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# ADVENTURE PRESS

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WINTER 2018 | ISSUE 12

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MAKING

SNOW  
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STOP YOU  
ANYMORE!

+ ALL-GIRLS  
COYOTE  
HUNTING  
TEAM

Shannon  
Del Curto

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AND HOW TO HUNT THEM





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# Winter 2018 contents

## 8 Cover Girl

Meet competitive  
coyote hunter  
Shannon Del Curto!

## 10 Share Your Photos

## 12 Results

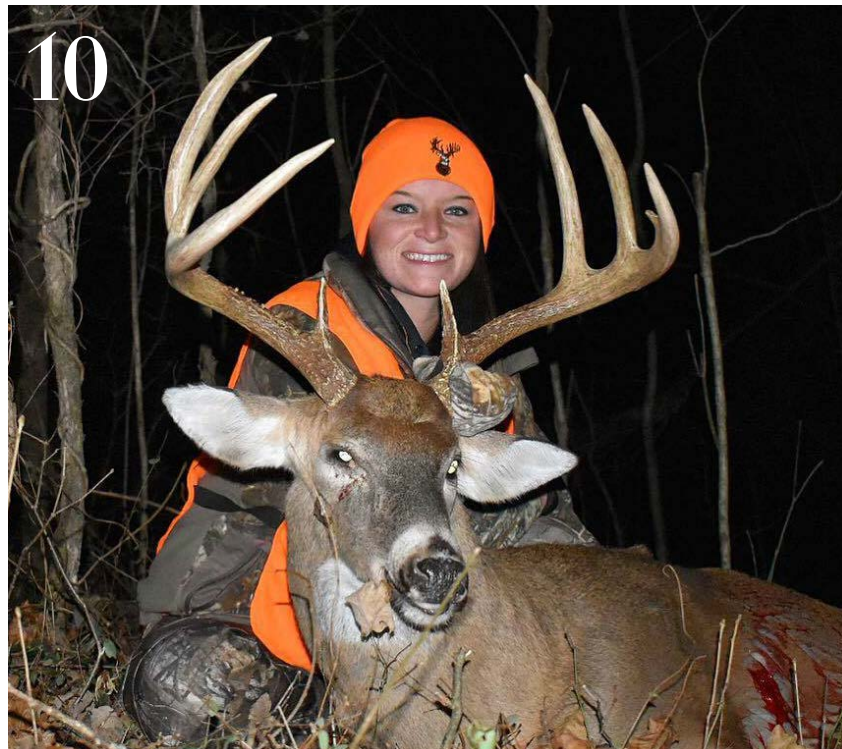
Meet the 2017  
ADVENTURESS  
of the YEAR!

## 14 Featured Photographer

Conni Mahoney

## 16 Coyote Ugly

Coyote hunting by  
Shannon Del Curto





# editor's note

## MORE TO COME FOR ADVENTURESS!

While many people often see winter as 'down time,' I've been busier than ever working on some new, exciting things to hopefully come for ADVENTURESS in the near future! And first off, I'm happy to announce I'll soon have an intern



- Katie Zeitler of Wisconsin will be helping me with some ideas and sales to fulfill her internship requirements for college.

Winter months are also a big time for trade shows, and I'm excited to be hosting my own booth of both **Pretty Hunter** and ADVENTURESS at the upcoming Iowa Deer Classic, March 2-4th!

Intern Katie will be at the show all weekend, as well as our Summer 2017 Cover Girl, Amy Smith, will be at the booth on Saturday to take photos and sign flyers of her cover! If you are around, I'd love for you to stop by and say "hi" to us all!

And of course this winter, I've made some time for ice fishing! I'm very proud to announce I'm now a pro staff for **Striker Ice**, maker of the Women's Prism Jacket and Bibs that float for added safety on the ice. Ice fishing safety is such a big concern, so it means a lot being a part of a company that helps keep people safe while enjoying the sport they love. I've also joined **FishUSA** - America's Tackle Shop, so I'm excited to be sharing my fishing adventures with them now as well!

*Jennifer Pudenz*

## ADVENTURESS

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*Information and  
inspiration  
for the outdoor  
woman and  
country lifestyle*

ISSUE 12  
WINTER 2018

Founder & Editor  
JENNIFER PUDENZ

FEATURED  
PHOTOGRAPHER  
Conni Mahoney

CONTRIBUTORS  
Shannon Del Curto  
Shelly Holland  
Hannah Stonehouse-Hudson  
Nikki Boxler

## on the cover



Cover featuring  
Shannon Del Curto.  
Check out her interesting  
bio on page 8!



# Winter 2018 contents



30

## 30 How to Read a Vexilar

And other Flasher Fish Finders  
by Shelly Holland

## 40 Snowshoe Adventures

Don't let snow stop you from enjoying the outdoors by  
Hannah Stonehouse Hudson

## 48 A Sweet Tradition

Tapping trees and collecting sap for maple syrup  
by Nikki Boxler

## 52 Last Shot

Featured photographer:  
Conni Mahoney



40



48



# Shannon Del Curto

Growing up in the central mountains of New Mexico, 27-year-old **Shannon Del Curto**'s passion for hunting began early in her teen years when she accompanied her best friend and father on several big game hunts and harvested her first big game animal at age 15. She continues to protect these mountains and other areas as a Rangeland Specialist/Wildland Firefighter for the United States Forest Service.

Born into a ranching family where the understanding for protection of cattle from predators was taught early, by age 16, Shannon began to venture out on her own, hunting coyotes and other predators. Today, she is on the **FOXPRO** Field Staff and competitively hunts coyotes with her teammate, Rachel, making them the only all-girls team at many competitions. They have won many side pots and, most recently, placed 7th in the 2017 Southeastern Arizona Coyote Calling Championship. Shannon hopes to influence more women to enter the predator-hunting world.





# +Past Issues



<< Lots of great information in last year's winter issue, including a mountain lion hunt by Jana Waller, crow season, ice fishing, chaga winter mushrooms and more!

Did you miss the last issue of ADVENTURESS magazine?! Check it out! >>



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STEPHANIE  
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AMELIA  
FARRAR



HEIDI  
PAHNKE



BRITTANY  
JILL



A woman with blonde hair and glasses, wearing an orange cap with a grouse logo and the text 'CHEQUAMEGON Grouse Gang', a dark green vest over a camouflage shirt, and tan pants, is smiling. She is holding a double-barrel shotgun across her body and a grouse in her left hand. A black dog with floppy ears is sitting next to her, looking at the camera. The background is a field of tall grass and brush.

