

## Arkansas Duck Hunting With A Side Of Ice (Part 2 of 2)

### Wanderings from the Woods & Water

by Jay Bicknell

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appreciated we come down in such severe weather. He hated we didn't kill more ducks and he wanted to give us two free days next season." We can't wait to go back next season.

We hit the road around 3 p.m. headed home! The roads were still very icy for about 50 miles, give or take. The trip back was laughter filled. I was definitely a distracted driver on the trip back; when you've got tears in your eyes from laughing so hard. The entire Arkansas trip was a blast! I thank God I got to share this experience with some close friends! It wasn't about the number of ducks we killed, but the memories we made. I wouldn't change a thing about my first trip to Arkansas!

If you ever consider duck hunting Arkansas; then, I highly recommend Prairie Sky Outfitters [www.prairieskyguideservice.com](http://www.prairieskyguideservice.com). Give Jeff Burris the owner a call at 501-529-7080. The guys at Prairie Sky work hard to make sure you have a great hunt. We did find out that three days after we left, the weather warmed up, and they started shooting limits again.

Special thanks to my wife for allowing me to leave when we've got five crazy kids at home. I would like to thank my mom for helping my wife with the five crazy kids while I was in Arkansas. A special thanks to Marlene Webb for making the AWESOME school peanut butter sandwiches for the trip.

Until next week, get out and enjoy God's creation!



**Birding BITS** BY Cindy Brook  
*Birding by Season*  
 Winter was filled with migrating sparrows, catbirds, goldfinches and robins. Spring was filled with cowbirds, wrens, titmice and woodpeckers. Babies, babies everywhere in the summer. Fall has red-winged blackbirds, crows and blue jays. My yard is always filled, and so is my heart. Happy New Year, everyone!

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I would like to wish everyone a Merry Christmas, and, remember, Jesus is the reason for the season. You are reading Part 2 of "Arkansas Duck Hunting with a Side of Ice."

The guides got the water open, and the ducks were starting to fly. The years of dreaming about going to Arkansas to duck hunt, the year of planning our trip, and the nervous excitement leading up to the hunt; I was finally in the blind with four of my closest friends in the world, Matthew Plowman, Kelby Browning, and Mike Tipton. Matthew and Kelby are like sons to me, and Mike is like a brother. I was finally in Arkansas, the duck capital of the world!!

We were hunting Arkansas! It wasn't too long when a couple of green wing teal hooked over our left shoulder. We opened up with two teal down on the water. It's hard to put in words the amount of ducks and geese we saw our first day in the blind. The only problem was, the thousands of ducks we saw were high flyers. They were booging it on south below the freeze line. We ended the hunt with a mixed bag of 13. We shot teal, shovelers, gadwall, and mallards.

We had high expectations for the next morning's hunt.

I think we had more hope than the guides did for the next morning! We got back to lodge for one heck of a feed. We ate some of the best grilled duck I have ever eaten! Then, after dinner, we strategized the game plan for the next morning. We were ready to shoot more ducks!

The next morning came early, about 4 a.m. early. We got to the blind with high expectations. The sun started rising on a warm 23 degree morning. The ducks were a little slow to start flying, but when they did, it was some great action. I thought we might have a chance to kill four limits. It didn't seem to take long and we had killed 16 or so, and that's when it ended. The ducks stopped flying. We did have a Bald Eagle swoop down about 30 yards from us and pick up one of the dead ducks! It was AWESOME to see! We didn't see much of nothing for a couple of hours. Our guide said that he hadn't seen it this slow in a while. We decided to pull the plug around 1 p.m. We ended up with a two-day total of 30 ducks. We even got a hen pintail.

We got back to lodge, ate, and got packed up. We were getting ready to tell the guide to go ahead and book us for next year. Before we could get it out, the guide said, "He

## No Better Time For Gun Maintenance

The modern gun deer season in Kentucky ended weeks ago and the late muzzleloader season closes this weekend.

The holidays are a good time to check one item off your to-do list: ensuring your rifle is clean and in tip-top shape for the next hunting season.

