

A PROMISING MIGRATION: FALL FLIGHT FORECAST LOOKING GOOD



Ducks Unlimited Canada

# Conservator

2007 WATERFOWLING HERITAGE ISSUE

**Celebrating** our  
**Waterfowling**  
**Heritage**

**Mentoring**  
the **Hunt**

Manitoba's  
**Mallard**  
**Lodge**

**Autumn's**  
**Glass**

# Mentoring the Hunt

BY BRUCE MASTERMAN



They are the future of waterfowling, and the future of conservation. And, happily, the future is looking bright. An increasing number of young Canadian girls and boys are discovering the joy and satisfaction of being part of the tradition of waterfowling, a time-honoured tradition that has helped shape the success of Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) over the past 69 years. But these youngsters aren't doing it without help.

**T**HEY'RE BEING MENTORED BY FATHERS, mothers, aunts and uncles, grandparents, family friends and other experienced hunters who have been long drawn by magical dawns at the marsh, the sound of frogs and birds awakening to the day and the warm relationships of hunting partners – all underscored by the pulse-quickenning anticipation of ducks and geese approaching a well-laid decoy spread.

Winnipegger Eric Cameron, 13, knows that feeling well. One cold, rainy morning last September, he and several other teens lay in coffin blinds in a muddy field not far from DUC's head office at Oak Hammock Marsh Conservation Centre north of Winnipeg. Scattered before them were about 40 Canada goose decoys. Two adult volunteer guides played sweet music on their goose calls, trying to entice a small flock of incoming birds.

Eric's fellow hunters had agreed in advance to give him first shot. But when the first goose came within range, Eric couldn't fire because he forgot to click off the safety on his 12-gauge autoloader. A few minutes later, however, Eric got another chance and managed to down his first goose ever. He was elated.

"I was really happy with myself," he recounted excitedly in an interview nine months later. "It's a great feeling, getting your first goose."

Several of the other youth in Eric's party also shot a goose that morning. All of the young hunters and mentors involved with the special hunt gathered that afternoon for a barbecue featuring – what else? – fresh grilled goose. It was a fitting end to a great day.

Eric previously had successfully hunted grouse with his father, Bruce Cameron, his mom, Nadia Zenchyshyn, and his older brother, Dane. His parents, both longtime ardent hunters, had mentored Eric and Dane

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by taking them on family hunts since they were young. Eric started carrying a toy gun on those hunts when he was eight.

“It’s Canadiana,” says Zenchyshyn. “It’s just another thing you can share with your boys.”

In Eric’s case, his parents initiated his hunting education. But his first goose hunt came about through a unique mentoring program offered by DUC and partner organizations. A spinoff from the highly successful Greenwing program for young members up to 18, the mentoring program is part of DUC’s Waterfowling Heritage program. It includes instruction on safe gun handling, waterfowl biology, dog handling, calling, ethics, wilderness survival and hunting strategies.

“It’s all about volunteers helping young people get experience in the field,” says Rick Wishart, DUC’s education director. “It’s also based on having fun and enjoying the great outdoors.”

According to Wishart, the program “really resonates” with young people and their mentors. Experienced waterfowlers get a great deal of satisfaction from sharing their valuable knowledge and skills with their students, who benefit from receiving that know-how in a memorable, safe, well organized event. Though the emphasis is on the overall waterfowling experience, Wishart notes that the ultimate goal is “to have these kids enjoy the experience so much, they will continue to be waterfowlers as they grow older.”

He adds that DUC’s Greenwing program, established in 1980, has always included elements of hunting, including safe gun handling, field ethics, calling, decoy carving and dog training. Local Greenwing leaders have the option to include these elements in their programs depending on their interests and those of the students.

“These kids are the future of DUC, but they’re also going to be our future politicians, educators, landowners, business people and conservationists,” says Wishart, adding that the organization has hired a coordinator to focus on helping local volunteers set up Greenwing and waterfowling heritage programs for young people.