# 2017 ADVENTURESS OF THE YEAR

*Brenda Maier*  
of Wisconsin



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Indiana



LACEY KASTERN  
Wisconsin



ERIKA FORSYTHE  
Oregon



LEAH EHRET  
Minnesota



BROOKE WRIGHT  
Colorado

## Individual Category Winners



### HUNT.

BEKA GARRIS  
Ohio



### FISH.

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Ontario, Canada



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WINTER







**Conni Mahoney**

Featured photographer

**BULL & BEAUTY**

*A majestic elk in newly fallen snow from Colorado's Rocky Mountains.*

See more of Conni's outdoor photography on **Instagram!**



# COYOTE UGLY

A person wearing camouflage clothing and a black cap stands in a field of tall, dry grass. They are holding a long-barreled rifle over their shoulder and a pink rope in their hand. The rope is attached to a dead coyote lying on the ground. The background shows a vast, open landscape with distant mountains under a clear blue sky.

*The ugly truth  
about coyotes and  
how to hunt them*

**By Shannon Del Curto**





Shannon Del Curto  
ready in a 'stand'  
or predator setup.

To be able to outsmart and trick one of North America's top predators is victory in itself. The coyote will prey or scavenge on just about anything, and since they are not necessarily the prey of other animals, management is needed by the ultimate predator: humans. Coyotes are found in almost every type of environment and have superb adaptability to their surroundings. They will strive and survive anywhere they can, making their way into ranches and neighborhoods, becoming very comfortable in areas where they can do quite a bit of damage.

Because of this, many areas allow coyotes to be hunted all year and without a bag limit. Coyote hunting is a growing interest as it helps with the practice of aiming, shooting quick, yardage, stalking and calling, and it is a great way to keep your rifle skills tuned in year-round or in the off season of big game hunts.

In the predator world, a 'stand' means the setup you make in an area to call predators.

You sit the stand and turn on that call and it seems as nothing is going to happen. But when something does respond, it gives you an indescribable kind of rush. You have moments to make all the right moves if you are going to be able to harvest this animal - one wrong decision can forfeit your chance of harvesting the elusive coyote. When multiples come in, the rush is even more intense. They may respond as hard



## HUNT.



Shannon Del Curto, Rachel Suazo and Naomi Ortiz in the Dogzilla Best of the Best Contest in Grady, NM.

chargers coming right at you or they may be wary of what is going on and take their time coming in or hang up. Each stand and response is different and with the more time spent out calling, the better able you will be at determining where they may come from or how and what they will respond to best. Here are some tips to calling and hunting coyotes, but first, the understanding of why coyotes need to be managed.

### WHY CONTROL?

Several studies have shown that in the past few decades there has been an increase in the coyote population. And with this

increase, has been an impact on our deer population in the East, as well as our deer and antelope populations in the West. Originally, coyotes survived in the West, but have now expanded and flourished all over the United States. Coyotes are very opportunistic feeders and prey primarily on rodents, but will also consume birds, fruits, wildlife and livestock, and will scavenge any chance they can.

From a ranching perspective, coyotes can be detrimental to calving numbers. Coyotes will stay around the calving pastures and wait for their opportunity to enjoy the afterbirth from a pregnant cow. However, they will also not hesitate to attack the just-born calf



as well. Luckily, cattle are very protective of each other and will stomp a threatening coyote, if given the chance. Not only do coyotes stick around cattle, but sheep and goats are an area of concern as well. Livestock is the livelihood of a rancher and losing a single calf can be detrimental to the rancher, his operation and his family. Therefore, the management of these coyote numbers has to be done in some way because if they are allowed to produce and run in bands of higher numbers, they will gain confidence and attempt to take down larger prey.

Now for all my big game hunters who love to head to the field and see numbers of deer and antelope in the unit they are hunting, that begins with the control of predators such as coyotes. In the East, deer fawns make up more than half of a coyote's diet. In the West, coyotes will prey on deer fawns as well as antelope fawns, creating a decrease in the populations. In cities, coyotes will prey on neighborhood pets. I'm sure you have seen pictures of coyotes taking off with house cats, and I have personally had coyotes attack a family dog. Whether in the wild or in the city,



A coyote losing fur and weight from the terrible disease of mange, often seen with overpopulation. Trail camera photo courtesy of **Sally Nazer**.

they prey on whatever it is they can find.

Along with management for ranchers and for our wildlife, coyotes can be carriers of multiple diseases such as distemper, hepatitis, rabies, parvo and mange. These disease outbreaks will affect the local population, but coyotes will adapt and continue to multiply.

Mange is a common skin disease seen by predator hunters. It is a parasitic mite causing hair loss and inflammation in coyotes. They lose weight and their fur, becoming extremely sick and miserable with itching and pain, eventually causing death to the host. Studies have also shown urban area coyotes with mange are more likely to exhibit undesirable behavior toward humans and their pets. If you happen to shoot a mangy coyote, I suggest you either do not touch it and leave it lay, if it is out of the sight of public, or dig a hole and bury it. Minimize your contact with the affected animal as mange can be spread to other coyotes, as well as any canine.

No matter how hard we hunt, trap or manage them, it is very difficult to make an actual noticeable dent in the coyote population. Coyotes will survive, females adapt by producing larger litters, they may even begin to breed at younger ages, and when coyotes are taken out of an area, others from elsewhere quickly come in and recolonize that area. It is a never-ending cycle, which makes coyote hunting a necessity and why in most states it is allowed year-round with no limit. Coyote hunting is about constant learning and observation of the species and their actions.

## **CALLS**

Before heading out to the field, you want to have the right gear to do the job. You don't



FOXPRO Field Staff  
Shannon Del Curto





want to end up educating more coyotes than you are shooting. It takes the right equipment mixed with lots of practice. Not every time out is the best day of calling, but the days you have success make all the blank stands or missed opportunities worth it.

First, some form of a call is needed. I carry hand calls and mouth calls as well as an electronic call. Hand calls are fairly simple to use and there are a good variety of them out there that will give a vast amount of sounds to use to call in coyotes. Mouth calls or diaphragm calls are good to have if you can master using them since they are able to let you be hands free and allow you to do what you need to when a coyote comes in. Both these type of calls give you the ability to sound different than already recorded sound files, but they do put the target on you since you are where the sound is coming from, so minimal movement is very important.

Electronic calls are great to have and best for someone who is just beginning. Electronic calls are used with a wireless remote where you can play sounds and also be able to place the call away from where you are sitting, so the attention will be where the call is placed, rather than on you doing the calling. There are hundreds of different sounds you can upload onto these calls to be able to have a variety to choose from. I have used FOXPRO for more than 10 years now and am currently running their CS24C model. **FOXPRO** offers hand calls, mouth calls and electronic calls in a variety of price ranges, if you need somewhere to start. Some states do not allow the use of electronic calls, so be sure to check your local laws. Another brand of mouth calls I have had luck using is **Made For Killing (MFK)** Game Calls.

## COYOTE COMPETITIONS

For some predator hunters, there are competitions in quite a few areas around the United States. Social media pages are the best way to find information on these contests. There are both smaller, local contests and large contests, such as the **World Championship Coyote Calling Contest**, which is held in a different area each year (this year it was in Utah and previous to that it was in Arizona). Worlds is where predator hunters go head to head to see who will be named the World Champion Coyote Caller, and some of the biggest names in predator hunting hold this title.

