chemistry and Science, led the outdoor education program at her school. She attended AHEIA's Teacher's Workshop one summer at Alford Lake, becoming certified to teach Hunter Education, Fishing Education, Pleasure Craft Operator Training, and the International Bowhunter Education Program. Soon afterwards she introduced the National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP), a program coordinated by AHEIA, to her school and accompanied students to the Provincial Championships in Edmonton.

Following her retirement, Carmen reached out to AHEIA staff member Allan Orr, as she was interested in continuing to share her knowledge through hands-on learning. She loved the idea of connecting with women and the outdoors and became an OWP volunteer instructor. It is also because of her love for the outdoors that Carmen has started a company called "Fearless in the Forest", which allows her to facilitate people's connection to nature through outdoor activities and nature-based learning.

Reflecting on her week at camp, Carmen was most happy about the "safe, supportive environment of the program where women could share and be vulnerable with their new skills, without judgement." Carmen believes that it just takes people getting into nature and then nature will do "its work". Her love of the outdoors is catching, evident to those women who participated in her sessions.



**Since 1994, thousands of women have attended the OWP to experience our province's beautiful wild spaces and connect with other women who wish to do the same.**

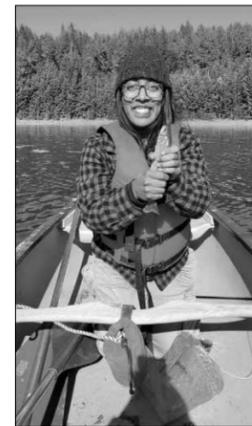
**This year we highlight three women who attended camp, either as a volunteer instructor or participant, to share their stories and reflections on their time at the Alford Lake facility.**

## Joy Lakhani

Joy is a bubbly, lovely lady, who always had a smile on her face at camp. It was clear from the moment she arrived that she was going to enjoy every minute of her time at Alford Lake.

Joy grew up in the East Kootenays, a big hunting and fishing community, but never participated in those activities, only trying fishing as part of an outdoor education event at school. She first learned about the OWP at an Ethical Resources seminar at the University of Alberta, and in 2017 attended the program. Joy arrived early that year and spent time on the dock watching a woman fishing and totally focussed on her casts, and thought it was "just so cool to see her do that". Joy participated in a fishing session that year, and did again this year, only this time it was Fly Fishing. Joy also took the Fly Tying session this summer and was absolutely thrilled when she caught a fish with a fly rod and a fly she had tied in the session! Joy also participated in the Introduction to Hunting Migratory Birds session and is now very interested in waterfowl hunting, hoping to participate in an AHEIA mentored hunt this fall.

Joy was happy to have met and connected with so many interesting women at OWP. She appreciated that camp provided her access to meeting like-minded people and was hoping to be able to fish with some after returning home. Because the instructors were "so welcoming and passionate", it has encouraged her to pursue these new interests on her own. Joy laughed, stating she "would never have picked up a fishing rod in the past, but now—yes!" Joy's enthusiasm at camp was contagious, and we wish her all the best with her new activities.



## Lisa Roper

Lisa was a new instructor at this year's OWP and conducted the Field Dressing session. She is a writer for outdoor education magazines and conducts workshops and presentations through her company, Lisa Roper Outdoors. Lisa is an avid hunter and angler, and is passionate about conservation and sustainability. She is also enthusiastic about introducing women to these activities, striving to "pave a way, break down walls and build women up".

In the Field Dressing session, Lisa instructed participants on how to properly field dress an animal and care for the meat, following a harvest. Utilizing a mule deer, she demonstrated skinning, identifying the muscle groups and preparing the meat for packaging. Assisting her was Hanah Marthaller, who demonstrated dressing-out pheasant, harvesting the meat and caping. Some of the women participated in the process, while others preferred to watch.

Going into the session, Lisa admitted she was nervous about how it would be received. She wanted it to be a "positive, feel-good experience" for the women. Natalie Semeniuk, a participant in the session, commented on how knowledgeable Lisa was, appreciated her great stories and mostly about how respectful she was of the animal. Natalie had never hunted big game before, and now has a better understanding of what is involved should she wish to try. In the end, Lisa was very happy at how well the session had been received by the women, and her goal of showing how to respect the animal and its journey, was accomplished. We hope to see Lisa again at future Outdoor Women's Programs!



