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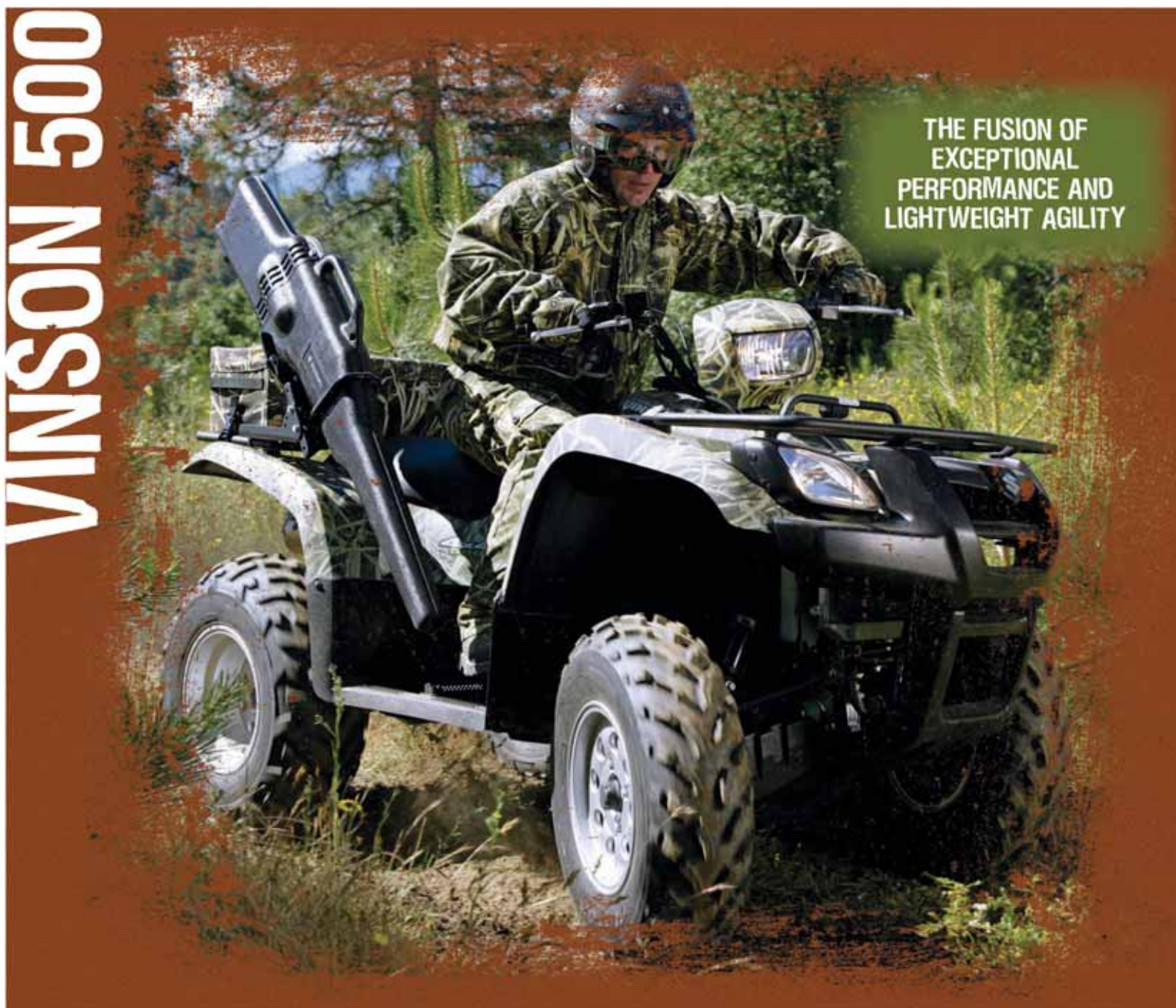
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Photo By Dick Ellis

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



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White Gold

Paddling snowmelt season

By Steve Henske

There is something about the transition from late winter to early spring that I just don't like. Don't get me wrong. I truly enjoy both winter and spring. I love to ice fish and snowshoe and cross-country ski, but three months of the deep freeze and shoveling is enough and I am ready for Mother Nature to turn the page to the springtime chapter. It is that "in-between" time where the daylight hours get longer, a thaw sends water dripping from the eaves, the birds are restless and then BANG, another 12" snowstorm. It is a temporary letdown and the anxiety drives me crazy, but we know spring is still on the way. Plus... a lot of snow can be a good thing.

In the canoeing and kayaking world, a heavy winter snow pack is white gold. Only we want this gold to disappear slowly and steadily while reverting back to its liquid state. If it melts too fast, the rivers flood, and if too slow then flow

levels are unpredictable. The water's journey in the hydrologic cycle will fill the ditches, then the streams and finally our paddling rivers on its way back to where it started. If you like to paddle in whitewater then this is the magical time. I liken it to bowhunting the rut or hunting the first big flight of northern mallards of late duck season. Some rivers can only be paddled during the spring runoff. Other "year-round" paddling rivers display their Mr. Hyde-side with standing waves, souse holes and grade three drops that are non-existent at normal flows. So when March finally shows up on the calendar, our gear is checked, the canoes are waxed and the scouting trips begin in anticipation of the spring break-up.

Early spring paddling has many risks. The water is ice cold and a dunking can quickly lead to hypothermia. High water levels from snowmelt mean fast tricky currents and dramatic eddy lines. The heavy snow and storms of winter have dropped trees and

brush into the rivers. These "strainers" can entrap a canoe or kayak quickly leading to a cold swim, or worse. Most rivers that meander along with a steady current and a few riffles in summer may require serious whitewater skills during spring flows.

The reward for these risks are many. With our hometown of Stevens Point centrally located in Wisconsin, we are within a



With life preserver secure, Shara Henske smiles for the camera with the canoe pulled up on a floating ice shelf of the Wisconsin River during a March trip. Her father, the author, is in the canoe behind her. (Photo by Kathy Konopacky)



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short drive of some fantastic spring paddling. From mid-March to early May our group can be found on the water almost every weekend. Local favorites are the Little Wolf River above Big Falls in Waupaca County, the Little Eau Claire River in Marathon County, and Mill Creek in Portage County. Mill Creek is a seasonal flow river that sports some great whitewater paddling to grade II+ and the added benefit of finishing the trip at Rusty's Backwater Saloon. This local watering hole, near the confluence of Mill Creek and the Wisconsin River, is a great place to share some stories and cool some hot pipes.

A few longer day trips are scheduled each spring too. At the top of the list is running the North Branch of the Oconto River near Mountain and the Wolf River by Langlade. These are serious whitewater runs for the more experienced paddlers. Other favorites include the Prairie River in Lincoln County and the Trappe and Rib

ivers in Marathon County. The Dells of the Prairie is one of the best whitewater adrenaline rushes around.

For paddling calmer water one has unlimited choices. The rivers will open before the lakes, and the north shore of any lake will thaw open before other more shaded shorelines. There is nothing like a slow paddle among the ice flows while soaking in the spring sun and watching the spring waterfowl migration.

COLD WATER AND HIGH SPRING FLOW PADDLING CHECKLIST

- **Scout!** The body of water you are entering is not the same as it was last July. Be prepared for fast currents, sweepers, a differently structured shoreline due to high water levels, and possible ice.
- **Have the proper gear.** A wetsuit or a paddling drytop may be

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required due to the cold water. Wear waterproof gloves. Avoid wearing cotton clothing, stick to quick draining synthetics. Tight fitting neoprene paddling boots are great this time of year. Always wear a properly fitted PFD. Carry a spare set of dry clothing in a sealed drybag. Have an emergency fire starting kit with you. Carry a spare paddle. Flotation bags in your canoe are recommended in high flow rivers.

- **Use the proper boat for the water you intend to paddle.** A raging whitewater river is not the place for a kevlar touring canoe or a 17' touring kayak. Canoes and kayaks are purpose designed, and should be used for that intended purpose. Halfway down grade II rapids is not the best place to find out that you do not have enough rocker or freeboard.

- **Do not paddle beyond your skill levels, and NEVER paddle alone.** If you are inexperienced in white-water then wait until warmer days (and warmer water) to give it a go.

Wisconsin's spring paddling is our favorite time. We wish the air and water were warmer, but the Wisconsin climate has decided that the high water will be here before things warm up, so go with the flow. The benefits are swift rivers, lots of wildlife, no bugs and some great times. Don't miss out... it is here only once a year. *W*

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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Gary Klonowski of Madison prepares his canoe for a run through the Dells of the Prairie River in Lincoln County. Flotation bags, spray skirts and a quality PDF are required on this stretch during high water. (Photo by Steve Henske)



Steve Henske and his wife Missy of Stevens Point, WI, are veteran canoeists having spent a lifetime paddling, camping, and in Steve's case bowhunting the northern US and Canada. Steve is a construction contractor in Stevens Point while Missy teaches grade school in Almond, WI. (Photo by Kathy Konopacky)

On Wisconsin Outdoors

With the Dick Ellis Experts

Hunting, Fishing, Trapping, Travel
and Outdoor Humor

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DICK ELLIS

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Wisconsin, we have more

READERS' MULTIPLE CHOICE TEST:

The above photo is:

- A) A Winnebago sturgeon with a sheephead in its mouth
- B) Rosie O'Donnell at an anti-gun luncheon just prior to speaking, or
- C) This reporter sticking his tongue out at the camera during picture day 1965 at Orchard Lane Elementary.

You should know the answer is not B) Rosie O'Donnell. Rosie would also have her foot in her mouth, and be surrounded by nine bodyguards with semi-automatic firearms as she rails against anyone in America owning semi-automatic firearms.

You should know that the answer is not C) This reporter. Although the resemblance is uncanny, clearly my blue Roy Rogers tie that made me among the most distinguished in the second grade class picture is missing, proving this photo is not me.

That's right, the answer is A. This sturgeon was registered opening day, Saturday February 9, 2008 on the east side of Lake Winnebago at Pipe. More than 3,000 shacks were counted via aerial survey, just one more great celebration of Wisconsin's great outdoors. For a while at the registration station where I waited with my reporter's hat on, with camera and notebook, it seemed like every one of those shacks had a successful spearer and every one of them was registering their fish at Pipe.

What a blast. Fish after fish after fish being registered, each attached to a happy spear chucker ready to share a story with a nosy writer. A big fish at the

"Walk through these March and April pages and learn from the OWO experts how to best succeed in these hunting and fishing seasons of early spring ..."

station, at least under my watch, came in at 150 pounds and 78-1/2 inches, ambushed by Jeff Kleinhans of Kiel. And then there was the 65 pound sturgeon speared right in the back by John Ziegelbauer of Fond du Lac while just minding its own business trying to enjoy a little sheephead lunch.

"Now that's putting a fork in it," I thought, and how every spearer out there on Winnebago and the upriver lakes holding vigil through a refrigerator size hole wants the game to end. And how many did end the vigil with water clarity to 17 feet.

What this gigantic game does show is that the Wisconsin DNR fish and wildlife biologists and technicians, the guys down in the trenches, know what they're doing the majority of the time and they're doing it in the first place because they love their work ... despite some of our ongoing fights pertaining to fish and game management. With the sturgeon, that would be Ron Bruch and his team along with so many members of the citizen advisory groups that have kept the Winnebago sturgeon population the most impressive in the world despite flirting with disaster from over-harvest not so long ago. There are other successes, like the establishment of the wild turkey that hunters in Ashland as well as Lancaster can now pursue.

It also shows that Wisconsin sportsmen and women don't need to be asked twice to participate in a good thing, even when it's not always a good thing for every participating individual. These sturgeon spearers are a bit.... well...first watch "Psycho" or "Cuckoo's Nest" and then we'll have that discussion. But I once talked to a spearer who has taken his two weeks of vacation each spearing season for two decades and has never yet seen a sturgeon. Yes, Jack Nicholson.... or a potato... has nothing on some of these boys. I myself am still considered sane because I have only gone about 18 days total without seeing a fish.

Next year.

Anyway, the Wisconsin good times never end, even in these tough times between the good ice of mid-winter and the open water fishing season officially beginning the first Saturday in May. Walk through these March and April pages and learn from the OWO experts how to best succeed in these hunting and fishing seasons of early spring. I think I'm the only writer in here that you won't learn something from. I almost fired me, in fact, before settling on a pay cut.



Jeff Kleinhans of Kiel was holding vigil Saturday in a Lake Winnebago sturgeon shack with son Josh, 13, when this monster appeared on the bottom at 17 feet. The 150 pound, 78-1/2 inch fish was among the largest taken during an extraordinary opening morning harvest due to extraordinary water clarity. (Photos by Dick Ellis)

Jason Gaurkee will show you some new tactics to try when things get tough during the spring walleye runs. Dave Sura is as good as a fisherman gets at working the Lake Michigan shoreline and tributaries for salmon, steelhead and jumbo perch. Wildlife artist Terrill Knaack takes a walk back in time to remember his Grandma Lydia on snowshoes trapping and fishing the Crawfish to help feed a Wisconsin family. Steve Henske takes us on some wild canoe rides on whitewater when the Wisconsin river ice melts. Ray Howell, recognized recently by Outdoor Life especially for his work with disadvantaged children, takes us on a successful bowhunt with a 12-year-old first-time hunter.

Badger JJ Reich uses a pendulum-calling tactic with fellow NWTF members to tag a stubborn South Carolina turkey. Tom Carpenter shows us another Badger bird and offers a new idea to get those kids in the field. S. Wilkerson evaluates when to refrain from shooting those surplus firearms that increase in value with time. And Dick Henske shows Wisconsinites how to get the most bang for their buck when planning an Ontario fishing trip.

There's more. Lots more. But this is Wisconsin. We have more. *W*

Global Warming

An inconvenient truth with an inconvenient answer

By Jeff Nania

The car drove slowly down a snow covered country road. The headlights and full moon overhead cast ghostly shadows across the winter landscape. The driver ever cautious, glanced in his rearview mirror often, making certain that he hadn't been followed, although it was unlikely as his circuitous route had involved several double backs. Still almost obsessive vigilance was necessary until arriving at his destination. He knew he must be close; he had memorized the directions rather than carry evidence with him. At last there it was, high atop the old church steeple, a neon cross, guiding the faithful to the church. But instead of turning into the church parking lot he turned the opposite direction up a long narrow drive excavated from the snow that lead to a small house atop a hill. He parked in the shadow of an old barn and began the final leg of his journey, walking toward the porch. Wood

smoke drifted lazily up from the chimney on the still night air. He new one challenge remained until he would be inside, and finally safe—the watchdog. If the dog chased him off or in some other way showed obvious disdain, he knew he would be immediately sent away to travel back down the lonely road.

He opened the door and was greeted by 75 pounds of intensely curious Labrador. The dog sniffed, wagged his tail and walked away in acceptance. The man was visibly relieved. Although many years out of school, he had never gotten over his fear of lab tests.

He was welcomed into the room by a cheery group seated around a blazing fire. Most of the members were there: Buddy 4, The Duck Doctor, Counselor Karl, Lake Woebegone Charlie, HorHey, the Senator, the Warden, Tommy, the Ambassador and the owner of the Jimmy Bait Company. With his arrival, the meeting of the

International Porch Society was called to order.

The society is a small, relatively unknown group assembled by the order of his Royalness El Presidente, their charge, to identify and solve critical problems facing the world today.

At an IPS meeting, opinions fly around the room like early season green wings. Topics are many and varied and serious debates arise often on such critical issues as "What constitutes a proper shotgun?" Usually brought up by someone like the Duck Doctor trying to justify his purchase of yet another shell shucker (while all the time claiming to be a double gun man).

At some point in the agenda, I believe it was after a round of Icelandic Black Death, someone, I believe it was Counselor Karl, asked the question, "Have you seen Al Gore's movie *An Inconvenient Truth*? What do you guys thing about the global warming crisis?" The question was directed at two of the society's more renowned environmental scientists, Lake Woebegone Charlie and Buddy 4, two men that agree on many things, but on this issue, sit on very opposite sides of the barb wire fence.

As this topic has a tendency to do, it became very passionate very quickly. Bold statements were made on both sides.

