



A PUBLICATION OF THE MOUNTAIN COUNTRY ROD & GUN CLUB, MURPHY, NC

MCR&GC NEWS



SPRING 2026

From the Editor

Indeed, it was a cold winter, and we hope everyone made it through without significant adversity, like a protracted loss of electrical power, being stuck at home for days on end, or any calamity winter storms might bring.

The return of spring carries with it renewed hope of a better year than the last: good health, prosperity, the love of family and the ability to share with old and new friends the secret we hope too many outsiders don't figure out – the joy of living in the mountains.

If you enjoy outdoor activities like camping and/or fishing, it's time to make your plans. There are a million reasons to put off recreation, but the truth is, time is finite. Opportunity knocks, but it's often impatient. Don't tempt fate. Put other things on hold and get out of the house.

You needn't be a fisherman to enjoy sitting beside a beautiful lake or flowing river. Picnics and cookouts are really just excuses to hang out with others. Many people want to venture out and enjoy the company of family and friends, but too often, they need someone to take the lead and give them the reason they've been waiting for. Be that reason.

Cherokee County is surrounded by public lands, recreational areas that cost little to nothing to enjoy. Adventure just needs you, anyone you might invite to go with you, a folding chair, a small cooler containing water or your favorite soft drink, and a picnic lunch. Personally, we favor Bojangles. Just saying.

Leading means motivating others to overcome their own procrastination. If you can do it, so can they. It's a new year. Be a leader!



Club Meeting Notes

During the January meeting, President Jeff mentioned the upcoming Fish Derby, and that he was hoping to see a return of activities during the derby for disabled kids so they could participate as in past events. The MCR&GC previously assisted in that effort.

The evening's guest speaker was Major David Junghans, an army veteran with 25 years nonconsecutive service.

Major Junghans began his military career in 1965 during the Vietnam War. Although he entered as an enlisted signals equipment specialist, [continued on page 2]

[Notes: continued from page 1] while in Vietnam he volunteered and served as a combat infantryman, received Ranger and Pathfinder qualification, saw combat missions as a member of long-range reconnaissance patrols (LRRPs), and even eventually served as a door gunner on Huey helicopters.



Major David Junghans (Ret.)

Years later, when the U.S. military indicated they had need of logistics officers in the War on Terror, Major Junghans returned to active duty. Being over 60 years old, the army would not send him to a combat zone like Iraq or Afghanistan, so he was deployed to Kuwait. Later, due to his MOS, he was sent to Iraq on temporary duty which lasted 29 months. There, for the second time in his protracted career he experienced combat conditions and shelling by the enemy.

Note: Major Junghans humbly said little about his actual combat experience; however, the times and locations in which he served, along with the service ribbons on his uniform indicate it was likely more extensive than what he revealed.

During the February meeting President Jeff encouraged those interested to participate in shooting

sporting clays with VP Tom Coy and others who meet regularly to do so. Jeff also asked club members to submit ideas and goals for the club to pursue in the upcoming months.

The evening's guest speaker was Sgt. Jeff McConnell, canine handler and trainer for the Towns County, GA Sheriff's Office, and his narcotics K-9, Bravo.

Sgt. McConnell explained the difference between search and rescue, patrol, narcotics and EOD canines and their training regimens. He indicated many law enforcement agencies were moving away from patrol K-9s due to the associated liability brought on by dog bites.



Sgt. Jeff McConnell and Bravo

He said police dogs generally began service around 1.5 years of age and are retired around age 7.

It costs \$15,000 to certify a canine and handler, and under Georgia law, handlers and K-9s are required to complete 16-hours of training each month to maintain certification.

To protect the dog's hearing, most training occurs using cap pistols and suppressors, but it is necessary to occasionally expose them to live fire

to avoid them being startled by the loud sound, said Sgt. McConnell.

Newly elected Sheriff Chris Wood visited the March meeting to thank everyone for their recent support. He promises a transparent administration as he works to provide enhanced law enforcement in Cherokee County.

Club President Jeff Gustason advised the members of the recent passing of member Larry Shoeman. Larry had recently provided live music for the 2025 club Christmas party. He will be missed.

Jeff asked members interested in resurrecting an old club activity of a group bird hunt to present ideas for doing so.

