

November/December 2007

Vol. 1. Issue 2

On Wisconsin *Outdoors*

With the Dick Ellis Experts

- **Old Dogs And Children—
Upland Game And
Memory Lane**
- **2007 Gun Season Outlook**
- **Cultivating Future
Hunters— Making The
First Deer Hunt Fun**
- **Planes, Trains,
Automobiles... And The
Suburban Whitetail Rut**
- **Whitewater &
Quietwater II—Planning
Your Trip**
- **Two Cans Per Man—
Expert Tactics For Taking
Canvasback Bulls**
- **The Fish-On Fix—
Addictive Fall Therapy
With Quickset Rigs**
- **Outdoor, Christmas Humor**
- **The Frozen Jungle—
Lessons From A Trapper**

Photo By Dick Ellis

■ Hunting, Fishing, Trapping, Travel & Outdoor Humor ■

Whitewater And Quietwater II

Planning Your Wilderness Trip

By Steve Henske

I remember preparing for my first Boundary Waters trip to Quetico Provincial Park in Ontario 27 years ago. Drawing from my experiences growing up I knew the basics of canoe camping and also owned a lot of the general camping gear, but I had never been to Canada nor been in a truly wilderness area beyond what northern Wisconsin's Vilas County had to offer. Very few "how to" books were written before 1980 on getting started. And, since I was young and knew everything, I was too bullheaded to read one anyway. Fortunately two of my buddies had been there before and possessed a rough gear list including the proper maps, a somewhat reliable vehicle and some bush paddling experience. We survived my first Canadian canoe trip without mishap. Mishap is a big word when venturing out into the

bush. We cannot control the weather. We cannot control the insects. We cannot control the possibility of one of our group getting appendicitis. But with proper planning and reliable gear we certainly can be ready to deal with any of these variables if they should occur.

FIRST STEP- HOW DO I GET STARTED?

If you really want to get involved in wilderness canoe tripping I would highly recommend you attend the Canoeopia Exposition in Madison, WI, which is typically held in early March at the Alliant Center. As one of the largest paddling expositions in the world the show offers 20,000 square feet of exhibits displaying gear, outfitters, maps, gadgets, books and anything else even remotely related to paddling. There is also an impressive line-up of guest speakers from around the globe covering a huge range of paddling

Continued on page 4



Wisconsin canoers enjoy the view at the last drop of the falls section on the Kopka River, Ontario.

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topics. Another great source of information is the Internet. Web sites like Quietjourney.com, Paddling.net, MYCCR.com (Canadian Canoe Routes), canoeing.com and some others offer an endless stream of info regarding gear, techniques, experiences and paddling destinations. If you know someone that has been canoe camping then try to get them involved. Drawing from actual experience is always the safest route.

WHAT NEXT?

As in any type of physical activity, practice makes perfect. Day trips on local waters with your canoe will build confidence in your skills and also show your limitations. Experienced paddlers tend to be a friendly lot, and it is a rare situation when you are not welcome to join in a day paddle with some newfound friends. Start paddling with a loaded canoe and do it on a variety of water conditions. Moving water skills should be developed, but most rapids encountered in the bush can be either portaged or lined. Some of the most challenging situations I have encountered have been on windblown lakes. Learning the nuances of paddling a craft through two and three foot white-capped rollers can save your life. One of the best skill builders is canoeing with a dog as your ballast.

An excited 65 lb. Golden Retriever bouncing around in your canoe will help your sense of balance better than anything I know.

THE CAMPING PART

Learning the basics of canoe camping before diving into the middle of nowhere will put your stress level at ease so you can have an enjoyable trip. Bottom line is you have to get out and do it. Wisconsin has a lot to offer for one, two or even weeklong paddling trips. Pick up two of Mike Svob's books: *Paddling Northern Wisconsin* and *Paddling Southern Wisconsin*. These wonderful guides to 165 Wisconsin rivers can help you find a place to get started. The Lower Wisconsin State Riverway is a fantastic place to get your feet wet if canoe camping for the first time. Extending 92 miles from Prairie du Sac to Prairie du Chien, this gem is a great trip for anyone.

TIME TO BUY A REAL COMPASS

Once you have reached a comfort level living out of your canoe for a night or two begin to look for a more challenging destination. For many Midwest paddlers the first taste of the North Country is northern Minnesota's Boundary Waters Canoe Area (BWCA). The BWCA is a remote and beautiful



Planning a Wilderness Canoe Trip: Rob and Eric Simkins of Amherst, Wisconsin look for Indian pictographs on the falls section of the Kopka River, Ontario.

designated canoe camping area chock full of lakes and rivers. If taking this next step I highly recommend you secure the services of an outfitter. A good outfitter will set you up with the proper equipment, maps, food and permits taking the worry out of what to eat and how to pack. Take notes of how they set you up. Many seasoned veterans of canoe camping will become self-outfitted. Owning your own canoe and gear has the benefit of familiarity and will save you some big money if you use it enough. Our basic "outfit" has been developed over many years of trial and error, stays packed as a unit and is ready to go almost anywhere at the drop of a canoe paddle.

EARNING YOUR STRIPES

Wilderness canoe tripping is not for everyone. Camping in remote areas away from cell phones, computers and the family SUV can create a disjointed feeling for most people and panic for the rest. History shows that each generation becomes more dependent on technology and further removed from the land. In our busy world it is what makes our economy click. That same technology is making it easier to access the boreal forest due to demands for pulp for paper, minerals and hydroelectric power. The roadless areas are getting roads. True wilderness still lies a short distance north of the border but it is getting further away every year. To experience it from a canoe, relying on your own preparedness and judgement is a challenge, and a wonderful challenge at that.

NEXT ISSUE: Bears can't swim and mice don't jump.

Steve Henske is a veteran canoeist having paddled thousands of miles on the Canadian Shield, and many more in Wisconsin. He resides in Stevens Point, WI, with his wife and paddling partner Missy, and faithful canoe rocking specialist Cody, a golden retriever.

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On Wisconsin Outdoors

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And He Is Us

The Worst Enemy Of Our Outdoor Heritage

By Jeff Nania

Will our natural resources and outdoor traditions survive the future? This is a question that is often and very easily asked, but far less frequently answered. In fact, those who do search for the answer are often thwarted—sometimes as a result of our own unwillingness to face the truth.

There is no doubt that our environment and traditions are facing significant challenges. If we are to perpetuate and protect these two things, change is desperately needed. It is essential we plan for the future, but first we need to look at the past. Those who fail to understand history are doomed to repeat it.

"What is this younger generation coming to?" That is a question that in one form or another has echoed through the ages. Cave parents probably asked it of cave children when they were caught making wheels or playing with fire. My parents certainly asked it of my generation, and I of my kids. However if we were going to ask that question more honestly it would change to, "What have we done to this younger generation?"

When I was growing up, for example, television was in its infancy.



Students from the River Crossing School in Portage learn teamwork under Jeff Nania's tutelage, including using the Archimedes Principle to move a log with a lever.

Fast forward to today. We have come a long way from that old black and white. Hundreds of TV channels, video games, personal computers and cell phones—along with soccer, karate, dance and football—all compete for the time left over after the school day and

So nothing has changed, right? Parents are still asking the same question and kids are still doing the same things. In spite of the concern of our elders, the world has kept on spinning. Dire predictions of future doom and gloom, due to youthful lack of interest, have not really materialized. I, for one, did not go blind ... from watching TV. I even grew up to lead a fairly productive life. So these doomsayers be damned, nothing bad happened. Or has it?

What is our life really like? What have we given our kids? Society, teamed with technology, helped along by our Visa card, has successfully made life on the couch immensely entertaining. Our kids are so engrossed in this electronic world that even verbal communication has been replaced by email and text messaging.

Let's not even talk about real outdoor experiences. Why go to the

Continued on page 6

"Society, teamed with technology, helped along by our Visa card, has successfully made life on the couch immensely entertaining..."

As kids it was not unknown for my brothers and me to waste a fair amount of time watching the mindless idiot box. We didn't, however, invent television, nor did we buy one and put it in our living room. Our parents did that, because no home was complete without a TV. So now instead of being occupied with playing outdoors or even, heaven forbid, reading, (all endeavors that require creative involvement on the part of the participant), some of our free time was spent as dedicated observers in the unreal world of vicarious adventure—levering cartridges rapid fire through a Winchester 92, sending the bad guys heading for the hills—all the thrills and chills of a death defying experience, with none of the risks.

on weekends. Life has become a rapid fire juggling act, intensity even pervades our leisure. If the family still has two parents living under one roof, it's likely both are working. They want to make darn sure their family has all the necessities, just like my parents did. We all want the very best for our children.

So when we walk into the house and see our son or daughter firmly planted on the couch, playing a video game, eating a Ho-Ho, with the TV blaring on a beautiful fall day, our immediate reaction is to tell them to go outside, get some fresh air. Get some exercise. In doing so we allowed history to repeat itself as we again ask the wrong question, "What is this younger generation coming to?"

Take a Kid ...
Outdoors



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BREAKING NEWS:

Nothing To This Publisher Stuff

By Dick Ellis

There's really not much to this outdoor publishing business after all. The reason we decided to print only six issues of "On Wisconsin Outdoors" through September of 08 before going monthly was to earn a bit of reader loyalty and attract some advertising support to this new paper. But mainly, it was so that I could learn to be a Publisher.

Nothing to it. You are now the boss. You put your feet up on the desk, smoke em or chew em if you got em and start yelling to your secretary for coffee. A slight problem did arise with that scenario initially since I forgot that the budget didn't allow for a secretary.

"Get your own coffee, Dad," my 13 year old daughter's voice carried back through the window as she ran to catch the bus. "And Mom says you're not supposed to have your goose poop boots on the desk."

Anyway, the important part is I had gone to the bank to ask for a loan so that we could begin to publish. "What do you have for collateral?" Mr. Vetta, the Banker asks.

"What?" I ask back, but I do this professionally so that I look like a publisher right down to my camo shirt and tie, so that he doesn't have a clue that I don't have a clue what he's talking about.

"You know," he says, "something of worth that we can feel confident about taking from you in the event that you don't pay up."

"I have a nice wife and an .870 Remington," I says. "You can't have Lori. I learned my lesson back in '68 when my dad got wind of the big trade about to happen down by Fisher's Pond with the Leet Brothers...my sister Barb for their Daisy BB Gun."

"That's terrible," he says. "No lie," I say, "It was an 1894 Spittin Image."

"No, I mean your sister," he says. "No worries," I say. "I had two other ones."

Mr. Vetta gave me the money right then and there, right out of his own wallet in fact, and then asked me to leave. I never saw a guy so emotional just to help out a new business. He was crying in fact, as I walked out with my \$213...including 10 brand new crisp twenties. I think that's more money than any outdoor writer ever had at one time in the history of Wisconsin. And now... I was a Publisher

I called my friend Larry the possum skinner. "I'm a Publisher," I say. "I thought you was just an outdoor reporter," he says. "What do a publisher do?"

"Well, I know that after the money starts coming in you get to yell for coffee," I say. "And the big city publishers sit on things called editorial boards so they can tell people exactly what's happening out there...like when the Wisconsin glaciers melted and Al Gore figured out that it was either secondhand smoke or Bush's fault. I think the Miss Universe Pageant gave him Most Valuable Player for that or somethin."

But I was way wrong it turned out. There's lots more to being a publisher. I call up things called "sources", get these things called "leads" from all around Wisconsin outdoors and send out staff to try to break these things called "stories" first in *On Wisconsin Outdoors*... Do you know that Wisconsin has Chronic Wasting Disease, for example? You'll read about it here first.

Did you know that the Holy Hill area is rumored to have a big ugly, stinky, mean half wolf-man half Bigfoot haunting the woods? At first suspecting



Dick Ellis

that it might be the nun I had in fourth grade at St. Lukes, I checked on that one myself, after calling my reporting staff in for a meeting and then remembering that we don't have a reporting staff yet. But false rumor. It was just Jim Doyle, and he's haunting way more than Holy Hill. Told me he heard I had come into \$213 recently and that he would have to take \$197 for the good of me and the state. Said he would make sure it got right to something called the "Spearing Fund for Better Wisconsin Fishing".

Did you know too that deer hunters who bait sometimes need to fill up the whole back of a pick-up truck...just to fit in the two legal gallons of feed?

"Wow...that's only two gallons?" I said to a hunter neck deep in corn back near the Upnorth Beaver Dams where I hunt without bait. "No wonder I flunked the water displacement section in high school chemistry. I always thought a guy could carry a couple gallons of corn, just like a couple gallons of milk. By the way, I dint see any deer again last night. You?"

"I had an off-night too," he said. "Only 476."

So I'm on all of this outdoor stuff for you. Since I don't have a staff yet, and these guys who write for *On Wisconsin Outdoors* actually expect to get paid, maybe I can ask for a little reader participation to help fill the pages. We'd like your hunting and fishing photos. We will publish them here or post them on our website at www.onwisconsinoutdoors.com. In fact, OWO will select the best kid's photo each issue and artist Jonathan Kuehl's caricature of that photo will appear in print, with the original art tubed and sent to the winner. If you don't win, but still want a caricature, Jonathan will do that for you for \$35.00 including shipping and handling.

We'd like your organization's upcoming events for an ongoing calendar, and you can sell your outdoor "stuff" for \$25.00 in the upcoming classifieds. We'd like your letters too on anything related to the outdoors, for publication here or on the web. And we'd like your patience, as we do learn a thing or two about publishing.

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See you in the woods!



And He Is Us... (Continued from page 5)

trouble? With a flick of the remote, we can experience the cold of an Arctic winter or the heat of a summer desert.

The other day I heard a radio commercial that instructed parents on how to talk to their kids, followed by a news report that said childhood obesity has reached near-epidemic proportions.

I read a story in the paper about the discharge of raw sewage into Lake Michigan that closed beaches, and caused human illness. I went to a hearing at the Capitol that dealt with lowering the hunting age to get more

kids involved in the outdoors. I heard disheartening testimony about the future of our traditions.

On the way home I lamented the state of things, the potential disastrous events that would befall our world if the next generation chose to ignore our natural resources.

The next day I took the kids from River Crossing School on a field day to a nearby wetland and woodland. I watched and helped as they explored and learned and became totally engrossed in our natural world. Shrieks

of surprise, then laughter greeted the appearance of a meadow vole next to someone's foot. I listened with them as we heard the raucous call of sandhill cranes and the music of migrating geese. Young eyes cast to the sky, allowed without distraction to both observe and be part of our natural world.

It was then I realized what constituted the biggest threat to our outdoor traditions and environment, to quote Pogo: "I have met the enemy and he is us."

At no time in history have we ever created an environment for our kids that so discourages pursuit of an outdoor life. That must change and we each must make a personal commitment to change it. Make your own choice: Will you be part of the solution or part of the problem?

Give them a chance. Take a kid outdoors.

Happy trails!



Jeff Nania is Executive Director of the Wisconsin Waterfowl Association.

Paul Smith's Outdoors

Some Treasures Unchanged At Wisconsin Dells

By Paul Smith

As fast as the world changes, it's nice to know some things remain the same. Perhaps no place is this more apparent than in the Wisconsin Dells.

Blink your eyes and a new amusement park goes up and a new condominium development is completed. But go down to the Wisconsin River that courses through the Dells and Dave Ehardt is still running his guiding business, the fishing is still great and one of the fish, the lake sturgeon, hasn't changed in millennia.

I joined Ehardt for an evening of fishing in the Dells in October, my first excursion there in over a decade.

"The river is as rich as ever," Ehardt said, pointing his 17-foot aluminum deep-v away from shore and into the dark current. "We shouldn't have much trouble bending a few poles."

Ehardt has operated Big Dave's Guide Service out of Wisconsin Dells since 1990. For the last 16 years, he has spent an average of 250 days a year on the Wisconsin River. Such an investment in time has afforded him a unique perspective and unparalleled knowledge of the river.

"The river can change in a day," Ehardt says, motoring the boat toward scenic sandstone cliffs. "If they release more or less water over the dam, the level can change by several feet. And each spring we find new holes and runs."

Each autumn, the Wisconsin River presents a cornucopia of fishing opportunities. Ehardt's game plan for this evening intends to touch on several of the highlights. It starts with a fishing tour downstream, through the picturesque Dells of

tourist fame, with stops at several select spots to try for smallmouth bass, northern pike and walleye. Then, after sunset, we'll move upstream to the deepest holes in the river, where we'll anchor and fish into darkness for sturgeon.

Ehardt feathers the boat downstream by using the electric trolling motor. We throw buzzbaits at the shore, watching for a strike on the surface bait. Just minutes from launch, a large northern pike slashes at one of Ehardt's offerings. The fish, more than 36 inches long, lunges out of the water but misses the bait.

We continue downstream. After another five minutes, a 16-inch smallmouth inhales my bait. The fish leverages its weight against the current, fighting long and hard before it comes to net. I pop the hook out of its jaw and turn it back to the river.

The boat continues its controlled drift with the current as we cast to the shore. Ehardt points out how weeds now grow in places he never saw them before, probably linked to zebra mussels and clearer water. Our baits are fouled on several casts.

"The fish seem to be doing fine," says Ehardt. "They go in cycles, with some having poor year classes but then rebounding, but overall we are still catching lots of walleye, smallmouth, white bass and crappie."

As we move downstream over the next hour, we catch a dozen smallmouths, ranging from 10 to 18 inches, and several white bass. The fish hit an assortment of spinner baits and plastic grubs.

"Isn't this amazing?" says Ehardt, gesturing in all directions. "Just a few miles from the biggest tourist spot in Wisconsin and we have the river to ourselves."

We did have some company. A red-tailed hawk circled overhead, then dive-bombed a juvenile bald eagle, making the eagle select a more protected tree.

With a half-hour of light left, Ehardt moves the boat to the edge of an eddy that traditionally holds walleye and sauger. The depth beneath the boat is four feet and drops to eight feet in the middle of the eddy. It's the type of spot that is the equivalent of a buffet table for fish.

