



MAPPING YOUR WAY TO UPLAND BIRDS

PRESENTED BY PYKE GEAR AND ONX HUNT

When it comes to scouting and traveling to locate new upland hunting spots on public land, most bird hunters use tree cutting maps provided by the DNR or the game commission to try to find cuttings that are the appropriate age. According to Brent Pike, the owner of Pyke Gear, forest cutting maps that the DNR provides are only one of the many tools upland hunters should use when trying to locate good upland bird habitat.

"I spend countless hours bird hunting each fall and winter. Sometimes it is very difficult to locate new hunting spots, especially when I am traveling a long distance from home. With modern day mapping software, I am able to hone in on new hunting locations from the comfort of my house or truck, long before I leave the truck with my gun and dog," Pike explained.

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WHAT BIRD WILL YOU BE HUNTING?

Before Pike digs into finding a new honey hole, he first asks himself what type of upland bird he is going after. "I know many hunters want to go on a hunting trip and come home with pheasants, grouse and woodcock, but it is very difficult to have great hunting and come home with several of any type of species of bird unless you really focus on one species. When I travel, I tend to focus on one species and hunt hard for that one species," Pike explained.



HOW FAR WILL YOU TRAVEL?



Next he decides how far he is willing to travel to go hunting. "Some upland hunters have a dream of traveling on a long distance hunting trip. Many want to hunt in South Dakota or even go further west. I suggest hunters who have never traveled a long distance from home on

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a hunting trip start by hunting within a day's drive of home. The longer distance the trip, the more overwhelming planning and executing the trip can be. A person who mainly hunts around home may want to start by using mapping software to hunt new locations close to home. I love traveling to new states to hunt and I often like going on hunting trips that are within a day's drive of my home. For instance, I love hunting sharp tail grouse in the

Upper Peninsula of Michigan. It is a trip I can easily pack for because I don't need much stuff and I can drive to the U.P. in a day. When I am planning a trip that is close to home, I plan on hunting between three and four days with one day of travel on each end of the trip. Knowing the exact number of days I am going to hunt helps me plan out the number of hunting spots I want to hit over the course of a few days," Pike noted.

pro tips

K9 FIRST AID

Having a first aid kit in the truck for Fido is a must when on a bird hunting trip. Below is a a list of items Brent Pike packs for his dogs when he goes on a hunting trip. It is better to be safe than sorry!

- | | |
|--------------|-----------------------|
| -ANTIBIOTICS | -THERMOMETER |
| -SCISSORS | -ANTI DIARRHEA PILLS |
| -HEMOSTATS | -SILVER NITRATE |
| -STAPLER | -K9 ATHLETE NEW DOG |
| -VET WRAP | -K9 ATHLETE HYDRATE & |
| -EMT GEL | AND RECOVER |
| -SKUNK KIT | |

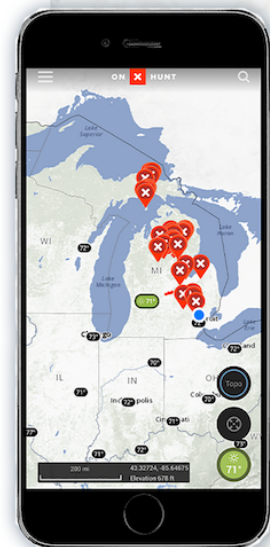


CALL A BIOLOGIST

When going to a new hunting area that you have never been to before, it can be intimidating knowing where to scout and hunt. One place many hunters turn to narrow down their search is to pick up the phone and call an upland bird biologist in the area they plan on hunting. “Biologists can be very difficult to get ahold of because they are constantly in the field,” Pike said. But most biologists will gladly answer questions from a hunter if you call them and politely ask them a few questions about the area they oversee. Biologists are often working in several counties and have a good handle on the bird populations in those areas and the ages of the cuttings in the area. I never expect a biologist to give me all the honey holes in the area, but they will often tell me where good food, water, and cover is located and I can narrow down my search from there.”

USING MAPPING SOFTWARE

Once Pike has an idea of the new areas he wants to hunt, he starts using OnX and Scout-N-Hunt software to better locate exactly where he wants to hunt. “What I like about the OnX program is it gives me detailed private land boundaries on my phone and GPS so I can take a close look at where the public and private land meet. continued...