"It is undeniable that global warming exists and the results will be catastrophic. Man is largely to blame. No thinking person denies it," Buddy 4 exclaimed.

"Actually no thinking person believes it. Climate change is part of the history of earth, man's role is relatively insignificant, a single volcanic eruption eclipses man's impact" replied Woebegone Charlie.

On they went point-counterpoint arguing what should or could be done to stop earthly climate change, discussing everything from no action to sweeping global initiatives.

At one point they turned to the Senator, and asked, "What is government going to do?" The Senator is as dedicated an environmentalist as I know. His response was quick and to the point. "Government can and should only do so much. Success in any endeavor requires personal responsibility and commitment, and the future of our environment is in the hands of people."

Personal responsibility and

commitment, what a novel concept.

The very inconvenient answer to *An Inconvenient Truth*.

Astrophysicists, the great predictors, have determined that if the history of earth were mapped as number two pencil lines on a continuous sheet of paper, it would wrap around a football field. On that sheet of paper, a line the width of a human hair, would represent the total human existence. Unlike plant and animal communities that came before us, humans have always endeavored to change the earth to suit our needs. In the short time humans have been here, we have made more changes in the landscape than any other species. We have undoubtedly caused ourselves some environmental problems.

As a society we do not need to agree on global warming, but there are some things that we do need to agree on. For example, we need to agree that we want clean air to breathe and clean water to drink. We also need to agree that while discussion has its place, any real, lasting solution requires some sort of action. If we are serious in our concerns, we must agree to do something.

The first step is to connect with our environment—breathe the fresh outdoor air, smell the smells, watch the beauty of a wetland coming alive at sunrise, walk through the woods feeling unpaved earth beneath your feet.

The next step is to make it a family affair—involve our husbands, wives, children, aunts and uncles in our outdoor adventures. They may like this outdoor time so much that it may become a family tradition.


People might even come to value these traditions and resources so much, they might even be willing to pay a voluntary fee to help support them. Heck, some people might just love the outdoors enough that they want to do more, they might organize dinners or fundraising events to raise even more money to support the restoration of natural resources.

Sound familiar?

You want to save our environment? Take a kid outdoors; teach them to hunt, fish and trap. No matter what your position is on the issues of the world, one thing remains true: good conservation takes your heart, your head and your hands. *W*

Jeff Nania is executive director of the Wisconsin Waterfowl Association.

Take a Kid ...
Outdoors



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Strange Days

Supplemental strategies for spring river run walleye

By Jason Gaurkee

Keeep reading. This is not the usual spring river walleye article. As experienced anglers we all know that when Wisconsin's river systems become navigable, all we have to do is head to the local bait shop, purchase a few dozen fathead minnows, grab a handful of lead head jigs, a rod and a seaworthy vessel, and you will catch walleye. Most days this formula works.

Unfortunately, not all days are created equal. Monday may produce a hundred walleye, lots of photos and high fives. Friday may result in a sound skunking and maybe thoughts of, "I should have gone to work." Well, maybe not that.

Now, we have all theorized on what is going on during a tough bite. It is usually a combination of unfavorable barometric pressure, poor water levels, temperatures or clarities, perhaps too much feed and over fishing. Regardless of what it is, the bottom line is a disappointing outing. I've had those days.

Having spent a few hours chasing river walleye over the last 25 years, I have added several new approaches to cope with the days when they are not jumping into the boat. Add them to your strategy and I guarantee you will boat more fish when things get tough.

A FATHEAD ALTERNATIVE

Without a doubt, live bait takes more walleye from January through April than all other techniques combined. A vertically jigged fathead has been a staple in the walleye angler's arsenal for decades. This method of fishing works so well because it is a finesse approach for the cold water, oftentimes sluggish walleye. However, we have all had days where no matter how slowly we work a jig, no matter how many times we change baits, no matter how many fish we are marking, catching just one is an exercise in futility.

I've found the bait you choose can make or break your day. In our state of Wisconsin, fatheads are the "bait of choice." But is it our choice? Fatheads are hearty, easy to maintain, plentiful and most importantly profitable, which is why the distributors make sure they are available in every bait shop and are usually the only option. Also, they do catch fish.

Many years ago a fishing partner introduced me to alternative live bait options. The one that really opened my eyes was the use of redbtail chubs for early season walleye. Now I had used the chubs for smallmouth, pike and musky but I, like many walleye anglers, had tunnel vision (again fatheads) when it came to bait selection for that early season bite.

I feel redbtails work well for a couple of reasons. First of all, when a river is peaking, fishing pressure spikes. I can guarantee you ninety-nine percent of all the anglers are banging walleye on their heads with fatheads. Those same walleye are hooked and lost or caught outright and released once, maybe twice. I'm a strong believer in the conditioning of released fish, walleye included. Before you know it, your presentation is under maximum scrutiny. Redtails offer an alternative to pressured fish. Walleye simply haven't seen them.

Redtails, too, are on average larger than fatheads. The larger profile creates a larger target in dingy water. Also, if you are seeking larger caliber eyes, redbtails offer a better chance of landing a trophy. Another plus, redbtails are harder than other baitfish and more active on the hook. Simply put, redbtails do all the work for an angler. One key note: redbtails won't tolerate low oxygen levels. You must have an aerator or you'll get a bunch of belly uppers and at their high price, it's a chance you don't want to take.

PRESENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

Being a father and fishing



Jason Gaurkee with a 30" post spawn female caught on a French rig tipped with a redbtail. (Photo by Dennis Hirtz)

"I have added several new approaches to cope with the days when they are not jumping into the boat. Add them to your strategy and I guarantee you will boat more fish when things get tough."

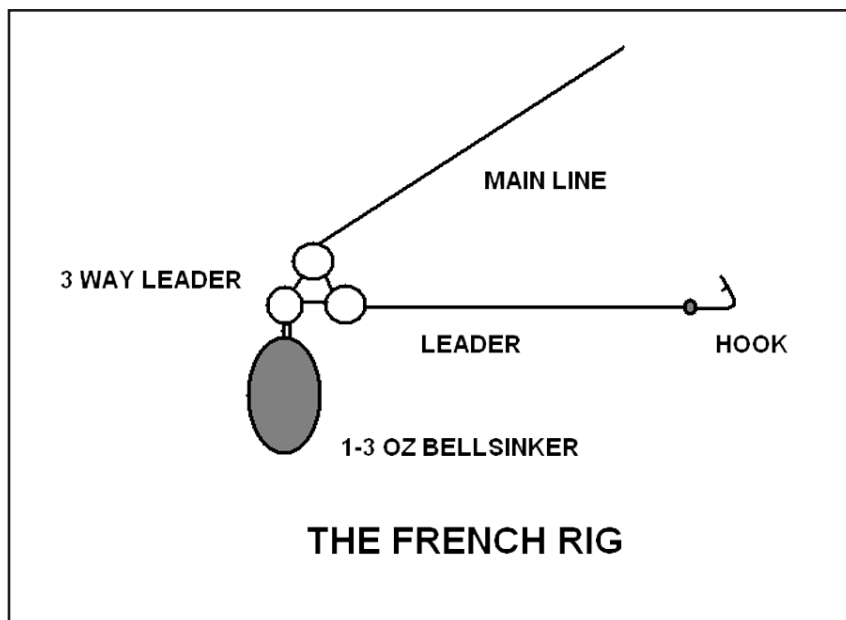
guide, I am often challenged to simplify the mechanics of a technique or tactic. Let's be honest, it takes a little while to become a prolific live bait jigger. Detecting light biting walleye can be one of the biggest challenges for a novice angler. With this in mind, I wanted to find something that would work even if it weren't worked properly. Ultimately, I found a rig that has consistently produced fish during tough conditions. Best of all, it's easy like Sunday morning.

I refer to it as the French rig. In short, a French rig is a modified three way or Wolf River rig. We are all familiar with the old Wolf River rig. The difference being

that a French rig has a much shorter leader from the swivel to the bell sinker. In fact I use Water Gremlin's clip on bell sinkers instead of tying them to the three-way swivel, thus keeping my bait on or very close to the bottom. My leader from swivel to hook is eight to twelve inches. Hook size varies depending on the size of the bait. The smaller the minnow the smaller the hook.

I will bait this rig with a minnow, a redbtail, fathead or perhaps a sucker. My weight is generally an ounce or more. I base the weight on current flow. I want my bait to stay on the bottom and

Continued on page 8



The French Rig

my line vertical.

My thinking behind this rig is simplicity. You can jig it. You can plunk it. You can troll it. I prefer jigging it. When you jig the French, the weight lifts off the bottom, lifting the minnow as well. The weight falls quickly, stirring up the bottom, but the minnow drops at a natural rate. Keep in mind, the longer the leader, the slower your bait lifts and drops. This has been a deadly finesse approach. Another plus to this rig, when not jigging the French, it still serves as a viable presentation with no manipulation.

TROLLING

Early spring may seem like an inopportune time to troll. I used to believe that. Several years ago, I was fishing the mouth of the Menominee River near Marinette. During the course of that day, there had been maybe a dozen walleye caught (mostly smaller) among the forty or fifty boats present. By no means outstanding and not what the annual pilgrimage to Marinette is all about. Later that afternoon, two local anglers were headed in our direction, trolling. Within a few passes they had boated four walleye, one being a thirty-four inch female, a true trophy.

Their rig consisted of a three-way rig, anchored by a three or four ounce bell sinker and either a number 11 or 13 floating Rapala. The leader attached to the Rapala was 18-24 inches long. The weight in the rig is almost as significant as the lure itself. It is a must to keep your bait running directly below

the boat. Reason being, river systems can be a zoo. Long line trolling will result in tangling with fellow anglers. With heavy weights you can troll right below your boat, keeping your bait in the transducer's cone allowing you to know exactly where your presentation is.

When trolling, speed is critical. We usually troll 1-1.5 mph always holding the rod and giving it the occasional pump. Trolling in this manner excels in deep water river systems. I look for areas fifteen feet or more. These areas are usually pre or post spawn holding areas.

Lure selection is really a matter of choice but it must be a shallow runner. Rapalas, Dave's Kaboom Lures, Bombers Long A's, Reef Runners and Thundersticks are all baits that should get the nod.

These strategies are suggested as a means to coping with tough conditions. When gearing up for your first spring river walleye outing in '08, stick with the basics. Those things you already know from experience that have produced time and time again. Where most anglers get tripped up are those times when things are not the way they are supposed to be. Over time I have discovered tactics like those discussed here. Add them to your overall strategy this spring. You may just need them. *W*

Jason Gaurkee has been guiding, writing and filming television shows on the waters of Wisconsin and beyond for over ten years. He can be contacted at jmgaurkee@yahoo.com or 920.851.6655.



Red Tail chubs can be an effective alternative to fathead minnows during the spring river walleye runs.

Obtaining the prized redtail

The price of success is often high. Ask anglers, who sometimes pay \$8 for a dozen *Nocomis biguttatus* (hornyhead chubs, known locally as redtail chubs), about how expensive success can be. As redtail chubs have become increasingly appealing as walleye and smallmouth bass bait, prices have escalated while their abundance has diminished. Additionally, bait dealers and anglers have noticed that it is more difficult to purchase this prized minnow. The redtail chubs they buy are smaller than they were several years ago, possibly reflecting harvesting pressure. What I have found is that if you speak to a bait shop owner, often-times you can preorder them. Keep in mind you will need a few days notice here. If you have no luck with your local

bait shop owner, drop me a line. I know of many locations in Northern and North Central and North Eastern Wisconsin that usually carry chubs.

An alternative to spending is trapping. Back not so long ago, before the VHS paranoia, we used to trap redtails ourselves by baiting a minnow trap with a small amount of dog food (kibble type) and dropping it into a creek or river known to hold redtails. Within a few hours, you have enough to get started. You can still trap. However, your traps need to have tags obtained from your local game warden, and you can only use trapped minnows on the water in which they were trapped. Please, during the VHS scare, check the regulations. They seem to literally change day to day.



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Green Bay's Post Spawn Walleyes

Looking for the easy meal

By Paul Mueller

The post spawn walleyes on the bay of Green Bay are like you or me coming out of winter hibernation; looking for warmth, a big easy meal and sunshine to lie in. Many fishermen struggle this time of year, but follow a few simple rules and your odds of success will increase dramatically. Rule number one is find warm water. Warm water means spawning baitfish, easy food and a surge in activity. Remember that fish are cold blooded and an increase in water temperature means an increase in comfort and activity level. Combine food with energy and you will get actively feeding fish.

There are several types of food/baitfish that will spawn in succession in the shallow flats of Green Bay. Perch, shiners, minnows and alewives will all spawn in succession. The key is to identify where and exactly when—then you can fish actively feeding fish for several weeks in a row.

Walleyes will seek sunny areas to enjoy the benefits of warm water and the warmth of the sun as they recuperate from the spawning process. As mentioned above, this means that fish

“Rule number one is find warm water. Warm water means spawning baitfish, easy food and a surge in activity ...”

will be active when food is present, however, they will not travel out of their way to pursue your presentations. Rule number two is that your presentations must be precise and slow. A depth change of one foot can mean the difference between catching numerous fish or only a few. Use your GPS mapping system to tightly follow the

contours of the bay. Once you catch the fish, note that depth and adjust your presentation to fish at that particular depth until you stop catching fish. Speed is also a critical factor. These fish are looking for an easy meal and will not chase bait. Therefore, go ultra slow and allow your bait to be in front of the fish for a longer period of time. The likelihood of getting bites will increase. Presentations like crawler harnesses will be very productive because they combine the ability to troll slowly with the superiority of live bait. *W*

To book a trip with Master Captain Paul Mueller contact him at 262.490.7621 or walleyefish@sbcglobal.net.



Post spawn walleyes on the bay require a precise, slow presentation.

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Open Water Winter

The "Eyes" have it

By Phil Schweik

I look around and smile as another feisty walleye is slid into the net. It's the eleventh walleye caught in short order from the same Wisconsin River bend and still I am the only one on the water. It is early March, the temperature is 28 degrees and the walleyes are on fire.

Although beauty is in the eye of the beholder, the "Eye" in the opinion of most Wisconsin anglers stands above the rest of all species of fish. Feisty, abundant and great table fare, this is the most sought after of all game fish in Wisconsin. Most people target walleyes during the spring, summer, and fall, a few hardwater enthusiasts will give chase during the cold winter months, but what about the period between winter and spring? That time of year when ice remains on the lakes and access to river fishing is limited to only a few accessible landings?

With temperatures hovering in the 20s this early March morning, it looks like a good day to go fishing but the area lakes are still frozen. There isn't a lot of ice, certainly not thick enough to walk on, but you still want to go fishing. Here near Mosinee, the Wisconsin River is accessible and it is open year round for game fishing.

First I fish for an accessible boat landing, and likely will find several

landings iced in prior to success.

Expect even the landing that will ultimately offer access to the water to also be partially iced in. Despite thinking, "I've been here before," I also know that the river rewards will be worth the extra work (with safety always the determining factor of whether or not I will fish the river) and out comes the ice chisel. I hammer away at the remaining ice along the landing until it is open for easy access.

With access to the river gained, determining where I will fish is when the "reel" fun starts. I usually start with the deep river pools generally found four to six miles downriver from any dam. That is where the current has had a chance to slow down and the fish are stacked up in anticipation of the upcoming spring migration.

Look for pools 12 to 20 feet deep. I generally like deeper pools that are affiliated with outside bends in the river channel. That is where a lot of structure will have congregated from years of manipulation by heavy currents, or spring run-offs. These types of areas will concentrate schools of walleyes until the time is right for them to head upstream. Once you have located a potential hotspot, set up just upstream from the area and proceed to work a small 1/8 to 1/4 ounce jig tipped with a fathead minnow through the area. Let the

current drift your jig along the bottom but search the entire pool from top to bottom for active walleyes. Most of the time the active fish will be at the top of the pocket facing upstream so it is important to work your bait into the area following the direction of the current flow.

At this time of the year, with water temperatures in the low to mid 30s, the fish are going to be in a dormant state but a sunny day with a light breeze will out produce any over-cast day. The sunlight penetrating the water actually warms the fish, increases its metabolism and triggers more



Hooksetters guides are river rats who began to scout every hole and rock pile on the Wisconsin as kids. Shown are John Sparbel and Phil Schweik of Wausau.

activity. Not only does it warm the fish but the warm sun on your back makes it very comfortable to be out in the boat despite the time of year.

