



# OUTDOOR CAMPUS

RAPID CITY, SOUTH DAKOTA

VOL 6 ISSUE 1

JANUARY-MARCH 2026

JANUARY - MARCH PROGRAMS BELOW!

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UPS AND DOWNS. PAGE 6.

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TRY SOMETHING NEW WITH YOUR  
HARVEST. PAGE 9.



## INTERN SENDOFF

Interns are a huge part of day to day operations here at The Outdoor Campus West. With two of them wrapping up their time here, we hear about their experience and future plans! Read more on pages 2 and 3.



# INTERN SENDOFF: ISABELLA POLLMAN

*by Isabella Pollman - Naturalist Intern*

Greetings! My name is Isabella Pollman and I recently completed my naturalist internship at the Outdoor Campus West. I am a junior at South Dakota State University in Brookings, majoring in Conservation Planning and Park Management with a minor in Rangeland Ecology and Management. For the past four years, I have worked seasonally for South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks in the parks division. However, despite my love for the parks, I decided it was time to try something new which led to me applying for this naturalist internship role. Little did I know that that would be the beginning of me discovering new hobbies and a passion for outdoor education.

During my time as a naturalist internship focusing on school programming at the Outdoor Campus West, I was given the opportunity to become involved with all aspects of conservation, outdoor recreation, and education. Every day was an opportunity to learn and practice outdoor skills, and to share those skills with an audience to give them the opportunity to adopt a new hobby and appreciation for nature. My primary focus was teaching school age kids about wildlife, habitats, archery, and the basics of fishing. As a kid, I attended many educational programs through the Outdoor Campus, which inspired my decision to pursue a career with South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks. Because of the impact those classes had on me, when I began working at the Outdoor Campus, I wanted to challenge myself to ensure the classes I taught were hands-on and had lasting impressions on the students. It was rewarding to see how excited the kids were when they came to visit the campus, and how much they learned through the programs.

Working at the Outdoor Campus has been rewarding not just because of the positive impact I got to have on visitors, but also because of the opportunities I was given to develop new skills.

Thanks to the support and encouragement of my supervisors, I was able to jump back into hobbies I was once apart of such as fishing and firearms, and I was also able to pick up new hobbies such as fly fishing and hunting. Everything I learned about outdoor recreation, from fly tying to deer processing and everything in between, I was able to bring back to the classroom and share with my students.

While it's bittersweet as my time at the Outdoor Campus West comes to end and I return to my university, I am beyond grateful for the opportunities I was given and the experiences I can take with me into my career. I plan to continue pursuing internships for South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks until I graduate and can begin a fulltime career within the agency. Regardless of what my future position may be, I am looking forward to continuing to share with others the importance of conservation through outdoor education.







## INTERN SENDOFF: AARON PLUNKETT

*by Aaron Plunkett - Naturalist Intern*

Ahoy! My name is Aaron Plunkett, and I am a naturalist intern at the Outdoor Campus West. Growing up in Arizona, I looked up to my great teachers and Boy Scout leaders. With their guidance, I have always felt drawn towards an educational career, with a wild passion for the outdoors. In the years following my move to Rapid City, while the pressures of adulthood began to set in, my fascination with wildlife and nature slowly became a shadow cast behind me. Through this internship, that flame has been reignited, and glows brighter than ever.

When I began my internship in January 2025, I could hardly tie a secure fishing knot. Now, I have successfully taught my family how to clean and cook what they catch. I went from never having held a rifle, to sharing hunting stories and teaching others to process their own deer. This has been the wonderful cycle of learning and leading as an outdoor educator.

I have done my best to take advantage of every learning opportunity that has come my way. From fly tying to muzzleloading, I want to try it all. The Outdoor Campus West has provided me with the most educational experience of my life, and a community of life long students, just like me. Undoubtedly the best parts of working here have been to witness fruits of my labor, and the growth in myself and others.

As an intern and active participant at the Outdoor Campus West, I have discovered my passions for hunting, fishing, trapping, and conservation as a lifestyle. Wherever I go from here, I will continue to sharpen my skills, learn whatever I can, teach when I have the chance, and be conservation minded. My time with South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks and the Outdoor Campus West will be cherished in my heart forever.



## VENISON TALLOW

*by Molly Boyum - Naturalist*

I try to use as much of an animal as possible when processing it. This has led to trying unique recipes, being creative outside of my comfort zone, and plenty of Google searches.