Learn more about the Outdoor Women's Program by visiting our website

**aheia.com/events**

or contact our Calgary office at

**403-252-8474**

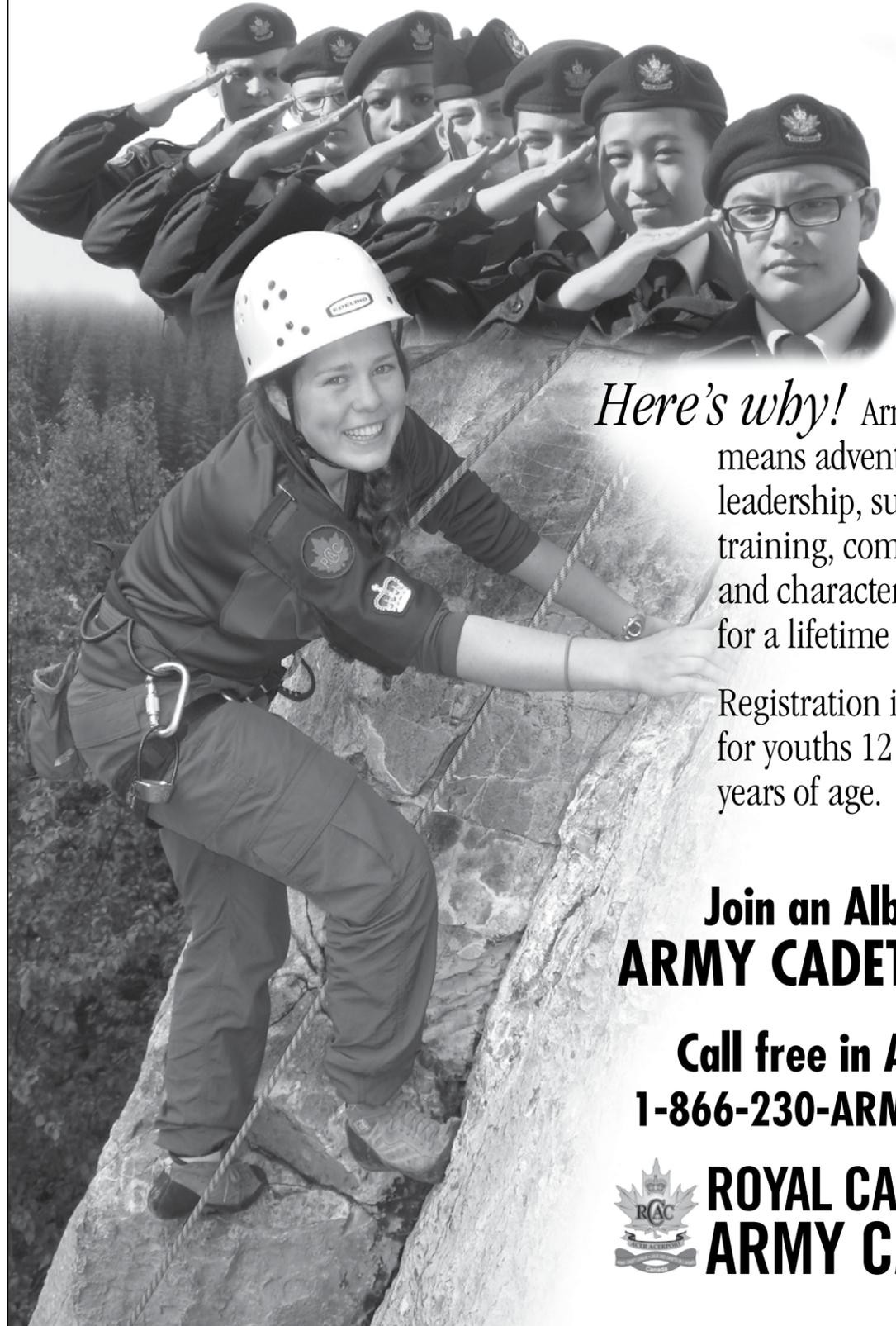
More OWP on the following pages ►



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## Bass Pro Shops and Cabela's Outdoor Fund Grant Helps with AHEIA's Outdoor Camp Programs



Cody Gross of Cabela's Calgary presenting a cheque to David Dolph of AHEIA for equipment slated for the Alford Lake Conservation Education Centre for Excellence.



AHEIA would like to thank Bass Pro Shops and Cabela's for the Outdoor Fund Grant received in May, 2022. Funds were earmarked towards new life jackets and fly fishing equipment for our youth and women's canoeing and fishing programming at the Alford Lake Conservation Education Centre for Excellence.

AHEIA is very appreciative of Bass Pro Shops and Cabela's continued support and encourage all AHEIA members to support our partners in conservation education.



*Thank You!*

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**Contact AHEIA at [info@iheia.com](mailto:info@iheia.com) for additional information.**



# Rare Alberta Wildlife Sighting

Photo Credit:  
Cristin Baril and Michael Messmer

Cristin and Michael came across a mother bear and her multi-coloured cubs in the Chain Lakes area this past spring.

**A rare sighting to see three colour phases in the same photo!**

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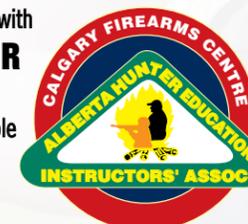
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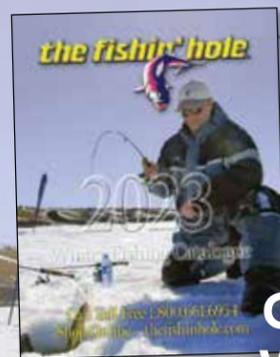
These projects are undertaken with the financial support of Wildlife Habitat Canada.

