

# **BECOMING A BOWHUNTER in NORTH CAROLINA**

In 2004, NCBA began a journey toward creating one of the most significant and valuable programs since its creation in 1975... 29 years earlier. This was the approval of the "NCBA Land Acquisition Fund." (LAF) It took a while for the fund to catch on and really begin showing any growth. Nine years later (2013), the fund has grown to almost \$28,000. It continues to grow at the rate of about \$6-7 thousand a year. All donations to the NCBA-LAF is an investment in the future of Bowhunting for youths and adults alike in North Carolina.

It is our plan and intent to organize and staff a bowhunter education program with instructors and mentors that will accept any individual, youth or adult, who has an interest, but maybe very little knowledge of archery or bowhunting, and train them to hunt with a bow and arrow. They will not only learn how to shoot and hunt, but also to understand our commitment to wildlife conservation, archery safety factors and concerns, but our legacy and history of Bowhunting too. To further ensure their lifetime commitment and participation, the program concludes with a guided hunt on private or public lands. This can be up to three days, or more, if the student wants to invest in the cost of providing for the hunt. The program is called "Becoming a Bowhunter in North Carolina."

One of the primary goals of the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission is to recruit and retain more people into the sport of hunting. We think a program such as this will assist them in achieving this goal as well as helping the sport of Bowhunting grow at the same time. We don't think the WRC can accomplish this on their own. They are going to have to partner with other sportsman's groups, like NCBA, NWTF, QDMA and others to achieve these goals. So, it is time we stepped up to do our part. But, the WRC needs to tell us what we can do to help, and be willing to work with us. So, we say to the WRC, "What do you want us to try to do? What can all of us do together that neither of us can do alone?"

NCBA's "Becoming a Bowhunter in N.C." could be our answer to what we can do to help recruit and retain more people into outdoor hunting and fishing activities. Maybe the WRC could initiate a new program to help facilitate more cooperation between the WRC and outdoor hunting and fishing organizations? Call it something like "Partners in the Outdoors." The state of Colorado has created such a program.

NCBA and many bow clubs, archery shops, sporting goods stores, etc., have conducted basic archery introduction programs for youths and adults alike for years like "Archery Alley." However, there has never been a serious combined statewide effort to teach the skills needed to be a successful bow (or gun) hunter. As most of our generation knows, when individuals are taught to shoot a bow in a school, PE class or an archery shop or club, the initial enthusiasm is high. However, unless there is another family member or friend who bowhunts, this enthusiasm seldom survives. NCBA wants to help and is determined to do its part to help overcome other hurdles with its "Becoming a Bowhunter in N.C."(BABINC) program.

The program is organized into three progressive levels:

**Level I- Introduction to Archery.**

**Level II- Bowhunter Education and 3D Field Training.**

**Level III- Guided Big Game Hunting.**

The program should be organized to simultaneously conduct the three Levels (Phases) of program throughout North Carolina and managed on a regional basis with six geographic regions: Northeast, Southeast, North Central, South Central, Northwestern and Western regions. This is going to require a good deal of recruiting the right volunteers to staff, organize and administer the program statewide.

Regional Coordinators will receive new student information and assign them to “Mentors” preferably for (1 on 1) individual instruction of Levels I and II program information.

## **LEVEL I: INTRODUCTION TO ARCHERY**

### **A- INTRODUCTION**

**Level I** of “Becoming a Bowhunter in N.C. ( Hereafter referred to as BABINC) is in response to youths who are attracted to the sport of archery, and to adults who have that feeling that “I wish I had taken up archery earlier. I love to hunt, but I am not interested in gun hunting any more because it just doesn’t offer the challenge and feeling of accomplishment that it once did for me. Also, there are those young and older adults, both men and women, who lament that, “I learned to shoot a bow, but I never learned to hunt with it.”

One of the key objectives of Level I-BABINC is to acquaint and indoctrinate the beginner, who has no knowledge, or a senior with 20+ years of traditional (recurve or longbow) experience, with today’s modern archery materials and designs ~ bows, arrows, targets and accessories.

No serious or expensive equipment purchases are required in Level I. The NCBA and program sponsors (partners) have provided the necessary teaching equipment and supplies. The participant (student) must provide only the desire and commitment to learn some of the sport’s history, to shoot with some competency, and to practice the safety factors involved.

A secondary objective is to make the beginning archer aware of the importance and effort put into conservation of wildlife and their habitat. Without these management activities and practices in place, there would be NO opportunities to hunt with a bow, rifle, or anything else. Bowhunters are significant and important supporters and contributors to conservation activities and outdoor hunting ethics. We take pride in being leaders in the forefront of wildlife management and conservation efforts.

