



THE UNITED Summer 2023 BOWHUNTER



Official Publication of The United Bowhunters of Missouri



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Summer 2023

Calendar of Events

July

20th-23rd: MOJam selfbow jamboree, Marshall Bowhunters Club, Marshall MO

August

1st: Start looking for seedticks

September

15th: Missouri archery season opens!!!

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The United Bowhunter, 10276 N FR 183 Fair Grove, MO 65648
or you can email: Dchaverstick@gmail.com Cell phone: (417) 693-5304

President ----- William Brown
Vice President ----- Joel Davis
Executive Secretary ----- Brenda Hudson

Membership ----- Brenda Hudson

Graphic Designer ----- Elise Haverstick
Elise.Haverstick@gmail.com

Editor ----- Darren Haverstick
dchaverstick@gmail.com

Webmaster ----- Darren Haverstick
dchaverstick@gmail.com

It is the purpose of The United Bowhunters of Missouri to support and upgrade the sport of bowhunting and foster a spirit of sportsmanship.

The United Bowhunter is published quarterly by The United Bowhunters of Missouri for the membership. This publication is a public forum available to the members to voice their ideas, concerns and to share their experiences.

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Fair Grove, MO 65648

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— On the Cover —

UBM member, Greg Posten, with his hard-won Gould's gobbler.

deadlines for submitting copy and pictures to The United Bowhunter
Mar. 10th, June 10th, Sept. 10th, Dec. 10th



AS I AM WRITING THIS, the Rendezvous is just days away. By the time you read this, I hope many of you attended our Rendezvous in Marshall, MO and enjoyed sharing our hunting tradition with others. No doubt there will be stories of hog hunts, turkey hunts, and bear hunts from the last couple

of months. The diversity of our organization is why I enjoy UBM so much. In hunting circles and in our society, someone convinced us that we all need to be the same, but that is not true at all. Some of us hunt only whitetails in Missouri, while others hunt multiple species of big game in multiple states. Some of us use longbows with wooden arrows, while some of us use recurves with carbon arrows. Some of us enjoy public land, while others have access to private land to hunt. Some of us enjoy hunting hogs over bait, while others of us enjoy the challenge of turkey hunting.

The rich diversity of our life experiences and passions makes us a tremendous club, poised to share the desired challenge of our hunting tradition. As we are well into the 21st century now, diversity in

hunting is wider now than ever. Let's remember and embrace how diverse each of us can be, as we rub shoulders with others as we represent The United Bowhunters of Missouri organization.

May this summer be a time of reflection, preparation, and enjoyment.

■
William R. Brown


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I HAVE BEEN HUNTING TURKEYS FOR ALMOST 50 YEARS.

My wife's uncle, Leroy Braungardt got me started and we hunted every spring starting in Florida, trying to hunt all four species in the US. Now there are limited tags for the Gould's in AZ but back then you had to go to Mexico. In all the turkey hunting I have done this spring, I never had a recovery quite like this one. With turkey, an inch can make the difference in getting the bird and not.

The first day of this year's season was spent without hearing a gobble. The second morning started the same. But lots of deer activity, with 20 plus moving around in front of my blind. Then I saw a couple deer take off running and I saw the culprits, two coyotes come up to 20 yards of my blind. I started to draw when they spooked.

I did a couple series of calls and thought I heard a gobble, so I called again and got a response. I'm looking through the deer and see a black object that I'm sure is a turkey and I call some more. He works my way and before long I see it is a gobbler with a nice beard.

There were two long beards and five jakes working toward me, the

first long beard gets to 20 yards. I'm ready and release my arrow. Thump, and he runs five feet and lies down. Thinking it is a mortal hit, I wait for the others to leave as they have no idea what just happened.

After ten minutes I start to get out of my blind and the turkey's head pops up and he jumps into flight with my arrow in him, one leg hanging, and he flies across the river.

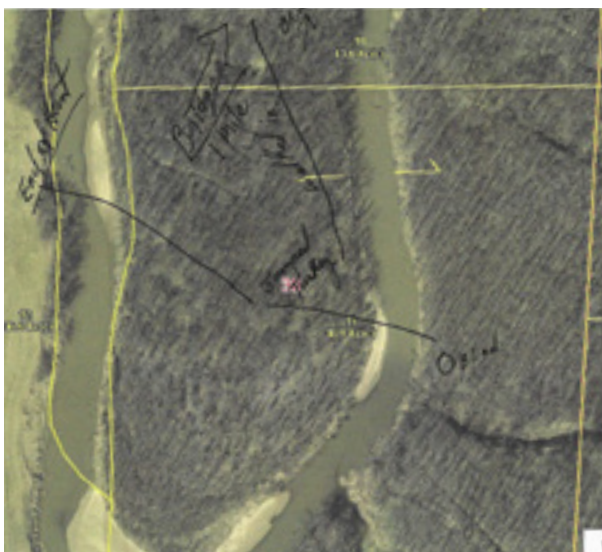
The river makes a big U on my property and I own the other side. Normally no problem but the river was up and I didn't feel safe crossing it. At 71 going on 72, I think things through a little better than I did when I was 20 something.

