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**The only thing that beats a good day in the blind is enjoying it with a first-time hunter.** If you've had the privilege of introducing a friend or relative to the thrill of duck hunting, you know what I mean. Sharing what we've learned through the years about calling, shooting, boating, cleaning birds, rigging decoys and identifying ducks with a new waterfowler is a great way to "pay it forward" and keep hunter numbers strong.

**As The Duck Hunters Organization, securing the future of waterfowl hunting is a key part of our mission.** All of Delta Waterfowl's Hunter3 programs — First Hunt, University Hunting Program, Defending the Hunt and Mentor Recognition — help fulfill our goal of recruiting new waterfowl hunters, while retaining and reactivating those whose participation has lapsed.

**Delta's University Hunting Program** is playing a key role in hunter education and recruitment across North America. Created in 2017 to educate future leaders in the wildlife and natural resources profession, UHP has proven to be an effective way of teaching these students about the important role that hunting plays in conservation. We delivered UHP to students at 39 universities in 2021, with plans to expand the program greatly in 2022.

I hope you'll enjoy the updates in this Hunter3 report and discover how, with your generous support, Delta Waterfowl is leading the way to recruit and educate hunters to ensure a strong future for waterfowl hunting across North America.

Sincerely,

Lee Danielson

P.S. Learn something new every day by subscribing to Delta's YouTube channel at <http://www.youtube.com/c/DeltaWaterfowl> for Duckology videos, migration updates, hunting tips, waterfowl recipes and more!



**NEARLY  
90,000**  
BEGINNERS INTRODUCED  
TO WATERFOWL HUNTING



## Delta Works to Secure the Future of Waterfowl Hunting

Recruitment and retention of hunters drives conservation efforts in North America

For duck hunters — just like anyone else — the future is relative. The hunt you're restlessly anticipating at 4 a.m. tomorrow is in the near future. Sharing a blind with your grandchildren or great-grandchildren is the future, too, but perhaps decades away.

Delta Waterfowl's mission is to produce ducks and secure the future of waterfowl hunting in North America, so we are always looking ahead.

Delta's HunterR3 programs work to create a strong future of waterfowl hunting by recruiting more hunters, fostering leaders with an appreciation for hunting, defending hunting opportunities and increasing hunting access.

### Addressing a Problem

Waterfowl hunter numbers have trended downward in North America since peaking in the 1970s. In Canada, the decline is even steeper. With fewer hunters, we have less influence in sound conservation decisions regarding waterfowl — and all wildlife.

The goal of Delta's HunterR3 is to increase the number of waterfowl hunters across the continent. And while each of the three R's (recruitment, retention, reactivation) is important, Delta recognizes that the greatest opportunity to actually grow and sustain hunter numbers is recruitment.

While Delta has been mentoring

### What Is HunterR3?

The name given to Delta Waterfowl's efforts to secure the future of waterfowl hunting in Canada and the United States is HunterR3. It's built on the "three R's" critical to the future of hunting and conservation: Recruitment, retention and re-activation of hunters.

Delta's primary HunterR3 tools in securing the future of waterfowl hunting are:

- ▶ University Hunting Program
- ▶ First Hunt
- ▶ Defending the Hunt





**ONLY 3 IN 10 WILDLIFE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT STUDENTS ENTER COLLEGE OR GRAD SCHOOL WITH ANY CONNECTION TO HUNTING**

youth hunters for decades — and will continue to do so — research shows that placing more focus on recruiting newcomers in their late teens, 20s and 30s provides a stronger boost to waterfowl hunter numbers. Most young adults have the means to continue hunting (transportation, money to buy a shotgun and other gear) after they are introduced, whereas kids often must rely on others to take them hunting.