In the last few years, tallow products have been all the rage. From videos on social media to seeing tallow products in stores around the area, it has been all over. I began wondering “what is tallow?” and “what do you do with it?” I became intrigued by the rendering process and found myself researching the history and uses for tallow.

I found that people have used rendered animal fat in a variety of uses for thousands of years. Beef or mutton fat is most commonly used when making tallow, but it can be made by rendering the fat from ruminant animals. Besides domesticated cattle and sheep, ruminant animals that are local to us in West River South Dakota include deer, elk, bison, bighorn sheep, pronghorn antelope, and mountain goats.

The next deer I processed, I trimmed off as much of the fat as I could. After some rendering cycles, I had my tallow. I have been doing this ever since, learning every time and experimenting with uses and recipes.

I am excited to offer a venison tallow balm making class on January 20! I look forward to taking a part of a deer that is often overlooked and discarded, and showing participants how versatile venison fat can be. We will go over harvesting and rendering methods, and then making skin balm. Sign up on the Go Outdoors South Dakota site and if you have questions, email me at [Molly.Boyum@state.sd.us](mailto:Molly.Boyum@state.sd.us)!



JANUARY-MARCH 2026

## NEW SERIES FOR DADS

*by Aaron Schone - Naturalist*

This spring, we plan to offer several of our introduction classes with an emphasis on dads! As a new dad myself, I often find myself thinking about how my own son will age. What will his hobbies become? Will I know enough to help him? What if I’ve never done it before? How do I teach him and when? All great questions to have for yourself but we are here to hopefully answer those questions! What our classes plan to be are an opportunity to build a community and find your own interest in activities you may have never done before which will help guide you and your family’s path into the outdoors!

The goal of each class is to not only share and teach the pertinent information for each activity, but then also how to effectively share this information with your family. Activities can vary in the skill needed and equipment and its important to find what’s right for you and your family. Some activities can be shared and enjoyed at a young age with your kids, while others may take patience and time. As an avid outdoorsman, I have been able to enjoy plenty of time outside with my son. The tricky part is sometimes wanting to do specific activities but understanding the safety risks that may be present, as well as if the experience may be negative and turn my son away. The current activities scheduled include introductions to archery, fishing and firearms with new opportunities to come in the summer! Email [Aaron.Schone@state.sd.us](mailto:Aaron.Schone@state.sd.us) with questions!



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# becoming an Outdoors- Woman

*by KayCee Smith - Naturalist*

Becoming an Outdoors-Woman (BOW) has connected South Dakota women to the outdoors for more than 30 years. The annual workshops have consisted of introductory to intermediate courses, hands-on learning, a wide variety of topics like fishing, shooting, archery, kayaking, camping, and more, and most importantly, an encouraging, supportive environment meant to facilitate learning and fun.

A new mission of the Game, Fish and Parks staff that focus on BOW is to keep the journey of outdoor exploration going past one annual workshop. To help women stay engaged and continue building their skills, the BOW Pathways series offers monthly opportunities to practice, explore, and connect with others across the entire state. Some of the pathways that have already happened are pheasant hunts, deer processing, fly casting, fly tying, and archery shoots. The instructors and staff have really enjoyed putting those programs together and supporting the community of women that come to these events.

Looking forward, classes like wild game cooking, ice fishing, plant identification astronomy, winter hiking, outdoor cooking, birding, camping, and much more are on the horizon! Pathways opportunities will be added throughout the year and in different areas of the state, so keep an eye on the Game, Fish and Parks events calendar and our Facebook pages for more sessions. We will also be distributing a monthly newsletter / email for the BOW community as well that will feature upcoming opportunities, useful licensing information, and some fun resources too.

Contact me if you are interested in joining that list to stay in-the-know (KayCee.Smith@state.sd.us). Whether you've attended a BOW workshop before or are brand new to outdoor recreation, all women are invited to join! See you out there.





# LEARNING THROUGH CURVEBALLS

## A 2025 HUNTING 101 UPDATE AND A LOOK FORWARD INTO 2026

by Clint Whitley - Naturalist

The 2025 Hunting 101 season is wrapping up as I write this in late November. If you are unfamiliar with our 101 programs, then you are missing out. These programs include an in-depth approach to a particular discipline in the outdoors such as rifle hunting deer, bowhunting, turkey hunting and more. Participants then end in a field experience hunting or fishing. This season is my fifth season of Hunting and Bowhunting 101 since starting work at this campus. For a few different reasons, this year has been challenging. The participants have been outstanding but we have had a couple of curveballs that always provide a great teachable moment for not just the participants but me as well. One example is a different crop in one hunting spot then what was planted in previous years and this completely changed the deer movement. Another example was having plans to hunt in one area and then it did not work out to do so and we had to look at plan B, C, D, and further down the line. I often run into these same challenges in my own hunting despite labeling myself as someone that can continually be a successful hunter. I try to plan and visualize how my current and future seasons are going to go and even as we speak, curveballs continually whiz past with a swing and a miss.