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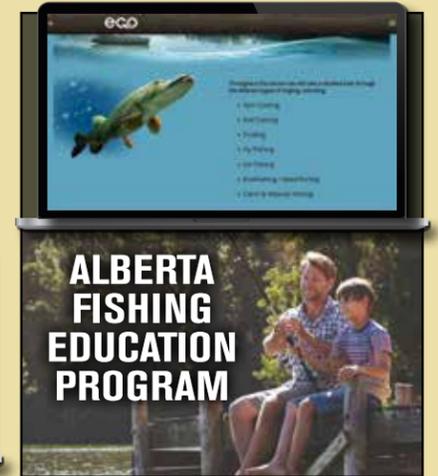
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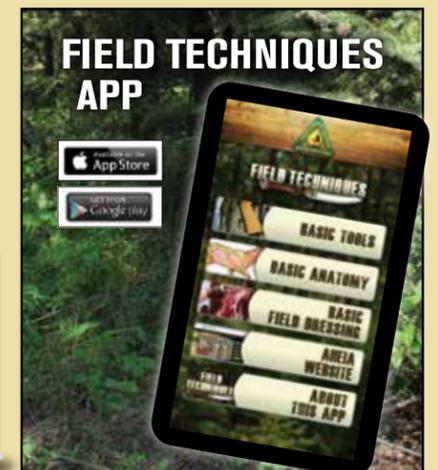
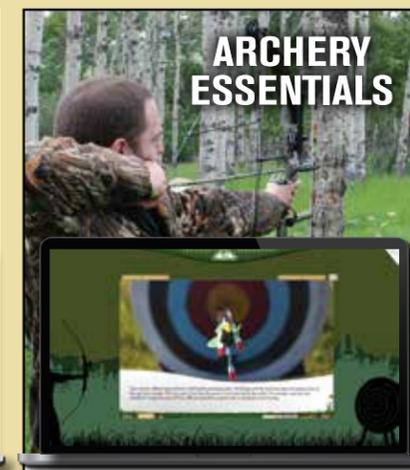
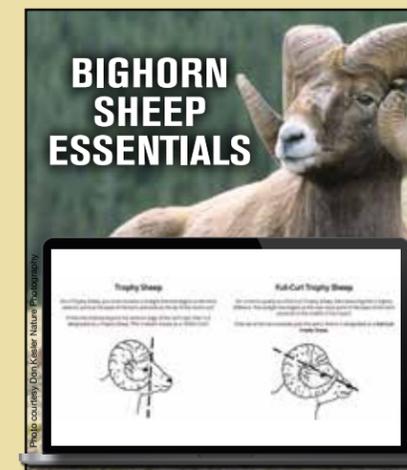
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# Go Hog Wild

By Brad Fenson

The Alberta Livestock Industry Diversification Act allowed wild boars and cervids to be farmed as domestic livestock. Wild boars were expected to become a popular new food source. Today, there are concerns that the diversification initiative could threaten the domestic swine industry. Wildlife and conservation groups warned that the boars would be impossible to control within fences. Agricultural proponents argued that the wild boars could never survive Alberta winters.

It is a classic case of "I hate to say I told you so." Wild boars are now an invasive species in much of western Canada. The good news is that Alberta Agriculture will be responsible for administering the Wild Boar Control Program under the Agricultural Pest Act and Pest and Nuisance Control Regulation. Agricultural managers are implementing new funding and controls to keep wild boar numbers in check. Nate Horner, Alberta Agriculture Minister, said, "Wild boar at large are a threat to our animals and environment, as well as a vector for diseases like African swine fever. We are taking action to get rid of this menace and help those affected by it before it gets worse."

The declaration comes on the heels of Elk Island Park announcing that wild boars have infiltrated the first National Park in Canada. The spread of

swine flu is a big scare that could be transmitted through the free-roaming wild boars. The wild pigs are causing chaos for agricultural producers, who are now eligible for compensation.

The main areas of concern are the County of Stettler and the Municipal District of Peace. Bounties are in place to encourage trapping and hunting. Alberta Agriculture posted the following:

#### Landowners and Trappers

*Whole Sounder Trapping Incentive Program—encourages the elimination of entire sounders, approved trappers receive \$75 per set of ears per sounder. This program is administered by participating municipalities and runs from April 1, 2022 to March 31, 2024.*

#### Hunters

*Wild Boar at Large Ear Bounty Program — this is an optional one-year bounty pilot program that will help with government surveillance efforts. Hunters receive \$75 per set of wild boar ears. This program is administered by participating municipalities and runs from April 1, 2022 to March 31, 2023.*

Wild boars are difficult to hunt and can become nocturnal. Research in Saskatchewan shows that the more pressure put on wild boars, the better they get at avoidance. Removing an entire group, or sounder, of hogs is the best means of control,

but is challenging. Due to privacy issues, Alberta Agriculture cannot give out exact locations of wild boars to hunters. The Large Ear Bounty Program will be a year-round hunting opportunity. Learning to identify signs of pigs and where they are eating is the best way to locate them.

Oxford describes a herd of wild pigs, or swine, as a sounder. The name of a group of wild hogs has more to do with the age of the animals than the noises they make. A group of young pigs, or piglets, is often referred to as a drift, drove, or litter. A group of older pigs is called a sounder of swine, a team, or a passel of hogs.

Call them what you will; the best way to understand hogs is by studying them—where, how, and why they move around, and how to attract them in number is the primary goal of any hog hunting enthusiasts. Agricultural experts would prefer hunters leave wild hogs alone, hoping to capture an entire sounder in some trap.

Hogs are wily critters and learn fast. If you think an old whitetail is cagey, wait until you meet wild boar. Knowing the hogs are a quick study, hunters must maximize opportunities and make the most of any shooting opportunity.

There are several feed and attractants for various wildlife, including hogs. Hunters in the southern states have been pursuing hogs for generations and have developed feeds that pigs love. Baiting hogs is comparable to the same activities for

black bears. Baiting hogs is effective, which is why they do it to capture sounders.

There is a strategy for attracting hogs that is simple to understand. Attract a drove of pigs to a feed site, and the young ones will race to it with reckless abandon. The more pigs that come to a site, the more they spread the scent of attractants on game trails coming in and out of an area. More young pigs are sure to show up, followed by juveniles. Of course, sows are regulars with the high-calorie demand of raising large litters of hungry mouths with boorish appetites.