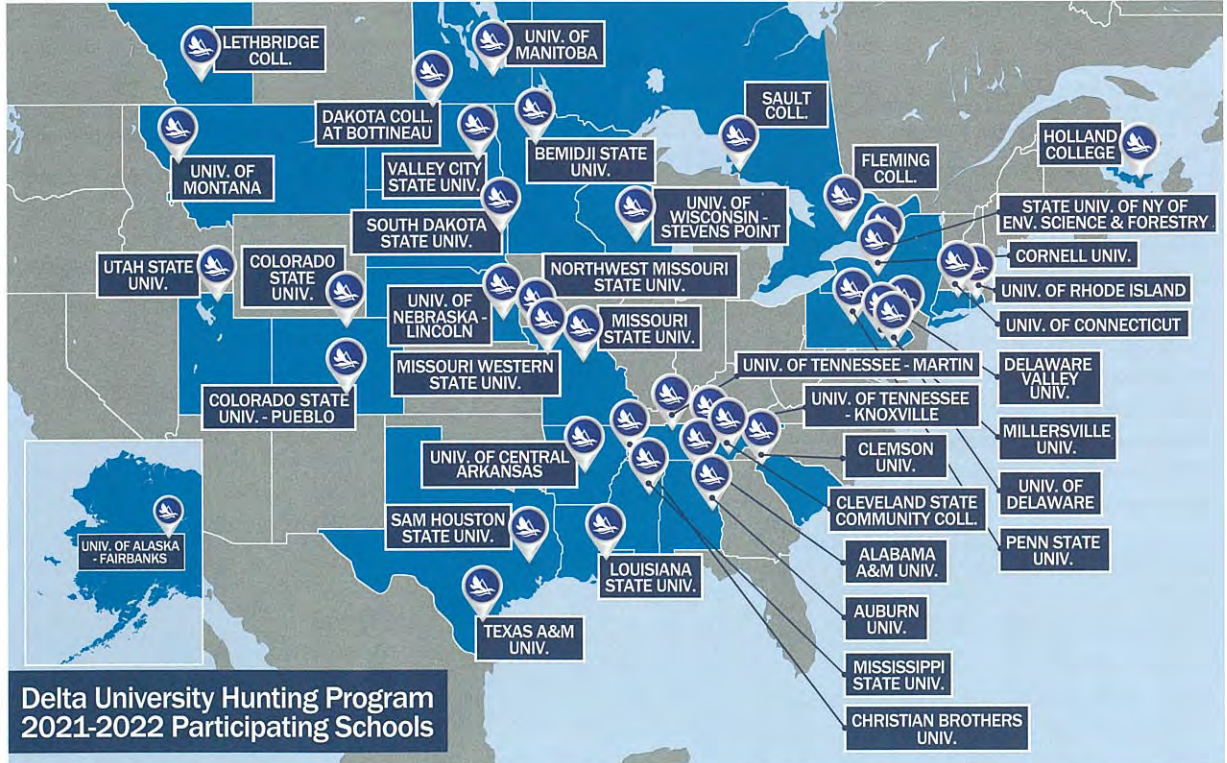
A key subset is undergraduate and graduate students studying wildlife management. These young men and women will soon hold positions with great influence on decisions about waterfowl management, conservation and hunting for decades to come.



**Delta's University Hunting Program**

It's estimated that up to 70 percent of university students pursuing degrees in wildlife sciences have little or no experience or connection with hunting.

These are tomorrow's wildlife managers, policy makers and enforcement officers. Delta's UHP collaborates with university professors and wildlife science departments to invite these students to experience hunting



Pandemic restrictions limited full participation by some universities in 2021-2022. At those schools, students were given the option to complete online hunter education and the Delta Waterfowl Duck and Goose Hunting 101 course at [todayshunter.com/duck-goose-101/](http://todayshunter.com/duck-goose-101/).

first-hand. The students take hunter education training, acquire hunting licenses, participate in a range day to become familiar with the guns and what to expect in the blind, go on a real hunt and follow it up with a meal including the day's bag.

In 2021-2022, Delta UHP classes took place at 39 universities across Canada and the United States, with 222 students successfully completing the program. This brings the number of future conservation influencers introduced to waterfowl hunting by Delta's UHP to nearly 1,000 since inception.

Most UHP participants say they look forward to hunting again — even those who don't, take with them a newly discovered appreciation of hunters' roles in and commitment to sound wildlife management. But for some, like State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry student Olivia O'Hara, Delta's UHP is a life-changing experience.

In her application, O'Hara wrote:

*"For me there is a lot of emotion and struggle ingrained when I think of hunting. I grew up in a suburban family that has an intense hatred of hunting and guns, and my entire life I have been working to be able to hunt. I taught myself to fish at an early age, and I taught myself rudimentary hunting and trapping skills much to the dismay of my parents. I have held my license officially for two years, and have had my bow a little longer. I have only been hunting twice. In a way it was lucky that I never harvested an animal those two times because I would've never heard the end of it.*

*"What I'm hoping to gain is more experience with a firearm, learn as much as I can about hunting waterfowl, meet potential friends who share an interest in hunting, make connections, hopefully find a mentor, and potentially take my first animal ever. I also want to form a positive relationship with hunting, because it has always meant stress and struggle."*

After the hunt, she wrote:

*"This hunt was the best experience ever. My previous two hunts were unsuccessful and I was woefully underprepared. I went*

## DELTA WATERFOWL DEFENDS THE HUNT

Equally important to HunterR3 is maintaining and growing access. This is where Delta's Defending the Hunt Program comes in.

