



www.virginiabearhunters.org

Dedicated to the preservation of hunting bear with dogs
and to sound wildlife management principles

MEETING NOTICE

The next membership meeting of the Virginia Bear Hunters Association will be held at 2 p.m. on Sunday, May 22, 2016 in the upstairs meeting room at Sportsman's Warehouse. The address is 3550 Ferncliff Avenue NW, Roanoke, VA 24017. Directions: From Interstate 81, take exit 143 onto I-581/220S toward Roanoke. Merge onto Hershberger Road NW via exit 3W. Take the second right onto Ferncliff Avenue and you will see Sportsman's Warehouse. For those who want to allow some time to browse the store, it is open on Sundays from 10 am to 6 pm.

Message from David Steger, President

I have been a member of VBHA since the early '70s and I have served as an officer or director for the past 14 years. I don't think the majority of our members know how important this Association is to our sport. Other members and I have attended many meetings lobbying the VDGIF staff and Board for changes that we think will prolong our sport and expand our opportunities, while safeguarding the healthy population of bear we now have. At these meetings, we see many groups promoting other forms of hunting, trapping, fishing, wildlife watching, etc., but VBHA is the ONLY organization fighting solely for bear hound hunting. Without our influence, I shudder to think how long our sport will last. Not only is hound hunting the primary target of anti-hunting groups, other hunters will gladly accept more opportunities at our expense and many would like to see hounds banned as a legal hunting method.

I'm delighted by the number of young bear hound hunters I see at our field trials, participating in youth day, training season and kill season, sending in harvest data for recognition, applying for our scholarship. It also seems that there are more and more bear hound hunters in the woods during training and kill season. So, I know that enthusiasm for our sport is not dying. However, I am frustrated by the lack of members, especially young adults, stepping up to leadership in our Association, and I am discouraged by the number of bear hound hunters who are not members in our Association. Wake up! Do your part! Spread the word and encourage other bear hunters to join.

While I will not be a candidate for VBHA President this year, I want to stay involved with the Association and assist the new leadership in any way I can. But, it is time to pass the torch! Wayne Ball and I will be your Nominating Committee for this year's election. We want and need to hear from members who want to become involved, learn the ropes, and help prolong our sport. Or, maybe you know of someone in your area who you think would be a good candidate. Call one of us and share your opinions. We must have a completed slate of officers by early July, so don't put it off.

2016 VBHA Election

The VBHA Bylaws require elections to be held in even-numbered years and call for a Nominating Committee to construct a slate of officers to be presented to the membership in our 3rd quarter newsletter. The purpose of the Nominating Committee is to make sure we have at least one candidate for each position, but additional nominations will be taken from the floor at our 3rd quarter meeting in Tazewell. David Steger and Wayne Ball have agreed to serve on the Nominating Committee. VBHA Members who are interested in serving on the Board or who know of a member they would like to have considered, should call David (540) 384-6506 or Wayne (276) 964-5961.



VBHA Recognition of Youth Bear Harvests

We are pleased to recognize and celebrate VBHA youth who harvested a bear during the 2015-16 season. At our membership meeting on May 22nd each of these young bear hunters will be presented a plaque to memorialize their achievement. We are grateful to these youth for sending us their harvest information.

Coy Brown
Dakota Coe
Emily Crouch
Jenna Entsminger
Damian Hensley
Zachary Lewis

Juliana O'Neill
Megan Templeton
Jenny Thomas
Kyle Setliff
Patricia Walke
Shane Watson

VBHA Big Bear Contest

Thanks to our members who entered their 2015-16 bear in our "Big Bear Contest."

Congratulations to the winner, **Patricia Walke**, who harvested a 561 pound bear.

2016 VBHA Scholarship

We are pleased with the number of applications received for VBHA's 2016 scholarship. The scholarship committee had finalized the scoring criteria before the application was posted on our website, and we will be scoring and announcing the winner in the next few weeks.

Susan Steger, Scholarship Chairman

VBHA'S 2016 RAFFLE

We are raffling a Garmin Alpha 100 with TT15 collar, to be drawn at our Fall Field Trial. Tickets are \$5 each or 3 for \$10 and may be purchased at any VBHA event or meeting, or from any officer or director.

VBHA's Position on Forest Stewardship

The Virginia Bear Hunters Association participated in the Lower Cowpasture Restoration and Management Project, the management plan for over 100,000 acres of Forest Service land in the Western Mountains in Alleghany and Bath County. We look forward to participating in the new Northern Shenandoah Restoration and Management plan in North Western Virginia. This unique approach to collaborating with diverse groups for better forest management has opened many eyes to the problems facing our forest land and the professionals who manage it. We encourage more collaboration with forest stakeholders.

