

MAKING A TURKEY SPUR NECKLACE

# ADVENTURE

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SPRING 2015

BLUEGILLS

WHEN THE  
SPAWN IS ON!

LIFE OF A  
FARMHER

+Women's  
TRAIL CAMERA  
CONTEST

A TO Z TURKEY  
TACTICS

MEET **NICOLE**  
WELLER LARSON

LET'S EAT!

COOKING  
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FAVORITES

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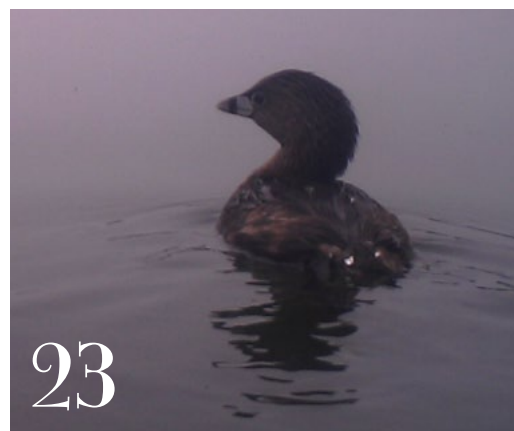
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# editor's note

WELCOME!

Wow! Thank you so much for being a part of the premiere issue of *Adventuress* magazine! This has been a long time coming for me, and I'm so happy to finally be able to share it with others!

Seven years ago, I created a magazine called *American Huntress* while in college. Although I was surprised by the support I found, I was young with no way to truly make it a reality. It's been my dream ever since.

As the years went on, I grew and eventually realized the word "huntress" no longer described me or what I wanted for the magazine. I felt huntress was limiting because I had become much more than that. It wasn't just about hunting anymore; I was living a total outdoor lifestyle. Late one night as I thought about

**ad·ven·tur·ess**

*noun*

a woman who enjoys or seeks adventure.

the magazine instead of drifting to sleep, I kept thinking of what word does describes that. I am someone who never

has the money to travel, but always sees any little thing as an adventure. It hit me like a lightning bolt... *adventuress*! I rushed to a dictionary to find it was an actual word!

Inspiration is a big goal for *Adventuress*. I want to celebrate the beauty of women, the beauty of nature and the beauty of an outdoor lifestyle. I want girls and women to be able to further their knowledge, feel energized to get outdoors and have the desire to try something new!

Another goal of *Adventuress* is to be able to support other outdoor women writers and photographers. And to keep the magazine FREE! That way more people can enjoy, learn and be inspired. However, this will only happen through enough support and advertising. I hope it can continue to grow!

I also hope you'll enjoy what digital can offer and how it's made this magazine finally possible. Take advantage of clicking on the links to websites, videos and advertisers.

To the future!

*Jennifer Pudenz*

## ADVENTURESS

[betheadventuress.com](http://betheadventuress.com)

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

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Founder & Editor  
JENNIFER PUDENZ

CONTRIBUTORS  
Nicole Weller Larson  
Skye Goode  
Christi Byerly  
Marji Guyler-Alaniz  
Ashley Rae

### on the cover



Nicole Weller Larson  
of Field of Dreams TV  
on one of her many  
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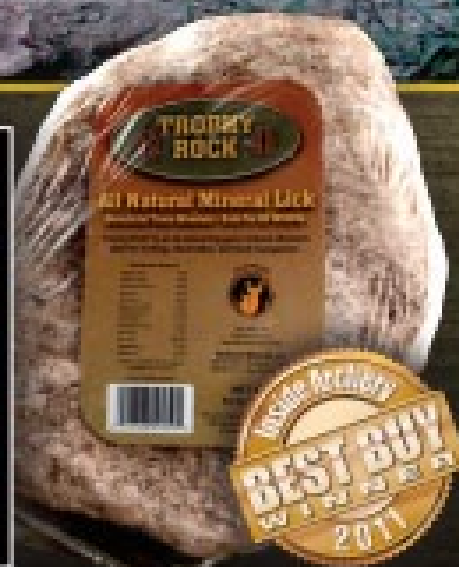
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**SPRING**

**RENEWAL.** Spring is finally here as the tallgrass prairie begins its annual growth in Iowa after a prescribed burn. **SUBMIT YOUR PHOTOS AT [BETHEADVENTURES.COM](http://BETHEADVENTURES.COM)**

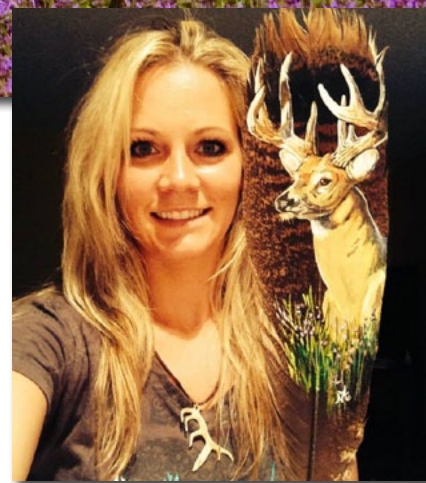




# Meet Nicole Weller Larson

There was no need to think on who I'd like to be the first ADVENTURESS cover girl - it was obvious! If you haven't met Nicole Weller Larson of Minnesota yet, you need to check out her incredible life, talents and accomplishments! And when it comes to turkeys... she really shines.

Nicole does it all - successful at hunting turkey, deer, bear and waterfowl, an impressive angler in open water and on the ice, and much more, but what really stands out about her is her amazing wildlife artwork. She is a true outdoorswoman at heart and her passion and love of wildlife shows. Nicole is a dental assistant, as well as a host and producer of Field of Dreams TV with hubby, Brent. Best of luck this spring, Nicole! *See more of Nicole on her [Facebook](#) page.*





**Runnings**

PRESENTS  
**FIELD OF DREAMS TV**



# FIELD OF DREAMS TV

*With Nicole and  
Brent Larson*

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**Girls at Play** is about inspiring your life on and off the water through kayaking, stand up paddleboarding (SUP), yoga, travel and events that bring women together. Founder/Director Anna Levesque is a world-class paddler and instructor who had a goal to promote confidence in women through kayaking. Her desire to promote confidence in women came from her own experiences of struggling with self-doubt in a male-dominated sport and wanting to share the amazing feeling of joy and accomplishment that kayaking contributed to her life. Cheers to Anna and Girls at Play, who recently celebrated their 10th anniversary! Find out more at [watergirlsatplay.com](http://watergirlsatplay.com).

Ashley Rae



She Loves To Fish.com

Ashley has a passion for year-round fishing and promoting the outdoor lifestyle.

Find her on:





**HUNT.**

# A to Z

*Tips for  
Turkey  
Hunting*



Turkey hunting is not easy. While that might not be what some of us want to hear, that is exactly what keeps many of us hooked. It can be a challenging, yet rewarding experience. As nature restores itself after those long winter months, we too restore our hearts with hunting camaraderie, the beauty of the outdoors and the thunder of some nearby gobblers. The following are some turkey tips to remember this spring. Good luck - I'll be rooting for you!



*Click to watch this hunt!*



**A**ttention – There are a variety of calls on the market to get a turkey's attention, but basically they fall into two categories: friction and air-operated. Friction calls tend to be the easiest to use with slate calls being popular. Just like trying different fishing lures until you get a bite, try different calls until you get a response. If it's windy and you need to get louder, try a box call. The most common air-operated call is the diaphragm or mouth call. This call requires a lot of practice to become proficient.