The number of sows drawn to a site will considerably influence the number of large boars visiting the area. After all, the only thing better than food to attract a giant boar is a female pig that might be ready to breed.

Alberta may have challenges controlling wild hog populations, but it cannot be much different than in many states. Hogs are hunted year-round in many places, and hunters are still successful. Add in cold winter, and hogs are more likely to be seen feeding, making them susceptible to hunters.

The biggest question is whether or not hogs can be controlled. Other jurisdictions have not successfully eradicated hogs, so why shouldn't hunters be allowed to enjoy some organic pork?

#### Tips for Success

- Always hunt downwind of hogs or where you intend to find them. One thing you cannot fool is a wild hog's nose.
- Shoot straight and shoot often. Hogs often appear in groups, and shooting accurately can allow multiple hogs to be harvested.
- Hunt the shoulder hours of the day when hogs are most likely to show up.
- Hunt for hog sign, then strategically set up for a successful hunt. Hogs root and can turn over a lot of soil and vegetation. It is hard to mistake where they are actively feeding.
- Hunt with a buddy to maximize opportunities to harvest multiple animals.
- Be an opportunist. If you are out deer hunting and kick a pig or two out of cover, take advantage of the chance to harvest them. Many hog encounters are when you least expect them.

Wild hogs are great for eating and should not be overlooked as a food source. If you happen to harvest one in a bounty area, it could help offset fuel, ammunition, and processing costs. Like bears and mountain lions, there is a risk of trichinosis, so cook the meat thoroughly.

The bounty has brought attention to wild hogs. The Alberta government now reports wild boars in 28 rural municipalities. That means there are likely wild hogs near where you live or where you prefer to hunt. However, most hunters would be willing to take on the challenge of hunting boars without compensation. Will compensation work to reduce hog numbers? Who knows, but hunters now know they can harvest wild hogs across Alberta and take advantage of new opportunities. Hopefully, hunters will be able to help control and manage wild hogs to benefit everyone and our native wildlife.



# Great Meals

from the

# Harvest

with Len Gransch



Len Gransch  
Program Coordinator  
AHEIA Red Deer - North

#### Walleye with Mushrooms

- |                                      |                                 |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 2 walleye fillets (4 ounces, halved) |                                 |
| 2 tablespoons salted butter          | 1 ounce dried porcini mushrooms |
| 1 clove garlic, minced               | Salt and pepper to taste        |
| 2 limes, juiced                      | 1 tablespoon lemon zest, grated |
| 1/2 teaspoon red pepper flakes       | 2 green onions, chopped         |

Place dried porcini mushrooms in a small bowl with enough warm water to cover. Soak 20-30 minutes or until rehydrated.

Melt half the butter in a medium skillet over medium heat. Place walleye in the skillet and season with salt and pepper. Sprinkle with 1/2 the lemon zest. Next, pour half the lime juice over the walleye and continue cooking for 5 minutes.

Flip the walleye and season with salt and pepper. Sprinkle on the remaining lemon zest and cover with the remaining lime juice.

Stir in the remaining butter, green onions, chopped porcini mushrooms, garlic and red pepper flakes. Continue cooking for another 5 minutes or until the fish flakes easily with a fork.

Serve with rice pilaf or rice noodles and your favourite veggie.

#### Applesauce Meat Loaf

- |                                |                                            |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| 1 pound ground wild game meat  | 1/2 pound ground lean pork                 |
| 1 cup fine dry bread crumbs    | 2 cups grated raw potato                   |
| 1 large egg, beaten            | 2 teaspoons salt                           |
| 1 clove garlic, minced         | 1 teaspoon baking powder                   |
| 1 teaspoon fresh onion, grated | 1 can applesauce (approximately 15 ounces) |
| Pepper to taste                | 1/4 cup parsley, chopped                   |

Preheat oven to 350°F. Mix ingredients together lightly in a large bowl.

Transfer to a 9"x5"x3" loaf pan (packed loosely).

Bake for 1 1/2 hours until set.

Serve with steamed brown rice and green beans.

Enjoy!

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Contact AHEIA at [info@aheia.com](mailto:info@aheia.com) for additional information.

Feral pigs, also known as wild boar at large, are one of the **most damaging invasive species** in North America.



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**“Like all pigs, wild boar are very smart. Their sounders can number upwards of 20 individuals, but removing only one or a handful of these individuals ends up spooking and educating the rest ...”**

# Boar Bounties Do More Harm Than Good

**By Andrew Heck**  
Communication Programs Coordinator  
Alberta Pork

The Government of Alberta recently introduced a bounty on ‘wild boar at large’—a highly destructive invasive species that has been spreading rapidly in our province and in various parts of North America. This pest was created when Eurasian wild boars were brought to Canada to be farmed for meat or for controlled hunts in the 1980s, but since then, individuals and entire herds have either escaped or been deliberately released for various unfortunate reasons.

There are many damaging consequences of having wild boar present in Alberta. They harass cattle at pasture, and they could potentially spread serious diseases to domestic pigs. They ravage crops and destroy native species in the bush, in many of the same parts of the province where hunters pursue deer, moose and other game. It should then come as no surprise that rural land-

owners and hunters are best situated to come across wild boar, and now, there is a bounty or cash reward for killing them. The problem? It has not and will not work to address the issue.

