

May/June 2008

Vol. 1, Issue 5

On Wisconsin *Outdoors*

With the Dick Ellis Experts

- **River Smallmouth**
Pre-spawn, spawn and post-spawn tactics
- **The Wariest Gobbler**
Intense season 6 challenge bags big Tom
- **Whitewater & Quietwater**
To portage over land, time
- **Summer Perch**
Plastic tactics for Great Lakes jumbos
- **Cub's Corner**
June gills on the bed
- **Product 6-Pack**
Great gear for the woods, fields and waterways
- **Dog Talk**
Food for thought
- **Surplus Firearms**
Veteran of the Osterfront
- **Summer Flyfishing**
When, where, what
- **Cochran Cartoons**
Gobble giggles & angler lies

Photo By Dick Ellis

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



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STEVE HENSKE

WHITEWATER & QUIETWATER

To portage across land, across time

My eyes are dancing back and forth, squinting at the topographic river map in front of me and scanning for something uniquely different on this rocky boreal shoreline. We know it is there. Two hundred-fifty meters of mystery that will guide us around the Grade 5 falls ahead. I barely hear my wife Missy shouting over the sound of the roaring waterfall... "There it is!" An old graying slash on a stunted black spruce marks the spot. We eddy out, wave to the other two canoes in our group and paddle up to the scarred spruce. With a deep sigh we pull the packs from our Royalex expedition canoe and set them onto the rocks. Another portage.

It is inevitable. If you plan on canoeing the Canadian bush you had better be prepared to carry your gear. It is part of the trip. Eventually you will come to the end of a lake or an obstacle in the river. The Native American Indians blazed the way with their hunting and gathering lifestyle and the northern canoe routes developed as highways for sustainability, not recreation. The early European explorers used these same northern trails as they "discovered" the New World, followed by the French Canadian Voyageurs, European trappers and traders and mineral prospectors. I have traversed some Canadian river portages where the exposed bedrock was literally worn smooth and cupped from centuries of moose-hide moccasins traveling the same route. The word 'portage' (pronounced 'por-TAJ') is of French origin and means 'to carry.' On the canoe routes it refers to (a) 'carrying place.' To us it means carrying all the junk packed in our canoes from here to the other end, where we pack it back into our canoes, paddle a little ways, and then do it all over again—a masochist's idea of fun.

Packing for a multi-week trip in the bush requires the skill of a master puzzle solver. You must take into account all those items you absolutely need for food and gear, make a pile of it all on the garage floor, and then eliminate half of it. The bottom line is that it all has to fit inside your canoe, while leaving a little bit of room for two paddlers. Then consider you will have to carry that pile multiple times over high cliffs and soggy wetland trails. With experience we think we have it somewhat figured out. Almost all of our food is dehydrated. Meals and snacks are planned out to the day and



Tackling difficult portages is tough work, but the reward can be scenes like this. We enjoy a sunset over the Allanwater River in NW Ontario's Wabakimi Provincial Park. (Photo by Missy Henske)

*"I have traversed some Canadian river portages
where the exposed bedrock was literally worn smooth and cupped
from centuries of moose-hide moccasins traveling the same route ..."*

fresh fish makes up a good portion of our diet. Lightweight tents, sleeping bags, sleeping pads and cookware are required. High-tech water filters are compact and solve our water needs. Tiny high-performance cookstoves are used when an open fire cannot be. For clothing, we stick with light synthetics and wool, which work when wet or dry and dry quickly. High-performance membrane raingear is absolutely necessary. The packs themselves are waterproof, easily organized and designed to nest in the canoes plus are comfortable to carry. Our luxury items include ultra-compact camp chairs, some good cigars and an ample supply

of hi-test spirits for the evening "Happy Hour." Paddlers and back-packers will make a millionaire out of the person who invents dehydrated beer.

An onlooker might compare our group's act of portaging to that of a choreographed dance. The first boat at the take-out must empty its load on shore and then pull the canoe out to make room for the next boat. That first canoe is carried down the portage trail to the far end (put-in), usually by the stern paddler (among our group, the hubby) while the bow paddler (the sweetie) grabs a pack, spare paddle and fishing rod. This continues until every-

thing is transferred from point A to point B. Quite simple. What the onlooker would not see is people tripping over loose packs, rocks and logs, the slapping and cursing at clouds of mosquitoes, rod tips being snapped off and frantic digging for poorly tied boots in two feet of Canadian muck. Every portage has a new set of challenges, no matter how many you have done. An important part of each canoe's gear is the 'bear resistant' food barrel. We use 60-liter poly barrels fitted with a portaging harness for our food and cooking utensils. The barrel is

Continued on page 8

JASON GAURKEE

ON WISCONSIN WATERS

River smallies the epitome of freshwater fishing



Jason Gaurkee with a 6 pound prespawn river smallie about to be released.
(Photo by Keith Lindner)

My guiding career began by chasing salmon in Great Lake tributaries and eventually progressed to muskies in the North country. Back then I spent most of my time traversing the upper Wisconsin River in search of ol' Mr. Esox. In those early years I would take time away from tossing bucktails and Suicks, occasionally working bass sized top water baits or tubes for smallmouth.

After a short time I realized that pound for pound, there isn't a better fighting freshwater fish. I became addicted. Since then, river smallies have become my passion, especially in spring, which means trophy time. Spring river smallmouth action is the epitome of all fresh water fishing.

TIMING

Arguably, the best fishing for trophy smallmouth bass occurs in May. I say "arguably" due to the fact that some anglers will make the case for fall (September/October) being prime time for trophy caliber fish. My biggest smallmouth, topping seven pounds, was a fall fish. However, year after year my clients and I boat more five-pound-plus smallmouth in May than all other months combined.

There are three spring periods; pre-spawn, spawn and post-spawn. Pre-spawn fishing can be hit or miss due to fluctuating water levels, temperatures and drastic changes in a

river's clarity. In a perfect world, you will want a normal water level and steadily warming water slightly off color in clarity. When these conditions come together, expect the best smallmouth fishing of the year.

During pre-spawn, fish will usually go on the feed when water temperatures reach 47-49 degrees. Rarely will you catch many fish below this temperature range. During this cold-water period you will need to focus your efforts in deeper water (wintering areas) adjacent to spawning areas with small presentations fished slowly. Keep in mind the fishing action will continue to improve as the water warms.

Pre-spawn smallmouth will make predictable movements when water temps reach the 50-55 degree range. These movements are quick, direct and full of purpose fully motivated by spawning. Males will move into shallow (usually two to four feet) water void of current, usually pools, eddies, or shallow gravel areas close to current. Fishing these areas during the pre-spawn period will yield your biggest smallmouth of the year.

Smallmouth fishing is never easier than during the spawn period although it is a controversial practice. In Wisconsin, the Department of Natural Resources has set up a catch and release season to protect this fragile fishery. Until recently, catching



Some of Jason's favorite cranks (left) include, Rapala, Bomber, Dave's Kaboom, Smithwick and Yozuri. Choices for wacky worms (right) include Senko, Tiki, Gambler, Food Stick and a Yum. (Photo by Jason Gaurkee)

a nest-guarding male was thought to be acceptable because they quickly return to their nests, sometimes within a few seconds and never longer than a couple of minutes.

Recent studies, like those conducted by Dr. John Jannsen, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, have revealed that waters inhabited by round gobies are harmed by catch and release fishing during the spawn. When a smallmouth was captured in goby infested waters, the nesting area was absolutely saturated by literally hundreds of these gobies and the smallmouth eggs were all but consumed by the time the nest-guarding male returned. I actually witnessed this on the underwater video taken by Dr. Jannsen's staff. With the exception of Great Lake tributaries, most smallmouth rivers do not have the goby problem, yet.

Spawning on rivers almost always takes place in 58 to 65 degree water which most years means mid to late May. When fishing spawning smallmouth, you want to intrude on a fish's territory. You want to trespass. The male specie is extremely aggressive, almost suicidal, attacking anything that crosses their nesting area. Your best presentations are those which are erratic but also stay in the zone.

Post spawn is what I call the "catching bonanza." This period can last up to a month after spawning is completed and ends by the summer peak or summer solstice calendar period. Both male and female small-

mouth go on a feeding binge during this time. I have fished areas that boiled with fish movement once the bait hit the water.

Continued on page 7

**On Wisconsin
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With the Dick Ellis Experts

Hunting, Fishing, Trapping, Travel
and Outdoor Humor

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DICK ELLIS

ON WISCONSIN OUTDOORS*The second amendment, first*

“Today, I want to talk to you about guns:

Why we have them, why the Bill of Rights guarantees that we can have them, and why my right to have a gun is more important than your right to rail against it in the press.”

“...It is time that our youth found out that the politically correct doctrine of today has mislead them. And that when they reach legal age, if they do not break our laws, they have a right to choose to own a gun to defend themselves and their loved ones or to engage in any lawful purpose they desire without apology or explanation to anyone, ever.”

“This is their first freedom. If you say it’s outdated, then you haven’t read your own headlines. If you say guns create only carnage, I would answer that you know better. Declining morals, disintegrating families, vacillation of political leadership, an eroding criminal justice system and social morals that blur right from wrong are more to blame—certainly more than any legally owned firearm.”

“...Our constitution provides the doorway for your news and commentary to pass through free and unfettered. But that doorway to freedom is framed by the muskets that stood between a vision of liberty and absolute anarchy at a place called Concord Bridge. Our revolution began when the British sent Redcoats door to door to confiscate the people’s guns. They didn’t succeed: The muskets went out the back door with the owners.”