Back to safety, first and foremost. Watch out for the flowing bergs of ice. Floating ice is an early spring reality and you will have to move on occasion. But ice should not keep the safe and vigilant angler from the gold in the river holes. At least you won't be

dodging any boats at this time of the year. I'm willing to bet that with the exception of perhaps me and a few friends, you will be the only angler working the river. I'm also willing to wager that at the end of the day, you will be going home with a nice bag of walleyes. *WS*

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



Phil Schweik's clients, like John Niko, are put on multi-species of fish year-round on the Wisconsin river system and March open-water success is no exception. (Photo by Phil Schweik)

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DICK ELLIS

ON WISCONSIN OUTDOORS

Jumbo perch, big schools keep anglers busy

As Dave Kahler and Dennis Radloff rocked on a soft Lake Michigan chop and prepared the rods for a planned assault on spring perch, Bob Lauridsen and Larry Daub of Oconomowoc settled into their own wake with a live-well full of sweet reality. Their fish were definitely yellow perch. But, with a few stretching the tape to an obese 14 inches, they looked more like something from a perch fisherman's dream.

We had ridden a fishing tip and a reporter's prayer for a good story in early April to claim a spot off the edge of a tight circle of 19 boats just inside the Milwaukee harbor gap. A hastily planned brown trout trip in the harbor changed when Radloff's fellow guide contacts recommended "perch" instead. The proprietor of Joe's Bait in Milwaukee said it even better.

"A guy came in this morning with five perch," he said. "They weighed eight pounds."

Another tip from an angler pulling his boat from the landing near the Summerfest grounds suggested working in 33 feet. He had successfully used a slip bobber and a fathead. Radloff had his own version, same depth; three-way swivel, bell sinker on the bottom, low-visibility six pound fluorocarbon line, large fatheads on tiny gold hooks.

"I'm never afraid to get away from the crowd," he said as we settled into our position far from the masses. "That applies to walleye fishing on the rivers. You'll often catch more fishing off the edge. The fish are in one spot and they attract the boats, but I think the fish slide off with all that building pressure. The fish are still close. But they're not right where they were."

We sent the lines south and gently popped the minnows off the bottom.



OWO Guide Dennis Radloff of Oconomowoc and Dave Kahler of Watertown show a few of the Lake Michigan super perch taken in the Milwaukee Harbor. With Ellis, they caught a three man, 15-fish limit in one hour, keeping mostly males smaller than these big females to help protect the spawning population. (Photo by Dick Ellis)

The first perch came at five minutes. The fifteenth for a three man limit came at one hour. Five more were released. Four fat females between 13 and 14 inches were part of our take. The rest sent to the live-well were smaller males.

Sixty minutes on the big lake had offered three fishermen unscientific hope for the future of a Great Lakes yellow perch population long in decline. The biological facts though, and a more tangible hope, came in an interview with DNR Fisheries Technician Jim Thompson just after our success.

For the first time in decades, he said, two strong year classes of spawning fish were on the ideal rocky habitat of the Green Can Reef, the primary perch spawning ground in Milwaukee. Good numbers of the 2002 year class of yellow perch were found

in DNR nets during winter assessment and were expected to supplement 1998 class reproduction numbers.

"We're very hopeful and excited," Thompson said. "The 2002 class is not as strong as the '98 class but those fish are now three years old and sexually mature. Two spawning classes on the Green Can is something we haven't had in a very long time."

Perch currently being caught in the 11 to 15 inch range, he said, are the remaining fish from the excellent 1998 year class. Hopes for a Lake Michigan recovery of yellow perch have been almost exclusively hinged to the '98 year class: fish now possibly entering their final spawning season as they near the end of their life cycle.

"Those fish are clearly at the very upper limits of their reproductive years and at seven or eight years of age at the upper limit of their life span," Thompson said. "The 1998 year class was the best and really only year class of perch since the 1980s."

That class also offered extraordinary fishing Friday, despite a five fish daily bag limit to protect the fragile population. The season also closes May 1 through June 15 to ensure that the vulnerable fish are not harvested before or during the actual spawning period. Productive fishing on perch in a pre-spawn mode also has a biological basis.

Perch, Thompson said, like other cold blooded fishes, "are at the mercy of their environment" and experience



Packer fan Dave Dove knows firsthand that you don't need a boat to catch the jumbo perch of Lake Michigan. This beauty was taken from the rocks in the Kenosha Harbor. (Photo by Dick Ellis)

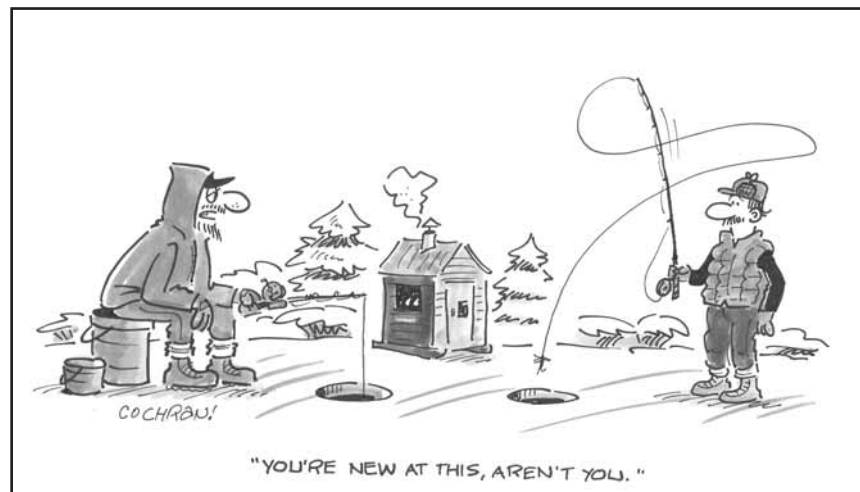
changes in early spring. As the water temperatures of Lake Michigan warm, the perch's metabolism increases, initiating heavy feeding. In colder water the fish requires less food to survive. The pre-spawn perch is genetically driven to eat more to store the energy it will require during spawn.

"It's in their best interest genetically to go on a pre-spawn feeding spree," Thompson said. "In a week or two as the actual spawning of May approaches, that feeding will taper off to almost nothing. Right now the fish are hungry and starting to assemble from all around this area to move on to the Green Can."

Plodding back through the harbor, we were uniquely satisfied to have the opportunity to find, fight and hold an extraordinary fish—and to remember 60 minutes of simple reality that no perch fisherman's dream could ever best.

"I've heard guys talk about fishing like that, but I've never seen perch that big," said Kahler. "It was fantastic, and something you want to do again." W

This story took place several springs ago. Lake Michigan perch fishing continues to improve and offers a tremendous experience despite a five fish limit. Contact Captain Dennis Radloff for Green Bay and southeast Wisconsin fishing seven days a week from April-November at www.sterlingmusky.com or 262.443.9993.



"Pritt-near" Perfect

Any day on the Wisconsin ice

By Bill Whiteside

By mid-December the word was out, big crappies on Big Chetak Lake in Sawyer County. On an unusually warm day in December, temperatures were hovering around 40 degrees, with some clouds and no wind. In other words, the conditions were "pritt-near perfect" for ice fishing.

Mike Lemanski, my brother, Jim and I arrived at the hot spot a little later than we wanted. We saw that four or five fish trap shacks were hunkered down surrounding a fish crib. It appeared they were all catching nice crappies. We drilled several holes around the shacks and marked very few fish. It seemed that if we were not right on top of the crib, you would have no luck.

Later, while Mike and Jim were fishing around the shacks, I decided to make a straight line of holes away from the action to check out different depths. After checking most of the holes I drilled, I became a bit discouraged. I decided we would have to look for another spot on the lake or leave the lake entirely.

Crappies are usually suspended, which makes them an easy mark on the Vexilar. I put my Vexilar in one of the last holes I drilled and it lit up like a Christmas tree. At first, I was not sure what I saw, so I pulled the line out and put it back in again. Sure enough, crappies were stacked and hungry. Minutes later, an 11-inch crappie was iced. Within 15 minutes, slabs of half-dozen crappies were ready to be shipped back to Eau Claire.

We may have been lucky this time, but I always recommend that fishermen drill as many holes as possible until you find the right spot. Be persistent. You never know when your Christmas tree will light up.


The weather was much different the following Saturday, the first day of a cold front. Although we knew it was going to be sunny, the temperatures were not going to get above zero. Although I'm a firm believer that the weather has an effect on how the fish bite, I know if I stay home because of the cold, I won't catch any fish at all.

We started early in the morning in the same area we fished the week before. The crappies were stacked

again, but were tough to catch. In this situation, I like to use a short, light-action rod (18"-24") with a spring bobber extended at the tip. I prefer a sneaky bobber where I can see the spring move and use it to jig my bait in a slow and consistent wavering motion. The shorter the rod, the easier it is to keep the line close to your body and out of the wind.

My favorite line is a two-pound test. It may be hard to see to tie your knot, but the fish can't see it either. We use this approach in deeper water (20-25'). We were using heavy baits such as ratso and #6 Moon Glows to get down to the bottom faster. It is important to get the bait down as fast as you can so you have a chance to get the fish before they leave the area.

No matter what the weather, ice fishing is a great sport. Fishing is not just about catching fish. It is about stories of another day on the water, stories of the "old days," and about fishing with family and those you simply like to spend time with.

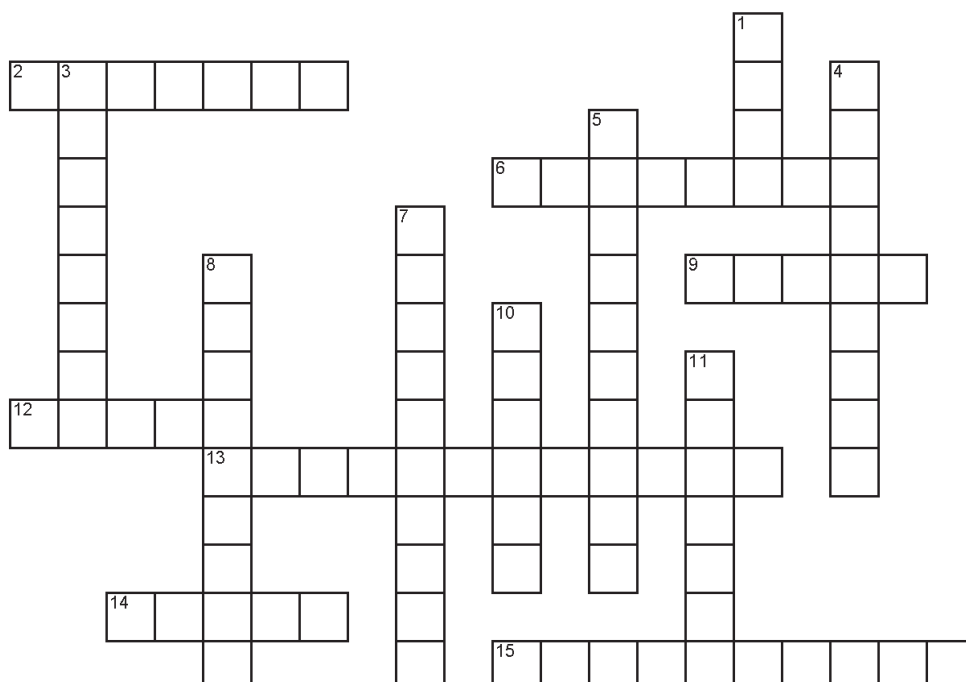
Good luck...and don't forget to take a kid fishing! 



Bill Whiteside, shown in high winds taking a very nice crappie on a north-west Wisconsin lake, is never afraid to leave the crowds to find success. (Photo by Dick Ellis)

Bill Whiteside is a highly successful open water and hardwater angler focusing mainly on the lakes of Wisconsin's north-west.

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- 5 Firearm and ammo maker.
- 7 Multi-tool maker.
- 8 Helps arrow fly right.
- 10 Hold arrows.
- 11 A food plot's worst nightmare.

Answers on page 32 xm

Cold Steel

Drift fishing tactics for pre-spawn steelhead

By Dave Sura

For those living along the shores of Lakes Michigan and Superior, "ice out" means steelhead. This, especially in Southeastern Wisconsin, has been occurring earlier each year. What was once March has changed to February, and in some cases January for anglers to get their first opportunity at open water steelhead. This, in my opinion, is the best time to target cold steel.

LOCATIONS

When looking for pre-spawn steelhead, look for the deepest water you can find. I generally will start looking close to the mouth of the river since these areas hold steelhead throughout the winter. Then work your way upriver. Classic locations such as river bends are good places to start. Fish the entire bend. Fish will hold at both the entrance and exit of the hole as well as in between depending on flow. Be sure to cover the width of the hole as well. Finding the entrance and exit of a hole will take some time, but will be well worth it. You can accomplish this by casting upstream, floating your bait downstream until it touches the bottom. Repeat this process as you move upstream, adjusting your depth as you go. Another classic location would be any major obstruction that impedes the flow of the river. These include bridge pilings, large boulders, and trees. Fish both the upriver and downriver sides of the obstruction to locate the deepest water. Once you've fished these areas, look for locals fishing "other" water and give those places a try. Spending time on the water is the best way to learn a river.

TACTICS AND EQUIPMENT

For many years floating spawn was the choice for catching steelhead. This is great way to catch fish, especially when the water is less than 35 degrees. When floating spawn, having fresh bait is crucial. Pre-tied, preserved sacs just don't have the same scent that fresh bait does. Tying hundreds of sacs a year like I do is a pain, but having a steelie rip drag off is well worth it. Any fresh spawn is good, but I feel that trout spawn works better for trout than does salmon spawn. When rigging spawn, keep it simple. A number six or eight octopus-style hook along with a few BB-size split shot tied under a fixed float is all you'll need to catch fish.



Dave Sura shows an early season steelhead taken from a Lake Michigan vein.

When choosing a float, I prefer a fixed float to a slip float, especially when the temperature is below freezing. Freezing temperatures can prevent a slip float from setting at the desired depth. Set the depth so that the bait occasionally contacts the bottom, since fish holding in current tend to hug the bottom. The amount of weight should allow the float to drift at the same speed as the current. Try your best to keep the presentation as natural as possible.

Over the past decade, drifting jigs as they do out west has become more popular. I prefer drifting plastics, although hair jigs work great as well. When drifting plastics, I like two-inch twister tails, like Berkley Power Grubs, but any brand will work. Jig sizes should range from 1/64 oz. to 1/16oz. depending on water clarity and flow. As a rule, use smaller jigs when the river is slow and clear and larger when the river is fast and dirty. Color can make a difference too. I normally start with white or pink and will switch if I'm not getting bit. Black, red, and orange are other good bets, so have a

variety of colors with you. Other plastics like one-inch panfish tubes also can be hot, especially when the water is low, clear and slow. As far as presenting jigs, switch the jig for the hook and follow the rules for drifting spawn. If the fish are fussy, add a waxie to the jig for some extra flavor.

When choosing a rod think of the size of the river you'll be fishing. Rods, like those made by St. Croix, will range in length from nine to 13 feet. As a general rule, the smaller the river the shorter the rod, the larger the river the longer the rod. Longer rods allow you to "mend" your line. Keeping less line on the water will keep your bait floating naturally as well as increase hooking percentages. Reels should have quality drags and hold a minimum of 150 yards of six or eight-pound-test monofilament.

TIMING

The southern rivers like the Pike and the Root will start first. These rivers also face the most pressure. As soon as the river opens, get out and fish.

Getting out early is important here. The first person to fish a hole will catch the active fish. As the season progresses, move north. Try fishing the Milwaukee or the Sheboygan. These rivers face less pressure and have great fishing to boot. If you're not sure of where to go, you can spend time searching on your own or you can hire a guide. Eric Haataja is a great fisherman and knows the Milwaukee well. Give him a call and he will hook you up.