**L**EADING BY EXAMPLE, DUC FIRST BEGAN A formal waterfowling skills program for youth in 1998 at Oak Hammock Marsh with the leadership of DUC board member emeritus Frank Baldwin. Then in 2000, Environment Canada allowed special Waterfowler Heritage Days when youth who have passed the required firearms training and safety course can hunt waterfowl before the normal hunting season without a licence, as long as they are in close company with an experienced adult mentor. Waterfowler Heritage Days are now offered in Prince Edward

Ducks Unlimited Canada began a waterfowling skills program for youth in 1998 in Manitoba, led by DUC board member emeritus Frank Baldwin (right).



“**These kids are the future of DUC, but they’re also going to be our future politicians, educators, landowners, business people and conservationists.**”

Island, New Brunswick, Québec, Manitoba and British Columbia. A program is being offered this year in Alberta and other provinces are experimenting with the concept. Lead organizations have included the Manitoba Waterfowler Heritage Committee (which DUC belongs to) and Alberta’s Hunting for Tomorrow Foundation.

DUC supports mentored waterfowling events across Canada by providing free educational resources, including a CD about waterfowl biology, a waterfowl identification booklet, posters, free one-year Greenwing membership and a copy of an extensive, easy-to-read manual titled *A Young Hunter’s Guide to Waterfowling and Conservation*. Also included are a video on hunter ethics and a guide on how volunteers can organize a mentored hunt program for youth. The information is designed to inform young hunters about ethical hunting and the importance of conservation.

Randall Eaton, an Oregon-based author and expert on hunting ethics, has written thousands of words in books and articles of the importance of introducing young people to hunting, including waterfowling. He quotes Don Jacobs, a leader in education reform, who called hunting “the ideal way to teach young people universal virtues including patience, generosity, courage, fortitude and humility.”

Eaton notes that hunting teaches that people are dependent on the “integrity and viability of nature.”

“Put a 12-year-old boy in a duck blind with a shotgun in his hands and there is a fair possibility that he will grow up to join Ducks Unlimited and fiercely protect wetlands,” Eaton writes.

**A**LTHOUGH THE COMMENT FOCUSES ON BOYS, there’s little question girls who learn to hunt from their elders share the same passion for waterfowling and a desire to see healthy bird popula-





Anjela Buus, with young daughters Grace (left) and Liberty, on her farm near Selkirk, Man. Buus is planning the province's first girls-only waterfowling heritage event for this fall.

“It was really cool to be out there and experience the thrill of seeing the duck and setting yourself up for it. It was something that me and my dad could do together that we both enjoyed.”

tions. Just ask 23-year-old Becky Henderson, who loves to hunt when she's not working as a credit counsellor and dance school owner in New Brunswick. Hunting, she notes, has instilled in her a deep conservation ethic. Henderson learned to hunt from her dad, Mark, who has been a DUC volunteer since 1989, when he helped establish the local committee in Hampton, a town on the Kennebecasis River northeast of Saint John. Now 50, Mark was mentored by his dad, Lowell, and grandfathers Clarence Henderson and Herbert Hoyt. Since 2000, Mark Henderson has passed the torch by mentoring his son Joey and daughter Becky, plus two young family friends. He's poised to mentor a nephew this fall. “Mentoring is critical for the future of waterfowling,” Mark Henderson says. “It is a sport that is difficult to break into without help of an experienced hunter to show the youngster the ropes.” Becky Henderson started accompanying her dad on hunts when she was about 10. She found herself being

enthralled by the stories Mark and his partners told, and eagerly absorbed lessons on gun safety. She also enjoyed being around the marsh, banding ducks, riding in the boat and hearing Mark describe how to identify different duck species. What Becky calls her “first real hunt” happened when she was 17. She shot a whole box of shells and didn't get one duck. She didn't care. “It was really cool to be out there and experience the thrill of seeing the duck and setting yourself up for it,” she says. “It was something that me and my dad could do together that we both enjoyed.”

Some mentors wisely learn early in the game to refine their approaches to planning hunts with young people. For example, Ontario hunter Cam Thomson decided to follow the approach taken by his own father, David. Then a farm boy in the Kawartha Lakes region of central Ontario, Thomson recalls that his dad wisely wouldn't ask him to go, but he almost always took him if Cam expressed an interest to accompany him. “I have seen several avid waterfowling friends who have turned their son or daughter off by pushing too hard when they were not ready,” Thomson notes. “Wait for them to ask.”