— Charlton Heston, excerpts of speech delivered to National Press Club, 2-11-97



The Ellis family reflects the vast majority of Wisconsin and American gun owners: respectful of human life, law abiding, and safe.

They may not wear red coats, but there is and always will be a very dangerous faction in America, the freedom killers, who would come into our homes...if they could... confiscate our guns and snuff out our right to keep and bear arms. I had a fleeting thought that it was Divine Intervention that took Charlton Heston from us after a long illness, at a very time when the United States Supreme Court is contemplating the 32-year old handgun ban in the nation’s capital; debating the very question of whether “the right of the people to keep and bear arms” belongs to individuals or whether it was instead intended to protect the power of the states to raise militias.

Since the Supreme Court last heard a gun case this important seven decades ago, the court’s decision on the D.C. challenge, either way, will reverberate across the country in “new” precedence. That will likely be very good or very bad news for the American gun owner. I think that it is uncanny that Charlton Heston’s passing comes when his death brings more attention to the fact that our very freedoms are in grave danger than even his magnificent oratory might have generated in life; a time of death

almost willed by the deceased, a last shot in defense of freedom, and extraordinarily coincidental like the passing of both John Adams and Thomas Jefferson on July 4, 1826.

From those who anointed Heston a hero to those who vilified him even in death, the airways, the Internet, and the print media are now filled and focused on firearms, the second amendment and the challenges faced to keep both. The truth will set us free. Because we can never be afraid to debate if we really believe we are right, that attention from the otherwise complacent masses is very good news indeed.

If I could, I would give up this space in a heartbeat so that you might read Heston’s entire speech to the National Press Club. Because the length of that great writing does not permit it, the speech in its entirety is posted on our website at www.onwisconsinoutdoors.com. A second Heston speech delivered to the Harvard Law School on February 16, 1999 is also posted. If you consider yourself a lover of your freedoms, I promise it will be well worth your time. If you haven’t really thought about your freedoms, you need to go there faster.

But for now...did you know that Charlton Heston marched for Civil Rights with Dr. Martin Luther King in 1963? But when he told an audience that white pride is just as valid as black pride or red pride or anyone else’s pride, they called him racist. He served in WWII against the axis powers. But during a speech, when he drew an analogy between singling out innocent Jews and singling out innocent gun owners, he was called anti-Semite. And when he asked an audience to oppose such cultural persecution, he was compared to Timothy McVeigh.

“But I am not afraid,” he responded. “If Americans believed in political correctness, we’d still be King George’s boys...subjects bound to the British Crown.”

Because he can no longer carry the torch, we will. The freedom killers dressed in big media attire or Hollywood glitter or riding the Fat Cat’s chair and an obnoxious pension of our own government officials will be back again in search of our guns regardless of any Supreme Court ruling. The war on freedom is already here. The means to fight it, especially if

Continued on page 16

Seven-On Sterling

Early season musky tactics

By Dennis Radloff

With a long winter of cold days and record snow levels behind us, it's time to get back out on the water and start chasing some muskies! Early season musky fishing can offer some great opportunities for a big fish if you're willing to take advantage of several factors. With the Wisconsin musky season opener south of Hwy. 10 on the first Saturday of May, there's no reason to wait to begin your search for the first fish of 2008. It just might be that pig that wouldn't swim out of your head this winter.

SHALLOW BAYS

Targeting shallow bays can be a great starting point since this is a common location utilized by muskies to spawn. While they are spawning, muskies do not eat much, if anything, so upon completion of this rigorous task they are going to be looking for the easiest opportunity to feed. Another

great factor comes into play: with shallow bays often hosting the first weed growth in the system, there will be plenty of forage mixed in the weeds.

SMALLER LURES

Down-sizing your presentation will increase your chance of triggering these often "sluggish" muskies. First and foremost, the smaller lures will match the smaller forage most likely in the weeds, and secondly a smaller presentation is a productive choice when water temperatures are on the colder end of the spectrum. Some good choices are six-inch minnow bait Slammers, Baby Shallowraiders, and Shallowraiders. These lures can be worked either with a straight retrieve or twitched with either a lighter gauge seven-strand or fluorocarbon leader.

SIGHT FISHING

Sight fishing is a tactic you can use when it comes to approaching "post-spawn" muskies in shallow bays. This

is accomplished by simply "cruising" along in a slow manner by use of your bow-mounted trolling motor while standing on the bow of your boat and visually looking for muskies lying in the shallow water on sand flats. When you locate a musky in the distance stop your motor and cast beyond the fish and



Dennis Radloff's client Todd Dahl with a 48-inch Wisconsin musky taken and released on opening day, 2007.

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Dennis Radloff
Wisconsin Fishing Guide, Oconomowoc

twitch your lure back to you in a manner that presents it to the fish. Another alternative to using a twitch bait is using a "jig & tail" combo. A one to two ounce jig tipped with a 6-inch Reaper Tail works well with a slow presentation along the bottom.

GPS & RETURN

While utilizing the basic tactics described here will convert a few fish for you this season, you may be thinking, *What about the muskies that don't go for this presentation and just swim away?* This is where using your GPS becomes valuable. If the musky you located swims away, don't worry.

Mark the spot with your GPS and come back in an hour or two. More often than not, these fish will return to the same spot which gives you another chance at trying to convert them.

Give these early season tactics a chance this year and I'm sure you'll get a few more muskies! Good luck and I'll see you on the water. 

Captain Dennis Radloff owns and operates Sterling Guide Service. He guides on the waters of Green Bay and southeastern Wisconsin seven days a week April through November. Contact him at www.sterlingmusky.com, or call him at 262.443.9993.

GAURKEE, from page 4

My experiences have shown me that once you locate a fish, you have probably located a dozen or more. Post-spawn fish seem to school up a little. Look for the best locations to be in shallow, rocky areas close and usually just down river from the spawning sites.

Almost anything goes during the post spawn period but you want to speed things up a little and cover lots of water. Live bait still works, but keep in mind that a bass's metabolism is increasing at this time meaning once again that food is priority number one and chasing down a faster moving, larger profile target like a spinner bait, tube or jerk bait is probably more practical and preferred.

PRESENTATION

By far, your most effective presentation utilizes the live bait connection, particularly for smallmouth in the spawn mode. Smallmouth are territorial and highly protective of that territory. When casting into likely holding areas with an artificial lure, anglers usually work baits in the right areas. However, smallies will often let them pass right by. On the other hand, a redtail chub, walleye sucker or garden-variety night crawler is often too much to resist and stays in the zone until you move it or it is devoured.

When using live bait in spring, I generally fish without a float, keeping my bait on the bottom. A simple split-shot rig consisting of a sinker heavy enough to hold your presentation on

the bottom but light enough to keep it snag free, and a circle hook is good. Circle hooks are the key element for catching and releasing spring smallmouth. Keep in mind that circle hooks differ from traditional "bait holder" type hooks when it comes to setting the hook. Circle hooks do not require a hook set. When you feel a smallmouth taking your bait, simply feed them a little line, lift the rod and start reeling. No sharp jerks are required; in fact doing so equals lost fish.

Next to live bait, wacky worming is quite possibly the best presentation available as of late. Wacky worming is a very simple technique both in rigging and application. When rigging, you will need a worm like a Senko, Food Stick, Gambler or Tiki. Then you simply run a hook through the thickest portion of the worm, usually located near the center. Once rigged and cast out, raise your rod tip and give it short subtle twitches back to the boat allowing the wacky rig to flutter down occasionally. Smallmouth will take it like live bait although you will need to set the hook a little sooner.

Tubes offer another solid option for spring smallmouth and are probably the most versatile option available. Dead sticking a tube works well. They can be jigged, drifted in current, set under a float or jerked, and excel when the water is cold or fish are holding tight to cover or in a river with crayfish being the primary food source.

My favorite tubes are often referred to as flippin' tubes. All this really means is the head portion is a little thicker. I usually choose tubes in

road kill, pumpkin seed, motor oil, or purple. I am really partial to the Strike King bleeding series and the new coffee ground tubes made with real coffee grounds.

Jerk baits, otherwise known as minnow baits, are often overlooked in the spring because our mentality tells us that fish are not aggressive enough to chase fast moving bait. Our mentality is wrong. Jerks can be worked as slow as you like and often outproduce other artificial alternatives. In fact, many of the top bass pros will start using jerk baits in water as cold as 45 degrees. Baits like Dave's Kaboom, Smithwick Rogues or Rapala Husky Jerks can be fished at any speed. Many of the new models suspend during a pause keeping the bait in the smallmouth's strike zone.

CHOICE RIVER SYSTEMS

Wisconsin has some of the best river smallmouth fisheries in the country. A few of my favorites are the northern Wisconsin (Mosinee up to Tomahawk), Chippewa, St. Croix, Wolf (Fremont up to Post Lake), Menominee, Oconto, Peshtigo, and Fox. Of these, the rivers that are connected directly to the Great Lakes and Green Bay offer true trophy potential. Inland rivers tend to be quantity fisheries but do produce big fish.

Perhaps the most important thing to keep in mind when targeting spring smallmouth is to practice sound catch and release ethics. In my opinion it should be every angler's responsibility to use circle hooks. Poorly hooked fish, even if released, in most cases go



Tube favorites include Strike King, Venom, Yum and Bass Pro Shops. (Photo by Jason Gaurkee)

belly up.

