

**Ideas for Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunter's programming for
adult-onset anglers and hunters in the NXT-GEN demographic**

NXT-GEN Ambassador 2024 Report for the Board of Directors

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Introduction

The OFAH NXT-GEN program was created to provide younger people the opportunity to offer direct input into OFAH discussions and represent the OFAH within their demographic. NXT-GEN ambassadors range in age from 18-30, and represent a diverse set of hunting, fishing, and conservation interests from across Ontario. Some ambassadors have grown up in families that actively hunt and fish, whereas others are self-taught.

As the OFAH implements its new vision for the future, the OFAH requested advice on what sort of programming, workshops, webinars, and camps would appeal to adult-onset anglers and hunters in the NXT-GEN demographic. The OFAH is looking for concrete ideas for programming that could be implemented within the OFAH clubs and zones and to ensure its future programming aligns with its broader goals as an organization.

In addition to sitting on an OFAH advisory committee and attending presentations on the current OFAH programs, the NXT-GEN ambassadors have been working together to brainstorm ideas and develop new programming. The document provides ideas generated by the NXT-GEN and serves as a starting point for the OFAH to support clubs and zones in developing programming that will attract the next generation of anglers and hunters.

New hunter and angler-oriented outdoor weekends

In discussing new program ideas, many NXT GEN ambassadors gravitated toward programming the OFAH previously hosted such as “Women’s Outdoor Weekends” or guided hunts for new hunters. Interest in these types of programs was due to past personal experiences with similar workshops and a sense that it can be a powerful way to draw someone into the activity and lifestyle.

These workshops would be tailored towards people interested in hunting and fishing, but want to try it before committing time and financial resources or want more guidance from experienced hunters and anglers. Ambassadors agree that having a women-focused workshop can create a sense of community for women looking to get into hunting and fishing, but that might feel nervous in a wider group setting. With OFAH’s goal to increase the percentage of women in its membership in particular, having programming tailored for women may encourage more participation. However, the idea of a weekend workshop for anyone new to hunting or fishing could also be suited well to newcomers and younger people who don’t have friends and family that partake in hunting and fishing.

Outlined below is a general weekend workshop schedule that could be tailored to both women and/or a wider group of newer hunters and anglers or those looking to get into the hobby. The activities listed are those that came up in discussions as being particularly of interest to the demographic we are seeking to attract.

Outline of what the workshop would entail/schedule:

Created below is a proposed schedule for a weekend workshop. The suggested ideas could also be used for a day course or night seminar. After talking through what we would look for as NXT-GEN, the themes of the weekend include Friday focusing on networking, Saturday focusing on hand-on activities, and Sunday focusing on learning more about specific topics and/or how to get involved. However, we do acknowledge that these could be interchangeable. Overall the creation of one of these workshops would provide;

- Different options/courses during the weekend, different skills to learn; some downtime to network
- Representation from teachers can depend on the intent of the program, but not make or break; the value of the programming is more important
- Location options that include central and northern Ontario (engage Zones A to D)

FRIDAY:	
12:00 - 12:30 pm	Welcoming Lunch
12:30 pm	Registration & moving participants into cabins - As people register, they could receive information about OFAH and their Zone
1:00 - 4:00 pm	Choose your own adventure - Explore as many activities as you can: • Kayaking, Canoeing, Paddle boating/boarding • Outdoor Survival • Nature hike
4:00 - 5:00 pm	Pre-Dinner Social: Join us at the dining hall for appetizers and meet your fellow participants, instructors, and volunteers
5:00 - 6:00 pm	How to Cook Session - participants assist in cooking their dinner
6:00 - 7:00 pm	Dinner
7:00 pm	Guest Speaker
Followed by	Friday night raffle draws, night hike, stargazing, and social evening campfire

Other proposed activities could include running a chainsaw or wilderness first aid course on the Friday

SATURDAY	
7:30 am	Breakfast
8:30 - 11:00 am	Outdoor Rotation #1
11:15 - 12:15 pm	Lunch

12:30 - 3:00 pm	Outdoor Rotation #2
3:15 - 5:45 pm	Outdoor Rotation #3
5:45 - 6:30 pm	Catch your breath - free time before the group photo
6:30 pm	Group Photo
6:45 - 7:45 pm	Banquet Dinner
7:45 - 8:00 pm	Saturday night raffle draw
8:00 - 9:30 pm	Guest Speaker
9:30 pm	Evening Campfire

It appears that having rotations for participants worked best in the past. Below are listed events that we believe would be both engaging and informative. The potential events would vary depending on who is organizing the weekend event.