Now 53 and living outside Brantford, Thomson says he decided to take a similar approach with his own sons, Alistair, 21, and Callum, 14. They started going with Cam on hunts when they were four or five. Cam says he also learned that boys don't function well in early morning, so he'll often go out solo at dawn and then take the boys for the evening shoot. That way, he can concentrate more on making sure they have fun and avoid that “getting a teenager out of bed at 4 a.m. thing.”

THOMSON SAYS ADULTS SHOULD NEVER TAKE their novices' skills for granted. Sometimes, he notes, experienced waterfowlers forget that ducks are very challenging targets. When Alistair started shooting, Cam recalls, he was sometimes frustrated because he found the birds tough to hit. To better prepare Callum for waterfowl hunting, Cam has helped him hone his shooting skills on sporting clays and skeet.

A DUC volunteer for over 20 years, Cam Thomson is vice-president of the Long Point Waterfowlers' Association, and chairman of its youth committee. The association is planning its first youth mentored hunt this fall to introduce more young people to waterfowling.

Thomson's decision to mentor his own sons was a no-brainer. He wanted them to have the opportunity to enjoy wildlife in the same way that has been so important to him. Plus, he enjoys their company and the chance to talk.

“We seem to always have our best conversations (while) hunting, fishing or canoeing,” he says. “Alistair

Tye Gregg (2)

and I shoot and Callum disses us mercilessly when we miss.” But when the Thomsons head for the Long Point Waterfowl Unit on Lake Erie this fall, they'll have a chance to get back some of their own. This will be Callum's first season of actually shooting at ducks instead of being restricted to critiquing the efforts of his dad and brother.

“I'm very excited,” Callum said in a phone interview a few months before his first season as a hunter. “I'm looking forward to it a lot.”

For him, the highlights of past hunts have included deciding which blind to use depending on wind direction and other factors, and also watching their yellow Labrador retriever, Dougle, retrieve downed birds. And this year, being able to shoot under an apprentice licence only promises to make the experience even sweeter.

ALTHOUGH THERE ARE MANY EXCEPTIONS – Nadia Zenchyshyn and Becky Henderson are but two – the bottom line is that more boys than girls are being mentored in hunting. Anjela Buus would like to change that.

She's planning Manitoba's first girl-only waterfowling heritage event this fall in Selkirk, on the banks of

“It's more of a family time – an intense family time. Other families go to Disneyland and places like that. We go hunting. We wouldn't want it any other way.”

the Red River north of Winnipeg. “I want to let girls know that it's OK for them to hunt, too,” says Buus, 41, a volunteer on the Selkirk DUC dinner committee.

Buus, who lives with her husband, Ken, and their two young daughters on an 80-acre farm east of Selkirk, was 13 when she started going hunting with her soft-spoken father, Grant Smale. And her passion for it sprouted instantly.

Now she and Ken, who are involved in a family construction company, take Grace, aged seven, and Liberty, two, with them when they hunt.

Grace started out carrying a DUC air rifle, and last year graduated to a .410 shotgun given to her by her godfather. Although she's still too young to hunt game, Grace uses the shotgun for target practice. From the start, Anjela and Ken taught her to respect guns, a lesson they are now teaching Liberty. To them, hunting provides meat for the table and quality time together.

“It's more of a family time – an intense family time,” Anjela notes. “Other families go to Disneyland and places like that. We go hunting. We wouldn't want it any other way.”

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# Mallard Lodge

HOME OF A MARSH MONARCH



Aboriginal people have recognized for centuries that Manitoba's Delta Marsh is a good place for waterfowling. Even today, people walking the beach that separates the marsh from Lake Manitoba to the north often find small arrowheads designed for downing birds uncovered by the lapping waves. The first Europeans in the Delta area were likewise impressed, their hunting parties dating back to the 1850s.