Smallmouth populations are extremely susceptible to over-harvesting. I have seen what over fishing has done to certain sections of the Wisconsin River. Sadly, once anglers realized what a fantastic fishery it was, pressure increased and fish populations absolutely decreased. Keep a trophy for the wall, perhaps, or better yet call your taxidermist and have him do a reproduction. Tight lines. *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.

ROY KALMERTON

ON THE PROWL WITH THE WOLF PACK

Early summer Lake Michigan fishing

Looking back at what worked and what didn't each month on Lake Michigan, is often invaluable in helping us plan future successes. In May of 2007, we chased brown trout off the shores of Sheboygan. One trip yielded 12 trout in just two hours. The browns continued into late May. King salmon also were active earlier than usual in 2007.

TACTICS

Fish were caught north of Sheboygan using red, green and fire-tiger Thunder Sticks on planer boards at 1.5 to 1.8 mph in 11 to 40 feet of water. Because the approach has worked year after year for us, we are going back to

the same well in 2008. Expect the call of "fish on" to be frequent. In April I received a call from Captain Pat Kalmerton of the Wolf Pack's *Addiction*, working the big lake with a party of three. In one-and-one-half hours of fishing the same spot as last year, utilizing the same type of baits, the *Addiction* limited-out with 15 fish, including two lake trout and 13 fat and sassy browns. *W*

Roy Kalmerton operates Wolf Pack Adventures in Sheboygan Falls. Contact Roy at 920.918.WOLF (9653) or wolfpackadventures@tds.net. For fishing reports, go to www.wolfpackadventures.com.

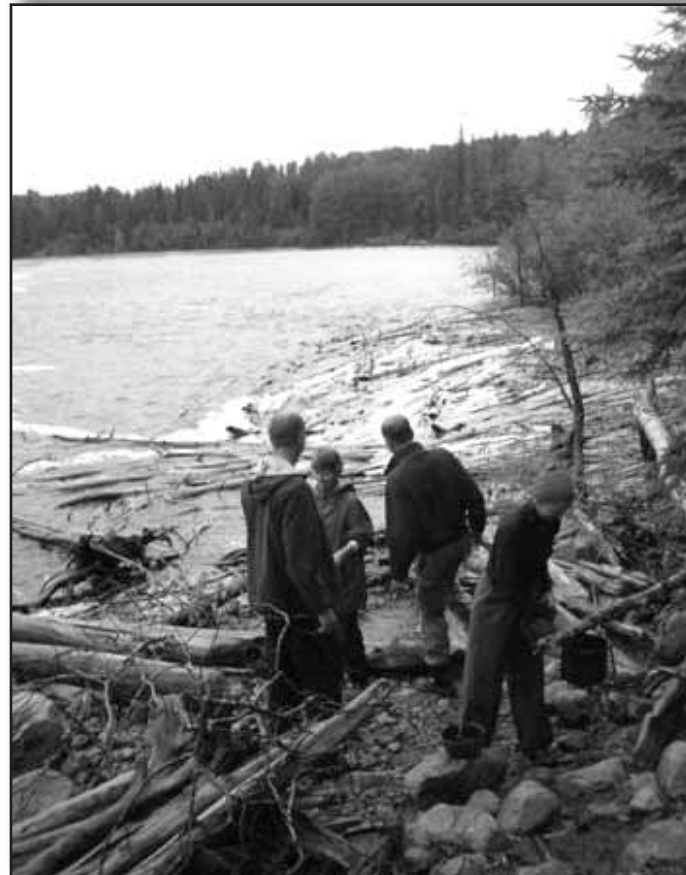


Here's an example of the early catch, where John & Amanda are exercising in The Wolf Pack style, displaying the results of a double header—and counting the catch to be sure we don't go over their limit. (Photos by Wolf Pack Adventures)





LEFT: Our group prepares to line the gear and canoes down the infamous "Mountain Goat Portage" of the Kopka River in NW Ontario. This vertical portage drops 75 feet and requires lines and carabiners to reach the bottom. RIGHT: We were portaging around Makaimi Falls on northern Ontario's Berens River in July of 2005 when a tornado touched down one quarter-mile to our northeast and left a twisted mess of timber. Clean-up took us hours to get to the bottom of the portage. (Photos by Steve Henske)



HENSKE, from page 3

obviously heaviest at the start of a trip and becomes lighter as we eat our way down the river. In one of my less refined moments I had made an unfavorable comment to my wife, something about our packs not being very heavy. Missy, being one of the "gets mad AND gets even" types did manage to get mad. She then added twenty pounds of Canadian Shield granite to the food barrel to get even. Not realizing, I grunted and carried the barrel on the quarter-mile portage blaming heat, fatigue and old age for the weight on my shoulders. Estrogen trumps testosterone again. Men always pay for having a loose tongue.

In our younger years the "portage factor" did not come into play when deciding our paddling destinations. We picked a river to tackle or a lake off the beaten trail and accepted the overland difficulties as part of the package. Although some members of our paddling group would argue, to me the challenge of difficult portages was quite rewarding. It accredited our travels to being similar to those of early explorers and also confirmed our toughness and ability to adapt to whatever the trip dished out. It also guaranteed us true solitude and wilderness since most sane recreational paddlers will not burn up two weeks of vacation time to do something comparable to military boot camp. The reward was

usually some fantastic fishing from an untouched deepwater hole or a particular view of the land that had been long forgotten. Nowadays since we are older (we prefer to call it 'seasoned') we pay particular attention to how the gradient lines are stacked on our topographic maps. If it looks like another set of killer portages, other options are discussed.

The summer of 2008 sees us breaking 30 years of tradition. Instead of traveling north to Canada, our Central Wisconsin group of ten paddlers will be heading to western Wyoming and Montana. We have assembled a long list of mountain rivers including the Snake and the Gallatin that we can day paddle and

fish while base camping. We also intend to paddle a hundred-mile section of Montana's Yellowstone River in four or five days and nights. The most glorious part of this trip is not the beauty of the Rocky Mountains but the fact that there is not one 'port-TAJ' to be had! The older we get the better we adapt. This trip will be a great change of pace. *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.

Deinlein's

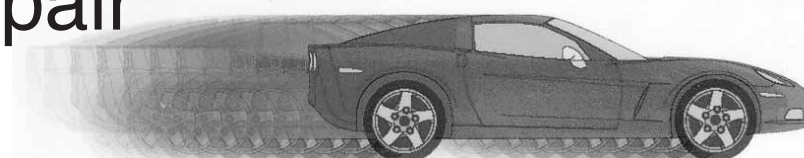
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The Mississippi River awaits you with some of Wisconsin's best bass fishing. (Photo by Dick Ellis)

By Todd Lensing

Well folks, it's that time of the year when the Big River comes to life with countless activities for all walks of life.

Early spring provides some of the finest walleye fishing around. We see a steady stream of boats traveling Highway 35 going north and south, heading for either the Genoa dam or the Lynxville dam. These are two great places to start, but the wing dams further down can be very productive as well. If you don't have a boat, there is convenient barge fishing below Genoa (Clement's Fishing Barge) and below Lynxville (Hubbard's Fishing Float). Both offer transportation from shore to the floats as well.

As spring progresses, the Mississippi River bluff country

offers challenging turkey hunting opportunities. Now with the extra permits available you might like to try a new location and change of scenery to bag that bearded tom! Of course you can't forget about the chance to hunt up some tasty morel mushrooms this season.

When the water starts to warm up, the spawning bluegills, crappies, and northern can provide some incredibly fast action. The shallow backwaters are a great place to start when looking for some fun-to-catch fish. The local bait shops up and down the river are always good at sharing information and pointing you in the right direction. The Mississippi is also home to some of the best large-mouth bass fishing in the Midwest.

Summer provides incredible recreational boating opportunities,

including water skiing, tubing, and river cruising. A popular pastime for many is shoring up and spending time on one of the many great sandbars and beaches along the river.

If being right on the water is not your bag, perhaps you're one of many motorcycle enthusiasts who enjoy riding the Great River Road (State Highway 35). There are also scenic tours along the many well-maintained paved back roads throughout southwest Wisconsin. *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, Wisconsin, www.flywayfowling.com, 608.734.323 or www.grandview-motel.com.

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Warming Trends

Spring musky tactics

By Phil Schweik

Muskies are creatures of habit. In spring and early summer, you can count on more fish searching out the warmest water available. Regardless of whether your target of choice is a lake or a river, you must find and work the warmest water on that system. It's no secret that northern shorelines attract heavy angling pressure in the early season. That's a good place to start, but expand your warm-water targets and adjust techniques to match the environment and you will put more muskies in your boat. As the season begins, consider:

- Checking northern shorelines;
- Checking warm water discharge and run-off areas;
- Checking fresh incoming water sources like creeks and streams;
- Creating aggressive fish by attacking weedy areas;
- Quietly and carefully working shallow backwater bays;
- Working traditional walleye spawning areas using noisy durable baits;
- Targeting the faster-moving water around dams with large heavy crankbaits and soft plastics.

NORTHERN SHORELINE

The northernmost shoreline of any lake will receive the most direct sunlight early in the year. With the water temperatures here warming faster than any other part of the lake, these northern territories will naturally draw fish from all other areas of the lake. Target this shoreline with shallow running crankbaits and soft plastics like bulldawgs and jigs with reaper tails in the afternoon when the water is warmest and holding the most active fish.