There are many other rivers that hold decent populations of fish further up to the Michigan Border as well. From February through May steelhead can be found in rivers along the coasts of the Great Lakes. Whether you're a novice or a seasoned veteran, get out this spring and catch some cold steel. *W*

Dave Sura has fished Wisconsin waters for over 25 years. He specializes in shore and tributary angling for perch, steelhead and salmon on Lake Michigan. He can be contacted at 262.930.8260 or steelheadsura@yahoo.com.

DARRELL PENDERGRASS

OUT THERE*A day on the Brule*

With snow still on the ground and a chill in the air, a steelhead angler makes his way down to the Brule River on opening day. (Photo by Dick Ellis)

It is steelhead season once again, a time when each and every Wisconsin trout angler rejoices in the passage of winter.

At this time fishermen pay homage to the swelling of rivers and streams, and we celebrate the crossing over from dark to light. Finally the lake-run rainbow trout of Superior will migrate en masse before our very eyes, proof forever that life and hope move forward against all odds.

Dark clouds, chilled winds, rain, and cold cannot keep me or my brethren from venturing to the banks of our chosen streams. In past years my place of worship has been the Brule River, where big waters churn through Douglas County before spilling out along the south shore. I like it there. No, I love it there. You can feel and smell and watch life awaken before you among the cedars and the pines. Everything is new again.

It's hard to describe exactly what the pull is, about why we need to stand

beside a river awash with April rains, why I and others like me have to go. We must go. Yes, it's about fishing, but it isn't about fish. I feel reborn standing on the river, as if the waters have cleansed me somehow. It's a pilgrimage I have to make.

However, since my six-year-old son was being baptized into the steelhead-church-of-angling this year I stayed closer to home for the opener. I picked the Sioux River, just north of Washburn along the Big Rock State Campground. This is where we paid our respects and this

is where I wanted my son to don his waders for the first time, to cross the flowing waters to the pools and holes that hold the trout as they make their sojourn to places up above.

With Jack's hand gripped firmly in my own, I led him from the shore into the swirling waters as it rushed over rocks and boulders that were born at the dawn of time. We moved through the chaos of rushing waters to the calmness of deepened pools, carved out to give the trout a rest as they work their way upstream. Sometimes we all need some help, no matter our journey.

For the first time, Jack's small hands worked the line and the bait and the rod out across the pool, his body and his mind and his thoughts learning what it means and what it takes to be a steelheader. I stood beside him, without a rod. I did not fish.

We could not see and did not see trout before us as Jack fished. We did not see the anglers around us catching trout, as they too worked their chosen

spots. But Jack is learning what it means to have faith; a faith in what cannot be seen with eyes alone.

We did not spend an inordinate amount of time on the river, just enough to set the mind to thinking and pondering. I wanted Jack to catch a glimpse of what a steelhead fisherman is, without boring him with the details. I want him to discover that "catching" is just a small part of angling.

Still, the details are these: An angler who comes to iced waters chilled from the melting snows of winter, who cannot see through clay-red waters two feet in front of him, who will risk life and limb to cross the weight of a river live and on the move, for the possibility of catching a fish that may or may not have arrived at that spot, has faith. Not a religious faith. But faith in himself, but more so, a faith in nature—with all its glory.

When we were finished, Jack and I crossed back to shore without incident. There were no strikes for us this day;

we didn't see any big steelhead hens rolling below us. For some it would appear we simply came to the river, fished for a bit, and then went home. Simple. It's so much more than that.

In the truck, heading to town for lunch, my son looked out the side window and to the river. His feet were wet, his jacket soaked and his hands were red with cold. Jack had his hat pushed back on his head, his face tan with windburn.

"Dad," Jack said, his eyes never leaving the river. "We didn't catch anything. But I had a great time."

And the migration to the river continues. *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.

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KEVIN MICHALOWSKI

DOG TALK

Choosing the right leash

Have you ever really looked at all the options in the pet care aisle of any department store? Dogs are a \$38 billion (with a B) per year industry because we all buy all kinds of stuff to keep our canine friends healthy and happy. And it's fun to buy that stuff, too.

matic correction should the animal decide to disobey. I know all that sounds pretty harsh like I'm some sort of canine disciplinarian or something, but don't get me wrong; I love playing with a dog as much as the next guy, maybe even more. Yet the leash is more than a strap or a string. It is more than

styles: snaps and slip leads.

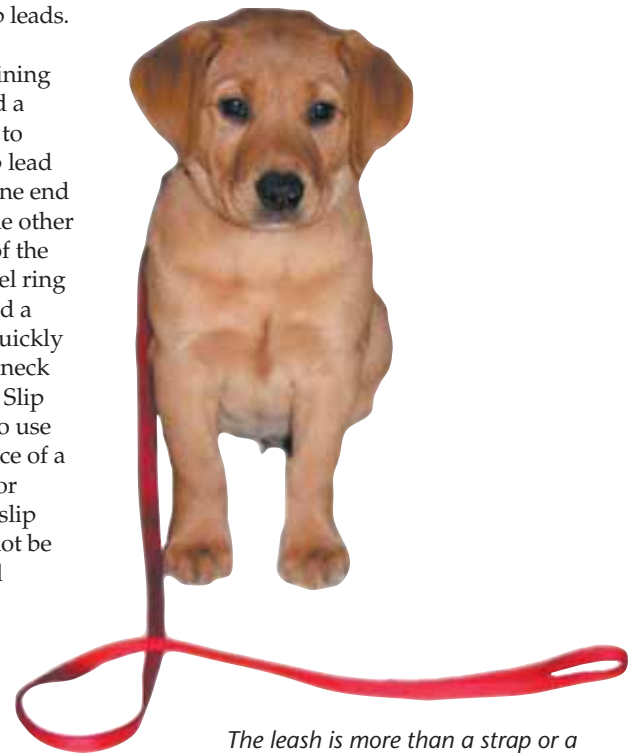
A slip lead is an invention of dog-training hunters who wanted a quick and easy way to leash a dog. The slip lead has a hand loop at one end and a steel ring at the other end. Pass a section of the lead through the steel ring and you have created a neck loop you can quickly drop over the dog's neck and be done with it. Slip leads are fast, easy to use and there is no chance of a snap ever breaking or pulling free. With a slip lead, the dog need not be wearing a collar and attachment is quick and sure.

On the down side, without a snap, the slip lead has no swivel at the end, meaning your dog needs to have good manners on the leash, or things

will get wrapped up a bit. Generally a slip lead is not a good choice for a puppy that has not yet learned to heel, but can be a great choice for a hunter moving from one field to the next or one who wants to keep his or her dog leashed while heading to the duck blind or some other location.

The retractable leash is almost ubiquitous and, as far as I'm concerned, not at all a good tool for training or controlling a dog. What do you want, a long leash or a short one? If your goal is to give your dog "more room to roam," consider what you are allowing the dog to learn. If the dog wants to go left, he can go left. Oh, sure, you can push the button that locks the leash, but the dog is already started in that direction and once you hit the lock, you can count on the dog tugging the leash and your arm. Have you ever seen a dog on a retractable leash that was not pulling its master around? I've seen very few. If you have a dog that is completely finished and has great manners, you can consider a retractable leash. But in most cases, you are just asking for trouble.

That leaves us the flat nylon leash. This is the perfect training tool for



The leash is more than a strap or a string. It is more than something you simply hang onto. It is a training tool and you should think about it as such when you buy and use one.

(Photo by Kevin Michalowski)

mastering basic commands and works great generally for walks around town. A good flat nylon leash is strong, light and versatile. But still you should match your leash to the dog. A young puppy needs only a narrow leash, perhaps half an inch wide with a lightweight clip or snap. But be careful with the snap. I'm currently training a headstrong Labrador puppy that requires quite a few corrections. Even though the dog only weighs 18 pounds, after a week of tugging the leash, the metal swivel holding the clip to the leash bent and opened up. Then I had a two-part leash and my part was not connected to the puppy.

As the dog gets bigger, go to a wider strap and a stronger clip. Buy a quality leash and it will serve you well. Once you get to the point of your training where the dog responds to your commands without the leash, you won't need anything longer than a six-foot nylon strap. *W*

Kevin Michalowski is author of "15 Minutes to a Great Dog" and "15 Minutes to a Great Puppy" (Krause Publications, \$12.95 each) and has been training dogs for 10 years. If you have questions or comments on dog care, email him at askdogtalk@hotmail.com.

"Dogs are a \$38 billion (with a 'B') per year industry because we all buy all kinds of stuff to keep our canine friends healthy and happy..."

But have you given any thought to the leash you use on your dog? And I mean real thought, not just whether or not it matches the dog's collar or your favorite dog-walking coat. The leash is your direct connection to the dog. It gives you control over the dog and provides you with a means of auto-

something you simply hang onto. It is a training tool and you should think about it as such when you buy and use one.

For all intents and purposes there are three kinds of leashes: rope, flat nylon and retractable. Then there are basically two types of attachment

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First Chance To Hunt

And a second chance at life

By Pat Clark

"It's all about the kids." Those are the words of Pardeeville area hunter safety instructor Tony Pautzke. On a cold January evening I drove down the forgotten back roads of Columbia County, twisting and turning to the shores of Duck Creek. A moon shone over the snowy fields chasing shadows of deer moving about. My destination was the quiet cozy community of the Wyocena Village. At their Community Center, 30 students awaited the beginning of their hunter safety course.

Greeting the kids first was Dan Zanon, a special guest who instructs cabinet making and millwork at the Fox Lake Correctional Institute. Dan announced that through his wood-working shop, all participants in the hunter safety program would receive a personalized turkey box call. The

participants filled out a form to have what name they would like engraved into the white oak, hickory and hard maple wood. They also chose what kind of handle they wanted on the call, either left, right or centered. Many of the kids chose their given name, but some used their nickname. One student, "Hawk," filled out the form and said, "I can't wait to use the new turkey call this spring on my family's farm." Dan also did a short demonstration on how to use a box turkey call.

These turkey calls are unique, not only in looks and use, but because there is a deeper meaning behind them. Inmates from the Fox Lake Correctional Institute are working on this project to build skills in woodworking. Not only do our future hunters have a life-long turkey call to use, but inmates are being educated in the skills that could offer them a second chance in life. One of the



Inmates at the Fox Lake Correctional Institute created turkey box calls for Hunter education students preparing for their first chance to hunt. The woodworking skills being learned offer the inmates a second chance at life.

"Not only do our future hunters have a life-long turkey call to use, but inmates are being educated in the skills that could offer them a second chance in life ..."

goals of the Fox Lake Correctional Institute is to put inmates through a vocational educational program that is certified by the Moraine Park Technical College. The hope is to reduce re-entry of inmates back into our institutions. This is not only a win for the kids and the inmates who now have a valuable and marketable skill, but also for the taxpayers.

"Very cool to have my own turkey call with my name on it," student Billy said upon filling out his turkey call form. "I can't wait to use it with my hunting partner, my dad."

The personalized turkey calls were to be handed out after they were made on the students' last night of hunter education. Handing out the calls were DNR Game Warden Casey Krueger and Wisconsin Department of Corrections Fox Lake Warden Jodien Deppisch.

The custom turkey call program is the end result of many groups coming together for a great common cause.

Those involved are the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Law Enforcement Division; Wisconsin Department of Corrections, Fox Lake Facility; Wyocena Village Town Board, Rio Conservation Club; and the Pardeeville Area Hunter Safety Instructors Association.

After the hunter safety participants completed their forms, Master Instructor Roger Bessac continued educating the students on the different types of gun actions and the safety needed to handle them.

The drive back through the wandering curves of highway G seemed a lot warmer that night knowing that there are many folks who really care about our hunting tradition and future. And, the future of that other sometimes forgotten subjects... people in need. *W*

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

REAL MEN BLEED

Are You a Wisconsin Blood Brother?

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JJ Reich
On Wisconsin Outdoors Columnist

Canada On Your Budget

Ontario Fishing 101

By Dick Henske

The sheer size of Ontario is daunting. It is Canada's second largest province, covering over one million square miles and stretching from the Great Lakes of the U.S. border to Hudson Bay. Relatively inaccessible, this wild and beautiful region can be reached not only by air, but also by occasional roads. It's these new roads, made to move the timber cut all over Ontario, which can also cut your costs. Northern pike, musky, lake trout, walleye, smallmouth, brook trout, perch, whitefish and crappies are all available if you know where to go.

Costs have gone up since our dollar value has dropped against the Canadian dollar. Along with the high price of gasoline, fly-in trips into the bush are very expensive. But there is a way to go! Use the Internet to find remote cabins or resorts that are as good as the fly-ins for half the price. You cannot just go in and camp in Canada. You are required to stay at a campground, motel, cabin, lodge or houseboat. Ontario has over 400,000 lakes and thousands of the remote ones, accessible by car, are as "fishy" as the fly-in areas.

Western Ontario borders Minnesota, so Wisconsinites normally use either the Pigeon River crossing at Thunder Bay or at International Falls. From Wisconsin you'll travel 600 miles to fish or hunt. But speed limits are lower in Canada and you really can't speed due to road conditions, especially when passing through the Indian reservations. I travel 460 miles to an outpost camp from Northern Wisconsin (Vilas County). It takes ten hours, including the border crossing.



Shore lunch is a part of the Canadian experience.

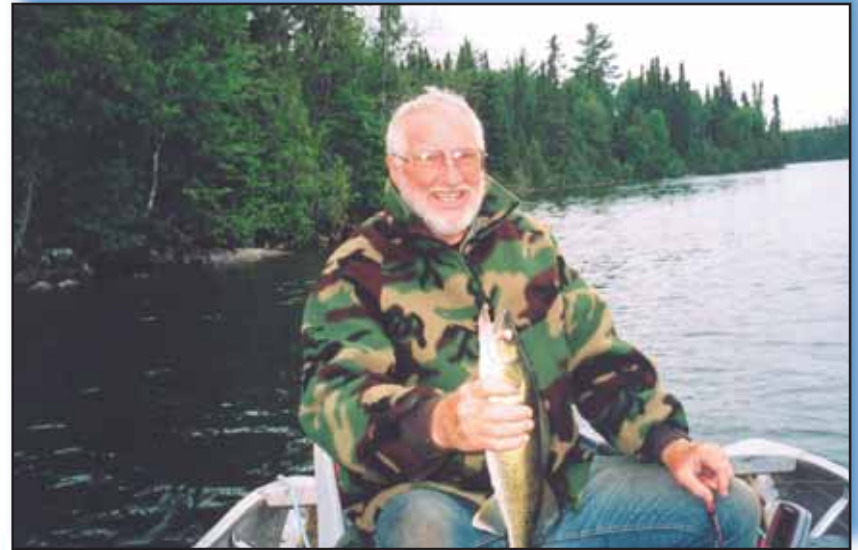
The border crossing can be time consuming. Cross early or late in the day. Remember, one case of beer or one bottle of liquor is allowed. No potatoes were allowed in 2007. No guns, unless you register and pay \$25 per gun. Taxes are expensive too; add 15% on everything including your cabin/resort, and you cannot reclaim those taxes as in the past.

Live bait is very restricted. Nightcrawlers must be in approved bedding. Leeches are not allowed in most areas. No live minnows. Buy canning salt and salt your own minnows, it works great. We, a large group of Wisconsin retirees nicknamed "The Not So Over The Hill Gang" by the OWO excuse for an editor, make strips out of the silver/white skin from the fish bellies and they work great on jigs.

How do you find a great place to fish? I can't believe the hoards of fishermen who go into Ontario and stay at the big resorts where the only rewards are great service and comradeship. They go to the same place year after year, love the getaway, but experience only average fishing. I have great comradeship and average fishing in Vilas County, and great service too from my wife, Mariel, if I treat her right. What I want is the great fishing that Canada offers. What I need to do to find it is to get away from the fished-out lakes.

Many resorts rent outpost cabins, that you can reach by truck or boat, that have great fishing. Many of these were fly-in lakes that the resort owner has purchased or leased to rent. Many of these outposts have only one cabin on the lake. From my experience, the resort/campground will not have the

quality of fishing that the remote satellite lakes have. One outfitter near Dryden has 25 lakes he steers his clients to, while they enjoy his great lodge on an average fishing lake. He offers walleye, northern and lake trout lakes that are true "honey" holes.