The problem now is to get to where he landed. I have to go back to my truck and drive five miles to the bridge to be able to get to him. So that's what I do. I cross the bridge and now I have a mile walk to where I marked where he flew across. I get there and the grass in there is over knee-high, so I start

walking back and forth through the woods. On the third pass at four feet, the turkey jumps into flight again still heading west with my arrow still in tow, leg dropped, and crosses the river again. Not back where he came from but the U in the river came into play again. Now you guessed it, I have to go back to my truck and drive five miles back.



This time he crossed on my hunting buddy which I have permission to hunt. I lost sight of the turkey as he crossed so I wasn't sure on exactly where he went. When I get there, the field hasn't been tilled yet so there is some grass in the field but not much to hide in. I look and think well maybe he went all the way across the field. So I check it out but nothing. I walk back to the river and look where I saw him last. There is only about a five-yard stretch of grass and a few trees so as a last-ditch effort I get right on the river bank, just in case he fell into the river. I go about sixty yards, turn and start walking back. I was within feet of reaching the end of this patch and I see a white flag (my four fletch arrow) sticking straight up. I'm only six feet from it. I take a small step and pounce on the turkey. Taking no more chances, I take my knife and end the hunt!! I drove or walked 13 miles to go 300 yards. ■



IT WAS A COLD FALL EVENING as I found my way to my favorite chair with a hot cup of joe. I had noticed the release of a new short film by Donnie Vincent called “Winds of Adak” that drew my interest. As I watched the fantastic piece of cinema, I was continuously reminded of one thing, the kill is but a small snippet of an extraordinary picture. Although filling our tags is the goal, so many things get taken for granted leading up to that moment. Things that directly contribute to our success in the woods. Have we lost touch with the lifestyle of a traditional hunter?

Growing up in small town USA, I had no shortage of hunters to converse with and hear tall tales of their backwoods exploits. Although I enjoyed such comradery, I quickly began to realize the deference between hunters of my parent’s and grandparent’s era to those closer in age to me. The old timers spoke of their adventures as just that, an adventure. They would talk of their old equipment, the truck they had back then, the hunting lands they cut their teeth on, and so on. Even to this day I find myself being able to paint a vivid picture in my mind while I listen to the old boys, almost as if I’m hunting right there with them. All the while, younger hunters spoke of their hunts as mighty triumph over an insignificant critter. How they killed the animal with such ease and what they don’t like about the animal whose life they just took. Comments like “I wanted a bigger one” or “just a stupid doe” seemed present in these stories. Simply put, a complete lack of respect towards the animals they hunt.

Being into my adult years with children and life experience, I

recognize that I had many less than ethical moments in the woods as a youngster. Phases where I looked at animals as beasts and saw hunting as a hobby rather than a lifestyle. I am now in an ever-evolving state where my approach towards hunting is not simply a seasonal thing, but I recognize it is who I am. I moved past simply saying that “I hunt” to saying, “I am a hunter.” This epiphany altered my mindset almost entirely and opened my eyes to the weight of this life path.

The pivotal point that I believe one must hyper focus on is that we are not just chasing an animal, we are doing everything in our power to take the life of a living creature, to kill. That one detail is largely under emphasized. At the end of the day our goal is to harvest the animal quickly with as little suffering as possible. Only when this reality is fully grasped can one begin to understand how serious it is. Such responsibility requires dedication and confidence that cannot be developed by treating it as a hobby. Practice becomes a serious matter with intent of growth and honing your trade. Gear choice is no longer about what is cool or trending, but what you can trust to not fail you, resulting in a miss or wounded animal. It all begins with the reality of your intentions.

I believe that a hunter must possess a genuine love for nature and all its inhabitants. Learning to find beauty in the smallest things makes you present, and it turns what used to be a simple outing into an escape from reality. I noticed this growing experience start to become prominent when I was no longer bored while on stand. Twiddling thumbs and fidgeting

was replaced with bird watching and endless entertainment from the local squirrel population. I stopped seeing whitetail deer as something only associated with putting a tag on, to a truly graceful and magnificent creature that I could watch forever.

Another fundamental mark of the hunter that was seen more predominantly in those old timers, was that of being a woodsman. The knowledge of wilderness skills and natural resources. Knowing how to start a fire or craft a shelter for survival are both things of equal or greater importance than what arrow you should shoot. Not all that long ago a map and compass were as common in the pack of an outdoorsman as a knife. Although phones and GPS are useful luxuries, they should never come before the knowledge of land navigation and basic survival skills. Even the shortest trips into the woods have resulted in long, cold nights due to being ill prepared. Less intense aspects of woodsmanship, such as tree and plant identification, are very beneficial to the hunter. It allows you to quickly spot potential food sources of the animals you are after and how you can hunt that food source. All these skills have many benefits and make you an asset to be around in the backwoods. But even more importantly, they unlock new appreciation for the wild places.