**B**eginners – Whether you are using a shotgun or a bow, a lot of people go seasons without successfully harvesting a bird. If you're new to turkey hunting, try going out with a seasoned hunter to learn some tricks of the trade.

**C**amouflage – With turkeys' crazy-good eyesight, it's important to have excellent camo. It's also important to think about what is behind you, such as sitting against a large tree so turkeys can't silhouette you. If you are hunting from a blind, it's very important to wear all black – hat, face mask, long sleeve top, gloves and even blacking out parts of your bow or gun (black electrical tape works well).

**D**ecoys – For many animals, hunts don't need to revolve around decoys; however, they do play a major role when it comes to turkeys. You don't necessarily have to get the turkeys to actually come IN to the decoys, but decoys can help bring them within shooting range, or just get them to slow down or pause enough so you can pull that shot off. A typical setup includes one male decoy (tom or jake; strutting, half-strut or breeding), with two hen decoys (one looker and one feeder). If using a strutting decoy, I do think it is worth using a real turkey fan.

**E**lements – Unfortunately, spring doesn't necessarily mean spring weather. I've hunted spring turkeys in complete snow with freezing temperatures to swarms of mosquitoes in 90+ degree temps... check the weather regularly, be prepared and layer up your clothing! Also have good boots appropriate

for your hunt, whether that's shorter hiking boots for walking or rubber boots for mud and creeks.

**F**an – Pay attention to tail fans. If several toms are coming in together, one is often going to strut the most - that's your head bird. The other males will often push their luck, but kind of hang away from the top male and not fully strut. If a male bird is pumping his tail up and down, you know he is excited, so keep working to get him into shooting range. If a gobbler in range all of a sudden drops out of strut, he might know something is up and you need to get your shot off soon. And if a tom is strutting and turning back and forth, sometimes this is the perfect opportunity to get ready for that shot when his eyes are hidden behind his fan.

**G**auge – While 12-gauge shotguns are the most used for turkeys, 20-gauge shotguns are perfect for youth



## HUNT.

*Delicious turkey recipe, page 52!*



finally able to harvest a big ol' tom, passing up jakes is passing up on valuable hunting and shooting experience, and a great-eating bird. Plus, jakes often hang out in gangs to protect themselves or go up against toms they couldn't compete with alone. This can make for some very exciting hunts and possibly give you an opportunity to double with a fellow hunter or yourself, if legal in your area, and you have two tags!

and adults who do not fit the “average American man” model. The main thing is to know your shotgun well, pattern it for turkeys (most popular is an extra-full choke for the tightest pattern) and get comfortable holding it while sitting on the ground, if that's how you're hunting. Shooting at a turkey at more than 40 yards is not recommended, regardless of which gauge of shotgun is used.

**H**en – You'll often be at the mercy of hens, whether the tom follows them in or away from you. If one walks in alone, you can softly talk with your call, keeping them comfortable around your decoys, while hopefully

someone else is listening nearby. And in “bearded-bird” states, a bearded hen is a legal, treasured bird to tag.

**I**nspiration – *When hunting turkeys, things are going to go wrong. You're going to get frustrated - just remember not to give up. You can do it! So here's an inspirational quote for when you need it: “The harder the struggle, the more glorious the triumph.” Amen!*

**J**ake – I'm sad to see hunters, especially beginners, pass up shots at jakes or not be proud of harvesting a jake. ANY turkey is tough to harvest and is a trophy! While it is rewarding when you are

**K**een – Turkeys have sharp eyesight. Sometimes it seems like just a blink of your eyes is enough to send them running! Even when the hours get long, pay attention as much as you can with slow, deliberate moves, as a turkey can always surprise you.

**L**ow – If using a bow, the best advice I can give you is to avoid shooting low on a turkey. The saying, “Hit 'em low, watch 'em go; hit 'em high, watch 'em die” is true.

**M**aintenance – Most turkey calls require some kind of maintenance. It's especially important to take care of your calls when weather is extreme, as mois-





A brother and sister morning double on a tom and bearded hen.

ture can affect the sound. Also, skin contains natural oils, so handling with your fingers can negatively affect some. Know the instructions for your specific call. While slate calls require sandpaper, you should never use sandpaper on a box call, which needs chalk. Mouth calls should be washed with warm water and stored in the refrigerator.

**N**WTF – The National Wild Turkey Federation is a great way to learn more about turkeys and become a better hunter. Visit [nwtf.org](http://nwtf.org)

for tips and tactics, turkey calls, recipes and more!

**O**wls – An owl call is a great way to locate turkeys in the mornings and pinpoint where they are so you can make a hunting plan. Even if you don't use a locator call, you can often listen for owls, crows or other sounds to set off gobblers so you know where they are roosted.

**P**ermission – Make sure you have permission to be on the land you are on. If you are running and gunning,

you need to know who owns what land and where that property stops. This is important for the safety of yourself and other hunters who you might not know you are in the area and could be silent or calling and using decoys.

**Q**uiver – If you are bow-hunting, make sure to have another arrow ready. Often times you can get a second shot at a bird even if you have a miss or wound. And with turkeys often being attracted to a wounded/flopping bird, even if you “smoke” one, you



## HUNT.

*Click for how to set up a blind*

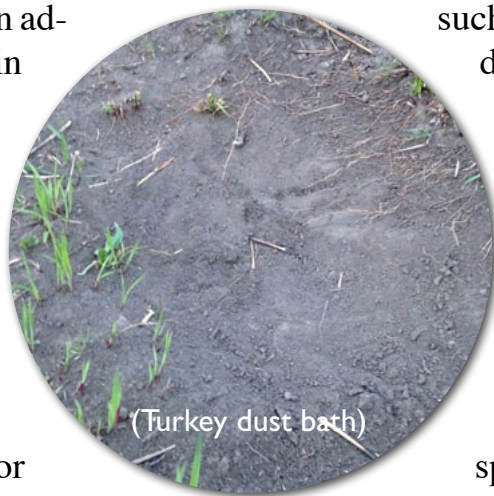


might be able to fill another tag (if legal) right on the spot!

**R**oost - Learn how to roost turkeys, as finding where they start and finish their day gives you an advantage. Start in the afternoon in open areas near big-branched trees where you've heard birds before. Sit quietly, listening for the wing beats of turkeys flying into their roosting spot. Stay until nightfall and then sneak out. Now you're ready for their fly-down in the morning.

**S**couting - As well as knowing where turkeys tend to roost, glassing fields and travel corridors from afar before season can help you get

closer when hunting time rolls around. Also use trail cameras before and during turkey season to help pattern locations and times. When in their area, pay attention to sign, such as tracks, droppings and dust baths.



(Turkey dust bath)

**T**icks - Lyme disease is a real concern for those who spend a lot of time outdoors as some ticks can transfer it to you. Permethrin is a great way to protect yourself, and while you can't spray it on your skin, you can spray your boots, pant legs and hunting blind. Once you get home, check yourself for ticks.