"They are usually stacked in here," says Ehardt, flipping out a piece of nightcrawler on a plain hook and weighted by a small split shot.

It only takes a minute for the veteran guide to prove himself right. We cast crawlers along the edge of the eddy, letting the current pull the bait to the waiting line of mouths. In this case, it's a



Guide Dave Ehardt shows another sunset walleye taken and released at Wisconsin Dells.

walleye line. We catch and release 10 walleye in the next 15 minutes. The fish are between 12 and 16 inches in length.

With the sun just below the horizon, Ehardt pulls anchor and makes the final move of the evening. We motor upstream through the cool air and between the sandstone cliffs. A few boats have anchored in the deeper holes, also seeking sturgeon, and we move past them to a hole that is uncoccupied. By anglers, at least.

"This hole always holds sturgeon," says Ehardt, anchoring the bow and stern so the boat is perpendicular to the current. "Not many people fish it."

Ehardt lights a gas lantern and we bait six heavy rods with gobs of nightcrawlers. A heavy sinker allows us to cast the baits downstream and keeps them on the bottom, where sturgeon spend much of their time. There is 21 feet below the boat, but we cast downstream into 27 feet of water. Ehardt says that sturgeon, which are very sensitive to scent, will smell the crawlers and move up into the hole to eat.

The lake sturgeon is called Wisconsin's "swimming dinosaur," a living link to our ancient past. We are fortunate to live in a state with a healthy population of sturgeon, so healthy that there are sport seasons on the fish both for spearing and hook-and-line.

According to the DNR, lake sturgeon are the state's largest and longest-lived fish. They have been aged at 100 years and can reach 200 pounds. Since females don't reproduce until they are 20 or 25 years old and then only spawn every three to five years, it is important to protect the fish from overharvest.

The DNR has instituted a new stur-

geon harvest tag system this year for hook-and-line anglers. The tag is required for anyone who keeps a fish; the cost is \$20 for residents and \$50 for non-residents. The revenue generated from sales of the tags will be used to help manage the state's lake sturgeon fishery.

On the Wisconsin River below the Dells, the protective regulations include a one-fish per season bag limit and minimum length limits of 50 inches in odd years and 70 inches in even years.

The 70 inch minimum length limit essentially means the season is catch-and-release only, although 175 sturgeon were harvested in 2004 (the most recent season with the 70-inch limit). That's fine with me.

"That's as big as I've ever seen them," says Ehardt. "Ones that big are rare. If we do get one on, it will drag us around the river."

After just five minutes, one of the rods begins wiggling. Ehardt strikes back and connects with the first sturgeon of the night. It turns out to be a 24-inch, just a baby in the sturgeon world. Ehardt quickly removes the hook and places the fish back in the water.

"Once the sturgeon in that hole get the scent of our baits, it will be steady action," says Ehardt.

Over the next hour, one of our baits is being inspected by a fish at every moment. As the rod bounces, indicating a strike, we quickly rear back and attempt to set the hook. We succeed about half the time. Most are sturgeon, but several are sheepshead and one is a 17-inch white bass.

It's an exciting, unique style of fishing. Sitting near the glow of the lantern, we constantly monitor the rods, waiting for the next bite. Then, when we set the hook on a fish, we work the fish out of the blackness toward the boat where it can be identified.

The biggest sturgeon started out "acting like a catfish," said Ehardt. After 10 minutes of give-and-take, Ehardt pronounced it a sturgeon. And it was, all 40 inches and probably 18 pounds of it. The fish made several long runs and circled the boat twice, tangling two other lines, before we were able to net it.

After a quick picture, it was released, back to swim with its ancient kin, a happy reminder that some things - especially some good things - don't change.

WS



A sturgeon caught in the hue of lantern light from a familiar hole by expert Wisconsin river guide Dave Ehardt is about to be released.

Wisconsin outdoor writer Paul Smith, of Wauwatosa, has won numerous national awards for his work.

Spoon Fed

Walleyes On The Bay Of Green Bay

By Captain Paul Mueller

Conventional presentations generally reserve trolling spoons for trout or salmon. Exceptions began primarily on Lake Erie where charter captains have been trolling spoons for walleyes for many years. After a trip to Lake Erie where spoons out-produced, crankbaits and crawler harnesses combined, I was determined to give spoons a try on the bay.

The first obstacle (likely the most difficult too) in trying a new presentation is the mind-set shift. A few years ago I was determined to try this new presentation and mustered up enough confidence to try trolling one spoon in the midst of several crankbaits. I was convinced the first walleye was a fluke. The second fish: beginner's luck. The third fish was an attention grabber. That day spoons out-produced all other presentations.

Since that day, spoons remain at the forefront of my walleye arsenal during

certain times of the year. I primarily use this presentation during peak water temperatures on the bay that occurs during the summer and early fall.

This presentation has some key features, the first being speed. This is not a game for slow pokes, as key speeds range in the 2 mph category. The advantage of this is covering water. For those who like to do math, you can cover twice the amount of water using spoons when compared to crawler harnesses. When water temperatures are high and fish are on the move, covering water can be the most important part of your fish catching strategy.

Second, they are easy to use; put them behind jet divers, down riggers, bottom bounders, leadcore or planer boards with a split shot. Any or all of these variations produce fish. Pick your target depth, select the method to get you there and off you go.

The third reason is that they are different. Unless you are on un-fished fish all year, a difference can make the difference. Sometimes a unique presen-



Guide Paul Mueller of Oconomowoc used spoons to take big walleyes and lots of them off of the Cedar River 15 miles north of the Wisconsin border in the Upper Peninsula.

tation will stand out and trigger bites that wouldn't happen with a more traditional or commonly seen presentation.

What spoons work? My experience has been that smaller spoons work the best. A slender spoon one and one-half inches to two and one half seems to work for me. There are a variety of brands out there, but Moonshine Lures seem to work the best for me. They have a long lasting glow paint that seems to make a big difference in deep water or as the sun is going down.

The next time you are looking for a difference-maker in the summertime, give spoons a try. For those that lack confidence, run them in with your cranks and you will see the difference it can make.

Good luck and let me know how you do!

To catch your first walleye on a spoon, call Master Captain Paul Mueller at 262-490-7621 or email him at walleyefever@wi.rr.com.

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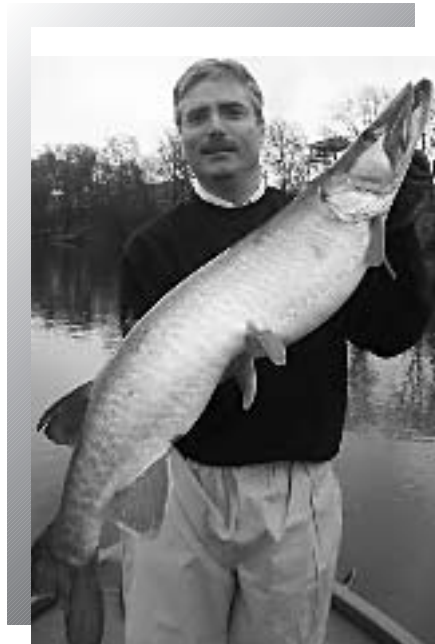
By Phil Schweik

As I set the hook into another big November musky, I yell, "Fish on..." Even after years of guiding and tournament fishing, there are no two words that will cause more commotion, instantaneously start the adrenalin pumping and create such a sense of urgency in the boat.

With the great rush that comes with not only hooking but fighting and landing the greatest fresh water fish of all, it is no wonder that so many people pay the dues of time on the water in search of the 'few minute fix.' With more people addicted to the sport, the odds of tagging that musky, in particular the big fish, become harder, more competitive and more challenging.

Fall techniques that aren't often used by other anglers have helped me put fish in the boat, even on heavily pressured waters. With water temperatures dropping and big fish on the feed, November and December is the time to take any edge with you on Wisconsin's lakes and river systems.

Start with live bait rigging. Most often when fishing in the fall, musky hunters are running live bait with a simple quick set rig. Quick set rigs are pre-packaged at your local sporting goods store—including Gander Mountain, where I serve as a member of the Pro Staff. The rigs are quick and easy and most often run effectively at four-to-eight-foot depths under a bobber. Two quick set rigs at different



Dave Kalstrom with a 45-inch musky caught on a quick strike rig after it followed a Smitty Bait to the boat but missed the lure.

depths under the bobber cover more water. But here is where I choose the less traveled route.

Instead of running two quick set rigs, I offer my own home-made rigs which consist of a one-to two-ounce jig hooked through the sucker's upper lip. A six-to eight-inch leader is then run from the jig to a small treble hook inserted into the sucker's back, slightly behind the dorsal fin.

Take a piece of rubber approximately one-half inch in diameter, for example from an old twister tail, and

slip it over the point of the hook on the jig to prevent it from coming off of the sucker's lip. When I hook the leader to the jig, I simply hook both together on the snap of the leader that is coming from my line. This technique allows a quick, easy set-up and eliminates the need for an inline sinker to hold the



Dave Henderson caught this giant on a Delong Flying Witch, a rubber jerkbait.

sucker down.

Once the rigs are set, I run one 15 to 25 feet behind the boat, suspended about four-to eight feet below a slip bobber. I prefer the use of slip bobbies over traditional round bobbies. Slip bobbies are easier to manipulate, have less drag in the water and the muskies feel less resistance pulling them down.

My second line is run totally different. I use the same home-made quick set rigs without a bobber. Free-line this presentation behind the boat anywhere from 25 to 50 feet. The free-swimming sucker is given the opportunity without any drag to run as naturally as possible.

I have caught significantly more muskies on the free line (as many as two-to-one) in comparison to the traditional bobber method. And on days when the bite is slow, this presentation will often produce when other methods fail.

When the bite becomes increasingly more difficult very late in the year, another method will frequently out-produce any offering in your boat.

Set up over a traditional deep wintering hole and vertical jig for muskies that have transitioned into a dormant state. I basically run the same home-made quick set rig described earlier. Instead of dragging it behind the boat, though, work it slowly across the bottom of a deep wintering hole keeping contact with the bottom structure at all times. Structure is the key. Look for any wood or rock outcroppings on your locator and you will find fish.

With this technique, run a heavy spinning rod and reel, spooled with 65 pound Cortland Spectron. The bite can be very subtle at times and you need to have a tool that is sensitive enough to feel the light pick-up of a late fall musky. Work the area thoroughly and



Guided by the author, 88-year old Bud Konopacki pauses with a beautiful Tiger taken on a Jim Korducki Rubber Tailed Bucktail run among the rocks in late afternoon.

don't be afraid to get right down in the heart of the wood structure. The big girls are lying there...waiting for you.

Try these new methods after perfecting one important technique at home. Look in the mirror and yell "Fish On!" You're going to use it later on the water. This is late fall in Wisconsin. The taker just may be the fish of your lifetime.

Contact Phil Schweik and Hooksetters Fishing Services at www.hooksetters.biz.

Outdoor Criss-Cross

Hunting Puzzle #14

Solution:



Pike's Peak

Turnover Fishing On The Madison Chain

On the Madison Chain, turnover usually occurs when the surface temperature hits the mid-to-upper 50's. 2007 has been an abnormally warm year for water temperatures, with temperatures in the 60's and 70's later into the fall. When these temperature changes occur, it suggests that larger fish will be feeding more aggressively. Lake Mendota typically produces some of the larger Northern Pike on the chain. During the post-turnover stages on Mendota, Pike fishing action is ample enough to satisfy most family members. The fishing experience at this time on Mendota can rival that of the Canadian fishing experience. When fishing for Northern Pike on Mendota or around the Madison Chain, look for the majority of the action to be on steeper breaks with rock and sand

bottoms. When searching these steep breaks, you can use a variety of tactics. If you choose to use artificial lures, try jerk baits such as Jerko's, Reef Hogs, Bobby baits or similar lure styles. As for color choices, look for chartreuse, perch or other bright patterns to produce the most action.

If you prefer to use live bait, you'll want to use suckers between the range of eight and ten inches. Always use a quick-strike rig to prevent any unnecessary damage to the fish, as Lake Mendota has a minimum size limit of 40 inches and a one fish maximum per angler. The livelier the bait you use, the better the action you will experience. Another productive method to use is trolling. Try using large number 18 Rapalas in 17-24 feet of water, 65-100 feet behind the planer boards, trolling



Scott Bitz, 14, of Pleasant Prairie, with a 41-inch Lake Mendota Pike taken on a cold and windy November day in 2006.

at two or three miles per hour. When choosing a location to start, always try

on the windward side of the lake. This usually oxygenates the water and makes the forage fish more active. Some good areas to look if you choose to start on Mendota are Governor's Island, Second Point, Picnic Point and Fox Bluff. Also, mid-lake bars can be productive this time of year. On cooler days, when water temperature drops between 32 and 42 degrees, you'll want to turn your focus to live baits. Look for deep breaks where the water drops into the main basin of the lake.

W

This article was compiled with the help of Travis Richardson, host of "The Fishing Guide" TV show, as well as the staff of D&S Bait. To contact D&S Bait, Tackle and Archery, LLC by phone, call (608)-241-4225 or check on the web at www.dsibait.com.

Slow Zone

Easy Pick'ns Sucker Will Trip Sluggish Predator

By John Kubiak

The big musky looked like he was in slow motion as he followed behind my Bulldog in the forty-degree water. As I went into my figure 8, the fish just disappeared, seeming very uninterested. Before I had time to even think about what just happened, line started peeling off one of the sucker rods in the back of the boat. From the sound of it, the fish had found what it was looking for. I grabbed the rod, reeled in the slack, and set the hook hard to break the quick strike rig away from the sucker and into the musky. After a short fight, I was able to slip the net under a very nice 47" musky. Catching muskies in the fall is not always this easy, but with the right approach you can definitely increase your odds.

I have a fall strategy that has produced many big fish over the past several years that includes using suckers on quick strike rigs, casting jerk baits, and vertical jigging. The first thing you need to do is find a good spot. A deep weed edge in the 10-15 foot range where panfish are located is one example. My favorite spots however are hard bottomed areas like rock or gravel



The author shows his late fall 47-inch fish just prior to release.

points and shorelines that bottom-out in the 15-20 foot range. Once you find a

good spot and have success, the location will produce year after year when the conditions are the same. This is not the time to run and gun, since the muskies' metabolism has slowed with the cool water temps. It's time to pick two or three spots, and just camp out. The feeding windows are much smaller in fall, so often it's just a waiting game.

I will generally run two sucker rods in rod holders, one in the front of the boat, and one in the back. The rod in the front employs a sucker on a slip bobber, set to about five feet below the surface. The rod in the back uses a reel with a line counter, and a sucker with one to two ounces of weight added to keep it down at the desired depth. I try to run this sucker down deep, about one to two feet off the bottom, and the line counter makes it easy to know exactly what your depth is. The rear rod does not need a slip bobber, but rather the bait clicker feature on the reel. That little click-click-click lets you know when a musky has found its meal, and is one of the sweetest sounds you'll ever hear.

Now that the spot is chosen, and the rods are set, here's how the strategy works. I keep the boat in 15-20 feet of water, and cast a jerkbait toward the

shore, or the top of the bar. If a musky follows the jerkbait, but does not strike, the sucker 5 feet below the surface is sure to attract some attention. Many times the slower moving sucker is just what a lazy following musky is looking for. The deep running sucker in the back of the boat will intercept any fish that are cruising the breakline. If it becomes too cold for casting, I like to do some vertical jigging with a bait like a Fuzzy Duzit. Vertical jigging allows you to wear heavy gloves to let your hands warm up a bit and take a break from casting. I will generally work the Fuzzy Duzit near the deep sucker in the back of the boat. The flash of this bait seems to attract attention, and when the fish come in they usually end up hitting the sucker, which is an easier target.

Fall can be one of the most exciting times of the year to fish for muskies. Just remember to be patient, and bring plenty of warm clothes. Finding the right spot, and using the right techniques can reward you with the fish of a lifetime.

W

John Kubiak is an avid musky fisherman who fishes when he can. He has 85 fish up to 48 inches caught and released.

First Ice

Great Fishing, Grave Danger

By Bill Whiteside

Everyone knows that first ice can be the best fishing they have all winter. Some of us waiting all summer for hard water and others just putting away their open water equipment are fired up to fish the new ice fishing season. First ice means you haven't fished since last ice, so you have a lot of things to think about.

You probably used a power auger the last time you were out. Check your hand auger. It might need new blades or sharpening. Make sure your vexilar battery is charged. A spare battery is nice. Guaranteed: your line will be kinked and curled. Change your line or stretch the old line out to get rid of the kinks and curls. You can do this by firmly pulling and sliding the line between your thumb and index finger without breaking it. You should stretch

out approximately three times as much as you think you're going to use. I like to use two-pound-test line for most panfish, three pound for larger crappies. I've had good luck with fluoro-carbon line such as Vanish or Pline. Also, replenish your bait box, remembering what baits worked well in the past on first ice.

You're going to be walking out, so don't forget your sled to carry all your gear. First ice can be very slippery. Ice cleats could save you from broken bones or other injuries. Our fishing buddy slipped and broke his hip on new ice. They took him away on a stretcher. If only he would have had his ice cleats on!

First ice is nice but be careful. Fishing may be hot, but it's not worth falling through. If you evaluate the ice as questionable, do not go. You've heard the old saying "You're walking on thin ice." That's exactly what you're

doing. To check the ice, I take a few slow steps and watch for sinking or cracking, knowing if the ice breaks I can get back to shore.

I also begin to drill or chisel holes. Three inches of good ice is enough to walk on. As I walk out, I keep drilling holes. Sometimes the ice isn't always consistent. It may be three inches in one spot and only one inch or less in another. So be careful! I strongly recommend wearing a life vest and carrying a rope and screw drivers that can help you escape in the event that your evaluation of safe ice was wrong. Also, there may be other people out on the ice when you first get there. Try to take the same path out that they took.