FEEDER STREAMS & RUN-OFF AREAS

Incoming warmer water will hold spawning fish plus minnows and forage that will attract larger prey fish. The key to fishing feeder streams and run-off areas is to not restrict your search to water immediately associated with the mouth. Incoming water does not immediately change in temperature to meet the temperature of the water around it. The change is gradual. Work not only the immediate area where it meets but 200 to 400 yards downstream where the water from the inflowing stream continues to meld with the main body of water.

In addition to working the mouth area, work up the feeder stream if possible. If the water is deep enough, fish will travel upstream as far as they can go in search of forage. Work any available structure and take advantage of fish that are passed by most anglers. Work bucktails and spinnerbaits that cover a lot of area and can be worked in and around structure.

WARM WATER INFLOW

These areas will concentrate large numbers of fish due to the constant inflow of warmer water where they can be easily targeted. It's important to remember that this is usually fast water requiring heavy baits like deep diving crankbaits and large, heavy soft plastics. The key is to cast upstream and to keep your line tight. A musky can strike anytime, but you may not feel the strike in the hard current. Set the hook when you feel any difference in line or rod. You may be surprised by what's on the other end.

WEED GROWTH

All season, any weed growth will attract gamefish seeking predation cover and protection. To target these areas, it's best to first work the outside edge from a distance with two anglers in the boat -- one casting in toward the weeds and the other casting out over the deep open water. This picks up fish that are holding tight to structure (weeds) and fish that are feeding on open-water suspended baitfish.

The key to finding open water baitfish and active predator fish is simply finding that warmest water. Remember the last time you were swimming in a lake and hit a warm spot? You wished the entire lake were that warm. Fish are the same. When they find a warm spot, they hold there.

After you have worked the outside edge, set up 10-15 feet inside the outside weed edge. Set the trolling motor down as far as you can and travel right through the weeds. Believe me, the tactic turns normally lethargic, non-striking fish into aggressive attacking fish. Disturbing the area in which the muskies hold and pushing them out of their safe zone often triggers a strike when the lure is run by them at a fast rate of speed. Work these areas with crankbaits, bucktails and large soft plastics.

BACKWATER BAYS

Warm water of a shallow back-



Schweik caught and released this Wisconsin River musky downstream from but in close proximity to a warm water discharge area.

water bay will also attract large gamefish. Keys to fishing backwater bays are the color of the bottom and the available structure. Shallow sandy bottom without structure will usually not hold fish. A dark-bottomed bay with stumps and timber will hold all kinds of fish. A dark bottom will warm up the surrounding area and any stumps and timber add not only cover but additional warmth because they soak up even more direct sunlight. Target these areas with jig and reaper combinations and slow-moving topwater baits like the Zara Spook or the Doc. Topwater baits aren't often considered as a "go to" bait in the spring. Try them, and catch more fish.

SPAWNING AREAS

Locations known by many anglers primarily for walleye fishing are often hot spots for spring musky. Muskies follow schools of walleye as a favorite forage food throughout the year, including early spring in traditional spawning areas. Long after spawning is complete, some muskies will remain in these areas and can be targeted well into summer.

Target the rocks that define spawning terrain with a lure that can withstand the constant punishment it is sure to take. The pounding noise and vibration sent through the water as your lure bangs off rocks will actually attract larger gamefish and increase your odds of catching one. Good bets include a heavy jig with a large, plastic tail; strong crankbaits like a Bucher Depth Raider series; or a jerkbait with an extra split ring attached in front as added protection from the bashing it will take on the rocks.

DAMS

Early in the year, fish including big muskies will migrate upriver toward

dams in preparation for spawning. Well after spawning is complete, many muskies will remain at these locations, sometimes throughout the entire year. Fish taking residence around dams are unique to the system and will take advantage of fast-incoming water. Fast dam water may look like a terrible place for muskies to hide, but this is exactly where the aggressive, active fish will be. They lie in wait of an easy meal offered by disoriented baitfish that have been sucked through the dam gates to be caught up in the swirling water. Big, heavy soft plastics like bulldawgs and Big Joes, crankbaits like the countdown Depth Raider, or a Triple D work great in these situations. As with the warm water discharge areas where a strike is difficult to detect, it is very important to keep a tight line when working fast water.

The slower-moving sides of the dam will also hold fish. Most often, these are inactive or lethargic fish that will also migrate to faster water when literally "moved" to feed. There are exceptions and you will occasionally catch fish in the calm water. But dedicate most of your "dam" time to the fast current.

Like approaches to lake and river angling during each of Wisconsin's seasons, productive spring musky fishing is the only option if we intend to remain in business as full-time professional guides. This early season, Hooksetters guides will be targeting the areas highlighted above, using the same lures and techniques recommended to you. Past successes dictate our future path.

Try it. You'll like it. Good luck and safe fishing. *WS*

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

Prime Time

Flyfishing the warm-water species

By Jerry Kiesow

Utter the words "Fly fishing" and thoughts immediately go to trout. Trout and fly rods just go together like bacon and eggs. One without the other is fine, but they compliment each other so well that it is almost a sin to separate them.

Well, I am going to separate them, and I am going to introduce the unschooled to another great combination: panfish (and bass) and fly rods—the warmwater species of the aquatic family known as Pisces.

PRIME TIME

Prime fly fishing time has arrived. We have been waiting a long time, especially this year, for the snows to melt, the waters to warm, and the fish to become active. Oh, we may have fished the early catch and release trout season. That is always fun, and challenging this year on snowshoes. We also may have waded one of the tributaries of Lake Michigan, drifting nymphs deep for steelhead—also a challenge in both hooking up and landing.



A basic selection of May/June fly patterns for panfish and smallmouths. From top right to left: Mickey Finn, Black-nosed dace, Squirrel Tail, Black Ghost, Black Woolly Worm, McGinty, Olive Woolly Worm, foam beetle, popper. (Photo by Jerry Kiesow)

But now, late spring/early summer is the time to get the boat out of dry dock, if you haven't already done that, and limber up the arm with the five/six weight, eight or nine foot

fly rod. Time to clean and take the memory out of your line and leader; tie on a fresh tippet; and make sure your fly box has some wet flies and streamers for the beginning of the season, and poppers and foam bugs for the latter.

Why? As most fly fishers know. May and June are the best times to catch panfish—crappies, bluegills and rock bass. But it's also prime time for bass, both smallmouth and largemouth, in shallow water.

We see people casting slip bobbers with live bait into the shorelines all over Wisconsin. What we only see occasionally are fly fishers casting into these same areas. But if we do see them and pay attention, we will find that these fly flingers are most likely out-fishing the live bait people.

Why? The average fly caster can cast to tighter places, with more accuracy, and with a softer, less frightening presentation than the chunk-and-dunk bobber lobster. And two, May and June are when insects and the young forage fish are most abundant. They become the food of choice. Flies imitate these.

WHAT IS DOING WHAT?

Early in the month of May, depending on what part of Wisconsin you are fishing, you may find crappies either getting ready to spawn or actually spawning. It all depends on water temperature.

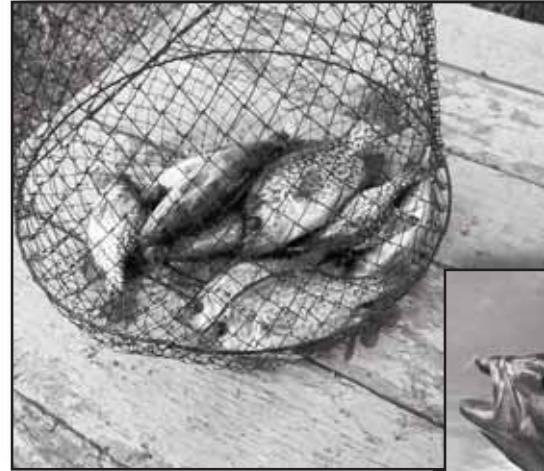
Crappies spawn when the water reaches 61 degrees and may still be spawning in 68 degree H₂O. Bluegills, on the other hand, begin their spawning as the crappies are finishing, in water temperatures reaching 67 degrees. You might still find them doing their thing when the temperature climbs as high as 80 degrees.

Once they have spawned, one of the bluegill pair will be defending the nest. They do this by attacking small critters that come too close to home or drop from the sky. We create said "critters" and call them artificial flies.

Obviously, what we need to do now is find water in the mid-sixties.

WHAT SHOULD BE IN YOUR BOX

In the beginning of May, start casting streamers for crappies. My personal choices are Black-nosed Dace, Mickey Finn, Black Ghost, and my own pattern, the Squirrel Tail. All should be



In May and June, the fly fisher, armed with just a few flies, can end an outing with a mixed bag of panfish. Or be surprised by a nice smallie. (Photo by Jerry Kiesow)



tied on number 6, 2x streamer hooks. If these do not connect with 'ol Papermouth, I will try any number of Woolly Worm color combinations, or a McGinty. These I prefer tied on number 8 wet fly/nymph hooks. I tie these patterns weighted, to avoid using split shot, allow them to sink, and then retrieve slowly.

As the month progresses and we get into June, my flies rise in the water column and even go to the surface when the conditions are right... meaning a hatch is on.


Now is the time of the popper! Crappies and bluegills will take poppers with abandon when presented around brush or pads and stumps. When mayflies are on the water, be there!

Another great surface pattern for June and later in the summer is the foam bug, especially for bluegills. Those spunky little critters just can't resist a bug bounced off of a stump or eased around a lily pad.