This is the exact reason that when I get asked a question about hunting, I often answer with “it depends.” This is the fun and challenging part of hunting. If it could be approached in a Step 1, 2, 3 fashion that many engineers would appreciate, it just would not be the same. The mystery of our quarry is what keeps us coming back. I love sharing this with participants. It is a chess game out there and we are the underdogs. We are stepping foot in these animals backyard and doing our best to outsmart them. Some hunts are easier than others and some we have had to work for. I tell every participant that I have spent a lifetime trying to master this thing. I want them to be able to safely handle a firearm, make a clean shot and how to field dress your deer. After that, we all are on the same playing field doing our best to become successful hunters. Our goal to meet 100% success in our rifle hunts is still on track and I look forward to December when we get back after it to close out the season.

Looking ahead to the new year we will be starting Waterfowl 101, Fishing 101, Small Game 101 and a few more later in the spring. To get involved, fill out the application during the application window. Applications can be found on the Outdoor Campus - Rapid City website. Click on programming to see those options. For any questions, email [Clint.Whitley@state.sd.us](mailto:Clint.Whitley@state.sd.us)





# WILDERNESS FIRST AID

by Casey Wyrwas - Naturalist Intern

As a student at Black Hill State University majoring in Outdoor Education, one of the required classes in the program's core curriculum is a first aid class. There are several choices but the most useful one in my opinion is getting certified as a Wilderness First Responder (WFR). So, as of March 2025, I became certified through Don't Panic Wilderness Medicine out of Custer.

After I began my naturalist internship with the education team at the Outdoor Campus West, it occurred to me that we teach a lot of outdoor recreation activities and programs that can potentially lead to dangerous outcomes in remote wilderness settings in the Black Hills and beyond. We strive for safety first before anything whenever we teach our classes, but accidents can still happen due to unforeseen circumstances out in the field. I felt that offering some wilderness first aid classes would be worth giving our participants the opportunity to learn how to help themselves, family, and friends if something were to happen while they were out in enjoying our beautiful South Dakota wilderness.

Since becoming a certified WFR, I have implemented a Family Wilderness First Aid program that is geared towards giving both parents and their kids first aid knowledge to utilize in familial wilderness outings. Similarly, I also started an Adult Wilderness First Aid program geared towards teaching adults more advanced first aid knowledge with a more serious focus. Between the two programs, some of the topics covered include wilderness medicine, patient assessment, backcountry medical situations, and more! Both classes have seen success with good attendance numbers and satisfied participants.

Moving forwards into 2026, I will keep offering these classes as my internship continues and plan to leave behind solid information with the hope that future interns will be able to continue offering these classes to help keep our participants safe in all their future endeavors. Reach out to [Casey.Wyrwas@state.sd.us](mailto:Casey.Wyrwas@state.sd.us) with questions.





## SCHOOL PROGRAMS CONTINUE TO GROW

*by Daniel Cox - Naturalist*

We are thrilled to have launched our new homeschooling programs this fall at Outdoor Campus West! The response has been fantastic - our sessions have been well attended, we have welcomed many new faces, and the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive.

It has been wonderful to see so many families participating and returning for more. Our goal is to be a starting point for new outdoor adventures for you and your children. If you have enjoyed one of our classes, we encourage you to take the next step, whether that is joining the 4-H Archery Program, purchasing your own fishing or archery gear, or exploring new skills through additional classes and programs!

If you are unsure what that next step might look like, we are here to help! Just reach out, and we will be happy to guide you.

We have also had a great mix of ages in our programs, and we would love to see even more participation from high school students. We have a variety of programs tailored for older youth, including advanced archery, fly tying, fly fishing, fish dissection, deer processing, and more. If there is a specific program you are interested in, let us know-we are always open to new ideas and custom requests when possible.

For questions or to learn more, please contact Daniel Cox at [Daniel.Cox@state.sd.us](mailto:Daniel.Cox@state.sd.us) or call (605) 394-2528.

## FOLLOW US!

Stay up to date on program information in Rapid City by following us!



@outdoorcampus rapidcity.



