

North River Retreat

Hidden in the Forested Mountains of
Hampshire County, West Virginia

Written by **Dan Whetzel**



The fantastic rural view of fields and mountains at the retreat.

Inset: John Gavitt and his favorite bird dogs.

“What we offer is the opportunity for people to enjoy the outdoors in a beautiful West Virginia mountain setting. Whether you are a seasoned outdoorsman or a beginner, we have a program to meet your needs.”

John Gavitt’s invitation to experience outdoor fun may be fulfilled at North River Retreat in Hampshire County, West Virginia. A career in wildlife conservation and a personal interest in preserving natural resources mean that John takes pride in the programs that are offered. Each guest may choose from a variety of activities or simply relax in the quiet setting.

“One of the reasons we started the retreat was to give people who have never had an outdoor experience

opportunities to enjoy natural settings. It is important to us that our guests benefit from an unconfined environment. We offer hunting, fishing, shooting clays, hiking, and training in outdoor skills. You won’t find crowded camping grounds; when guests make reservations, they have exclusive privileges at the retreat.”

Guests benefit from John’s 25 years of experiences with the U.S. Wildlife and Fish Service and CITES, an international wildlife treaty overseen by the United Nations. Work with the UN has taken him to Asia, Africa, the South Pacific, and other regions of the world and has focused on the regulation of wildlife trade, particularly endangered species. Those experiences reinforced the belief that



John instructs campers in the proper handling of firearms used in shooting clays at The Matrix.

stewardship of the land must be a way of life because it conserves natural resources for future generations. “My goal is to leave this retreat in better shape than when I acquired it. No one really owns the land; we are just stewards of environmental resources.”

The camping area reflects John’s approach to the outdoor experience. A four wheel drive vehicle is necessary to access the North River Retreat, and electrical, cable, and conventional water hookups are not available at the tent campsites. A stone fire pit, tent shelters, tables, portable potties, drinking water, and level ground for pitching tents round out the amenities. A nearby cabin provides overnight lodging, cooking, and shower facilities for small hunting parties who prefer more conventional accommodations. John remains on the site to ensure the generators and propane, which run appliances in the cabin, are operating safely. The primitive outdoor experience is purposeful and attracts those seeking a close-to-nature experience.

One of the feature attractions at North River Retreat is the clays range which contains “The Matrix,” a multi-level shooting platform. A trap machine located underneath the platform and six additional ones located along the perimeter



The Matrix is a clay shooting, multi-level platform built by local builder Mac Watts, Sedan Construction. Three shooters (bottom photo) demonstrate the uniqueness of The Matrix.



**A bird hunt on a crisp, beautiful fall day at the Retreat.
Right: Fly fishing for trout at the Retreat pond.**

of the range release clay “birds” from different angles. Shooters are challenged with incoming, crossing, and doubles shots and by changing positions on the platform. No previous experience at shooting clays is necessary because shotguns, safety equipment, snacks, and instructions are part of the program. Shooters are welcome to bring their own firearms.

Quail hunting is provided and enhanced when birds are released at different locations on the retreat. Hunters may bring their own dogs to the licensed shooting preserve or use those provided by John. Deer hunting begins in September for bow hunters and muzzleloaders, while firearms season kicks off Thanksgiving week. Rifles and tree stand safety harnesses are available at no extra cost. As fall and winter give way to spring, turkey hunting rounds out the hunting season. John personally guides hunters or may occasionally call on neighbors for assistance. To ensure quality hunts and reduce interference, the number of guests is strictly limited during these seasons.



Anglers have several options to test their skills, including the meandering North River or a pond that is located on the property and is stocked with trout, bass, and bream. A state fishing license is required for stream fishing but not for use of the pond.

