

MOVING FORWARD, GIVING BACK: THE WYOMING WOMEN'S ANTELOPE HUNT



For years, 36-year-old Jaclyn Carder and her husband loved to hunt together. “He was my guide,” she recalls. “Until I met him, I had never shot a gun or spent any time in the outdoors. He taught me everything that I know about the outdoors and the conservation of the land and animals.” Hunting trips were deeply important for the couple and many more were planned for the future.

But in January of 2021, Jaclyn’s husband passed away unexpectedly. With this seismic change in her life came a shift in what hunting meant to Jaclyn. It was, of course, a way to remember her late husband. But it also signified determination and self-reliance for Jaclyn and her family. Hunting was a way to show her daughters that she could successfully harvest an animal for their family table, without the help of their late father.

At this year’s Wyoming Women’s Antelope Hunt, Jaclyn was recognized as the Theodore Roosevelt

Sportswoman, an award sponsored by the Boone and Crockett Club. Named after the founder of the Club and the “father of American conservation,” this recognition is bestowed each year on the hunter who shows exceptional fortitude—whose adventurous spirit is unhampered even when the odds are against them.

This kind of grit and resilience is exactly what hunting meant to Jaclyn, and what made her a perfect mentor for Roya Platsis, a 39-year-old-from California. This was Roya’s second Wyoming Women’s Antelope Hunt, and

Every year at the hunt, Fred Williams, Wyoming state director for the First Hunt Foundation, keeps busy guiding hunters and running a skills course to orient newer hunters.

Fred Williams in the field with one of the participants.

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her first time to harvest. And it was Jaclyn's first opportunity to use everything she had learned with her husband to help another hunter. She remembers, "My partner got her doe in the early afternoon. I got to watch someone that has never killed a big game animal take one. Her look of pure joy is what made my hunt."

Mentorship like this is at the heart of the hunt, which is the flagship annual event of the Wyoming Women's Foundation. Every year, more than 40 women from all over the country gather near Buffalo, Wyoming, at the Ranch at Ucross to experience camaraderie and mentorship as hunters. They leave having made lifelong connections with future hunting partners and mentors.

This kind of support opens new opportunities for the hunters. Before the event, 25 percent of participants who provided feedback reported struggling to hunt due to a lack of mentorship. Afterward, 95 percent reported feeling like they either provided or received mentoring. Even more tellingly, a full 100 percent said they had learned something they can use to give back to their families and communities.

Giving back extends beyond mentorship. Hunters have the opportunity to donate their harvest to Food from the Field. This program, part of Wyoming First Lady Jennie Gordon's Wyoming Hunger Initiative, provides nutritious, ethically-harvested meat for people and communities who need

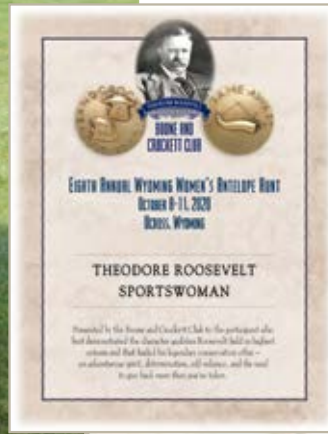


ABOVE: Jaclyn Carder with her antelope harvest. **LEFT:** Sisters of the Sage alumni together to continue the camaraderie.





ABOVE: Mentor Jaclyn Carder (left) with mentee Roya Platsis (right) and her very first harvest. **TOP RIGHT:** Jaclyn received the 2021 Theodore Roosevelt Sportswoman recognition with her hunting partner Roya. **RIGHT:** The 2020 Theodore Roosevelt Sportswoman recipient, Ella Murray, poses with her harvest, guide, and mentors.



For nine years the Boone and Crockett Club has sponsored the Theodore Roosevelt Sportswoman Award. This award is presented to the participant who best demonstrated the character qualities Roosevelt held in highest esteem and that fueled his legendary conservation ethic—an adventurous spirit, determination, self-reliance, and the need to give back more than you've taken.



it most across the state.

Many hunters choose to give back by returning to volunteer. After being crowned Ms. Wheelchair USA in 2013, Ashlee Lundvall was invited to hunt as a special guest. An advocate for making hunting accessible for all (and recently appointed as a Wyoming Game and Fish Commissioner), she has returned to support the hunt every year. When a recent attendee, herself using a wheelchair, needed support, Ashlee went along as her mentor. This hunter went on to be recognized as the Theodore Roosevelt Sportswoman in 2020.

Another regular mentor has used her experience to help hunters outside of the hunt. Caitlin Youngquist has been a volunteer and hunting mentor since the hunt began in 2013. This year, she shadowed a guide, and she is now working toward licensure as a hunting guide. Passionate about outdoor education, Caitlin helps coordinate a hunt called Sisters of the Sage, a hunt for Wyoming Women's Antelope Hunt alumni.

And it is not just participants who use their skills to give back. We have a committed group of guides who are integral to helping make the hunt a success. Fred Williams, Wyoming state director for

the First Hunt Foundation, serves on the hunt planning committee and helped develop the Boone and Crockett honor received by Jaclyn. Every year at the hunt, he keeps busy guiding hunters and running a skills course to orient newer hunters.

Jaclyn's guide, Fritz Bates, holds an especially important place in her memory. "Standing on top of what Fritz called a blip—or a mountain, to this Kansas girl—I learned that I needed to be there. I needed this time and this hunt to find out that hunting is more about helping other people hunt or teaching them land conservation. It was something that my husband taught me and something I want to continue for him. I am incredibly proud of being a Sister of the Sage, and that I got to share my story with these amazing women." ■



To learn more about the Wyoming Women's Antelope Hunt, visit www.wyomingwomensantelopehunt.org

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