



The Explore Bowhunting program compliments the highly successful Oklahoma National Archery in Schools Program being conducted in hundreds of Oklahoma schools, where students are building self-confidence and learning precision skills.

Explore Bowhunting Program Capitalizes on Success of Archery In Schools

By Rich Fuller, Sr. Information & Education Specialist, and Explore Bowhunting Program Coordinator



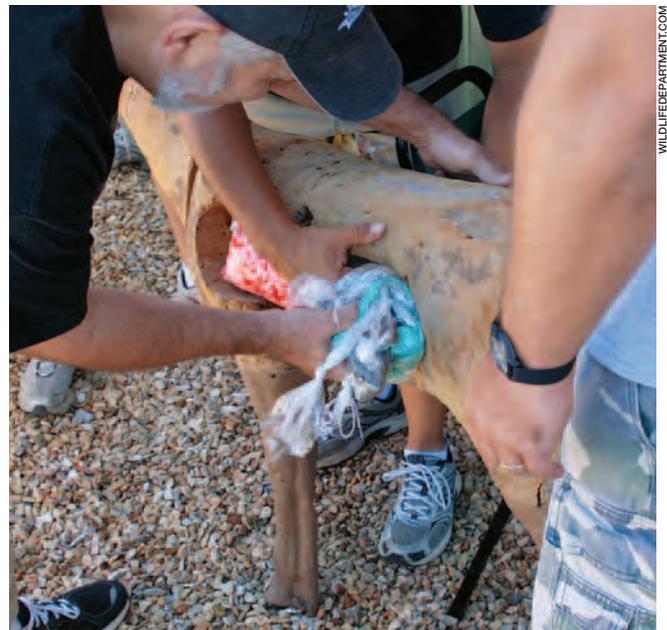
A deer target stuffed with simulated organs made from a range of food products can teach youth about a range of topics, from wildlife anatomy to marksmanship.

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“Let me take the shot!”
“No! Please, please let me shoot it first!”
Such are the sounds heard at a recent visit to Locust Grove High School football field with physical education teacher, Ladney Keener. Keener is one of Oklahoma’s first teachers trained in Explore Bowhunting a new educational program being sponsored by the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation. Among the 22 different lessons within the Explore Bowhunting curriculum, certainly one of the most popular is the “Shot Placement” activity.

As part of the activity, students are given common food items such as pudding, corn kernels, whipped cream and food coloring to construct the simulated internal organs of a whitetail deer. After the heart, lungs, liver and intestines are formed with different sized Ziplock bags, the “organs” are placed inside the hollowed-out cavity of one of Keener’s 3-D archery deer targets. After the simulated deer is built, students take turns shooting at the target and then examining their arrows to determine how effective the shot was. According to Keener, the exercise mimics real-life bowhunting scenarios.

“By the time they get the deer organs made and placed inside the fake deer body, they pretty much can’t wait to shoot it with real arrows to see what happens,” said Keener. “Of course, the activity is designed to teach how to make an ethical and effective shot on an animal, but it also teaches them something about physical anatomy. After the



Teachers undergoing certification training to teach the Wildlife Department’s Explore Bowhunting program learn to create simulated deer organs using food items like pudding, corn, whipped cream and food coloring stuffed into plastic bags and placed inside a 3-D archery deer target.

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shot, we have each student inspect their arrow and, based upon the material left on it, make an educated guess as to what organs were hit.”

Based upon that, Keener has his students make a judgment as to how long a hunter should wait before he or she should begin tracking the animal.

“Believe it or not, it’s remarkable how closely this can sim-



Teachers create a simulated body cavity for a deer archery target that will be used to hone youth's archery skills and ability to interact with the natural world.

ulate an actual hunting situation,” said Keener, an accomplished bowhunter since childhood.

Beginning in 2010, the Explore Bowhunting curriculum was developed by the Archery Trade Association (ATA) to teach students aged 11-17 how to interact with the natural world by developing basic skills used to bowhunt. Several of the activities focus on getting close to animals. According to the professional educators who developed the curriculum, the program not only teaches students how to interact with nature using ageless hunting skills, but it also teaches an appreciation of what is around them and enhances their encounters with the outdoors.

According to Colin Berg, education supervisor for the Wildlife Department, the Explore Bowhunting program compliments the highly successful National Archery In Schools Program being conducted in hundreds of Oklahoma schools.

“With literally hundreds of Oklahoma schools now participating in the Archery in the Schools program, including several that have been participating for a number of years now, the Explore Bowhunting Program has come along at just the right time,” said Berg. “We know through student surveys that a large ma-

majority of kids who participate in the Archery in the Schools program are interested in learning about bowhunting, and that’s where Explore Bowhunting fits the niche. It’s a great ‘next-step’ for kids to learn not only about the archery skills used in hunting, but it also teaches them about wildlife, their habits and habitats and conservation of our natural resources.” Berg said.

In addition to the Shot Placement activity, the Explore Bowhunting curriculum covers such topics as how to use calls to lure animals into range, how to estimate the distance to a target, how to field dress game animals, how to shoot a bow from different positions and understanding animal ecology — specifically the whitetail deer.

By attending a one-day training workshop, teachers not only receive the curriculum but also student handbooks as well as training materials such as deer anatomy charts and DVDs. Additionally, each school system receives a resource trunk that has a large collection of visual aids. Within each trunk there are three different types of bows (compound, crossbow and



Several Oklahoma teachers are also getting trained in the Department's Fishing in the Schools program — an offshoot of the Department's Aquatic Resources Education Program started in the late 1980s to teach youth fishing skills.

recurve), game calls, camouflage clothing, a shooting release, broadhead samples, deer lures and scents, a trail camera, arrows, and much more. According to Berg, the donation of 50 kits to Oklahoma by the ATA has been a huge factor in the program's early success.

"If you were to go out and purchase all of the gear in each kit, it would likely cost around \$2,000, so with 50 kits, the ATA has made an incredibly generous \$100,000 donation to the Department which has got the program up and running in a great way," Berg said. "We are extremely thankful to the ATA and its members for making these kits available; and we truly believe that this program is going to promote interest in bowhunting."

According to Berg, one of the primary reasons for the ATA's assistance and designation of Oklahoma as one of the first Explore Bowhunting pilot states is due to the Wildlife Department's plan for comprehensive outdoor education training of Oklahoma teachers. Beginning in 2009, many teachers who had previously gone through an Archery in the Schools training were given the opportunity to become certified to teach Oklahoma's hunter education program.

Then in 2010 some of those same teachers were invited to attend Explore Bowhunting training. The training opportunities haven't stopped there, however. Several of those same teachers are now getting trained in yet another of the Wildlife Department's education programs, the Fishing in the Schools program. Fishing in Schools is an offshoot of the Department's Aquatic Resources Education Program started in the late 1980s to teach youth fishing skills.



One reason Oklahoma has been designated one of the first Explore Bowhunting pilot states is due to the Wildlife Department's plan for comprehensive outdoor education training of Oklahoma teachers. Beginning in 2009, many teachers who had previously gone through training to teach the Oklahoma National Archery in the Schools were given the opportunity to become certified to teach Oklahoma's hunter education program.

"Of course all of the Department's educational programs are voluntary, but through our equipment grants and other incentives, we have a growing number of teachers who want to become trained in all of our education programs, which is fantastic," said Berg. "And we know that's one of the big reasons why we've gotten assistance from national organizations such as the ATA. They see that many Oklahoma teachers are conducting an entire outdoor education program for their students, and they want to be a part of that success and energy."

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