I hope you have a safe and successful ice fishing season. Good luck and take a kid fishing.



Bill Whiteside is a northwest icefishing expert from Eau Claire.



Bill Whiteside works a northwest Wisconsin lake for panfish with one eye on the vexilar.

"I know many of you diehard ice fishermen and women hear this every year, but it is worth repeating: No fish is worth risking your life over. Always use caution when heading out onto the ice..."

Hardwater Gold

Experience The Early Rush In Wisconsin's Northwest

By Chris Powell

Well it's just about that time of year to go hit the ice, and here in northwest Wisconsin, we have bountiful opportunities to hit ice fishing gold. First ice around here is usually hot. Lakes such as Marshmiller, Otter, the Chetek Chain, Menomin, and Miller Dam are popular with local anglers in search of a good meal of bluegills. Look in the shallow water during this early ice period. Tear drops, moon jigs, and rockers work well tipped with waxies, wigglers, or if you can find them, mousies.

Early ice is also a great time to break out the tip-ups for bass and northern pike. I usually set out two tip-ups while I jig. I like to use a mono leader about 18 inches long with a split shot eight inches above a number 4 treble hook, tipped with a small to medium northern shiner.



Fast hardwater action keeps kids and adults alike happy on any Wisconsin lake.

I will usually set one shiner directly under the ice and place one near the bottom as well. First ice is also a great time to catch walleyes by way of jigging pole or on tip-ups. Personally, I prefer jigging them with a jigging shad rap, as they put up a great tussle and taste great afterward. Look for them in low-light hours of the day in 10-20 feet of water.

I know many of you diehard ice fishermen and women hear this every year, but it is worth repeating: No fish is worth risking your life over. Always use caution when heading out onto the ice, especially this early in the season. Always bring a spud bar along to check the ice for weak spots, and never fish alone. It is a good idea to pick up ice picks to hang around your neck, just in case you do fall through. These will help you to pull yourself out. Also, with the lack of snow the last couple of years, it would be a good idea to invest in a pair

of ice cleats to help with traction. These lakes can get downright slippery!

I wish you all a fun and safe ice fishing season!



Chris Powell, Fat Guy's Guide Service, Phone: 715-577-9771, www.fat-guy.org.



What kid do you know who is just waiting to spill a smile on the Wisconsin ice?

Cheap Shots

Gambling With Garands, The CMP Experience

By S. Wilkerson

Anyone with a passing familiarity with gun magazines has seen the Civilian Marksmanship Program's advertisements for M1 Garands: "Own a piece of history." "Genuine U.S. Government M1 Garands." "This historically significant collector's piece symbolizes a greatness in the American character and deserves to be passed down to your children and to theirs."

All of which is true. What is a tad bit disingenuous, are the pictures of the Garands in the advertisements. They look virtually unissued or fresh from a US armory rebuild. Unfortunately, reality and the pictures in the ads can be as different as night and day when it comes to CMP Garands and M1 Carbines.

Even if you get a bone, you'll be supporting a good cause. The purpose of the CMP is to promote firearms training and marksmanship, especially for youth. It is a non-profit organization chartered by Congress. Currently, they offer Garands, M1 Carbines, Kimber .22 rifles in some abundance and the occasional 1903 and 1903A3. With the exception of the Kimbers, most of the



Typical CMP Service Grade Inland M1 Carbine after cleaning and installation of a surplus birch stock re-stained by the author. Original carbine was replaced by the CMP because of a heavily pitted barrel. CMP customer service is second to none.

CMP's wares are lend-lease returns from Greece, Italy and Denmark.

I, myself, own or have owned four CMP firearms: A Harrington and Richardson M1 returned from Greece and then waited four months for it to arrive.

When it did, I couldn't believe my eyes. In fact, I couldn't freakin' believe that any self-respecting army on the planet would have fielded such a wretched example of a rifle. No wonder the Turks took Cyprus and won't give it back. Greek soldiers were probably too embarrassed to meet the Turks on the field of battle armed with rifles like mine. Among my Garand's "attributes" was a stock so loose that the barreled action could move laterally in it. The gas tube, upon which the front site sits, moved north and south and east and west and was barren of finish. Muzzle wear, however, was less than two and with the exception of the operating rod and stock, the rifle was all Harrington & Richardson, apparently original and never rebuilt.

The dang thing shot, too, and pretty well with Korean surplus ammunition, no less. Three inch groups at 100 yards were the norm when I did my part and some measured tighter than two. Clips were ejected, on top of my head, after every eight rounds. In fact, it shot so well that I figured it deserved a new stock and fresh parkerized finish. While I was at it, I opened the barrel, thus tightening the gas tube and preventing it and the front sight from moving. The rifle is now very attractive and accurate, although it still dumps its clips on top of my head.

When Inland carbines became available from the CMP for the first time in years, I had to order one. This time, I took the advice of web forum posters and placed a Post-It note on my order form asking for a nice one to compensate for the junk they had sent me in the past. Because I believe everything I read, I had "learned" that the CMP almost always fulfills such requests. Why, according to scores of posts on the CMP's very own web site, happy CMP workers will gladly go out of their way to hand pick a rifle or carbine in some arcane serial number range to fill a hole in someone's collection.

One thing's for sure though, a rifle or carbine purchased from the CMP will be guaranteed to be serviceable and, in fact, if you read their descriptions, they don't promise anything more than what they eventually delivered to me. New after-market stocks are not that costly. Parkerizing is inexpensive. CMP prices are fair and if you're not happy with what you got, they will make it right.

I wouldn't hesitate to order another one, with the understanding that it might not look like the one advertised in *Guns and Shooting* magazine, Post-It note or not.

S. Wilkerson is an award winning Wisconsin journalist, firearms expert and student of the second amendment.

Sheesh. I thought if they had time to find someone an Inland M1 Carbine in the 4.3 million serial number range, they darn well had time to paw through a pallet and send me one that hadn't been to hell and back.

I figured I'd get a nice one because I deserved a nice one and web posters said I would. The CMP disagreed with me and them. What I actually got was a rifle only fit as a source of a few parts. Split stock, cracked front site, an inoperable bolt stop, and, wonders of wonders, a pitted bore. As a service grade version, my carbine was guaranteed to have a serviceable bore, free of pitting. I contacted the CMP, told them of my plight, and they told me to send the carbine back. They agreed that it didn't meet the definition of a service grade, and in less than two weeks time, sent me another carbine.

Hope springs eternal, and I figured that the CMP would now, finally, send me an unblemished example that I, too, would be proud to post on a web forum. Instead, what I got was okay. Great metal finish, muzzle wear of less than two, a bright shiny bore, a functional slide stop, and again, a well-used, heavily dinged stock. Despite the shiny bore, a close inspection revealed what looks to me like some pitting. I thought of sending it back again, but decided this might be the best I could do.

You might do better, or just as likely, as well or worse. I think my experience with the CMP, based on the many of them available for resale at gun shows, is pretty typical. Those perfect examples in the CMP ads and on web forums are actually atypical. People are always proud to show off good fortune and reluctant to advertise bad luck.

One thing's for sure though, a rifle or carbine purchased from the CMP will be guaranteed to be serviceable and, in fact, if you read their descriptions, they don't promise anything more than what they eventually delivered to me. New after-market stocks are not that costly. Parkerizing is inexpensive. CMP prices are fair and if you're not happy with what you got, they will make it right.

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Out There

A Pirate Tale

By Darrell Pendergrass

There's a skeleton of an old wooden boat sunk down near the shore of the lake by our house.

I found the boat by chance a few years ago during a canoe paddle along the edge of that lake. I wasn't looking for anything; the old boat just sort of appeared beneath me as I was staring into the lake. At that time the old boat sat a good two or three feet below the water's surface, upside down, its hull filled with an assortment of holes. It was apparent why it was on the bottom of the lake.

When it happened I felt lucky to have found the boat, and even entertained thoughts of bringing it to the surface for repairs. Those thoughts eventually passed, and just as well. I hardly needed another farm project.

The boat had to have belonged to the people whose home my family now owns, as they were the only ones who have ever lived close to the lake other than us. Two generations of boys and

girls from the same family grew up there; those children are either retired now or have passed on. That was years ago. When they could, I imagine that like me they would get on to the lake for spring-time rides across the water. They probably liked watching the ducks and geese as they migrated back to the area, or spent time listening to the sounds of nesting cranes lifting up from nearby ponds, feeling a part of the water. They likely used that boat.

There's clearly something soothing about being on a lake that transcends time. The feeling we get when we're on the water is the same feeling that man got at the dawn of time. Not everything changes through the years.

When my children were finally old enough to go out in the canoe with me, I showed them the sunken boat on a day when there was a slight chop on the water. Grace and Jack leaned over the edge of our canoe, peering into the depths, trying to make out the lines of the boat. Grace pointed it out to her

brother, and they both smiled at me.

"It's a pirate boat," I fibbed as the kids looked on. "Pirates lived around here way back when, and this was their boat, before it sank in a big battle. There's probably a skeleton down there."

Of course, because they were little kids, they believed me. And subsequently, when we've gone for canoe rides around the lake the kids always want to see the pirate boat. Together we always seek out the boat near the cattails and shore muck, looking for it like buried treasure. "There it is! There it is!" they'll shout. "There's the pirate boat!!"

Once we even salvaged a water-logged beaver-chewed oar from the 'wreck,' carrying it above our heads in triumph on the way home. I told the kids that pirate ghosts might come looking for it, so the pirate paddle sat near the hay barn for a long time, before it was eventually tossed into the wood pile. We still talk about it.

Over the course of a few short years the lake has dropped in depth, and the

ribs and sides of the old boat have eerily risen above the surface, as if those ghosts of long ago are trying to get it to float again. You can see it was once green.

I recently saw the pirate boat again for the first time this year. Floating in my canoe I looked at the boat. I don't know the real individuals who actually oared the boat around the lake, but I'm guessing whoever it was saw the things I see today - loons, snapping turtles, swans, and ducks of all kinds. Those people may have been entranced by a bear swimming across the middle of the lake as I was a few years back. I know they felt what I feel. I know they stood in awe as I do.

Pirates or not, they were a lot like me. And I am like them.

W

"Out There: Twenty years of family, fishing, farming and a life afield", a collection of stories by Darrell Pendergrass, can be purchased for \$15 at The Daily Press in Ashland. Or send \$15 and \$3 for shipping and handling to Darrell Pendergrass, 52405 Otto Olson Road, Grand View, WI 54839.





"After twenty years of family, fishing, farming and a life afield, Darrell Pendergrass has collected a wealth of stories and memories that will make you smile and laugh. This book is a treasure trove of family history and a collection of stories that will make you feel like you are back in the heart of the family. It is a book that will be read and enjoyed for years to come." - Bob Olson

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Send \$15 and \$3 for shipping and handling to Darrell Pendergrass, 52405 Otto Olson Road, Grand View, WI 54839

The Frozen Jungle

Trappers Part Of Predator-prey Life Cycle

By Dick Ellis

EDITOR'S NOTE: This month's column from the Ellis archives takes the place of the usual OWO column "On the Trapline with Arnie Groehler." Groehler is currently serving in Iraq.

The orange flag tattering in the breeze at the end of a long bamboo stick calls Arnie Groehler to another muskrat "feeder hut" far out on the ice of Big Muskego Lake. Located near the primary food source of cattail, feeder hunts offer muskrats a place to eat protected from elements and predators. In this frozen jungle though, protection and survival stand precarious at best.

A trail of air bubbles trapped in the ice and remnants of gnawings from feeding muskrats betray the runway leading from the succulent cattail stand to the hut. Groehler has the No.1 Stoploss trap, a foothold trap designed to drown, set in the submerged doorway below. With a metal spud, he chisels a hole in the ice that has formed around the base of the bamboo since he last checked the traps two days earlier. Dropping to his knees to check the trap, he probes the icy water with rubber gloves stretching to the shoulder.

Groehler has claimed almost 1,600 muskrats in the traps already this fall and winter. He will probably take 2,000 before the February season closure.

Ten trappers here aim to harvest 90 percent of Big Muskego's estimated muskrat population. The previous year, that estimate was set at 30,000 by Department of Natural Resources (DNR) biologists.

The 90 percent population harvest, Groehler says, is the proper goal to maintain the pre-trapping number of muskrats the following year. Muskrats become sexually mature at six weeks and in southern Wisconsin they average three litters annually. Under normal conditions, for every female muskrat in April, there will be 36 muskrats by fall.

Failure to harvest 90 percent will lead to the doubling of the population annually, excessive vegetation eradication and accompanying loss of habitat for other wildlife, related problems for man, and eventual mass muskrat starvation. The muskrat, Groehler says, is an "indicator species" used to determine the health of a marsh. High populations of muskrats indicate a healthy marsh while a nonexistent population may signal too much pollution.



Resetting a leghold trap at the base of a feeder hut is Arnie Groehler, a Wisconsin trapper education instructor for the State of Wisconsin and Director of the North American Fur Auction, which evolved from the Hudson Bay Fur Company of 1670 and first sent pioneers to explore Wisconsin.

"Five years ago, Muskego Lake was a poor environment for all species of wildlife," he said. "The DNR eradicated the carp population which was riling up the water so the cattails couldn't grow. Once the rough fish were gone, the water became very clear which prompted extensive new growth of nutrient-rich cattails and with that increase of their primary food source, the muskrat population drastically increased."

He called trapping vital to the balance of nature and said an unchecked muskrat population will continue to increase and devour literally every bit of vegetation in its own habitat.

"The trapper balances those peaks and valleys," he said. "We want some muskrats there because they keep the proper cattail and open water mix. In building huts, they keep cattail growth in check and provide puddles and nesting areas for waterfowl."

Last year, he said, trappers took out only 5,000 muskrats of the estimated 30,000 population due to the hard early winter. As a result, muskrats took out all the vegetation in the center and east side of the lake. By winter's end, muskrats were starving to death and cannibalizing other muskrats trapped. As a result of the feeding frenzy, Groehler said, vast floating mats of rotting, putrid cattail stalks clogged channels and shorelines and impeded boating.

On this morning, 10 dispatched muskrats are piled on the sled that Groehler tows along on his journey of checking and resetting some 70 foothold traps ambushing the feeder huts. A handful of conibear traps baited with

potato to emulate a cattail snack are also set beneath the ice along the runways, designed to snap like a mousetrap and kill the muskrat instantly. Today, these are empty and Groehler's long rubber glove disappears below the ice to check the leghold trap.

This time he emerges with a mink, an "incidental" or unintended catch. During the mile walk out on the ice under stormy skies hours earlier to find the trapper, a reporter had felt peaceful, yet isolated: a man alone on the marsh.

Peaceful? The mink was traveling on the muskrat runway under the ice with one intention: invade the hut and devour any muskrats inside their own residence. Had it found no one home, the mink would have waited and, one by one, killed the returning inhabitants, then followed the runways to surrounding huts and repeated the ritual...moving, killing, eating...until the mink had survived the winter.

Had the mink survived the trap, it may have been instinctively killed by an otter protecting its territory. Had a muskrat survived the mink or the trap, the osprey and hawks on the marsh were waiting.... or the coyotes, which quickly learn to run the trapper's circuit to get an easy meal first, or dig through the south side of a hut softened by the sun, then wait in ambush for the architect to return to repair its lair.

Alone? Such a humanly self-centered perspective. Alone and peaceful? Such a humanly ignorant perspective. There is much to be learned on a trapper's coattails one day in the frozen jungle.

TRAPPING FACTS

Attendance at a 16-hour trapping education course is mandatory in Wisconsin before a trapper's license may be obtained. Curriculum includes trapping instruction, pelt handling and a history of trapping. Because the course also addresses animal habitats and scents, persons not interested in trapping may find the course beneficial.

HORICON MARSH A HOTBED

Wisconsin's fur quality is among the best in the nation. Annually, muskrat fur from Horicon Marsh is recognized as the world's finest at auction house sales around the world, including Copenhagen and Toronto. Groehler regularly attends these auctions and his pelts have been regularly included among the top 100 in the world of that species by Top-Lot muskrat.

PURCHASED AROUND THE WORLD

Wisconsin muskrat pelts are worth \$4 in the fall and \$6 in the winter, and are marketed to Russia for the economical type of hat preferred there, and to the Chinese military for cold-weather hats. The Chinese also purchase the entire world's otter fur for military officers' hats.

ATTITUDES TOWARD TRAPPING

Groehler started trapping 30 years ago and in addition to muskrats, he targets mink, raccoon, fox, coyote, possum, beaver and otter. He is also an animal control trapper and said surveys show that the large majority of citizens are accepting of trapping for an individual's economic gain or to control problem animals.

"People's attitudes change when coyotes start eating their pets or there are 14 raccoons in the attic, or they paid \$150 for a clump of birch trees and a beaver takes them down the next day," he said.

SIGNS OF OVER POPULATION

Nature addresses wildlife overpopulation with diseases such as rabies and distemper. Groehler is seeing a relatively high number of those diseases in coyotes and skunks. "There is often a perception that trappers aren't professional," he said. "But we're very professional. As wildlife managers, we have a real love for the outdoors and wildlife in general."

Dog Talk

For A Christmas Puppy, Plan Ahead

By Kevin Michalowski

There are two schools of thought when it comes to puppies at Christmas. Some people say Christmas puppies should be avoided, others see the puppy as a traditional gift that brightens the holidays. Good planning and a little forethought will allow those who want to keep the tradition of a Christmas puppy alive, and enjoy the experience they hoped for. Here are 10 tips for making sure the Christmas puppy is a welcome addition and not an overwhelming burden at the holidays.

1 NO SURPRISES - If someone is set on getting a Christmas puppy, the first thing I would tell them is to prepare for the pup well in advance and never give a puppy as a surprise. If you plan well, a Christmas puppy can work, but remember, it's one more responsibility on the schedule during a busy holiday season.