These contests are sometimes in different platforms, but they will be a timed hunt. Some are one day, others two days, and the winner can be the one named with the most coyotes or possibly the biggest coyote. These contests give out money, rifles, buckles, E-callers and many other different prizes. They are a great opportunity to get out and meet fellow predator hunters.

Rules for each contest vary by area and the individuals who put them on. Some require a paper tag to write the time and date of the harvest and some require teams to place a 'block,' usually PVC pipe or wood, inside the coyote's mouth with the time and date on it as well as with a time-stamped picture taken. This is all done to help reduce the chances of anyone cheating by trying to harvest coyotes for the contest out of the set date and times.

You do not need to be a seasoned hunter, as anyone can enter these competitions. If you think you want to try hunting these, the best advice I have is to scout your areas and make sure you can get in enough stands for your limited time hunting. When making calling sequences for contests, I like to keep them a little shorter at about 8 to 12 minutes, that way I am able to get more set ups made in the time I am given to hunt.





## GUNS & AMMO

The next thing you need is a rifle with a good scope - the most popular calibers are 22-250, .223, .243 and .204, though you can use just about any caliber rifle. A lighter bullet accommodates for a flatter trajectory - ideally you want a small entrance hole and for the bullet to expand and do the damage inside the body cavity without an exit wound. I am currently using a Specialized Dynamics 6.5 Grendel in an AR platform. It is a flat-shooting and hard-hitting round great for coyote hunting.

Heavier barrels give you more stability, but also more weight to carry from stand to stand. The most important thing when it comes to your rifle is that you become comfortable with it. Practice guessing yardages and taking

shots, practice from the position you will be shooting on stand and practice shooting at smaller targets since the vitals of a coyote are quite small. A bad shot on a coyote can cost you as they have the will to survive and can go hundreds of yards without a leg or from a gut shot. You do not need a high magnification on your rifle scope - leave it turned down when calling and if one hangs up at a couple hundred yards, you will have the time to turn up your magnification to take the shot.

Along with your distance-shooting rifle, a shotgun can come in handy, preferably a 12-gauge with 3-inch shells. You can hunt coyotes with one or the other, but if you are able to, I suggest carrying both your rifle and shotgun to stand. There have been too many



times I have not taken one or the other and it has lost me some coyotes. Pellet size is personal preference: a 00 buck will give you larger pellets, but less amount in your target; a 4 shot will be smaller pellets, but more on your target. (Some states may have laws you have to use a certain shotgun load or smaller for coyotes.)

## OTHER GEAR

A good set of shooting sticks is a must-have. There are a variety of sticks available, such as *Bog-Pods*, *Swagger Bipods* and *Night Goggles* offers the Night Stalker tripod with the Kopfjager “Reaper Grip” Rest, which is the most sturdy set of sticks I have seen. Shooting sticks are important so you are able to be steady on your shots and to avoid taking any shots freehanded. Along with the bipods, a small chair is not needed, but can be used to make those longer duration stands more comfortable.

Another thing you can add to your gear is a decoy; most common is something resembling a rabbit or some sort of prey that moves to take the coyote’s attention, allowing you to position yourself for the shot. Coyote decoys are also used to help ease a coyote into your call. Although when using decoys, there is always a time and place for them. Coyote decoys are best in the breeding months and prey decoys are great early season, but sometimes in high-pressured areas, coyotes become more educated to these contraptions and may spook.

The last piece of gear that is very important is your camouflage. A coyote relies on its eyesight and can detect slight movement from far out, but that doesn’t mean you have to spend tons of money on clothing. Neutral colors work just fine as long as you are able to break up your silhouette and blend in well



enough with your surroundings. I use a variety of different brands of camo for different areas I hunt. A lot of it is personal preference to what you think conceals you best. It’s also a good idea to wear a facemask and pair of gloves.

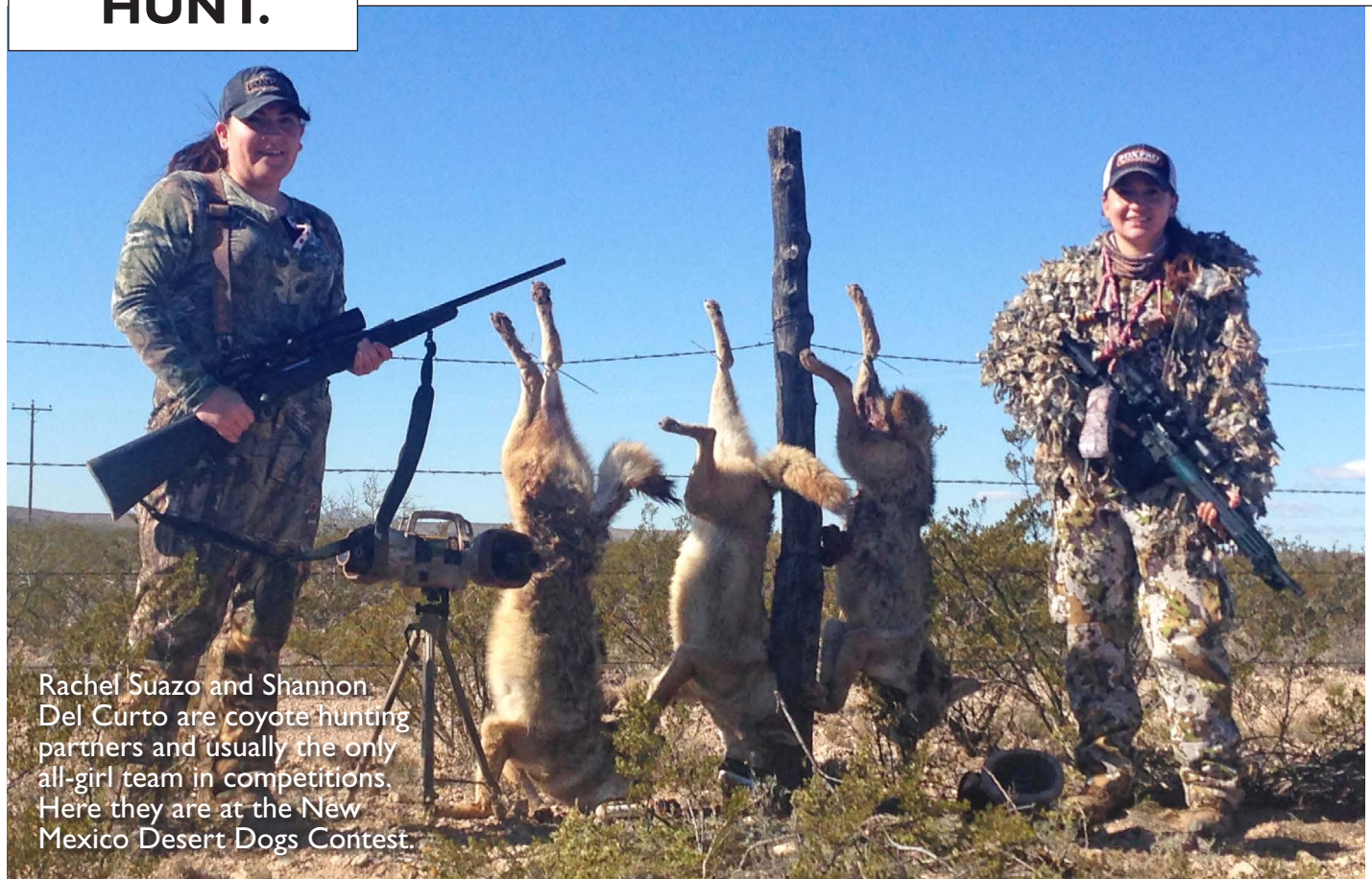
Coyotes blend well in lots of different terrain, although binoculars are not necessary, they can help distinguish a coyote coming from far or one that has hung up in the distance. I personally do not take binoculars on stand; to me it is unnecessary weight to haul when your rifle scope can double as binoculars, if needed.

