

ON MY HONOR

As many of my Boone and Crockett Club friends know, I've been associated with the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) for many years. Though I was only a Scout for a little over a year as a boy, I was a high-adventure assistant Scoutmaster and venturing crew leader for about 18 years as my three sons became Eagle Scouts. Since then, I've been a member of the Occoneechee Council in Raleigh, NC, and for the past five years an ATV safety instructor and summit trek leader at Camp Durant in Carthage, North Carolina.

As our Ethics Committee discussed this important but sometimes elusive topic of hunting ethics, it occurred to me that just about all the guidance we need is encompassed by the more general guidance Boy Scouts are given. Their Scout oath states:

On my honor, I will do my best to do my duty to God and my country,

And to obey the Scout Law; to help other people at all times;

To keep myself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight.

What hunter would not want to abide by that oath? We wish to be honorable, to lead lives guided by whatever our religion might be, to obey the laws of our country, and to help other hunters, landowners, and youth whenever we can. To consider ourselves ethical hunters, we certainly want to keep ourselves physically capable of the hunt, abstain from alcohol or drugs when armed, and to follow moral guidelines, as provided by our Fair Chase statements. But what is the Scout law? It turns out that the Scouts' law also gives us useful hunting guidance:

A Scout is Trustworthy, Loyal, Helpful, Friendly, Courteous, Kind, Obedient, Cheerful, Thrifty, Brave, Clean and Reverent.

If I had more space, I could go into what the Boy Scouts mean by each of those items, or I could tell you how I would interpret each as they apply to my hunting experiences and techniques. But I would rather you, the reader, do that. Please give it some thought. How would each term apply to how you hunt, what you consider ethical, and perhaps even to what you've seen other hunters do?

Not many people know that the Boy Scouts also have an outdoor code:

***As an American I will do my best to:
Be clean in my outdoor manners
Be careful with fire
Be considerate in the outdoors
Be conservation minded***

This helps the Scouts—as well as hunters—to apply the general terms of the Scout law to our experiences in the outdoors, whether it be camping, backpacking, hunting or any other outdoor recreation. The program of Leave No Trace follows this outdoor code.

Finally, the most obvious statement of Boy Scout guidance that just about everyone, including non-scouters know by heart is their motto: “Be Prepared.” We could pretty much sum up the entire hunting experience with that motto. Be prepared to know your game, its habits and habitat; be prepared to be legal in all that you do on your hunt; be prepared with the proper equipment for the game you are pursuing; be prepared physically and with the ability to use your gun, rifle, or bow capably and accurately; and be prepared to follow the Club's Fair Chase guidelines and your own moral code when hunting. Do we need any more than that? ■

Read more about B&C's MOHAB (Montana High Adventure Base) program at our TRMR on page 34.