

Shotgunning

IN THE AUTOMATIC MIND

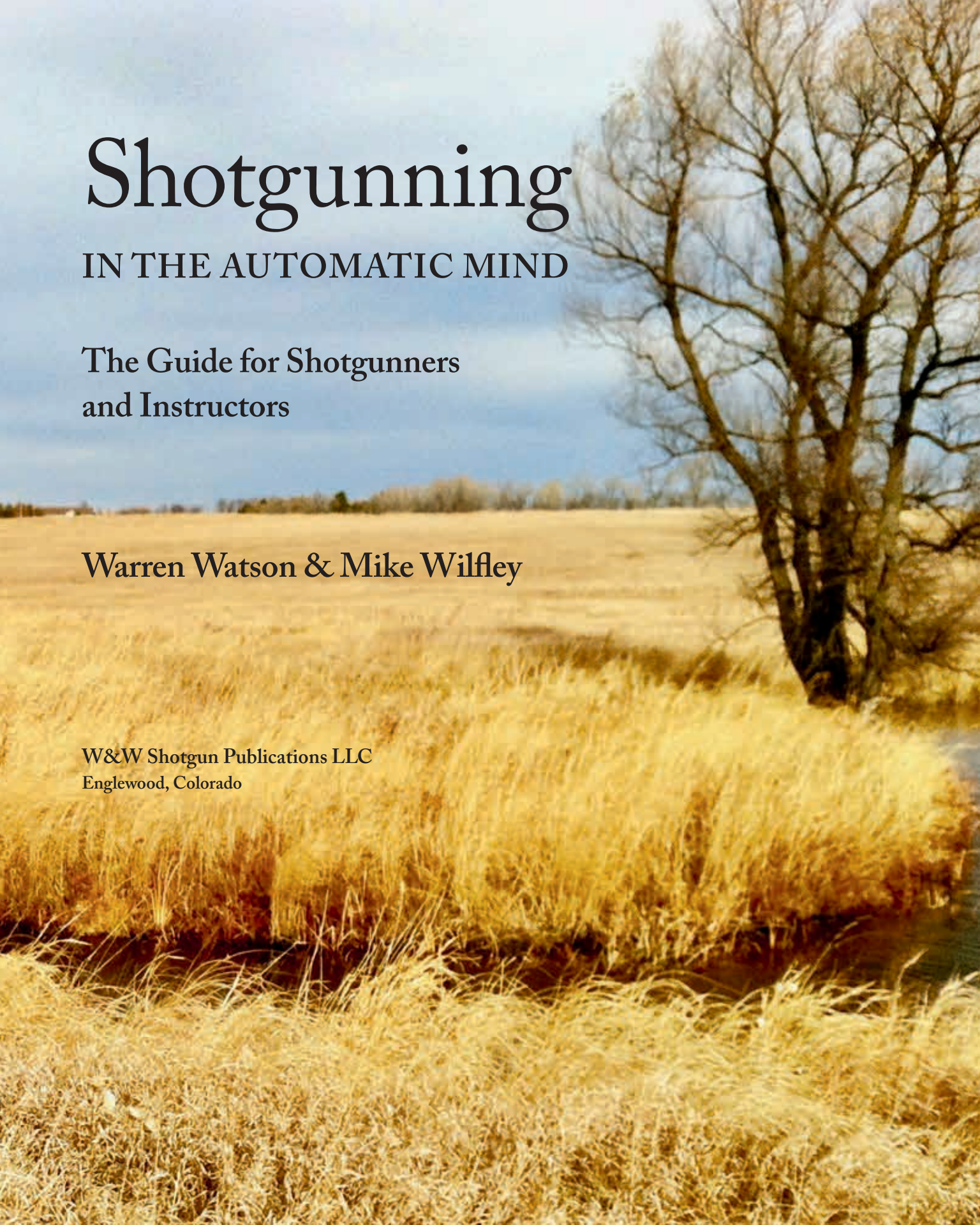


The Guide for Shotgunners and Instructors



Warren Watson & Mike Wilfley





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and Instructors

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PREFACE

The co-authors of this book, Warren Watson and Mike Wilfley, are lifelong students of shotgunning. For 15 years, they have been friends and hunting companions.