Practice is something I often see neglected by the younger hunters. The bows get broke out and dusted off a couple months prior to season and then hardly shot throughout the year. Going back to my earlier topic of understanding the gravity of killing an animal, that should bring the importance

of intentional practice to our eyes. Training must begin the moment season ends and never stop. Do you think pro football players leave the cleats hung up until season starts? Absolutely not. Fall is the Superbowl of this blood-sport and failure in the form of wounded animals is not the goal. As hunters our entire year and off season must revolve around preparing for that single moment when our prey is before us, to do our part with precision. This does not go to say practice must be all business and no fun. Shooting at the local range or in the backyard is quite relaxing and a great way to connect with fellow hunters and have some laughs at each other's expense. But when it is time to get serious and prepare, be focused on improvement.

Lastly, carrying the title of "Hunter" comes with the duty of being a good ambassador. Being respectful towards fellow hunters

and non-hunters alike. Having a servant's heart to help others and to pass information freely is what sets the greatest of hunters apart. In times like these where division is so present, we must strive to remain united. Equal in importance is respecting the animals through how we conduct ourselves after the hunt. If you are going to take a photo with your trophy, clean it up the best you can to make it look tasteful to anyone who sees the pictures later. Don't parade your harvest around town on the back of your truck or trailer for the world to see. Even if you think it makes no difference to others and it causes no harm, many people do not care to see those things and as a hunter, you represent all of us. Its not just about you.

In conclusion, I think it is important to note that most hunters are good ambassadors. Even when some well-known figures may cast bad light on the community, the

majority are genuinely striving to do the right thing. It also brings me great pride to associate myself with the traditional bowhunting crowd. Ever since picking up a stick bow, I have been taken back by the purest nature of all the guys and gals I come in contact with. You will also see organizations such as Compton Traditional Bowhunters and Professional Bowhunter Society that are doing great things for both us as hunters and for wildlife on a national scale. But I charge all hunters regardless of method to examine themselves and the "why" behind their approach towards the outdoors. To get involved with state and local clubs to strengthen the community and represent bowhunting in a positive light. In doing so it is my hope that we are all able to understand the bigger picture and reconnect to more traditional ways of hunting lifestyle.




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Mike Yancey
Bowyer

NOT QUITE SURE WHY IT'S CALLED THE OFF SEASON. It's easy to keep busy, preparing for the next year's hunting season. Just trying to find time to practice between work and family commitments. Then there's tinkering with your gear, bows, arrows, packs, and stands. Moving stands and moving them again.

It helps to have good, generous hunting buddies. I feel blessed to have both.

I'm never happy with my hunting pack, and I'm always telling myself I'm going to downsize. But my pack

always seems to be as heavy as last year, if not weighing even a little more.

I have to make new arrows for the upcoming season (Lots More) I'm becoming afraid I might have an addiction. But there are a lot worse things I could be doing so it's all good. A shout out to Feathers-n-Wood for some great cedar shafts. My arrows are never as pretty as some of you make but seem to fly well. I call them practical just to make myself feel better.

Or some leather working projects might be in order. You have to tinker with your bow or bows, or if you're lucky and have a new one, to play around with. Making new strings, or maybe just new string silencers, beaver or maybe puff balls this year. Those rubber



spiders look cool too. You have to try out all of them of course. Adjusting nock placement; trying to find that perfect combination.

Maybe, like myself, a little bow fishing is in order. I love to poke some big carp. Well, I might be babbling on a bit too much, but there's always lots to do in the Off Season. And I would be very neglectful not to take the time through it all not to say "THANK YOU" to my very understanding wife. For always putting up with and encouraging my Year Round Season. ■



>>> Another Spring

Steve North

ANOTHER SPRING HAS FINALLY GOTTEN HERE AND THAT MEANS TURKEY SEASON. Winter wasn't that bad but I'm glad it's over. I've been checking on few of my areas that I like to turkey hunt and scratching of leaves are visible. My setup mostly is a chair, some netting in front, tree behind me, and cedar branches when possible. I hardly use decoys at all because I've just had bad luck at times with them. As for my shot on turkeys, I'm not good enough to head shoot, lol. I'll only take a shot in the spine, and he has to be looking away or he gets to walk. I want to break his spine.

I'm not a big fan of pop-up blinds because I like to see. So opening morning comes, and I'm set up giving a few soft calls when the woods exploded with two gobblers under 100 yards. As they get closer, I see them coming my way. Now this next part, a lot if not all, will say I'm crazy, but it's a Steve North thing. They come to

40 yards and I see this massive beard on one; he's a stud. I tell myself, "I want you!" And then he goes into strut and I say, "Crap!" All his middle tail feathers are gone. I guess he must have gotten shot at during youth season.

I say to him, "Well, buddy, you get a pass from me." So he and his buddy mess around me for a while and, yes, he gives me my shot but I won't take it. I like those fans. His buddy was good, but I could not get a chance at him. I told this to a couple of good friends of mine and they said you don't eat feathers. Lol. I told them I won't shoot a Boone buck with half a rack and turkey with no fan. It's just me.



So over the next seven days I hunted until 12:45 each day. I had a few close encounters but just couldn't get my spine shot. And, yes, Featherless does give me two more shots in that time frame. On Day Eight I'm set back up where I was on the opening morning. A single gobbler is 50 yards from me, gobbling his head off when all of a sudden, he takes off running. Two coyotes came running through. Damn!

