



By Jen Davis

Adult Onset Hunter

I stumbled, rather abruptly, into the world of hunting about nine years ago. As a 30-year-old mother of one, my interest in food (what was in it, where it came from, who had touched it and why) began to plague my thoughts. I became interested, first, in organic food, then free-range meat, eggs, and dairy and then all-local food.

Ultimately, I began growing and canning as much of my food as I could. The next logical step was into hunting, but I couldn't see that at the time.

My husband and I had been having one of our revolving-door-Second-Amendment conversations. These were generally plucky, lighthearted debates about firearms, who should own them, what kinds and why. He would generally fall on the side of the gun owner — me, not so much.

When we met some 10 years prior, he had been an avid firearms enthusiast. But I, then the mother of a one-year-old child and never having owned a gun before, was having none of it. He rehomed all of his

firearms before moving in with me and would bring it up from time to time as a sign of his devotion.

At some critical point in the conversation we were having that day about the Second Amendment and guns, he suddenly faced me with a question: "What about guns as tools?" For example, guns' use as a tool for the acquisition of meat. Venison is organic, free-range, local meat. At that moment, a light bulb flicked on in my brain and has never dimmed; a hunter was born.

I decided to research everything I could about what I had to do to go from a person who knew nothing about guns to a person who could bring home the venison. I read-up on hunter safety training and realized I faced a steep learning curve. I didn't know the difference between a rifle and a shotgun — aren't all long guns the same? I certainly couldn't decipher all of the different calibers and gauges. Figuring out what gun a person needed just to get started seemed an insurmountable barrier to entry at the time.

Knowing who to ask and where it is safe to go

when you don't know the right questions to ask is very important. I found understanding and patient friends who helped guide me. My husband and I bought Ruger 10/22s for our anniversary that year.

I found out through helpful women in my life

that my local sportsman's club, Washtenaw Sportsman's Club (WSC), was running a women's weekend (Wild Women of Washtenaw). The event included the hunter safety education training necessary to get a hunting license. I signed up as fast as I could and jumped in with both feet. I was petrified but exhilarated by the possibilities.

The weekend was amazing. I got my hunter safety certification. I learned more about shooting .22 rifles, handguns, archery and what it would take for me to join the club. There were many amazing people and awesome adventures along the journey.

In just under 10 years, I went from being skeptical of guns altogether to a full-blown sportswoman, teaching others about handgun safety, concealed pistol certification, hunter safety certification, sitting on

the board at WSC, managing our new membership & programs, volunteering with NWTF, my local environmental organizations and mentoring other hunters.

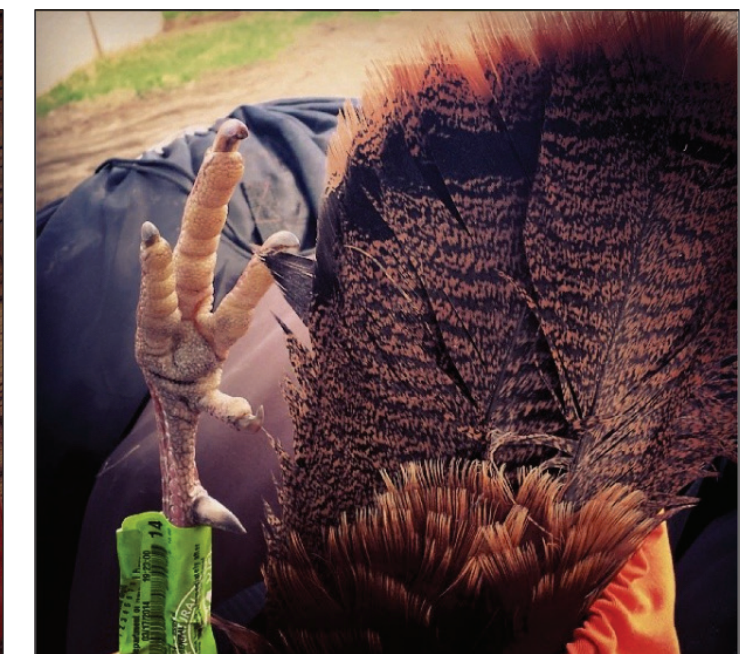
I was raised around hunters, but it was never close at hand, and I had never been taught. It was assumed I

was not interested, and no one I knew growing up was interested enough to want to share. There was one boy I knew who thought it was funny to freak me out with dead squirrels from time to time. Aside from that, I came from a place of complete ignorance.

It is amazing to me how quickly one can go from fear or skepticism to full-throttle endorsement in such a short time. From my introduction, I have learned more than I could've imagined.

I am now dedicated to being the safe person to ask questions for anyone uncertain like I was. Thanks to the encouragement and

mentorship of my fellow sportswomen and men and supportive organizations like MUCC, I have come from a place of complete ignorance to being knowledgeable and encouraging to others. From mentee to mentor, I am so very grateful! 🦋



Squirrels can be a great quarry for first-time hunters. They also provide rich, tasty protein and are relatively easy to clean. With practice, wild turkey can be another fantastic species of game to hunt. They often provide a test of a hunter's ability to be stealthy and blend in with their surroundings due to the birds' sharp eyesight.