Michael Bodenchuk is the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA-APHIS) leading wildlife biologist on ‘feral swine’ in Texas. Prior to taking on that role many years ago, he was a hunting outfitter for more than a decade, and his wife is a taxidermist to this day. During his outfitting days, he served as editor of an international hunting newsletter and is well-versed on the concerns of hunters and their ability to be leaders in the field of conservation. To say he knows his stuff would be an understatement. Like all avid hunters, he loves the thrill of tracking down elusive prey, and there is probably no better example of that than his state’s feral swine—or wild boar—population.

“Anyone who kills a pig is a friend of mine,” said Bodenchuk. “But you have to understand that

they’re not helping control the population. The cost of this species is enormous, and the societal expense far outstrips the economic benefits to hunters.”

Pigs first arrived in Texas in the early 16th century as Spanish settlement took place in the region. At that time, they were treated as grazing animals and a source of subsistence meat for settlers. They would be turned out onto the open range in the spring and harvested in the fall, when it finally became cool enough to safely process meat, prior to the use of refrigeration.

“Remnant populations of these animals were supplemented with Eurasian wild boar in the 1960s, as a way to encourage a commercial hunting industry. From there, it became a free-for-all.”

Like all pigs, wild boar are very smart. Their sounders can number upwards of 20 individuals, but removing only one or a handful of these individuals from the sounder ends up spooking and educating the rest, and they move to new areas that were not previously infested.

“They compete with native wildlife for natural forage, occupying the same riparian corridors where other game species go to drink water. I’m a big fan of hunting turkeys and quail, but they eat the turkey eggs and the quails, as an example.”

Apart from the obvious environmental damage from wild boar, these animals are perfect reservoirs for disease.

“Salmonella, trichinella, E. coli, brucella, leptospira, you name it. We’ve studied these carcasses extensively, and most are actively shedding various kind of harmful pathogens. We can’t barbecue our way out of this problem.”

Bodenchuk mentioned one particular instance of hunters from Wyoming making the trip to Texas to capture one of the prized specimens that have become the topic of conversation for many hunters who dream of heading south. The carcass they brought back home—as it turned out—harboured pasteurilla bacteria, which can cause fatal pneumonia in humans. Prior to butchering the boar, the processor to whom it was brought pressure-washed the carcass, just to be safe! Unfortunately, the very act of handling and cut-

ting this animal thereafter caused pasteurilla to enter his lungs. He died, but the fixation with wild boar meat lives on for many.

When Alberta’s wild boar bounty was announced earlier this year, social media was abuzz with comments suggesting these animals represented free bacon or time to load up the freezer. It is a wishful thought, but a greatly misguided one beyond the human disease risk. There are many more negatives associated with the presence of wild boar, including public safety issues, devastation to the natural ecosystem and the potential financial harm for farmers, as livestock diseases could jeopardize overseas markets for selling meat—an important fixture of our agricultural economy.

From 2008 to 2017, the Government of Alberta’s previous wild boar bounty helped inform the situation for the province’s researchers, but what was found, was that their numbers and range had grown over that span of time. Quite the opposite of the intended effect! In fact, Bodenchuk suggested that, aside from the obvious natural consequences for wild boar population growth, the bounty could incentivize the illicit, deliberate movement of wild boar from one area to another, as a way to create additional hunting opportunities. This creates a market for wild boar where one did not previously exist. The bounty, then, comes with a double whammy of encouraging wild boar spread and damage in new areas.

“You might end up getting better numbers in terms of where they are, but the problem is that it probably won’t be new guys going after them.

It’s going to be the same ones who are already causing the problem that the bounty is supposed to eliminate, and it might even encourage some landowners to get in on the action themselves. You can have a bounty or eradication, but not both.”

Alberta’s new bounty is currently being offered by only three rural municipalities, and two separate components of the program (addressing hunters and trappers) will last for one year and two years, respectively. There are also some strings attached, such as the requirement to collect pairs of ears and validate that any individuals killed were located in those specific municipalities. The bounty will also not be offered in any areas where whole-sounder eradication is actively taking place, which are generally considered the province’s hot spots. All things considered, the \$75 reward probably would not even cover your gas to get after them.

Some critics allege the problem is being overblown—that there are not very many wild boar even out there, since few people ever encounter one. They are undoubtedly difficult to measure, since they move quickly, usually under the cover of darkness, and they do not all look exactly alike. Seasonal changes related to food sources can make them much fatter or skinnier, and their thick coats of hair vary in colour. But Bodenchuk insists that the doubters have been deceived.

“If you’re lucky enough to see one in the daytime, think about how many more are out at night. And if you count one, rest assured there are a dozen more somewhere nearby. Unless they’re radio-

collared, there’s no completely accurate way to tell how many there are.”

When it comes to conservation, hunters have a vital role to play when it comes to certain species. Most hunters love and respect the land that supports their sport. But hunting wild boar—without a controlled approach to track, trap and eradicate entire sounders—is surely a wrongheaded approach, according to Bodenchuk.

“Bounties are really good at getting county commissioners re-elected. They’re very popular, but very inefficient.”

So what can hunters do to support the work of credible authorities within government, academia and the agriculture industry? In Alberta, information about wild boar sightings should be reported by email to [af.wildboar@gov.ab.ca](mailto:af.wildboar@gov.ab.ca) or by phone at 310-3276 (FARM). They can also be reported using the EDDMapS app available on the website of the Alberta Invasive Species Council (AISC): [www.abinvasives.ca](http://www.abinvasives.ca). Details such as GPS coordinate are very helpful, along with the number of individuals sighted, and if you are able to make out males, females and juveniles. Further information of this nature can be found through AISC.