BY GORDON GOLDSBOROUGH

**B**UT THE NUMBER OF WATERFOWL HUNTERS at Delta Marsh increased dramatically in the early 20th century, when the Portage and Northwestern Railway built a spur line to the lakeshore, and straight through the marsh. Its original purpose was to offload minerals, timber and fish from steamboats on the lake. But commercial shipping on shallow Lake Manitoba was always a dicey proposition, and it ended around 1910 as railways and roads around the lake provided more reliable, year-round shipping alternatives. The railway continued to serve as a convenient means to get to Delta, both for enjoying the fresh breezes off the lake during the sweltering days of summer, and for getting to the humble shacks in the marsh and along the lake, from which hunting parties were staged. Waterfowling was then a popular pastime among the urban professionals of Winnipeg.

Among the men – and they were, with few exceptions, men – who visited the marsh to shoot was Donald Henderson Bain (1874–1962), a wealthy Winnipeg merchant who was the former captain and centre of the Winnipeg Victorias hockey team. In 1895, and again in 1901, the Vics won the Stanley Cup – the last Winnipeg team to do so. Bain probably first visited the marsh in the late 1910s as a guest of a business acquaint-

tance, Joseph Lemon (1862–1925) who, around 1912, had built a lodge with his friend, physician Fred T. Cadham (1880–1961). Lemon's lodge was a modest little structure – similar to those elsewhere at Delta – with clapboard-sided walls painted light brown, a roof sloping on all sides to a flat top, and with a couple of sparsely furnished interior rooms. It overlooked Lake Manitoba and, in fierce weather, was buffeted by winds and crashing waves. Lemon invited friends to shoot near his lodge, although the boundary between his property and that of the adjoining Portage Country Club was not clearly marked. Lemon's guests were required to wear coloured ribbons so club members could identify them.

Bain must have been sufficiently impressed by the club that, in 1917, he bought a share in it (increasing to five shares in 1931, compared to all other members' single share). When Lemon died in 1925, Bain bought the property from his estate. But the little lodge was clearly deemed inadequate because, in 1932, as Canada was in the grips of the Great Depression, Bain built himself a new lodge equal to his stature and wealth. He had the means to do so because he had made a fortune as a grocery broker. His firm, headquartered in Winnipeg with branches across Canada, brought in train carloads of food and packaged them in small

“**Lemon's lodge was a modest little structure – similar to those elsewhere at Delta ... it overlooked Lake Manitoba and, in fierce weather, was buffeted by winds and crashing waves.**”

all images courtesy of the author





Left: Donald Bain (right) and friends on the lawn in front of Mallard Lodge, 1940s. Bain's personal assistant is at far left.

**B**UILDING THE LODGE HAD BEEN A challenge. The firm Bain hired was concerned that pure sand at the site would not provide adequate foundation. In typical fashion, Bain discharged them and proceeded as his own general contractor – pouring a concrete basement directly on the

sand. He was subsequently proven right; over 70 years later, the basement still has nary a crack. The site was remote and getting materials to the job must have been difficult given that the road to it was primitive, even in good weather (when wet, the road was impassable). Bain spent \$75,000, purchased a dragline, and hired an operator to build an all-season road to the lodge. Winding through the marsh along an old river channel, the road is still in daily use today. Having spent so lavishly to provide access, however, Bain was unwilling to allow others to use it. Members of the Portage Country Club were forced to build their own road along the lakeshore because Bain refused them permission to use his.

Despite its remote location, Mallard Lodge was intended to be Bain's year-round private retreat. And Bain took his privacy very seriously. Signs were posted prominently around the property, warning those "trespassing, hunting or trapping" to expect prosecution. Stories are still told by old-timers of being driven at gunpoint off the Bain property. Many had seen the marsh as a public resource for the benefit of all, and the perceived effrontery of landowners who, like Bain, asserted their rights with signs and fences was not appreciated (my grandfather had his own story of being confronted by a new fence around the "Bain Estate," where he had formerly hunted, and to his dying day, he indignantly remembered Bain's insult). Even celebrities fared no better. It is said that Clark Gable, who visited the marsh in the late 1930s with renowned sportswriter Jimmy Robinson, inquired about staying at Mallard Lodge because its grandeur befit his status better than the rude shacks elsewhere, only to be turned away.