An hour or so later the tom comes back, gobbles again, and then takes off again. What the heck? Then I see two gobblers come running in and chase off the single gobbler. And sure enough, the two are Featherless and his buddy. I'm not too happy with them because by now I know their routine. They mess around for a few minutes and leave with a hen.

At 11:30 I make a few soft calls and 15 minutes later I can see a good bird quietly easing through the woods in my direction. He finally gets to me and is looking for the hen. Experience tells me he won't be here long with no decoy. He turns away and I start to draw. He sees something and I freeze. We are both frozen for almost a minute before he finally turns his head away. I have a feather in the



center of his back picked as my spot and the arrow is gone. I don't remember shooting, but I see it hit him dead center. The bird drops and doesn't move. I mean doesn't move at all! I just look and say, "This never happens." They always flop and try to run or something. I'm only 12 yards away and after a minute he flops around. I'm by him now and do what we need to do until he's gone. I actually started shaking a little. I haven't done that in years on anything. I guess as we get long in the tooth you start to appreciate what it is to still do what we take for granted as youngsters. I picked him up and said, "Man, you're heavy!" I sent a picture to my son, Robert, who immediately called me. This is a special bird. I got home and my wife said, "You got one, didn't you." I said, "Yep, a big one." He weighed 24.5 pounds, my second biggest.

I wasn't planning on writing this story, but Darren sent me a text asking for it. So as I sit here in the woods, waiting for a gobbler to gobble, I have finished it so here you go, Darren. Thank you for all you do for the UBM as well as your daughter and all the officers. ■

AS MOST OF YOU KNOW, MY FAMILY AND THE GANG ARE STUMP SHOOTERS. We stump shoot weekly and do attend some 3D shoots. I've had 3D targets at home and they turned into fixed targets requiring maintenance. Like most, I do have a fixed target. However, it doesn't offer the challenge or variation we look for when there is a group shooting.

I started carrying a small target that can be used almost anywhere. It's a tennis ball. A new bright fluorescent ball is easy to set up (throw) and it stands out. It's best if you shoot judos to avoid losing arrows under the grass or leaves. I have a yard or field which allows us to roam, throwing the ball different directions and distances. It doesn't take long to notice that you don't want to be the last to shoot. If the ball gets hit, you might be shooting at twice the distance as the person who hit the ball. You never know what direction or distance the ball will travel. That somehow adds to the challenge and kidding that we all enjoy. Setup and take down is easy. Just pick up the ball.

Keeping the fun in archery and get togethers is what it's about! ■

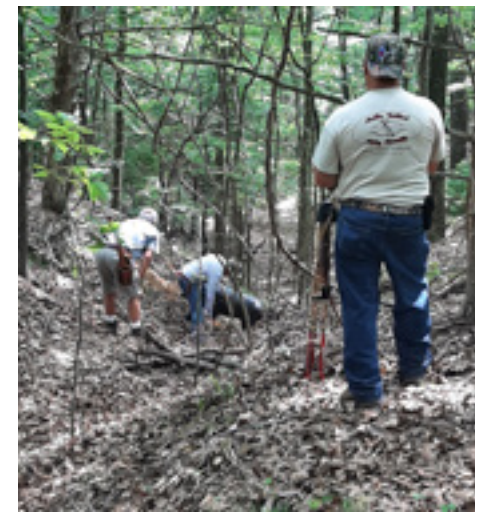


THE ANNUAL JERRY PIERCE MEMORIAL SHOOT WAS HELD in Mississippi the weekend of May 19th-21st. We all camped at the Army Corps of Engineers Enid Lake. If you need a great place to camp in Mississippi that is the place to go! Some attendants arrived earlier to fish and/or relax.

Saturday evening was cool for May as we feasted on elk burgers, pork ribs, and groundhog. We also had brussels sprouts, broccoli and rice casserole, and cucumbers. Dessert consisted of pies, brownies, and cinnamon monkey bread. This is just a sampling of the food at a typical UBM gathering. After everyone finished eating, we sat around the firepit listening to awesome music. We even had camping neighbor that came and played with Rodney.

The guys shot Saturday in the morning and some again in the afternoon. They also shot again Sunday. It was a new course and much easier to walk than in the

past. Others just sat around and swapped stories. Those that went were the Dickersons, Petersons, Calahans, Novotnys, Bandermans and Hudsons. Ruthann Dickerson's brother and sister-in-law and their family were also there. We also spent time with Chris Rackley and Lenny Pierce. ■



I'M NOT SURE WHY, but I have wanted to hunt Gould's turkeys with a bow for a long time now. I think it's a combination of several things; their beautiful snow-white tipped tail feathers, their aggressive behavior, and the exotic locale they live in, the high desert of northern Mexico and southern Arizona. An interesting tidbit I learned when researching this hunt is that the Gould's is the largest of the six subspecies and it is not uncommon for a mature gobbler to weigh 30 pounds. Another tidbit, they have small to non-existent spurs.