Hunters are strongly encouraged to learn more about this issue, with industry groups like Alberta Pork and Alberta Beef—representing our province’s hog farmers and cattle ranchers—hugely appreciative of your efforts to make wild boar eradication possible, rather than potentially compromising it.



Wild boar eradication specialists pose with a deceased male. Whole-sounder removal involves trapping and killing entire groups, not individuals.



Traps are placed in wild boar hot spots, monitored 24/7 via tracking cameras. When a whole sounder is spotted within a trap, a cellular signal is manually sent to drop the gate and close the trap.

“As one of the most coveted species in Alberta, walleye require more active management to ensure sustainable populations for future generations to enjoy.”

# Stocking Walleye in Alberta

By Janine Higgins  
Engagement and Education Specialist  
Alberta Environment and Parks

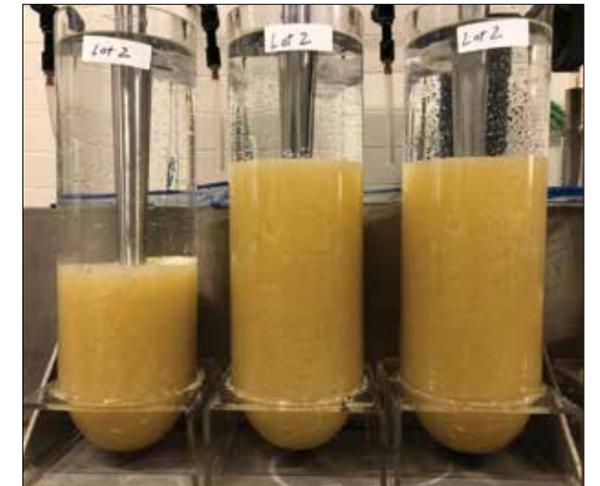
Many anglers have created memories reeling in a walleye; maybe it was alongside an old friend, while watching an eager junior angler, or simply by themselves while enjoying some solitude at a favourite fishing spot. As one of the most coveted species in Alberta, walleye require more active management to ensure sustainable populations for future generations to enjoy. These management approaches include special harvest licences, where harvest opportunities are provided at waterbodies that would otherwise have a catch and release regulation, slot and minimum size limits, and walleye stocking. Alberta's walleye stocking program recommenced in 2021, however it was a bit different from historical walleye stocking efforts. Walleye stocking was used from the 1980s

to the early 2000s to re-establish collapsed or extirpated (locally) extinct populations, and to create new self-sustaining populations in lakes and reservoirs. The primary goal of the walleye stocking program this go-around is simply to create additional fishing and harvest opportunities. Since these opportunities will be created and maintained through stocking, stringent regulations which are often necessary to ensure sustainable walleye populations can be avoided. The catch? It will take at least four or five years before this slow growing species reaches a catchable size.

So how does walleye stocking occur? Unlike trout stocking, there is no brood stock of walleye available. A spawn camp must be set up to collect eggs from a sustainable walleye population that will be hatched in a fish hatchery. In order to capture walleye, Alberta Environment and Parks staff set up live traps in Lac Ste Anne just as ice

comes off the lake. Using very long lengths of mesh netting called leads, fish are funnelled towards and into submerged, cone-shaped traps. Traps are checked each morning, with captured fish sorted and non-target species, such as burbot and suckers, returned to the lake. Adult walleyes are brought to large temporary holding pens just off shore. From there, female and male walleyes are brought into a tent onshore and the eggs and milt are collected. A tent is required to protect the eggs from sunlight. Walleyes are then safely released back into the lake where they will spawn again next year! Once collected, the eggs and milt are carefully mixed with a feather to prevent sticking or clumping without causing damage to the very fragile eggs.

An advantage of this program is that the fish population in Lac Ste Anne won't be impacted by these activities; egg survival rates in the wild are much lower than in the hatchery and there-



fore, few walleyes are needed to collect enough eggs for the program. In 2021, there were over 5.5 million eggs collected from almost 200 female walleyes. There are over 40,000 mature female walleyes in Lac Ste. Anne, so the number of fish needed to conduct a spawn camp is relatively small compared to the total population.

The fertilized eggs are placed in large jars called upwellers that gently flush water through the eggs to keep them well oxygenated while the eggs absorb water and harden, which makes them less fragile. Once hardened, the eggs are transported to the Cold Lake Fish Hatchery where they are counted to determine the approximate number and put back into upwellers that will be their home for the next few weeks. Once the eggs start hatching, it is a race to get them to their final destination at lakes and reservoirs. Walleye are voracious and if left in the hatchery, they will eat each other, resulting in lower success rates and ultimately less fish for anglers!

Where are these walleye stocked? In 2021, lakes and reservoirs included Burnstick, Chin and Sylvan lakes, Forty Mile Coulee Reservoir, Little Bow, McGregor, Milk River Ridge, Stafford and Travers Reservoirs, as well as Lac Bellevue. Check the stocking report on [MyWildAlberta.ca](http://MyWildAlberta.ca) to find out where this year's fish end up!

