



**A PROMISING  
INVESTMENT  
IN OUR**



DCO George Fischer teaches the fundamentals of firing a muzzleloader.  
Top inset: Campers fish at Fischers Pond in Cascade.  
Bottom inset: Campers practice on the mini zip line between hunter's ed classes.

BY SENIOR CONSERVATION OFFICER ERIC CRAWFORD

# FUTURE



**IT IS TRULY  
ASTONISHING  
TO WATCH AN  
ELEVEN YEAR OLD  
GROW AS AN  
OUTDOORSMAN  
IN FIVE DAYS' TIME.**



**F**or the past four years as Co-Director of the Idaho Conservation Officer's Association (ICOA) Youth Conservation Camp that has been my experience. Coming up on the five year anniversary of the camp, I've witnessed 130 children develop into tomorrow's sportsmen and women.

In 2010, the ICOA held their first Youth Conservation Camp at Trinity Pines Camp and Conference Center in Cascade, Idaho. I recall those first hours of our first camp being filled with trepidation among the officers involved; all wondering if we and those first 30 children would survive those five days. To say it was a success was an understatement.

Over the course of that week in August the children in attendance are taught and certified in Hunter Education. Through the core curriculum of Hunter Education children develop lasting skills in sportsmanship, ethics, conservation, first aid and map and compass. Additionally they develop skills in team work as they work through several challenges on Trinity Pines' Challenge Course. One of the highlights to the Challenge Course is the zip line. Although an individual event, it is truly astonishing to see a group of children stand behind one of their own who they just met three days ago, and give them the encouragement and support to complete the 600 foot zip line. In addition to all of those activities, the children are introduced to archery, trapping/muzzleloading and fishing. All of the topics are taught by passionate conservation officers and other IDFG staff from throughout the state.

Day four of camp is packed with activities and tends to be the most exhausting day of the week. In the morning children are briefed and review firearms safety as we head to the range for Range Day. The range is divided into three stations: shotgun, .22 caliber and muzzleloader. During the course of the morning the children are rotated through each of the stations; providing them the opportunity to fire each of the firearms. The .22 station follows the range requirements of the Hunter Education program; affording the child a chance to shoot from three positions. As they move to the shotgun station children are provided with a 20 gauge shotgun and instructed on proper stance and technique and given several opportunities to shoot clay birds. At the final station, muzzleloaders, children are a little apprehensive. For most of them it is their first exposure to a muzzleloader, in this case a .45 caliber. Once the ice is broken it is hard to keep them from coming back; I'm sure it is the boom and large plume of smoke that creates the excitement.



Above: Regional Conservation Officer Blake Phillips teaches the basics of safe firearms handling.  
Below: "Thanks, I've got it." Proper fence crossing safety with a firearm.





Above: District Conservation Officer George Fischer demonstrates a dirt-set trap.  
Below left: Wildlife Biologist Anna Owsiak asks, "Whitetail or mulie?" in wildlife-identification class.  
Below right: Campers play "Oh Deer", a game about wildlife population dynamics.



In the afternoon, a trip is scheduled to Fischer Pond in Cascade where the children are instructed in fisheries management, knots, aquatic entomology and taught to cast with several rod and reel types and then set free to fish in the pond. Many of the children involved have had little to no experience fishing and many catch their first fish, rainbow trout. Smiles and laughter are widespread during this time. Last year some of the fish were deeply hooked and as a service to the Cascade community, the fish were donated to the local food bank so someone could enjoy the tasty fish.

Later in the afternoon, with the temperature hovering around 80 degrees the kids and the counselors tube and water fight their way down the Payette River, returning to the camp via water. It is always a big hit with children and officer counselors.

The week comes to an end on Friday morning with a sign of relief and exhaustion. Parents return to pick up children and watch as they graduate with their Hunter Education certification and hopefully a little more life experience. It is truly an amazing experience and an honor to observe children grow and develop into tomorrow's sportsmen and women and continue Idaho's wildlife and sporting heritage.

This August 11-16 we will again be hosting 30 plus children at Trinity Pines Camp and Conference Center in Cascade, Idaho for the fifth year. All the kinks have been worked out and the camp runs like a well-oiled machine. Applications can be found on the Association's website: [icoaonline.org](http://icoaonline.org).

Thank you to our partners and sponsors for making this camp possible:

- Idaho Dept. of Fish and Game
- Citizens Against Poaching
- Kootenai Valley Sportsman
- Bonner County Sportsman Association
- Inland Empire, Safari Club International
- Shoshone County Sportsman Association
- Shoshone County Bitterroot Bowman
- Shoshone County Public Shooting Range
- Garden Valley Sportsman Association
- Troy-Deary Gun Club
- Cedar Hills Gun Club
- Latah Wildlife Club
- Pheasants Forever, Pocatello Chapter
- Priest Lake Sportsman Association
- Snake River Versatile Gun Dog Club
- Sandpoint Archers
- Ducks Unlimited, Kootenai Valley Chapter
- Lewis-Clark Wildlife Club
- Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, Idaho Chapter
- Indianhead Flyfishers
- Aquatic Education Endowment Fund



*Senior Conservation Officer Eric Crawford is a field training officer and is stationed in Moscow.*