Like a lot of game animals in the USA, I would probably die before I ever drew a tag to hunt a Gould's in Arizona so I started looking at reputable outfitters that offered the Mexican version. I settled on Michael Murray with El Corral Hunting Guide Services and booked the trip with him over two years ago. My good friend, Greg Posten, would accompany me on the adventure

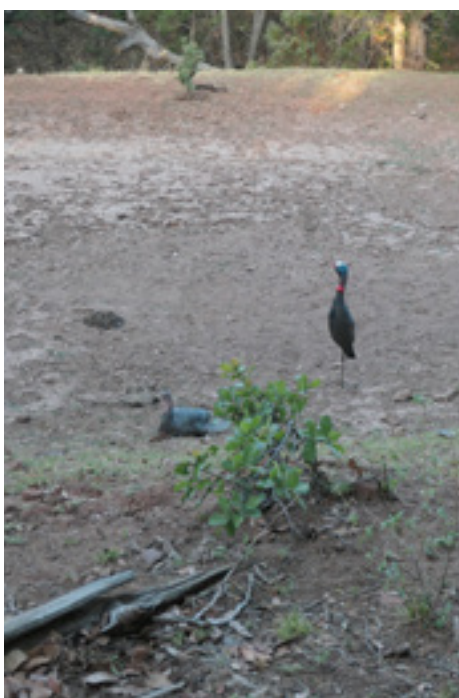


Hunters and guides

and we were supposed to arrive in Chihuahua City in late May of 2022. Unfortunately, wildfires in the area caused Michael to cancel that hunt so we rebooked for mid-May of this year. Greg showed up at my house on the afternoon of May 10th and my wife, Leah, dropped us off at the Springfield airport to begin our journey.

Traveling on a plane these days is a lesson in patience and being able to adapt your travel plans. After

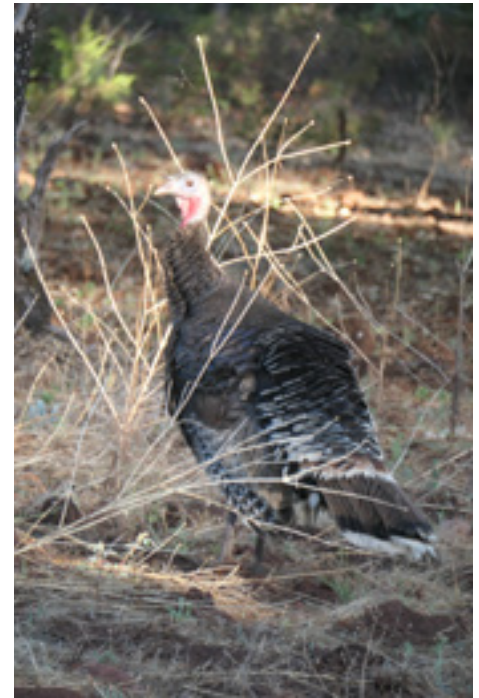
missing our flight to Chihuahua City due to weather delays, Greg and I spent the night in Dallas. We arrived at our destination airport the next day the same time as the other hunters in our party so no time in the field was lost. Our hunt host was Fernando Rodriguez and he and his daughter loaded us up in a van for the trip to camp. Unbeknownst to us hunters, we were in for an "experience". We left the airport around 1:45 in



A view from my tree



The tom's point of view



We saw a lot of these.

the afternoon and didn't pull into camp until 9:30 that evening and the best way to describe that trip is this: Imagine vertically mounting a jackhammer into the bed of an old pickup. Now imagine somebody strapping you to that jackhammer and turning it on while someone else simultaneously starts driving that pickup as fast as they can while wearing a blindfold. Now imagine doing this for a solid eight hours. Note to self: Always pack Dramamine when going to Mexico.

Our camp consisted of a two-story cabin nestled in the mountains around the Copper Canyon basin. A generator supplied electricity and we had running water for most of our needs. We were at about 7000 feet elevation with very dry air. Fernando told me the region typically received around three inches of annual rainfall which really made us feel "special" because it rained on us two days out of five. The mornings were quite cool with one dipping into the high 20's but the afternoons warmed up into the 70s.

The first day of hunting started well before daylight. We had a light breakfast of granola, yogurt, toast and fresh fruit. Fernando paired the hunters with their guides, and we loaded up in 4-wheel drive vehicles to get to our hunting spots. Greg



Home, sweet home

and I were the only bowhunters in camp and we had made it very clear beforehand what was required for us to have a chance at success. Ideally, we would be hunting from blinds with decoys out front to distract the toms. Both of us had packed a jake and hen decoy because we weren't sure what camp would have. Fernando and Perez were the guides for Greg and me. We drove for about 20 minutes on a road that used a very liberal definition of that word before Perez stopped and Fernando and I got out. It was just getting light, and I could make out a few details of the terrain we were standing in. On the left side of the road, it was mainly forest and on the right, it appeared to be an open area strewn

with granite boulders. I grabbed my decoys and gear, and Fernando grabbed a single chair from the back of the truck. I thought that was odd, so I asked him if my chair was in the blind we were going to. Imagine my surprise when he answered that we wouldn't be using a blind and that I was just going to have to hide in the brush.