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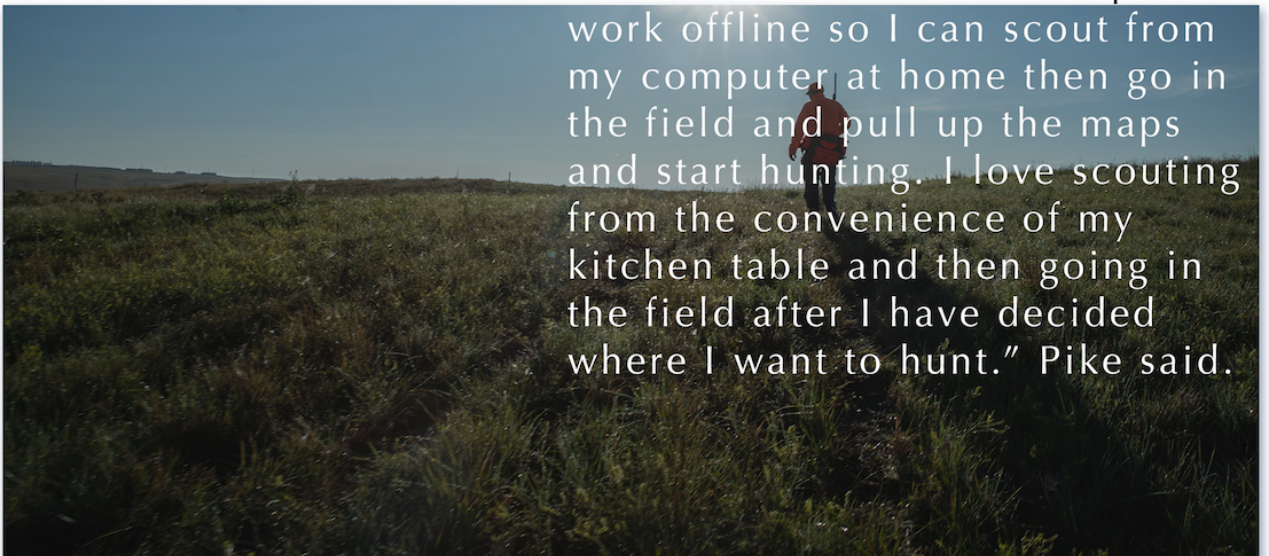
Many hunters only use OnX on their phone but I like to have the chip in my handheld GPS system that I use on my dogs so I always know where I am at in association to the boundaries. It makes scouting and hunting easier than when I am just using my phone. I like having both apps at all times," Pike explained.



In addition to having OnX, Pike uses the Scout-N-Hunt app. This app gives detailed info about the cuttings and the ages of the cuttings. "I use the Scout-N-Hunt maps to really dial in exactly where I want to hunt based on the age of the cuttings.

Scout-N-Hunt maps label prime and marginal habitat, provide upland and lowland data, and even wetland data. The maps

work offline so I can scout from my computer at home then go in the field and pull up the maps and start hunting. I love scouting from the convenience of my kitchen table and then going in the field after I have decided where I want to hunt." Pike said.



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FINDING HONEY HOLES

One way Pike zeros in on new hunting spots is to use Scout-N-Hunt to locate the right cutting age and then uses aerial images from OnX to locate honey holes that aren't always on maps. "Often the Scout-N-Hunt maps will show a large cutting in a certain area but it doesn't always show smaller cuttings that are nearby. I look up that cutting on the layer of OnX maps that shows aerial images. What I often notice is there will be smaller cuttings nearby that didn't make it on the maps, but they are there.

You have to look at the aerial images and look closely for openings in the canopy that looks like a cutting. I mark these locations and visit them when I am hunting. Because these areas often aren't on a map, the hunting pressure is often low and bird numbers are pretty good. Combing over these maps and aerial images can take a lot of time but it is fun and can help me find new hunting areas that are off the beaten path," Pike noted.