THE BONUS FISH

One of the best times of the year to catch smallmouth bass on a fly is in the pre-spawn catch and release season in the northern zone. If I can be at our cottage in Marinette County after Memorial Day before the catch and digest bass season opens, I will almost be able to guarantee you that I will catch smallies on streamers. And not 10-inch smallmouth either. Sixteen-inch fish are not uncommon. My largest

smallie last year was 18, but in 2006 I had a 20-inch fish. All on a three weight, eight-and-a-half-foot rod with a 5x tippet. I call that fun. My wife was catching them on small minnow simulators on an ultra-light spinning rod with four pound test line. That too was fun.

Where I find these beauties is in the rocks and on the gravel. They aren't spawning just yet, but they sure are looking for places to do so. So, if you have not already done so, get your fly fishing gear in order. Prime time is here! 

(Special note: This year, if you fish bass in the northern zone, approximately north of Highway 78, you will be restricted to artificial lures with barbless hooks only during the catch and release season, which is the first Saturday in May through the third Friday in June. Do not blame this one on the DNR. This was included by our legislature in the state budget bill.)

Jerry lives in Grafton, WI. He fly fishes year round, teaches fly tying and fly fishing. He has also written a book, "Tales of The Peshtigo Putzer," which includes some fly fishing tales as well as hunting and other yarns on a variety of outdoor activities. Get a copy at www.publishamerica.com, or if you would like a personalized autographed copy, send \$24 to Jerry Kiesow, P.O. Box 203, Grafton, WI 53024. The cost covers the book, tax, packaging and shipping. Makes a great gift.

When It Hurts So Good

Raw thumbs and big bucket-mouths

By Dave Duwe

Why is my thumb raw? That is the question I ask myself every spring. The answer for me is a simple one; the largemouth bass are in the shallows and they are hungry. Anyone who has caught a large number of bass realizes that their small sandpaper teeth will make your thumb very raw, which is actually a good thing—it means you're catching them!

In May or early June when the water temperatures reach 65 to 68 degrees, the largemouth will spawn. The largemouth bass spawn on hard sandy bottoms. These locations can be off of a point or in a shallow bay. The females will lay eggs in saucer shaped nests constructed by the males. These nests are usually located in one to five feet of water. The males will then guard the nests from predators.

This time of year is the easiest time to get a trophy fish. The fish are in shallow water which makes them very susceptible to the angler. You can catch them on spinner baits, plastic worms, tube baits and my personal favorite, the plastic stick baits. These baits are lures like the Senko, Yum Dinger or the All-Terrain Stik. These lures are a "do nothing" approach to fishing; the least amount of action, the better the lure will work.

The equipment one needs to fish is very standard. You need a medium-heavy to heavy spinning rod, like the Berkley Lightning rod and a medium sized spinning reel like a Cardinal 3 spooled with 20-pound-test Fireline. I will always use a non-stretch line when fishing with a stick bait. It has a two-fold benefit: first it provides great "feel" so you can easily tell when a fish picks up the bait, and the second



Barb Schneider, client of Dave Duwe, with a nice Lake Geneva Largemouth.
(Photo by Dave Duwe)

benefit is that you will have a more powerful hook set. The more power in the hook set means more fish landed.

There are two basic rigs for the stick baits. The first is the Texas rig. The Texas rig runs the point of the hook one-half inch down the center of the bait and brings the hook through the bait to hide it back into the plastic. It makes for a completely weedless bait. The second option is "Wacky Rigging." This is also a productive method. You

basically run the hook straight through the center of the bait. I prefer to use a wide gap hook, either a 2/0 or 3/0. In both presentations, I will never use any weight on the line. Fishing weedless adds to the "do nothingness" of the presentation.

Once equipped, the only other factor is the retrieve. I will

make long casts toward the saucer shaped circles and let the bait fall slowly for 5-10 seconds. Then I will twitch the bait a couple of times. Most of the strikes will happen on the fall. I will work the bait by raising the rod three to four inches and jiggling it only about half of the way back to the boat, and then re-cast. Though I will concentrate on spawning fish, there are plenty of fish in pre-spawn or post-spawn cruising around the area, so making multiple casts in an area can yield great success.

This presentation will work almost all of May and June. Once the water warms, the fish will move out of the shallows and this method become ineffective.

Here is hoping that you too will have a sore thumb this spring. I know I will have one! *WD*

Dave Duwe, owner of Dave Duwe's Guide Service, has been guiding the lakes of Southeastern Wisconsin for 15 years, specializing in Delavan Lake and Lake Geneva. Go to www.fishlakegeneva.com



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Jumbo Perch

Plastic tactics for the Great Lakes

By Dave Sura

Like the first Saturday in May, June 16, the other fishing opener, attracts hundreds of anglers to the shores of Lake Michigan. Although the limit is five fish per day, the chance of catching perch over 15 inches is more than enough to entice fishermen and women to wake up before the sun does. Catching these fish is generally not difficult, but there are ways to improve not only how many you catch, but also the quality.

TIMING AND LOCATION

As the water warms into the mid-50s, alewives congregate in harbors along the coast of Lake Michigan. This begins first in Kenosha and works its way north. Perch follow. Like all fish, post-spawn perch want to eat. And they do. Perch gorge themselves on alewives just as salmon do. This, along with a stop in commercial fishing, has allowed the perch to grow large.

There are several key locations to look for when searching for jumbos. Early in the season, when the water is cold, start inside the harbor itself. The water here is considerably warmer than the surrounding lake. Look for areas with current. These areas funnel baitfish by waiting perch.

Rocks. Perch use these areas too. Not only can they ambush prey there, but can escape predators as well. Other good early season locations are warm water discharges. Like the inside of a harbor, power plants and bubbles (water treatment plant discharges) are areas of current and warm water. As the season progresses and the water warms into the 60's, perch move out of the harbor and into the lake. Again, look for areas of current and rock. Finding these areas shouldn't be difficult. Spend some time scouting the harbors prior to the opener with a good pair of polarized glasses to locate quality water.

Low light equals action. As the water has become clearer from mussel infestations, perch feed



Dave Sura has been a student of Lake Michigan shore fishing for decades. His techniques mean more and bigger fish and jumbo perch fishing is no exception. A five-perch limit on Lake Michigan is more than enough when the angler adopts the jumbo tactics refined by the author.

early and late. Start prior to sun-up. There have been many times I've caught my limit before 5:00 a.m. As the saying goes, the early bird gets the worm, or in this case, the perch.

PRESENTATIONS AND EQUIPMENT

Live bait. Although it works well, day in and day out you can catch more and larger fish using artificial baits, namely plastics. When looking for the right plastic, first think size. What sizes are the alewives that are being eaten by perch? From my experience, baitfish range in size from two to four inches long. Perch eat all sizes of alewives, so choose baits to match. Straight tailed or split tailed baits work better than curly tailed ones, so start with those. Baits, such as the 2.5-inch Zoom Tiny Fluke, the two to three-inch Berkeley Power minnows, and the three-inch Gulp minnow are good choices to start with. Jumbo perch will have no trouble taking these offerings.

Colors. I've tried most of them. Natural colors work the best. Be sure to carry an assortment, but start with white, pearl, or green. Other hot colors include watermelon, baitfish, motor oil, and pink. Match these baits with jig heads

ranging from 1/32 to 1/8-ounce jig heads. Smaller heads work well in shallow, slow moving water or when fish are finicky. Larger heads, in turn, work better when fishing deepwater or in heavy current. Try to use jig heads with gold hooks. For whatever reason, perch prefer them to bronze.

When jig fishing, I always use 4 to 6-pound hi-vis lines with a fluorocarbon leader. Lime green, pink, or yellow, the color doesn't matter. What does matter is being able to line watch. Watching your line allows you see strikes before you feel them. Doing this will increase your catch rate as it has mine. This is the single most important trick I've learned to help me fill my basket. Fluorocarbon leaders help as well. I started fishing perch in the seventies and Lake Michigan is much clearer now than it was then. Jig fishing is an art form. Although it is an easy technique to master, it will take time getting the "feel" of it. The basic way to fish a jig for perch is simple. First, cast it out. Second, let the jig sink to the bottom. Be sure to watch the line as it sinks. Many times fish will strike the jig on the way down. Third, lift the rod upward and then drop the rod down. Again, watch the line on the fall as fish almost always hit on

the drop. How fast or slow you move your bait depends of the activity level of the fish. More active perch may want a snap-jigging approach and less active may want a very subtle one. Work your jig different ways until you find what the perch want.

I prefer using light or ultra-light action rods when jig fishing. I personally use seven-foot St. Croix's. Using

rods over six feet long increases casting distance; this is especially important when fishing from shore. Rods made of quality graphite are also important. They give you the sensitivity needed to "feel" the jig while fishing. Reels should match the rod. Choose one with a good drag and at least three ball bearings. A smooth retrieve is necessary to work a jig properly.

Another way I've fished for perch is drop shotting. This technique has worked well when fishing vertically over warm water discharges or "bubbles." Rig it the same as you would when drop shotting for bass. Tie a hook to the line 12 to 18 inches above a 1/4 to 3/8-ounce weight. Hook the minnow grub through the nose of the plastic, drop it to the bottom and jig it.

Whether you've fished for perch or not, hopefully you've added something to your arsenal that will help you jig more jumbos in the bag. *WS*

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.



