

Rondeau Bay Waterfowlers' Association

"Jeff Bechard Memorial" Mentored New Hunter Event – 2010

"Waterfowler's measure success by the number of sunrises they witness!" Combine that with "At Rondeau, an east wind stirs the waterfowlers blood!" and you have the makings of our annual event:

The RBWA "Jeff Bechard Memorial" Mentored New Hunter Event!



On Oct 1st and 2nd 2010, The Rondeau Bay Waterfowlers, introduced 34 new hunters to a fabulous outdoor experience at Rondeau Provincial Park. An evening of instruction, capped off by the meeting of mentors and choosing of blinds made for sleepless nights as dreams of widgeon, mallards, teal, and geese, filled the imagination of every participant.

As one father stated, " My son didn't sleep a wink last night! And that was Thursday night!"

Most participants arrived around 5:00. After a quick check at the Park entrance, to make sure all participants had their Ontario Small Game License or their Hunter Apprentice Safety Card and their Migratory Bird Permit, youths and their parents, as well as mentors journeyed to their campsites, quickly setting up before dinner. Dinner, prepared by the world famous RBWA chefs, was served at 5:30.

At 6:00, presentations began, with a great welcoming to all the participants by the RBWA chairman of the event.

A Rondeau Park Interpreter, Laura Penner, informed participants about the “gem” that is Rondeau Park. Particular attention was given to the threatened and endangered species whose habitat and presence is found within the Park. Truly it is one of those rare areas found on the Great Lakes.

No stranger to the “Youth Hunt” Canadian Wildlife Service Enforcement Officer, Steve Evans, provided an overview of his job and a reminder of the concerns which he deals with on a day-to-day basis using a very unique video in the process. Many new hunters had never seen a “market gun” and were surprised at its size. As well, he introduced the apprentices to the high tech equipment which is used by enforcement personnel. Interesting? You bet! The only sound heard during the presentation was the call of geese as they passed over, saluting the participants!



Another highlight of the night was the assigning of mentors and choosing of blinds, which was carried out by a lottery system. How lucky are ya? Mentors discussed hunter experience with the apprentices and ascertained that all the required equipment was available. Apprentices were instructed to ask any and all questions regarding waterfowling. Special thanks go to mentors who provided guns and other equipment for the new hunters.

It’s amazing how quickly the new apprentices crawl into their sleeping quarters!! By 10:00 the only sound heard was from other campers within the campground!!

Breakfast was served at the Waterfowl Office at 4:00 am. At that time each mentor was given a box of shells and ear plugs for their protégé.

Transportation was provided by mentors or by RBWA. Many were very impressed with the new hyper drive and long tailed motors and boats which moved apprentices and their mentors safely to their chosen blinds.

The day was coloured by rain. It started a 3:30am and never let up until late the next day. However, everyone had lots of shooting, although getting the birds to fall was another question. Many apprentices went through the box of shells provided,



as well as extra shells carried by their mentors. In this event, mentors are not allowed to shoot.

Phone calls were made to a number of blinds. Not one apprentice wanted to come in early! Hunting, began at legal shooting time, and finished at 10:00am with everyone returning to the Pavilion for a hot lunch proved by Delta Waterfowl (Kingsville).

As Chairman, I was concerned that the weather would create a poor experience for apprentices. However, as I walked through the Pavilion at the conclusion of the hunt, there was noise and there was laughter. Lots of it! That said, "Winner!" to me! Oh, the stories!! Flight after flight of widgeon appeared magically over the decoys, only to be dispersed by the apprentices. It is amazing how the sight of birds coming in can warm even the coldest fingers!!

Two of the great stories involved a record number of shells being fired to bring down two ducks!! Who were those mentors?? Another pair of apprentices confirmed the story about missing a goose which the mentor failed to identify until it was almost through the decoys!! Yes, it was raining!! But, it was the laughter and the smiles in all of this that said, "Thank you"!!

To conclude the day, presentations were made by a number of sponsors, without whom this event would not be possible. As well, a duck cleaning lesson taught the apprentices how to clean their birds. All birds were cleaned before leaving the Park (leaving a wing attached.)



Special thanks go to our sponsors: Barney's Boats

in Erieau, GK World Championship Calls, G&K Archery, Delta Waterfowl, St. Lawrence Outfitters, Kent Cartridge Company of Canada, the Staff at Rondeau Provincial Park, Canadian Wildlife Service, and Webbed Connection.

More than one hundred people worked to make this day a success. Without that manpower, this event would not happen!! Thanks to the mentors, the cooks, RBWA helpers, parents and participants who made for a super event.

Get ready for next year!!

For info on the **2011 RBWA "Jeff Bechard Memorial" Mentored New Hunter Event!** contact a member of the RBWA.