**D**ESPITE HOSTILITY TO THE PUBLIC AT LARGE, Bain was highly loyal and generous to his family and to those who met his high standards. Guests lucky enough to receive invitations to share the Bain sanctuary did so under strict conditions. Use of profanity was grounds for banishment. So was drinking, as Bain was a teetotaler. One guest, a prominent Winnipeg surgeon, recalled having to tiptoe up

Left: Donald Bain (right) and friends on the lawn in front of Mallard Lodge, 1940s. Bain's personal assistant is at far left.

**“Patterned after hunting lodges in his Scottish ancestral homeland, Bain's was far grander than anything else on the marsh. To call Mallard Lodge a “duck shack” would do it serious disservice.”**



Bain (seated second from left) during his days as captain of the Stanley Cup-winning Winnipeg Victorias.

the stairs to his second-floor bedroom carrying a tray of glasses, ice and mix so he and the other guests could enjoy a drink without Bain hearing.

Most of those who received invitations were business acquaintances or relatives but, occasionally, others were asked. On at least one occasion, Bain invited the pretty young salesgirls from a department store in nearby Portage la Prairie to visit his lodge for a refreshing day at the lakeshore. Not that any “hanky-panky” was expected. Bain enjoyed female company but he was not interested in any long-term commitments. A young neighbour remembers Bain's advice that he should avoid three things to make money: politics, religion and women. Bain lived by this rule, diligently avoiding any serious involvement with all three. However, Bain retained the services of a personal assistant who lived in his home, managed his household, entertained his business guests at dinner, and usually accompanied him to Mallard Lodge. The job was filled initially by his widowed sister, later by a cousin, and still later by an attractive, but unrelated, young woman, all of whom played a key role in the life of a committed bachelor.

Having no children – at least none known – Bain invested paternal attention on his pets. He acquired curly-coat retrievers, a rare breed characterized by jet-black, tightly curled fur, from stock in the U.K. and at any one time had several around the house with many more in a kennel at his Portage la Prairie farm. The “curlies” were his beloved family, accompanying him everywhere, including duck shoots into the marsh. Lodge guests recall being overwhelmed by the stench of a wet dog under the dining room table to which Bain, who had a poor sense of smell, was oblivious. When a favoured dog died, it was memorialized with a marker in a graveyard beside the lodge. Their status was easily higher than that of Bain's human company. On one occasion, complaints from a staff member of a slippery staircase went unheeded – until one of the dogs slipped and injured its leg on it.

The only significant threat to Mallard Lodge came in the mid-1950s when Lake Manitoba reached unprecedented levels. The beachfront began eroding toward the lodge, and it faced imminent collapse into the lake. Bain stemmed the problem by purchasing a half-dozen surplus armoured personnel carriers, parking them end to end along the beach as a breakwater. Gradually over time, they stabilized the shoreline and became covered with sand until they were nearly gone from view. The sight of military hardware guarding the lodge perimeter probably reinforced the public's impression

of the impenetrability of Bain's domain to any people walking along the beach.

**T**HE STATUS OF MALLARD LODGE AND ITS PROPERTY became uncertain after Bain's death in 1962. Although Bain had intended to offer it all to the provincial government for a game sanctuary, his declining mental health prevented it so that, by the time of his death, the lodge remained part of his estate. However, the government was planning to construct a floodwater diversion channel into Lake Manitoba at the time so, after a series of convoluted financial transactions, it purchased Bain's former property and buildings. Mallard Lodge had already been emptied of its contents during a public auction attended by hundreds of people, some seeking for bargains and others probably wanting a rare look at the Bain sanctuary.

Having no plan for the buildings themselves, the government offered them for use by the University of Manitoba as a teaching and research facility. Their offer was gratefully accepted and, in 1966, the University's Delta Marsh Field Station was established.