2 CHOOSE THE RIGHT DOG - Beagles tend to bark, Huskies pull

and English pointers like to run. You want to know a bit about the breed of dog before you bring it home. All puppies are cute; so don't buy one based solely on how it looks. Think about what you want the dog to do and where you live. Do some research. Ask questions and make an informed choice.

3 PURCHASE CARE ITEMS AHEAD OF TIME - Get everything you will need BEFORE you bring home the puppy. Dog food, water dish and chew toys can all be wrapped up and placed under the tree to give the new dog owner some presents to open. You'll also need a portable kennel, leash, collar and training treats.

4 TRAIN THE TRAINER - Whoever will be handling puppy care must be trained to properly handle, discipline and teach the young dog. Training the dog is not difficult, but learning to train the dog takes some time. Dogs can't use logic or reasoning, so stop thinking in human terms. Have patience, and understand that dogs



Kids and puppies are a great combination. Just make sure you plan ahead when you consider bringing a puppy home as a traditional Christmas gift. (Photo by Kevin Michalowski)

react to your actions and will learn through repetition.

5 DON'T LEAVE THE PUPPY ALONE FOR TOO LONG - The socialization and training of your puppy will start the day it arrives in your home. Christmas is a fine time to introduce the

puppy to people as long as there are not too many and they are not too loud. If you have a large group for a holiday party, keep the puppy in a quiet room in the portable kennel and make regular

Continued on page 16

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Bear Necessities

Bananas, Buddies A Recipe For Success

By Dick Henske

The bait site was located in an old pine stump on the edge of a dark, timbered swamp.

It was mid-morning and only half of the bananas and candy had been eaten. The logs were scattered everywhere and I could see where the bear had lain on the ground digging into the bait. I baited again, pulled the logs into place, and felt that this time the bear might return before dark for "seconds."

That evening I snuck in, made sure the bait wasn't hit, and sat 60 yards down wind on a bait bucket. A doe worked through, a raccoon checked the bait, and then after a two-hour vigil I saw a big, black shape working the gusting south wind in a mist of rain. He was coming in! Nose up. Listening. Stopping often. Cautious. When he was ten yards from the bait pile he started to circle the bait site and offered me a broadside, clear lung shot. The .35 caliber Marlin with 180 grain hand loads did the job. The bear took off crashing brush. Although hard of hearing, I listened but heard no death groan.

I followed the direction the bear had run and after a ten-minute search and 75 yards made the recovery. I tagged him in the tongue, and then blazed the trees back to the meadow so I could find him later. It was dark by this time and I needed help; the bear was a 10-minute walk from the truck and weighed about 275 pounds.

The Howling Dog is a great local bar near my Manitowish Waters home and I hoped the locals would be finishing a brew. It cost me a round of drinks, but three hunters returned to the field with me. Big Dave Ryan, a bear-hound guy who had helped bring

down nine bear already during the 2007 season, was really into it. He gutted the bear quickly and rigged a harness with a rope so three of us could lift and drag the bear easily. Jim Patterson, another hunter and fishing guide, helped haul and manned the flashlight. Dan Connaughty, who owns Townline Sports and has helped me pull out a bear before, provided the support and muscle until the bear was in the truck.

The bear then went to the Pea Patch Saloon, where owners Lisa and Barry took pictures. They had provided me with the vegetable oil left over from fish fries that has worked so well in my bait sites.

What next? I called my wife, Mariel, arguably the finest looking retiree north of Milwaukee. Then, on that 60 degree night, because I could not register it until the next day, we had to transport the bear to the Manitowish Waters Lions' beer cooler. He was registered the following morning at Dietz's Gas station—their first bear of the year—where we removed a rib and a tooth for D.N.R. studies.

Jeff Krans, a fellow bear hunter, and I skinned him on a tarp. We quartered him on the tailgate of my truck and turned that bear into delicious steaks, burgers, and a bucket of meat destined for sausage.

That's it. How sweet it is. Amazing how a great hunt still energizes you at 72 years-of-age as if you were still 16.

But the successful hunt was no accident. It started August 1, when I collected bait and set up four bait sites. I baited every three or four days until the last week before the hunt, when I began to bait every day. All the bait sites were hit, but one declined in activity, so I abandoned it. Two other bait stations were often heavily hit by a big bear, but

only nocturnally. I hunted three nights and saw a sow and two cubs. Then, on the fourth night, I connected.

I bait with left-over fish fry vegetable oil so the bears dig in it and walk scent back into the woods. These scent trails draw all the bear in the area. I also use candy, rolls, bread, apples and a huge box of bananas that our local Ward's Grocery Store provide. I think that the banana/candy combination was too much for this bear. I have shot many bears and still learn more every year. Oil placed on bait sites causes the bears to dig up hollow logs and makes a mess out of your set up. My best luck has been baiting at the base of a large stump and covering it with lots of logs to keep out the scavengers.

Bow hunting is the way to hunt bears when they cooperate. They didn't this year. I had to keep shifting to different sites depending on the bait activity. When deer and grouse hunting waits, I hate to waste time scouting and baiting bears. Cautious bears also make it difficult to place a double lung shot with a bow and arrow; and a bruin's abundance of fat can make it difficult to sustain the necessary blood trail even when the hit is good.

Bear hunting is fun. Make sure you apply for your license. In Wisconsin it takes six to eight years of preference points before you'll draw a tag. I'm an old "codger". By my next draw, I'll be 80 years old. Mariel, arguably the best looking retiree north of Milwaukee, will undoubtedly still love me although she did momentarily mistake the bear carcass hanging in the cooler for me this season.

If the Wisconsin wait is too long, I'll probably once again travel to Ontario where I have shot many bears in the evening after long days of non-stop walleye action. In Ontario, try Ted



Dick Henske dropped this bear with a .35 caliber Marlin on public land near Manitowish Waters.

Brown at Timber Wolf Lodge (1-807-599-2716) or Merkels Camp (1-807-938-6428). Go on the internet and you'll find all kinds of outfitters that offer quality hunts.

Get out and do it! Keep the rust from settling in!

Retired principal Dick Henske of Manitowish Waters hunts and fishes Wisconsin, Canada and the western states. Rarely does he miss a day in the field.

Dog Talk... (Continued from page 15)

visits to play with, pet and talk to the puppy. Take a few (no more than three or four) guests along to show the puppy strangers are nothing to worry about.

6 BEGIN THE HOUSEBREAKING SCHEDULE IMMEDIATELY -

Don't forget to take the pup outside every couple hours because this starts the house-breaking process. Don't train the pup to go on newspaper, which can cause problems with the housebreaking schedule. Use newspaper only in emergencies.

7 ESTABLISH A ROUTINE - Be sure to plan activities according to

a routine so the dog becomes accustomed to eating, sleeping, playing, bathroom breaks, and training. If you're not the type to adhere to a schedule, don't get a dog.

8 CONDUCT TRAINING REGULARLY -

Use 15-minute daily training sessions to teach your dog basic obedience commands. You can start this training as soon as you get the puppy home. It is never too early. Remember, dogs learn through repetition, and short daily sessions will help reinforce acceptable behavior. You'll

notice results after only a short time.

9 KEEP THE DOG HEALTHY AND HAPPY -

Your dog will depend on you for everything. So make sure you give it plenty of water, exercise and entertainment, as well as the proper food, shelter, training and medical care.

10 SPAY/NEUTER - Unless you intend to include your dog in a well-planned and monitored breeding program, call your vet after the holidays and discuss the spay/neuter options. Male dogs need to be about five months old and females should be

spayed before their first heat cycle.

By following these tips, Christmas puppies can be a great addition to any household. A puppy at Christmas time may sound like a lot of work, but with a little planning, things will go quite smoothly.

Kevin Michalowski is the author of "15 Minutes to a Great Dog" and "15 Minutes to a Great Puppy" (Krause Publications, \$12.95 each). If you have questions or comments about dog training or care email Kevin at AskDogTalk@hotmail.com

Two Cans Per Man

Expert Tactics For Taking Canvasback Bulls

By Captain Todd Lensing

Most die-hard duck hunters dream of shooting a trophy bull canvasback. In the waterfowling world it's like shooting a Boone & Crockett buck. With an unprecedented bag limit of two cans per day per hunter throughout the entire 2007 60-day season, there's no time like the present for making it happen. Through the years I have learned a few tactics that should help you in your pursuit of the majestic "bull can."

LOCATION

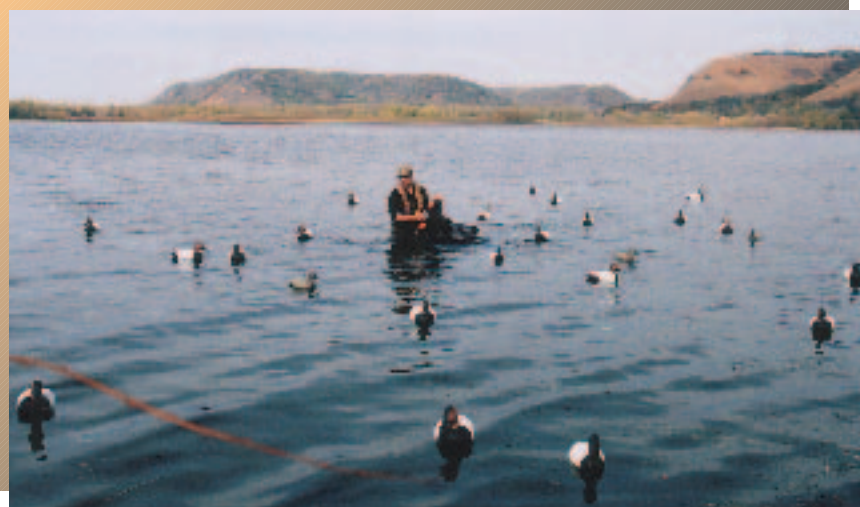
First and foremost, you must be in an area that holds huntable numbers of canvasbacks (i.e. Mississippi River). Second, within that area you have to be where the canvasbacks are feeding or trading from their feeding to resting areas.

DECOYS

I like to use all drakes—and lots of them—but if you are in the right location, especially a feeding area, you can be successful with a smaller spread. We all know ducks need room to land, but there is a big difference between dabblers and divers. Think of it this way, dabblers are like helicopters and can basically drop straight down into small pockets, whereas divers are like airplanes and need a runway to land and take off. Keep this in mind when setting your decoys for canvasbacks. If you think you have a big enough landing area, make it a little bit bigger. I use a minimum of a twenty-yard wide landing zone.

TROPHY SELECTION

The area we hunt is considered a major staging area. The hens and juvenile bulls are usually the first to arrive,



The author among just a part of his canvasback spread off of Mississippi River bluff country. Drake decoys and lots of them is part of Lensing's advice for success.

followed by mature bulls. I am not saying you wouldn't be able to shoot a true trophy canvasback when they are first staging, just that you need to be very selective.

In my experience, when a flock of canvasbacks (15+ birds) come to your decoys, here's what usually happens: The flock will come in very tight together on the first pass (we call this "balled up") and a few birds, usually hens or juvenile bulls, will drop into the decoys. The main flock will come back around again with the same scenario occurring. As the flock continues to circle, they spread out thus making it easier to pick out a mature bull can.

Many times I will let a flock circle three to four times before calling the shot. The key to bagging a mature bull is patience. What I witnessed last year on a full, 60 day can season was that late in the year there were mostly small flocks (three to four) of canvasbacks around, but most of them were mature

bulls which made picking out a trophy a lot easier.

TROPHY IDENTIFICATION

It is extremely difficult to differentiate a hen from a bull in low-light

conditions, let alone a mature bull. The hen canvasback is only a three-color hen that I am aware of, meaning they have a chocolate head and tail, grayish back and whitish belly. In low light they can look a lot like a bull, considering some of the mature hens are bigger than the bulls.

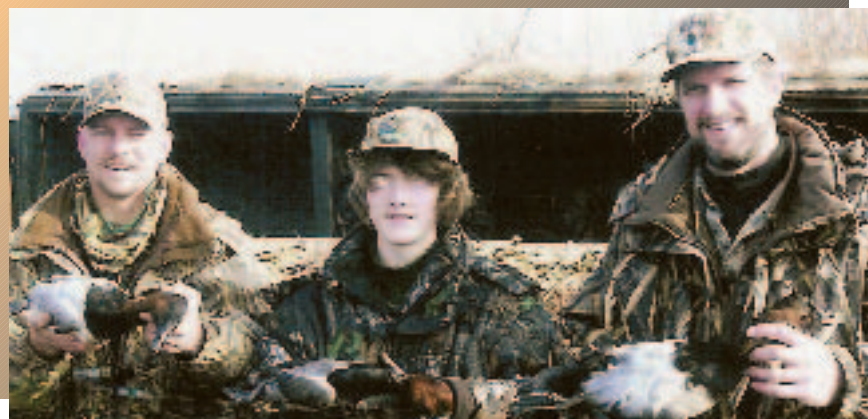
Again, be patient and pick out your trophy carefully. A true trophy bull will have a large burgundy/brown head with no white speckles (pin feathers), and will have a silver/white back and a black breast and tail.

One other note, a canvasback is the best eating duck you will find anywhere.

Have a great season!

W

Todd Lensing, Flyway Fowling Guide Service, LLC, Ferryville, Wisconsin, www.flywayfowling.com Phone: 608-734-3235. Grandview Motel, LLC, e-mail: grandviewmotel@centurytel.net, www.grandview-motel.com.



Todd Lensing clients with bull canvasbacks taken on pool nine of the Mississippi River near Ferryville.

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Planes, Trains, Automobiles And The Suburban Whitetail Rut

By John Volkman

One thing is certain with deer hunting...eventually you will have an encounter with a whitetail that truly defines why so many of us are addicted to chasing *Odocoileus virginianus*. 2006 was a year in which several personal encounters did just that.

My primary hunting area is located very close to my home. It is far from a stereotypical whitetail habitat. Located on the edge of the Fox Valley, it is bordered by a heavily used railroad on one side, and by a large trucking warehouse on the other, and on the remaining two sides, by state highways. And it lies directly underneath the flight path of planes both arriving to and departing from a major airport.

Short on solitude but long on convenience, most of my available November hunting time finds me perched in a tree listening for whitetail buck grunts mixed amongst the train whistles, jet engines and semi back-up beepers. Available cover encompasses about 15 acres. Standing corn expands the usable cover tenfold until harvest time. Despite all this unrelenting human encroachment, every year a few whitetails call it home, offering me quick access into their world.

Like many whitetail fanatics, my "season" starts in early summer with observations of bucks sporting velvet



Chloe Volkman poses with the buck that kept her parents on edge in suburbia all through the 2006 season until a final November encounter.

His main beams were very heavy and his G2 was split on one side.

With the DNR designating our area an Earn-A-Buck zone, our opening day first priority was for my wife to take a doe. I had pre-qualified in 2005, so opening night found my wife and I settled into a ground blind. Barely an hour into the hunt, a choice doe approached and after a few tense moments Amy was able to make the shot.

every whitetail in the area had vanished.

The morning of November 6 told me that the rut had definitely started in my neck of the woods. At first light, a wide 10-point chased a doe across the CRP field just out of range. An hour later, I instantly recognized the heavy beamed buck with the split G2 cruising the same field 100 yards out. He was in prime shape, and looked even better now than the last time I had laid eyes on him in late August. The buck stopped when I grunted but wouldn't alter his course. I watched him as he continued his route, eventually disappearing into the 90-acre standing corn field like it was a black hole.

The morning of November 9 found me back in the same tree over the CRP field.

At 6:45 a.m. I heard a buck grunt. With my eyes fixed on the location of the sound, a doe broke out of a stand of willows. Right on her tail was a buck. It was him, doing his best to keep another smaller buck away from the doe. He even spent time chasing her buck fawn away, which appeared to have a hard time understanding what was going on. I watched the show for over 30 minutes as the buck divided his attention between the smaller buck and the doe he had claimed for his own. Several times they started to come my way only to have the doe change her mind again and again. Eventually they disappeared into the corn. Again, I climbed out of the stand and with snow in the forecast, planned on an early afternoon return. A

short, out-of-town trip found me racing back home after seeing several bucks from the highway cruising at midday.

I was back on stand at 12:30 p.m. with the snow boiling as if on cue, just as I got settled. It was the kind of day every bowhunter dreams about. With the snow came buck movement and lots of it. By 3:00 p.m. I had already seen six bucks, including a 3-1/2 year-old buck with an odd shaped, right main beam. At one point I had this buck coming to my call when two smaller bucks diverted his attention and changed his course. The snow was falling so hard that I was constantly cleaning my arrow off. It seemed like every time I looked up another buck was cruising the CRP field.

At 4:00 p.m. the split G2 buck appeared like a ghost out of the corn field. Again I grunted, snort wheezed and bleated at him, to no avail. He appeared on a mission and it didn't involve walking under my tree. I watched him as he disappeared and wondered if I would ever get a shot at him. I could only think that this early bow season was almost over. Sunday morning I was leaving for a deer hunt in Alberta with four co-workers. At 4:30 I looked down and directly underneath me the buck with the odd right main beam had walked out! At 12 yards he offered a perfect quartering away shot and I took him up on it. Forty yards from the tree I saw him fall. To date, November 9 is one of the most exciting days I have ever had afield.

The next morning found me checking my Cuddeback one last time

"Short on solitude but long on convenience, most of my available November hunting time finds me perched in a tree listening for whitetail buck grunts mixed amongst the train whistles, jet engines and semi back-up beepers..."

covered racks, tree stand maintenance and backyard target practice. Last year included an added challenge. My wife Amy accompanied me into the whitetail woods when bow season opened, with her own bow in hand.

Summertime Cuddeback trail camera photos had revealed several mature bucks living in my hunting area. Anticipation was high heading into September after several August stakeouts revealed three different mature bucks visiting the soybeans. One buck's rack sported a unique look.