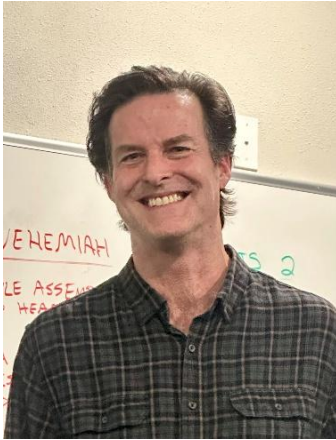
Michael Howe made a presentation of recent enhancements to the club website's [Upcoming Events](#) page. Members are encouraged to review it periodically as new events are posted.

[Cherokee Scout](#) publisher David Brown was the guest speaker for the evening. David discussed challenges to the newspaper business with the advent of artificial intelligence and the question of validity of information found on Internet searches.

David said we've reached a point in our society where the ability to civilly discuss public policy and social issues has degraded into little more than accusation and argument.

David acknowledged it was during the Vietnam War that journalists began to integrate their values into their reporting, and over time, this approach has increased. He said some people prefer bias in their news
[continued on page 3]

[Notes: continued from page 2] which reflects their own, and such



David Brown

preferences have created niche markets among news outlets. He added, independent, nonaligned newspapers are essential if unbiased reporting is to survive.

Asked how the club could gain additional press exposure, David said June and July are slow months for local sports news, and he encouraged press submissions for outdoor-related activities during that timeframe.



Fishing the Great Smoky Mountains National Park

The advent of spring puts angling on the minds of many, especially when it's available with the backdrop of the Smoky Mountains.

The GSMNP is a big place, and understanding where you can fish

and what the expectations are helps to maximize the effectiveness of your planning.

Check out this [fishing map of the park](#), some inside information and the applicable rules.



Are You Insured?

Training with your defensive firearm, and subsequently obtaining a concealed carry permit, may improve your chances of surviving a mass shooting or violent crime, but it fails to address the aftermath of such an unwanted event – legal scrutiny.

Lawfully armed citizens often are not law enforcement officers. They lack the benefit of qualified immunity which LEOs possess. Rest assured, no matter how valid is any defensive use of a firearm, the incident and the armed citizen will be placed under a microscope. Any indication the armed citizen made the least mistake is going to be amplified. It might lead to an overblown effort to prosecute, and is likely to end in some type of lawsuit, but the probability the armed citizen is congratulated and sent on his way is low. Such is the society we live in.

A number of companies offer insurance to cover, in whole or in part, the legal costs which can be associated with the defensive use of a firearm. They vary in terms of their

effectiveness as gauged by critics, but having immediate assistance with acquiring legal representation, and a means of funding a legal defense, is certainly a plus should a lawfully armed citizen find themselves in such a situation.

In addition to having this kind of coverage, it behooves anyone with a CHP to obtain training in the law regarding the defensive use of force. State statutes may say one thing, but courts often interpret those statutes in a way that appears to laymen to contradict what they perceive the statutes to mean. Such legal findings are referred to as case law, and under the doctrine of *stare decisis* (starry dee-sigh-sis), Latin for, "to stand by things decided," courts often accept the rulings of previous courts on like issues and consider them settled in terms of the application of applicable laws.

In other words, a court decision in some closed legal case may prove the precedent that's applied in yours.

NOTE: this article is NOT being written by a lawyer; neither should it be construed as legal advice.

Some armed defense insurance companies offer access to training in laws regarding defensive use of a firearm. One provider of such training is [Andrew Branca](#), a noted attorney and instructor in the field. The idea is, training with your defensive weapon is just half of the equation. Understanding what you can legally do or not do with that weapon, and the second guessing that can accompany such a traumatic event, is the other half.

Again, there are a number of companies which offer insurance for those who choose to lawfully carry a **[continued on page 4]**

[Insured: continued from page 3] concealed firearm. Anyone considering such a plan should examine them carefully and ensure they understand the nuances and limitations of what's offered. Among those companies are: [CCW Safe](#), [U.S. Lawshield](#), [USCCA](#), [Right to Bear](#), but this is not an exhaustive list.

NOTE: The Mountain Country Rod and Gun Club does not endorse any firm offering these or similar services. The choice in selecting and enrolling in such a plan is the sole decision of any individual choosing to do so, and is an option that's neither recommended, encouraged or discouraged by the MCR&GC.



When the Lights Go Out

Summer storm season will soon be upon us, and while 2026 has shown us winter storms can be equally challenging, perhaps living in WNC makes it even more critical to be prepared.