And 40 years later, the station continues to use the site as a base of operations for courses, workshops and research on all aspects of biology and marsh ecology. Though several new buildings have been built around Mallard Lodge, it remains a focal point for visitors and is virtually unchanged from Bain's day.

The stately Mallard Lodge is a remarkable example of a “marsh palace” built by an equally remarkable, if curmudgeonly, man. Guests sometimes report suspicious creaks, groans and miscellaneous paranormal phenomena during overnight stays. And whether it is Donald Bain, still holding court, or wind whistling around the old building in the night, is best left to imagination. ✨

GORDON GOLDSBOROUGH is a member of The Delta Marsh History Initiative, a community project supported by the Delta Marsh Field Station, that is preparing a book, to be published in 2008, on the cultural and scientific history of the marsh, including factors leading to its present degraded condition. For more information, see [www.umanitoba.ca/delta\\_marsh/history](http://www.umanitoba.ca/delta_marsh/history).



**“Having no children – at least none known – Bain invested paternal attention on his pets ... their status was easily higher than that of his human company.”**



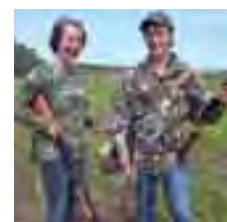


Above (left to right): Ruthanne Hanbidge (nee: Glass), dog Max, granddaughters Katie and Helen and daughter Barb share a moment following an all-in-the-family Saskatchewan partridge hunt.

Jake MacDonald (2)

# the Autumn's Glass

BY JAKE MACDONALD



Television, cheap airline tickets and worldwide digital information systems are rapidly turning the planet into the global village that noted Canadian educator and philosopher Marshall McLuhan forecast more than 40 years ago. In another few generations, most of the people in the western hemisphere will speak the same language, eat the same processed snacks and listen to the same music.

“

**With all the bright lights and globe-trotting, she still missed Saskatchewan, especially family trips into the countryside. From the time she was a little girl, she'd always gone fishing and duck hunting with her dad.**

”

**B**UT CANADA IS STILL A PATCHWORK OF distinct societies, and without generalizing too much, it is still possible to notice certain characteristics unique to each part of our country. Maritimers still have their regional brogues. A majority of Québécois claim they would rather make love than war. The Vancouverites feel sorry for the rest of us.

And many Canadians have clear opinions about Saskatchewan, even if they've never been there.

Many people regard Saskatchewan as flyover country, that great patch of tawny plains that an A-320 at full cruising speed takes an hour to cross. To the outsider, Saskatchewan seems like a huge absence of anything, a place of endless grain fields, abandoned homesteads and dusty gravel roads. But Saskatchewan, too, is a distinct society, with attributes as unique as any region in Canada. It's very different, for example, from next door neighbour Alberta, which has a drier climate across the south that makes cattle ranching more prevalent than grain farming. The economics of cattle ranching demand huge spreads of land managed by hardy self-sufficient families, so individuality is still a strong part of this part of Alberta.

For the most part, with the exception of the south-west region of the province, Saskatchewan's climate is more suited for grain and mixed farming, and the culture of farming is co-operative. The annual fall har-

vest once demanded many hands and shared machines, so teamwork became a way of life. And that's still a part of the Saskatchewan character. (It's no coincidence that Saskatchewan was the birthplace of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), which formed Canada's first social democratic government in 1944.) It's unusual to travel around Canada and meet people who are tough, friendly, frank and generous all at the same time, but that's typical of Saskatchewanians.

When Ruthanne Hanbidge (nee: Glass) was growing up on her family farm in the 1940s she was a prototypical Saskatchewan farm girl – bright and attractive, and drawn to both hard work and fun. Her dad was a dairy farmer and politician (a dyed-in-the-wool Liberal who nursed a long-running feud with his neighbour John Diefenbaker) and Ruthanne gravitated to a career satisfying an appetite for both civic duty and adventure.

“I studied nursing in Vancouver and went to work in Bermuda when I was 19,” she says. “It was really fun. I lived there for two years and then moved to New York. I really enjoyed going to the galleries, the museums and the plays. I was young and I wanted to see the world, and nursing was an excellent way to pay the bills while I was doing it.”