Game, Fish & Parks Outdoor  
Campus-Rapid City



South Dakota Game, Fish &  
Parks-Education



# NEWSLETTER FEATURE PHOTO CONTEST

*by Molly Boyum - Naturalist*

We spend a lot of time out in the field, but no one sees South Dakota quite like you do. If you are like us, you take your phone or camera out at every sunset, every wildlife sighting, or just when the moment feels right. Have a photo you pride yourself on? Send your photo and a brief description or story to us at **TOCwest@state.sd.us** with the subject line of [Q2 Photo Entry](#) for a chance to be featured on the cover of the Quarter 2 April - June issue of our newsletter!

\* Selected photo and description will be credited in the issue and the photo will only be used in that issue of our newsletter.



# RECIPE ROOST

## Apple Pheasant Thighs with Wild Rice

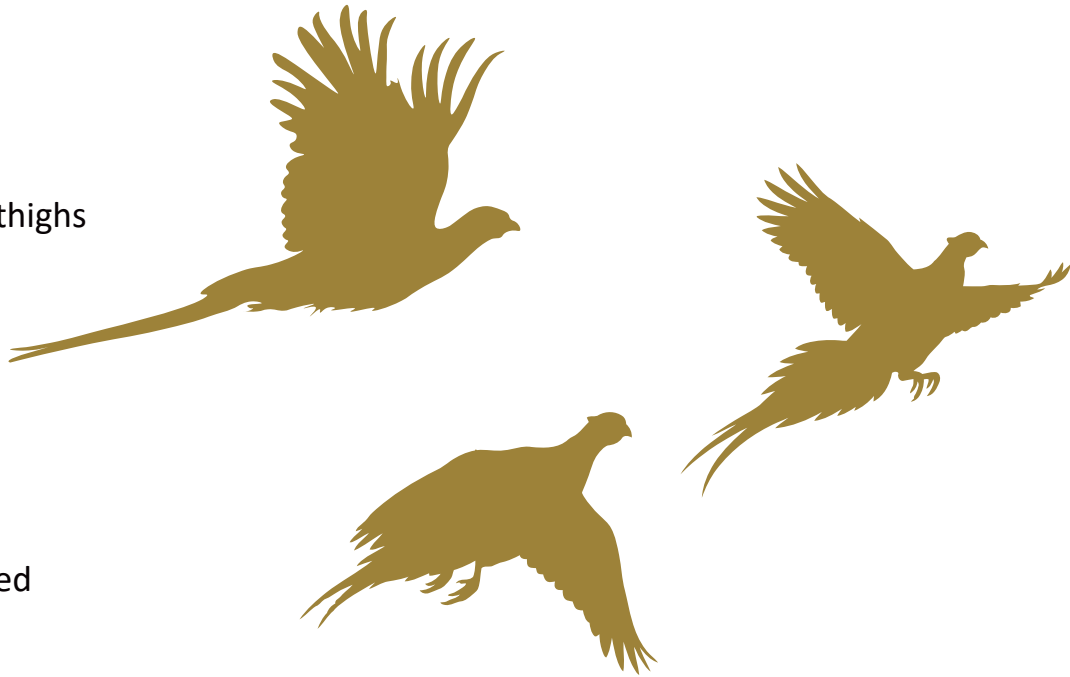
- Serves 4

### *Ingredients*

- 1 1/2 lb. (10-12) pheasant thighs
- Coarse sea salt (to taste)
- Cracked pepper (to taste)
- 3 tsp. Italian spice blend
- 1/2 cups all purpose flour
- Cooking oil of choice
- 2 tbsp. unsalted butter
- 1/2 sweet onion, finely diced
- 2-3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 1/4 cups apple cider
- 1 1/4 cups chicken stock
- 1 tsp. Dijon mustard
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1/2 cup wild rice
- 1 large honeycrisp apple, sliced
- Fresh thyme
- Crusty bread for serving (optional, but recommended)

### *Instructions*

- Preheat oven to 275 degrees.
- Season pheasant thighs with salt, pepper, and about 2 tsp. of the Italian seasoning. Dredge it in the flour and shake off excess.
- Heat a braising dish or Dutch oven over medium - high heat. Add enough oil to coat the bottom in a thin layer and brown the pheasant thighs on both sides. Remove and set aside.
- Reduce the heat to medium and drop in the butter. Once foaming, add the onion. Sauté until soft, then add the garlic. Cook for additional minute then deglaze with the apple cider, stock, mustard, heavy cream, and remaining teaspoon of Italian seasoning, whisking to combine. Stir in the wild rice and layer in the browned pheasant thighs and sliced apple.
- Top with fresh thyme, cover with a lid, and braise for 2 1/2 - 3 hours, or until the thighs are very tender when pricked with a fork. In the final 30 minutes, remove the lid to let the liquids reduce and brown the tops of the thighs and apple slices.
- Serve warm with crusty bread.