**U**npredictable - Incredibly wary with sharp survival

instincts, turkeys make an ultimate game animal. Keep in mind, this also makes them extremely unpredictable. When you are trying to get a tom to come to you, you're actually working against what nature has programmed him to do... to stand in the open, gobbling and strutting while the hens come to him.

**V**est - If you gun hunt turkeys, a good turkey hunting vest is an excellent union of form and function. It can be your best friend, keeping you comfortable and ready for whatever is ahead for you in the woods. I love the looks of **Cabela's Women's Tat'r Turkey Vest**.

**W**eather - Turkeys hate rain, they hate wind... they just plain hate bad weather. So keeping this in mind can help you set up a hunting plan, if you can stick out the weath-



er yourself. When it rains, turkeys feel more vulnerable in the woods and typically head to an open field or open area. On a windy day, get out of the wind as well (a plus if on the edge of a food source).

**X**enial – Okay, yes, I am stretching for an X word! But xenial is friendliness between a host and guest, or strangers. Thank landowners that give you permission to hunt and guides who help you. Let them know how much that means to you, as they are helping you develop memories that will last a lifetime. And support other turkey hunters.



Kirsten Schirm - first turkey with a bow.

**Y**elp - The plain yelp of a hen is basic turkey communication and one of the main sounds you'll be trying to create with calls. If you can yelp, you have a chance of

being able to call in a turkey. The yelp is commonly used by a hen to communicate with a gobbler during mating season. There is also a similar sound, the excited yelp, which means a turkey is worked up about something. If a gobbler is henned up, you might be able to lure the hen in (with the gobbler in tow) using this call.

**Z**ones - Some states divide themselves into zones for hunting areas and season dates. Know the maps, times and regulations for your area, especially if you traveling out-of-state and might not be as familiar with these rules. -JP

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## Making a Turkey Spur Necklace

By Skye Goode

<< Goode harvested a 19-pound, 9-1/2-inch bearded tom off public land and this 17-pound, 8-inch bearded tom on a solo hunt last spring.



**Last spring I was fortunate enough to harvest two mature gobblers.**

After consuming the meat, displaying the fans and beards, and taking more pictures than necessary, I decided I should do something with the “true” trophy on a turkey: the spurs. Hens can have beards, jakes can have nearly full fans, but only a mature gobbler will have the pointed spurs on the back of their legs that solidify you’ve bagged an adult male.

I enjoy using nearly everything possible on a kill, not to waste any material. With the help of my mentor, Bill, we fashioned together a spur necklace that I look forward to wearing at even the most formal occasion. I went to a local bead shop and bought beautiful fire agate beads along with some elk antler tube beads. The color contrast of the dark spurs makes the necklace really pop.

The day I shot my birds, I quickly cut off



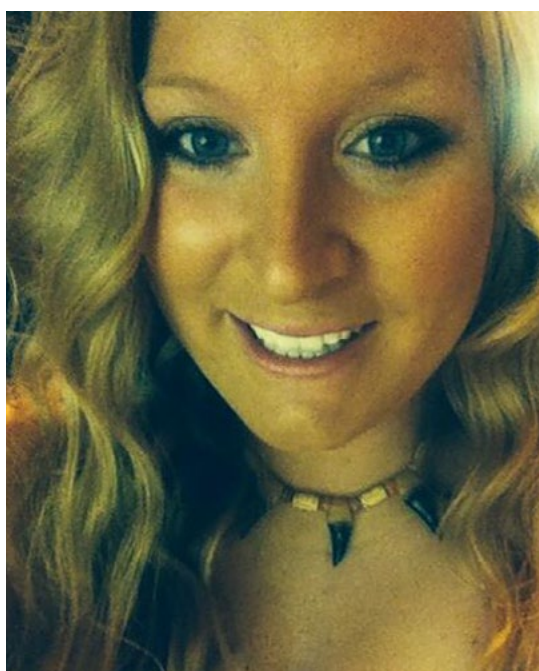


a 5-inch area on the leg bone where the spurs are connected and placed them in some Borax to cure for a few weeks.

Once completely dry, I hollowed out the bone by poking the marrow through and peeling off the dried skin and extra tendons. Many references on the Internet say you need to pop off the spur cap, clean everything so it's blindingly white, and then glue it back on. However, I prefer to keep everything as natural as possible and chose not to take off the spur cap.

I then worked diligently with a Dremel rotary tool to sand down any extra bone and flesh that was not necessary to the piece. I polished and buffed the bone and spurs with a sandpaper-type polisher and finished it with a clear coat nail polish to give the spurs a deeper color.

While working on my spurs outside, I had an epiphany. As I held the pieces in my hand



The author proudly wearing her turkey spur necklace. The same concept can be used for making other animal-part jewelry. Goode has also made an ankle bracelet from bear claws.

Use Borax to dry the spurs and bone. Borax can be found in the laundry section of any grocery or box store.

and took the grinder to the spurs, the bone pulverized into a powder that slowly floated away on the breeze. I had a strange sense of serenity, as I accomplished the very privileged feat of harvesting animals in the wild, utilizing as much of the birds as possible and then grinding up the last of the bones to be lifted away back into Mother Nature. The details of those two hunts flooded my memory as I worked

on memorializing these birds forever.

*Skye Goode of Wisconsin is a Mossy Oak Prostaff member, [mossyOak.com](http://mossyOak.com), and has been hunting and fishing all her life. She enjoys every aspect of the outdoors, including scouting and harvesting game, cleaning and processing the meat, and cooking up a hot meal that same night.*



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# Try a Water Setup

**G**irls - get your boots on and get in the water!

This spring, try a water setup with trail cameras. With so many waterfowl migrating at this time, you can really get some amazing wildlife photos of a wide variety of ducks, geese and shorebirds - not knowing what you are going to get on camera is half the fun!

## Location

While location may seem as obvious as water, there are a few tips to help you get the best photos. First of all, scouting can be helpful so you know where to find the waterfowl and look for shoreline tracks. Then pick a spot somewhat out of the wind so there is not as much current in the water and where birds naturally hang out, whether it is a shallow shoreline, a floating log, rock pile or on a dock. Look for a unique back set that will make your photo stand out, and think about what the birds will be doing in this spot: flying,



For a new perspective with trail cameras, use a trail camera stand in water!

swimming or perched while cleaning feathers. If flying or swimming, set the camera quartering too or away from the area. This will allow the camera enough time to capture the photo and the full bird in the frame. Also set the camera up as low as you can, getting a unique angle that is close to eye level with the birds. However, if setting in water that may rise, such as a river or creek, take that into account as well.

## Camera Settings

Setting up your camera for waterfowl photos can take some thought as well as trial and error. Using a camera with fast trigger speeds on a burst mode taking three photos at a time can help you capture that great moment versus a setting that only takes one photo at a time. If the camera is facing the open water, set the IR on the highest setting so the camera isn't getting set off constantly. However, waves will set your camera off more, so use larger



SD cards, such as 8GB or 16GB and check more frequently.

If you face the camera toward the shore, choose a medium setting so you don't set off on the background, such as cattails or grass.

### Timing

Think about when the waterfowl will migrate through your area. Here in Iowa, that time is usually early spring and early winter. During the migration, you never know what flock of birds might show up. Also think about nesting, which here, happens around April and May. Do not disturb a mother on the nest, but get ready for some amazing photos when the babies arrive! ~JP





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FISH.