Fisheries Biologists give significant consideration before stocking any fish, and walleyes are no different. The current fish community, whether stocking can potentially supplement existing walleye populations that lack productivity due to other limitations such as irrigation, and the genetic integrity of fish populations are all considered. Alberta's Fish Disease Lab tests for diseases and all equipment is disinfected between waterbodies to minimize the risk of transferring aquatic invasive species.



**It is important to remember that moving any fish between waterbodies without authorization is illegal – let's leave stocking to the experts!**

**If you want an insider look on what AEP is up to, follow us on “My Wild Alberta” Facebook, or learn more on [www.mywildalberta.ca](http://www.mywildalberta.ca).**

Alberta



“These fish are very special and need our help to protect them and make sure that they are in our river systems for generations to come.”

# Searchin’ for Sturgeon

## A Monitoring Program Powered by Citizen Scientists

By Janine Higgins  
Engagement and Education Specialist  
Alberta Environment and Parks

Lake Sturgeon have been calling Alberta rivers home for thousands of years — with little change to their appearance since the dinosaurs roamed the earth. As the largest fish in Alberta, Lake Sturgeon are a popular sport fish due to their strong fight and unique body. Unlike many fish species in Alberta, their body is covered in denticles instead of scales, and have five rows of bony plates called scutes. Their shark-like tail, and up-turned nose with four whiskers (called barbels to help locate food), make this gentle giant a unique fish to snap a pic for Instagram despite it being catch and release fishing only.

While these popular fish are sought after by many, their populations are not doing as well as we’d like to see, as they are currently listed as Threatened under Alberta’s *Wildlife Act*. Across Canada, Lake Sturgeon are vulnerable to over-harvest and poaching, habitat degradation, habitat fragmentation (from dams and weirs), and slow to recover due to late age at maturity and

gaps in spawning years. Habitat degradation is due to water pollution from industrial, agricultural, and city effluent, and livestock sources; habitat alteration is due to changes in water flows from dams or water withdraws. Habitat fragmentation (due to dams) prevents the movement of lake sturgeon between the North and South Saskatchewan river system. Lake Sturgeon also suffer from being over-loved; many anglers want to take a photo with their Sturgeon catch, but mishandling (fish that are dropped, held vertically, fingers in gills, held out of water) can lead to injury or death of the Sturgeon. Poaching or misidentification (“is this a sucker fish?”) is also a killer of these fish.

Because Lake Sturgeon don’t reproduce every year, and are late to mature, population recruitment (adding fish to the population) is a slow, long-term process. The good news is that Lake Sturgeon are increasing from the critically low population levels of the past century, but are still in low numbers with few mature fish.

Monitoring the Lake Sturgeon population in the North Saskatchewan River is no small feat, as it takes a substantial number of angling hours to collect enough data. Thankfully, a group of dedicated citizen scientists are always keen to step up to the plate and lend Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP) a hand. Since 1991, volunteers have been assisting with catching, tagging and measuring Lake Sturgeon, following the same methods that AEP fisheries biologists use to estimate population size. In 2022, these volunteers committed their sought-after summer fishing trips on the North Saskatchewan River to support this project. After attending training, volunteers were given a special fisheries research licence to use two fishing rods, tag and measure fish, and all the required sampling equipment. They captured and checked for a tag (Passive Integrated Transponder (PIT)) using a hand-held scanner, and inserting one just under the fish’s skin if the fish is not



Jeff Krukowski, a citizen scientist, helping to monitor the Lake Sturgeon population in the North Saskatchewan River.

tagged. By tagging fish and recording previously tagged fish, fisheries biologists can estimate the number of Lake Sturgeon in the river. Jeff Krukowski, a citizen scientist who’s been involved in the program since 2003, says, “Sturgeon are an incredible fish and extremely fun to catch. I am very lucky and fortunate to be able to participate in the citizen science program for Sturgeon in Alberta. These fish are very special and need our help to protect them and to make sure that they are in our river systems for generations to come. AEP does a lot of good work protecting Sturgeon, and the citizen science program is a way for fisherman to contribute to these protection efforts.” While the fishing season isn’t over yet, volunteers caught over 445 fish this summer! A similar project will be completed on the South Saskatchewan River system next year, so that

the population status of Lake Sturgeon can be updated in 2024, which will inform the federal status under the *Species at Risk Act*.

If you’re heading out fishing for this species, make sure to use the correct gear — fishing line greater than 30 lb test, and a heavy action rod and reel to quickly land and release the fish. It is not recommended to fish with a pickerel rig. Always keep the fish horizontal and in the water and have your camera ready and release the fish as quickly as possible after catching it. If you see an angler keeping a Sturgeon, please call Report a Poacher at 1-800-642-3800 — our citizen scientists always have bright orange volunteer angler flags to identify them. More information can be found on My Wild Alberta on Facebook, mywildalberta.com or alberta.ca by searching Lake Sturgeon.



A Passive Integrated Transponder (PIT tag) being inserted into a Lake Sturgeon.