Virginia Bear Hunters Association supports a diverse forest with old growth, wilderness, and well-managed young forest. In areas that are considered suitable for logging, intense forest management of these areas helps to provide forest products, jobs for our rural populations and is good for our wildlife. Bear, deer, turkey, grouse, rabbits, and bobcats all need early succession forest in a patchwork of small cutting areas to maintain healthy populations. The cutting of 1% of suitable forest annually would ensure sound management of our forest on a 100-year rotation. Unfortunately, harvest of mature forest has fallen behind for a generation leaving a lack of diversity in habitat for many wildlife species. A large portion of the National Forest in Western Virginia is considered unsuitable, too steep and rough for logging. These are areas where black bear can thrive even in hunting season and ensure healthy bear populations for our future generations.

Please consider this: We think the taking of a black bear by a nuisance permit should be the last resort not the preferred solution to the problem of nuisance bears. How does good forest management relate to kill permits? A well-managed forest with a diverse make-up of both young and old forest is good for bear and it is good for other wildlife. Bears eat acorns, right? They do, but acorns are not available during the time of the year when bear are leaving the forest to feed in the neighborhoods and crop fields. The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries say a fed bear is a dead bear. In most cases this has turned out to be true with over 300 nuisance permits issued in 2013. In the last nine years an average of 152 bears has been harvested on kill permits per year. Most damage is to cornfields, some to orchards, bee hives, and livestock.

A forest from 0 to 20 years is considered young and we are not establishing enough of this type of environment to offer soft mast crops such as berries, grapes, poke weed, sassafras and other summer foods. If we can establish more young forest land, not only bear but deer, turkey, and Ruffed grouse will have a better environment, as will several species of birds and non-game animals.

Game clearings and controlled burns are other tools that can be utilized to help keep our bear in the forest. Traditionally our forests have been 85% oak in the Appalachian Mountains. Our over-mature forest are fast converting to maple and more shade tolerant trees and we are in danger of losing our predominantly oak forest. This along with lower acorn production in over-mature forests could add to the nuisance bear problems even in winter months when acorn crops fail. Huckleberries, blackberries, and poke weed all can be enhanced by control burns. Controlled burns used wisely by trained professionals can enhance regeneration of oaks, reduce invasive non-indigenous weeds, and improve soft mast production, while improving the health of our forest environment. Occasionally acorn production can be greatly improved after a prescribed fire.

We commend the Game commission for their efforts to educate the public on living with bears. But there is more to do to educate farmers and others on how to stop bears from becoming a problem. If we can manage our forest to increase soft mast while improving the overall health of the forest all users can be served and we could reduce some of the bear damage to our farms.

We look forward to working with other forest stakeholders, and the Forest Service Professionals to ensure that we manage our resources for generations to come. Our Forest and Wildlife are precious, renewable resources. Hunting, fishing, hiking, sightseeing, timber production, and watershed protection all are important uses of our forest land. Our common enemy is budget cuts that threaten the proper management of our resources and threaten to shut us out of the forest because access cannot be maintained due to budget cuts to roads and trails. Can we not find ways to cut through the bureaucracy so that everyone can enjoy the forest in the spirit of Theodore Roosevelt? Roosevelt knew the value of conserving our resources and keeping our lands wild. He enjoyed hunting and camping in these our wild lands.

Most of us live in wooden houses and can't imagine a world without books and toilet tissue. Can we not work together to help the Forest professionals manage our forest without drowning in a bureaucratic sea of frivols regulations?

By Steve Nicely, VBHA Director, Region 4

VBHA is indebted to Steve Nicely for his time and work on these National Forest projects. The alliances he has formed with other stakeholder groups is priceless. Below is information on another NF project and we encourage VBHA members, especially those in Rockingham County, to get involved.

North Shenandoah Mountain Restoration and Management Project

The USDA Forest Service, the public, communities, and partners are working together to identify forest restoration and management opportunities on the 100,000-acre North Shenandoah Mountain Restoration and Management Project in Rockingham County, Virginia and Pendleton County, West Virginia. Working together over the next two years, we will identify activities to improve watershed conditions, vegetation conditions, wildlife and fisheries habitats, and recreation uses to implement over the next ten years. Restoration and management opportunities will complement efforts on adjacent lands and will address vegetation, habitat, and watershed conditions that transcend landowner boundaries.