RAY HOWELL

KICKING BEAR*Devin's double "pinch"*

Devin Landers, 12, aka the "Firecracker," is one of the most fun and competitive kids I've ever known. At the 2007 Kicking Bear event in La Crosse, WI, hosted in conjunction with the Blackhawk Archers and the La Crosse Sheriff's Department, a kickball game broke out on Friday evening that lasted until the wee hours of the morning. There were about 80 adults and youth involved, including Devin, while the rest of the crowd stood around watching and rooting for their favorite team. It's incredible to see the parents and mentors having that much fun to the point that several times I saw grown men and women leaping and diving to get their hands on the ball! Needless to say there were a lot of people who showed up stiff as boards at breakfast the next morning.

Greg Symons, alias "Sarge," has been a part of the Kicking Bear events since 2000. At the end of games including a 3-D archery shoot on Saturday, Sarge informed all the youth that he would be leading a gun hunter safety course free to all kids involved with Kicking Bear. An organized youth hunt would follow in the fall for any interested program graduates. Later that summer, Sarge coordinated the classes that taught firearms and tree stand safety while stressing all-around good ethics in the outdoors.

Just prior to the hunting season, Devin and I got together. I wanted to make sure his shooting skills were proficient for the type of hunting we were going to do and made and set a cardboard silhouette of a whitetail deer at 100 yards. We talked about how to follow the back of the front leg line up to the center of the silhouette and squeeze a shot off with good follow-through. Devin proved to be an incredible shot. I couldn't believe how well-placed his shots were and how calm and confident he was in his shooting abilities.

Devin and I discussed some of the experiences of my first hunts; how things change when you're no longer shooting at paper but the real thing. I get excited every time I see a whitetail in the woods, especially when I have the opportunity to hunt them. I told Devin, as it was with me, that many great seasoned whitetail hunters will completely fall apart when the trophy

of their dreams steps into view. With his shooting ability, Devin's real challenge would be controlling his emotions and waiting for the right shot.

We also discussed the importance of not letting the deer detect movement or smell. Using a product like Wildlife Research Scent Killer is perfect for sitting in ground blinds, especially for youth. No matter what you did wrong in not being scent-free, simply stepping from the vehicle and spraying yourself down allows you to become "invisible" to a whitetail's uncanny sense of smell.

first adult deer that stepped into the feeding area within his comfortable shooting range. At 2:30 p.m. he whispered, "There's a buck." I could see there was no joking with this. Devin's eyes told the whole story! I turned my head to look that direction and sure enough, a buck was feeding about 110 yards from us. *This is incredible*, I thought. *We're going to get an opportunity.*

Devin slowly lifted his gun and rested it on a large branch. The buck was quartering severely away from us.

The tracking was very easy. The buck had expired in the woods within 75 yards. We found ourselves grinning from ear to ear—high fiving—and acting like a couple of people who had just won the lottery.

After Devin had his first "hands on" lesson on how to field dress a deer, a story in itself, and dragging the deer back to the edge of the tree line, the whole experience carried me back to the first time I harvested a whitetail. The feelings were exactly the same.

With plenty of daylight left and a doe tag to fill, I asked Devin if he wanted to try for a double "pinch." That big grin provided the answer, and we were soon back in the blind where it was even tougher to keep quiet. We were whispering about all the things that had unfolded from the moment he first saw the buck. I asked him where he thought the next deer was going to appear from and he pointed to a well-used trail at the west end of the food plot; not my personal choice, so the bet was on.

A half hour later, a single, large adult doe walked into the food plot about 80 yards from us. I couldn't believe it. I had just lost the bet. Again, Devin slowly got his gun into position and waited for the right shot opportunity. Before the sound of the shot had left the valley, the doe hit the ground and lay motionless. Another well-placed shot! Before my optics were even off my eyes, I uncontrollably yelled, "Great shot Devin—you pinched again!"

There we were again, grinning from ear to ear, only this time I volunteered to do the field dressing. We were having so much fun I forgot that we had to physically drag both deer back to the logging road which was quite a jaunt. But I'll tell you what—with all the laughing, joking and swatting each other on the back I really don't remember all the physical work involved. A double pinch?

Not even on my best day. Acts 10:13 *W*



Given the opportunity by Ray Howell and Kicking Bear, Devin Landers made shots that ended it quickly for two Wisconsin whitetails.

We talked about the importance of stealth while hunting. When they can't see, hear, or smell you, they're at a distinct disadvantage.

The following weekend found us together sitting in a brush blind near a food plot in Wisconsin where I had been watching several deer feeding in the evenings. It was an extremely quiet afternoon; I knew any mistake made with movement or noise and the hunt would be over instantly. I don't know what it is about trying to be quiet especially when you're having a good time. Several times we broke out laughing and I had a real difficult time trying to keep the sound muffled.

Devin was going to harvest the

It would have been tough for even an expert to make the shot. I asked Devin to wait until the deer had turned perfectly broadside. I couldn't believe the patience this young boy had. The minutes went by like hours and I was almost sure Devin was going to hear my heart pounding. Finally the buck gave Devin the opportunity. I reminded him to follow the leg line and a second later the shot rang out and the buck ran off the field. Through my Nikon optics, I saw that the bullet had hit perfectly. I couldn't have placed the shot any better myself. I looked right at Devin. "You pinched!" I said.

We waited for twenty minutes and then walked over to the point of hit.

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.

The Best Bet Bite

Northern Wisconsin crappies and gills

By Dick Henske

After decades of fishing the lakes and streams of northern Wisconsin as a resident of Manitowish Waters, I've learned that crappies in May are a "best bet" bite. They come in to spawn and move to feed, but remain in or near the warm, shallow, weedy water for an extended period of good fishing. The odds are good that you can hit the jackpot.

One effective presentation is a weighted bobber over a mini jig tipped with long, soft plastics. Use plastics with long, slender tails, but they must be flexible. This system works on our northern lakes, depending on weather, from the walleye opener until the end of May. I look for shallow weed beds and move until I start to catch a few fish; then I "work" the area. Crappies can be congregated in areas no bigger than a volleyball court. Warm, low-wind days in a stable weather pattern are the most productive. On windy days crappies suspend in deep water just off the weed edges.

I use an ultra-light rod and line, which allows me to cast a long way with the weighted bobber to locate fish.

However, each lake has its own characteristics. I fish in Vilas and Iron Counties and find it easier to catch crappies in the dark-stained water lakes. But you need to begin by targeting lakes known to hold crappies. If you're not sure, ask at the local baitshop.

Use the twitch and jerk method with the bobber; try to keep it moving. Sometimes just the wave action on the bobber is enough to move the tail and trigger a strike. Cutting the plastics paper-thin to initiate even the slightest movement often will do the trick. Colors vary, but white, purple, green and black work for me. Carry a lot of rigs; northern and musky will rip off your baits.

You really don't need live bait, but if you feel you must, put a wax worm on the hook tip. This will usually get you a perch or one or two bluegills. I leave about three feet of line between the bobber and jig. Experiment!

Big bluegills can be hard to come by in northern Wisconsin. Scout out good lakes and learn to fish them, knowing that characteristics often differ and so too must your approach. I actually start catching suspended pre-spawn gills in mid-April staging in deep water off the spawning beds. I have the best luck on clear lakes where some gills spawn at 8 to 20 foot depths.

We have experienced drought for three years and most lakes and flowages are extremely low. The old hunting dog and I can walk the sandy shores looking for spawning beds with the best fishing often found on the more remote walk-in lakes. I seldom see any fishermen

and it's great to be out soaking up sun, catching those gills!

Consider two methods. I use a fly rod with black mini-poppers once the fish are in the shallows for a dynamite limit of pure fun. You need a lot of poppers because the trees get you on back casts and the fish can be tough on those little poppers. Buy a whole card full. A big bonus is the amount of bass that you will catch and release.

My other method is similar to crappie fishing, utilizing an ultra-light rig with the same jigs but different plastics. The most effective is a small mini-black worm. You may need a wax worm to find a school or to catch reluctant fish. The plastics I use vary in color and shape. Store-bought ones work well. Let your bait sink to various depths and slowly retrieve. A piece of night crawler will work too, but when I'm fishing all I need is a snuff box of jigs and plastics and a snuff box of wax worms. That's it!

Use a creel if you want to keep a meal. My wife, Mariel and I love bluegills and I take eight or 10 for a fish fry. But never over-fish this wonderful resource of ours. Fish are vulnerable

when on the beds.

Finally, I will use a light, 12-foot aluminum Jon Boat that fits in the back of my pickup for some of those back-in lakes with poor shorelines to walk. An old electric motor helps move us around. Don't forget your Polaroid glasses to help you spot those spawning beds.

Close and wonderful encounters with bear, deer, fishers, wolves, and lots of loons and migratory birds will be part of your Wisconsin early summer experience. Just remember this phrase....

"Always leave the area you fish or hunt cleaner than when you came."

Even in pristine northern Wisconsin, even in the back country, the shame is that you will not have to look long to find another person's trash.

See you on the water! *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.



Alone on the shoreline of a walk-in access only lake in Vilas County, Dick Henske of Manitowish Waters works beyond the cover of a downed tree for staging bluegills in pre-spawn. English setter Maggie waits for the next hit too. (Photos by Dick Ellis)



Although the bluegill fishing on a small walk-in only lake in Vilas County is virtually non-stop May 20, the fish reaching eight inches or more like this one held by Dick Henske are few and far between. Two very large gills reaching more than nine inches were among the catch taken by Henske on another walk-in lake the day before.



**The second amendment, first
EDITOR, from page 5**

our gun ownership someday translates into "felon" with the stroke of our lawmaker's pen, is already here too.