## THE HUNT

Even though coyote hunting is usually allowed year-round, the winter months are the best for calling when there is snow on the ground. At this time, coyotes are easier to see, and with a slight breeze, the sound carries much further. However, that doesn’t mean the



## HUNT.



Rachel Suazo and Shannon Del Curto are coyote hunting partners and usually the only all-girl team in competitions. Here they are at the New Mexico Desert Dogs Contest.

only time to call is with snow, as coyotes can be called in a variety of weather conditions. Although I would say during a heavy rain is the least desirable condition to hunt coyotes, before a storm is great or after a long storm can be even better. Keep in mind this sport varies with each stand, each coyote and each location.

First thing first, you have to call where there are coyotes. Put some miles on driving, looking for any tracks, scat and, most importantly, don't hesitate to talk with landowners. See where they have been seeing activity and ask to get permission to hunt their land. Look for areas that hold the prey of a coyote, such as rabbits and rodents.

Something that is easier to find is cattle - find cows and you have found coyotes. As previously mentioned, during calving the afterbirth is very desirable to coyotes, plus they will also eat the droppings of calves

because they contain the milk of the mother. Also, in winter pastures where ranchers may be feeding, coyotes will eat the feed and rodents hidden in the hay bales.

Another idea is to go out at night and play some locator howls or sirens and see what responds. Mark that on a GPS, and then call a stand nearby that area the next day. Some states do allow you to hunt coyotes at night.

Once you have located coyotes, it is time to determine your approach on how you are going to set up to call them. This will vary on the weather, terrain and vegetation you are hunting. The stand is very important - it will make or break your opportunity at getting a shot. Get where they can't see you, hear you or smell you. You also want to make sure where you plan to set up allows you to hide your vehicle to where an incoming coyote cannot see it or catch a glare from it.



When approaching the area you intend to call, be stealthy. Don't slam truck doors, talk loud, break branches or stomp when walking. If you have to hit a skyline, be quick, but if possible, side-hill-it into your stand so you can sneak in undetected. When placing a call, try to minimize your track scent by one way to the call and one way back to where you are going to sit. Eliminate the amount of scent around the stand by not walking through where coyotes may cross when coming to the call.

If using hand calls, just be sure to sit with the wind in your face, or a crosswind, and that you are well camouflaged. With electronic callers, I prefer to sit a crosswind with the call about 50 yards upwind from me as coyotes depend on their nose, and if they get downwind of you, they are out of there. Not all coyotes will circle downwind, but they may if they have been called to before or want to catch a whiff of what they may be eating for dinner. When sitting 50 yards or so downwind, ideally the coyote should come into a good area for you to get a shot, but every coyote reacts different. If you have a partner, just be sure to have one of you sitting where you can see the downwind side



and place the other closer to the call or where you see the best shot opportunities happening.

When it comes to sitting, I like to sit in the shade side of bushes or trees, but that is not always possible with the wind direction, so just be sure you have a background to break up your silhouette. Also make sure there is nothing on you or your rifle that may glare in the sun, as a coyote can see that from hundreds of yards out and bust you. If possible, have the sun at your back so any incoming coyotes will have the sun in their eyes, and with the sun shining on the coyotes coat, it will help you to better see them coming. The sun in your face makes you shoot into the sun and stick out to the coyotes rather than vice versa. Overcast days are great and then the sun is not a factor. Last thing when setting up is be sure if you need to turn left or right with your rifle and sticks that the area in front of you is clear enough to be able to make that quick move.

## TIMING

Now let's talk stand length and sounds. I suggest about 15 to 20 minutes, but sometimes up to 30 minutes. Be sure you are ready when the call turns on - no fidgeting. I have had coyotes, and even bobcats, show up within the first few seconds of turning the call on, and if I was still trying to get my rifle set or facemask on, I wouldn't have gotten the shot. If there are no signs of something coming in, then you can cut the stand time shorter. Watch for birds coming to your call, simply for the reason coyotes will sometimes follow crows and hawks into a call, so birds can be an identifier of something better to come.

The sounds played can vary widely with type and sequence, as you never know what may trigger a coyote's response. A rule of





Rachel Suazo and Shannon Del Curto with Shannon's 11-year-old niece, Emilie, at the Ambush 360 Contest in Farmington, NM.

thumb I usually follow is to hit a sound in each area of instincts: parental, territorial and predatory. So with that, a pup distress for the parental, maybe some lone howls or other vocals as territorial and some type of prey distress to trigger their predatory instincts. You want to speak their language. With the experience and observation of their behavior will come the ability to recognize or mimic the different vocalizations of coyotes, what they all mean and when to use them.

Of course if you are in an area coyotes are not pressured, they are much easier to call in. When calling high-pressure areas, they have heard all the common sounds so try something different, such as a bird distress or mouse, rather than a rabbit. A prey distress in the fall may have more success than in the spring, as

in the fall you are most likely calling younger coyotes from the past year's breeding season. Pup distress is a sound that can work all year as it provokes curiosity, but can be best in the spring when denning season begins and the paternal, maternal and territorial instincts are at their highest.

You want to capitalize on the best conditions to hunt and what time of year it is. Females go into heat beginning of January into mid- to late February, and breeding coyotes are like rutting deer, you may find them out in the open or along tree lines looking for a mate. This time of year is when vocals can be used more effectively, just be careful on which vocals you choose to not scare off any not-so-aggressive smaller coyotes.

No matter the time of the year, coyotes



are always hungry, so don't forget about your prey sounds. A typical stand I will play a prey distress, some pup distress and some vocals all adding up to my stand length with some silence mixed in there. Don't play straight 10 minutes of a rabbit screaming as realistically, a rabbit will not do that.

When playing the call, you do not need to have the volume all the way up as coyotes have much better hearing than we do and will hear the call from far away. If it is too loud and unrealistic, they will know something is up. You want to sound as real as possible - a small rodent or rabbit isn't going to be able to scream very loud - so I like to keep it at a mid-range volume.