Spring  
spawning bluegills





**Let's give some credit to the little guys.** After all, it is usually these small, easy-to-catch and tasty fish that brought us to our love and respect of fishing today. I know I owe that much to the bluegill.

While sometimes we like to overlook common species like this for those larger fish we dream of getting a trophy picture with, there's really not many other fish that can compare to the bluegill. Catchable at any time of the year, often producing many opportunities, only needing basic tackle while taking a wide variety of baits, not wary and forgiving of less-than-perfect techniques, fun fighters for their small size and exceptional to eat, this makes the bluegill a great way to introduce fishing to youth and beginners. You don't even need a boat!

Abundant in many ponds and lakes, bluegills do not like current. They are closely related to largemouth bass, so where you find one, there's an excellent chance you'll find the other. You'll often find them around the shoreline and structure, such as sticks, stumps or vegetation.

## Spawning

Just as the rut makes bucks more aggressive and active providing hunters with better chances to harvest, spawning presents the same behaviors and opportunities to the an-



Fry 'em up!  
Recipe on page 52

Olivia Pudenz (right) and her grandmother Patty double on a pair of male bluegills while fishing from shore.

gler for bluegills. Spring and early summer are the best times to catch bluegills because they congregate in shallow water to spawn, become very aggressive and easier to catch. Spawning peaks when the water temperature is 75 degrees, but you can often determine spawning just by looking into the water from the shore. Bluegills built their nests in shallow water usually 2 to 6 feet deep close to shore, making huge beds of saucer-shaped depressions in sandy or muddy bottoms. You'll often be able to actually see male bluegills hovering



# FISH.

over the nests to guard them.

This is an exciting time. With aggressive males, you can often cast out into these beds, let your bait sink into the nests and slowly retrieve it to find you catch a bluegill nearly every cast! When you feel them bite or pick up the bait, set the hook!

Most of the fish caught from these nests will be males. Males build the nest and protect the eggs against intruders. Females can be caught in nearby deeper water off the spawning beds. Take note of the locations you produce catches for males and females because the areas will be good year to year.

## Summer

Some bluegill will spawn a second time early in the summer. Check into this same spawning activity and areas around late May to early June. However, as the season progresses, males will abandon the nests to travel to deeper water and the small bluegill hatched will move away to feed. Summertime bluegills are usually found at depths ranging from 10 to 12 feet along natural structure, such as edges of weed beds, deep coves and humped or flat areas, as well as man-made structures of stake beds, brush shelters, tire reefs and boat docks.

## Boys Vs. Girls

How to identify a mature male bluegill from a mature female? During the spawn, males traditionally develop dark, orange- to reddish-colored breasts, while females are lighter and more yellow. However, for the easiest and surest way to tell the difference, look at the size

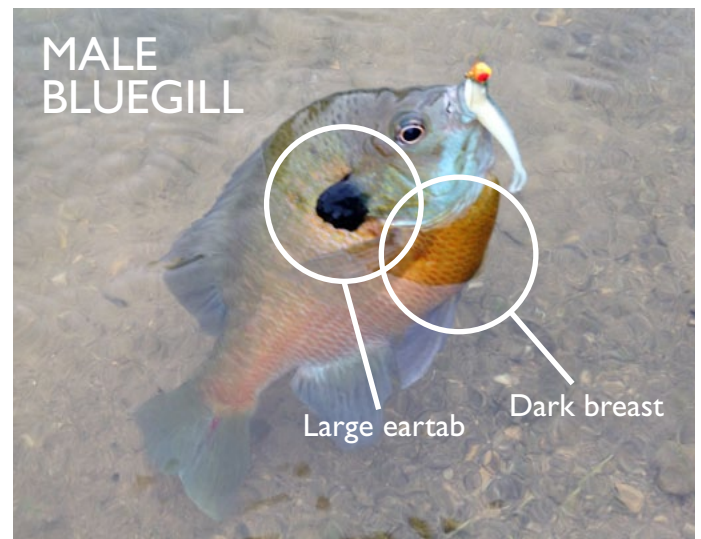


Madysen Hackfort of Iowa with a beautiful male bluegill she caught with a yellow jighead, small piece of live worm and some help from mom (Laura).

of their black eartab, which is noticeably longer and broader in the male, and shorter and narrower in females.

## Tackle

For the most success and most fun reeling in these tough fighters, use light line and tackle for bluegill fishing. Many prefer ultra-lite graphite spinning rods and small reels with 2- to 4-pound-test monofilament, though you can literally go as simple as a cane pole and





a can of worms. Kids are able to catch bluegill with the small youth rod and reel combos as they learn about fishing.

Bluegills have such small mouths, so when choosing a hook, think of their mouths being about the size of the end of your pinky finger. Since their mouths are so small, you'll also want a pair of fishing pliers handy in case you need to use them to remove a hook further passed their mouth.

For youth, a small bobber can be a great way for them to fish. Otherwise, a small 1/32-, 1/16- or possibly even a 1/8-oz. jighead with a bait is perfect. While a small piece of worm or a jig tail can work great, I prefer to use 2-1/2-inch Berkley Gulp Alive! Minnows. I've had such great luck with these minnows for both bluegill and largemouth bass, while they are ex-



Ashley Rae of Ontario, Canada with the cool-looking pumpkinseed sunfish. Pumpkinseeds are the same family as bluegills and possess the same feistiness that makes them so fun to catch. See more of Ashley's fishing adventures at [SheLovesToFish.com](http://SheLovesToFish.com).

tremely handy to not have to deal with live bait and they last longer. The Berkley Gulp Alive! Minnows are available in different colors (Emerald Shiner and Smelt are colors I often use) and come in a scented juice. If left on your hook after fish-

ing, they dry out just like a real minnow. Impressive!

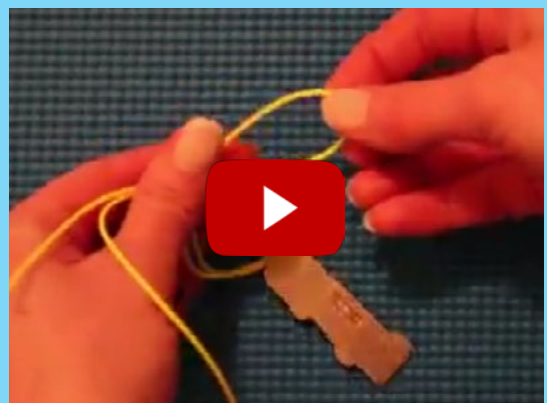
### Dinner Time!

Bluegills are not only a great way to teach youth and beginners about fishing, their liberal numbers and delicious taste are a great way to teach people about knowing where your food comes from and providing an excellent meal for your family. Check out Recipes on page 52-53 for cooking bluegills! -JP

### +Learn-A-Knot: Palomar

- ~ Great beginner's fishing knot to learn with a wide variety of uses for all kinds of light fishing lines
- ~ Secures a fishing lure, snap or swivel
- ~ Retains almost all of the original line strength

Click to watch!





**EXPLORE.**

# the marvel of morels





They're famous for being a true delicacy. And if there's anything to make them even more irresistible, it's the fact we only have them to savor once a year. However, many don't realize there are true morels and false morels. It is important to know the differences as false morels are poisonous. A true, edible morel is hollow, and a false, inedible morel has a cottony inside in the stem. False morels also can look similar, but you can usually tell they just have an "off" appearance. If you're new to mushroom hunting, have an experienced person come with you to show you the ropes. And if you aren't sure, play it safe. Remember this saying when you are out mushroom hunting this spring, "If it isn't hollow, don't swallow."