"The answer's been here all along," Heston wrote. "You simply...disobey. Peaceably, yes. Respectfully, of course. Nonviolently, absolutely. But when told how to think or what to say or how to behave, we don't. We disobey social protocol that stifles and stigmatizes personal freedom. I learned the awesome power of disobedience from Dr. King...who learned it from Gandhi, and Thoreau and Jesus, and every other great man who led those in the right against those with might."

As Heston said, when the Redcoats came door to door to confiscate the guns, they didn't succeed. The muskets went out the back door with their owners. In

our peaceful resistance, know that we won't go out the back door. The right to stand in our own front doors unafraid, even with our guns locked away in the cabinet, is uniquely American and earned by better people before us. But earned too by our own law-abiding use of firearms and respect for the sanctity of human life.

We understand, freedom killers, that under the wrong governing climate you can probably legislate us, the American gun owner...We the People...into wearing the label of criminal. But you understand, that even if that ever happens, you still can't have our guns. Ever. *W*

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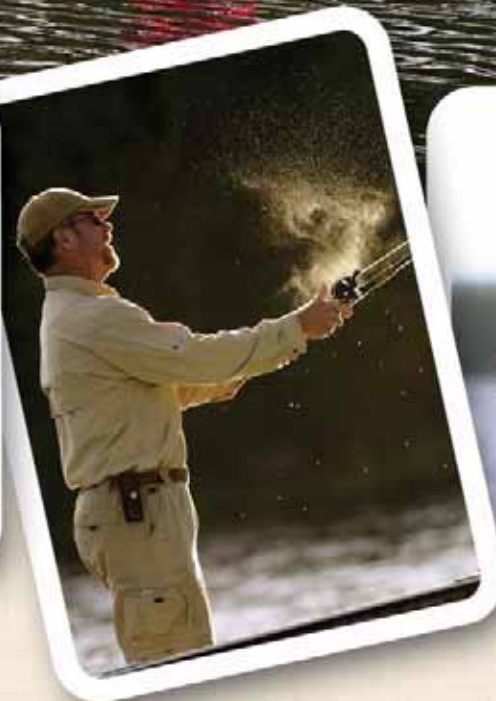
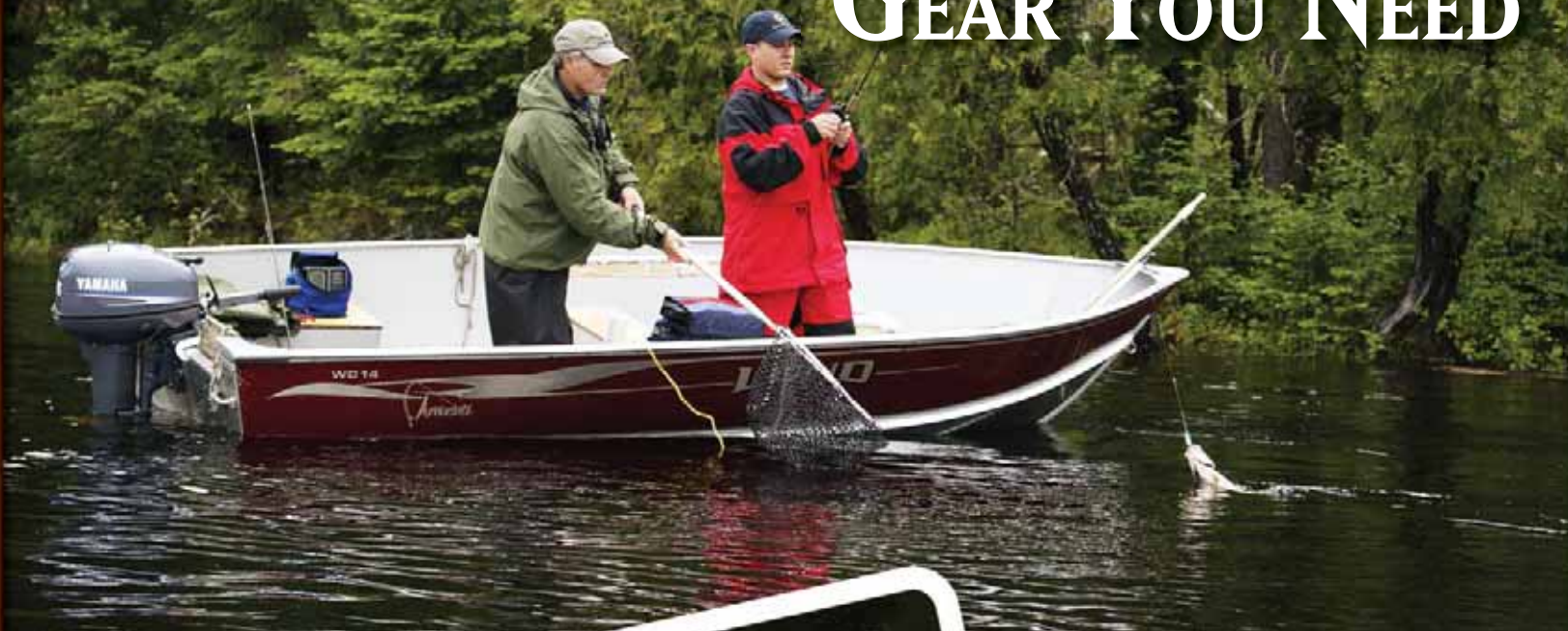
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TOM CARPENTER

BADGER BIRDS*Northern Oriole*

The oriole loves summer, returning to Wisconsin in late spring from tropical wintering grounds in Central and South America. A male oriole creates a spectacular sight in his feathered finery of fiery-orange and jet-black. Insects and fruit are the culinary attractions now, and June is the perfect month to observe orioles whether you're fishing, camping, hiking or just out in the yard. Orioles do fine in rural, suburban and even urban settings, as long as there are mature trees around.

Look for a stunning bird with blaze-orange chest, belly and back, and black head and wings. Females are a drabber blend of grayish-orange and olive-yellow.

Listen for the oriole's beautiful, flute-like hoo-li song of four to eight notes.

Search with binoculars for an oriole nest—a woven basket of plant fibers and bark strands suspended from the tip of a branch high in a tree. Leave out pieces of string and yarn (under eight inches long, so they don't

tangle the birds) for the orioles to use.

Attract orioles with orange halves impaled fruit-side-up on a deck rail or tree trunk. Set out a tray of grape jelly. Feed sugar water in an oriole feeder.

Did you know that the Baltimore oriole (East) and Bullock's oriole (West) were once considered distinct species? But they readily interbreed where their ranges overlap along prairie river corridors, and are now known simply as the northern oriole. *W*

TOM CARPENTER

CUB'S CORNER*June gills on the bed*

June is not too late to take a young angler out on the water to experience great sunfishing action. Whether you have a first-time angler in tow, a young outdoorsperson looking for some success, or an adolescent who needs some time outside with Dad and/or Mom, bluegills are the perfect answer and June is the perfect time.

With the sun at its zenith for the year, water temperatures warm up beyond that magical 70-degree range that really pulls bluegills into the shallows to make their dinnerplate-sized spawning nests in the sand or gravel. The fish—especially those pole-bending sunnies that generate whoops and hollers from anglers of all ages—will never be as accessible as they are now.

So get out on the water. Cruise the shallows, looking for spawning beds. By the time you spot them, the fish will have fled to deeper water. Just anchor up and wait; the bluegills will be back soon. If you're shore fishing, poke along and look for spawning beds; the nests are easy to spot. It's funny, but boat anglers are always trying to get their baits as close to shore as possible, while shorebound anglers want to cast out as far as they can!

While you're waiting for the fish to return, rig up. Use light spin-cast tackle for your youngest anglers, generally those under the age of 13 or 14. Don't burden the littlest kids with a cheap cartoon-character outfit. Instead, get something decent and reliable. You should be spooled up with good-

quality, eight-pound test monofilament. Bobber fishing is best. Who doesn't love watching a bobber go down? I've seen it a million times, and I still get excited. Every time. Kids do too.

Use light, thin pencil-style floats that offer little resistance to fish. Tie on a light-wire, size 6 or 8 hook; light-wire is good because it will easily straighten out and you won't lose your entire rig if your young angler gets tangled up in a lily pad stalk, brush or other snag. Long-shanked models are best because they make hook removal much easier; these fish are hungry for a meal and aggressive at defending their nests, and they will do their best to swallow your offering.

A smallish garden worm, threaded lightly on the hook, works great. So does a nightcrawler half. Waxworms attract June bluegills too (stick to a smaller hook, or use a tiny teardrop ice-fishing jig.) My favorite June bluegill baits, through, are small crappie minnows. Minnows seem to discourage the smaller sunfish from biting, while attracting the real slabs.

There will be plenty of action, so use the opportunity as a learning experience. Let the young angler cast out and set his or her own hook. If you miss a few fish, no big deal; there will be more to come. Take fish off the hook yourself, though. You don't want a bluegill spine cutting your trip short and souring the experience.

Take some time to study the beautiful fish you catch. Differentiate the



Big gills keep novice anglers of all ages happy—and busy—in June. (Photo by Dick Ellis)

orange-bellied males from the yellow-chested females. Note the beautiful blue markings on the jaws and lower gills (hence the name bluegill), the handsome black ear flap, the purples and yellows flecked on the fishes' sides.

Take some breaks. Even if the fishing is grand, your little fisherperson may decide they need a change of activity or scenery for awhile. Bring along plenty of snacks and juice drinks for just such a purpose. Soda pop and granola bars do the trick for my adolescents.