No doubt everyone has a flashlight or two for use if the lights go out, but they are NOT as practical as having a battery or propane-powered lantern.

There's a simple hack for improving the lighting capability of your

flashlight in terms of expanded light coverage.

If you take an [ordinary, clear one-gallon plastic milk jug, attach your flashlight](#) so that it directs light downward into the jug from the top, the jug will diffuse the light so that it acts like a lantern. You can even turn the rig upside down to better disperse the light, or hanging it from overhead might even increase the light's coverage.

Some prefer to fill the jug about $\frac{3}{4}$ full of water. Doing so gives the rig weight to prevent it from moving around. You might experiment to see if the water does a better job of diffusing the light, but doing so will prevent you from turning it upside down.

Such a homemade device may not seem like much in the light of day, but eliminate all other light and it's likely to be amazingly bright.

The more you plan for adverse weather conditions the less you are likely to be impacted by them. If you haven't yet done so, now is the time to plan, and to encourage others to do the same.

Don't forget to periodically change the batteries in flashlights and other gadgets to prevent leakage of battery acid rendering them inoperable when you need them most.



A Place You May Not Know

If you're a fly fisherman, perhaps it's

time to take the kids or grandkids for a day trip. Are you looking for a good way to give them an insider's look at your favorite pastime?

In Bryson City, just 48-miles from the Murphy traffic circle, you'll find the [Fly Fishing Museum of the Southern Appalachians](#), and it sits next to the [Appalachian Rivers Aquarium](#). How cool is that?

Bryson City is always a nice venue for a day out. Nestled on the banks of the Tuckasegee River, its shops and restaurants are inviting. Toss in the aforementioned fishing attractions and there's something for everyone in the family.

Fly fishing is like baseball; you don't have to be actually engaged in doing it in order to enjoy talking about or visiting sites that promote it. The fly-fishing museum and adjacent aquarium might just exceed expectation.

NOTE: both places have seasonal days and hours, so call them before making the drive - (828) 488-7857.



The [NRA Annual Meetings](#) (NRAAM) will be starting in a few weeks in Houston. The event will be April 16-19, 2026. If you're an NRA member but have never attended, you owe it to yourself to indulge at least once.

Most attend for the huge tradeshow. Think of it as a giant candy store for hunters and shooters. Got a specific model of firearm you want to pick up and handle? Chances are, you'll find it there.

In addition to the show, a number of **[continued on page 5]**

[NRAAM: continued from page 4] seminars and workshops are held on a variety of topics of interest. The list of these will continue to be updated as the event nears, ESPECIALLY DURING THE LAST WEEK BEFORE THE EVENT BEGINS, so keep checking the link. It's also an excellent opportunity to meet celebrities of the gun rights and hunting world. Noted politicians make appearances as well.

Having attended the NRAAM in Houston back in 2013, this writer can assure you the George R. Brown Convention Center is a superb facility for the event, and it has a great view of the Houston skyline.

NRA members and their immediate family get in for free. If you plan to attend, it's best to [pre-register](#).



Fishing News from Raleigh

Yes, rules change or expand, and knowing only what was legal last year may leave you in violation of fishing laws this year. That's why it's a good idea to review [NC fishing regulations](#), which can vary by location, and certainly differ for salt and freshwater fishing.

It is now [necessary to report catches of the following fish](#): Red Drum, Flounder, Stripped Bass, Spotted Seatrout and Weakfish IF THEY ARE CAUGHT in coastal waters, joint fishing waters or adjacent inland waters. Reporting must occur within 24-hours of completion of your fishing trip. [Reports can be made online](#).

You can easily access fishing regulations online by category:

[Fishing Licenses](#)
[Inland](#)
[General Trout](#)
[Mountain Trout \(counties A-M\)](#)
[Mountain Trout \(counties N-Z\)](#)
[Other Trout Waters](#)
[Additional Fishing Regulations 2025-2026 Regulations Digest](#)

Stay informed and make the most of your fishing opportunities this year.

NOTE: Information in the *MCR&GC News* does not constitute complete information regarding all fishing or wildlife regulations, and is intended as an overview. Sportsmen should contact the [NCWRC](#) regarding questions or clarification.



Going Afield

All of us venture out from time to time. That's part of the fun of living in WNC, and just because we're located at the far western corner of North Carolina doesn't mean there isn't plenty to do.