By now we can hear a couple birds gobbling in the distance and I am just a tad upset. I reiterated to Fernando that I was hunting with a recurve and that I needed those toms CLOSE in order to kill one. Doing that without a blind was going to be a mighty tall order to fill. He seemed rather non-plussed by it all, so I got busy trying to figure out how and where to set



Rough and beautiful country



Finding a turkey in this is tough!

up. Like the old saying goes, “If your guide hands you lemons, you just make lemonade.” Or beat him to death with a turkey decoy, or something like that.

Fernando had chosen the left side of the road to hunt on and about 15 yards in there was a dry pond. Fernanda said the birds came out of the woods on the far side of the pond and walked across the pond bed. The bank on the east side of the pond was a hill and up about 10 yards from the pond bed was a big pine tree. I placed my decoys in the pond bed and hunkered up by that tree to start calling. If the birds came from the correct direction, and if the tom focused on my decoys, and if a thousand other things went just right, I just might be able to pull this off. Fernando set up about 15 yards behind me and we both started calling.

For a few minutes, the only bird interested in our love songs was a tom to the south of us on the other side of the road. He was a long way off but he’d gobble every time I called and it sounded like he was coming closer. Of course, where I was at was not good for a longbeard

coming from that direction, so I started gathering up my stuff to move. On the north bank of the pond was a little cedar tree and it would offer me some good cover for the bird coming in. However, just as I stood up to move, a tom gobbled from 25 yards away on the far side of the pond. Where did he come from?!?! I quickly knelt down, checked my arrow, and putted to him softly a couple of times.

The tom came right in gobbling, and in full strut. As I watched him

coming towards me, all I could think of was “I might actually make this work!” He went up the hill behind me just a bit and I could hear him drumming and walking around. He was only 10 feet away and I dared not move a muscle. Ole Tom finally committed to the decoys and while I hunkered down on the left side of my tree, he strutted by just on the other side. I could have easily bonked him on the head with my bow, he was that close.

As he walked down into the pond bed in full strut, I drew my bow and picked a spot right at his wing butt. He was oblivious to my presence, and I had all the time in the world to concentrate on my shot placement. I let go of the string and watched my arrow hit its mark a mere seven yards away.

And that’s when things all went to pieces. Instead of me watching the bird roll over and start flopping, I saw my arrow get almost no penetration. The only thing I can figure out is that I hit him right in that knot of bone and gristle where the wing attaches to the body. In any event, he ran off with 90% of the shaft hanging out from under



These ladies worked their tails off to keep us fed!

his wing. He crossed the road and then took flight across the boulder field. Fernando jumped up to see where the tom was going as I just sat there sick to my stomach. I had done everything correctly and still had an undesirable outcome. I just hoped against hope that a miracle would occur, and we would find him dead over there somewhere.

After about an hour of looking, Fernando and I met back up to compare notes. Fernando said he found the bird, alive with my arrow still hanging out of him. He was going to put the bird down with his shotgun when a cow came out of the brush and spooked the tom. He took flight and disappeared into the Mexican bush. I guess he wasn't hurt too badly.

Greg also had an opportunity that morning but had some bow/blind contact that caused his tom to run off before he was able to take a good shot. At least we knew that we could get the birds in close enough. We all arrived back to camp a little before noon and sat down to the first of what would be many fine meals. One of the hunters, Justin, had shotgunned a nice bird so we celebrated his success as the kitchen ladies tried to feed us to death.

The rest of the hunt consisted of us hunting from blinds, usually around feeders. Greg and I both saw a bunch of hens and jakes, but toms were in short supply. Greg did end up killing one on the third morning of the hunt, so I was really happy for him. I had one more

opportunity but also suffered from bow/blind interference that resulted in wonky arrow flight. We found out later that the group that hunted in that camp the week before had taken eight birds. That certainly explained the lack of opportunities for us.

Overall, the hunt was a good experience, and I would use the outfitter again now that I know what to expect in camp. The guides and cooking staff were very friendly and you could eat yourself into a coma if you were so inclined. Also, if you kill your first bird and want to hunt for a second, you don't have to pay for the second one unless you are successful. That is almost unheard of. ■

2023 UBM Javelina Hunt

Dan Novotny

HERE I SIT ON A ROCKY, BRUSHY, COVERED-WITH-THORNS HILLSIDE in West Texas once again. It's been two years since my first adventure here and I'm amazed at the difference since the last trip. Two years ago, it was sparse and dry with a total of about four inches of rain for the year. Last year they had a good year, as told by the rancher, with 14" of rain. Here I am looking at all the yucca plants starting to bloom, the prickly pear was succulent and juicy, and the grass was tall. Different kinds of cactus and flowers blooming everywhere. It made the inhospitable walking on rugged, rocky terrain more tolerable.

There I heard it again. The sounds of a couple javelina squabbling just around the curve of the hill and down in the ravine. I knew just where they should be. I kept a close eye out as I eased over to peer over the edge of the ravine. The brush in bottom of ravine is so thick I couldn't make out anything even with binoculars. I texted Mike McDonald, who I knew was headed this way somewhere, that I





heard the javelina below me. As I waited and watched I saw a side by side coming down the mountain trail toward me. It was a group of aoudad hunters coming back down. They came by me and didn't see me until they were about five feet away. Pretty effective camo, I think.