Level I participants must pass ORAL tests and bow and arrow shooting accuracy and proficiency tests before they can “graduate” to Level II. Level I graduates should also make a decision as to whether or not they really want to learn to hunt or not, and are willing to put in the time and practice before entering Level II.

There are typically 8-12 hours of instruction in Level I, plus additional indoor shooting practice time, depending upon each individual. There is a NO fee for Level I to cover administration and documentation costs, unless we have to rent a facility to conduct classes.

### **B- HISTORY OF THE SPORT**

Archery has a fascinating history going back some 5,000 years to the ancient Egyptians. Participants in Level I will learn how the Chinese and Japanese used the bow and arrow, how and why the Assyrians changed from the longbow to the recurve bow in the 1500’s, and how the compound bow was conceived and patented in 1969. The history and heritage of the bow and arrow is truly amazing.

### **C- EQUIPMENT REVIEW and DEFINING FACTORS**

The following equipment will be presented, discussed and demonstrated with an emphasis on safety factors and conditions:

Bows:	Longbows	Archery Accessories
	Recurve Bows	Selecting a Bow

Arrows:	Compound Bows	How bows vary
	Shafts	Pounds of pull and you
	Fletching	Draw Length
	Nock	Matching an Arrow
	Points	Length and Strength

#### D- LEARNING TO SHOOT THE BOW AND ARROW

The compound bow has been in development for over 40 years and today's beginner models have made learning to shoot much easier and more fun. The "National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP) is having great success with the single cam Genesis bow built by Mathews. Level I will introduce archery using this same, or similar equipment, using a systematic or technical approach to select and learn to use today's equipment. Below is an overview of the steps in learning to shoot.

- 1- Determine the shooter's dominant eye.  
A "Right-eyed" person will hold a bow with their left hand.  
A "Left-eyed" person will hold the bow with their right hand.
- 2- Determine bow weight (pull) by pulling the string back to the side of the face and holding it there.
- 3- Measure the draw length when the string is pulled back to the anchor point on the side of the face.
- 4- The draw length will determine the arrow length the individual will be shooting.

Once the proper bow and arrows have been selected (sized to the individual), shooting practice will begin. Teaching the participant how to see the target with both eyes open and how to smoothly pull and release the string.

Safety factors will be stressed on how to shoot from a "firing line" with several other archers and when and how to retrieve arrows from the target. Paying attention and following instructions are considered extremely important in learning to handle and shoot a bow safely.

After a student has learned to approach the shooting line, nock an arrow, draw the bow, aim and release the string, and hit the target consistently at 10-15 yards, they will be introduced to today's archery accessories; what they accomplish, why and how they contribute to becoming a better bowhunter. These accessories include peep sights, string loops, string silencers, various types of arrow rests, bow stabilizers, bow sights and string releases. Choosing accessories will become increasingly important as the student progresses into Level II training.

#### E- ADVANCING TO LEVEL II

Level I is the first step to becoming a bowhunter, and it is essential to learn the facts and skills presented. Should the participant (student) decide at the end of Level I that he or she does not want to become a hunter, that is OK. Archery is a fun sport, an Olympic event, and hours spent outdoors on a 3D range can be exciting and satisfying.

However, if you now really want to learn to hunt with a bow, Level II is the next step. This is an important commitment. In Level II, you must select and purchase your own equipment: a bow, arrows and accessories. Although an archery shop may allow you to try out different makes and models in the early stages of Level II, you must learn and practice with your own equipment to become effective enough to pass the shooting tests required to move on to Level III. The Level II instructors (Mentors) will give the students all the help they need to select the proper equipment, sized to each student (participant) specifically. Level II is challenging, exciting and very rewarding.

## **LEVEL II: BOWHUNTER ED & 3D ARCHERY FIELD TRAINING**

### **A- INTRODUCTION**

An archery student entering Level II of NCBA's Becoming a Bowhunter program must have successfully completed all classes in Level I of the program, or if the student has had some experience in shooting a bow and arrow and wants to learn how to hunt with a bow, he or she must take and pass the written Level I Equivalency test to enter Level II.

Level II is specifically aimed at teaching the (IBEP) Bowhunter Education Course, archery hunting skills, wildlife habitat and conservation, plus wildlife management – all critical to today's bowhunter.

Successful completion of Level II includes completion of the National Bowhunter Education Foundation "IBEP" course or the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commissions "Today's Bowhunter" Course.