This is your newsletter, and we're always looking for ways to make it more interesting, and a means of sharing insight and adventure with fellow club members.

Having said that, whether you go on a fishing or hunting trip, shooting sporting clays with friends, or venturing further abroad, we'd like to hear from club members. Send a photo and brief message about your

time afield. You'd be surprised at how many people live somewhat vicariously through the experiences of friends and acquaintances.

On your next adventure, share the fun. Email a photo and a line or two: webmaster@mtncrgc.com.



Being Watched?

Technology can be a marvelous and life-improving thing. Unfortunately, anything made to enhance life can be misused for nefarious purposes, especially surveillance equipment.

California authorities are warning residents of [cellular-capable trail cameras being used to monitor private residences](#) by burglars to help determine when no one is at home.

The aforementioned cameras were found attached to power banks, a device such as an external battery for recharging cell phones. They extend the battery life of any electronic device, and if attached to nearby bushes or trees, they could remain undetected while allowing criminals to remotely watch your home. Yeah, that's a little unnerving.

In such cases, the culprit might be someone known to the homeowner. Landscapers and yard maintenance staff could set up such devices while **[continued on page 6]**

[Watched: continued from page 5] performing requested labor. Attaching a camera with zip-ties and activating it would only take seconds, especially if the perpetrator had previously identified a good spot to place it.

Is your home isolated, far from town or not visible from the highway? Is it a home thieves might target as a place to steal valuable goods? You could potentially be targeted by burglars looking for places to rob where the response time to a security alarm gives them time to act.

What can you do? Most people aren't going to take the time to scout the areas around their home looking for hidden cameras, and just because there are none today doesn't mean there won't be any next week or next month.

Still, homeowners can take reasonable precautions to minimize their risk.

1. Keep bushes and hedges trimmed back to make them less attractive concealment for surveillance devices.
2. Install a good quality monitored security alarm system and arm it regularly. Be sure these include motion detectors and glass break sensors as well.
3. Add webcams with night vision to your home's interior and exterior which detect motion and alert you via your cell phone. They become useless if the electrical current is lost, but they can be backed up temporarily via an uninterruptable power supply (UPS).
4. Keep your doors locked even when you are at home.
5. Be cautious about who you allow to perform work on

your property. Background checks are far easier to obtain today via legitimate websites.

6. If you have highly sought after goods in your home (firearms, electronics, jewelry, etc.), be careful who you tell, and use a good quality safe to secure them. Given the right tools and sufficient time, any skilled thief can get into the average safe; however, the idea is to prevent burglars from enjoying a protracted amount of time in your residence.
7. If you're part-time, or going out of town, ask a trusted friend or neighbor to keep an eye on your property. Criminals have been known to ring doorbells and ask for directions, or place a fake package at the door to see if anyone retrieves it to ascertain if anyone is home.
8. If you're going on vacation, tell no one but the trusted friend or neighbor until you return. Someone you don't want to know that you're away might overhear and take advantage of your absence.
9. Ask the trusted friend or neighbor to collect your mail. Temporary stop mail orders have been known to be passed on to thieves by complicit mail carriers. Everyone is honest until they aren't.

There is no silver bullet for avoiding being a crime victim, but preparation and due diligence are better than nothing. Security professionals may be able to offer additional ideas and tailor a system to meet your needs.



50/50

If you've yet to attend a meeting of the MCR&GC, you may not be familiar with the 50/50 drawing held each month.

The 50/50 drawing was established as a means of paying the nominal cost of temporary use of facilities used for monthly meetings.

While not compulsory, it has proven an effective means of funding these venues without using regular club funds, and participants seem to enjoy the activity, especially if one member ends up on a multi-month winning streak, right Bill?

Tickets are \$1.00 each or six for \$5.00.

Attendees are usually treated to a guest speaker, refreshments and time to greet friends and fellow members who share similar interests.

If you have yet to attend a meeting of the MCR&GC, plan now to visit us in the near future. Meetings are open to the public, and if you're not careful, as Jeff Gustason likes to say, you might just meet a new best friend.

The next meeting of the
MCR&GC
 will be **Tuesday, April 21, 2026**
7:00 pm
 Choices – Murphy Pregnancy Center
 1262 Andrews Rd., Murphy
 (adjacent to Save-A-Lot)