## EXPLORE.

The most common morels to eat are the black, gray and yellow morel. Some morels fruit earlier than others, so using this information can help you determine where you are at in the morel season.

### Black Morel

This mushroom is the first edible morel to fruit. It can be as small as a ½-inch tall, and is often charcoal, light tan, dark brown or honey-colored. The black morel tends to have a meatier texture.

### Gray (and Grey) Morel

One of the next edible morels to fruit is the gray, which in the right conditions, can grow to be 1-foot in height. This morel is usually a light to dark gray color, but may change to yellow as it matures. They tend to have more-dense of pits on their caps.

### Yellow Morel

The yellow morel, also known as common morel, is the last edible morel to fruit. It typically ranges in white-creamy to a yellowish color and can also grow to as large as 1-foot tall. Depending on the weather, yellows will fruit with or just after the gray morels.

### The Season

A good morel season depends on the winter snowfall amounts and spring weather. The more snow, the better for morel season due to all the moisture melting snow provides. Spring needs to be a gradual warm-up, keeping the

>> Search around dead elm trees, which often stand out as barkless light-colored trunks. A good bunch of morels were found around this dead elm last spring.







Morels often grow in bunches due to their root system. So when you find one, step lightly and search around for more!

soil damp at all times. The best temperature range for morels is 60s to low 70s during the day and 50s at night. Warm, rainy nights really get morels started. The usual morel season is during April and May.

## The Search

Morels have a root system that causes them to often grow in bunches, usually in or near woods. They tend to come up around dead or decaying trees or roots (especially elms), heavy leaf cover or foliage, dried creek bottoms and near river banks or mossy areas. Morels prefer black or sandy soil, hate clay soil and cannot tolerate standing water.

Many people say morels grow where there are mayapples. However, I don't think mayapples are necessarily a place you'll find morels, I think they just like the same conditions.

During the start of morel time, plan on

searching open areas first and shady areas later in the season. You want to check areas that are going to have a warmer temperature first. Try south-facing hills early and north-facing hills later. A good way to search is by starting at the bottom of a hill and zig-zagging your way up. It tends to be easier to locate morels this way than going down the hill. Too much sun and wind will dry morels out quickly, that is why as the season progresses and the spring temperature rises, it is best to move to shady areas.

When you do happen to find these hidden treasures of spring, be sure to cut or pinch the morels off. Never pull them from the ground as they grow from a root system. Then, place your morels in an onion or potato sack so you continue to spread spores as you walk in search of more mushrooms. Also, remember your special spots for next year! ~JP





# THE OTHER SPRING BOUNTY

Easier to find than mushrooms, hunting for wild asparagus can be a great family activity!

By Christi Byerly

**P**eople are often surprised to hear about one of my favorite spring activities - hunting wild asparagus. Many Midwesterners are familiar with hunting for other spring delicacies such as morel mushrooms, but when comparing mushrooms and asparagus, asparagus is actually much easier to find, has a longer growing season and weather doesn't affect it near as much. Asparagus grows wild and abundantly right out in the open, usually along fencerows or in roadside ditches in most of the Midwestern states.

In my travels, I've seen countless patches along fences while driving along on the highway or Interstate; that's how big and visible some clusters get! The uniform-sized spears you buy in the grocery store are a long way from what those sprouts grow up to be in an amazingly short amount of time.

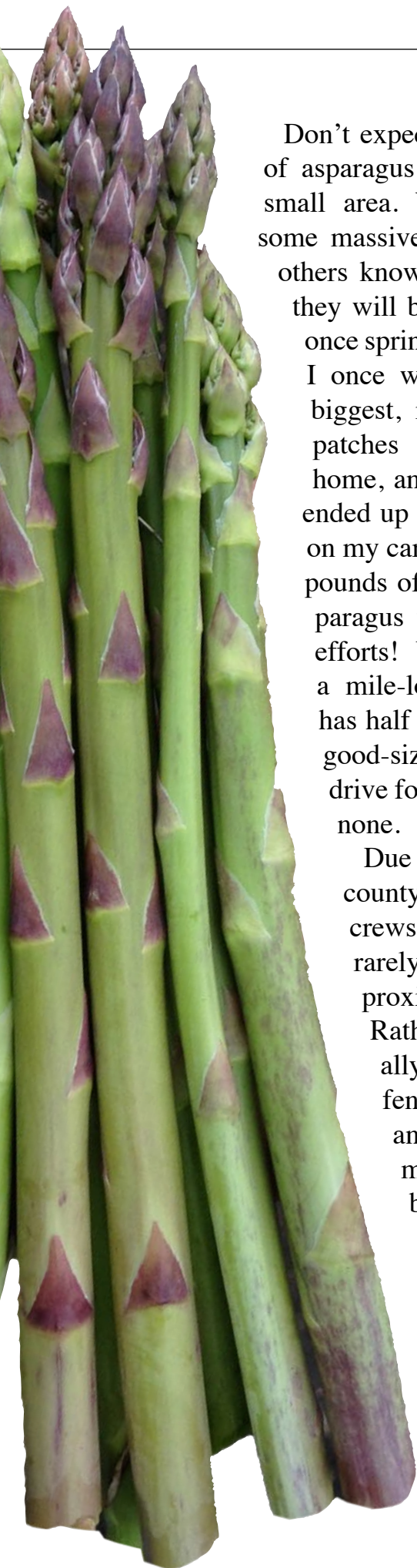
While spring is the harvest season, late summer or early fall is the best time to scout the roadsides for next spring's harvest of this healthy, tasty and, in this case, free vegetable.

There is no pattern as to where you'll find wild asparagus. One theory is that these wild

patches are the result of birds eating the seeds from fall plants and then expelling them. If the ground is the right mixture of fertilizers and nutrients, the seeds will root and be ready for picking in just a few years. In the right area, with healthy soil and good weather conditions, an asparagus patch can last and produce for as long as 30 years - even in the wild, with no green thumb gardener taking care of them.