Dick Henske has been fishing Canada every year since taking early retirement as an elementary principal at 55 almost 20 years ago.

***"Plan on spending \$800 to \$1000 for a fly-in
and \$400-\$600 for a drive or boat-in,
plus 15% taxes ..."***

Canada is leaning toward catch and release, except the fish you eat. Think again if you want to cheat and over-bag. Fines are five or six times greater than a similar charge in Wisconsin. Officers have authority to inspect, search, arrest and seize. They can enter your cabin to check the refrigerator. Follow the rules!

Spring fishing is the best; expect some ice or snow the first two weeks, but with the warming trends, lakes are all open by the May 15th opener. Fall fishing is great too. Summer fishing can be tough, but the fish are there; use your locator and move until you find them. Northerns will be in the downed trees, shorelines or preying on bait fish. Walleye will be deep—10 to 40 feet on structure. Some people cast for northerns and walleyes. We cast artificials for northerns, but use jigs with a variety of plastic tails dressed with some form of bait or meat.

We fish medium to light rods and line. Make sure you bring extra rope to make rope anchors on remote lakes, fish markers to stay on structures, and one locator per boat. I would suggest duct tape and a tube of Goop to help keep these backwater boats dry.

Going to Canada next year? Plan now! Call the resorts and push them for answers to find quality fishing. Try outfitters near Ignace, Atikoken, Dryden, Souix Lookout and Kenora. You can also find outfitters on big waters if that's your bag. Try Lake of the Woods, Eagle Lake and Lac Seul, which are within the 600-mile range.

If you've got the bucks, fly-ins can be great. I feel Northern Wilderness Outfitters (800) 274-3666 is one of the best. Vic, the owner, has 20 lakes with great cabins with generators, solar energy, turbo fitted float planes and quality fishing. Plan on spending \$800 to \$1000 for a fly-in and \$400-\$600 for a drive or boat-in, plus 15% taxes. Our group of eight old guys fish and catch fish most of the day, have delicious shore lunches and relax in the evening. Search it out! Plan ahead! Expect a lot! And, of highest importance... get the rust out! *W*

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.

Void In The Heart, Not In The Mind

Memories keep best friend close



Kisha is gone, never forgotten. (Photo by John Volkman)

By John Volkman

The last day of duck season can bring a wide range of emotions. I've come to look forward to the last days of the season even more so than opening day. Weather, migration patterns and the thought of casing the shotgun for another 10 months add anxiety and excitement to the last decoy set of the year. When Mother Nature cooperates, the last days can bring the most exciting hunts of all.

The last day of the 2007 Wisconsin duck season was different. I arose too late by most water fowling standards, got dressed and went outside to plow my driveway clear of the five inches of wet snow that had arrived the previous night. I had no intentions of hunting. My heart kept me from being in it. But minutes after walking out the door, I heard a flock of Canadas flying low in the fog directly over my house. By the time the second flock flew over, I had my camo on, gun in hand and a bag of decoys over my shoulder. After a hasty walk to the middle of the cornfield directly behind my home, I set out two dozen Canada silhouettes and sat down on the edge of the spread. As I dug through my blind bag for a handful of shot shells, a portable dog dish reminded me that this hunt would be unlike any other over the past 15 years.

You can hunt ducks and geese by yourself. But water fowling is not a solitary sport. Hunts with a retriever are experiences that, for reasons only

known by dog owners, produce memories that last longer and remain more dramatic than those without.

I had lost my 15-year-old Lab in June. So this fall, each hunt had included friends and only their own retrievers. Throughout the season I had taken little pause to reflect on past hunts with my Lab. This day was different. Without anyone else to make conversation or the sight of another retriever romping through the dekes, it didn't take long for my mind to wander.

As the first flock of mallards skirted the decoys my mind drifted back to that September day back in 1992 when I was given a shiny little black female lab as an early birthday gift. To this day, the finest birthday gift I've ever received and likely the most influential. "Kisha" was small by labrador standards at 55 lbs. soaking wet, but as big as they come when it came to natural hunting ability. Like most labs, she had three loves—hunting, people and food, not necessarily in that order. Her ability to find birds never ceased to amaze me, even after seeing it happen thousands of times (a perfect fit for my inadequacy as a dog trainer). I learned much more while training her in her early years than I thought possible and the little black fireball turned her master into a bonafide duck hunting fanatic. Without her, I truly believe my hunting passion would have taken a completely different turn.

As flock after flock arrived and departed, I failed to raise my gun. Instead, each group of birds would bring back another memory...

... A diver hunt on Lake Winnebago with longtime friends Eric Carper and Bill Ewald, where Eric and I shot at a drake bluebill skirting the decoys that eventually went down belly up 200 yards from our boat blind. After Kisha made the long swim to the cripple, the duck righted himself and a ten minute chase ensued with Kisha finally submersing her entire body to catch the drake. When she brought the bird to hand, the drake's leg sported a band so worn only two numbers were legible. Each time I look at that band I can see Kisha diving after that drake bluebill.

... A solo, early January pheasant hunt with single digit temps and blowing snow like rivets banging into your face, where I followed Kisha along several miles of an Iowa cornfield terrace. She pointed and flushed 47 individual hen pheasants before finally pushing a rooster up, her tail wagging just as hard on the rooster flush as the first hen hours earlier.

... Halloween 1995, on a rock covered point, which jutted out into a North Dakota lake during what many would refer to as the "grand passage" of waterfowl. A huge cold front had hit the prairie with 50 mph sustained winds and the thermometer only showing in the 20's. The sky was pocked dark with every type of waterfowl in a mass exodus from the breeding grounds. The lake attracted ducks looking for rest as we had thousands upon thousands of ducks decoy to our small spread in a matter of hours. The three of us watched as my little

black dog retrieved each and every bird flawlessly in some of the most brutal weather I have ever hunted in. I can still see Kisha fighting the swells back to me with a drake mallard in her mouth while a flock of Bluebills 100 strong landed in the decoys all around her. She never wavered.

...Several hunts during the early part of the season, just Kisha and me, where a simple walk would produce a full limit of ducks and not a shot fired from my gun: a result of Kisha performing mop-up duty at one of Wisconsin's heavily hunted public marshes. Further evidence in the endless proof that a Lab's nose never shuts off.

So I sat, an hour into the last duck hunt of 2007, yet to fire a shot. I am not sure how many flocks of birds had hovered over the decoys during my daydreaming through Kisha's life, but I know there were many for the taking. It didn't matter today. There was no urgency. For on this day the birds kept coming and eventually I took my limit. As I picked up the last mallard of the day and studied it in my hand I realized how duck hunting, as life, isn't nearly as rich without a little black Lab at your side. *W*

John Volkman of Neenah, Wisconsin is an outdoor/hunting product manufacturers' sales rep for Mike Wieck 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.



John Volkman and Kisha close out another day in the goose fields. Fifteen seasons together make it hard to say goodbye.



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RAY HOWELL

KICKING BEAR*Michael's first bow kill*

Two years ago the Wisconsin Bowhunters Association adopted Kicking Bear, a mentor-driven program that gets underprivileged kids off the streets and into the outdoors. The second Annual WBA Kicking Bear event, headed by Greg Prince, was held in New Lisbon on September 8 and 9, 2007. The WBA also held its 61st State Broadhead Annual Shoot in 2007 since its inception in 1946. It is the longest running shoot in the United States. The event routinely draws between 700 and 1000 shooters annually.

The Kicking Bear event has an area all to itself that uses fun and games to introduce kids to the wonderful world of archery, including its own 3-D course. Again this year, there were lots of kids attending. As in all events held nationally, any funds raised will go right back to help these kids. There are lots of kids and families who cannot afford to purchase archery equipment so this is a great tool to help get these kids started.

Such was the case with Michael Jones, who won a brand new Edge bow by Diamond. Diamond, by BowTech, has been donating bows for these events. Up to 10 bows were given to kids who could not afford them at some of these events due to the additional efforts of the clubs involved.

I told Michael that I would take him on his first whitetail hunt once I taught him the proper way of shooting a deer by being very accurate with a bow. Wintertime is my favorite time of the year to take kids on a hunt. The deer are easy to pattern and you can get them in close for a good, humane shot.

Michael and I set a Double Bull blind up in an apple orchard. It only took a few days before the deer were used to the blind. The severe cold weather and the amount of snow had stressed the deer and made them very easy to pattern to and from their bedding and feeding areas. Using a pair of Nikon optics and watching from a distance, Michael and I knew exactly where to put the blind to get the deer in close to us, where the wind would be in our favor the majority of the time.

Michael and I knew that we were going to attempt to harvest a deer at a distance of 20 yards or less. One of the best ways that I found practicing with new hunters is to cut out a cardboard silhouette of a deer and teach them how to follow the back of the front leg lines to the center of the animal. Then hold tight—release the arrow—with good

follow through. This method always works great on the cardboard silhouettes. But it's what happens to a person when the real thing is standing at 20 yards or less that you do not have any control over. It takes an incredible amount of patience to wait for the right shot and then to follow through. It all becomes mental.



Michael and mentor Ray Howell, founder of Kicking Bear, practiced and scouted before having the opportunity to tag Michael's first deer with bow and arrow.

We knew there was a four-point buck with a very large body feeding pretty regularly in the area. The morning of the hunt we glassed the area before we were going to go into the blind and we saw the buck with several does feeding in the open in the orchard. We decided to leave and return later, hopefully not spooking any deer while getting into our blind. Just after noon, Michael and I went back to the apple orchard in a very heavy snow. There were still two deer feeding within 50 yards of the blind. We decided to take our chances and try and sneak into the blind because the buck was nowhere in sight.

Both deer left and went to the other side of the orchard just as we crested the hill. We got into the blind and set up with Michael practicing pulling his bow, both while sitting down and also kneeling just as we had done at home.

Little did I know that this would turn out to be one of the more incredible hunts I'd ever been on! It wasn't 15 minutes and there were does feeding within 40 yards of us. And as the snow kept coming down, more deer started to enter the orchard. I've always had an

extreme amount of luck hunting during weather fronts. Michael's eyes were peeled for anything that moved. Every time another deer would come into the orchard, he had it in view before I did. Then things really started to happen. The deer were feeding with the wind to their backs and coming into us. I could not believe how close these deer were

ment and the hunt would be over. I could not believe the amount of patience and control Michael was showing. This went on for at least three minutes, but it seemed like three hours! The buck didn't move—he just kept staring. Then all of a sudden the doe standing next to us bolted and I heard her run off behind the blind. The buck followed the doe with his eyes as she ran out as if he was trying to figure out what spooked her.

Michael was still sitting there ready for the opportunity to draw his bow. For whatever the reason, the buck did not follow the doe. He turned completely around and started walking back toward the other deer and that was Michael's opportunity. It was as if he had been doing this all his life. The bow came back to full draw, I gave a short grunt, the buck stopped and the arrow was released. Everything went into slow motion. Michael had made a perfect slightly-quarterming shot! The buck bolted. I got so excited I could not believe what had just unfolded! I looked at Michael and I said, "You pinched! What an incredible shot." We waited in our blind for about 15 minutes and then stepped out into the orchard.

The snow was still coming down and the wind had picked up. I was worried about how the blood trail was going to look with these conditions. We walked up to where the deer had been standing when Michael released the arrow. I could follow the blood trail with my eyes right to the wood line. And there, just inside the woods, lay this magnificent buck and a dream come true for Michael. I can't describe the feeling of being with youths on their first hunt and having the opportunity to be a part of their first harvest.

What a great tool hunting is to spend time with those who need a mentor in their life—not only to share the outdoors but also all the wonders that the Lord has put here for us.

We had a wonderful prayer of thanks together kneeling over this buck. Michael has become a great "fishing" partner through archery. Matthew 4:19

W

getting to the blind. At one point I put the range finder on a big doe and told Michael that she was within 20 yards. He said he wanted to hold out and wait for the buck. I don't know if I could have done that at 12 years old.

As the afternoon wore on, there were deer everywhere. Several does had passed within our 20 yard marks. Then I heard Michael whisper, "Don't move, don't move, here come two more deer." As we were watching them come close to us, a third one appeared. It was our four-point buck. Boy—did I get excited! I thought what is the chance that we'll get a good shot on this buck? I was no more than thinking about that and the buck came forward and nudged one of the does in the back end and she ran forward and stopped within feet of our blind. Michael could have reached out and touched the deer—it was that close! We were both holding our breath.

The buck walked at an angle to our left, stopped, and looked right into our blind. He was perfectly broadside—the exact shot we had been practicing. But I knew that he was so focused on us or on the deer close to us that any move-

Recently honored by Outdoor Life, Ray Howell is founder of Kicking Bear, a national organization dedicated to enriching the lives of troubled and at-risk young people through outdoor experiences. Connect with www.kickingbear.org.

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S. WILKERSON

SURPLUS FIREARMS

To shoot or not to shoot

Nestled deep in the dark recesses of my gun cabinets lounge a pampered few. Rifles and handguns whose brief shooting careers are over or never even started. They are the firearms of my modest collection that I consider too valuable or potentially valuable to shoot. As long as I own them, they will probably remain in their present state of suspended animation.

With a few exceptions, all of these rifles and pistols were actually bought to shoot. In fact, most of them are former military weapons purchased because they had historical value and, as a bonus, chambered inexpensive surplus ammunition.

My first such purchase was a 1944 vintage Mauser 98k with all matching numbers. I bought it in 1972 for \$100 from one of my father's co-workers, a vet who brought it back from Europe in a duffel bag. That rifle is now easily worth eight times that amount. A pretty shrewd investment for a 13-year-old kid, if I do say so myself.

Not so smart was same person, twenty years later, buying an excellent British Enfield Mk IV for \$90 and "improving" it. Improving it meant removing its rather sloppy, although probably original, Suncorite paint finish from the barreled receiver and then cold-bluing the whole works. Compounding this outrage was the ill-advised decision to put a nice shiny coat of Tru Oil on its like-new stock. Shortly thereafter, similar "upgrades" were performed on a matching numbers Polish M44 carbine bought for \$80.

Some years later, thanks to the world-wide Internet, I discovered, much to my chagrin, that these guns had some collector value, or did, until I happened to them. Armed with this new-found knowledge and desperate to right these wrongs, I removed the Tru Oil with lacquer thinner, applied a more original boiled linseed finish, and

peddled these victims of my ignorance to assuage my guilt. Originality counts, I learned, and I vowed never to make mistakes like those again.

Although, some gun collecting zealots might think that I did. When I got the short end of the ugly stick in a CMP luck-of-the-draw-purchase M1 Garand, I chucked its beyond-hideous Greek replacement stock and replaced it with an after-market version practically before I had the box open. I also had its metal re-parkerized. The rifle now looks as good as it shoots. In some circles, however, I committed the ultimate sacrilege: I tampered with a gun's "history."

To which, I say, "Bullocks." That gun had no real history. It was a Harrington & Richardson rifle built in 1954, so it never saw a battle and it was far from factory original. Ripe for practical improvements, in other words.

Some guns are like that and some aren't. No one in their right mind would chrome plate the Red Baron's Lugar or use cold blue to touch-up the muzzle wear on Patton's Colt SAA .45. Firing a matching numbers WWII vintage 98k is also a bad idea because you would risk cracking its 60-plus-year-old stock.

So at what point should a gun stop being fired and relegated to the status of safe queen? Like so many things, beauty is in the eye of the beholder—and his or her wallet. I have been buying and trading (usually at obscene monetary loss) guns for decades. In other words, I have guns that I can shoot without guilt. Anything that I think might one day be worth more money than I paid for it due to the vagaries of the collectible gun market, I buy and then leave alone, hoping to reap riches and/or smug satisfaction at a future date.

Just think how rich lots of old guys would be if they had such foresight. Don't they feel silly now for drilling

and tapping the receiver of their 1903 Springfield to mount a Tasco scope or hacking the sight ears off of Grandpa's M1917 to give it a more "modern sporting rifle" appearance.

In the 1990s, clairvoyant types bought Russian SKSs for a couple hundred dollars and semiautomatic Russian Tokarev rifles for not much more. Really smart people bought Chinese AKs and new-in-the wrapper Mk IV Enfields for a pittance. Dumb people now kick themselves in the rump for wasting their money on run-of-the-mill hunting rifles, which, of course, is what I did.