Mike made his way down on the opposite side of the ravine as I went down my side. Together we found NOTHING! They were gone, who knows where, vanished like the little ghosts they are. Thus began a number of days of fruitless pursuit of hearing them but not finding them, or seeing a quick glimpse and then they were gone, which was Mike's story.

Back at camp that first morning we found that the newest member of the group had scored on one. Rich's son, Steve, scored on one the first morning he hunted here with his compound. Later that afternoon he got a second one. Wow, we're

thinking this is a good start or is it beginner's luck?

As the days went on, we began to believe it was luck. Sightings were sparse and usually quick.

The javelina were spread out in small groups and scattered in the hillsides. The prickly pear was being chewed on and were juicy. Dave found a group up on a level



bench where you could look down on camp but couldn't close the deal. We just kept checking new spots to find sign. It was evident that they were all over on the hills but finding them for a shot was tough.

Come Thursday, Mike and I went back to the area we started off in. Mike and Greg had been in that area the afternoon before and Greg had seen some up above him at several hundred yards. I had an idea that they weren't spooked and might be around there, but could I find them? I moved across the mountain side toward a steep ravine that I had seen a lot of sign in previously, and eased up so I could look down in without being spotted. At the edge of the ravine, I heard a couple of javelina squalling with each other high above me on the hill. I started to make my way up towards where I thought the noise came from. In this country there's not much of a way to hurry with the rocky loose footing, especially for an old guy with two knees replaced. About halfway up I spotted movement through the brown grass. My first impression was it looked just like the top of a groundhog



running into a bush. I quickly realized this was a half grown javelina.

Then just that quick, two more bigger ones appeared above me to my left and they moved into the cover of that big green bush. One of them had spotted me and came out the downhill side of the bush to take a closer look at me. I hadn't been moving when they ran in, so I think that helped.

So here I am with an arrow nocked and a nice javelina staring at me at less than ten yards with his hair all raised up. Just that quickly, I drew and shot taking a quartering-to-me shot. The arrow hit and he ran into the bush with a lot of brush cracking and rustling around. This only lasted a few seconds and everything was quiet.

At this point, a second big javelina came around the bush and was staring at me with hackles raised. When he turned from



head-on to broadside, I took a shot. The arrow hit him perfectly left and right but low. As soon as it hit it bounced back down toward me with the broadhead end broken off. I watched the javelina run uphill along with the small one and another one.

I made my way up around the bush and saw the first javelina laying there dead. He only lasted mere seconds. I then went uphill trying to follow the second one and finding a very sparse blood trail. Javelina are notoriously hard to trail. I managed to follow about 30 yards and lost the trail so I continued uphill as I was getting near the top. After searching with no luck, I headed back down to retrieve my dead one. I went down to the bush and went around it only to find a bloody spot but no javelina. So now I'm puzzled and quite concerned. I saw a trail making its way away from the

bush and followed the blood sign for maybe 20 yards before losing it again. Being quite upset at these events, I started downhill once again and after going a short way I came around a large bush and saw my arrow I had shot the second one with lying there. I then looked around and realized I had been looking at the wrong bush earlier. I went over and there lay the javelina exactly where I thought he should be. The previous spot was the blood from the second one that I never found.

I texted Mike and directed him to the ravine below me where I just heard more. He stalked it in fine fashion but they were gone again. We then headed for the side-by-side dragging the javi down the hill. Mike came and picked me up and we headed out. I'm staring up at the hillside when he suddenly stops. There is a rattlesnake curled in the road in front of us. Not wanting to

hurt or kill him, I used me walking stick to try to nudge him off the road. What happens? He goes under the side-by-side and ends up coiled up right next to where the driver would step when getting in. Mike tells me, "Keep him occupied while I get in other side". So I did and he was able to get in and back up away from the snake so we could leave. The weather was turning colder, and we hunted Friday morning with no luck. It stayed in the 30's all day with a good wind.

We would pack up and leave early Saturday morning and when we got up there was an inch of heavy wet snow on my truck and it was still coming down. It made for an interesting pack up and drive out on ten miles of Texas red clay roads. A final tally showed the group of eight hunters only took three javelina this trip. ■

Board Members

William Brown, President (2023)
73 Tonka Shady Court
Camdenton, MO 65020
wrbwilderness@hotmail.com
(636) 290-5213

Joel Davis, Vice-President (2024)
110621 S Alley Jackson Road
Grain Valley, MO 64029
jcdavis@hotmail.com
(816) 522-4260

Darren Haverstick, Treasurer (2025)
10276 N Fr. 183
Fair Grove, MO 65648
dchaverstick@gmail.com
(417) 693-5304

Ryan Plummer, Secretary (2024)
2118 Walnut St
Higginsville, MO 64037
ryanplumber9739@gmail.com
(918) 533-1856

Kevin Pickney (2025)
HC 79 Box 2696
Pittsburg, MO 65724
kevin_pinckney@yahoo.com
417-733-3362