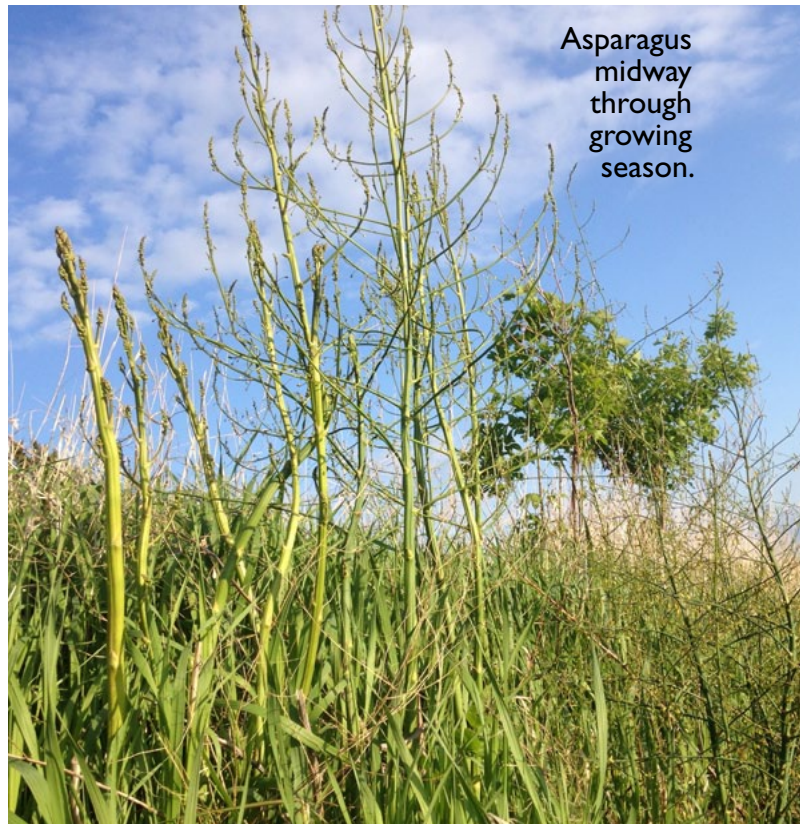




Don't expect to find hoards of asparagus clusters in one small area. You might find some massive patches, but if others know they are there, they will be prime picking once spring comes around. I once went to only the biggest, most productive patches nearest to my home, and even though I ended up putting 25 miles on my car, I had nearly 10 pounds of the freshest asparagus to show for my efforts! You might find a mile-long stretch that has half a dozen or more good-sized patches, then drive for 5 miles and see none.

Due to mowing by county maintenance crews, patches are rarely found in close proximity to the road. Rather, they are usually in or near the fence. I will not - and do not recommend - trespass by climbing over a fence, even for a few prime spears. If there is a patch near a home, I will

>> Fresh asparagus spikes.



Asparagus midway through growing season.







Asparagus are often found in tall grass along road ditches and field edges.

ask the owners if they harvest it; if they do, I leave that one alone. Most farmers, however, are quick to allow you access with a courteous request.

After the six-week prime time for cutting during late April, May and early June, the spears continue to grow and the fronds spread out. Some of these stalks can grow to be as tall as 7 feet, and the male of the species will sprout green berries, which turn red as the season wears on. This is especially helpful, knowing that you have actually found asparagus rather than a look-alike weed. However, the berries are **NOT EDIBLE** and are poisonous to humans, so it is not advised to eat asparagus once the tips have started to spread out and develop tiny seeds on them.

Most clusters of asparagus are a dark, unique shade of green, which is another helpful ‘tool’ for identifying. As the weather gets colder, the stalks will turn from green to yellow and then to a light, golden brown. You will likely even come across patches that are half gold and half green.

Asparagus can grow as much as an inch an hour in ideal conditions, so once the picking time is over – between June 1st and June 15th – it doesn’t take long for the spears to shoot up and spread out. There may be patches of only three or four plants, while in other places you might find one to two dozen clumped together. Those are the ones to mark or record now in order to remember almost exactly where to search next spring.



## Marking Patches

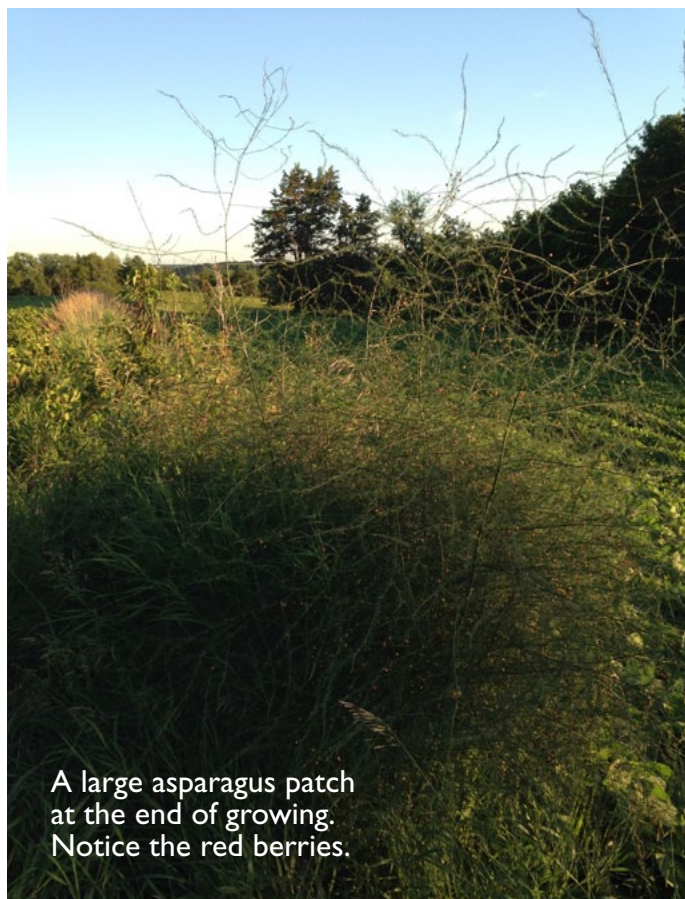
Some asparagus hunters mark a patch by tying a ribbon on the fence near the patch, but that also alerts other asparagus hunters to the patch. I prefer to make a map with notes. A county plat map comes in handy as they have all paved and gravel roads marked as well as even dirt roads and creeks.

## Timing

Asparagus starts to poke through the ground in late April, and when it's time to hunt, look around the bases of old stalks. I usually break off the tops of the old stalks and pull some weeds to make my hunting easier. It is often very difficult to break off the old stalks at ground level; some are as tough as tree branches, but if you break them off a foot or so above ground level, you usually get what's left of the old fronds and have only a stick poking up, making it much easier to find the new sprouts.

Also keep in mind that asparagus doesn't all come up at once. I've had patches where I got eight to 10 nice-sized spears, only to come up empty-handed from a patch a mere 5 feet away. However, that's a good thing; the next time you return to that area, the other patch will probably have started to come up. Also, as fast as it grows, within a week to 10 days, some of the stalks in a patch will already have spread out and passed the point of picking, but there may be new growth underneath if you look closely.

Grill 'em!  
Recipe on page 52



## Cutting Sprouts

No matter how tall a spear gets, you should never snap off just the top. Cut it just below ground level; the spear will continue to grow. When a plant is snapped off too high, it prevents it from spreading out and that plant will die off and no longer produce.

Take advantage now of sharing some nice spring days with your family and let the kids have fun by spotting, harvesting and mapping out asparagus. And don't forget eating! Enjoy!

*Christi Byerly is a lifelong resident of southwest Iowa. Christi and her husband, Rich, are writers. She is an avid reader and is looking forward to summer, enjoying the garden, pool and tending to flowers.*



A close-up photograph of a person's arm reaching into a field of green plants. The person is wearing a black watch with a silver face. They are holding a red flower. The background is a soft-focus field of green plants with some blue and red flowers.

LIVE.

# THE LIFE OF A FARMHER

One Iowa woman's journey to take photos with a purpose

Photos and article by Marji Guyler-Alaniz







LIVE.



I love the magic that can be captured in one simple image. A couple years ago, I was laying awake thinking about how blessed I am in life. Six months before that, I had left the comfort of my corporate job at a large agri-business in search of more time with my kids and the freedom to start my own adventure. Ok, so maybe I did things a little backward (well, backward to a Type-A planner like myself). I jumped first, hoping I would find what I was looking for in the waters below. One thing I did know is that I would continue with my photography.