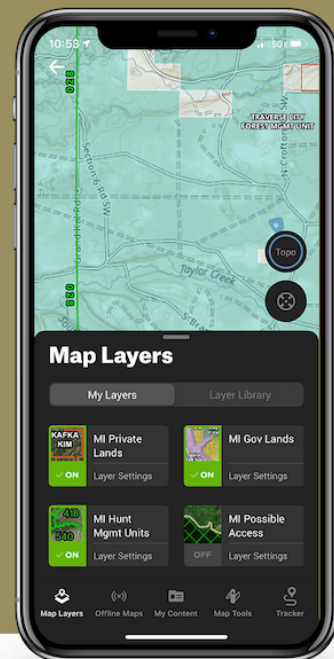


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ONX MAP LAYERS

ONX MAPS OFFERS A WIDE VARIETY OF MAP LAYERS THAT CAN BE USED TO HELP HUNTERS LOCATE NEW PLACES TO HUNT. DETERMINING WHAT LAYERS ARE BEST FOR UPLANDS HUNTING CAN BE DIFFICULT. ACCORDING TO BEN BRETTINGEN OF ONX MAPS, HUNTERS SHOULD USE THE APP ON THEIR COMPUTER AT HOME AND LEARN THE LAYERS AND SCOUT FROM HOME WHEN POSSIBLE. "WE LOVE HOW EASY IT IS TO PULL OUR PHONES OUT OF OUR POCKETS AND LOOK AT THE MAPS, BUT LEARNING THE LAYERS AND SCOUTING FROM HOME IS BEST DONE ON A COMPUTER OR TABLET OF SOME TYPE. I LIKE PLAYING AROUND WITH THE DIFFERENT FEATURES WHEN I AM SITTING AT MY DESK SO WHEN I GO TO THE FIELD TO HUNT AND SCOUT, I AM ALREADY FAMILIAR WITH THE LAYERS I WANT TO USE MOST," BRETTINGEN SAID. WHEN SCOUTING AT HOME AND USING THE APP, YOU CAN SAVE MAPS OFFLINE FOR HUNTING AREAS AND ACCESS THOSE MAPS WHEN HUNTING IF CELL SERVICE IS UNAVAILABLE. ANOTHER OPTION IS TO BUY A HUNT CHIP FOR A GPS UNIT SO THE MAPS AND LAYERS ARE AVAILABLE ON THE GPS, REGARDLESS IF CELL SERVICE IS AVAILABLE. BELOW ARE SOME OF THE LAYERS THAT UPLAND HUNTERS WILL FIND THE MOST VALUABLE WHEN HUNTING AND SCOUTING.

- PRIVATE LAND LAYER
- GOVERNMENT LAND LAYER
- GMUS/HUNTING UNITS LAYER
- STATE SPONSORED/PRIVATE -LAND ACCESS PROGRAM LAYER
- SATELLITE IMAGERY BASEMAP
- TOPOGRAPHY BASEMAP



FINDING OVERLOOKED AREAS

Most upland bird hunters focus their efforts on aspen cuttings when chasing grouse and woodcock. Most pheasant hunters focus on grasslands, crops and prairies when they are looking for places to find birds. One thing Pike looks for that others often overlook is open areas and edges near timber. "Last year we hunted several remote islands in the middle of Lake Michigan that hadn't been cut in over 70 years. There are a lot of birds on the islands but no cuttings. The birds in areas like this live near edges where cover is a short distance away. They will feed in the openings and live on the edge and fly into the older nearby trees for cover. These open areas and edges can be found by looking at aerial maps on OnX. These openings are not easy to find on OnX Maps. I can drop a pin on an edge or an opening and go there. Many of these places require a long hike, but the hike is worth it because there are typically several birds in openings and near the edge where a creek bottom and an opening meet. Finding these hidden gems requires work and extra walking, but it typically pays off. Birds live in a lot of different cover and focusing your efforts in areas that most hunters overlook can really payoff."



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SPEED SCOUTING

Pike also uses mapping software so he can speed scout. “Dogs and people typically can’t or don’t hunt all day. Hot weather, rain and a variety of other factors cause most of us to take a break from hunting during the middle of the day,” Pike said. “When I take a break, I often get in my truck and take a drive to a spot I have marked on my mapping software that I haven’t hunted before. It doesn’t matter how good the software is; nothing beats checking out a new spot on foot or at the very least driving by it. By scouting during the middle of the day when I wouldn’t typically be hunting anyway, I can maximize my time in the field. By scouting I can determinewhere I want to hunt the next day or on the next trip.

Sometimes I will scout an area and see that a certain area would be better later in the season based on the food and cover I scouted. I like to maximize every moment in the field and if I am not on the ground with a gun and a dog, I like to scout and use mapping software like OnX and Scout-N-Hunt to help me find my next honey hole much quicker than if I was using paper maps.” continued...



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Going on an out-of-town or out-of-state hunting trip can be a lot of fun. Leaving home prepared for the trip often makes the trip even more enjoyable. Using mapping software like Hunt-N-Shoot and OnX Maps can help any upland hunter do more research from home and help them become more successful in the field. A few hours on mapping software can teach a hunter what would take days, months, or years to learn if they were using old fashioned paper maps. Mapping technology has come a long way in the last decade. Using the mapping software will likely help any hunter put more birds in their game bag. 🐦



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