

Camo Comradery with Kids

For a few hours on this day, Terry Pogatchnik was in the middle of the action during this kickoff to the Minnesota waterfowl-hunting season.

But the lifelong hunter wasn't hunting. Nor was Charles Warga, who unlike Pogatchnik, didn't grow up with a shotgun in his hands but has certainly gravitated in that direction in recent years.



Still, both adults were enjoying a day that lends itself to those growing up like both Pogatchnik and Warga. It's ultimately what this event is all about.

The two were among the adult mentors for Minnesota Youth Waterfowl Day. The event, typically held in early September, two weeks before the regular state waterfowl season opener, allows youths ages 15 and younger to hunt waterfowl when accompanied by an adult who is not hunting. The idea behind

the popular Minnesota Department of Natural Resources gathering is to expose young people to waterfowl hunting.

Hunting, of course, is the centerpiece of Youth Waterfowl Day. But there also was a sense of the resource, and how important it is to save that resource for this generation and the generations that follow.

“They (the youths) definitely enjoyed and appreciated the opportunity to go out,” Warga, a mentor/guide for the event, told *Minnesota Traditions*, which celebrates these Minnesota Traditions and embraces the resources that are a part of them. (For more, go to www.minnesotatraditions.com.) “There was a lot of excitement involved. I think they understand the importance of having (these resources). We talked about that.



“Everyone understands we’ve got to take care of it, to clean up after. We tried to bring that up in the conversation. It’s respect. Picking up spent shells, not forgetting anything ...”

Pogatchnik and Warga mentored a group that included Pogatchnik's son, Trevin.

“With electronics these days, just trying to get them off (electronic devices) and into the woods ... into the field,” Terry Pogatchnik, of Rice, said of the draw of these hunts for him. “I get to spend time with them I don't get anywhere else.”

For Trevin, the allure was much simpler.

“I like that you have to hold the shotgun up in the air and swing it around,” he said. “When they're flying, it's fun.”



Trevin says he's been around hunting since he was about 4, and fellow youth hunter Triston Mroska of Rice said, “I've been hunting a very long time – ever since I was about 5 I would go along to see the goose and duck hunts.” But youth hunters of all experience levels were on hand for this hunt, which provides a perfect setting for just that, Warga said.

“A couple knew (how to hunt), and there were some rookies,” he said. “One thing I like is that it’s in the early season, and it (the resource) is overloaded with wood ducks. There’s nothing flashy with woodies.

“It’s one of the few hobbies or pastimes where you’ll definitely chit-chat and joke around, and then when you see something in the air, everyone shuts up, and then they go back (to socializing) again. It lends itself well to getting youth fired up for it.”

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