The volume level also depends on the terrain you are calling. In the open country, you want that sound louder so it will carry, and if you are in thicker areas, the sound can be played at a lower volume. Start the call volume low at first, just in case you snuck in close to some coyotes. Then slowly begin to increase your volume as if the prey is in more pain. If you have a coyote responding to the sound you are playing, do not change the volume or the sound - just allow that coyote to come in.

If a coyote does hang up, then try a different sound, such as a vole or lip squeak, and see if that gets him moving in your direction again. If you have a coyote coming in and he is in your shot opportunity area, let out your best "bark" to try to get him to stop. If he does, it will most likely not be for long, so be sure you are quick on that trigger and have him in your scope ready to shoot. Although some hunters do it, I do not

recommend using the short, harsh three-bark series that is used to warn off other coyotes. And when walking into stands or during your calling sequence you hear those three-sharp barks, you have most likely been busted.

If you shoot at a coyote, hit or miss, don't give up calling that stand. Play some ki-yis or coyote distress sounds as sometimes there will be other coyotes in the area that may also come in. Surrounding coyotes aren't necessarily spooked by the sound of the shot - only the one shot at is most likely not going to come back.

Last thing I want to say about stands is make a lot of them - don't just make one and think you don't know what you are doing if nothing happens. Get out there, keep trying and something will give.

It may be ten blank stands before you get something to show up, but that one time it works will make those worth it.