With all the bright lights and globe-trotting, she still missed Saskatchewan, especially family trips into the countryside. From the time she was a little girl, she'd always gone fishing and duck hunting with her dad.





Above: Ruthanne (right) and her father display the results of a successful specklebelly goose hunt during her younger days. Ruthanne passed down the waterfowling traditions from her father to her own children, including daughter Barbara, a DUC biologist in Saskatoon.

sity of Saskatchewan. Once he was a lawyer, he hung up his shingle in Saskatoon and they began raising a large family. As any parent knows, raising kids involves a lot of hard slogging, and that was especially true in Canada of the 1950s, when dishwashers and clothes dryers were unheard of and most families got by on one car or no car at all. But with all the work, Ruthanne and Robert tried to keep a sense of adventure in their family, and they entertained themselves with frequent forays into the outdoors. “We loved Saskatoon because you could go duck hunting at dawn and still show up for work by nine or 10 in the morning,” says Ruthanne with a smile.

Her oldest child, Barbara, has great memories of those trips.

“We would all pile into the back of the station wagon and head out. We fished in the summer and hunted in the fall and often pitched a tent. I can still recall the smell of wet canvas and the sound of rain on the tent during the night,” Barbara says. “There were sometimes eight of us in there plus the dog and all our gear, so the entire floor was covered with bodies. You can imagine it was quite an undertaking if you had to get up in the middle of the night.”

The kids acquired a love of nature that stayed with them as they grew up. Barbara became a biologist and studied subjects many city girls might find icky. She eventually took a job with Ducks Unlimited Canada’s Saskatoon office. Her specialty is waterfowl but she likes to work on education initiatives for young people.

“Twenty years from now, they’re the ones who will be voting and making the laws, so it’s really important that we get them to care now about wetlands and wildlife. I was very lucky to have had the type of childhood I did. I doubt that I would have grown up loving the outdoors the way I do without that sort of upbringing.”

EVERY YEAR, BARBARA AND HER HUSBAND LOOK forward to fall hunts and the freezer is always filled with venison, ducks and geese. The rest of the Hanbidge kids have been similarly affected by their upbringing. Beverley, the nurse, lives in Whitehorse with her two children who she light-heartedly refers to as her “bush babies.” Bruce is a biologist with the Saskatchewan Wildlife Branch. Patricia is a horticulturist. John raises cattle and “prize-winning daughters” as Ruthanne calls them. Rebecca, the baby of the family, is a Canadian soldier and a feisty skydiver who’s already served in Afghanistan.

“Four of my six kids have served in the military,” says Ruthanne. “I guess that’s the influence of their father. None of the kids did it because they were looking for a job. They were looking for adventure and a chance to serve their country.”

One of the boys, Bruce, served in Bosnia, where he ran into a starving dog that had been shot for chasing chickens. Bruce took pity on the dog and gave it some doctoring and a few good meals.

“Bruce has a soft heart when it comes to stray dogs,” says Barbara. “He sent the dog home to Canada and we all took care of her until Bruce could get home. She is really a very lovely, gentle dog. We called her Lucky because that’s what she was.”

Ruthanne’s sons, Bruce and John, are falconers and use their dogs and falcons to hunt ducks and upland birds around Saskatoon. Ruthanne has a photo of Bruce in Mongolia, where he went to learn about the falconry techniques used by the Turkic peoples who hunt with golden eagles, a tradition over a thousand years old. Mounted on shaggy ponies, these nomadic herders and hunters would ride out to hunt with the eagles perched on their fists. Ruthanne’s backyard, a beautiful garden with flowered arbour and fish pool and her award-winning orchids, has occasionally had to serve as an aviary for the boys’ birds of prey. Some days among the spectacular backyard backdrop, red-tailed hawks, goshawks or falcons can be found sitting on their perches and glaring at the garden visitors.

Now Ruthanne’s kids have kids of their own, and the tradition of going camping and hunting as families continues.

