

B&C PROFESSORS' CORNER

Partnership Gone Wild: Introducing the First B&C Wildlife Extension Specialist



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In 1914, the Boone and Crockett Club's 27th year, the Smith-Lever Act created a nationwide extension system administered by the nation's land-grant universities. Its purpose included learning, discovery, engagement, and the transfer of university

research into practice—activities long endorsed by the Boone and Crockett Club. Motivated by this common purpose, the Boone and Crockett Club partnered with Michigan State University (MSU) Extension and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Wildlife Division and in 2010 created the nation's first Boone and Crockett Club Wildlife Extension Specialist position. This is a first-of-its-kind partnership between the Boone and Crockett Club, a major land-grant university, and a state natural resource management agency. The partnership builds on the land-grant tradition of delivering useful, science-based information to those who implement wildlife conservation at the local, state, and national levels. It supports the grander goal of ensuring that citizens can continue to enjoy America's rich wildlife heritage and the socio-economic benefits that well-managed wildlife resources bring to local communities and our nation.

My own interest in working on the people-side of wildlife management developed during my years as a graduate student at MSU studying whitetail deer. After radio collaring and tracking about 150 newborn and adult deer across southwest Michigan, we documented one of the lowest annual fawn mortality rates (23 percent) in the nation. Aside from the delight of novel findings and working outdoors for nine months of every year, the best part of my research was sharing the research results with local landowners, farmers, wildlife agency biologists, hunters, and anyone else who would listen. I was intrigued to think how these people might use my results to improve management of habitats and deer populations in their areas. Might the DNR increase the number of antlerless deer licenses, and if so, would hunters respond by killing more does? Would landowners manage their properties differently and perhaps curtail the practice of feeding deer?

I envisioned that in my dream job, I'd work to transfer knowledge and build bridges between scientists and the many people who implement wildlife management and conservation practices on the ground. Sometimes dreams come true! Soon after graduation I was offered a position under a jointly funded partnership between MSU Extension and the Michigan DNR, as a

wildlife outreach specialist within the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife at Michigan State University. Fast-forward 10 years, and today I am humbled and inspired to be the first Boone and Crockett Wildlife Extension Specialist, helping carry out the vision created a century ago.

One aspect of that vision is working to increase public support for hunting and conservation by recruiting new adult hunters and hunter supporters. That's why we launched Gourmet Gone Wild® (GGW), an innovative program designed to build on people's growing interest in local and unique foods and sustainable living (popularly termed the "foodie" and "locavore" movements). GGW reaches out to inform citizens about the values of hunting and fishing, including the nutritional and culinary benefits of wild fish and game. Groups of young professionals are invited to GGW events to sample professionally prepared wild fish and game dishes paired with local wine and beer. While noshing, participants learn about the health benefits of eating local and the roles of hunters and anglers in conserving our natural resources. One highlight of GGW events is a cooking demonstration by our professional chef, who showcases wild game as a local, healthy, and delicious cuisine that easily rivals non-game options when properly prepared. Participants are invited to attend

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gourmet gone wild

The ultimate in healthy, local, sustainable eating

Gourmet Gone Wild is a partnership program of the Boone and Crockett Club, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Michigan State University Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, and Michigan United Conservation Clubs. Funding for the program has been generously provided by the Hal and Jean Glassen Foundation, National Shooting Sports Foundation, and the Great Lakes Fisheries Trust. gourmetgonewild.org

Learn more about Michigan State University and our other B&C University Programs



Gourmet Gone Wild-er (GGW-er) events to try their hand at hunting, shooting, or fishing. Some GGW-er events take participants directly into the field or stream to harvest game or fish. Others consist of workshops that give individuals the basic tools and confidence they need to get started in harvesting nature's bounty. Future plans include partnering with farmers' markets to offer game-cooking classes, helping the Boone and Crockett Club with its first-ever Wild Gourmet Cookbook, and reaching out to other interested states to expand the program nationally.

I believe this partnership between MSU Extension, the Michigan DNR, and the Boone and Crockett Club is uniquely qualified and positioned to achieve important outcomes for wildlife and conservation. These include increasing public support and engagement in hunting and conservation-related activities; informing the broader public about the economic, environmental, and social benefits of sustainable use; and promoting sustainability of natural resources into the future.

Future *Fair Chase* articles will share the work we're doing to connect youth with the joys of being in the wild, streamline adult hunter-recruitment policies and programs in Michigan (see the President's Column in this issue), and communicate the importance of our natural resources to local communities by highlighting public lands as anchor points for community prosperity.

It's all about reaching out, connecting, sharing my passion for wildlife, and promoting our hunting and conservation ethics. A dream career for sure! ■

Jordan Burroughs



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