# OUTDOOR CAMPUS

— RAPID CITY, SOUTH DAKOTA —

## JANUARY PROGRAMS

### **New Years Community Wild Game Feed**

This will feature an educational component on preparing wild game followed by a game feed where you will be able to try many wild game preparations!

**JANUARY 3 | 5:30 PM - 7:30 PM**

### **Family Intro to Archery**

Family introduction to archery, where we will discuss safety, equipment and then get target practice. Ages 8+, please!

**JANUARY 5 | 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM**

### **Intro to Ice Fishing**

Join us for a hands-on class learning all about ice fishing equipment, safety, locations and techniques. Class is held indoors at the Outdoor Campus. Ages 8+ please!

**JANUARY 8 | 6:00 PM - 7:30 PM**

### **Dehydrated Meals for Outdoor Adventures**

Replace those expensive freeze-dried meals with your own dehydrated ones. You will learn how to dehydrate and assemble meals!

**JANUARY 9 | 6:00 PM - 7:30 PM**

### **Smelt Fishing**

There is a tasty little fish that comes out in swarms after the sun sets. We will spend an evening on the ice catching and cooking Rainbow Smelt. Location TBD. Ages 12+, please!

**JANUARY 10 | 7:00 PM - 9:30 PM**

### **Dads Intro to Archery**

This is an introductory archery class geared towards gaining basic archery knowledge and how to share it with your family!

**JANUARY 13 | 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM**

### **Dutch Oven Cooking**

Learn how cook with and care for cast iron Dutch ovens. You will be making food so come hungry! Closed toed shoes are required.

**JANUARY 13 | 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM**

### **Intro to Firearms**

Learn the operating components of different firearms and the fundamentals of safety. We will handle our inert safety guns. Youth must be accompanied by an adult, for ages 10+.

**JANUARY 16 | 6:00 PM - 7:30 PM**

### **Venison Tallow Balm**

Learn about how to harvest and render fat, and then make balm from it! Ages 12+, please!

**JANUARY 20 | 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM**

### **Adult Wilderness First Aid**

Ages 18+, please.

**JANUARY 21 | 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM**

### **Intro to Reloading**

Learn the skills, process and equipment needed to reload your own bullets.

**JANUARY 23 | 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM**

### **Gun Cleaning**

Learn basic techniques and tips for cleaning firearms. Try them out as we clean some of the Campus firearms.

**JANUARY 30 | 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM**

### **Dads Intro to Firearms**

We will focus on types of firearms, safety and range etiquette. There will be an introduction with inert firearms and a range portion at Pete Lien & Sons Shooting Sports Complex.

**JANUARY 31 | 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM**

### **Intro to Archery**

Learn the basic techniques of archery, parts of a bow, range safety and how to safely shoot different bows. Ages 8+.

**JANUARY 31 | 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM**

### **On Location Ice Fishing**

Meet us at Sheridan Lake for this fishing event. All equipment will be provided (or bring your own) along with advice on how to catch fish and use specific equipment. Dress accordingly for the weather. More communications about a specific meeting spot at Sheridan Lake, weather, etc. will happen closer to the event!

**JANUARY 31 | 12:00 PM - 4:00 PM**

**\*\*POP UP CLASSES MAY BE ADDED PER INSTRUCTOR DISCRETION\*\***

**\*ALL YOUTH ATTENDING PROGRAMS MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY A REGISTERED ADULT\***  
Go to the events tab at [www.gfp.sd.gov](http://www.gfp.sd.gov) to register.





# OUTDOOR CAMPUS

— RAPID CITY, SOUTH DAKOTA —

## FEBRUARY PROGRAMS

### **Intro to Archery**

Learn the basic techniques of archery, parts of a bow, range safety and how to safely shoot different bows. Ages 8+ up.

***FEBRUARY 3 | 6:00 PM - 7:30 PM***

### **Bow Set Up**

A hands-on workshop where we will guide you through customizing a compound bow, perfect for hunting or target shooting. All materials will be provided; personal equipment is allowed.

***FEBRUARY 10 | 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM***

### **Family Wilderness First Aid**

Learn basic first aid that will help keep you and your friends and family safe when you're out enjoying South Dakota's beautiful wilderness. Disclaimer: this is not a certification class. All ages welcome at parents' discretion.