Not long after the arrow struck, she took up the trail with her color-blind husband giving directions. 100 yards down the trail, "There she is!" broke the silence as Amy found her first bow-killed whitetail.

The remainder of September and October breezed by without a sighting of a mature buck. Amy had a few close calls with a 2-1/2 year-old buck but couldn't get a shot. The much anticipated First of November arrived but after the first five days I hadn't seen any deer. If not for my Cuddeback photos, I could have easily convinced myself that



The author arrowed this fine suburban buck in a snow storm in the Fox Valley before finally catching up with his slug gun on Thanksgiving morning with the buck that had eluded him all season long.



Amy Volkman took this doe with bow and arrow to qualify for Earn-A-Buck in 2006, then chased tremendous bucks with husband John Volkman in suburban Fox Valley country.

before my trip to Canada. On the way back to the house I spotted a buck in the standing corn. When I raised my binos I instantly realized it was the heavy beamed buck guarding a doe. I ran back to the house and told my wife to grab her bow. We both threw on snow camo and hurried to the other end of the 90-acre cornfield to get the wind in our favor.

The initial 200 yards of the stalk went fast as we moved closer to where I last saw the buck. At one point we had another smaller buck at less than 10 yards. He moved on without spotting us and shortly after, I spotted "our" buck standing over a doe very close to where I had seen him a half-hour earlier. Moving at a snail's pace, inches at a time, Amy and I moved to within 40 yards of the buck. Amy was having trouble picking him out; he was standing in a large weed patch inside the corn. We moved even closer and I ranged him at 25 yards. With Amy still unable to make out his vitals

we continued to inch closer; 20 yards...19...18...17...16. At 15 yards, I was about to come out of my skin. I couldn't believe we actually were able to get so close. He had absolutely no idea we were

there and was completely focused on the doe bedded beneath him.

Since he was standing one corn row to our right and Amy still could not get a clear shot at his vitals, I whispered to her to get ready; I was going to blow on my grunt call and did not know how he would react. When the buck heard the grunt he turned his head toward us for a moment and then

turned his body 180 degrees. He stepped directly into our row broadside at 12 yards, stopped, and looked the other way! Amy already had her bow drawn, and when the buck stopped, she settled her pin behind the shoulder and released. At the shot the buck ran 10 yards and turned back towards us. It appeared he was trying to determine if another buck had moved in on him. Instantly, another smaller buck was standing within feet of us. Amy and I were locked into a stare down with him. After a few tense seconds he realized we were something that wasn't supposed to be there. When he left, the heavy beamed buck and his doe followed. Amy made the comment that her knees were shaking from kneeling so long. I told her that's not what the shaking was from.

After a short search we were able to find the arrow and determined it must have deflected just short of the buck as it was protruding from the ground at an odd angle. I couldn't believe what had just transpired, by far one of the most exciting encounters I have ever had while hunting whitetails. I told Amy to let it all soak in since she may never experience anything like that again.

After my return from Alberta, I was excited to learn that the heavy beamed buck was spotted on opening morning of the Wisconsin gun season heading into the same corn field where

the corner of my eye and turned to see a buck chasing a doe at full speed across the set-aside field. I instantly knew it was him. The doe stopped at the top of the field and the buck pinned her against a black cherry tree. About 20 minutes later the doe bedded with the buck standing close by. He was out of range and obscured by brush. All I could do was watch and wait.

Once again this buck had me on edge. After an hour he decided to bed down next to the doe. When he settled, in I could barely see the top of his rack in the tall canary grass patch. After what seemed like an eternity, the doe nervously stood up and the buck followed. She made a break back to where the pair had come from and he stopped her again.

This time he was in the open but on the edge of shotgun range. I knew it was now or never as I settled the crosshairs on the buck. At the shot the buck reared up like a horse and changed direction, I shot again and heard the bullet hit home. The buck disappeared from the scope.

After waiting a few minutes, I called Amy and told her what had happened. I had her come down to the field while I stayed in the stand and directed her to the location I last saw the buck. When I heard a whoop from her direction I knew she had found the buck. I couldn't believe after all the close calls the buck was finally ours!

Whether you hunt the Northwoods, farm country or even on the edge of suburbia, whitetails are where you find them. When you do, you will also find an addiction that only gets worse with each and every encounter. It's something I'm sure I'll never get over.

Just ask my wife.

W

John Volkman of Neenah, Wisconsin is an outdoor/hunting product manufacturers sales rep for Mike Wiek Sales, covering Wisconsin. He is a three time Wisconsin goose calling champion, avid waterfowler, fisherman and big game hunter. Contact him at jvolkman1@new.rr.com.

"I couldn't believe what had just transpired, by far one of the most exciting encounters I have ever had while hunting whitetails..."

our stalk had taken place. On Thanksgiving morning, I was perched in the same stand I had spotted the buck during archery season, this time with my slug gun in hand. I watched a 2-1/2 year-old eight-point check scrapes at first light while wondering if I would ever see the cornfield buck again.

At 7:30 I caught movement out of

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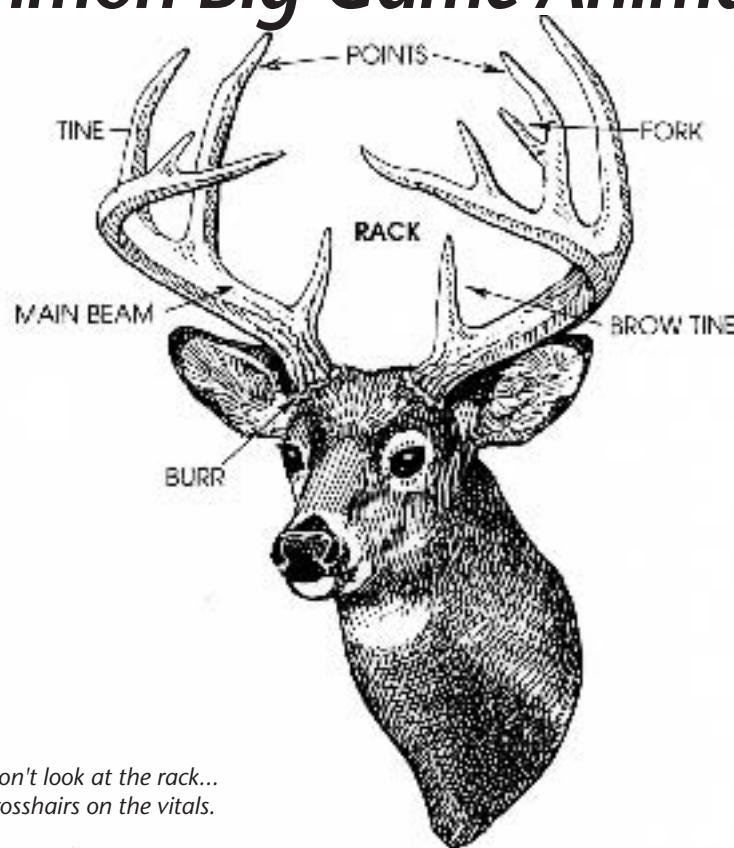
On North America's Most Common Big Game Animal

By Jeff Peters

The white-tailed deer is the most plentiful big-game animal in North America. Their range extends from southern Canada all the way through the United States and Central America to Bolivia.

- ✗ Male deer grow new antlers each year. Antlers grow quickly, but stay soft and tender until late summer and are covered with a fuzzy skin called velvet. Bucks scrape against trees to remove the velvet and expose the sharp points, called tines.
- ✗ Young bucks grow small antlers with usually 2 points and older deer grow larger antlers with 6 or more tines or points.
- ✗ A deer's hoof is divided into 2 segments and spreads like 2 fingers for greater flotation in muddy or swampy areas. Deer also use their hooves to dig through snow for food – nuts and plants – and for combat.

- ✗ Scent glands are located between the two parts of the hoof on all four feet, metatarsal glands on the outside of each hind leg, and a larger tarsal gland on the inside of each hind leg at the hock. These scents identify individual deer and mark a deer's territory.
- ✗ During breeding season bucks mark their territories with scrapes (pawed areas on the ground) and rubs (areas on trees where the bark has been rubbed off by a buck's antlers). They mate with several does within the territory and often use their hooves and antlers to drive off other bucks.
- ✗ Deer have good eyesight and acute hearing, but they depend largely on their keen sense of smell to detect danger in their outdoor environment.
- ✗ A deer's hollow hair – along with a thick layer of under fur – provides insulation and protection against snow, wind and water, keeping the



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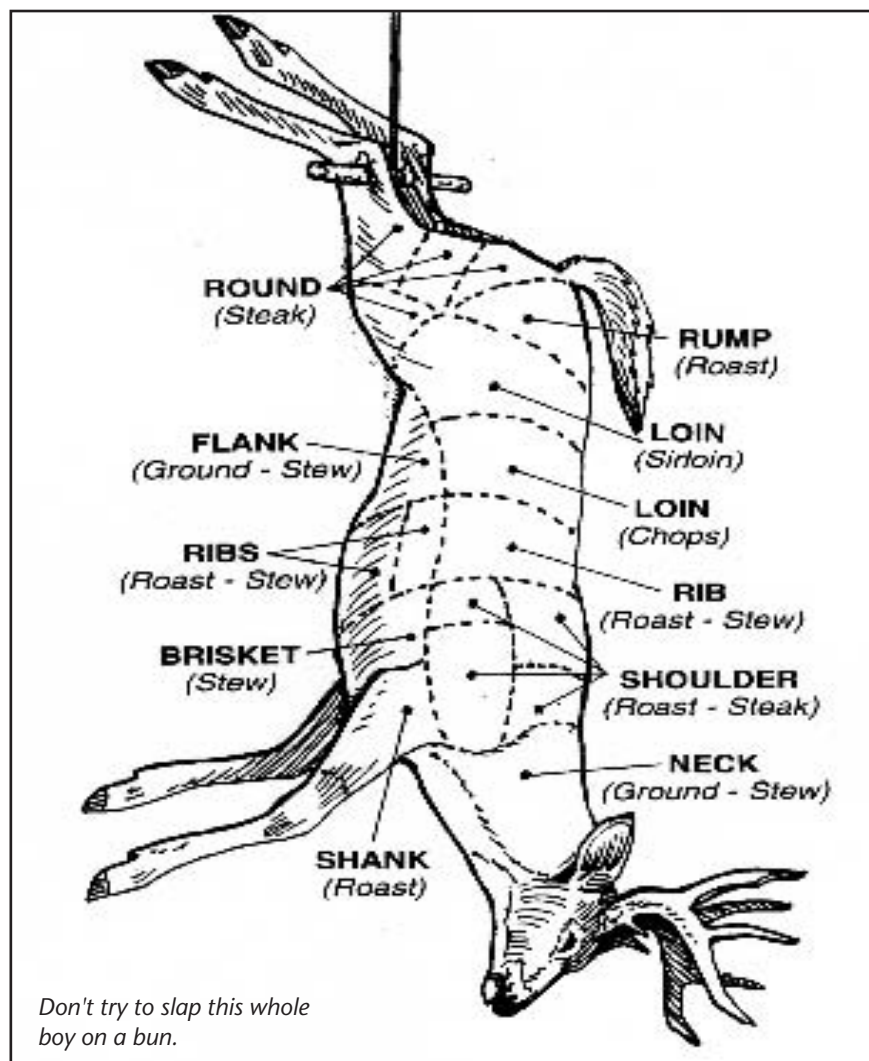
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deer warm and dry in extreme cold conditions.

- ✗ Deer are herbivores – eating an assortment of plants, nuts, fruits and farm crops (including gardens) where available. In the winter they eat the twigs of various trees and shrubs.
- ✗ White-tailed deer breed once a year from October to December. Does give birth to an average of two fawns the following spring. Young males leave their mother after one year, but females often stay with their mother for two years.
- ✗ Fawns weigh four to eight pounds at birth and have a reddish-brown coat with white spots. They move very little the first few weeks, relying on their natural camouflage and nearly scentless condition to escape predators.
- ✗ There are 38 subspecies of white-tail (*Odocoileus virginianus*) in North, Central and South America. Sixteen of these species are found in the United States and Canada. Subspecies are distinguished by geographic location, body size, coloration, antler growth, and physiological, biochemical, and behavioral differences.
- ✗ The whitetail is the official state mammal in Wisconsin, Arkansas, Illinois, Michigan, Mississippi,

Nebraska, New Hampshire, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania and South Carolina.

- ✗ North America's whitetail population is estimated at 20-25 million and is the most popular game animal in the United States, pursued by about 11 million hunters each fall.
- ✗ Deer were an integral part of the lives of the indigenous people of North America. Venison made up a large part of their diet, and the deer hides were used for clothing, rugs, blankets, shoes and much more. They also fashioned various tools and jewelry out of the antlers and bones.
- ✗ Unregulated market hunting in the late 1800's reduced the whitetail population to an all-time low of about 500,000 in the U.S. In 1900, the Lacey Act – the first federal wildlife law – was enacted prohibiting the interstate trafficking of venison and other wild game, and the whitetail population rebounded fairly quickly.
- ✗ In 1908, 41 states established their own departments of conservation, furthering the protection and management of deer in the United States.
- ✗ Although they are not completely nocturnal, whitetails, especially mature bucks, are very active at

night. They typically bed down at noon and rarely bed in the exact same place.

- ✗ The lifespan of a whitetail is 11 to 12 years (17 to 20 years in captivity), but most deer never live that long. In heavily hunted areas, many deer are harvested within months after birth.
- ✗ Antlers are the fastest-growing tissue in the animal world, growing an average of one to two inches a week in the spring and summer. The velvet on a growing set of antlers contains blood vessels and nerve endings.
- ✗ The deer family is the only species in the world to grow antlers. Antlers are often mistaken for horns, but horns are permanent and antlers fall off each year.
- ✗ Antler size is mainly determined by genetics and nutrition. Good genetics and good nutrition combine for larger racks.
- ✗ A buck may lose 30 percent of his body weight during rut – from chasing does, breeding and challenging other bucks.
- ✗ Favorite wild deer foods include yellow sweet clover, wintergreen, red clover, smooth sumac, mountain ash, poplar, quaking aspen, cucumber tree, red alder, dandelion, acorns, nuts, berries,


crabapple, American plum...

- ✗ A deer can rotate its ears to focus on a particular sound. They can also alert other deer of danger with a simple flick of their ear(s).
- ✗ Everyone knows the whitetail gets its name from its 12 to 15 inch long tail, which is brown on the outside and white underneath. They raise their tail straight in the air – called "flagging" – if they detect danger.
- ✗ Studies have found that deer are 4,000 to 10,000 times more sensitive to smell than humans. They have millions of receptors in their noses and they can differentiate between six odors at one time.
- ✗ In order to regulate their body temperature, a deer grows a different coat in the summer and winter. This process is called molting and is triggered by hormonal changes regulated by the changing seasons. *W*

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Chris Powell
Wisconsin Fishing Guide,
Chippewa Falls

Favorite Venison Recipes

From Field To Table Fare

VENISON STEW IN A PUMPKIN

| | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| 1 10 to 20 pound pumpkin | Dash of Worcestershire | Dash of paprika |
| 3 pounds cubed venison | 2 cloves garlic | Pinch of cloves |
| 1/4 cup olive or vegetable oil | 2 onions | 4-5 carrots |
| Enough water to cover stew | 2 bay leaves | 6 potatoes |
| Juice of 1/2 lemon | Salt and pepper | 3 stalks of celery |

Cut the top off the pumpkin and scoop out the seeds and clean the inside, place on a cookie sheet and bake at 350 degrees for about 1 hour until just tender. Use a skillet to brown the venison in oil; add water to cover meat; add garlic, onions and seasonings; cover and simmer over very low heat until tender. Add the chopped vegetables and continue to simmer for 20 – 30 minutes until vegetables are tender. If needed, thicken the stew with flour. Pour the stew into the pumpkin, cover with the pumpkin top and bake at 350 degrees for about 30 minutes. – Caryn Krieb, Ashland County, Wis.

DAVID'S VENISON MARINADE

| | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 2 pounds venison steaks or chops | 3/4 cup orange juice |
| cut into 1 inch cubes | 1/4 cup lemon juice |
| 1 medium chopped onion | 3/4 cup olive oil |
| 1 clove minced garlic | 2 teaspoons soy sauce |

Blend all the ingredients and marinate the venison for 6 or more hours in the refrigerator. Skewer venison cubes and grill on low heat. Baste with marinade and sprinkle with garlic salt while grilling. – David George, Town of Morse, Wis.

DARLA'S MARINATED VENISON

1 pound venison cubes
1 bottle beer
1/2 cup soy sauce
1 teaspoon garlic salt
1 teaspoon onion powder

Combine all the ingredients and pour over the venison cubes. Marinate in a closed container overnight in refrigerator. String venison cubes on wooden skewers and grill until done. – Darla Waite, Mercer, Wis.

MISSY'S EASY VENISON STEW

2 pounds venison stew meat
6 peeled potatoes
6 large carrots
1 medium onion
Salt and pepper
1 packet onion soup mix

Brown the venison in pan or skillet and then place in a slow cooker. Cut the vegetables into bit size pieces and add to slow cooker. Sprinkle onion soup mix over the top and salt and pepper to taste. Cover with water and cook for 5 hours on low heat. Thicken gravy with flour if necessary. – Missy Wiener, Ashland County, Wis.

MIKE'S VENISON TENDERLOINS

2 venison tenderloins
Kosher salt and fresh ground black pepper
1/4 cup olive oil
2 garlic cloves, minced
1/2 large onion, sliced
2 bay leaves
2 cups dry red wine (divided)
Salt and pepper to taste

Pre-heat oven to 350 degrees; roll tenderloins in salt and pepper; heat 1/4 cup olive oil in sauté pan or skillet on high heat and then sear tenderloins 1 to 2 minutes per side. Add 1 cup of wine and simmer over high heat until the alcohol cooks off. Add garlic, onion and bay leaves. Place the pan in oven and cook 10 to 15 minutes depending on how well done you want the tenderloins. Remove pan from oven and set tenderloins aside on a cutting board to rest. Add the remaining wine to pan (remove the bay leaves) and bring to a boil. Stir with a wooden spoon, making sure to loosen any bits of onion and garlic from the bottom of the pan. Simmer on medium heat until liquid reduces and a nice sauce develops. Slice tenderloins into 1/2 medallions and pour sauce over the top or serve the sauce on the side. – Mike Brecke, Door County, Wis.