In summary, coyotes are a predator that needs to be controlled. While calling is very popular, there are also other methods of managing coyotes, such as trapping, spot and stalk, and bait (where legal). Get out and experiment to see what works best for you and your area. Don't be afraid to try something new, and most importantly, have some fun! Also, coyote pelts can be sold to tanners, or skinned and tanned yourself, and some areas pay a stipend for harvested coyotes. And of course, if they are going to be disposed of, be sure to dispose correctly, not thrown out for the public eye to see. As hunters, we always need to respect our harvested animals.

~~~

See *Shannon Del Curto's* bio on page 8.



# *Pretty Hunter*



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er

“YOU ONLY LIVE ONCE

BUT IF YOU

*do it right*

ONCE IS ENOUGH.”

- MAE WEST

“I AIN’T AFRAID TO  
*love* A MAN,  
“I AIN’T AFRAID TO  
*shoot* HIM EITHER.”  
- ANNIE OAKLEY

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# HOW TO READ A VEXILAR AND OTHER FLASHER FISH FINDERS BY SHELLY HOLLAND

Shelly Holland  
with a black  
crappie using  
a Vexilar.







Ashley Rae of [shelovestofish.com](http://shelovestofish.com)  
using a MarCum flasher.

I see more and more women getting out on the ice these days. They've figured out what an amazing adventure it can be! It's definitely a sport that has a more even playing field with just a few key tools - a flasher fish finder being one of the best things you can bring out there on the ice. The knowledge these give about what is under the ice is priceless as an angler!

While there are several main brands out there such as **Vexilar**, **MarCum**, Humminbird and Garmin for the hard water angler, we are going to explore the Vexilar specifically as it has become such a common and well-known flasher fish finder.

## SCOUTING

Even if you have no prior knowledge of the lake you are fishing, by simply adding a water bottle to your ice fishing arsenal, your Vexilar unit can quickly tell you the water depth before you even drill a hole. In the spot you'd like to test, clear any snow off the ice large enough

for the transducer (hanging black puck) and pour a little water on the ice (so no air will get trapped in between the transducer and the ice) to get your reading. Finding your target depth (or structure) before drilling any holes can save you a lot of time and energy.

If you have a Vexilar FL28, this unit comes standard with a digital depth display, making it super easy to read your depth. However, a digital depth display can be added to any Vexilar that doesn't have it. If you don't have digital display, you have to use the range feature. For example, on a FL8, start with



## FISH.

Barb Carey with a walleye using a Vexilar.  
Photo by Hannah  
Stonehouse Hudson.



turning the range knob left to #1. This will show depth 0 to 20 feet, #2 will show depth 0 to 40 feet and #4 is 0 to 80 feet. Turning the knob right is for deeper water: #1 is 0 to 30 feet, #2 is 0 to 60 feet and #4 is 0 to 120 feet.

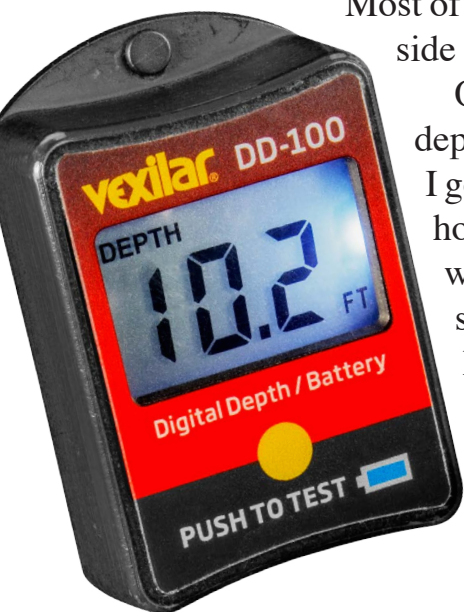
Most of my fishing is with left side range #1 or #2.

Once I have found a depth I want to fish, then I go ahead and drill a few holes. You never know where the fish will be, so drill even more holes than you're planning to use at first so you'll be able to move around when needed. The

more holes you drill, the better chance for success. Drilling many holes in the beginning also allows time for things to calm down. Drilling can startle the fish away initially – allowing time for things to settle down is more important in shallow water 12 feet and under.

### READING THE BOTTOM

If you don't know how to read a Vexilar, it seems very confusing at first. However, you'll soon realize it is extremely easy to learn once you know what to look for. Let's start with reading that depth. Read the Vexilar display circle like the direction of a clock. The lines at twelve o'clock are your starting point where your hole is and top of the water. Continuing to the right is your water column until you come to a thick band of lines, which is your





bottom reading, giving you your water depth (reading the white numbers around the circle if on 'S' shallower range setting, yellow numbers on 'D' deeper range setting).

On the display below, the top of the water column starts at the 0 then comes down the right side and ends at the green line at around 12-½-foot depth. The green, yellow and long red line indicates a soft bottom, weeds or mud. If it was a shorter, solid red line

at the 12-½-foot mark, that would mean a hard bottom of sand, gravel or rock.

If your lucky enough, you may find a transition area - this would be when one hole has a hard bottom and a nearby hole has a soft bottom. Fish have been known to like these transition areas. Walleyes might be on the hard bottom, while panfish prefer the soft bottom. Anything you would see between 0 to 12-½ feet on this display would be

This display showing a soft bottom with a water depth of 12-1/2 feet.



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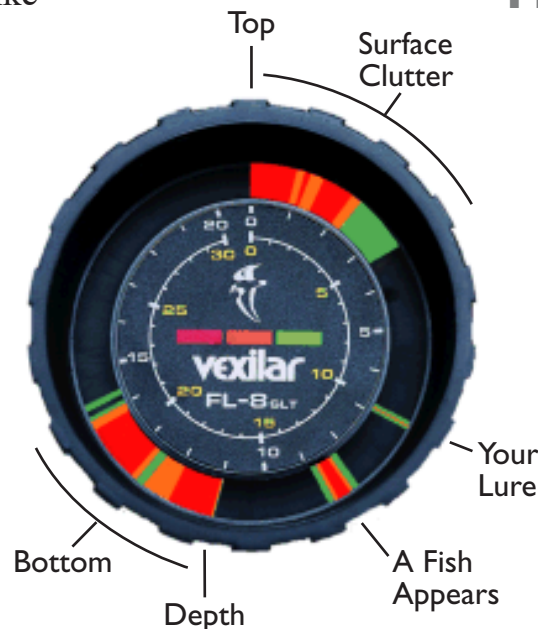


Ashley Rae of [shelovestofish.com](http://shelovestofish.com) using a MarCum flasher fish finder.

your jig or a fish. In other scenarios, if you have structure, such as an underwater tree, then branches will show up as green, yellow or red, but not move like your jig or fish.

If at any time the water column from 0 to bottom shows a bunch of lines and you can't seem to find which one is your jig, you probably have interference, especially when fishing next to other anglers with flasher fish finders. Simply push the 'Rejection' button until the problem clears. If you have a unit with a low power mode, this is great for shallow water. By

trying this, you will see a dramatic difference in reading your Vexilar.



## INTERPRETING THE SIGNAL

The strongest signal will be directly under the transducer, which is also where your jig will be. The size of the red line indicates the size of your presentation and fish.

The further away the fish is, the weaker the line becomes going from red to yellow and then green, being the weakest. While fishing, it will appear fish are coming up from the bottom, when in reality, the fish are coming



# FISH.

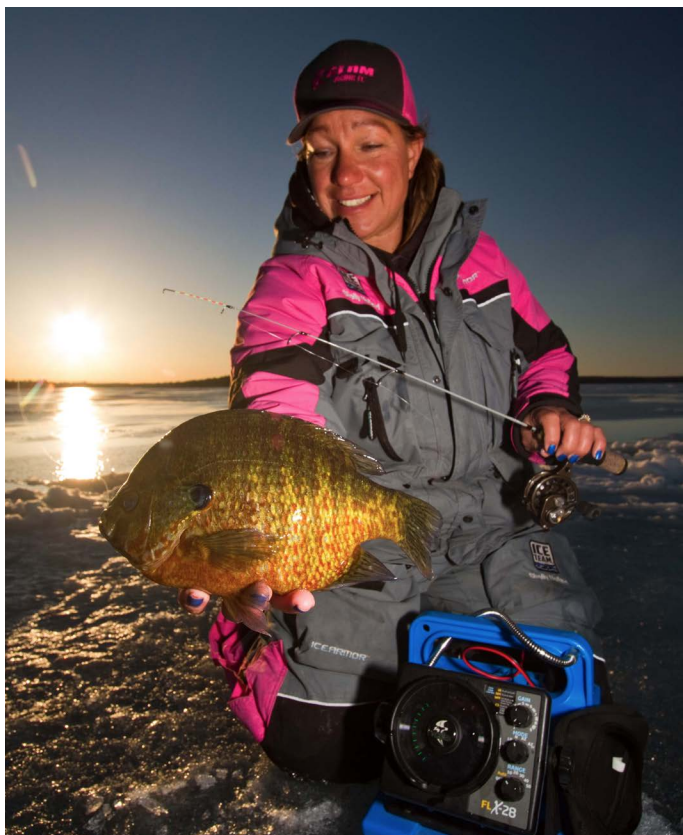


Alicia Thompson of Wisconsin with a black crappie caught with the use of a Vexilar.

in from the side. So imagine when you see a green line in your fish zone that the fish your seeing is off to the side up to 10 feet away - this would be a good time to vigorously jig your bait to entice them to bite.

## BOTTOM ZOOM

Vexilar units FL18 and all the FL20 models offer split screen bottom zoom. This is a great feature to have. When applied, it splits the screen in half, left side being the zoomed-in side, right side the normal water column. The left zoomed-in side will magnify the bottom 6 or 12 feet, whichever you set it to, giving you a higher definition up to ¼-inch target ID on the FL28. Bottom



### SHELLY ON ICE-DUCERS:

For ice-ducers, I like the Pro View 9 because it works well in deep and shallow water. The Vexilar 12-degree ice-ducer is also one I would use because again it works well in 30 feet and under; you would simply turn your gain up if fishing deeper. The 19-degree ice-ducer is specifically for shallow water.