I was able to make a change to spend more time with the ones I love, doing the things that I love. My loved ones and I are in good health. We have a warm home, filled with love. Friends and family surround us. I have an amazingly supportive husband and two

crazy, but awesome, little kids.

As I thought about all that I had, I also thought about what I could do to give back to others. The idea hit me like a bullet right then and there. I needed to start photographing women in agriculture.





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OTHERS.



## THE IDEA

An article in The Des Moines Register a few days earlier was resonating through my thoughts. Women always have been involved in agriculture and are becoming involved at a faster rate than ever before. These women play all sorts of roles in our agriculture system, and are all important. However, in any farm imagery, you almost always see the farmer portrayed as a male.

I decided it was time to take my ability to photograph and use it to document the women in this field. The next night the name of my new “project” hit me just like the idea had. I would call it FarmHer, playing off the word farmer and her.

## THE START

I put my idea out there to a few people, one of who put me in contact with the Women, Food and Agriculture Network and that is when the wheels really started to go. The group was kind enough to notify their members about my project and the response I received back was overwhelming.

So many women were either interested in being a part of my project or just interested in following the progress. That year through our (cold) late spring and early summer, I had the opportunity to meet and document seven amazing women as they work their part in our agriculture system. Women from all walks of life, making a living for themselves and their families, and providing food, fiber, fuel, etc. to their communities.

## THE STYLE

This project is about documenting women. It is not about posing people to create the perfect

THESE WOMEN PLAY ALL SORTS OF  
HOWEVER, IN ANY FARM IMAGERY,





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OF ROLES IN OUR AGRICULTURE SYSTEM, AND ARE ALL IMPORTANT.  
YOU ALMOST ALWAYS SEE THE FARMER PORTRAYED AS A MALE.





scene. My goal is to capture the beauty in the every day and my style is to show who these women are through subtleties. Subtleties that show these are women and portray that they are agriculture. Too often in our world, the beauty of a woman, of an image, is judged by a face. These are beautiful women, doing beautiful work and my goal is to bring an appreciation to what they do. If you read the whole story, written through my images, I hope you end with a great understanding and appreciation of that woman, that farm and the beauty within. Each one tells a unique story, while the whole strives to be an overall movement.

## THE FUTURE

I am so excited to continue this project not just in the near future, but for the long term. I believe in the idea of FarmHer. I believe that the only way you change ideas and perceptions is consistency over time. These changes might be subtle, but I believe they will occur. By infusing images of women in agriculture into farm imagery, we can change the way people perceive a farmer. If you believe change is necessary and can occur, spread the word about FarmHer, tell your friends and family, and come back to visit often.

Visit FarmHer at [Farmher.com](http://Farmher.com)





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**LIVE.**





# 10 easy ways to be more sustainable

## PLANT A GARDEN

You don't have to be a green thumb or devote a lot of time or space to benefit from growing your own food. You can start small with easy plants such as tomatoes, carrots and potatoes!

## MAKE A RAIN BARREL

You'd be amazed at how much water you can collect from one rain! Use the rainwater to then water your garden and landscaping plants, which will also save you money.

## START COMPOSTING

Turn trash, table scrapes and waste into pure nutrients - your garden will thank you!

## CAN, FREEZE AND DRY FOOD

It might have seemed complicated from watching your grandma, but it's really not. Once you start, you realize how simple it truly can be and you'll feel good about your food!

## FORAGE FOR WILD EDIBLES

There's nothing better than using what's naturally available. "God gives every bird its food, but He does not throw it into its nest."

## HUNT AND EAT WILD GAME

Nothing else can give you the same appreciation for where your food comes from.

And nothing else is more organic or local. Plus, the money from your hunting license goes to support conservation across the state.

## BACKYARD CHICKENS

There's something special about going out and collecting eggs every day. And you'll definitely notice the difference between cooking farm fresh eggs versus those eggs at the grocery store! There are many breeds of chickens that are great for both eggs and meat.

## GET A PIG OR TWO

Not everyone has the room or ability to have a pasture of cattle. A pig is a great solution to raise some of your own meat as you can have just a couple and they don't need much space. You can raise them in the spring and butcher as soon as late summer.

## HOMEMADE CLEANERS

I never imagined I would someday take the time to make my own cleaners. But now I never want to go back. White vinegar can pretty much do it all!

## SALVAGE A BUILDING PROJECT

It might be easier to run to the store, but you'll save money by salvaging materials for a project or repurposing something... and you'll be much prouder in the end! -JP



# Little Blues



Creating a bluebird trail for your home





The mother bluebird laying on her eggs in the nest. She'll produce three to six eggs, laying one a day.

introduced into North America. These birds are also cavity nesters; however, they are very aggressive. House sparrows, which are small enough to enter any hole bluebirds can, will chase them off, and the larger starlings will out-compete them for natural nesting cavities.

The bluebird population has greatly decreased, and the most important step we can take to help bring them back is by providing nesting sites by starting a bluebird trail.



The eggs hatch 12 to 14 days after incubation starts.

Last year, I decided to make a bluebird trail for our acreage. While I got so much fun out of monitoring the parent bluebirds and watching the eggs turn into baby chicks and grow until their “fly-off” day, I also discovered why bluebirds desperately need help from humans in the first place.

## Where we are today

With so much land being cleared for housing and developing, old trees cut down and wooden fence posts replaced with metal posts, natural nesting cavities for bluebirds, and other birds like them, has been greatly reduced.

To increase this problem, two imported species - the house sparrow and the European starling, were

## Getting started

A bluebird trail is a series of bluebird boxes placed along a prescribed route. This is a great outdoor project people of all ages can enjoy and learn from nature, while helping nature.

While we've been taught not to disturb the nests of many birds, bluebirds will not be scared away by your visits and you should actually not put up a bluebird box unless you plan to frequently monitor it.



A store-bought ready-to-go bluebird box.

## Bluebird Box

Your trail should consist of at least three boxes and not just any birdhouse will do. A good bluebird house should be well ventilated, easy to monitor and easy to clean. Cedar and redwood





A trail camera photo of the parent bluebirds after a spring rain.

heavily wooded areas, which is the habitat of the aggressive house wren, and farmsteads and feedlots, which are areas of the house sparrow. Also avoid areas of heavy pesticide use. Think about all of these things when choosing a site for your boxes and you'll have better luck in successfully housing a pair of bluebirds.

You'll want to mount the nesting box so the entrance is

are ideal, though other types of wood can be used as long as it is not treated lumber (toxic content). Boxes can be painted or stained the traditional blue or a light color.

Bluebird boxes should never have a perch, which attracts sparrows and wrens. It should consist of a round entrance hole of 1-1/2 inches or oval hole of 1-3/8 x 2-1/4 inches for the Eastern Bluebird. You can find good bluebird houses at stores, ready to put up or ready to paint/stain, but do check if they are easy enough to access, but durable enough to protect from predators.