So what would a smarty pants venture capitalist slash gun collector buy now? Unfortunately, the well has become pretty dry because simple supply and demand is driving up prices. Hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, of the guns still exist in warehouses across the world, but access is being denied to even more willing buyers. Thanks to some silly United Nations treaties, many countries have agreed not to sell their surplus firearms to exporters. Instead, they destroy them and forego the revenue these guns could contribute to their bankrupt national budgets. Many desirable guns, like German G43s and Broom Handle Mauser pistols, are barred from importation for reasons I doubt the BATF could even explain.

Not that some pretty desirable bargains don't still exist. They do, indeed, and here's what you will do if you are smart. First, fulfill the requirements necessary to purchase the best grade M1 Garand from the CMP you can afford. After that acquisition, buy an M1 Carbine from them.

Next, get a curio and relic license and order a Russian-captured (RC) 98K. Granted, these rifles were disassembled, re-armored, and reassembled, but they have a real history denied by most of the guns now available on the



Romanian version of the Russian TT 33. Another Century International Arms Import, the gun has never been fired since being refurbished in a Romanian armory. Inexpensive now, this pistol will certainly increase in value. (Photo by Dick Ellis)

surplus market. Every RC saw service on the Eastern Front, where some of the bloodiest battles of history were fought. Expect to pay \$200 - \$400. For good measure, buy a Russian 91/30 or M44. They are practically free, generally less than \$100, and have a history like the captured 98Ks.

Other good bets would be CZ 52 and CZ 83 pistols from the Czech Republic, where you can buy all day for less than \$250. Eastern Bloc TT33 pistols are still affordable, although the less common Russian and Hungarian versions are really getting pricey. Excellent Romanian versions can now be had for \$200. M44s made in Hungary, Poland and Romania are escalating in price, although they are currently relatively affordable. M91/30s exhibiting East German markings are money in the bank. So, too, are the very last, foreign-made, real AK variants imported to the US: the Romanian SAR 1, 2 and 3s, still obtainable for less than \$400. (Current WASRs do not have real AK receivers.)

There you have it. Bonafide investments that can also be shot, although I would suggest sparingly if you want to increase your return in the years to come.

So empty out that TSA and buy a real hedge against inflation—surplus firearms. You can thank me later, and for goodness sake, leave the cold blue and Tru Oil in the bottle. *W*

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



Author's MK IV Enfield. Imported in the 1990s by Century International Arms, the rifle appears never to have been fired since its manufacture in 1953. Would you shoot it? (Photo by Dick Ellis)

Elementary

Gobbler lessons in a wooded classroom

By Jeff Schilling

I touched the peg to my slate call once again and immediately heard the thunderous gobble of an eager Tom on the other side of the ridge. He was closing in on my position quickly! I raised my 12 gauge shotgun and waited for the Tom to visit his supposed "hen-in-waiting." Suddenly, not one but two heads popped into view, both with great interest in the hen decoy. The two Toms got within 20 yards of my position and after the sound of my shotgun, one lay motionless on the ground. That is how it unfolded for me a few years ago, one of my very few picture perfect hunts. A good number of my hunts have not progressed so seamlessly. In my failures, I have learned a thing or two from the turkeys. Lessons, some elementary, learned from these unlikely teachers prove that failure can be more valuable than success.

Scouting is essential for spring turkey hunting success. However, even the best scouting does not always put the bird in the game bag. On several occasions, I have had great confidence in my guess as to where the roosting flock would travel, as they would fly down from the trees, until they showed me otherwise. One



Like the author, most Wisconsin turkey hunters learn from past mistakes. Here, Chuck Jurcek of Mukwonago lifts a hefty Waukesha County Tom after experiencing his share of rookie failures. (Photos by Dick Ellis)

such occurrence in particular stands out. After scouting my area, I was sure that all I was going to have to do to bag my turkey was show up at my blind. The turkeys had other plans. I got in my ambush spot well before first light. Just before sunrise I could

hear the turkeys clucking in the trees and expected an easy tag filled. Those birds did something different than they have done in my scouting observations, and headed away from my position. **Lesson learned:** be flexible, expect the unexpected and take nothing

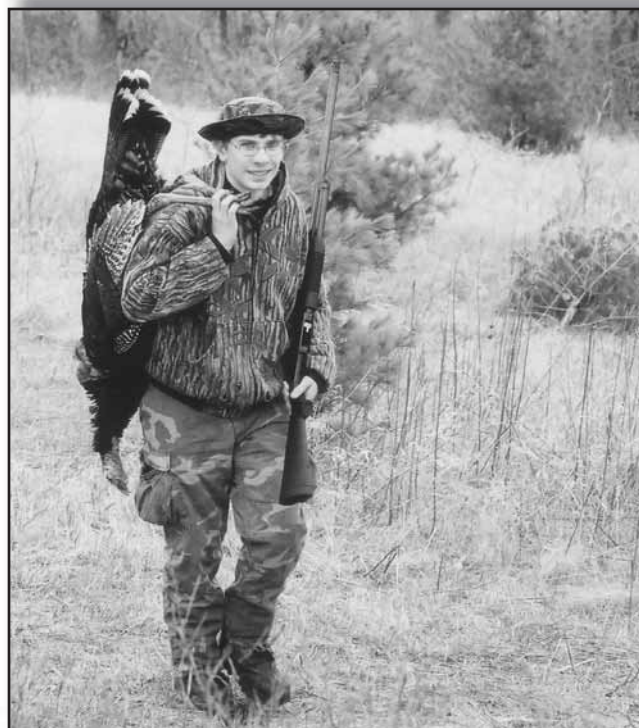
for granted when anticipating the possible movements of turkeys.

Another related opportunity for learning occurred during a hunt in which I had captured the attention of three Toms. They would gobble in response to every one of my calls. I positioned myself directly in their path. The turkeys eventually got lockjaw and no longer responded to my calling. That is, until I heard a booming gobble come from right behind me! Those stealthy turkeys snuck around behind me and never made it to my side of the tree. If I would have been in a pop-up blind or even a makeshift blind I may have been able to turn toward them for a clean shot. **Lesson learned:** be flexible, allow for the ability to adjust positions when a turkey arrives from an unexpected direction.

Other teachable turkey moments occurred when after finding my blind and calling, I would see a more promising area and leave for that one. More often than not, this proved to be a mistake. For instance, after getting a turkey to answer my calls and then waiting for nearly 30 minutes, I would then move closer to where I thought the turkey was residing. On more occasions than I would like to admit, I would eventually see that turkey in the first spot looking for the hen he had heard earlier. As a result of these experiences, I have learned to wait for a few hours in my initial location and this has led to increased success. In my discussions with other hunters, I have found that many have made this same mistake. **Lesson learned:** be patient and give the birds enough time to find their way to the decoy and calls.

It is difficult to hunt turkeys when they stop gobbling en route to your setup, or don't gobble at all. It is important to remain patient and stay put. Quite often this strategy brings success. I have had my share of perfect turkey hunts but more often I have dealt with gobblers that won't cooperate. The next time you get outsmarted by a Tom, don't get frustrated. Instead, learn from the turkeys in the wooded classroom. Hopefully the next time you are in the field, you will be the one teaching a lesson or two to the turkeys. *W*

Jeff Schilling is an avid Wisconsin hunter.



Take a kid hunting ...



...and teach her ethics in the field.

TOM CARPENTER

CUB'S CORNER*Create a bullhead adventure this spring*

Even though I knew the ice must have been off the local lakes, fishing was the last thing on my mind as I pulled my single-speed Schwinn into the driveway that warm, almost sultry mid-April afternoon so long ago. But there it was: the family car—a tank of a late-60s vintage Impala—with fishing rods leaning up against it.

How could it be? Wasn't it too early in the season to be fishing? We'd never fished open water this early before. Heck, we had still been ice fishing a few short weeks ago.

"Where are we going fishing?" I wondered aloud.

"Bullheading," was Dad's reply. "Let's get loaded and ready. Grab that box of nightcrawlers you picked the other night. Mom's got dinner ready, then we'll head out."

I couldn't believe it. For a boy who could never get enough fishing, it was a dream come true. It was out of the blue. The world was mine.

And we had a grand adventure all-around. Time has eroded my recollection of which events happened on which nights. But the memories themselves are clear. And from that year on, bullheading was a spring tradition in our family.

There was the evening that three deer came to the water's edge for a drink soon after we had cast out our lines and sat back to wait for darkness. It was my first encounter with wild

deer, and the whitetails' sleek beauty mesmerizes me to this day.

There was the night we got caught in a thunderstorm. We raced it for a mile, back toward the car, with lightning cracking and thunder bellowing overhead. My job was to carry the bucket filled with 27 yellow-bellied bullheads we had already caught. Later, a careful count revealed that not one of our ugly prizes had sloshed out.

There was always the hiss of a gas lantern, lit during that in-between time after dusk had faded but before full darkness really hit. You might catch a bullhead or two before lantern-lighting time, but the event usually signified the beginning of any real action for the evening.

Usually we stayed out until 10:30 or so—an adventure in itself, out there in the darkness—and the angling was followed by a fish cleaning session at home. You were lucky to be in bed by midnight. So most of our bullheading happened on Fridays or Saturdays, but Dad was not averse to going on a school night if conditions were right. He had his priorities straight, at least as far as I was concerned.

And to be honest, there really is nothing like a bullhead fillet, carefully carved from a cold-water fish that has been fasting much of the winter. Rolled in cornmeal or cracker crumbs and then deep fried in peanut oil, the lean, sweet and firm meat is in my opinion among

the best of freshwater fish to eat.

One of the neatest things about creating a bullhead adventure with kids is this: it's so easy. It can happen near home (most everybody has some good bullhead water within an easy drive). The tackle and rigs are simple and affordable (you probably have everything you need already, or close to it). And kids love bullheading (because fishing at night is such a new and exciting adventure).

Any medium-power spincasting or spinning outfit will do the job. Ten-pound-test monofilament line is just right—it won't reduce the number of bites you get from aggressive bullheads, and it will help you pull hooks out of snags and fishes' mouths. Slide a 3/8 to half-ounce egg sinker on your line, add a barrel swivel, then add a 30-inch dropper ending with a long-shanked hook in size 2 to 1/0. Bullheads like to swallow hooks, so you'll want a long shank to be able to crank it out.

Consider a lantern as essential equipment. A gas lantern is great, but a battery-powered model will do too. Don't skim and try to get by with just a flashlight; you'll want the hands-free convenience and brightness a lantern provides when it's time to take a fish off the hook or tie a new rig.

Garden worms and nightcrawlers make the best bait, but cut bait works too. This is a bottom-fishing proposi-

tion, so toss out your rig, prop the rod in a forked stick or holder, and wait for the tip to start bobbing at the tug of a hungry bullhead. Set the hook quickly, because by the time you see a good bite, the bullhead will be on its way to swallowing the hook. Keep trying different spots until you locate fish.

Good springtime bullhead locations include protected bays and coves, boat channels, canals, slow-moving sloughs off rivers, backwater lakes...most any protected water that warms faster than the main lake or river. A shallow bay that gets sun all day will warm up fast and attract springtime bullheads. Swimming beaches are great places to fish too; the water warms quickly here, drawing prey which attracts bullheads, and the bottom is clean of pesky debris. Swimmers usually aren't an issue this early in the season!

Creating memories that will last a lifetime doesn't have to involve a multi-day trip or cost a fortune. I value every night I have ever spent bullheading—with my own dad way back when, and now with my own kids—as much as I do any of the other more "glamorous" outdoor adventures we might tackle.

Kids love bullheading. I can see it in their sparkling eyes in the lantern light as the frogs and creepers serenade us, another rod tip starts bouncing and the warm air hugs us in its springtime embrace. *W*

TOM CARPENTER

BADGER BIRDS*Yellow-rumped warbler*

Spy a yellow-rumped warbler and you know that spring has arrived! These dapper, sprightly little warblers follow warmth northward as spring progresses through Wisconsin. You might see birds as early as late March in our southern counties, but April usually sees the most yellow-rumped warblers passing through—and when they do, it often seems like they're everywhere.

Yellow-rumps are also known by this very descriptive term of endearment: butterbutt! (So named because of the bright yellow flash that appears on the bird's rump when it flies.) You can

see butterbutts in yards, fields, forests and gardens across Wisconsin as the birds work their way toward nesting grounds in the coniferous forests of Canada.

LOOK for a tiny, handsome bird with a topcoat of blue-gray, black streaks on a creamy breast, and yellow chest patches, cap and rump.

LISTEN for the yellow-rumped warbler's song—a buzzy, trilling warble; and its call—a single, sharp chik.

WATCH butterbutts hover and swoop as they hunt flying insects.

PROVIDE yellow-rumps food by

planting berry-producing shrubs, especially bayberries (also known as myrtle berries), which they will eat if insects haven't emerged yet.

DID YOU KNOW that yellow-rumped warblers used to be known as myrtle warblers in the East and Audubon's warblers in the West? Then it was discovered that they freely interbreed where ranges overlap. Myrtle warblers have white throats, Audubon's have yellow throats. Most of the birds we see in Wisconsin are white-throated, though yellow-throated ones specimens aren't unheard of. *W*



Yellow-rumped warbler (Photo by Brian Hansen)

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

DICK ELLIS

ON WISCONSIN OUTDOORS

Spring antler search keys fall hunting success

By Dick Ellis

The hunt continued, approaching 24 "man hours" in the seemingly endless, budding spring forests of Washburn near the endless blues of Lake Superior. Somewhere out there, Mike Foss, Cory Chard, and Darrell Pendergrass were going through the same motions as I was: walking with one eye on the compass and the other on the ground and listening for the radio to crack with news that a hunter had finally scored.

As the hours slipped by, no treasure had yet been discovered. This search for the shed antlers of whitetail bucks, though, had been anything but unsuccessful. The welcome arrival of another spring in Northern Wisconsin had opened up a whole new world in the deep woods, and provided the keys for another kind of hunt yet to be when the leaves and the temperatures fall again.

Tree rubs—wounds still fresh and appearing almost as they looked the day last fall when a whitetail buck stood to polish his headgear—were easily seen in the open forest. Scrapes, a buck's calling card for receptive does during the mating season, or rut, were as easily discovered. And deer trails winding with the terrain and pellet

droppings added more of the missing pieces to a puzzle that, if fitted together properly, eventually rewards the hunter with the filled tag. Occasionally, the reward is an exceptional buck.

"Spring is my time for serious deer scouting," said Foss, a Wisconsin licensed deer and bear guide. "The foliage has been knocked down flat to the ground. There are all these trails, the same trails that will be used next fall. What you see in spring is a perfect picture of what was going on in fall. There is no competition from other hunters. When everyone else is out on the river fishing, I'm taking advantage, looking for antlers and scouting for new stand placements for both deer and bear."

So much more comes with the search. In 2005, using binoculars to verify or dismiss what he thinks he sees at a distance on the forest floor, Foss found the decaying carcass of a trophy class buck. Such a find, he stressed to other "hunters," unlike a discovery of the dropped antlers only, must be legally tagged before it can be claimed, regardless of how old the carcass, or how it met its demise.

Foss also found a black bear carcass torn apart and scattered, with clearly defined wolf tracks telling the story of a pack feast. Foss was left to photograph the scene, and to speculate if the bear had died naturally and then been discovered by the wolves, or perhaps a young bear in slumber had been discovered by the pack and killed.

Although searching for antlers was the primary mission April 11 and an activity gaining popularity throughout Wisconsin, the wonders of the outdoors in spring were everywhere. We would find a pine tree with the bark high off the ground obviously clawed by a large black bear on its hind legs creating a territorial boundary marker. A wolf kill and consumed carcass of a whitetail doe was discovered. And this reporter would find simple fascination in capturing with a telephoto



Spring scouting and shed hunting allows the hunter to be in the right place in the fall. Guide Mike Foss with his Washburn buck taken late in the season in 2007.

lens the different fur color phases of snowshoe rabbits transitioning from winter to spring camouflage.

