

impact

University of Idaho Extension programs that are making a difference in Idaho.

4-H Shooting Sports camp — ethics, tracking and orienteering, oh my!

AT A GLANCE

4-H Shooting Sports provides numerous life skills and knowledge while engaging youth and adults in a lifetime sport.

The Situation

Current research indicates that spending time in nature increases a child's ability to learn, increases memory up to 20 percent, and improves self-esteem and social behavior. A National 4-H Shooting Sports program, new to Idaho, is Hunting, which incorporates history, ethics, conservation, wildlife management, laws and regulations, survival, camping, environment and shooting skills of rifle, shotgun and archery.

Our Response

Faculty, staff and volunteers developed and conducted 4-H Shooting Sports education camps at various hosting sites, including Central Idaho 4-H Camp and Gooding County Fairgrounds. Over the past three years educational camps were held to provide youth and families with an opportunity to learn and expand their 4-H Shooting Sports skills.

At a one-day educational camp, participants had the opportunity to learn hunting safety, wildlife population, trajectory, and animal and plant identification. Youth tested their knowledge by joining a game of Jeopardy. They experienced wildlife population change by using an interactive game called "Oh Deer." Trajectory science was taught using water guns to hit various



Extension Educator Cindy Kinder teaching youth about tracks and how to identify them.

targets by changing the angle of the gun. Youth also had the chance to learn about identification of animals and plants. They ended the day by practicing their aim with air rifles.

At multiday camps, youth engaged in hands-on learning and attended multiple sessions each day and applied what they learned at the evening activities including a Snipe Hunt and a Trail Challenge. The hunter skills workshops covered orienteering; stalking and recovering of game; camouflage; wildlife ID and tracking; leave no trace; and habitat and plant ID. At orienteering, youth used a map and compass to complete the challenge of getting from one point to another. During stalking and camouflage classes youth learned how to be discrete and sneak through the

woods under multiple conditions, including hiding and making as little noise as possible. Wildlife ID and tracking reviewed types of wildlife seen in Northern America as well as population trends. Participants also made their own animal track molds to take home. Habitat sessions taught the needs and uses of plants for animal survival.

Youth applied all of their new hunter skills to track, sneak up and capture a “Snipe.” Cabin groups were given a map and instructions on how and where to catch the Snipe. Each team succeeded in their hunt; however, some were challenged more than others including having their Snipe poached.

The second day of camp included more hunter decisions workshops, archery, and rifle skills, a hides and skull collection and ended the day with a Trail Challenge. Workshops included topics of first aid, packing your pack, food science and safety, ethics, landowner relationships, calls and calling, and how to prepare for a hunt. The first aid workshop went over what to do and how to respond to a medical emergency that you may encounter while camping or hunting. In how to pack your pack, youth learned the essential things that need to be in your pack before going on an outdoor activity. Everyone was able to make their own dinner at the food science and safety workshop creating a tin foil dinner.

The ethics and landowner relationships workshop helped youth understand how to make tough decisions with rules and regulations. Preparing for the hunting class taught participants what is needed in a pack when hunting, including what you need to locate game and what you need once you have harvested the game. Calls and calling session taught youth about animal calls and why and when different sounds are made. Youth were able to listen to different types of elk and goose calls and practice with their very own turkey and goose calls.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Youth participants were able to get hands-on learning with bows and air rifles. That evening campers were challenged on a trail hike where they encountered five stations that related to the workshop topics. At each station they were given a scenario and had to apply what was learned that day by reacting to the situation.

Program Outcomes

Through these area-wide education camps, there knowledge of shooting sports and outdoor education programs available through 4-H has increased. There is a broader understanding of the role of hunters in wildlife management and conservation. Youth were able to practice the actions of a responsible hunter and understand the reasons for hunting laws and regulations. Everyone was also given a chance to be outside interacting and learning about the environment. Youth and adults (232) participated in the first three years of this program. At the day camp 90 percent of participants agree and strongly agree that because of camp they have increased their knowledge of trajectory. After our hunter skills workshops 95 percent of participants agreed and strongly agreed that because of camp they have a better understanding of wildlife habit and movements. Following our hunter decision workshops, 89 percent of participants agree and strongly agree that because of camp they have increased their awareness of ethical choices. Participants (96 percent) also agree and strongly agree that because of camp they have more knowledge of landowner relationships.

The Future

We will grow and expand the 4-H Shooting Sports program in effort to encourage more outdoor activities for youth and their families. It is important to continue the growth in learning skills, building self-esteem and impacting social behaviors of these youth.

Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

University of Idaho Critical Issues Grant