MONICA'S STEAK DIANE

2 cans cream of chicken soup
1 can cream of mushroom soup
1 package Lipton Onion Soup mix
2 pounds venison

Brown the venison – cubes, steak strips or slices – in a pan and place in a crock pot with the above mixed ingredients. You can add mushrooms and onions to taste, if desired. The gravy can be thinned with beef broth to the desired texture. Cook on low heat throughout the day. The longer you cook, the more tender the meat. Serve over rice, noodles, or potatoes. – Monica Bigo, Ashland, Wis.



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Weather Or Not

Mother Nature Biggest Factor In Cumulative Deer Harvest Numbers

By Debbie Munson Badini

With a surprise cold snap leaving a dusting of snow on the ground in northern Wisconsin, the 2007 archery deer season opened September 15 with reports of success from across the state.

"So far, so good," said Department of Natural Resources deer ecologist Keith Warnke, adding that harvest tags were being filled at a "brisk pace" during the first few weeks of the season, despite temperatures that rose back into the 80s after the initial cold weather.

"People are out there hunting at typical numbers and we have had higher than normal [harvest reports] especially in the Earn-A-Buck units," Warnke said. "That first weekend was nice and cold, resulting in good deer movement. After that, hunting was probably limited somewhat by the warm weather and the tremendous crop of mosquitoes we got after the heavy rains. Those mosquitoes were probably the only atypical thing about the season so far besides the snow."

Though Warnke said he personally hasn't been out in the deer stand yet, he has been spending a good amount of time in the woods pulling double duty grouse hunting and scouting. From what he has seen, he said he is looking forward to a promising rifle season.

"When I have been out scouting in central Wisconsin, deer sign has been really heavy even in areas where deer density isn't usually that high, and it appears that the fawn crop was really strong," he said. "The hunters I have



Debbie Munson Badini

talked to are raring to go...and I am, too."

THE BIG BUT

But whether or not good harvest numbers during the first few weeks of bow hunting translates to success for hunters during November's nine-day rifle season will again depend on some help from Mother Nature.

"Given a consistent season structure...typically if there is a high early archery harvest, there will be a strong gun season," Warnke explained. "But there is one great caveat with that, because the rifle season is just way too short and it's totally influenced by the weather. If we have terrible weather during the opening weekend, the gun kill is going to suffer. That's the big but."

Meaning, if the weather on the gun opener is cold enough to encourage deer movement during the day — at least

down into the 20s, Warnke said — and snow is on the ground to aid with tracking, hunters can expect harvest numbers to meet, if not exceed, last year's opening weekend tally of nearly 170,000 deer.

"Yeah, if those are the [weather] conditions opening day, with an estimated 1.8 million deer in the state, you can be guaranteed a good gun season," he said enthusiastically.

But with no way to guarantee the right weather conditions, Warnke stressed that the only reliable way for hunters to fill their tags is to put time into scouting or developing good contacts near where they hunt.

"The major predictor of success is scouting, not having Keith Warnke tell you that there are millions of deer in the state," he explained with a chuckle. "The key is to be out there to see what has changed with deer behavior and movement since you were last out, because once the rut happens, the deer are in a major transitional time and everything gets screwed up."

THE BEST MEDICINE

For example, one of the worst things hunters can do is expect that deer will be working the same travel routes and heading to the same feeding areas in November as they did during the early archery season, Warnke said, adding that "where they were in September and October is probably not where they are going to be in November."

While acorns may have been the big draw in October, in November deer

THE 2007 RIFLE DEER SEASON DATES ARE AS FOLLOWS

Regular Gun — Nov. 17-25

Late Gun (CWD units) — Nov. 17-Dec. 9


Muzzleloader — Nov. 26-Dec. 5

Statewide antlerless — Dec. 6-9

will be recovering from the confusion of the rut and transitioning from their fall feeding patterns to their winter ones — which vary depending on region throughout the state. The only way to discover where the deer are transitioning to, Warnke said, is to spend the time scouting.

And if all else fails and scouting regularly before the season is not a possibility, the best medicine is to get up to deer camp on Friday and take a long walk through the woods, observing sign, food sources and where the deer are moving, he advised.

Or, hunters can save their time and simply rely on the Farmers' Almanac to guide their opening day strategies.

"I had somebody predicting that it's going to be an early rut this year, because their sheep were already in heat," Warnke said, laughing. "So, you can take that for what it's worth." 

Debbie Munson Badini is a writer and photographer based in Marquette, Mich. Contact her at debbie.munson.badini@gmail.com.

Ghost, Man Or Hoax?

What's on your night camera?


By Dick Ellis

After covering a bear hunting story in Lake Superior wilderness country near Washburn, I received a cuddeback photo from Guide Mike Foss; an eerie night image of what seems to be a man walking through the forest passed Foss's bait pile. But, to some, you can see through this image.

After Foss emphatically denied playing with the photo, I waited one day and thinking his hoax was on me, attempted to flush my friend out. "Mike," I wrote, "I have a connection with a national television network. They want to interview you but they need to evaluate the photo and camera first."

"I'm ready for them," he said. "Spooky heh? That is a no-flash

camera that triggers on infrared heat motion. I can walk by the camera 100 times and it will take a very clear photo of me. Whatever it is, you can see through it. And I will swear on my father's grave that I never touched it."

If you are the ghost man, give us a call. On second thought, call Mike. If you're not, what's on your night camera? We want to see the good, the bad...and the Caspers. 



Cubs Corner

Young Deer Hunters Need Comfort And Fun

By Tom Carpenter

When I think back to my first Wisconsin deer hunts, a full generation ago now, it is in some ways a wonder that I came back for more.

Part of my persistence can surely be attributed to sheer Bohemian cussedness. Armed with a single-shot 12-gauge and the burning desire to shoot a deer, I probably would have hiked from Lafayette County to Superior and back if it meant putting my tag on a whitetail.

The first year, it rained. And rained. And rained. And we sat out there for almost all of it. Each day at noon we'd drive into the laundromat in Belmont, peel almost everything off, throw the drenched clothes in a dryer, watch the small-town world go by outside until everything was dry, then go out and brave the elements again. After three days (who can remember the three-day season in southern Wisconsin?), even I was happy to be done.

The next year, another Wisconsin weather personality showed up: Bone-numbing November cold. A big fat zero on opening morning, and not much more on the following two. My discount store boots cracked in bitter air, but I definitely preferred the cold to the rain.

Somehow, I don't think many of today's kids would have gotten through it, or wanted to go again. That

makes me sound like an old coot, but I'm not quite (yet). There is just a different reality today. Kids are different — not better or worse, just different — and we have to take a little more care when easing them into a pursuit as demanding as deer hunting.

The key is very simple and straightforward: In every aspect of the hunt, consider and plan for the comfort level of the young hunter and the fun they will be having. If you make decisions around this base, you have an excellent chance of hooking that youngster as a hunting partner for life. That should be your bottom line.

With that goal in mind, here are ten smart ideas to implement as you take that young sportsperson along for the hunt.

Practice shooting. Kids take the responsibility of making a clean kill seriously. So get the out to the range a few times and build their shooting confidence. Focus on the easy 25- to 50- and possibly 75-yard shots that are the bread-and-butter of Wisconsin white-tail shooting. Don't worry about long-range pokes.

Spend on quality clothes and footwear that fit. Proper gear pays for itself in comfort, warmth and attitude. With so many miracle fabrics available today, along with excellent boots, there's no reason to skimp and let a young hunter suffer. Pay special attention to good gloves and handwarmers.

Take them scouting. Make the young hunter a part of the preparation and planning. Get out for a small game hunt on the land you'll be deer hunting. Look for whitetail trails and whitetail. Show the young hunter the stand you'll be using. Better yet, have them help choose the site. Plan secondary strategies together.

Make the hunt about them. Consider leaving your own rifle or shotgun at home or camp. Concentrate on the young hunter. Be there with them, helping them through the questions they will have. You've shot a lot of deer of your own, and will have plenty more chances.

Hunt for short periods. Most adults have a hard time sitting still ... imagine how hard it is for a kid of 12, 14 or 16! Plan your day around short sits of a couple hours at the days' most productive times (early morning, around noon, and late afternoon). Take relaxing breaks in between, in town or at camp.

Eat and drink plenty. Food and drink go a long way toward any young hunter's enjoyment. Don't feed them garbage! Granola bars, fruit, cheese, jerky, a sandwich, juice ... they're all so much better than high-sugar candy and pop. A thermos of hot chocolate also does wonders for the attitude of a young hunter on stand, in a blind or taking a break.

Enjoy, and laugh. Take joy in the parade of nature you're certain to see. Geese or sandhill cranes migrating overhead. Squirrels playing. Weasels hunting. Mixed flocks of chickadees, nuthatches,


creepers and downy woodpeckers working the woods. Make the hunt about something more than killing a deer.

Be a coach. Young hunters need guidance. Be there for those high-pressure moments when a deer appears and a shot is imminent. A few soft whispers won't hurt anything and will help everything as the young hunter prepares to shoot.

Misses are okay! Never judge or berate a miss. Misses just happen. There will be other opportunities. Assure the young hunter that missing is part of the game, and that learning from a muffed shot is a necessary step toward their first (or next) deer.

Involve them in the success. Good, solid kills are actually more likely than a miss. Young hunters are patient and excellent shooters. Have that young hunter approach their kill with you at their side. Treat the moment with reverence, respect and happiness all rolled into one. Let the novice do the field dressing, or at least participate.

Deer or not, celebrate the hunt. Base the success of any hunt on time spent together as family (or friends), and not dead deer.

The simplicity of taking a young hunter deer hunting bears repeating: Make sure they're comfortable and having fun. And if you need any further reason to sacrifice a little and do it right, think about this: Consider it an investment in who might or might not be taking you hunting when you're old. 

Badger Birds

The Black-Capped Chickadee

By Tom Carpenter

Few birds are as familiar or beloved as the black-capped chickadee. A tiny and handsome package of feathered energy, chickadees grace woodlands, thickets, field edges, yards and gardens year-round. "Understated yet classy" describes the chickadee's feathered finery — black bib and cap framing bright white cheeks, and a steely-gray back blending into delicate buff-and-cream underparts. Chickadee acrobatics are fun to watch as the birds flit, cling, swing, hang and contort to glean insects, larvae and seeds. Many a deer



Terrill Knaack's sketch of a chickadee


hunter has had a lonely day brightened by a visit from a gang of chickadees.

Listen for buzzing chicka-dee-dee calls as a feeding flock works through the trees and bushes. In late winter and spring, listen for the high-low fee-bee call the birds make as they establish nesting territories.

Feed chickadees black-oil sunflower seed. Any type of seed feeder will do!

Save the fat trimmings from any deer you butcher, put it in a suet cage and hang from a tree limb or feeder pole arm. Chickadees love eating "the real thing" and will go crazy for it.

Attract nesting chickadees with a small nest box offering a 1-1/8-inch-diameter hole. The birds will furnish bark pieces, plant down, moss, fur and feathers to make a cushiony home inside for eggs and nestlings. Hang the box in autumn so it's available for investigation all winter, and immediate spring occupancy.

Did you know that to conserve precious energy, a chickadee's heart-beat and metabolism slow almost to a standstill on frigid winter nights 

Native son Tom Carpenter watches birds across the country, and writes about the avian world for many publications.

A Blue Christmas

Unexpected Gift Makes Another Memory

By Dick Ellis

Sometimes the biggest gifts come in the smallest packages, or they're not wrapped at all. I knew that 15 years ago, when a blue-eyed starving puppy walked out of a Milwaukee alley on a cold December morning to take a place next to me in a thousand pheasant fields. I knew that 13 years ago, when the doctor handed me a tiny bundle of girl that at six pounds, 11 ounces still weighed more than any other responsibility one new father had ever carried before.

Sometimes the gift is so unexpected; it's also the best. Blue, the tan-haired cross of perhaps husky and lab has earned the family nickname "Dingo" in the field because of his appearance and his fast evolution to tenacious hunter. In 2005, wild roosters were still no match for this savvy predator with his tremendous nose and no-surrender attitude that would press even the most determined ground-bound runner to take eventual flight in front of the scatterguns. Blue in '06 had surrendered considerably to age and injury.

Two ACL injuries and surgeries over three years takes its toll. Last fall, we had settled into a routine of visiting the fields where Blue had excelled for well more than a decade simply to walk together. The few wild pheasants that did flush under Blue's nose were also under the best of circumstances; scent found outside standing corn or on the edge of the soybeans. There was still the occasional "birdie" behavior on scent but balance was a problem in the heavy brush. There was no fanatical rush of a dog frenzied on the smell of pheasant that might last for 10 minutes and 200 yards until the rooster at last tried the skies as a last chance for escape.

On the eve of the Eve of Christmas, the gift arrived. There was no UPS or US Postal Service truck delivery. No COD. No wrapping. Just the same old, small package: 48 pounds, tan fur, blue eyes, who himself for so many seasons had been money in the bank in the Wisconsin tall grass—delivery guaranteed.

A south wind hit Blue in our yard as we walked again in front of a 14th Christmas and his nose turned to work it. His Dingo stalk had a purpose to it again; no doubt, a mingling of some wild scent on the wind and a dose of morning aspirin, and his eyes worked the woodline. His nose led him to those trees and he used the breezes until we both saw the stray cat scamper that Blue knew was there, unseen from 50 yards. Blue turned to me, tail slowly wagging, head cocked and then whined the familiar whine of the dog hoping this day was a day to hunt.

I called my brother John Ellis of Muskego and told him that I needed to play a hunch. We needed to go to Wisconsin's wild pheasant country and I did not care if it was Grant County, or Green, or Lafayette, or Rock or Jefferson or to the north and east of us toward Winnebago. We've played them all successfully behind Blue.

We ended up on a Rock County paradise. When Blue wasn't yet one year old and neither Blue nor I were white-muzzled or gray-haired, we had pulled into a farmyard after driving aimlessly seeking permission to hunt despite the orange "No Hunting" signs that should have already given us our answer. There we met Kay, a widow with grown children who welcomed Blue and I, two blue-eyed mongrels.

We travel back usually once a year



Many a long tailed wild rooster have fallen to the instincts and desire of a blue-eyed mongrel saved from the big city by an outdoor writer.

to the Rock County farm, to hunt wild roosters that have taken hold in southern Wisconsin since the state planted proper cover for nesting and protection from predation and planted wild strains of pheasants to prime the pump many years ago. We hunt the property like other properties scattered across Wisconsin but we leave Kay a Christmas gift of appreciation. Last year, we traveled back several times, just to spend time together in the field and to see Kay.

In 2006, unlike all of the other years, Blue and I never took a wild bird from the tall grass. Time eventually ends all great runs. That's okay. I was wanting for nothing.

On this eve of the Eve of Christmas, Blue started slow. Ninety minutes of work showed us a lone rooster flushing far ahead and a hen which took to the

air nearby (not necessarily pushed by man or dog). But a cold wind worked on Blue and he worked into it like yesterday. Scent turned him wild, and for one afternoon, time could not hinder an old dog who knew where that smell would lead. Over four hours, one rooster fell, then another, then another on frantic chases from 50 to 200 yards lasting from five to 15 minutes. Blue was strong, stable, in charge. We were simply the caboose on his engine; our shotgun reports simply his reward.

I knocked a fourth rooster down that fell into a brush-shrouded fence-line and was gone. Unacceptable numbers of hit but unrecovered game would be the only factor that could ever make me consider not hunting. With Blue, that has never been a problem. This was a runner, and 30 minutes later, Blue still had the scent but no rooster. He pressed the chase hundreds of yards before locking up in his bizarre mongrel point over what we knew was the bird. It was over.

At home that evening, there were dues to pay for a four hour gift. I heard Blue pacing the wooden floor in the wee hours, the pain of his old body not allowing him to lie down or sleep. I joined him, and a little more food and another aspirin helped. He cried initially as my hands worked over the bones of his back and legs, robbed of muscle now by time and atrophy. But he leaned into me and let me know it was also just what the doctor ordered.

When Soldier Blue could lie down, he would sleep the next day away. I went back to bed myself with the Dingo in another world, dreaming the dreams of the hunting dog.

"Thanks for the gift, Blue," I said. "It was just what I wanted."

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A Hat Trick

Guide, Artist, Television Host Captures Wisconsin's Outdoors

By Terry Bitz

Jim Tostrud wears quite a few hats when it comes to his love for the outdoors.

Many in Kenosha County know "JT" from his *Wildlife Visions* TV show that has run on the Time Warner Cable access channel for six years. He is also a well known local fishing guide, skilled hunter and occasional writer.

What may not be apparent to many is that this Kenosha resident is also an accomplished artist, especially one that now focuses on capturing animals and fish in their natural habitat. He is as likely to be armed with a notepad for sketching when on a hunt as he is a firearm or bow.

"I am a great observer of what God has given us," said Tostrud.

His love for art was fostered at a young age as artistic talent clearly runs in his family.

"When I was a kid, both my uncle and brother were really good artists and I wanted to be as good as them," said Tostrud. "I credit my mom though for me being an artist. She hung large pieces of paper up on my bedroom wall and let me draw on it."

With the foundation being laid in the home environment, his artistic skills further developed while attending Bradford High School in Kenosha

where he received a number of awards.

Upon graduation, he attended Viterbo College in La Crosse, WI, where he went on to earn a BA in Teaching and a BA in Business.