"If you want your rifle to last longer, the best way to do that is to keep it from getting rusty," said Bill Balda, an expert marksman and the Hunter Education Supervisor for the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources. "The best way to keep it from getting rusty is to clean and lubricate it. As a result, you get to know your rifle better and you know it's in safe working condition."

A well-maintained rifle can last generations and will perform better over time. Neglecting routine maintenance can lead to a buildup of gunpowder residue and metal fouling.

"The simplest way to unload a muzzleloader is to fire it into a safe backstop. But the residue from burnt black powder and even its substitutes is extremely corrosive," said Mark Marraccini, Kentucky Fish and Wildlife spokesman and a muzzleloader craftsman. "If you leave that inside the barrel for very long it would be just like dipping any piece of steel into corrosive acid or salt. It's going to start etching its way into the steel immediately."

Marraccini warns against creating pits in the barrel. "They will affect accuracy later and could make your muzzleloader unsafe," he said.

Before undertaking any cleaning routine, first make sure the rifle is not loaded.

For centerfire rifles, Balda suggests cleaning the barrel with patches wet with gun cleaner first, then, a wet brush for five to 10 passes. After the initial cleaning, continue to use dry patches until they come out clean. A light coat of oil then can be applied in the bore.

"If you want to remove copper buildup after shooting 500 to 1,000 rounds, there are chemical cleaners that can be used. I use a bore paste, which is like a jeweler's paste. It has grit in it that is harder than copper but not hard enough to score the steel of the barrel," Balda said. "Most liquid cleaners have ammonia in them. When you run that patch through and take it out and it has blue on it that means you have copper in

the barrel. I would first brush it out and then go ahead and patch it dry. Then, put bore paste on another patch and scrub it in there. You can go back and forth, particularly at the throat, seven or eight times."

Balda recommends placing a piece of wood on the end of the barrel to prevent the cleaning rod from coming out.

"When you pull that out, that paste is going to look black no matter what," he said. "Then check it with a wet patch. If the wet patch is blue, there still is copper present. Then, you have to keep doing it. Even if you only get half the copper out of it, it will still shoot better."

While you're at it, check the bedding screws. Wood stocks tend to shrink and swell with changing environmental conditions and that can loosen those screws. For pesky screws that refuse to stay tight, Balda suggests securing them with blue Loctite.

If your rifle is a bolt action, Balda suggests removing the bolt and cleaning the bolt face and the receiver inside the action with a toothbrush-style cleaning brush. Then, wipe with a light coat of oil. Wipe down the outside of the rifle and clean the lenses on the scope.

For muzzleloaders, hot soapy water effectively cuts through black powder residue and the heat from the water helps dry remaining moisture inside of the barrel after running a dry patch through it, Marraccini explained.

If you can remove the barrel, set the base of it in the water and work the cleaning rod similar to a plunger.

"When you can run a dry patch down it and it comes out entirely clean, then I like to put some natural greases on; Bore Butter is one brand of it. There are other brands out there, too," Marraccini said. "You put it on a patch and run it down there until you're satisfied that you've got a coating on the inside of the barrel."

Treat the exterior of a muzzleloader the same as you would any rifle: wipe it dry and remove any fingerprints.

"Hunters know what kind of weather they were out in," Marraccini said. "That water finds ways to get in all the cracks that you can't see. As much as you're comfortable disassembling it and cleaning it, it's good for the gun. It makes good sense to clean it and take care of it."

## Stickeler's Puzzle

**STICKELERS** (etc.)  
 by Terry Stickels

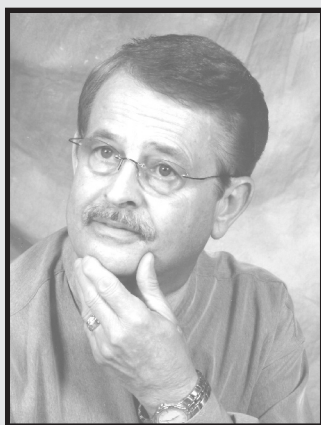
Molly's husband's father-in-law is  
 Molly's husband's brother's brother-  
 in-law and Molly's sister-in-law is  
 Molly's brother's stepmother.

This means that Molly's   ?  
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Stickeler's Answer on Page 12

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