***FEBRUARY 10 | 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM***

### **Intro to Archery**

Learn the basic techniques of archery, parts of a bow, range safety and how to safely shoot different bows. Ages 8+.

***FEBRUARY 19 | 6:00 PM - 7:30 PM***

### **Coyote Calling**

An all-inclusive opportunity to learn about coyote hunting and important information, and to piece it all together and to try and call in and hunt coyotes in the field. We will cover electronic calls, utilize hand calls and discuss the benefits of each. Equipment will be provided and communication will be established prior the class. Be aware of the time commitment and weather before registering for this opportunity.

***FEBRUARY 21 | 5:00 AM - 12:00 PM***

### **Intro to Trapping**

Get hands on training with traps and the equipment for different furbearer species. Leather gloves for setting traps are not required but recommended.

***FEBRUARY 25 | 6:00 PM - 7:30 PM***

### **Fly Tying: Early Spring Flies**

Come learn some early spring fly tying patterns with our tying equipment. We will be learning a great fly pattern(s) for success right here in the Black Hills. No equipment or supplies needed. Ages 12+. All abilities encouraged and welcome!

***FEBRUARY 26 | 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM***

***\*\*POP UP CLASSES MAY BE ADDED PER INSTRUCTOR DISCRETION\*\****





# OUTDOOR CAMPUS

— RAPID CITY, SOUTH DAKOTA —

## MARCH PROGRAMS

### **Intro to Fly Casting**

Join us to learn the basics of fly casting and fly fishing gear. Ages of 12+.

**MARCH 4 | 6:00 PM - 7:30 PM**

### **Intro to Archery**

we will discuss safety, equipment and then get target practice. Ages 8+, please!

**MARCH 5 | 6:00 PM - 7:30 PM**

### **Making Wild Game Brats and Sausages**

We will go through a variety of recipes and strategies of making some great brats and sausage that you can enjoy for the entire year.

**MARCH 10 | 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM**

### **Intro to Firearms**

We will teach you the operating components of different firearms and the fundamentals of safely. Class includes handling our inert safety guns. Youth must be accompanied by an adult, for ages 12+.

**MARCH 13 | 6:00 PM - 7:30 PM**

### **Intro to Reloading**

Learn the skills, process and equipment needed to reload your own bullets.

**MARCH 14 | 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM**

### **Dads Intro to Fishing**

This class will include a classroom portion going over a variety of ways to fish as well as equipment, followed by fishing instruction in our front pond.

**MARCH 17 | 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM**

### **Traditional Archery**

Join this traditional archery class geared towards using our recurve bows! Ages 12+.

**MARCH 20 | 6:00 PM - 7:30 PM**

### **HuntSAFE**

This is an Independent Study field day. Students take the online portion first before attending a field day to receive their hunter education cards.

**MARCH 25 | 5:30 PM - 9:00 PM**

### **Intro to Archery**

Learn the basic techniques of archery, parts of a bow, range safety and how to safely shoot different bows. Ages 8+.

**MARCH 26 | 6:00 PM - 7:30 PM**

### **Intro to Fly Casting**

Join us to learn the basics of fly casting and fly fishing gear. Ages of 12+.

**MARCH 27 | 6:00 PM - 7:30 PM**

### **On Location Snowshoeing**

We are excited to provide you the opportunity to borrow snowshoes free of charge and explore the snowshoe trails located on Big Hill Trailhead south of Spearfish. There will be a short brief on the defined route allowed for snowshoes, technique, and safety information prior to heading out. GFP staff will be present but your time on the trails will be self guided. We have a variety of sizes but as snowshoes are rented, be aware there may be a wait. Participants will be limited to 30-45 min so that opportunities are available for others. Snowshoeing can be a vigorous activity requiring certain physical abilities. Dress for weather as appropriate, understand layers can be shed.

**MARCH 28 | 7:30 AM - 12:00 PM**

### **Intro to Bowhunting and Ethical Shot Placement**

Join us as we breakdown bowhunting basics as well as discuss the importance of ethical shot placement. Ages 12+, please.

**MARCH 31 | 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM**

### **Intro to Fly Tying**

We will be learning a great beginners fly pattern for year-round success right here in the Black Hills. No equipment or supplies needed. Ages 10+.

**MARCH 31 | 6:00 PM - 7:30 PM**

**\*\*POP UP CLASSES MAY BE ADDED PER INSTRUCTOR DISCRETION\*\***