Their families, their friends, other professionals, and writers of the many shotgun books and articles published in the last 100-plus years have taught them a great deal about shotgunning. They have learned that training, skill-building, discipline, and — ultimately — competence provide experiences and life lessons that go far beyond the sport of shotgunning.

Each generation stands on the shoulders of past generations and the authors are grateful to all those past and present shotgunners from whom everyone can learn and grow.

“This is an outstanding and comprehensive guide that can easily serve as a single-volume resource for the novice, developing, and experienced shotgunner. Written in an intelligent and easily approachable style, a large portion of the book is a methodical, clearly outlined guide to gaining the visual and physical skills needed to excel, whether in the field, with clay targets, or as a competitive shooter. An understanding of the psychological factors involved in skillful shotgunning, and the advice and exercises provided to gain mastery of this most difficult aspect of the sport, are among the most valuable features of the guide.

My experience with Warren has been invaluable to me in picking up a sport I began in adolescence and then abandoned for decades. His lifetime of experience as a hunter, as a successful competitor, and as a highly trained and experienced teacher and coach helped make my successful return to shooting a genuine pleasure. Warren is a gifted teacher and has managed to translate his accumulated knowledge, wisdom, and teaching ability into the finest guide on the subject I know.”

H. Peter Silvestri, M.D.

When you have shot one bird flying you have shot all birds flying. They are all different and they fly in different ways but the sensation is the same and the last one is as good as the first.

Ernest Hemingway



INTRODUCTION

Setting the Stage

If you want to learn to shoot a shotgun, you will love this book. If you already love shooting a shotgun, you will also love this book.

Shooting shotguns attracts people from all walks of life. Our ancestors became proficient with spears, bows, and guns as a necessity of life. Today, we aspire to a level of competence in shotgunning because of instinct and a desire for diversion from the modern world where, for most of us, our physical abilities are largely unneeded.

Our book presents a logical, step-by-step system for understanding shotgunning today, using the world's fastest-growing shooting sport—sporting clays—as a point of departure. To paraphrase a tag line from the Krieghoff shotgun company, the challenge and fascination of shooting sporting clays is the delicate balance between the well-honed instincts of a good wing shot and the controlled, measured performance of a clay target veteran.

Shotgunning in the Automatic Mind teaches the competitive sporting clay shooter how to win, and teaches the field shooter how to improve their technical skills. Inside this book you'll find details of basic methods of shotgunning as well as sophisticated techniques taught to elite shooters. You'll learn about fieldcraft, target reading, and how to create shot combinations.

Most importantly, this book will open the door to mental techniques that allow you to shoot in “the zone,” or in what we call the “Automatic Mind.” When operating in the Automatic Mind, one can become an intuitive shooter—able to spontaneously use the knowledge, deep understanding, and skill developed by extensive training, practice, and experience.

In these pages, we do our best to share our accrued wisdom to help you master the physical and mental art of shotgunning.

We believe shooting to be much more than a physical reflex. Shooting allows you to extend your will far beyond your relatively limited human physical abilities. This extension of will, or power, is true in all sports that use tools such as golf, tennis or fishing. You cannot run or throw anything 800 mph. What you *can* do, though, is create an extension of yourself with the shotgun as a tool by firing a pellet missile at 800 mph; blasting

a cloud of lead or steel shot that expands to 30 inches wide and up to 20 feet long. To have your shotgun consistently become an extension of your hands and your eyes—and ultimately of your will—you must first establish in your subconscious memory the information needed for consistent repetition. This only happens through diligent physical and mental training, and practice.

