

Building memories!

Teaching kids about the outdoors creates bonding experiences

BY JOHN N. FELSHER

According to a survey conducted by HunterSurvey.com, nearly 46 percent of sportsmen took at least one child hunting in the previous year. Most people probably start hunting because their father, uncle or grandfather liked hunting and wanted to share his favorite sport. Increasing numbers of young women take up hunting each year, usually to spend more time with their husbands or boyfriends.

I grew up fishing and hunting with my dad. He loved teaching young sportsmen about the outdoors and would rather watch a child catch a fish than land a state record bass himself. Dad always used to say, "You can either

fish or take small children fishing, but you can't do both at the same time. Decide what you are going to do and stick with it."

The same philosophy applies to hunting. When hunting with young children, Dad frequently carried his gun, but rarely fired it. He preferred to watch children, or even young adult novices, do the shooting. He missed many opportunities to bag game because he didn't want to take that opportunity away from a child.

Too many sportsmen today don't understand this philosophy. They want to hunt more than they want to take their children hunting. Some sportsmen think young children should already

possess the skills of Daniel Boone and yell at the youngsters when they don't. Instead of yelling, teach children how to do something correctly. Don't do everything for a child. Let young sportsmen learn by doing and making mistakes. Just make sure they don't do anything that could harm themselves or someone else.

Make every outing interesting and enjoyable for young children. My dad could make an adventure out of picking out a Christmas tree in a parking lot on a cold December evening. He knew the value of spending time with his children. He always explained the

See **BONDING**, 54



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