### Conservation Education Points of Contact

**Calgary**  
Conservation Education Centre For Excellence  
911 Sylvester Cr. SW  
Calgary, AB T2W 0R8  
Phone: 403-252-8474  
1-866-852-4342  
Fax: 403-252-3770  
info@aheia.com

**Edmonton**  
Conservation Education Centre For Excellence  
#88, 4003 - 98 Street  
Edmonton, AB T6E 6M8  
Phone: 780-466-6682  
1-866-282-4342  
Fax: 780-431-2871  
edmontoninfo@aheia.com

**Alford Lake**  
Conservation Education Centre For Excellence  
Box 369  
Caroline, AB T0M 0M0  
Phone: 403-722-2423  
Fax: 403-722-2445  
alfordlake@xplornet.com

**A.H.E.I.A.**  
Calgary Firearms Centre  
242 Avenue & 32 Street SW  
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# Identification of Alberta's Game Fish Quiz

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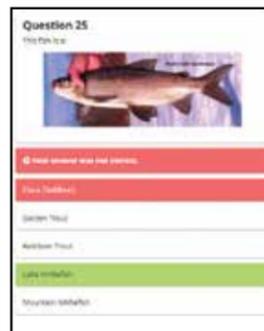
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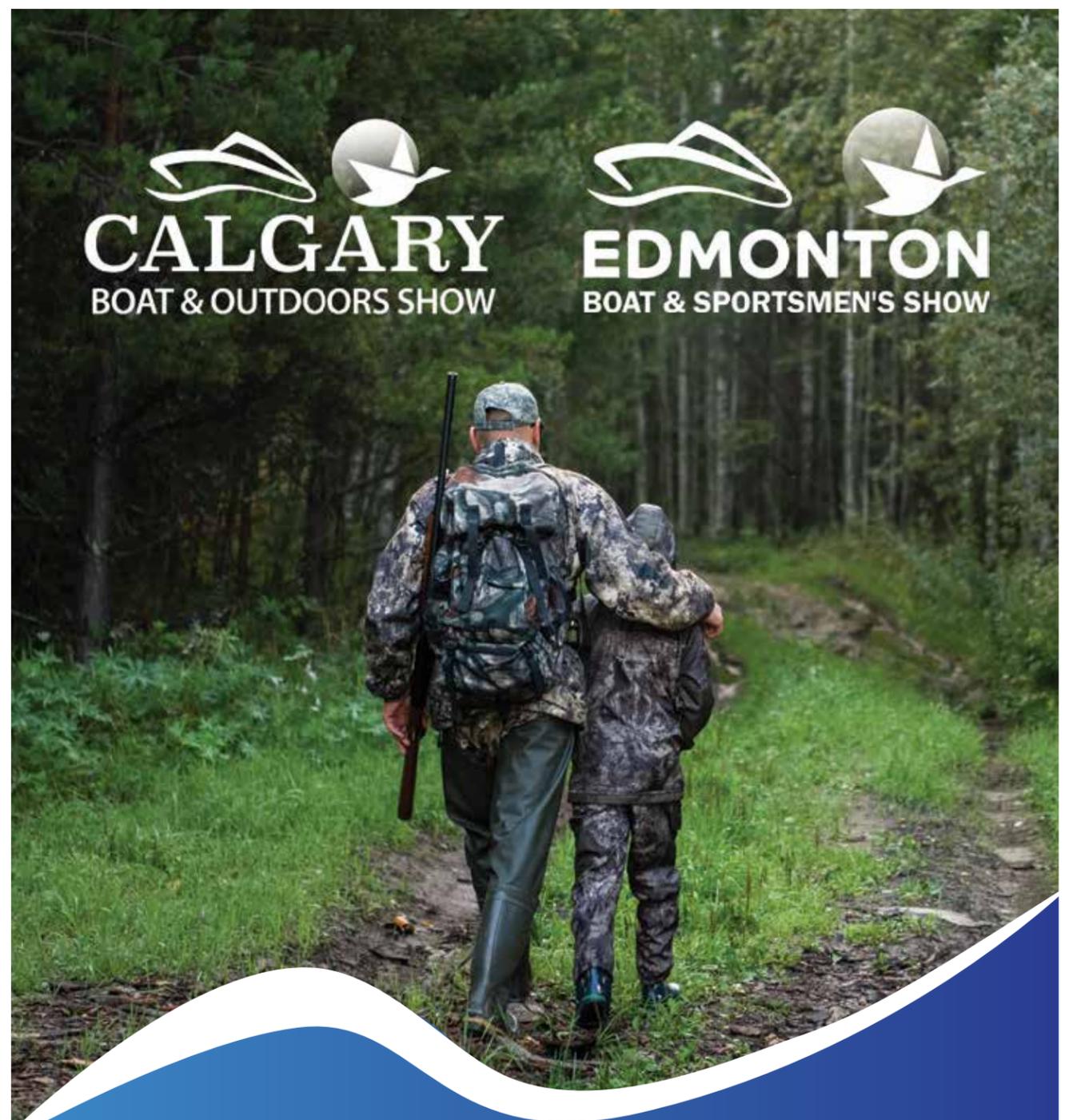
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**Calgary Boat & Outdoors Show**

**February 10-12, 2023**

BMO Centre, Stampede Park, Calgary, AB  
[calgaryboatandoutdoorshow.ca](http://calgaryboatandoutdoorshow.ca)

**Show Hours:**

Friday, February 10	10am - 9pm
Saturday February 11	10am - 7pm
Sunday February 12	10am - 5pm

**Edmonton Boat & Sportsmen's Show**

**March 16-19, 2023**

Edmonton Expo Centre, Edmonton, AB  
[edmontonboatandsportshow.ca](http://edmontonboatandsportshow.ca)

**Show Hours:**

Thursday, March 16	12pm - 9pm
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Drawn Tuesday, May 24, 2022  
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Licence #584091. 1000 tickets printed.

**Ticket #239**

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