Tostrud did some teaching for a time and also worked as an illustrator before moving back to Kenosha and taking a job working in construction during the summer. During the winter months he would attend outdoor shows where he would sell his art. It was at these shows that he made a name for himself with his black and white artwork.

A couple of years ago, Tostrud quit his stable construction job to focus completely on his art, guiding and various media work.

One of the first things he did after quitting that job was to take on the task of heading up a team to paint a huge mural in the new children's auditorium at his church, Kenosha First Assembly of God. At more than 250 feet long and over 20 feet high, the mural was a big project that required months of work. The timing of his transition out of construction was fortuitous in that he would not have been able to tackle such a large project if he was still working at his previous job.

A visit to Tostrud's studio where he also edits his TV show revealed an artist who has been prolific over the years with penciled works, paintings



A Jim Tostrud original hangs on his Kenosha studio wall next to the impressive results of two hunting trips.

and photography mixed in with a number of fish and game mounts.

Though he does sell his art to individuals, his work is also used and featured in a variety of places from magazine covers and beer cans to adorning clothing lines from outdoor companies.

Tostrud's outdoor work has earned him recognition from various places including being twice named National Artist of the Year by Whitetails Unlimited. One look at his work espe-

cially his penciling reveals what sets his outdoor art work apart from many others. It's the attention to details.

Any person who has spent time looking at various outdoor art can testify that often times a bird or especially a deer just doesn't look "right." Tostrud spends a lot of time working to make sure the animals dimensions are in proper proportion so that they look like the real thing.

A recently completed penciled work of a wild turkey his son shot showed extreme details down to the leaves and underbrush that the bird was standing in. Such details mean that Tostrud spends anywhere from 50 to 100 hours to finish a penciled drawing; whereas a painting may take him 20 hours.

"Pencil work is my favorite. However, people don't realize how much time it takes," said Tostrud.

People may not realize how much time it takes to produce good penciled art, but they can certainly appreciate the results.

Contact Jim Tostrud at 262-496-5178 for more information on his art or guiding service. His website is www.wildlifevisions.net.



Terry Bitz is a freelance writer who resides in Pleasant Prairie, WI. He can be contacted at tbitz@wi.rr.com. His website is www.outdoorconvergence.com.

Game Warden Decoys

The Good, The Bad, The Ugly

By Duane Harpster

Although game wardens have used decoys for many years, they only came "out of the closet" in the early 1980's. The use of decoys allows wardens to control the scene of violations and address serious violation problems. Decoying works very well to combat shooting from the road, or vehicle complaints which often involve trespassing on private land. These "road hunting" violations give hunters a black eye with the public and can cause landowners to refuse ethical hunters access to these private lands.

I used grouse, pheasant and deer

decoys extensively in my career, especially deer decoys. In Boulder Junction, shooting deer from roads on both private and public property was a serious problem, so we used deer decoys to successfully address the situation. I utilized a "summer" red-coated deer to work summer deer shining, and to address numerous complaints of illegal hunting by tribal members in early September. I was also fortunate to know Dan Cardinal, a long time Special Warden in Vilas County, who modified my decoys so their heads and tails moved. I believe Dan was the first person in Wisconsin to make a remote-operated deer decoy. His efforts enabled wardens to successfully

address unethical hunting across Wisconsin and greatly reduce violations.

While working decoys, wardens were treated to a front row seat as people either did the right or wrong thing. There are enough decoy stories to fill a book. Here are several to demonstrate the good, the bad and the ugly behavior of humans.

THE GOOD

When some hunter observed a decoy placed in the lying down position, the wardens watched as he got out of his truck, stood on the road and looked at the "deer" while whistling and clapping his hands. He then drove

away, only to return, leave and return again. Finally, the wardens contacted him, intending to inform him that it was not a real deer. Before they could say a word, he told them there was an injured deer on private property. He was glad to see the wardens, he said, because they might be able to find the landowner and put the animal out of its misery. He had not been able to locate the landowner.

THE ENTERTAINING

When a couple spotted the decoy and took numerous photos before leaving, unaware that it wasn't a real

Continued on page 26

The Big Lie

Buyer Beware When Purchasing Wisconsin Lake Property

By Pat Clark

If you are thinking of buying a home for retirement or just for a weekend getaway on a Wisconsin lake, think again. There's a decades old lie you better become familiar with; some "lakes" in Wisconsin are really not lakes. Now the local realtor isn't going to inform you of this (they need a commission). Most "locals" don't want you to know either (misery loves company).

Here are some recent comments by my new neighbors who moved to Wisconsin to retire on Beaver Dam "lake." What is the blue and white garbage in the water? Why can't I catch anything but bullheads and carp? Why is there such a high turnover in home sales sold around here? Nobody told us that this "lake" is just a dammed up river. How can they call this a lake, when it really isn't a lake?

These victims of the big lie happen to be recent new property owners on Beaver Dam "lake" in Dodge County, which isn't really a lake, by the way. It's

reservoirs. It's not right to call these "lakes" when the same name identifies the real Lakes (Lake Geneva or Green Lake).

Think of the uniformed folks coming with their hard earned money to buy a home "up north" only to find out that what they bought wasn't really what they thought. These unfortunate people have and will continue to fall victim to the big lie.

These dammed up rivers and creeks were doomed from their beginning in the mid and late 1800's. Most dams were put in to support the young industrial machines of Wisconsin. Now that the machines are gone to the recycling heap or have moved to China, the "millpond lakes" are recreational "lakes." The areas that are impounded by the dams were, for the most part, a river channel and a riverine wetland ecosystem (a marsh). In other words, the property you might purchase sits adjacent to a marsh with too much water on it. The bottom of the marsh that sits in front of you is marsh bottom (muck). What is wrong with a marsh

or an environmental group, no one has had the courage to do battle in court over this ongoing fraud. Certainly the locals, who tend to be ecologically ignorant, actually think the big lie is justifiable. We need to protect our property values. In other words, when it's time to sell our property on this fake lake, we need the big lie to help us sell our home to the next suckers who think this is a real lake. The Department of Natural Resources won't inform anyone either. They need the revenues from the boating and fishing crowd. They're not really interested in ecology, but only the cash flow that the big lie provides.

What is on the horizon for the "big lie?" People are becoming educated about our man-made disasters. Environmental issues are finally getting the world's attention. Wetlands are becoming accepted as necessary functions of nature. If you want clean water, clean air, more wildlife, more hunting, and a simple way to fight global warming, draining these sewers and replacing them with vegetation to absorb pollutants like CO₂ is a natural start.

Another argument for fixing these problems is pure ethics. If you're religious or not, we created these dammed up nightmares, not nature or God. We are not God. If you believe we are then we've got bigger problems. Ethics also

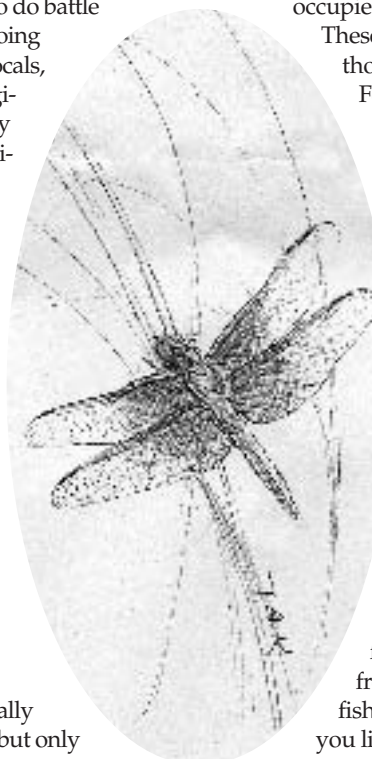
relates to the creatures and botany that occupied these dammed up areas.

These creations for the most are those listed on State and Federal endangered and threatened species lists. Restore them to their original intent and you have a lesson in ethics for the world.

If you already live on one of these man made black eyes, and are content with your fake lake, you cannot be called a sportsman or the much-abused title of conservationist. A sportsman only allows fair chase, under fair conditions and is done under real environments. If you're content, for example, filling the freezer with hatchery raised fish, you've lost your soul. If you lie about staring out the window at the blue-green algae water watching carp jump, you're already ecologically dead. If you watch the rain fill your basement, because of the dam down river, then curse the Lord above for His flood, you're blind and ignorant.

When President Reagan stood at the Berlin Wall and proclaimed "Mr. Gorbachev tear down this wall," freedom smiled upon the world and it was the start of great things in Eastern Europe. "Mr. Doyle, tear down these dams." It will be the start of great things in our own back yards.

Pat Clark is author of "Observation from a Wisconsin Prairie." To order the book go to www.authorhouse.com.



"Whether it's an honest politician, an angry homebuyer or an environmental group, no one has had the courage to do battle in court over this ongoing fraud..."

a dammed up creek with 6,500 acres of wetlands under water. If you are thinking of purchasing your dream getaway on the following artificial "lakes," think real hard again: Beaver Dam "lake," "lake" Puckaway, "lake" Koshkonong, Petenwell "lake", Castle Rock "lake", or "lake" Sinissippi.

These dammed up, man-made disasters are really impoundments, flowages or

bottom? Nothing. Other than God made it a marsh bottom. That muck bottom will give you some guarantees; it will have huge summer algae blooms, limited success at sustaining a fishery, is subject to flooding basements in the event of heavy rain, and smell.

What is truly surprising about the big lie concerning "lakes" is that no one has ever challenged it. Whether it's an honest politician, an angry homebuyer

Game Warden Decoys... (Continued from page 25)

deer, I asked the warden working the remote why he hadn't contacted the couple to send them on their way. "They were enjoying it so much," he said. "I just couldn't disillusion them."

THE BAD

When two bow-hunters spotted a decoy and the driver stated his belief that it was a decoy, the passenger refused to believe that the moving deer wasn't real. The driver insisted that he

had just watched a television program about warden decoys and they do move on. The passenger though, readied his bow and again stated his intention to shoot the real deer. The driver surrendered the argument but drove on to leave the shooter standing in the road. The violator then drew and shot twice before being apprehended. When the wardens stopped the driver, he asked if he really had to go back for his buddy.

THE UGLY

After a decoy was placed off of a county highway on private land at night during the deer gun season, a vehicle with a father and his two, adult sons shined and then shot the decoy twice before fleeing to hide their blacked-out van behind a home under construction. All three had been involved previously in numerous fish and game violations.

There are strong opinions about the use of decoys, both pro and con. What I believe with certainty is that the judicious use of decoys in Wisconsin has reduced illegal and unethical hunting violations that give hunters a black eye. And that... is a good thing!

Duane Harpster is a retired Wisconsin Conservation Warden.

When Santa Packed A BB Gun

Joy Settled Over The Gatewood Gang

By Dick Ellis

The year 2005 made the eighteenth consecutive week of Christmas Eve that my little sister had called and asked, "Did you watch, 'A Christmas Story'?" It seems that missing the tale of Ralphie and the Red Ryder BB gun is a mortal sin parallel to being absent without leave during a showing of "It's A Wonderful Life."

So, for the eighteenth consecutive Christmas Eve, when I answered, "No, I haven't seen 'A Christmas Story' yet," I thought I heard the last straw settle onto the camel's back in Patty's living room 30 miles to the west. She was on my porch a few hours later, a brand new tape of Ralphie and the Red Ryder BB Gun in her hands.

"Here," Patty said. "No excuses. Watch this. This reminds me of my four brothers when I was growing up at Christmas time."

Uh-oh. This couldn't be good. Patty's Christmas memories? I remembered too-vividly duct-taping my father's black boots over the fireplace from the chimney flue in a dark living room on a Christmas Eve long ago, then screaming bloody murder to my five-year old sister that Santa was stuck. Patty ended up premature gray and I ended up posterior red on a Christmas Eve in 1966. And that was the year I was rewarded for being good.

So with some apprehension of just what kind of memories Patty was speaking of, I watched Ralphie work the screen to get his Red Ryder. In the process I was flooded with memories of how hard we who made up the Gatewood (subdivision) Gang worked the real world to get our Daisy B.B. guns, our bows and arrows, or sling shots in the sixties and early seventies. After months of wearing out the Sears catalogue in front of my parents, my personal efforts were rewarded in 1968 with the 1894 Winchester spittin image, lever action model Daisy BB Gun.

The 1894 was a side-loading gem that needed to be fed slowly with copper ammo BB by BB, but it looked really cool. Eventually, the owner learned to jam the receiver open with a single BB and dump the rest of the box in, finally retrieving the jammed BB again after loading. Joe Cartwright had nothing on us.

The end-loading BB gun, on the other hand, didn't look as cool but the savvy sixties-kid could pack his cheeks full of BBs like a woodchuck, and then empty his whole mouth full of ammo

into the holding tube for an ultra-fast, fully-loaded piece. The lone drawback to the endloader was that for each ounce of ammo BBs, the tube also took on a half-ounce of genuine fifth-grade gob.

Beaner Andersen once had his whole loading tube freeze solid on a cold February morning. Hog Hansen, on a colder February morning, once had his tongue stick inside the little loading tube. In fact, most of it was still there when he panicked and pulled it off when he saw Rick Miller coming with the boiling water.

Which, in turn sparked a whole new debate over what might be better, and less expensive on Fisher's Pond for bluegills...waxies or a piece of tongue. The last I remember of that great debate, Mike

wire trying to figure out what all the crying was about.

It was summer before I was officially caught and charged, parentally speaking, with irresponsible use of a BB gun. Sam was our mutt, a half-spaniel, half-golden lab saved from the Humane Society on an Easter morning and a natural ally in the pheasant and rabbit woods. To reach the woods, the neighborhood kids needed to pull back the cyclone fence bordering the cemetery, let the dogs under, jump the fence, and move quickly through the fresh graves to our stomping grounds.

We had watched this newest section of cemetery, behind the veil of progress, take away our snake-

place again in seconds. With the lone exception of the time Chucky Albrecht got caught in the barb wire. There was nothing pristine about that noise.

In fact, there was a six-hour rumor moving around after that that the cops had caught Chucky and tortured him like the natives on one of the Saturday afternoon Tarzan movies. The rumor was only dispelled when Chucky showed up for game three of the triple-header.

Anyway, after a day in the woods chasing rabbits Sam would inevitably bolt for his own romp in the neighborhood after I pulled the fence back out and he squeezed back under. "Sam Stop! Sam Stop!" I yelled, to no avail.

There was only one logical thing to do in a 10-year old's mind. I sent a tiny copper ball out of the end of the Spittin Image and into Sam's rear end. The trouble was, my house was the first house adjacent to the cemetery and my Dad was a self-employed engineer working at home. His office window was at the very spot on the house where Sam spun and shrieked as the BB found its mark with a bee-like sting.

Dad's face pressed against the window as he looked at Sam, then looked at me. His voice took on the same tone he had just after he had discovered his boots hanging from the Chimney flue two years earlier and seen Patty's white face. "Did you shoot that dog?" he asked. I looked at the Spittin Image in my hands. I looked at Sam. I felt the sweat begin to bead. This was trouble, but I knew a man was only as good as his word.

"Nooooo Waaaaayyyyy!" I responded.

Now, grounded for life may seem a bit harsh. But more logical thinking should have told me that the Daisy 1894 Spittin Image BB gun wasn't that important. Despite years of honing our skills as hunters there was only a few critters actually taken by the Gatewood Gang. Mike Prusinski's rabbit, Steve Ellis and Jeff Eckman brought home a pheasant, and the Leet boys occasionally had a bullfrog or a duck tied up in their garage as prisoner. But I did miss it. It was a harsh lesson learned, the highest of dues.

There was also a moral to this story. If you have a son, from eight to 13 years old, punish him. At least three times a week. Even if you don't know what he did. All you have to say is, "You know exactly what you did young man...." And do you know what?

He will.



Martino was trying to figure out how to get a bunch of second graders to put their tongues on the Orchard Lane playground flagpole.

Anyway, my Dad handed me the Spittin Image and then gave me the talk. I was to use the airgun outside of the neighborhood only, not a difficult task since our neighborhood was surrounded by fields, woods and ponds. And, I was never to point it at anyone or any living thing. That was my promise, Dad reminding me as I left the house that a man was only as good as his word.

I spent 30 minutes keeping the promise. 30 minutes trying to hit the red-wing black bird on the wire. 30 minutes trying to resuscitate the bird. 30 minutes crying and vowing never to do that again. And 30 minutes trying to hit the sparrow that had settled on the

catching fields, our sandlot diamonds, and football fields until the land was rendered useless. Oh, we hung on as long as we could. For example, "Herbert Brown, 1900-1966" was second base for four years before his wife complained when Rex Libel's near-perfect hook slide took out the flowers on the headstone and left a 17-inch cleat scratch over "Herbert."

And we got almost commando-like at evacuating our ball field when the cops could be seen moving through the old part of the cemetery toward the new to break up a good-ole Saturday double-header. From 30 hollering kids in the Gatewood Gang jumping the fence with bats, balls, gloves and bases (except 2nd base, which was Herbert and which we always left behind out of respect) the cemetery became a pristine

Settin' Sun?

Hunting, Fishing May Not Be On Horizon

By Bill Thornley

The elderly man stared longingly out at the hills he had wandered, deer rifle in hand, during his younger days. He had years earlier put away his rifle and his blaze orange clothing. His legs would no longer allow him to walk the hills, not that it would matter much if they were stronger.

Nobody was walking the hills anymore. Nobody was building tree stands, following the sounds of hounds hot on a bear trail or spending autumn evenings with a faithful old dog in a duck blind. Those days were over.

He tried to think back, to pinpoint just when hunting had died, but he really couldn't. The sport had just gradually faded away, the victim of declining participation and increasing pressures from the anti-hunting community that, although in the minority, was extremely well-funded and aggressive in its mission to kill hunting.

Without the efforts and dollars of

sportsmen, wild places were increasingly lost to development and the wildlife that lived there had disappeared. Parking lots and subdivisions sprang up where whitetails had once rubbed the velvet from their antlers. Shopping centers replaced wetlands where geese had once

elderly man staring longingly at the hills may be a glimpse of our future if trends continue as they are going today.