Potential events:

- Firearm basics if having range event
- Archery Range
- Learn to Fish (Fly Fishing and/or Rod & Reel) / How to Clean a Fish
- Fish Identification
- Bird Identification / Calling
- Animal Calling
- How To Series: Blind / Treestand
- How To Series: Boat Training / Trailing
- Waterfowl Hunting 101 / Turkey Hunting 101 etc.
- Outdoor survival (orienteering, outdoor cooking, first aid basics)

SUNDAY	
7:30 - 8:00 am	Clean up Cabins
8:00 - 8:30 am	Breakfast
8:45 - 11:15 am	Guest Speaker(s)
11:30 - 12:30 pm	Lunch
12:30 - 1:30 pm	How to get involved / Thank You
1:30 pm	Departure

Depending on who is organizing the event would determine their connections for guest speakers. Some ideas for guest speakers are:

- Tackleshare (about the program and some fishing education)
- Trapping, showing set up of traps and how to get involved
- More specific/technical conversations on the event topics from Saturday

Mentorships

Mentorship programs could be a way that the OFAH can support and facilitate learning for beginner hunters and anglers. The OFAH could support zones and clubs by developing an online mentorship program tailored to specific techniques or animals of interest. The OFAH could provide access to mentoring through meet-up opportunities mixing experienced and new hunters, or offer NXT-GEN ambassadors the opportunity to teach and mentor other younger hunters and anglers. The mentorship could also be tied to the weekend workshop proposed above where mentors are recruited to help with the workshops but can provide further 1:1 support for those interested after the workshop.

Some ideas gathered from ambassadors on what a mentorship could look like include:

- Online workshops discussing tactics of hunting/angling
- Young hunters weekend or day

Social Media/OFAH online materials

Social media has become the forefront of how individuals seek out and learn about programs and events. The ideas listed below serve To increase the visibility of the OFAH and catch the eyes of the next generation.

- Instagram Reels
 - Fishing / Hunting Tips: handling, gear for each season
- OFAH online FB group, get access with your membership, share photos, ask questions, engage with each other; leads to others learning about the group
- Catch of the month posts - OOD uses these in their magazines
- Virtual derbies, bingo card or other targets, fish photos (once legalities cleared up)
- Advertisements
 - Events & public meetings
 - Volunteer opportunities & once they're completed post the content to show how important it was
- Quick online manuals
 - Fishing / Hunting - types of equipment (shopping list for a newbie); then more advanced types of gear (see Ontario Hawking Club website)
- OFAH app – thinking long term this could include quick manuals, links to our programming and programs (could have the same feel with mobile browser viewing/logged in to AMS)
- Recruit NXT-GEN to help with communications (esp. to NXT-GEN)
 - A NXT-GEN take over
 - Share experiences in blog/post form
 - Post content to show how you can join and why - show the networking that has been done through capturing more content

Zone and club meetings

The OFAH could develop zone and club meeting themes to be more attractive to new attendees. Access to huntable land or waterways can be a challenge to new or younger hunters, so clubs could help to facilitate connections with landowners or be explicit about the land access a club may already have rights to. Clubs could also host sessions where the rules/regulations for accessing public land locally are reviewed and people can ask further questions.

Open Houses could be hosted through the clubs/zones as well as a general way to socialize in a casual atmosphere and for which OFAH could attend and promote their programs and membership.

After the hunt/catch

While getting the right shot or hooking a fish is at first the primary focus for those who are hunting and fishing, ambassadors agree that uncertainty around what to do after the shot or the catch can lower confidence for newer hunters and anglers and lead to wasting of meat. Ambassadors also feel there is a lot of interest from younger people in the sustainability of hunting and fishing and utilizing every part of the animal, beyond just improving skills in the kitchen.

We recommend that OFAH explore opportunities to continue supporting after-market advanced hunting/fishing courses such as the “After the Shot” course that runs through Zone G. Expanding on this program by introducing an “After the Catch” fishing-related version would help to attract those who partake in fishing but want to learn how to properly fillet a fish, use more of the fish such as the bones, proper storage, and handling. These workshops would be hands on. There could also be specific courses for cooking lessons including a cooking session and eating the meal all together to boost a sense of community and connection with others.