Delta's continually expanding hunter-advocacy program remains steadfast in defeating threats to waterfowling anytime, anywhere. And consistent with its origins, the program depends upon volunteers and members working with Delta staff to ensure positive outcomes.

The charge in the United States is led on the federal level by John Devney, Delta's chief policy officer. In Canada, Defending the Hunt is managed by Jim Fisher, vice president of Canadian policy for Delta Waterfowl.

In 2021 Delta added a senior director of government affairs, Cyrus Baird, to defend the hunt in the United States on the local and state levels.

"No group has a more motivated, robust army of members and volunteers than Delta Waterfowl," Baird said. "In Texas I have more than 20,000 people willing to act. In Louisiana, I have nearly 30,000. I have thousands of people in Pennsylvania, Illinois, California — you name it."

Now, Baird has introduced an interactive advocacy system in sup-

port of Delta's Defending the Hunt. Available by visiting [deltawaterfowl.org/defending-the-hunt](https://deltawaterfowl.org/defending-the-hunt) or texting "Delta Waterfowl" to 52886, the Duck Hunters Action Alert System allows anyone to report threats to hunting, take action and monitor bills.

"The software allows someone in, say, Missouri, to click on bills in their area and learn why we support or oppose the legislation. It's a game-changer."

Delta action alerts also continue being delivered to supporters' email inboxes. Sent on a localized basis to regions where Delta hopes to protect or expand waterfowl hunting opportunities, the alerts have proven highly effective for more than two decades. The typical alert includes suggested language that Delta members can use when contacting a local, state/provincial or federal lawmaker.

Recent Defending the Hunt wins influenced by Delta's action alerts include an overwhelming response to a Maryland state house bill in February 2021 that threatened to prohibit most forms of waterfowl hunting across a massive swath of the famed Susquehanna Flats.

To receive Delta's action alerts, ensure your current email address is on file with Delta Waterfowl by visiting [deltawaterfowl.org](https://deltawaterfowl.org).





*not expecting to harvest a bird but I had the first shot and first bird on the ground. This is my first harvest ever, and I am beyond thankful to both the bird for its life and everyone involved. We were then taught how to cook and clean the birds, and even some of the offals, like the heart. I can't even express how happy I am."*

Delta Waterfowl has identified 494 universities in the United States and Canada as strong prospects for UHP.

During 2021 and early 2022, Delta Waterfowl received grants from supportive states, non-governmental organizations and other parties interested in waterfowl conservation, to expand the program. Arkansas Game and Fish Commissioner Anne Marie Doramus hosted students from the University of Central Arkansas on her family's farm and committed to help expand UHP to more Arkansas schools.

"Acceptance of the UHP concept is broadening," said Joel Brice, Delta's chief conservation officer. "Professors are almost unanimously positive after their UHP experiences. Landowners who host UHP hunts are eager to have more students on their properties in the future. Enthusiasm for UHP is really taking hold in every way."



Olivia O'Hara of SUNY-EFS shot a Canada goose during a Delta UHP event.

### Delta's First Hunt Program

Since its inception in 2003, Delta First Hunt events have introduced nearly 90,000 beginners to duck and goose hunting. That makes it far and away

North America's largest and most successful waterfowl hunter recruitment program. Delta chapters and volunteers conduct a wide variety of educational and hands-on events throughout the year geared to sharing the joys of waterfowl hunting with thousands of newcomers.

Although COVID-19 disrupted the program in 2020, Delta's First Hunt efforts began to recover from pandemic restrictions in 2021. There were 131 First Hunt events conducted throughout North America, giving thousands of newcomers their

initial experiences as waterfowl hunters. And it's all thanks to hundreds of dedicated Delta volunteers at chapters throughout every flyway.

In the seasons ahead, Delta volunteers will undoubtedly lead many thousands more people to discover the joys of waterfowling through First Hunt events.

### Securing a Bright Future

Delta Waterfowl continually works toward a stronger future for ducks and duck hunters, always striving to fulfill a vision of abundant waterfowl and endless opportunities to hunt ducks and geese.

We recognize that hunters are the lifeblood of conservation. Without the contributions of hunters, waterfowl populations would certainly suffer.

Delta's HunterR3 pillar programs — University Hunting Program, First Hunt and Defending the Hunt — ensure that we're advancing our mission to secure the future of waterfowling.



DELTA  WATERFOWL

[DELTAWATERFOWL.ORG](http://DELTAWATERFOWL.ORG)

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