

## Discovering Bancroft's Fish and Game Club



From left Bancroft Fish and Game Club board secretary Dave Beardmore, member Sean Pether, safety trainer Harry Murfin, president Paul Goggan and vice president Bruce Hopkins bring out the big guns for the club's open house range day on Canada Day. / SARAH SOBANSKI Staff

**By Sarah Sobanski**

"Now you can say you've shot one of the most powerful handguns in the world," hollered Bancroft Fish and Game Club secretary Dave Beardmore over my earplugs.

I looked at the too-light, inky black weapon in my hand with wonder. I thought, "At least I hit the target."

Later, I would watch in awe as Beardmore shot the same gun off 10 times in quick succession. I had managed five shots and could barely hold the thing up. Clearly, practice made perfect.

Bancroft Fish and Game Club hosted an open house range day over Canada Day long weekend. I was stunned by how easy and enjoyable attending was.

I'll preface this editorial with that I've never legally discharged a firearm before. As anyone from a small town, I'm used to the sounds of shots across a valley, having friends who hunt and generally, the ideas of guns out and about. When thinking about guns and gun ownership however, it's easy to jump to headlines from our southern neighbours. I think about Americans debating the right to bear arms and mass-shootings. That kind of overarching media coverage does nothing to encourage a girl, or guy, to get involved in shooting — whether it be sharp or mammal.

Driving down to the club just outside of Bancroft, I was a little apprehensive about what I might find. I thought I'd stick to the archery section and then leave, quickly, before getting shot. Guns are intimidating.

Then, I found club president Paul Goggan and a team of club members before a table of big "toys" — the rest was history.

The club is really cool. It's set back from Hwy 62 South and dug into the scenery. There's just about every type of range available from handgun to archery including trap and rifle.

Goggan and his fellow gun-extraordinaires were more than happy to let me shoot anything my anti-gun heart desired. They were full of encouragement. So I started with a .22 millimeter revolver, which club vice president Bruce Hopkins showed me how to load "cowboy" style, worked up to the standard handgun for the armed forces, and then finished with a gun that just about punched me in the nose when I fired it. That skunk target didn't stand a chance — or it won't when I figure out what I'm doing — no word on that yet. The gun range experts I talked to were all about safety. I was shown how to properly hold the gun so as to not blow my hand off, and additionally, I was shown the best way to aim and stand. I wasn't left alone with a giant pistol — probably for the best.

The club has a lot of useful information for members. One graph that peaked my interest was a pistol accuracy chart. It showed on a wheel how the improper angle of your shooting, depending on where your bullet hit, compared to where you were aiming. For example, hitting south east of your target could mean you're tightening your fingers when you shoot or jerking or slipping on the trigger.

The excursion was a learning experience in how important a resource such as the club is to our community. There is something so cool just outside of town — I keep using the term cool because I agreed with the boys at the gun table that there is no better word to

describe it.

If you're like me and have always been curious but have never known where exactly you could go to try this kind of thing, check out the Bancroft Fish and Game Club the next time you have a chance. There's a women's range day event coming up Aug. 20. Email Goggan at [paul.goggan@hotmail.com](mailto:paul.goggan@hotmail.com) or give him a call at 905-644-8846 for more information.

The knowledge between the club's board and its members is indispensable.

One piece of advice I won't soon forget: you'll know you're handling a firearm incorrectly if everyone around you starts to pack up and leave the range. You don't usually argue with someone disrespecting guns on the range, seeing as they have a gun and all. You just get yourself out of there.

All things considered, get out there and play ? just play safe.