To successfully complete Level II, the student must attend all classes, participate in all activities identified by the instructor or Mentor, show an understanding of how important safety precautions are in handling a bow and arrow, pass the BHEC final examination, and pass the Level II 3D range shooting skills tests.

It is anticipated that many participants will require several sessions of 3D target shooting practice to achieve shooting competency and be able to move on to Level III, which is a licensed hunt for big game animals. Earning the Level III opportunity is the ultimate goal of the NCBA's "Becoming a Bowhunter in N.C." program.

### **B- BOWHUNTER EDUCATION COURSE**

Unit 1 Introduction to Bow Hunting

Unit II Wildlife Conservation and Management

Unit III Safe and Responsible Bowhunting

Unit IV Know Your Bow and Arrow

Unit V Preparation Before the Hunt

Unit VI Methods of Bowhunting

Unit VII

- a. Shot Placement
- b. Game Recovery
- c. Field Dressing

Unit VIII Outdoor Preparedness

Field Exercises

- a. Range estimation; Shoot / Don't Shoot

- b. Broadhead Shooting and effective range.
- c. Elevated stand shooting
- d. Blood trailing and marking
- e. Shooting from a blind

The BHE Class should take a minimum of 14 hours to complete;

Final Examination:

This is a battery of oral and performance tests to determine if the student has acquired the knowledge necessary to become an ethical, effective bowhunter, who can appreciate the exciting and rewarding bowhunting opportunities in North Carolina.

### C. 3D TARGET PRACTICE AND SHOOTING COMPETENCY TESTING

Students (Participants) are expected to practice shooting at 3D targets to develop adequate shooting skills. Shot placement is very important. Just as important is having a thorough knowledge of the anatomy of the big game animals you are hunting. It is imperative to be very familiar with the skeletal structure and location of the vital internal organs of the animal so the arrow will penetrate deeply and hit vital organs that will result in a quick, clean and ethical kill.. In North Carolina, these are primarily whitetail deer, black bear, wild turkey, wild boar and feral hog. Although feral hogs are not a regulated and controlled big game specie, they do attain formidable size and present an exciting challenge for bowhunters.

To accomplish these skills requires a lot of PRACTICE. A local 3D archery range that supports the “Becoming a Bowhunter in N.C.” program is highly recommended. When the student feels ready to take the 3D targets shooting tests, they should notify their instructor/mentor and arrange a date and location. These shooting tests may be taken multiple times until the instructor/mentor determines the student has adequate shooting skills to move on to Level III.

### D. EARNING THE LEVEL III OPPORTUNITY

Moving on to a Level III hunt is intended to be a reward for the student’s efforts to learn all the essentials to becoming an effective bowhunter. After Level I has presented the fundamentals, Level II is critical in mastering the needed techniques and skills. Possessing knowledge of game animals and their habitat is vital. Demonstrating adequate skill with a bow and arrow is a must. When a student qualifies for Level III, they have earned the opportunity to hunt and experience “excitement for a lifetime.”

## **LEVEL III: GUIDED HUNTING**

### A. INTRODUCTION

Level III is the final phase of the NCBA’s “Becoming a Bowhunter” Program. This is when everything the student / participant has learned will be integrated and applied. Participants have earned the license and the opportunity to take a game animal with a bow and arrow due to their performance in Levels I & II.

Level III hunts are conducted on public and private lands under hunter agreements or with written permission between the NCBA or the hunter (participant).

## B. FINDING A PLACE TO HUNT OR GETTING PERMISSION TO HUNT

The instructor/mentor may be familiar with public game lands and can help the student by introducing him / her to some areas he is familiar with. Maps of public game lands are available free on the WRC's website at [www.ncwildlife.org](http://www.ncwildlife.org).

Some of the best places to bowhunt in North Carolina are on small plots of land, from a few acres to 10 acres in size and larger can hold good populations of deer. It is not difficult to obtain permission to hunt with a bow and arrow. If you will keep your eyes and ears open all year around, many opportunities to bowhunt will present themselves in the most unlikely places; in church, in supermarkets, restaurants, hardware stores, home and garden stores and at super stores like Lowe's, Home Depot, Wal Mart, etc. Just take time to talk to people any time an opportunity presents itself. Sometime a residential lot will butt up against a small woodlot or low swampy area that holds a huntable herd of deer that are eating flowers, shrubs or vegetables from a backyard garden. Landowners will often welcome a bowhunter to come on their property to remove deer from it. These are ideal places to set up a feeder or small food plot that will attract deer. Set up a ground blind or find a tree that is suitable for using a climbing tree stand. Set up a feeder or put out some shelled corn about twenty yards from your ground blind or tree stand.