New shooters often believe they are instinctive shooters; however, none of us are born shooters. You become truly competent only with commitment and hard work. To become a world-class competitor at anything probably requires 10,000 hours of dedicated effort. The objective of this book is to provide anyone who aspires to develop the Automatic Mind in shotgunning with the tools they need to achieve their goals. The information is here to guide you. The rest is up to you.

The Foundation for Successful Shotgunning

Things that last a lifetime are built on a strong foundation. You take one logical step at a time, starting with the most basic, core, physical skills. Once those core physical skills—vision, posture, mount, rhythm, lead—are mastered, you will learn methods to guide a shotgun to the target. When the physical skills are mastered, shotgunning becomes more of a mental activity through pre-shot routine, target reading, decision-making and advanced techniques. As one acquires more knowledge and experience, it is possible to enter the realm of intuitive shooting known as the Automatic Mind. This is a state largely devoid of conscious thought. Some describe the state of Automatic Mind as a sense of freedom and euphoria as they find their own light. It's when the shotgun truly becomes an extension of your will and you gain the satisfaction of achieving a high level of competency in a sport that has been enjoyed by all levels of society for many decades.

Decide what you want from your sport. Keep it in perspective. Vary your routine to keep it fresh. Enjoy yourself. Shooting is obviously not one of life's essential activities. Nonetheless, a high level of competency at most anything will lead to greater wisdom about yourself, about life in general, and provide the simple satisfaction of doing something well.

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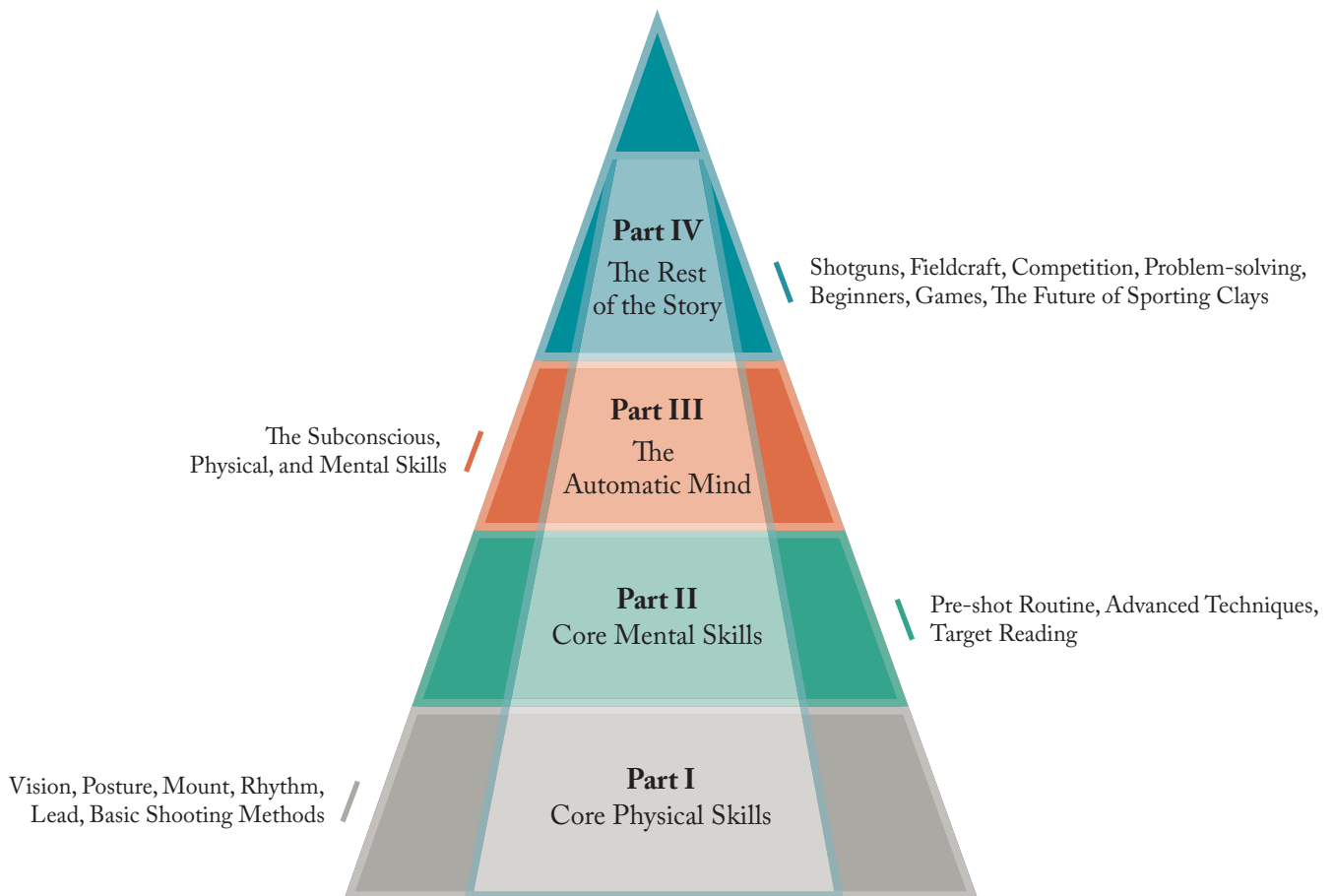
How to Use This Book

