

Susan Nelson

Although I got a late start at hunting, I am trying to make up for the time I missed out on this amazing sport. The year that I got married, my husband, who had always hunted whitetail deer, asked if I would like to go with him deer hunting that season. I said I would. His next question was, “Do you want to go and watch or do you want to hunt?” My response, “If I am going, I am hunting.” Things have not been the same since!

I grew up in a rural Missouri where my Dad and brothers hunted and fished. I never participated in the hunting, but fishing was a different story. I loved bank fishing on the Gasconade River, fishing for catfish in the sloughs and going to the heated crappie docks at Lake of the Ozarks. Then life happened and I didn't get to do much of that anymore. I did, however, take up trap shooting which was my first experience with actual shooting. Therefore, when my husband asked if I wanted to go deer hunting, I was experienced in shooting a gun and gun safety.

After a couple years of whitetail hunting, we attended a sports banquet and purchased a trip to Africa from the oral auction. We were naïve and hadn't done our research, but thought we could get started with a plains game hunt. That first trip was the best experience we have had. You have probably heard people say that once you go to Africa, you will find a way to go back, and IT'S TRUE! We have been three times, to South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia. All three have been a different experience. We have tried to incorporate other activities on our trips such as visiting National Parks, Tiger Fishing, Victoria Falls and a children's orphanage in Namibia where we took toys and clothing to the children.

One thing I have noticed in all three trips is the people we observed out in the bush and undeveloped area are the happiest! They barely have what they need to survive yet they are happy to see you and always have a big smile. It was good to know that the food from our hunts would be distributed to these people for their nourishment.

My husband and I enjoy hunting together. We enjoy each other's experiences and making memories. Most women do not decorate their home in the same décor as I. My art work consists of our mounts and artifacts we have gotten from Africa and North America. Our latest hunt consisted of black bear hunting in British Columbia where we both were fortunate to come home with a bear. We are both retired now and it is great to know we can hunt anytime we want. Before when working we always saved our vacation days for hunting season. No time for the beach - we wanted to hunt! In addition to the hunting in Africa I have been fortunate to hunt elk in Wyoming and Colorado, mule deer in Nevada, Javelina in Texas, bear in British Columbia, turkey and whitetail here in Missouri. This September I will be in Oregon hunting elk.

In February I attended a clinic presented by the Missouri Dept of Conservation as well as an Upland Pheasant Hunt for women only. That was my first experience with bird hunting. I had a great time and now have another reason to get out and enjoy the great outdoors.



For the women reading this, I encourage you to become involved too; whether it is observing, actually hunting or fishing, spending time with others involved in the sport, or perhaps getting your children engaged . . . if you aren't already involved, don't wait. Give it a try. We invite more women to become members of our Local Gateway Chapter.