zoom is not meant for shallow water. Once you have used this feature and see first hand its benefits, you will always want to use it when applicable (deeper water).

While the FL28 is the top of the line model priced higher with all the bells and whistles, Vexilar has many different options in a range of prices. If you're newer to ice fishing or new to using a flasher fish finder, the FL8 is a great unit to start with. The fact that you can read what's below the ice, see if there are fish down there and if there coming to your jig is really what its all about.

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*Shelly Holland of Minnesota is a professional angler and regular seminar speaker who has been promoting ice fishing and teaching others how to fish for years. She represents Vexilar, Ice Team, Clam Outdoors and Mr. Heater, as well as is a part of the Women Ice Angler Project, a community recognizing and generating awareness for women anglers in the ice fishing industry.*

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## *Don't let snow stop you from enjoying the outdoors*

**By Hannah Stonehouse Hudson**

**H**ave you ever wanted to head deep into the woods on a beautiful winter day? You've been stuck inside for what seems like weeks, the sun is shining, there are sheds to be found, pine canopies to explore and it's finally above zero. But you get to the woods and there is about 4 feet of snow on your favorite trail. That makes it difficult to go exploring...

Or you just want to keep your running routine interesting in the wintertime. Pavement is scary when you are in the northern climates. Ice can cause injuries, and salt ruins your shoes.





Snowshoes are the answer you are seeking. Winter adventures out in the woods - or on packed snow-covered trails - bring new fun in the dead of winter. Our brains will thank us for the outdoor time.

I carry snowshoes with me everywhere I go. They are a permanent staple in the trunk of my car, and if I am in need of a quick jaunt in the silence of the woods to clear my head, I strap them on and go. Sometimes I go for deep trails in the woods - sometimes I go for packed running trails.

This is also a great activity to share with friends, family and to get kids outdoors on nice winter days! The following tips will help you get started:

## SNOWSHOES

Head to a sports store that has snowshoes, and first, look for snowshoes that are designed for your body. While not all snowshoes come in men's and women's specific versions, a women's specific snowshoe should include a narrower frame shape to accommodate a woman's more narrow stance, as well as a binding more fitted for a women's boot shape.

You'll also want to select a snowshoe that is the right size for your weight. Having a snowshoe that is too small will cause you to sink too deep into soft snow. A snowshoe that is too large will be too heavy and clunky for you. Look at the product hangtag, their website or ask a shop employee to learn what



is the best size for your weight. And if you'll be backpacking or carrying gear, don't forget to plan that weight as well!

Next, determine what kind of activities you will be using them for. Some brands and types are for running, others for mountaineering, there's very traditional wooden ones and some are for general use. I do a lot of different activities in my snowshoes. I run on trails and hike in 4 feet of snow in them, and I only want to carry one pair, so I chose a general use pair.

## OTHER GEAR

Once you have your snowshoes chosen, add a pair of gaiters and poles to your

purchase. You'll want these for deeper snow. Gaiters are an extra piece of material that strap around your ankle and lower leg to keep snow and water out of your boots and shoes so you can stay dry. They vary in size and shape depending on both gender and intended use.

Snowshoe poles help stabilize the upper body, establishing a rhythm to your walk or hike, and improving your balance on difficult terrain. Using poles also reduces stress on your knees, ankles and feet, as well as includes upper-body movement for more of a full-body workout.

The poles usually come with adjustable sections for easy carrying and to make quick

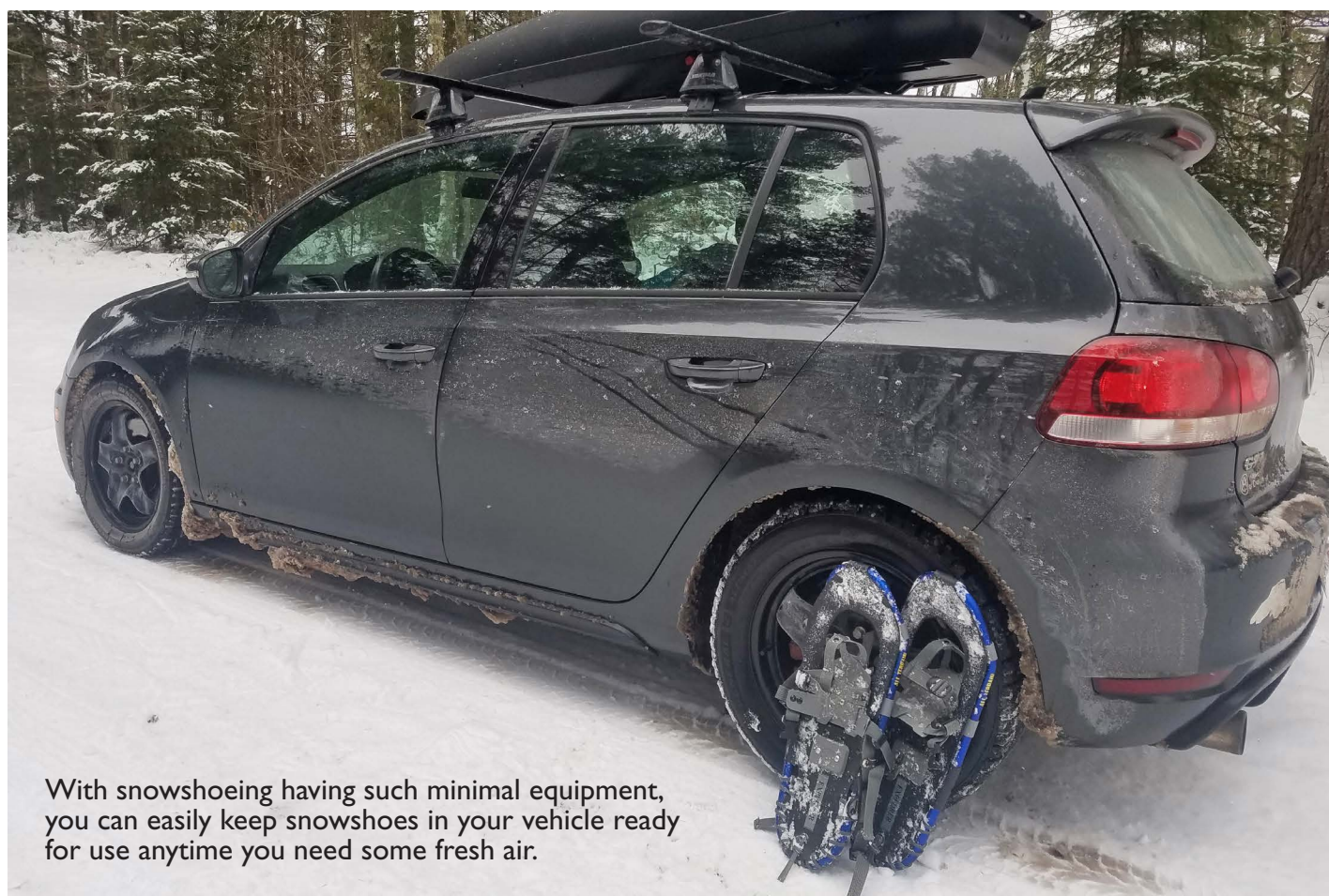




**EXPLORE.**







With snowshoeing having such minimal equipment, you can easily keep snowshoes in your vehicle ready for use anytime you need some fresh air.

changes for different terrain, such as shortening the length for steeper terrain in front of you, lengthening the pole for descending terrain or having different lengths for each pole when walking side-hills with the downhill pole longer. To size your snowshoe poles, hold the pole upside down (hand under the basket) and adjust the length so the handle touches the ground with your elbow at a right angle.

While there are higher-end, pricier options you can choose to spend on if you'd like, you don't have to spend a lot of money to start snowshoeing and these should last you for years. You can find snowshoes for less than \$100 and gaiters and poles as low as \$15-20 each. There are also some kit options that come with all three together.

After those have been purchased, pick

what shoes or boots you'd like to go with them. Waterproof boots of any sort will work with gaiters for big snow, and a simple pair of running shoes without gaiters will work for packed snow trail runs.

## CLOTHING

Keep in mind when you are recreating outdoors, your clothes should allow you to move freely and comfortably. If you get sweaty, your clothing should wick the moisture away from your body to keep you dry. Wool and synthetic materials (such as polypropylene) are the best to use for the outdoors. Cotton absorbs moisture from your body and dries slowly.

Layers are the best way to keep you the most comfortable in the outdoors in the winter. This gives you the ability to add or remove





layers as needed in changing conditions. When needed, have a base layer of mid-weight long underwear top and bottoms, as well as warm socks, followed by an insulation layer such as a fleece jacket or wool sweater and fleece pants, and then an outer layer of a waterproof/breathable jacket or parka and pants, plus a hat and gloves. This will keep you warm and dry from the inside, and protected from the outside.

Now find a trail, strap the snowshoes on and GO! It's seriously that simple. You'll now be able to go deep into the woods to see the beauty of the woods in winter, and if you are a runner, you'll be able to avoid ice and salt. Your run will be way more scenic as well, I'm sure.

## AFTERCARE

Taking care of snowshoeing equipment is quick and simple, but important to possibly prevent the development of rust and add to the longevity of your gear. All that's needed is to

wipe your snowshoes off to dry after use and then store in a cool, dry place. You can store by hanging your snowshoes on a wall or in a snowshoe-storing bag.

By the way, if you are a competitive person, there are snowshoe running races! Just Google "*snowshoe racing*" and you will find a whole list of 5Ks, 10Ks, and even a half marathon. Perfect for keeping fit in winter.

Snowshoeing may seem like an exotic thing that you would not do regularly, but once you discover it, you will be addicted. It's easy to start doing, the equipment is light and portable, and it is excellent for mental health in winter. Enjoy!