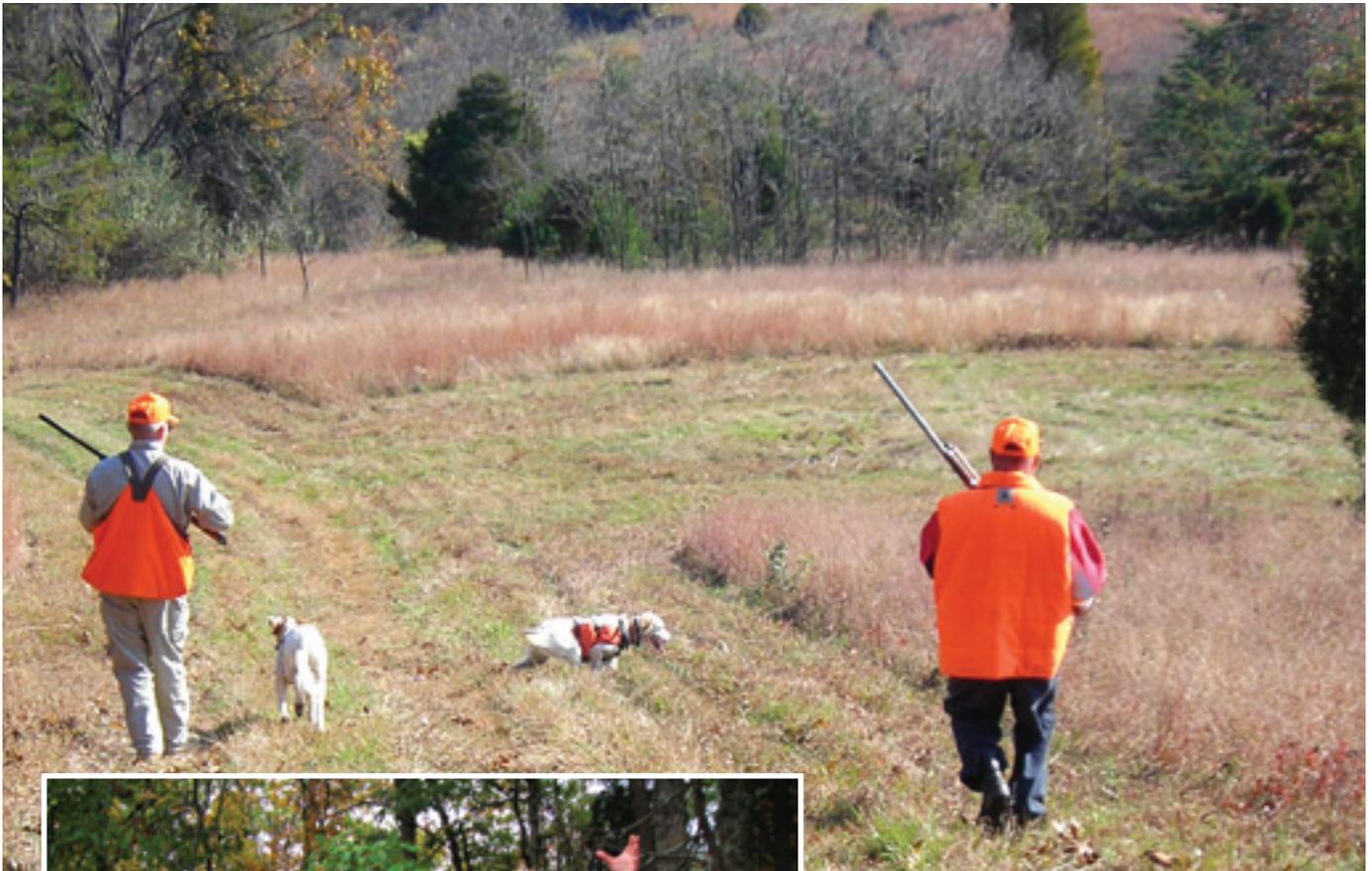
North River Retreat is a family owned and operated business. Both John and his wife Arlene keep busy doing what they enjoy. Arlene is director of the Diabetes Management program for the Valley Health System, but whenever possible, she plans and prepares meals and assists

with the camp chores. While North River Retreat is a business, it is also a perfect setting for John, Arlene, and extended family members to enjoy the outdoors they have always loved while sharing that experience with others.

For more information contact John at Northriver@live.com.



Right: New fire pits and camp sites welcome primitive outdoor camping.



An anxious, but well trained bird dog flushes game.



Left: Training courses can range from tree and plant identification to bird watching.