Wes McCain (2024)
17339 Business 60
Neosho, MO 64850
wesley.mccain0903@gmail.com
918-964-9726

Bob Burns, (2025)
11507 S. Cave Road
Lone Jack, MO 64070
stonesheep@embarqmail.com
(816) 520-5361

Cody Cass (2023)
10207 Concord School Road
St. Louis, MO 63128
cody_cass@me.com
(314) 680-7900

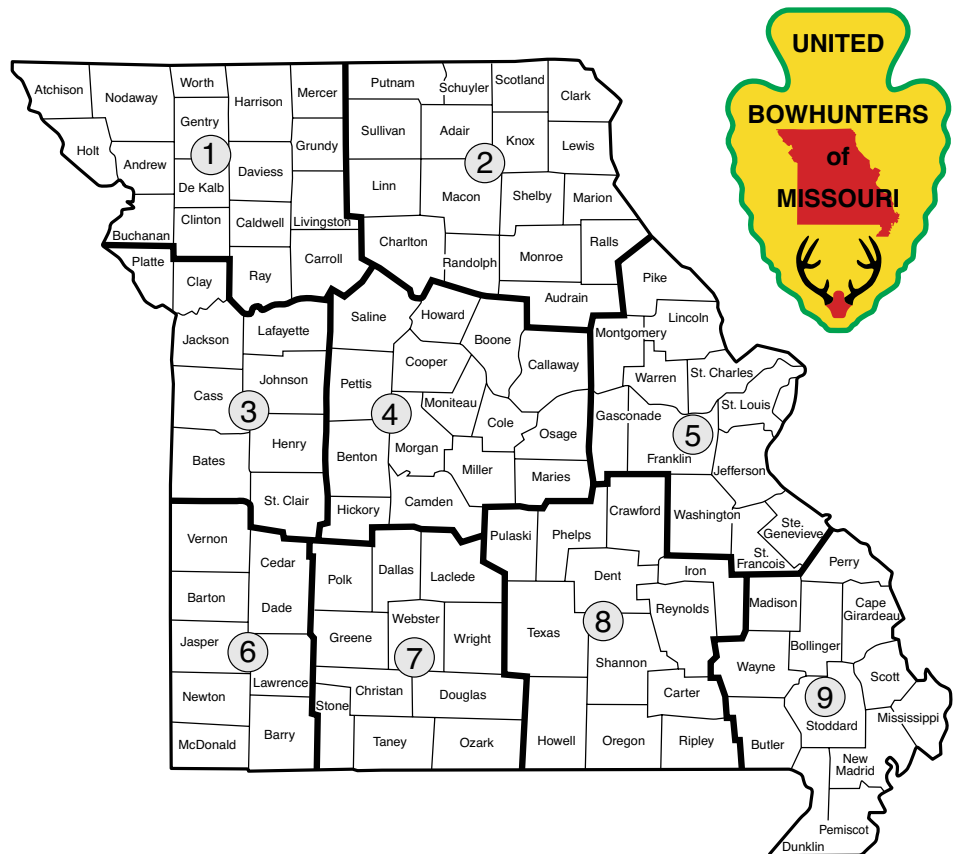
Nicholas Gray (2023)
121 E 32nd St
Sedalia, MO 65301
drnjgray@charter.net
(660) 827-2448

Tom Dickerson, Bowhunter Ed.
226 Country Road 436
Jackson, MO 63755
TRAD_5558@yahoo.com
(573) 243-7113

Elise Haverstick, Graphic Designer
50 Highley Court Apt. 22
Bonne Terre, MO 63628
elise.haverstick@gmail.com
(417) 693-6084

Brenda Hudson, Executive Secretary
24933 Helium Rd.
Newtown, MO 64667
larrydeanhudson@hotmail.com
(660) 794-2591

UBM Contact Information



1. Max Medsker, 22363 State Hwy A. Graham, MO 64455 mjrrmeds@grm.net (660) 254-4558

2. Brandon Snider, 6784 Shelby 472, Shelby, MO 63468 brandonsnider1986@gmail.com (660) 651-4875

3. Open Position

4. Carey Breshears, 33330 HWY AA, Edwards, MO 65326 cgbreshears@gmail.com (573) 347-2670

Rev. Dr. Nicholas J. Gray, 121 E. 32nd Street. Sedalia, MO 65301, 660-827-2448

5. Todd Goodman, 504 Willow Grove Ct., Troy, MO 63379 (636) 528-2278

Steve Bostic, 4234 Dogwood Lake Ct., Wentzville, MO 63385 stevenbostic@yahoo.com
(636) 828-4923

6. Mike Smith, 2512 N. Highview, Joplin, MO 64801 mikesmith.5120@gmail.com (417) 529-9255


7. Darren Haverstick, 10276 N. Farm Rd. 183, Fair Grove, MO 65648 dchaverstick@gmail.com (417) 759-6522

8. Open Position

9. Mike Calahan, 130 Plumwood, Cape Girardeau, MO 63701, kcjc.cal@charter.net, 573-335-3994

Out-of-State Members Representatives:

Byron Whitlock, 105 2nd Street Oswega, KS 67356 bwhitlock620@aol.com (620) 238-3583



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