Before reading this book, ask yourself what you hope to get out of these pages. Your answer will determine how you will use it.

If you are an absolute beginner, begin by reading “Safety,” immediately following. Next, take a look at the glossary. It will acquaint you with many of the most common shotgunning terms. This is essential. After that, carefully read Chapters 1 through 6.

If your intention is to gain a greater understanding of the basics of shotgunning, whether in the field or on the sporting clays range, then the chapter reviews and illustrations will allow you to accomplish your goal.

If, however, you want to become highly competent and educated about shotgunning and instruction, then Chapters 1 through 10 must be read with some care.



Organization of the book.

If you want to successfully compete at the highest levels of sporting clays, then the entire book must be carefully studied. This book will help aspiring competitors determine what level of competition is realistic and what must be done to get there.

Everyone has the ability to become reasonably competent with a shotgun. The purpose of this book is to provide a guide for every level of aspiration. Keep in mind that no matter the level of experience, the solution to almost any shotgunning problem can be found in the fundamentals contained in Chapters 1 through 6.

"I am convinced if a person understands the first six chapters, they can become a proficient shot for the rest of their life."

Warren Watson

Safety

The shotgun at short range is one of the most dangerous of all weapons. A solid, close-range hit in the head or body will kill. A limb can be blown off or mutilated. Simple as that. There is a reason police carry shotguns for very dangerous short-range situations. There is a reason fishing guides in Alaska carry shotguns in case they have an unexpected encounter with a bear at very close range. If a shotgun can kill a bird out to 60 or 70 yards or break a crossing clay target at 100-plus yards—and it can—it can also put an eye out at that distance.

All beginners should first shoot a shotgun at a solid object 30 feet away in order to experience its destructive power. A watermelon provides a great example. An old cardboard box will work if nothing else is available. The exercise will make a deep impression and foster safety awareness.

All experienced shooters have had close calls, seen close calls, or know of someone who has had a close call—or worse. Experienced, knowledgeable shooters never resent being reminded about gun safety. Everyone can be careless at some time. It is for their friends and companions and strangers and anybody else close by to remind them (in a pleasant way) that others are near. *Remind them —no matter who it is.*



Unsuspecting watermelon.



Inattentive shotgunner pointing his shotgun at the unsuspecting watermelon.



Oops!



A 28-gauge at 30 feet with three-quarter ounce of No. 8 shot, skeet choke. *Never, ever, point a shotgun at anything you wouldn't want to destroy.*