We are planning a public field trip for May 25th, from 9 am to 3 pm, to visit the area around Camp Run, Rough Run and the German River. Come and share your knowledge of conditions on the ground as they relate to aquatics, wildlife, timber, and recreation. More information will be posted to the website and announced in a news release in the coming weeks.

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/gwj/landmanagement/projects/?cid=fseprd495600>

Or you may contact Karen Overcash, Project Coordinator at 540-265-5175.

VBHA Members Continue to be Custodians of their Forests and Neighborhoods

Again this spring, we are hearing of VBHA member groups who are picking up litter on highways and National Forest roads. We know from the aftermath of our own events that bear hound hunters do not litter! So, these hunters are picking up trash left by others. It's a shame that it is necessary, but this type of stewardship goes a long way to elevate the public's perception of bear hound hunters.

- Johnny and Freda Smith organized 16 or more and adopted a section of Route 601 (Flat Ridge Road) on the Grayson and Smyth County line. Their first trash pickup was held on April 2, 2016, and was followed by a picnic. VDOT's Adopt-A-Highway program requires that trash be picked up at least 2 times per year for at least 3 years. The new VDOT sign recognizes "The Virginia Bear Hunters" as custodians of this section of highway.
- Steve Parcell and his group in Giles County continue to be the adoptees for a beautiful section of Big Stony Creek Road that runs mostly through National Forest. Their VDOT sign recognizes "Virginia Bear Hunters Association Region 3."
- On Saturday, April 9, 2016, twenty-one members of the Massanutten Hunt Club picked up over 1100 pounds of litter on National Forest in Rockingham County on Cub Run Road between Route 602 and Newport Loop. This is an annual happening for the Club.
- For their 16th year, a group of Big Island hunters representing the VBHA held their National Forest road clean-up in late March. They picked up litter on Hunting Creek Road and Battery Creek Road ("old CC road"). These roads are located in Bedford County near Big Island.

Message from Barney Bolter, VBHA Director, Region 1

As many of you know last year I attended the National Hound Summit in Wisconsin representing the VBHA. This was a very eye-opening experience with many different groups of hound hunters from all over the country. As we get close to our organizational elections, the upcoming VDGIF regulation cycle, and the state legislation cycle some of the topics discussed become very relevant again. Please become involved, invite your hunting partners to join OUR organization and do what you can to further our sport. I have listed several things below to hopefully stimulate ideas and generate discussion. A lot of these things we are already doing well and if you have ideas feel free to contact me or any other board member by phone, email, or at the meetings.

PROBLEMS FACING HOUND HUNTERS

- HSUS/PETA/IDA (in defense of animals) attacking our sport
- Fighting from other hunting groups
- Legislators/ other state leadership
- Social Media (number 1 resource for anti-hunters for propaganda)
- Keeping wildlife management groups on side of hound hunter
- Youth involvement
- Money, Money, Money
- Law Suits from anti-hunting groups (file with no intention of winning, uses up our money)
- Lobbying by anti/non-hunters
- Media presence
- Anti-hunters dividing and conquering hunting groups

GOALS ALL HOUNDSDMEN NEED TO HAVE

1. Have a strong and consistent message (backed by science and data, get as many other groups on your side as possible before presenting it)
2. Must have convenient positive impact technology (good pictures of families enjoying our sport without gore, have a way to send out our message quickly when time is needed, get information to members so when they are questioned they completely understand and can communicate our message, all forms must be used, do not give out condemning information cause the antis will always find it)
3. Youth must get involved into our sport (FFA programs, school clubs and after school programs, scholarships, awards, mentor programs)
4. Media, (we must be visible, if they don't know you exist, can't join) get in every publication you can afford, go to fairs and tradeshow, have little business cards at farm supply and sporting goods stores, clothing and logos that are tasteful in design.
5. Alliances are key to increasing your numbers, these alliances come and go as their sport is different from ours, must meet with these groups ahead of time and approve each other's message, message must always be get more hunters into the woods with a spin towards your objective, constantly looking for more partners, look outside the "hunter blinders" and look for business' and other groups who benefit from our sport.

2016 Spring Field Trial Results

We had a beautiful day and a big turnout for our Spring Field Trial held on Saturday, March 26th in Botetourt County at the Montgomery farm. This was our first time using our new mechanical bear. A 400+ pound full body-mounted bear was donated to VBHA by Al Richardson and we worked with an animator to have sound and silent movement added.