Recent figures from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service show the number of hunters 16 and older declined by 10 percent between 1996 and 2006, drop-

reading books and watching TV....

....You have to live it.

And families are changing. The image of father and son walking down the old hunting trail is growing faint as millions of families are now headed by single parents. I was introduced to hunting by my father, who had been introduced to hunting by his father. But what happens when Dad isn't there and Mom doesn't have interest in hunting or time to devote to it?

It is hunters who have traditionally been most willing to give their dollars for wildlife conservation. If the animal rights movement ever succeeded in doing away with hunting, who would step forward to make up for the loss of billions and billions of dollars used by state and federal governments to propagate wildlife and protect habitat -- dollars now generated by sales of hunting licenses, firearms, ammunition and various hunting equipment?

Hunters are not alone in the trend

Continued on page 30

"Without the funds generated by hunting, the agencies that protected and managed natural resources also disappeared..."

nested, and autumn skies grew quiet. Without the funds generated by hunting, the agencies that protected and managed natural resources also disappeared, as did the numerous sportsmen's clubs and organizations that had worked so hard for generations to keep wild places wild.

Fiction? Perhaps not. Saturday, Sept. 22 marked Hunting and Fishing Day in America. Yet for sportsmen everywhere, the news is not good. The

ping from 14 million to about 12.5 million. The drop was largest in New England, the Rocky Mountains and the Pacific states, which lost 400,000 hunters during that time span.

We are losing our connection to field and forest. We are losing our common heritage and the knowledge and respect for wilderness that most concrete dwellers can never appreciate. You cannot know wilderness by



He asked, "Oldtimer, why do you hunt?"

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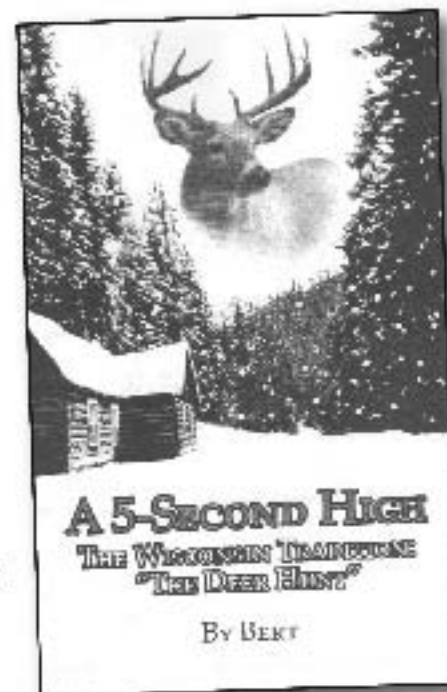
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Settin Sun?... (Continued from page 29)

of declining numbers. Recent figures from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service indicate that the number of Americans who fish has dropped 15 percent, from 35.2 million in 1996 to 30 million in 2006.

The decline of sportsmen and sportswomen coincides with a 13 percent increase in "wildlife watching" in the past 10 years. Nothing wrong with wildlife watching.

In Northern Wisconsin most of us enjoy it every day. But it is what the stats don't say that should concern us. While wildlife watchers spend about 45 billion dollars annually, hunters and anglers spend about 75 billion dollars, much of which goes back to both game and non-game species. If sportsmen went away, who would make up the difference?

Such activities as wildlife photography and bird watching have increased in number of participants from approximately 63 million in 1996 to more than 71 million last year. Again, this is great. I have made a semi-career out of wildlife photography. But despite the devotion of many, I would bet that most wildlife watchers fall into the "drive-by" category.

They see a bear, deer, elk or eagle near the side of the road and stop just long enough to click a picture with a

digital camera. But what is beyond the pretty picture? What do the majority of these people, often just passing through from an urban area, understand of wildlife behavior? Do they know if numbers are up or down? Do they know if habitat is healthy and plentiful, or in decline? I would bet that most hunters do. We live it. We study it year-round and discuss it while leaning on our neighbor's tractor tire as we tip our cups of morning coffee.

When animal rights activists gather in Madison each fall to protest the start of deer season, they seem oblivious to how much gas their own SUVs and buses are using and how their own sprawling homes are pushing wildlife out of prime habitat.

We see it in our own back yards as expensive homes crop up in former farm fields and wild lands are chopped into two-acre lots. Trails once walked by old-timers who spent hours getting away from the nearest roads are now rutted by the tires of ATVs whizzing up and down. Land access – or lack of it – is an increasing concern as "No Trespassing" signs crop up on favorite hunting acres and fishing holes of our youth.

The world is getting smaller.

We have read about how most wildlife agencies are already operating on a shoestring budget, how programs benefiting wildlife and habitat are being forced to be cut, how there are not enough wardens in the field. What happens if hunting and fishing license fees dry up?

As America becomes more urban, and more and more concrete covers once-grassy hills, the environment grows less and less friendly toward sportsmen. In this area the hunting tradition is still strong. We are comfortable with guns, and our kids are learning about hunting not only from family members, but also through hunter education programs.

Groups like People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) claim hunting is a cruel blood sport. But to most people in these parts, hunting is a lifestyle that families and friends continue to share. Yet even here in the Northwest we are feeling the squeeze as hunting land becomes harder and harder to find. Many of the old-timers are putting away their guns and the old hunting camps are disappearing. Will the next generation fill the void?

To paint everybody who does not hunt and fish with a broad brush is, of course, ridiculous. They are not all out

to end hunting. And to stereotype all hunters as drunks filled with bloodlust is equally foolish. But it is the guy who poaches 12 deer and has beer cans falling out of his pickup truck who makes the evening news, not the local Ducks Unlimited chapter that works hard to purchase habitat so mallards and pintails can continue to nest.

The majority of sportsmen I know are themselves all for animal rights. They and I believe wildlife should be treated with respect. When we step into wild lands, we are filled with a sense of sacred awe in the presence of all that is around us. When we do harvest an animal, we thank God for the opportunity to do so. We condemn those who cut corners, cheat and treat wildlife less than respectfully. And if we never even fire a shot, we are thankful for the opportunity to have hunted.

It is our job to be devoted enough, to care enough about the sporting lifestyle we love, to make sure those opportunities continue to be available to the next generation.

W

Bill Thornley is an outdoor writer from Spooner.

On Wisconsin Outdoors

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On Wisconsin Outdoors Board of Directors

Dear Hunter Daily,
How do you go about getting
permission to hunt?

- Bobby Mitchell, West Bend

Dear Bobby,
Those who gives us permission to hunt are the sportsmen's most valuable asset. No matter if you own the finest firearms, bows and arrows or other equipment, you simply can't hunt without permission. The permission givers, hence, must be wined and dined and offered gifts of appreciation in exchange for that precious right to hunt. And after your wife does say yes, you can focus on the landowner.



Hunter Daily



Conibear Smith

Dear Conibear Smith,
Have you seen many changes in
Wisconsin trapping over the years?

- Theodore Sellers, Superior, WI

Dear Teddy
To answer your question....what was your question? Oh....the biggest change outside of Muskrat Mike's long underwear change in '42 after a five year run in the long reds was probably that the traps today are made to dispatch the critter immediately. In yesteryear, it was more like whapping than trapping. We'd wait behind a tree and whap, let's say a wolverine, on the head over a bait pile. If he didn't go down, you could be in trouble. Which reminds me, why did they draw this durn cane in my character? I don't have any legs."

Dear Rex Rodsalotta,
The steelhead migration is only a
few months away. Any advice?

- Paul Keddell, Sturgeon Bay

Dear Paul,
It depends on what steelhead migration you refer to. Is it the steelhead, as in Ganaraska, Chambers Creek and Skamania strains that run up our tributaries on their spawning runs, to the delight of flyfishermen up and down the Great Lake? If so, I have found great spring fishing in the shadow of Miller Park on the Menomonee with both spawn sacs and white and black flies and on the Root in Racine. Or is it the steelhead, as in Chicago Bears Fan strain, who run up our highways on their eating runs, to the dismay of people and cows up and down our Great State? If so, a No-pest strip strung from Dubuque to Kenosha currently being debated in Madison, just may be your answer.



Rex Rodsalotta

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ACROSS

- 2 A popular bow made by Matthews
4 Constant bad luck.
5 A hunter's decision: _____ blind
9 Rifles are either centerfire or

- 12 What a food plot planter prays for
13 Hunters pray for good _____
14 Thompson Center's "do-it-all" gun.
15 Some states say "No Hunting" on this day

DOWN

- 1 Hard-hurled turkeys are birds.
3 A deer hunter's name: Whitetail _____
6 Realtree's slogan: So real, it's
7 Yamaha ATV: The _____ 700.
8 I aim for the _____
10 Part of a muzzleloader: _____ plug
11 A sportsman's paid friend.

Sacred Ground, Part II

Shallow Lakes At The Crossroads – Jewels Or Sewers?

By Terrill Knaack

There is a small lake in southern Wisconsin not far from where I write. It is almost 300 acres. My wife and I like to take the canoe there at different times of year. It has a depth of six feet. The water in mid summer is crystal clear. Varieties of submerged vegetation change beneath the boat as we glide along, each having a unique form. Largemouth suspended over their nests seem like large moving shadows while overhead black terns hover and dive with uncanny skill. Our eyes search for streaks of blue as the rattle of Kingfishers is heard from two directions. Low over the water is the constant undulating flight of dragonflies. We wonder why we forgot our book again that could help us identify different species.

Wisconsin is blessed with shallow lakes. Some are really large prairie potholes, others are part of large riverine systems. The one thing that they all share is that they are surrounded by and managed by a culture that is almost totally at a loss to either understand or appreciate them. Even after 150 years of history we are still strangers in a strange land. What could be the meaning of these lakes? If we could find enough spare millions of dollars lying around, wouldn't we want to dredge them or build higher dams to raise the water levels and make them into something more suitable to our tastes?

A large expanse of open water stretches in front of me as I write. I am only yards away from the original 1840's survey transect that crossed a wet prairie into a sedge meadow. A small stream was easily crossed. The area abounded with numerous springs and sloughs of wild rice that sustained the indigenous culture. Except for itinerant remnants, these cultures had mostly been eliminated by that time. Huge changes were about to take place. The natural watersheds of Wisconsin were dramatically altered after our statehood and perhaps for very good reasons. We needed sources of energy and transportation. We built dams for water power and locks. With the advent of the steam shovel we tried to erase some lakes to make room for more agriculture.

Today most of our shallow lakes in southern Wisconsin are in bad shape or threatened. Most are embattled in



"November Wind" by Terrill Knaack

conflict. Some lie almost completely wasted. A few are actually being restored by hard-working people that really care about them.

As a veteran of hundreds of lake meetings, presentations, and a couple DNR citizen advisory committee processes, and having for decades tried to initiate an educational dialogue that could increase understanding, there are

submergents [Sago, Wild Celery, Coontail] are adapted to and even dependent on natural hydrological cycles for their perpetuation. The last thing we would really want is to totally stabilize water levels on these lakes. The absence of natural variation equates to stagnation and eventually extreme biological degradation. Restoration often requires mimicking

"In a culture increasingly detached from nature, where little education in ecology is offered, our lack of appreciation for this part of Wisconsin's great natural heritage is somewhat understandable..."

several basic popular questions that keep resurfacing that we need to consider. Why would we want to consider solving problems in a shallow lake by drawing it down or lowering its water level? If the lake has a mucky bottom isn't the water quality going to be bad no matter what we do? If the lake is highly eutrophic, or even hypereutrophic, isn't that the result of problems in the watershed that we can just blame on non point source pollution? And lastly if I've invested hundreds of thousands of dollars in my lake property and a lily pad or bull rush appears on my shoreline won't my investment be a loss?

Every plant native to our shallow lakes; emergents, [Arrowhead, waterlily, bull rushes for example.]

an extreme drought like event. Without vegetation, invertebrates and fish populations suffer. Without vegetation, bottom strata become unstable. Nutrients [excess nitrogen and phosphorus] saturate the water column producing massive blue green algae growths. A healthy shallow lake in contrast is an incredible high energy system, biologically productive beyond belief with clear water and great biodiversity.

Healthy submergent aquatic vegetation is the hallmark of these lakes.

When shallow lakes lose their natural vegetation and become extremely biologically degraded, or as has often been the case when hundred or thousands of acres of sedge meadow and wild hay marsh

are allowed to dissolve into an expanding water body, the result can only be a hypereutrophic disaster. This is unfortunately the reality for many Wisconsin lakes. We all hopefully know that wetlands are nutrient traps that are the key to water quality. Imagine dumping such huge loads of nutrients into a lake.

Lastly, why the cross roads? The lake where I live once had a bed of native *Potamogeton Pectinatis* [Sago] and other submergents that stretched for a mile near my house, when the lake was in better shape. All bird life, waterfowl and gamefish benefited. Today that same zone is a monotype of the exotic invasive *Potamogeton crispis*. There is hardly a wisp of sago to be found. Apparently the crispis is gathering phosphorus to itself and releasing it when it massively dies off in mid June. How resilient are our lakes? Surely certain shoreline plant communities such as sedge meadow may be restorable, but at what cost? Look around Wisconsin. Shallow lakes are abundant. Unfortunately most are degraded. Some lie wasted or are hypereutrophic to the point that coming up with management that a majority of local people can agree upon is all but impossible.

The Lake Koshkonong Wetlands Association has done a great job through its website in engaging any one who cares about the Lake in an enhanced education, research and planning process. I recently heard that organization, which is highly diverse, labeled dismissively as the "duck club".

In a culture increasingly detached from nature, where little education in ecology is offered, our lack of appreciation for this part of Wisconsin's great natural heritage is somewhat understandable. Perhaps we need to consider that the real meaning of these lakes is in the diversity of life they support. The more we learn about their plants, birdlife, fish, mammals and invertebrates the more beauty we will see. When we see healthy shallow lakes as beautiful, we will see them as essential for our own well being and begin to care.

Terrill Knaack has been painting Wisconsin landscapes and wildlife for 30 years. He is also a photographer and a perpetual observer of Wisconsin's natural history. To learn more about his work, see www.terrillknaack.com

Product 6-Pack

Great Gear For The Woods, Fields And Waterways

By JJ Reich, Copyright © 2007

Here's the rundown on four hunting and fishing products that you may find useful in the woods, fields and waterways. We did.

DO-ALL OUTDOORS' IRON BUCK ANTLER MOUNT

For \$35.00, this antler mount is designed by an iron sculpture artist and allows you to display your antlers with style in just a few minutes. Just put your sawed-off antlers between the two brushed-steel plates and tighten the screws.

The Iron Buck Antler Mount turned an old 8-point rack that was hanging in my garage into a work of art that is now on display on



a wall inside my house. It truly is a unique and handsome way to show off a trophy rack for years to come.

www.do-alloutdoors.com
(800) 252-9247

THE GAME GOURMET COOKING SYSTEMS



For \$7.00, these packets provide just the right blend of herbs and spices to make venison delicious. They also include a convenient oven cooking bag to ensure that the meat is moist and tender. Several convenient recipes

are available, including packets for steaks, roasts, stews, soups, duck, geese and upland game.

I used this system twice. The nifty oven cooking bag makes cooking a roast

super easy and leaves no messy pots or pans to clean up. You simply add the wild game meat, some vegetables and water to the bag and cook the entire bag in the oven for three hours. Both meals tasted great! My friends and family agreed.

www.gamegourmet.com
(800) 237-7583

LACROSSE FOOTWEAR'S ALPHA ICEMAN

For \$154.00, these 10-inch, cold-weather boots feature a soft-shell rubber bottom that is 100 percent waterproof and lightweight. The leather, stretch nylon and neoprene materials that make up the rest of the boot provide flexible



comfort; and the removable, thick wool-felt liner makes these boots ultra warm.

These boots are so comfortable it feels like I am wearing big, warm slippers! Don't get me wrong, these boots are durable and tough; but the comfort and fit from the soft-rubber, bottom shell and the stretch nylon is second to none.

www.lacrossefootwear.com
(800) 671-2668

DURASAFE'S TRAILER GUARDIAN

For \$51.00, this lock helps prevent accidental decoupling and also locks a trailer to the tow vehicle. It's available in single and dual arm models and fits most 2-1/2 inch and 3-inch ball mounts.

The Trailer Guardian is easy to install, strong and effective.



Every year I haul my boat to Canada for a week-long fishing trip. Knowing that my trailer is secure while hauling my boat on long trips is very comforting.

www.durasafe-usa.com
(866) 544-5615

VORTEX DIAMONDBACK 8X42 BINOCULARS

For \$250, these binoculars feature a durable, quiet coating, and boasts a waterproof design which uses tight O-ring sealing locks. The advanced roof



prism optical design incorporates high-density BaK-4 glass makes for excellent clarity. They are available in green or coyote brown.

Vortex is building a name in the industry because they truly do offer a high-end product at an affordable price. Personally, I am awed by the performance, quality, and clarity of the optics. My uncle Joe also owns a pair and he never stops talking about how much he likes them. It's sickening, really.

www.vortexoptics.com
(800) 426-0048

BIGFOOT GEAR BAG

Starting at \$50, this huge gear bag is made of strong denier polyester and zips close and straps up tight. The bag is available in several big sizes and has a variety of padded carrying handles, heavy-duty cinch straps, water-repelling zipper seal with various tie-down and storage options.

This huge gear bag makes storing and transporting bulky and odd-



shaped fishing, hunting and camping gear simple – just stuff, zip, and cinch together. And when not in use, works great as a ground tarp. I like to use mine when hauling a bulky ground blind, chair, seat cushion clothing and other archery gear into the woods.

www.bigfootbag.com
(877) 883-0200

JJ Reich is Field Test Coordinator for "North American Hunter" and "North American Fisherman" Magazines and the author of the Kampp Tales hunting books for children. (www.kampptales.com).

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