A group effort, this was still a solitary exercise. We were alone with our compasses and our thoughts. Ashland taxidermist Cory Chard worked to break out of a "slump" in the arena of shed discovery. Although his total for the year stood at nine sheds found, he had been without a find for four days despite venturing out daily prior to work. "That's okay," he said. "Often when I find one, I'll find several more in that area."

Pendergrass walked away from steering the *Washburn County Journal* for a one day escape and to participate in a new outdoor game. Foss was at work, forever piecing together the giant puzzle that often in fall has sent him or his clients impressive bucks.

"This is big woods shed hunting," Foss said. "This isn't the agriculture land of the south. We don't have the luxury of corn fields, alfalfa and woodlots. It's a lot tougher. I've been here my whole life and haven't even begun to touch the woods. In ag land, almost every buck is seen. Here, the bucks are often not seen and they can grow old. Genetics and age play a part in antler growth. In the early eighties I saw a buck so big that I had to take another look; I thought it was an elk."

In late afternoon the radio crackled twice with welcome news; a small antler dropped the previous year and a

large half rack dropped this spring by a big buck are discovered in less than 60 minutes. Two additional hours focused on the area to find the matching antler and most of April 12 prove futile. Still, the find is reason to celebrate.

"Up here most sheds are dropped in December and January and I start searching in March," Foss said. "You have to stay on the deer trails then because the snow is deep. Any four inch snow fall will cover a newly dropped shed. I already walked twice on that trail where the antler was and never saw it."

"I know that this buck is going to be monstrous and I know now where he's been. Once you find one, you want to find more. It's real satisfying. The sheds are themselves true trophies. The satisfaction you get from finding one after putting in all of these hours is unbelievable. It's like prospecting for gold. I would have been a great prospector. I would have never left the creek."

For information on guided deer and black bear hunts contact Mike Foss, Northern Wisconsin Outfitters at (715) 373-0344 or visit the website at www.northernwisconsinoutfitters.com.



Wisconsin deer and bear guide Mike Foss with shed antler and deteriorating head of a massive buck found while spring scouting in Lake Superior country near Washburn. (Photo by Dick Ellis)

This column originally appeared in April 2005. Read Dick's weekly column and browse column archives on the website at www.onwisconsinoutdoors.com.

Reflections Of A Duck Season

& Todd's Tip of the Month



Satisfied Flyway Fowling clients after a day on the Mississippi River with Captain Todd Lensing in 2007. (Photo by Todd Lensing)

By Captain Todd Lensing

As I think back on last year's waterfowl season and the ones that came before it, I sometimes have to chuckle over the things that can happen while pursuing ducks. Here are just a few of my favorite observations.

Have you ever...

...launched your boat in the wee hours of the morning only to find it full of water after parking the truck? Oops, forgot to put the plug in!

...arrived at your "secret spot" thinking you had it all to yourself only to have someone shine a spotlight right into your eyes in the pitch dark, causing you to see red dots for the rest of the day?

...got everything completely set up, thinking how perfect it all is, only to discover you forgot your shotgun?

...gone to shoot at a large flock of ducks setting up to land in your decoys, only to find you forgot to load your shotgun?

...had ducks on a string that just needed a little three note greeting call to seal the deal, and your duck call sticks causing you to sound like you just slapped a chicken?

...been enjoying your mid-morning snack when you had to put it down to work a group of ducks, then you see that your dog enjoyed your

mid-morning snack as well?

...decided to put your gloves on your ice-cold hands and find that the gloves are lying at the bottom of the boat in a nice pool of water?

...gotten out of the boat only to discover that the water is over the top of your chest waders, and you're hanging onto the side wondering what to do next?

...been setting out or picking up decoys and end up doing a face-first plunge into the water?

...shot three times at a hovering duck just 20 yards away and MISSED? Now that's frustrating.

TODD'S TIPS

Divers can be notorious for skirting the outside of the decoys. Here are a couple of tricks you can try if this happens to you.

In a crosswind set, try putting your line of divers right in front of the boat. Put the bulk of your decoys no further than 15 yards from the boat and run the remaining decoys downwind. On a calm day I like a short tail. On a windy day I will run the tail out 100 yards or so.

If the wind is at your back, try putting the bulk of your decoys in front of the middle part of your boat, and run the remaining downwind. Again, on a calm day use a short tail and on a windy day use a long tail. With this set

"In a crosswind set, try putting your line of divers right in front of the boat. Put the bulk of your decoys no further than 15 yards from the boat and run the remaining decoys downwind..."

I also like to put two or three decoys on each side of the line close to the boat to look as though some birds have just landed.

If you use either of these two set-ups and the divers skirt your decoys, they should be well within shooting range. Another thing to keep in mind for the crosswind set-up is that the ducks will also skirt you behind the boat, so be ready for those shots as well.

I hope these proven methods work

for you the next time you're after an elusive diver.

See you on the Mississippi. As always, be safe out there. *W*

Captain Todd Lensing is a professional guide and U.S. Coast Guard master captain who takes clients out daily during the Wisconsin waterfowl season. Contact Todd at Flyway Fowling Guide Service, Ferryville, WI, www.flywayfowling.com, 608.734.323 or www.grandview-motel.com.



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Team Tom Tagged

Wary gobbler finally falls near NWTF headquarters



A unique 'pendulum' calling tactic finally brought the wary Tom within range of JJ Reich's scattergun.

By JJ Reich

"Come on down to headquarters this April for a turkey hunt," P.J. Perea, editor at the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) e-mailed me. Before I hit the reply button to accept, I already marked the trip on my calendar.

Working as a writer in the hunting and fishing industries, I have become friends with folks from several wildlife conservation organizations, and I felt very lucky when P.J. invited me down to South Carolina. Not only did I want to hunt, but I always wanted to visit the NWTF Center and Winchester Wild Turkey Museum.

TEAM ROSTER

When I arrived I met up with P.J. and Matt Lindler, another editor. Joe Mole, a cameraman; Brian Chatham, a biologist; Paul Rackley, a staff writer; and Sharon Boney, a graphic designer, would also hunt with us. This was Sharon's first year turkey hunting and everyone was excited to try to help her get her first bird. She was ready.

They were hunting public national forest land near the NWTF Center, and the hunting had been tough so far. Birds were gobbling on roost and then a few times on ground before shutting up for the day. But there was one bird that always seemed to gobble in the same area every day. This bird earned a reputation for eluding them a few times. For this, the

crew lovingly nicknamed the elusive gobbler "Ol' B" (for Bastard).

ROOSTED AND MAD

It was in fact tough hunting. On the first couple days, P.J., Sharon and Paul had run-ins with Ol' B. Once they got too close and busted him out of his roost. Another time, the bird came in to their calls and hung up at 70 yards, then skirted around them.

On the third day, Paul, Joe and I set out for an evening hunt. We went straight to Ol' B's playground, setting up in different spots to try to cut off the gobbler as he approached his typical roosting area.

When Joe was setting up, a hen saw him and flushed. Then we all heard a loud gobble! But the gobbler didn't follow the hen. He just stood glued in his tracks, about 70 yards from Joe, gobbling his head off to get his hen to come back. She never did. Eventually the bird circled away from all three of us and flew up to roost in his usual area, alone.

At dusk, we snuck close to roosting area and hit an owl call to pinpoint the gobbler's location. Because the Tom was still worked up about missing his hen, he gobbled at us 20 more times. That bird was mad.

But we were excited! We started plotting our next morning's ambush. "OK, I think that gobbler might be Ol' B," Paul said. "We're going to call in more guns, so he won't escape this time!"

GOOD MORNING

Five of us showed up the next morning: Paul, Joe, Brian, PJ and me. We needed to safely plan out our multiple-gun surprise attack. The guys knew the area very well. Because of the terrain of the land and their experience with this bird prior to this hunt, there were only a few possible directions this gobbler would go. We'd have the bird surrounded.

We chose four set-up locations that were at least 200 yards apart, a safe distance from each other.

We agreed that once we heard one of us shoot, we'd quit hunting, unload our guns and meet at the location of the shot, to avoid any accidents. Since I was the guest, the guys gave me the prime spot and Joe, who won the US Open calling tournament in 2003, would come with me.

Our set-up location was a strut zone near where the gobbler last saw his hen. Joe planned to call the bird using a "pendulum" calling tactic. It works like this: the shooter (me) faces the roosted bird. The caller (Joe) hangs out about 100 to 150 yards behind me. When Joe hears the Tom gobbling in the distance, he moves in the opposite direction. Meaning, if the gobbler moves west, Joe moves east. And if the gobbler moves toward Joe, Joe moves farther away. This way Joe's calls are always teasing the gobbler and forcing him to chase the sounds, while always keeping me in between the gobbler and Joe.

After I settled in and calmed down, I concentrated on looking for movement in the woods. Soon I could hear Joe's yelps. Then I started hearing soft yelps and clucks behind me, but opposite Joe. This was perfect! I had both a champion caller and a real hen behind me.

It didn't take long for the gobbler to start sounding off. He was still mad. Soon his gobbles sounded closer and Joe's calling

sounded farther away. The pendulum calling tactic was in full swing and working. At 70 yards, the big bird entered into my field of vision. But this time the Tom did not hang up. Joe's calls kept going in the distance, so the gobbler kept coming. Then Ol' B stopped in an opening of the woods 33 yards away. BOOM! The bird piled up. Success!

PARTY TIME

As I stood with my trophy in hand, the four other happy hunters approached from all directions, with smiles big as if they had pulled the trigger themselves.

We all stood around celebrating and reliving the excitement. Then we headed back to NWTF headquarters to show off the gobbler to Matt, Sharon and others at the office. Sharon seemed to be the most excited because she really wanted somebody to bag the bird that had eluded her on several hunts.

Before I rushed off to catch a plane home, I toured the 100-acre NWTF Center, walked through the museum and admired the largest turkey call collection in the world. I also stopped off at the front of the building to snap a photo of my Tom in front of the NWTF sign. The trip was a dream hunt that was especially rewarding because we harvested a big gobbler using teamwork.

To learn more about how you can plan a trip to visit the NWTF Center and Winchester Museum, visit www.nwtf.org.

JJ Reich of Wisconsin is an outdoor writer who contributes product-related articles to several national magazines and websites.



It took all the effort of Team NWTF and JJ Reich to take down one stubborn South Carolina gobbler.

DICK ELLIS

AN OUTDOORSMAN'S WISCONSIN

Mother Bear, Mother Nature team for medical miracle

Almost a mile off the nearest logging road west of Neillsville, DNR Bear Biologist Mike Gappa finishes the trek through the Clark County snow and leads two researchers to the sow's shallow den burrowed out months before among a stand of immature aspen. Pressed against the entrance Mother Bear is protecting her precious secrets, four rambunctious cubs, from the real world outside.

Deep within the den, Mother Nature is protecting her secrets too. Although the sow has remained relatively motionless since taking to the den five months before, she apparently has suffered little muscle atrophy or bone mass loss. And certainly, insignificant losses to negatively affect her health or ability to function. If compelled to do so, in fact, the sow could bolt from den instantaneously and be on the move as if she had never been in this hibernation-like state at all.

Despite her extended slumber, the sow has maintained her own excellent health and provided nourishment for her newborns that are nursing constantly on extraordinarily rich milk consisting of 30 percent fat and 10 percent protein. These cubs at seven weeks of age and seven pounds are already at weights expected in youngsters a month older. Somehow, she accomplishes this by bypassing the kidney, and without eating, drinking, urinating, or defecating for four or five months.

With an extensive history studying osteology and anatomy, naturalist Valentine Vogel, and Professor Danny Riley, Ph.D. of the Department of Cell Biology, Neurobiology and Anatomy at the Medical College of Wisconsin, are hoping to coax those secrets from Mother Nature. And translate the knowledge into astronomical benefits for both the medical field and future space flight.

In stark contrast to wintering bears, persons bedridden for relatively short periods experience great difficulty when using those muscles again. According to Dr. Riley, who for twenty-five years has worked extensively with muscle atrophy in astronauts with the NASA space program, the breakdown of human muscle in the weightlessness of space and the deterioration of muscle in hospital patients correlates closely.

"It appears that time in space lowers the tolerance of muscles," he said. "Astronauts experience Delayed Onset Muscle Soreness, like when you

exercise and are sore the next day. The fibers also break and the muscles tear more easily. And if you came here to Froedtert Hospital and asked someone who has been in bed for two weeks to walk down the hall, he couldn't do it very well."

Medical insight into muscle atrophy and bone mass loss, though, only touch on the "treasure trove" of biomedical advances possible through studying just how bears survive and thrive, in nature. Cardiovascular disease, diabetes, osteoporosis, organ transplants, anorexia, obesity and cholesterol-related issues and other monumental medical problems may all reap the benefits.

The potential benefits of the bear to human medical research in preventing disease is immense, said Vogel, who sought the expertise of Riley and the resources of the Medical College to pursue his theories regarding health and hibernation. Theories Vogel developed over decades of study in osteology and anatomy during commissioned work with the Milwaukee County Zoo, Milwaukee Public Museum, the San Diego Zoo and Living Desert Zoo in Palm Springs, California.

"I feel certain that the causes of the physical and behavioral changes in black bears is related to the amount of fat that surrounds the physical body, muscle fiber and bone structure," he said. "Answers and truths into the behaviors of bears will be found in the closer study and research of white and brown fat cells."

Large accumulations of brown adipose tissue or fat are found in wintering bears, he said. Much less or a complete absence of this fat is found in spring. Of the two types (white and brown cell) of "sub cutis" fat, brown cell fat is essential to rapid muscle and bone development and is prevalent in many mammals during fetal or neonatal periods.

"Every infant born, human or animal has brown fat, but it's gone as the animal develops," he said. "A wildebeest in Africa is running with the



With Mama Bear immobilized, DNR Bear Biologist Mike Gappa pulls another cub from the den. (Photos by Dick Ellis)



Naturalist Val Vogel with a new friend during research.

herd 15 minutes after birth. Why does it have brown fat? Brown fat protects muscle. Brown fat holds the biggest key in our work with the black bears."

Vogel believes when the bear has built up enough fat to sustain it and in the case of sow, its cubs, through winter, and can no longer find the nutrients to increase the fats, proteins, and enzymes essential to survival, it enters its hibernation-like state. The building of fat, and hibernation correlates with the changing seasons and the absence of natural foods in the wild including grasses, berries, nuts, and the occasional protein and meat values found in insects or fawns.

The bear, Vogel theorizes, maintains its health through winter without drinking, eating, urinating, or defecating, due to a chemical change in the brown cell sub fat around the organs and close to the muscle. A change that in part transforms the saturated fat, or solids, into unsaturated or oily fats with protective characteristics vital to survival.

This change may release proteins and enzymes or other substances that stimulates the muscle fiber and bone, enters the heart and vascular system, and initiates a chain reaction that affects other tissues and organs including the brain and nervous system, lymphatic system, digestive system, urinary system, reproductive organs and skeletal structure

"The fats also nourish these tissues and organs to prevent muscle and bone loss, especially in weight-bearing muscles," Vogel said. "Strength and

agility is important when the fat supply is depleted and the bear recovers from its hibernating state."

On March 4th, Biologist Gappa approaches the den and uses a syringe mounted on a jab-stick to immobilize the sow. He pulls the four bewildered cubs from their home for weighing and safe-keeping in the warm jackets of observers. The sow is pulled from the den. In the cold and wide-open spaces, Riley and Vogel, with assistance from Graduate Students Brian Curry and Dave Baewer methodically go through the familiar process of taking fat and muscle tissues and blood samples from Mama Bear.

To keep lab results unbiased, samples are taken and compared from the same bears in summer months and again during hibernation. To date, eight bears have been sampled during the ongoing research that began in 2001.

Samples secured, the sow is returned to the den, no worse for wear. No longer her secret from the outside world, four cubs are snuggled in again to nurse and grow on Mama Miracle's wonderful body.