In addition to VBHA merchandise, Creekside Supplies (Doug Zimmerman) and The Dog Box Man (Mike Montgomery) were onsite with their hunting dog supplies. Breakfast and lunch were provided by Aaron's Smokehouse (of Buchanan).

Our field trials are fund-raising events to supplement our treasury and allow us to send newsletters, maintain a website, hold quarterly meetings, contribute to other related organizations, etc. A LOT of work goes into field trials and we appreciate all the time and effort donated by officers, directors, and members. **A special thank-you to all those who participated in the competitions.**

The Youth Bear Bay opened the competitions with 35 young bear hunters participating and each getting a trophy.

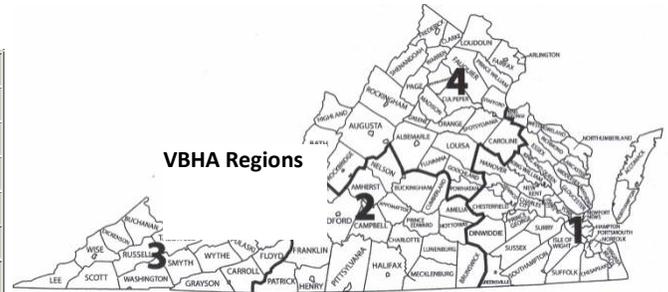
The adult competition results were:

1-Dog Bear Bay (56 entries)	1 st	Rattler	Andrew Gilliam
	2 nd	Little Jazz	Wayne Hensley
	3 rd	Lace	Dennis Painter
2-Dog Bear Bay (29 entries)	1 st	Lace, Savage	Dennis Painter
	2 nd	Conway, Maggie	Stanley Coffey
	3 rd	Tigger, Little Jazz	Wayne Hensley
3-Dog Bear Bay (20 entries)	1 st	Gunner, Little Jazz, Tigger	Wayne Hensley
	2 nd	Ace, Rattler, Sally	Andrew Gilliam
	3 rd	Creasy, Shady, Diesel	Mason Smith
Bear Treeing (50 entries)	1 st	Little Jazz	Wayne Hensley
	2 nd	Rainbow	Rex Dooley
	3 rd	Eli	Jacob Schmitt
Dash Race – Line Finals (35 entries)	1 st	Timber	Charles Montgomery
	2 nd	Hambone	Charles Montgomery
	3 rd	Skeeter	Mason Smith
Dash Race – Tree Finals (35 entries)	1 st	Rover	Gary Bowen
	2 nd	Eli	Jacob Schmitt
	3 rd	Little Jazz	Wayne Hensley
TOP DOG (22 contenders)		LITTLE JAZZ	WAYNE HENSLEY



VBHA Executive Board 2015-16

President	David Steger	Catawba	540-384-6506
Vice President	Richard Sprinkle	Buchanan	540-254-2578
Secretary	Hunter Thrasher	Buchanan	540-598-6169
Treasurer	Wayne Ball	Raven	276-964-5961
Advisory Director	Charles Montgomery	Buchanan	540-254-2048
Region 1 Director*	Barney Bolter	Kenbridge	434-247-9608
Region 2 Director	Will Herndon	Brookneal	434-610-4895
Region 2 Director	Wayne Hensley	Bedford	540-586-8242
Region 2 Director	Clint Steger	Catawba	540-392-2247
Region 3 Director	Steve Alley	New Castle	540-864-5891
Region 3 Director	Henry Bishop	Blacksburg	540-230-0190
Region 3 Director	Steve Parcell	Ripplemead	540-626-3801
Region 4 Director	Andrew Gilliam	Williamsville	540-925-2438
Region 4 Director	Al Heil	Culpeper	540-718-7781
Region 4 Director	Steve Nicely	Clifton Forge	540-862-5110



*Region 1 also includes out-of-state members.

Use this application to update your information or give to a fellow hunter and encourage them to join our ranks!

VIRGINIA BEAR HUNTERS ASSOCIATION - MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

- Individual – 1 Year - \$15
- Individual – 3 Years - \$40
- Family – 1 Year - \$20
- Family – 3 Years - \$50
- Lifetime (under age 50) - \$150
- Lifetime (age 50+) - \$100

Return to: Hunter Thrasher, VBHA Secretary
3826 Narrow Passage Rd, Buchanan, VA 24066
Make checks payable to VBHA

- Renewal
- New Member
- Update Information

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip Code _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Individual and family membership years are measured from the date dues are paid or from current expiration date, if later.

