



MASTER HUNTER PROGRAM

A PROJECT OF ONE MONTANA

Program Impact 2021

The Montana Master Hunter Program improves working relationships between landowners and hunters; helps landowners and the State of Montana with their wildlife management goals; and creates ambassadors and mentors for the sport of hunting. Some 2021 highlights:

- **71 new master Hunters graduated in 2021, creating a community of 237 Master Hunters.**
- Participants represent **41 cities and towns in Montana** from both urban and rural communities.
- **15%** of our participants are **women** and this number increases annually.
- **Over 15%** of our participants are mentors or Hunter Education Instructors.
- We hosted **13 on-ranch service projects** to teach Master Hunters about the role of private land stewardship in benefiting wildlife and other public resources.
- **Over 50 Master Hunters provided 482 hours of combined volunteer hours** for projects ranging from removing invasive weeds and building wildlife friendly fencing, to removing encroaching conifers to promote forest health.
- One Montana was the recipient of a grant from Wisetail (a Bozeman-based software development company) that allowed us to **develop a new Learning Management System, The Roundup**, which is our “one-stop shop” for all things Master Hunter. It allows access to class resources, landowner contacts, and hunting opportunities. Students complete their online programming through modules we have built in the system, and enter their continuing education and volunteer hours. It is also a place for Master Hunters to connect with each other and continue to discuss challenging topics. **By helping us to better manage our course and learners, The Roundup makes the program more impactful, more effective, and more efficient.**
- **We offered two continuing education programs:** The first was an **archery certification** where Master Hunter Graduates who were already experienced big-game bowhunters worked to further develop their hunting and shooting skills. To become certified, each student had to complete the class and put three consecutive shots into a 9-inch target from 40 yards under outdoor/field conditions.

Master Hunters also had an opportunity to **field harvest and butcher a bison**. Participants spent one day at North Bridger Bison (NBB) with rancher Matt Skoglund and participated in a field harvest. On a second day, they learned how to butcher the bison from Anna Borgman at Forage Fed, discussed cooking and went home with about 42 pounds of bison meat each.

- We **grew the geographic reach of the program** by stretching further north and east with classes in Kalispell and Miles City, respectively. In 2022, we’ll go north to Havre.
- We **piloted two new classes** including civic engagement/hunting advocacy and wildlife tracking into the curriculum.
- Six additional ranches are now allowing access to Master Hunters through the MHP, giving us a total of 26 ranches partnering with the program to provide hunting access at some level.
- We **produced two videos** this year to illustrate the importance for landowners and hunters to come together, and the important work that landowners do to steward our public resources (Release Nov/December 2021)
- The Master Hunter Program was featured in On Land Magazine in October 2021:
<https://onland.westernlandowners.org/2021/stewardship-in-action/mastering-all-aspects-of-the-hunt/>

Bridging the Urban-Rural Divide by Building Trust between Landowners & Sportsmen

One of the most valuable services that the MHP provides is an opportunity for hunters to interact with landowners by working alongside them. In 2021 we hosted 13 Service Days on ranches and farms across the state. These workdays help to educate hunters about the role of landowners in stewarding wildlife habitat and the multitude of challenges with land management. Here are a few examples:

We worked with The Blackfoot Challenge engaging in a variety of projects to benefit aspens, cattle, hikers, hunters, elk, and grizzly bears alike. Hunters learned how important stewardship is to our public wildlife. **As tailgates and tools are shared, common ground is found.**

Master Hunters met in Malta to work on wildlife friendly fencing projects with the Ranchers Stewardship Alliance (RSA). We talked about prairie conservation, how good grazing promotes biodiversity, and about how drought is forcing ranchers to think hard about pasture rest and rotation. **Working alongside each other, we bridged the distance between Bozeman and Malta and Billings and found shared values.**

We gathered with AMB West, MT Fish Wildlife & Parks, and Park County Environmental Council in Paradise Valley to remove fencing that was adversely impacting antelope migration. Throughout the day we discussed the complexities of population growth, land use change, policy change, public perception change, geological change, and land stewardship efforts in the region. **Creating these connections that allow for such nuanced, important conversation is key to our work.**



Master Hunter Experience

"Being introduced to some of the landowners, getting a better understanding of their operations, and hanging out with other MHP graduates has been extremely rewarding... I see the Master Hunter Program as an opportunity for me to do my part in trying to bridge that divide and hopefully to be part of the solution and not part of the problem."

David Brammer, 2020 Graduate



Landowner Perspective

"I think this program is rebooting what that relationship [between hunters and landowners] should look like. You really trust that these hunters know what they are doing, how to act and hunt appropriately."

Bill Milton, Milton Ranch

Thank you for your support!

Bass Pro Shops and Cabela's Outdoor Fund, BNSF Railway Foundation, Montana Grain Growers Association, Montana's Outdoor Legacy Foundation, Montana Stockgrowers Foundation, Montana Wild Sheep Foundation, Mystery Ranch, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Ruby Habitat Foundation, Sitka Gear, Weyerhaeuser, Wild Sheep Foundation, Wisetail.