~~~

*Hannah Stonehouse Hudson of Wisconsin is a photographer, writer, speaker and outdoor enthusiast. Follow her and her adventures on Facebook @HannahStonehouseHudson.*



Include a friend!  
Ruth Sims and  
Stella Miller  
enjoying some  
fresh air and a  
winter hike by  
snowshoeing  
together.





LIVE.



# A SWEET FAMILY TRADITION

*Tapping tree and collecting sap for maple syrup*

**By Nikki Boxler**

**O**n a frigid winter morning, Dad and I drive down a snow-covered road in his muddy pickup, and I can see the steam rising from the sugar shanty off in the distance. I crack my window to catch a whiff of the sweet aroma of boiling sap mixed with the chilly winter air.

As the sweet scent floods through the truck window, so do the memories.

As a kid growing up in a small-town farming community, I spent my summers on a row crop tractor helping Dad and Grandpa with the fields as well as tending to any and all other farm duties they could unload on me. Once the temperatures dropped and the snow



started to fall, it was time to start helping tap trees and run lines for maple syrup. I remember layering on as many winter clothes as I could functionally fit before walking out the door looking like an upright starfish on snowshoes! Dad always comically warned I dressed too warm for what lay ahead, in which case, he was almost always right.

On our way to the woods, a stop at the local gas station for proper “nourishment” was always a must. My siblings and I loaded up on our favorite candy bars and sodas, which Dad would remind us this was our payment for labor in the woods - cheap labor to say the least!

The rest of the day was spent trudging through snow, carrying a drill and hammer to tap the trees and repair lines. Maple syrup production has changed drastically over the years to become a now more efficient process, as is the case with any manually intensive

line of work. However, “efficient” and “easy” are two words that should not be used interchangeably!

First off, most people aren’t aware of just how much sap is required to produce a gallon of maple syrup. It takes around 40 gallons of sap (often times a bit more) to make one gallon of maple syrup! So for us to hit our set numbers for the season, it requires a year-round effort of running new lines, replacing old or damaged lines, cleaning and making changes to current equipment, and acquiring new equipment.

## **TREE, SAP AND SYRUP**

Now let’s discuss what sap is and how we turn it into the delicious end product that is maple syrup. Sap is a clear, watery substance containing dissolved sugars and minerals that comes from the vascular tissue of a plant.



Trees must be tapped to collect sap and lines run the sap to the sugarhouse.



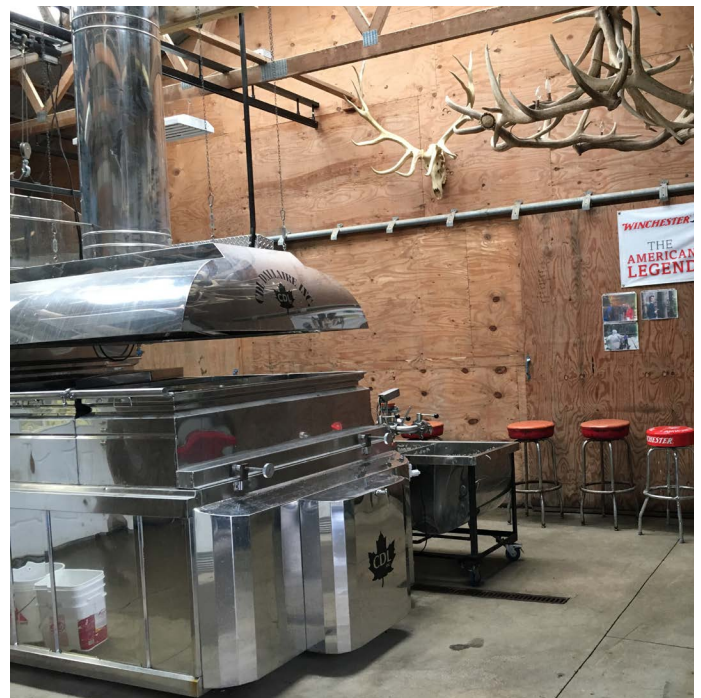
**LIVE.**



During the warm-weather growing season, plants make sugar through their leaves, which is then stored as starch in the root tissues during the winter months. As spring approaches and the temperatures begin to change, the starch is turned back into sugar, which leads to the formation of sap.

Trees usually get tapped around February when a pattern of freezing and thawing temperatures occur. Typically, weather patterns for this time of the year consist of freezing temperatures during the night followed by warmer temperatures during the day, which causes the sap to “run.” To collect the running sap, trees must be tapped – this is done by drilling a hole into the tree and then gently tapping a spout into the freshly drilled hole. Each tree is tapped conservatively resulting in

A look at a sugarhouse for collecting sap and equipment used to make maple syrup these days.







no harm to the tree. Think of it as a person donating blood!

Once a tree is tapped, the sap is collected using vacuum-pumped tubing, which transports the sap to a gathering tank or directly to the sugarhouse. When my family first began making maple syrup, they used wooden spouts and sap buckets. The sap buckets were gathered by hand and dumped into a gathering tank before being transported by a horse-drawn sled back to the sugarhouse.

Once in the sugarhouse, the sap goes through several processes before turning into syrup. First, the sap is put through what is called a RO Machine, which uses the process of reverse osmosis to remove some of the water. Afterward, the sap is boiled to evaporate the rest of the water. As the water evaporates, the sap thickens and the previously dissolved sugars caramelize and the sap begins to take

on the form of thick syrup. The newly formed syrup is then filtered and sealed until it is ready to enjoy.

Pure maple syrup can be boiled down even further to produce several other maple products, such as maple cream, maple candy, granulated sugar, etc. If you or your family are ever looking to see it first-hand, local maple syrup farms usually schedule events for the public to come and tour facilities and experience first-hand the work that goes into each delicious drop!

~~~

***Nikki Boxler** grew up on one of the largest dairy farms in Western New York and continues to reside there today. It is this pristine setting that shaped her love for the outdoors. Now Nikki is featured as one of the hosts on the digital series *Winchester Life*. See more of Nikki at [nikkiboxler.com](http://nikkiboxler.com).*





+Last Shot





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TRANSFORMATION

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way for spring*

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