

# Setting your outdoors New Year's resolutions

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If you're sitting around this Saturday morning with the TV on in the background, you are getting inundated with advertisements about weight loss, smoking cessation, changing your cellphone plan and buying a new car. All of these ideas revolve around making changes in the new year, so why not consider a few changes in your outdoor habits?

Since you're unlikely to see this as a TV commercial, here are a few suggestions to consider:

## **QUALITY OVER QUANTITY**

Too many "sportsmen" look at a trip to the lake or the woods as an extended grocery store run, especially if they have gone to the trouble of hiring a guide or an outfitter. In days gone by, success was measured by a cooler full of fish or a full limit of ducks (plus a few extras tucked into

the empty shell bag).

Why not concentrate on the quality of the experience?

To achieve quality means sharing the experience with another, maybe less experienced, sportsman. Ideally, that might involve a child or grandchild, or maybe even a spouse — who would view what you consider just another spotted bass or another catfish as the fish of the day or even of the season.

## **SHOOT MORE OFTEN**

As hunters we go out and set up our guns to be on target and then put the weapons away until it's time to get a game animal in our sights.

First, shooting is fun, and shooting more often will reinforce skill sets you may not have used in a while, especially if the concentration is on shooting, rather than making sure the weapon is on target. Rifles, shotguns and archery tackle all apply, and if you add the

element above — taking a kid, spouse or friend — the experience is all the better.

## **LEARN TO USE YOUR DEPTH FINDER**

Anglers are bombarded with info from all sorts of media on the Internet, including YouTube videos: Your current depth finder can do so much more than you are using it for, and if not, consider upgrading.

If you are in a forum where a professional or semi-professional angler is present, ask them about using depth finders/sonar to locate structure and pattern fish. Many will even go with you on your boat and give a tutorial for a small fee. Suffice to say, if you are not keeping up with this technology, you are falling behind the other folks out there on the water.

## **BREAK OUT OF YOUR ROUTINE**

Most sportsmen identify themselves by the species they hunt or fish for. We are deer hunters, bass fish-

ermen, etc. That hunting and fishing license you pay for every year is providing you with a lot more outdoor opportunities than you are making use of.

Spend a day hiking through one of the many thousands of acres of public land the state has dedicated to the outdoors. If you can't bear the thought of hiking, pack along a .22 rifle and convince yourself you are squirrel hunting.

Likewise, if you own a boat and trailer and never fish anywhere but Lake Keowee, take a day and visit a different lake or river. Go ahead and make a few casts, but also make sure you take notice of your surroundings.

Like Ferris Bueller said, "Life moves pretty fast. If you don't stop and look around once in a while, you could miss it."

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**As the New Year dawns, make your outdoor New Year's resolutions to concentrate on quality over quantity and make sure you take the time to enjoy the experience.**