“Hunting gives us something in common,” says Ruthanne. “We enjoy being together and there’s always so much to learn. You learn about nature and weather and animal behaviour. We have always hunted as a way of food gathering, just like you would take fish from the lake or vegetables from your garden.”

Daughter Barbara agrees “it’s been years since I bought meat at a store. When you serve your family or friends a goose that you downed, cleaned and prepared yourself, you are serving up more than a good meal. There is always a story or two that goes along with the food. We end up talking about the hunt, the challenges, the behaviours and biology of the birds and also how lucky we are to be able to do this.”

Ruthanne says that some people might be caught off guard by seeing her grandchildren handling guns and learning how to hunt. But for her, it’s all about understanding nature, being thankful for what is around you and being a part of it.

“Do you know what I believe in? I believe in common sense. Maybe that’s a characteristic of people in Saskatchewan. You have to learn a lot of common sense to live here. You have to learn that everything lives and everything dies. That’s a good lesson for any youngster to understand.” ✨

Saving waterfowl habitat is important to me, so I buy Ducks products.

Proceeds from Ducks merchandise support waterfowl and wetland conservation.



#### TAN SHOOTER SHIRTS

100% cotton, with button down collar, reinforced forearms and contrasting shooting pad. **C\$49 tan/green** (sizes S-3XL); **C\$50 tan/orange** (sizes M-3XL) – \$49.95 each



#### DUCKS CAPS

Choose the safety and visibility of blaze orange or opt for a classic beige-navy combo. **C709 beige/navy; C713 blaze orange** – \$19.95 each



#### CAMO MOSSY OAK SHOOTER SHIRTS

100% cotton with button-down collar and one-point back yoke with crossed Canadian and American flags. Available in sizes S-3XL. **C421 black/camo; C422 khaki/camo** – \$79.95 each



#### DUCKS T-SHIRT

Classic crew neck t-shirt, done up Ducks style! Available in sizes M-2XL. **C726** – \$21.95



#### FLAMBEAU “SKYSCRAPER” MECHANICAL DUCK DECOY

A mechanical two-wing mallard decoy with battery, charger, two-piece ground stake assembly and plastic storage box. **C579** – \$79.95

Order Total	Shipping	Order Total	Shipping
up to \$25	\$4.95	\$150.01 - \$200	\$12.95
\$25.01 - \$50	\$6.95	\$200.01 - \$350	\$14.95
\$50.01 - \$100	\$8.95	\$350.01 - \$500	\$16.95
\$100.01 - \$150	\$10.95	over \$500	\$24.95

“When you serve your family or friends a goose that you downed, cleaned and prepared yourself, you are serving up more than a good meal. There is always a story or two that goes along with the food.”

“I loved being in the long grass beside the marsh in the early morning darkness and hearing that whistle of wings overhead,” she says. “We usually stayed in a tent and cooked over a fire and I had happy memories of those trips. When I was 17 my dad got me my first gun. It was a 20-gauge Ithaca and he taught me all the rules of safety and sportsmanship. There were no hunter safety classes then, but he was stricter than any classroom instructor.”

AFTER LIVING IN NEW YORK FOR A COUPLE OF years, she went home for a visit and seemed to find herself crossing paths often with a handsome young medical student and ex-soldier named Robert Hanbidge.

“I was attracted to him and he was attracted to me,” she says. “We kept bumping into one another and finally ended up getting married. After our wedding we went goose hunting for a week. I don’t know how many other couples in Canada do that, but we both loved waterfowl hunting and we couldn’t think of a better way to spend a honeymoon.”

During the war, Robert Hanbidge had served in Europe with the Canadian army. (“He’d lost most of his friends in Holland,” says Ruthanne.) After the war Robert decided that being a lawyer was more his calling and so he and Ruthanne moved to Saskatoon where Robert enrolled in the College of Law at the Univer-



Ducks Unlimited Canada  
Conserving Canada’s Wetlands

Active by nature.

We attempt to ship most orders within 48 hours with delivery made to you in 7-10 working days. When placing order, have your credit card available to help process your order promptly. Sorry, we cannot accept cheques or CODs. Shipping rates will be added based on subtotal of all items (not including applicable taxes).