## The Perfect Spot

Habitat is a key factor for your bluebird trail. During the summer, bluebirds feed mainly on insects, so they prefer open rural areas with scattered trees and low ground cover. Ideal habitats also include perch sites, such as a fence line or tree branches where they can search for food. Pastures, acreages, cemeteries, golf courses and parks away from human traffic are all good locations. Avoid brushy and

approximately 5 feet off the ground. Face the box away from prevailing winds and toward a tree or shrub that is within 100 feet (a landing spot for the young once they first leave). It's best to have your boxes in place by mid-March as the bluebirds return from their winter migration and look for nesting sites. They will then usually nest in late March or early April. However, you can also put up boxes later in the season as bluebirds usually have two to three clutches.

## It's time! Monitoring

This is amazing and SO FUN! I honestly got lucky when it came to my first bluebird house. I had a pair of bluebirds in the house within a few days of mounting it! I also did not have a single problem with the first brood. I had a blast visiting them, photographing their growth as well as setting up a trail camera to view the work of these great parents.

I will say I got so lucky on this first brood that I didn't understand why bluebirds needed monitoring and starting wondering if I was



just doing more harm scaring the parents off the nest each time I visited. I starting backing away from monitoring more and more and soon found out the hard way.

## Know your nests

Check your bluebird boxes at least once a week during nesting season, until the chicks are close to fledging. You do not need to worry like I did about scaring the parents. You are actually helping them and they aren't going to leave because of it. During my second brood, the parents choose another one of my bluebird boxes on the trail. Their sweet little grass cup shaped nest was perfect and full of eggs.



The wren's nest on top of the bluebird nest.

original nesting house was also taken over by house sparrows that I also didn't catch in time. Luckily my bluebird parents moved to my third box and were able to lay their eggs.

## Dangers to nests

After these issues, I got back on track monitoring my bluebirds. Four more baby bluebirds successfully flew out of the second brood. For

the third clutch, the bluebirds (as did the wrens) stayed in the same houses. However, I had an awful discovery this time.

I walked up to the nest with the baby wrens and found the nest raided. The box I bought was well-built, but the black

piece that held the door shut, which I thought was metal, ended up being plastic that could be bent back. I had not been able to tell that. Raccoons scratched along the house until they were able to pull the door back because of this plastic piece. They ate all the wren babies.

I was very upset, but thought maybe it was karma that they took over the nest and I was glad it saved my bluebirds lives then. I would be able to fix this problem now that I knew it existed. However, I walked to the nest with my bluebird babies to discover an even worse sight. The box looked shredded with scratches all over it, and although they could not break into this door, they shook all the babies to death. I was devastated.

## Moving forward

Even though there were tough times for the bluebirds, I am so happy to have had eight baby bluebirds successfully fly off last year. I am delighted to see them already back and starting to nest this spring. So far, I have fixed any issues with the bluebird boxes, checked them frequently and kept control of the raccoons on our property. Every baby bluebird that flies off is a success and I received so much joy from watching them. I will continue this bluebird trail for many years to come. JP



Do not open box after nestlings are 14 days old.



+Recipes

# SPRING'S *Fabulous Four!*



Morels ~ Bluegill ~ Asparagus ~ Turkey



## Fried Morel Mushrooms



On the left: mushroom ends and bad pieces cut away to throw back outdoors.  
On the right: cleaned and halved morels.

fresh morels  
butter  
eggs  
flour  
salt  
pepper

Clean morels and cut in half. Melt butter in frying pan at medium heat. While cooking, don't let the pan overheat or run out of butter. In a small bowl, crack eggs and stir. On a plate, pour flour and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Roll morel halves in eggs until covered, then roll in flour until coated. Place in pan and sautee mushrooms until golden brown, flip and brown on other side.

## Deep fat fried Bluegill

bluegill fillets  
peanut oil  
seasoned breading

Heat deep fat fryer of peanut oil to 375 degrees. When it is heated, roll damp fillets in a plate of seasoned breading, our favorite is **Totally Wild's Fish & Wild Game Seasoned Breading**. Once completely covered, carefully drop into fryer basket. Submerge basket in the hot oil for several minutes until desired browning and crispness.



## Grilled Asparagus



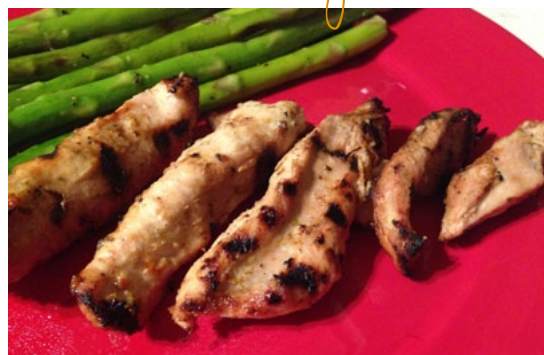
asparagus spears  
extra virgin olive oil  
salt  
pepper

Preheat grill for medium heat. Make a long cupped "boat" out of tin foil. Place asparagus spears in foil and lightly coat with olive oil. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Close the tin foil and place on grill for about 10 minutes, or to desired tenderness.

## Marinated Wild Turkey Breast

turkey breasts  
zesty italian dressing

Slice turkey breasts with the grain in 1-inch strips. Place strips in a quart Ziploc bag or container and add dressing as needed to completely cover. Marinate strips overnight in the refrigerator. Remove turkey from marinade and place directly on the grill at medium-high heat for approximately 5 minutes on each side, or until thoroughly cooked. ~JP





+DIY

# slough off



## Winter

### How to make HOMEMADE SUGAR SCRUBS!

#### Lemon Sugar

2-1/2 C white sugar  
1/4 C coconut oil  
1 lemon

Melt oil and pour over sugar mixing well.  
Zest the rind of one lemon. Cut zested lemon in half and juice. Add juice and zest to sugar mixture and stir to combine.

#### Cinnamon Sugar

2 C brown sugar  
1/2 C white sugar  
2 Tbsp. cinnamon  
1/2 C coconut oil

Combine sugars and cinnamon.  
Slowly pour melted coconut oil over mixture and stir until well blended.

#### White Winter

2-1/2 C white sugar  
1/4 C coconut oil  
1/4 C vitamin E-oil  
1 Tbsp. peppermint oil

Stir first two oils into sugar. Add peppermint oil and mix well.

*Each recipe fills three 8 oz. canning jars. Rub on hands ~ rinse in warm water ~ pat dry.*

*Melting coconut oil:* Heat coconut oil in the microwave for about 30 seconds, or until mostly melted.

*Make it your own:* The amount of each ingredient can be tweaked to your liking. Try different oils, spices and smells! I mainly use coconut oil, but baby oil, almond oil, vitamin E-oil and light olive oil are also popular. -JP





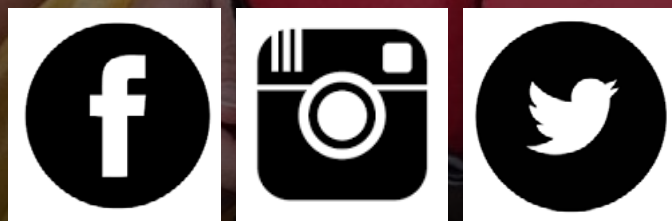
**JEWEL OF THE FOREST.**  
The wild Jack-in-the-Pulpit  
during May. Once fall comes,  
the plant will showcase  
bright red “berries.”  
SUBMIT YOUR PHOTOS AT  
[BETHEADVENTURESS.COM](http://BETHEADVENTURESS.COM)





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