

Kentucky Afield Outdoors: Practice Safety At The Shooting Range

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The cooler temperatures and lower humidity that spread across Kentucky this week made it feel more like early fall than the dog days of summer.

Fall hunting season seems closer with a crispness in the air in mid-July. And in reality, it isn't far off. Early fall squirrel season in Kentucky opens in less than a month. Spending time at the shooting range now not only is fun but it's also a surefire way to ensure you'll be ready when it counts this fall.

"Ranges are established places where people go to shoot rifles, pistols, shotguns, even archery," said Bill Balda, Hunter Education Supervisor with the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources. "Rarely are all of these done at the same time and at the same range."

Kentucky Fish and Wildlife has public shooting ranges (tube, trap and skeet, and archery) on select wildlife management areas in Kentucky. A complete list is available online at fw.ky.gov.

These public shooting ranges are self-serve – trap and skeet ranges are open to organized clubs or groups and must be reserved 30 days in advance – and users must comply with the posted rules. Some of the guidelines are based on courtesy; the majority focus on safety.

"When you get to a range, there should be a sign that clearly marks what the

range is for," Balda said. "Be aware of what you can and cannot use on each range because these ranges are placed and have safety zones according to the firearms they're designed to handle."

The basic rules of firearms safety still apply at the range:

Treat every firearm as if it's loaded. Keep the action open and the firearm unloaded until you're ready to fire.

Make sure you point the firearm in a safe direction. At a range, that's designated as toward the target. Never point it at yourself or others.

Keep your finger off the trigger until you're ready to shoot.

Know your target and what's in front of or behind it.

"Probably the most common thing I see on rifle ranges is people still handling a firearm on the firing line while people are down range," Balda said. "For safety and courtesy that's something you shouldn't do when people have gone down range to work on targets."

The same applies for shotgunners.

"From time to time people need to go down to the trap houses and reload the thrower," Balda said.

"Again, you should not be handling your firearms when someone does that. Most shotgun ranges are pretty good about having a rack to put your shotgun in when you're not shooting."

Aside from proper handling of firearms, there are

two other safety measures to keep in mind.

Eye and ear protection are required at all times.

Depending on the weather, an anti-fog lens cleaner may need to be applied to safety glasses.

"Another thing that helps keep your glasses from fogging up is to take off your hat," Balda said.

Hearing damage is irreversible, and the sound of your firearm going off should not be the signal to protect your ears.

Balda advises wearing ear plugs and ear muffs when shooting anything other than a .22 caliber firearm.

"With a .22, I recommend one or the other," Balda said.

As more people visit the shooting range with the fall hunting season drawing closer, be even more aware of what's going on around you. Don't be bashful about calling for a cease fire if you observe a potentially dangerous situation.

"Everyone should stop shooting and figure out what's going on and fix it," Balda said. "It's not a big deal. Just get it done. If someone gets hurt then it's a big deal."

Kevin Kelly is a staff writer for Kentucky Afield magazine, the official publication of the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources. He is an avid angler with a passion for muskellunge and stream fishing. Get the latest from Kevin and the entire Kentucky Afield staff by following them on Twitter: @kyafield.



With autumn around the corner, Kentuckians will visit gun ranges to hone their shooting skills before hunting seasons open this fall. Following proper safety procedures is paramount for all users. A list of public gun ranges on Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Management Areas are listed on the department's website at fw.ky.gov.

The Creator's Creation

**Wanderings
from the
Woods
& Water**
by Jay
Bicknell
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see there is a Great Creator. The evolution teachers tried to convince me with their books that Evolution was the truth. The teachers didn't care much about the Book I have and get all my answers from. The Book I read disproves the theory of evolution over and over; The Holy Bible inspired by God.

The world was created in 6 days and on the 7th day He rested. The answer to creation can be found in Genesis. Darwin can have is theory, but I will stick with my Jesus and His word.

I am sure there are a lot of folks that would call me a crazy Christian. I have spent enough time in His creation to know how real God is. If you don't know Jesus just take a walk in the woods and see how all things work together. Look at his wonderful creation. No Jesus, No Peace. Know Jesus, Know Peace.

Until next week, get out and enjoy God's creation!

My degree as a wildlife biologist required me to take evolution classes. I had several very intelligent professors try to convince me that the THEORY of evolution was an absolute. They tried to convince me that it all started with a bunch of actions and reactions on cells to get us to now.

Since I can remember, I have loved being outdoors. The reason I love being out, because I get to see the hand of God at work. Whether it's a sunrise or a blanket of fresh fallen snow, it all just shows me how real my God is.

Some things to think about!

- If the earth was a hair farther away from the sun the earth would be an icebox. If the earth was hair closer to the sun the earth would be an oven.

-The trees absorb carbon dioxide and produce oxygen. We breathe oxygen and emit carbon dioxide.

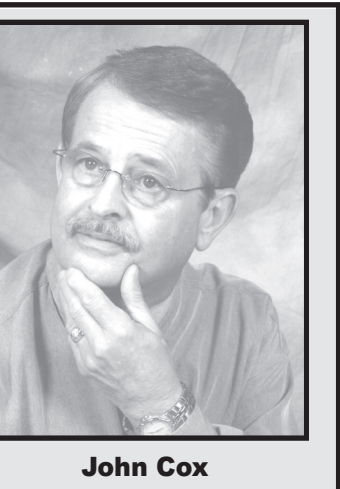
Is this just by chance? I think not. This world was designed by God. His creation works in harmony. Just "by chance" would never have this much order. It just takes a walk through the woods to

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• Add 25 oz. of hydrated lime per square yard in peaty soils
Sources: www.thegardenhelper.com/acidsoil
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