Some specific topics that would be helpful to focus on are:

- How to cook meat so it is less “gamey”
- Cooking tougher and not as popular cuts of meat or parts of fish such as the collars
- Utilizing bones, off-cuts, and fat

To boost the value of these courses, it would also be ideal to have some take-home material for attendees to continue practicing what they learned such as a small recipe book or a guide to butchering/filleting.

OFAH may consider reaching out to different retailers to host the classes such as Loblaws where such events have been hosted in the past. This may be a good strategy to attract people who are not already members of the OFAH but pass by the advertisement for the event while they are out getting groceries. Alternatively, the workshops could be added to Under the Lock and other derbies.

Winter-focused programming

Winter-focused programs would be an opportunity to introduce people to winter activities, such as ice fishing. This would give people the chance to learn about ice safety, types of rods/reels, lures, techniques, and equipment needed for ice fishing. This could also be an opportunity to introduce people to winter camping, whether it's on the ice while you are ice fishing for walleye, or winter camping in the woods.

Another winter-focused idea is ice fishing meet-ups. This could be set up with the Zone, where people from each zone could meet up together, and all travel to one spot to fish for the day, or meet at the lake that they plan to fish at. This would also be a great opportunity for young anglers to meet more experienced anglers and learn tips and tricks. The OFAH can support this by sending out email blasts to Zone members. Another way the OFAH can support this is by getting TackleShare involved, to provide ice fishing gear for new anglers who may not have gear.

Bring and Buy / Swaps

For new hunters and anglers, buying new gear can be expensive. The OFAH can help to break down this barrier by providing guidance and support to clubs in hosting their own bring and buy/swap events. The OFAH can provide a guide and support logistics for clubs to host a variety of events that may include decoy share programs/library for those looking for decoys for hunting, clothing and gear swaps, or garage sale style bring and buy events.

These events can be relatively simple for a club to put together and with some guidance from the OFAH in the form of a two page guide can be a great way to support networking among younger and older hunters and can be used to attract new members to the OFAH through door prizes or raffles.

Fishing related workshops

Sometimes fishing can be intimidating to new anglers who aren't familiar with all the different types of rods/reels, all the equipment that can be used when fishing and the use of boats while fishing. One-day workshops could be a way to reach large numbers and people who are interested in learning a new skill related to fishing, such as:

- Fish Handling techniques (tied to Fish Along, Fish ID - Fishing Essentials- Learning to fish)
- Boat handling techniques - trailering - loading
- Invasive species awareness (cleaning your boat)

The OFAH can help support these programs by advertising them on Zone websites, along with emails to Zone members and Ontario residents.

Litter clean-ups / Anti-litter signage

Litter clean-ups are an example of a club activity that can engage members and their communities (including families) who are interested in conservation and healthy wild spaces. A number of our clubs do this, so this should be an easy one to put together as a guidebook. A related way to promote anglers and hunters being responsible for their litter is for clubs to encourage anti-litter messaging in their communities, such as sponsoring signs about littering at important locations.

Initiate university/college clubs

Starting or joining a school club is a great way to get involved. Sometimes we don't know what resources are available to us until we have a central hub to go to. University/college clubs/activities have the ability to connect interested students to each other while simultaneously finding potential members in one place. These clubs could consist of hunting/fishing offshoots as well. For example, general outdoor clubs, ecological society, archery, etc. Due to school funding, it would be best if these clubs didn't run directly through the university. This would provide a wider range of options for the members and allow for more

freedom when organizing events outside of school. It would be ideal if any NXT-GEN that are currently in school or are recent grads help with facilitating these involvements.

Listed below are ideas for OFAH involvement:

- Attend a club day by setting a booth to provide; hand outs, gauge interest, promote the NXT-GEN program, survey for demographics/interest – target schools with wildlife / resource management programs etc. (Trent University, Fleming College, Carleton University, University of Guelph, Lakehead etc.)
- Carlton has a shooting club that OFAH could support and facilitate the creation of a larger club encompassing hunting and/or fishing activities (<https://www.cusaclubs.ca/club/carleton-university-firearms-association/>).
- OFAH's new association member software could potentially support university groups and help connect people and share information on the platform.