Riley and Vogel turn and begin the long hike back to the truck. Next stop, the Medical College of Wisconsin. Hopefully, the biggest secret hidden in the bear's den is one step closer to being told. *W*

The column from the Ellis archives was awarded first place for excellence in the technical category of the Outdoor Writers Association of America annual competition in 2004.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

READER'S BACK FIRE*An even bigger lie*

It was with interest that I read Pat Clark's article entitled "The Big Lie" in the November/December issue of On Wisconsin Outdoors. While there is not much I agree with in the article, I also had a difficult time finding anything that was true. I do agree with the statement that buyers should beware when purchasing lake property. Buyers should beware when purchasing any property. If you don't take the time to do your homework before a purchase you are bound to be disappointed. A \$300 professional home inspection should certainly tell you whether a basement has a history of flooding. The local zoning office can easily tell you if the property you are considering is in a flood plain. Realtors have a strict code of ethics they must follow in disclosing defects or risk losing their license and careers.

Good sources of information on a lake's condition are also easily obtainable. Lake districts (such as the one for Beaver Dam Lake), lake associations, local sportsman clubs, fishing clubs, and the area fish manager for the DNR are great and easily accessible sources. Much information is also available on internet sites like Lake-Links, bulletin boards, etc. Clark's contention that "Most locals don't want you to know either [about the lakes condition] (misery loves company)" has not been my experience at all. Landowners often complain about their taxes being too high and wish less people would buy property on 'their lake.' With today's technology and the information we have at our fingertips there is no excuse to buy property and be totally surprised.

While I can't speak for the condition of all these "man-made disasters" Clark mentions--specifically Lake Koshkonong, Beaver Dam Lake, Petenwell Lake, Castle Rock Lake, or Lake Sinnissippi--I can tell the readers a bit about Lake Puckaway, having had the privilege of serving on the Board of Commissioners for the LPPRD for over 20 years. First and foremost, Lake Puckaway is a naturally occurring lake. At least it has been since it was first described in Fr. Marquette's Journal more than 300 years ago, in 1673. The lake covers 5433 acres and does have a

dam, constructed in the 1800's that is located nine miles down the Fox River at Princeton. The dam was originally constructed as a navigation aid and current operation affects lake levels by approximately 6 inches at normal river flow. The dam is an important management tool to carry out the Districts Comprehensive Management Plan on Lake Puckaway, and is actually used to help create and maintain a healthy ecosystem.

Clark in his article claims that these "sewers" have "limited success in sustaining a fishery." Perhaps we should tell that to the fishermen who consistently bring in limits of 3 to 5 pound Walleyes each spring and summer and to the bass clubs that break records for fish caught and total pounds at their tournaments on the lake. Lake Puckaway produced the state record Northern Pike at 38lbs. 0oz. And according to Dave Bartz, DNR Area Fish Manager, "Lake Puckaway has the highest concentration of Northern Pike per acre of water of any lake in Wisconsin". We are not talking hammer handles here; we are talking fat, healthy fish with phenomenal growth rates. Puckaway is designated as Trophy Waters for Northern Pike, with a 32 inch minimum size and one fish per day bag limit. The statewide average percentage of legal fish on lakes with a 26 inch Northern Pike size limit is only 6%. In Puckaway most of our Northern are over 26 inches, and we even have 4.5% are over 32 inches. It's also interesting to note that the February issue of *Wisconsin Sportsman Magazine* has an article entitled "36 CAN'T MISS FISHING TRIPS". Three of those trips involve Lake Puckaway or Lake Koshkonong. These do not sound like the symptoms of lakes with limited fishery.

In the past major stocking efforts were undertaken in the restoration project on Lake Puckaway. Indeed, there was a time when Puckaway was overrun with "bullheads and carp." Through good lake management and a lot of help from dedicated DNR personnel, currently the only stocking taking place is through the efforts and dedication of a great group called Walleyes for Tomorrow. Walleyes for

Tomorrow in conjunction with the DNR and Lake District hatches 2 to 3 million walleye fry each spring to supplement the natural reproduction in the lake. These fish are not "hatchery raised," but

are raised in Puckaway from fry on. And for the record, they came from eggs which were taken from Lake Puckaway to begin with. Fishermen and fisherwomen of Wisconsin, this is a group that deserves your thanks and support. According to DNR surveys, all other fish species in the lake are self-sustaining.

Of course Mr. Clark doesn't believe this. According to his article, "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 the big lie provides". This is totally false. In my many years working with outstanding DNR staff like, Jim Congdon, Dave Bartz, Dave Painter, Ron Bruch, Rob McLennan, Mark Sessing, Ron Kazmarek and many others, I've never met one that didn't have the health of our waters and public's best interests at heart. Obviously Clark only knows other DNR people, but he hasn't chosen to provide any examples in his article.

Finally, Mr. Clark states in his article "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". Well I don't know what to call these people either. What I do know is that these are the same people that go to their Lake District meeting and vote themselves a



What makes a good Wisconsin lake? (Photo by Dick Ellis)

raise in their property taxes for lake restoration. These are the people that volunteer their weekends to harvest and plant wild celery in Lake Puckaway. These are the people that place advisory signs for waterfowl resting areas advising boaters and hunters to go around, in order to strengthen our waterfowl production. These are the people who give up their land and their labor for shoreline restoration projects. Maybe you can't call these people sportsmen or conservationists, but at least you can call them 'doers' and not just complainers.

Perhaps Pat Clark is right. Maybe there is a conspiracy out there by the "locals", Realtors, and DNR against him and the recent new property owners on Beaver Dam Lake. Maybe there is a statewide conspiracy to propagate his "Big Lie." And if you believe that, I've got this bridge in Brooklyn I'm selling, heck of a deal....

Phil Malsack, Chairman
Lake Puckaway Protection and
Rehabilitation District

(You can learn more about Lake Puckaway at www.lakepuckaway.com)

Read Pat Clark's column which appeared in the November/December issue of On Wisconsin Outdoors on our website at www.onwisconsinoutdoors.com. Past issues of this newspaper and other interesting information will be posted on our website.

On Wisconsin Outdoors Welcomes Letters to the Editor

Guidelines: 1. Only signed letters including name, street address and daytime phone number will be accepted. 2. Letters selected for publication may be published at onwisconsinoutdoors.com or in our bi-monthly newspaper, at the editor's discretion. 3. Letters should be limited to less than 200 words.

On Wisconsin Outdoors Board of Directors

Dear Hunter Daily,
How do you cope with failure in the turkey fields? I did everything right last year before blowing a 25 yard shot on a nice Tom.
—Pete Wiley, LaCrosse

Dear Pete,
I'm guessing you're a young hunter. You'll learn that failing to fill a tag and the idea that there are no guarantees is what makes hunting so wonderful. When I do make a mistake, I simply take time to reflect on the beauty around me in the Wisconsin fields. If that doesn't work, try snapping a huge willow branch over your thigh.
—Hunter



Hunter Daily



Conibear Smith

Dear Conibear Smith,
Why did you start trapping?
—Billy Perkins, Kenasha

Dear Billy,
Trapping is like courtin' and that sparked my interest. I couldn't get a date (see picture). I had to lure a wife in and capture her. My wife fell into a pit trap. I dug it on the path from her cabin to the stream where she went for water. I would have had an even purttier one but I dug the first pit too deep. That one didn't make it.
—Conibear

Dear Rex Rodsalotta,
I gave my wife a deep fryer and low-calorie shore lunch mix for her birthday, no insult intended, but now she won't talk to me. Any advice?
—Jeff Millford, Tomahawk

Dear Jeff,
Stay out of the Ugly Stick aisle.
—Rex



Rex Rodsalotta



[Nice as a limit on ice]

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1985 28' MALLARD TRAILER: Air, new hot water heater, new septic, clean, microwave, refrigerator, bedroom, sleeper couch, table bed, located in Rome, WI. \$2000. Call (262) 542-7461.

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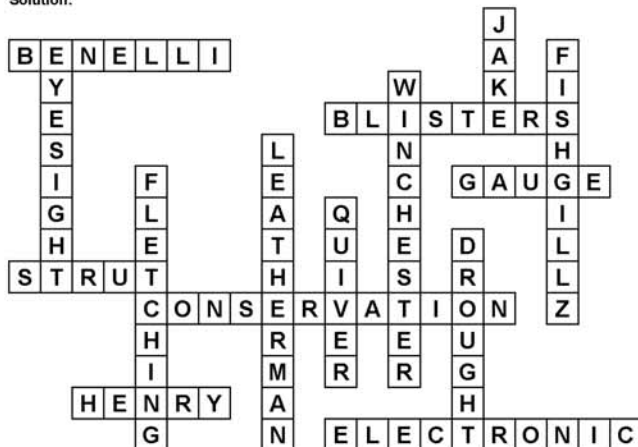


Garrett Leigh caught this 29" Northern Pike on a Manitowoc County Lake on a rattle trap. Granapa Dick Luchsinger of Manitowoc holds the fish for Garrett.

Send us your hunting and fishing photos or your organization's news to:
submit@onwisconsinoutdoors.com

We will do our best to post it in the **On Wisconsin Outdoors** publication or on our website at www.onwisconsinoutdoors.com

Solution:



Puzzle on page 12

On Wisconsin
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Kuehl Kids
PHOTOS



sample photo



sample caricature of photo

Submit your photo of a kid in the outdoors! If we select your photo, we'll print the caricature in an edition of **On Wisconsin Outdoors**, and send YOU the original artwork as our gift!

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TERRILL KNAACK

SACRED GROUND*Grandma's Snowshoes*

Last night's snow continued well into the dawn. By early morning we were on snowshoes, making a trail across prairie openings and then through rolling groves of giant oaks. The remnants of October's asters and goldenrod were just keeping their heads above the gathering snow. Far from the highway, a silent world of deep snow surrounded us. Whitetails discovering our presence kept just ahead of us with great leaps. Swish-swish, we made barely a sound. The distant cry of a Redtail, the nearby calling of turkeys, nuthatches and chickadees, all remind us we are not alone.

Snowshoes offer us an open invitation to wander freely through winter. 'Till the hard crusted snow in late winter, they are close to completely silent. Soon we are along a stream wandering through alders and swamp maples. The sounds of flowing water surround us. We see where a mink bounded across the ice and where an otter dragged its tail. Every creature, from turkeys to coyotes, that passed this way has left a story in the snow. Rocky Run State Natural Area and trout stream is our local wilderness just a half hour from the studio. An oak savanna restoration project that seems to get better and better each year.

Few winters afford us the opportunities of the present one. Deep snows have actually stayed for weeks. (Most of my snowshoeing in past decades has had to be in the Lake Superior snow-belt.)

Snowshoes were part of my earliest childhood memories. Mysterious webbed ovals and ellipses hung from the basement rafters. We had Alaskan Cruisers to Bear Paws. Made of bent ash and cowhide, all were kept well varnished. However my most inspirational snowshoe stories were from my grandmother, who as a young lady lived on an upper artery of the Crawfish River. Grandma Lydia has been gone over three decades now. She lived to age ninety-six and lived a life that spanned the harnessing of mules for plowing, having a single cylinder gas engine, to the modern diesel tractor.

Grandma told me many stories



Fresh snow "Pine Marten" by Terrill Knaack.

when I visited her in her final years. Mostly about the mules she had when she was a child, but also about trout fishing, and how proud she was to supplement the family income by catching mink along the river. She had but a small assemblage of traps. The income from mink pelts meant a gift of extra spending money that helped fulfill a young lady's wish list.

Though most of us seem to recall that snowstorms were much worse when we were younger, and the drifts deeper, to my grandmother in her nineties, it seemed like yesterday when the snow lay deeply drifted along the banks of the Crawfish. The only way to enter that world was with snowshoes. It was an adventure to leave the everyday world of chores to follow the river. Her exploits as a mink trapper were never forgotten.

When grandma was ninety-five,

she was still splitting kindling for her stove and keeping her garden. From her earliest years, she always kept close to the nature around her and drew her energy from it. She called the robins and orioles by names she'd given them as she worked in her garden. She was thankful for every sunrise. I knew her as a young man. By then, the webs of her snowshoes in the rafters had long been eaten by mice.

Her image recalls the lives our ancestors lived on this land not so long ago. We have come a long way in a short time. Life is perhaps much better for us today. We certainly don't have to be as physically tough or resourceful. The future pulls us forward with increasing speed that disconnects us from much that was part of day-to-day life for rural people of the past. Few of us today have had to adapt to, appreciate or learn about nature at all. We

have lost our connection to a world that sustains us (though we don't see it). It was a world that easily became our home when we were young and adventurous.

Through time, that youthful connection to nature often fades. The material demands of modern life can be crushing. Some however, see that nature is really what we have inside us. It is an endless source for learning and wisdom. For those with a sensitive eye, it is a continual source of inspiration and health. *W*

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.

**Share the
Outdoors**

Next time you're picking up a copy of On Wisconsin Outdoors for yourself, grab a couple extras for colleagues, family and friends.

Product 6-Pack

Great gear for the woods, fields and waterways

By JJ Reich

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

FISHGILLZ'S FLOATING SUNGLASSES

For \$99, FishGillz sunglasses have sleek, fashionable frames that float! The lightweight, polarized glasses also come with a floating, padded case and micro-fiber lens cloth. Many styles are available. The Santa Cruz (pictured) feature black frames and bronze-colored lenses.



A pair of my sunglasses fell off my head and into the water while reeling in a walleye last summer. Watching expensive sunglasses sink to the bottom of a river and swept away is sickening. FishGillz floating sunglasses are a great idea that can ultimately save you money.

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tional loads. The new Hevi-13 pellets have even more ingredients than the original Hevi-Shot recipe, making them more robust.



OK, if you are like most turkey hunters, you are sick of hearing how awesome Hevi-Shot is. But, the big news here is the newly released Hevi-13 loads now come 3-1/2-inch shells and are also available in 10-gauge. These new size offerings make this already-magnum load even more deadly.

Hevishot.com
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SCHADE'S OLD TIMER CAMO COMBO

For \$40, this knife and flashlight combo includes a Schrade Old Timer Sharpfinger knife, which has a blackened 440 stainless steel blade, combined with a rugged, nine-bulb, white LED flashlight. Both come pack-



aged in a nylon sheath.

This combo might just be: "The perfect turkey hunter's knife!" I used the combo all last turkey season and loved it. The compact flashlight is perfect for setting up during the early-morning darkness; and the small curved-blade knife works great for cleaning and skinning gobblers.

Taylorbrandsllc.com
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SKIP'S PHOTO FAN

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Plus you can use it to display a cured fantail trophy on your wall, or as a decoy when attached to a stake. Package includes a DVD with instructions and several fun-to-watch turkey hunts.

When taking photos of a successful turkey hunt, I usually end up kneeling directly behind the bird which can look awkward—I hate that. This tool gives you the freedom and versatility to pose in any way you want, resulting in better looking photos.

Skipenterprises.com
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A button-down shirt for turkey hunting? Are you insane? Hey, you probably wear a button-down flannel when you deer hunt, so, why not?



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embed a personal photo into their glass calls; giving you a high-quality, one-of-a-kind turkey call that is simply one of the best manufactured calls money can buy. The call pictured here is one of me and my son Cal, in which I gave to him on his first birthday.

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JJ Reich is an outdoor writer who contributes product-related articles to several national magazines and websites. He is also the author of Kampp Tales Outdoor Adventures hunting books for kids. Learn more at: www.kamptales.com.



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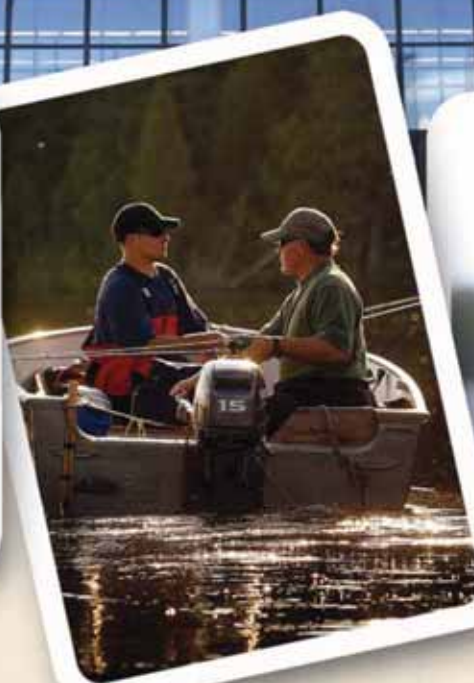
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