

FROM THE EDITOR

I was walking along a nature trail not far from our home on Skidaway Island, a barrier island off Georgia's coast, when off to my right I caught sight of an osprey in full-dive mode. This aerial hunter hit the surface of a nearby salt-water lagoon with a splash and soon after emerged with a silvery mullet in its talons. With some vigorous flapping, the bird was able to gain altitude and seemed on its way to completing a successful mission.

On my left, though, I saw a bald eagle come off its perch from a towering loblolly pine and swoop down toward the osprey. The eagle went on to harass the osprey till it dropped the mullet from its grasp. The eagle then flew down to gather his "easy pickin's." The osprey returned to circling high above the lagoon, back in the hunt once again.

I wish my grandkids had been along to watch this drama. We've all seen bizarre pet tricks and such on YouTube videos, but nature may well still be the best channel around. Whatever we might see or experience in nature, it's a lesson well learned and time well spent with youngsters. If we would like them to join us as hunters someday,

let's be sure they're comfortable just being outdoors in the first place. We can no longer assume that kids "self-acclimate" to the out-of-doors the way most everyone of our generation, as a matter of course, did.

I read with interest a story in the *New York Times* (March 11, 2018) by Ellen Barry titled, *In Britain, Learning to Accept Risk, and the Occasional 'Owie'*. The article describes how educators in Britain are adding some measure of risk to school playgrounds. "Out went plastic playhouses," notes Ms. Barry, "and in came the dicey stuff: stacks of two-by-fours, crates and loose bricks." Ms. Barry goes on to write, "Limited risks are increasingly cast by experts as an experience essential to childhood development, useful in building resilience and grit."

Nature, of course, has all along offered the same learning experience to young people. Thorny vines, wet, moss-covered rocks, and shiny three-leafed plants all encourage kids to watch their step and keep their wits about them. The occasional "owie" reinforces the lesson.

I was having lunch with a group of men with whom I play golf and happened to

mention that I had missed our last outing because I had been hunting ducks and geese in Nebraska along the North Platte River. As the conversation turned to hunting, I learned that five of the eight men at our table were hunters but none of them had gone afield since retiring to Georgia. Apparently, it's a lot easier to find new golf partners than new hunting partners. To get the ball rolling, I'm looking to schedule a quail hunt with these guys for next fall.

It's no secret that the bulk of our hunting population has long been comprised of the Baby Boom generation. Indeed, the high-water mark for hunting participation in America, the early 1980s, was the time when the youngest of this post-war generation was old enough to join the rest of that generation in the field. The years have rolled on, though. Of the 75 million men and women who comprise the



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Baby Boom generation, 50 million are today over 65 years-of-age. In 12 years, all of us in this generation will be 65 or older.

Over the years, we have been reminded by many in our ranks to, "Take a kid hunting." Nowadays, I would suggest that we add to that notion by saying, "Take a grandkid hunting." Like the osprey, I'm sure there are still lots of us ready, willing and able to give it another shot.

Hope to see you down the trail. ■

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