## C. SOLICITING LAND TO HUNT

Keep in mind that NCBA membership alone carries \$100,000 in hunter liability insurance, and requires NO signed contract, agreement, etc. (This policy also covers gun hunting.) NC law does require that hunters have written permission to hunt the property of another person though!. A standard hunting permission form can be printed from our website. The fact that ALL NCBA members are covered by hunter liability insurance is often enough to convince a landowner to give you permission too bowhunt their property. Many will not allow gun hunting, especially in or near residential communities.

Here's a few tips from some our more active NCBA-BCRS members that may help you obtain permission to bowhunt,

Look on GIS mapping and find a few good land prospects in the area you want to hunt. Names, addresses and property sizes can be obtained from "FREE" computer sources on the internet. Check links like Google Earth, Bing.com for satellite photos showing fields and wooded areas. Owner information can be found on links like "The Ultimate White Pages". Then, go knocking on doors; in person. Identify yourself and tell them your purpose. Dress nice and be polite. You may be surprised at who will let you bowhunt. Ask if they have problems with deer depredation, and explain that you can help. Tell them you belong to the N.C. Bowhunters Assoc. and that you are an experienced and insured bowhunter. Consider joining the NCBA-BCRS Program and getting certified to participate in the BCRS program. This status carries up to \$2 million in hunter liability insurance, and offers other special bowhunting opportunities in various areas across the state. If you do join the BCRS Program, study the benefits of the program so you can talk about it easily.

We can email copies of our BCRS brochure and fact sheet to you that you can print out and hand to prospective landowners.

Email us at [info@ncbowhunter.com](mailto:info@ncbowhunter.com) and ask for the BCRS brochure & fact sheet.

We can also send articles on the benefits of utilizing bowhunting as a deer management tool.

Go to our website at [www.ncbowhunter.com](http://www.ncbowhunter.com) to find an application to join NCBA.

Contact Dennis McClure, BCRS Chairman at: [bcrs@ncbowhunter.com](mailto:bcrs@ncbowhunter.com) for info about getting BCRS certified.

#### D. PREPARING TO HUNT

At the conclusion of Level II, participants will be given several check lists designed to help prepare for the Level III hunt. The archery equipment list is obviously important. Use it and add to it for future hunts. Lodging or camping is the responsibility of the participant (student). The instructors (mentors) will provide specific lists based on the nature and duration of each hunt. Some hunts may have the option of staying in nearby motels and eating at area restaurants. Food is the responsibility of the participant (student) regardless of whether they camp or stay in a motel. Students will be told if they have or need to make this choice.

A clothing-Personal Hygiene list will be provided. Minimizing human scent is important in any big game hunting, and it is critical in archery hunting because of the close quarter hunting scenarios you will be dealing with. If they smell you, you will **NOT** get a shot. Mentors will advise you on bathing, use of deodorants and changing clothes. Appropriate camouflage clothing is another important ingredient in successful bowhunting. The changing seasons and habitat of the area you are hunting can influence the color and pattern of the camouflage you wear. In a ground blind, you wear black. In a tree stand, you try to blend in with branches. Be prepared to do either.

#### E. SCOUTING AND MAPPING YOUR AREA

Familiarity with the area you plan to hunt is another key ingredient to successful bowhunting. Trail locations, water sources, feeding and bedding areas are conditions you should know about. Even if it is an area you have (or have not) hunted before, the use of topographic maps and satellite map/photos from internet sources like Google Maps and Bing.com can be very helpful. Important data can be plotted and recorded on the map as if it had actually been scouted on foot. Many hours, even days can be saved by using these sources to plan for your hunt ahead of time. Learn to read and use aerial and topographic maps and satellite photos. It is a vital part of Level III training.

#### E. SELECTING A HUNTING METHOD

Depending on the region and layout of the land you have chosen to hunt, one of three hunting methods may be chosen: a ground blind, a tree stand, or spot-and-stalking. In North Carolina, you most likely will be hunting whitetail deer, but you could be hunting turkey, black bear or hogs. This will affect your choice of hunting method. The mentor will discuss the pros and cons with you for the specie of game you are hunting and the nature of the terrain of the land. Recent trail-cam photos and data will also be considered.

#### F. FINDING AND CARING FOR HARVESTED ANIMALS

Every effort will be made to recover a deer, turkey or any animal shot with a bow and arrow. The techniques learned in Level II for blood trailing and field dressing will be utilized. Success learned in the “Becoming a Bowhunter” program” will not be soon forgotten and will lead to a lifetime of outdoor adventure and memories.