Go chase frogs on shore together. Take a hike. Watch birds. Play in the shallows and investigate bugs, crayfish and other natural wonders that you find. (And they are all wonders to young imaginations.)

Most kids love to save some fish—to show off at home, to prove their skills, to commemorate the trip. Be open to the idea, and eat those bluegills, for they will provide the finest fish dining

you will ever experience—better than even, dare I say, the vaunted walleye.

Filleting a bluegill can be difficult: Most fish are a third to half a pound and only six to seven or maybe eight inches long. A better plan is to scale the fish (get the young angler to help with this step), lop off the head and tail, pull out the innards, then make cuts along both sides of the dorsal and anal fins, and pull those fins out with a pliers.

Roll the fish in cornmeal, cracker crumbs or a commercial mix (I love Fry Magic), and cook in hot oil. The sides will curl up. "Fillet" the fish with a butter knife right on the plate and be prepared for mass consumption.

Unlike other anglers, I am in no rush to finish my family's panfishing season. In fact—for bluegills, June is the best month of all! *W*

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



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Lake Mendota Bronzebacks

The where & how on the Madison Chain

By Gary Engberg

The Madison Chain of Lakes all have good fishing with each lake having its own "special" species. The largest lake in the "Chain" is 9,842 acre Lake Mendota, which besides having trophy walleye and northern pike, holds big smallmouth bass.

Anyone who fishes Lake Mendota should have a quality map and good electronics in order to find and fish the abundant mid-lake structure (rock bars and humps), sharp breaking drop-offs, and the many points which are all prime smallmouth locations throughout the summer. Study a lake map before going fishing on Lake Mendota for success. The best maps are made by Mapping Specialists (866)-525-2298. Their maps are very accurate with a GPS coordinate grid that will help you in finding the prime underwater structure that Lake Mendota possesses. The minimum size for smallmouth on Mendota is 18 inches, but there are many larger fish.

Spawning is completed on Lake Mendota by the end of May. The first key to fish Lake Mendota smallmouth is to work the deep weed edges around the lake that range from 12 to 20 feet deep. Try anchoring outside the deep weeds and make long casts

with a slip float, a 1/16 ounce orange Slo-Poke jig, and a fat and lively leech. I'd put the slip-float rod in a holder while casting with another rod. Fan cast with a 1/8 ounce Slo-Poke Weedmaster jig and a leech or half of a nightcrawler. If you don't like anchoring, try working slowly off your bow mount trolling motor. I suggest using a 7 to 7 1/2 foot rod because the longer rod allows for a longer cast which won't spook the smallmouth.

Another key is to concentrate on the lake's rock bars and humps that are located in the main basin and off the numerous points. Smallmouth in Lake Mendota like rock, gravel, and the hard bottoms that attract their favorite food, the crayfish.

A live bait rig is good for fishing outside the weeds and up and down the lake's deeper structure. Put a bullet or slip sinker (1/4 ounce) above a barrel swivel, tie on 3 to 4 feet of fluorocarbon line, and then use a colored hook or a floating jig head baited with a leech or a piece of nightcrawler. This rig can be slowly dragged up and down breaks, up and over rocks, and along the lake bottom.

Here are some prime smallmouth areas to fish on Lake Mendota:

- Try fishing the deep weed edges on both sides of Picnic Point,

Second Point, Governors Island, and off Maple Bluff.

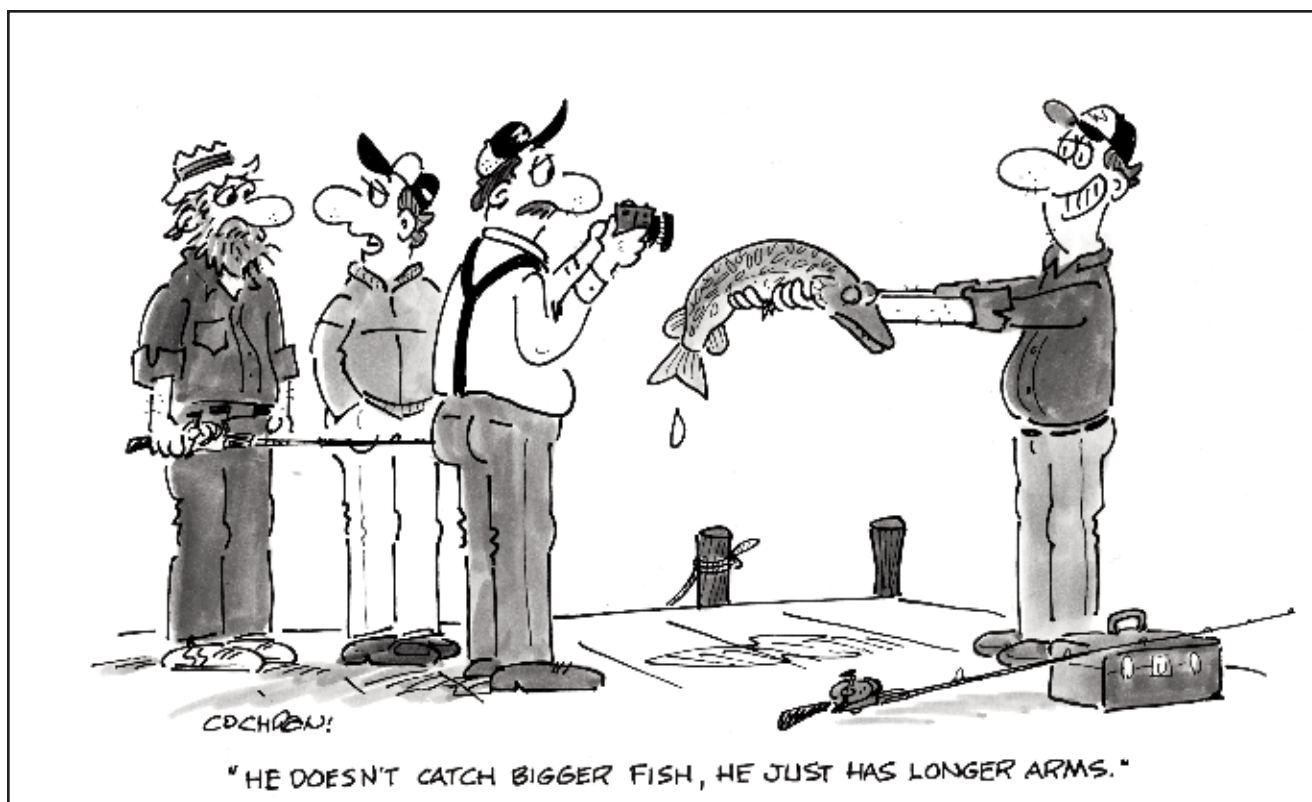
- Work the rock bars and the humps north of the Brearly Street Bar on the east side of the lake. Here, there are rocks and weeds and numerous inside and outside turns with some open pockets to cast.

- Dunn's Bar, out from Governor's Island, is another prime location. Cast slip-floats and leeches up to the rocks, weeds, and bar edges. Also, drag jigs up and down the steep breaks for smallmouth.

- There's structure north of Second Point, where the depths and contours



Bob Zownir of Madison with a smallie.



change rapidly from 20 to 40 feet. Try fishing the sharp contours with a jig or a rig.

- West of Second Point is the Commodore Bar which tops off at 15 feet and drops down to 60 feet. Use your electronics to see if fish are present on the bar and again either jig or rig the fish.

Spinner baits, buzz baits, and in-line spinners will work when burned across the weed tops. The noise, flash, and vibration attracts bass that are buried in the weeds or cruising the edges. White and black spinners with gold and silver blades are my favorites for Lake Mendota. *W*

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Solitary Woman

Wardens police outdoors with little help

By Terry Bitz

I was having a telephone conversation with DNR Warden Jennifer Niemeyer, working out details of me riding with her while she went out on a patrol. Part of the conversation went something like this:

Niemeyer: "I will need to you sign a waiver. If we get into a gunfight or something, we need to make sure you don't sue the department if something bad happens."

Me: "Is there anything in the waiver that assures me I can't be used a human shield if there is a gunfight?"

Niemeyer: "No."

Me: "Can I turn on a siren if there is a high-speed chase?"

Niemeyer: "No."

Me: "Can I handcuff someone if you have to take them down?"

Niemeyer: "No and you need to quit watching so many episodes of *Cops*."

Me: "Hmmm, well okay. I need a story so I'll sign it."

Niemeyer is one of the game wardens that serve in the Kenosha area. Actually, one warden position is currently unfilled, so at this time, she is the only warden for Kenosha County.

Serving here since 1999, she has



Conservation warden Jennifer Niemeyer checks Kenosha fishermen for licenses.
(Photo by Terry Bitz)

become a recognized and respected face among the local outdoors community. Ten years, according to Niemeyer, is the longest any warden has served in this county. She's not far away from reaching that mark.

Niemeyer earned her four-year degree from UW-Platteville before entering certified law enforcement

training. One year of training with the DNR followed before she was assigned to Kenosha County.

Typical of others in the field, it was her love for the outdoors that caused her, a self-described tomboy, to decide to become a warden. "I grew up fishing with my dad on the Mississippi. I loved fishing. I loved the outdoors," she said.

Unfortunately, she can't partake in outdoor activities as much as she'd like, especially in fall when she works long days. Niemeyer does fish occasionally and finds time to hunt deer and waterfowl.

On the morning I rode along with her, we checked anglers in Kenosha harbors. I promised not to reveal any of her secrets, but I can say that she often scopes out the activities of people from a distance before checking them out in person.

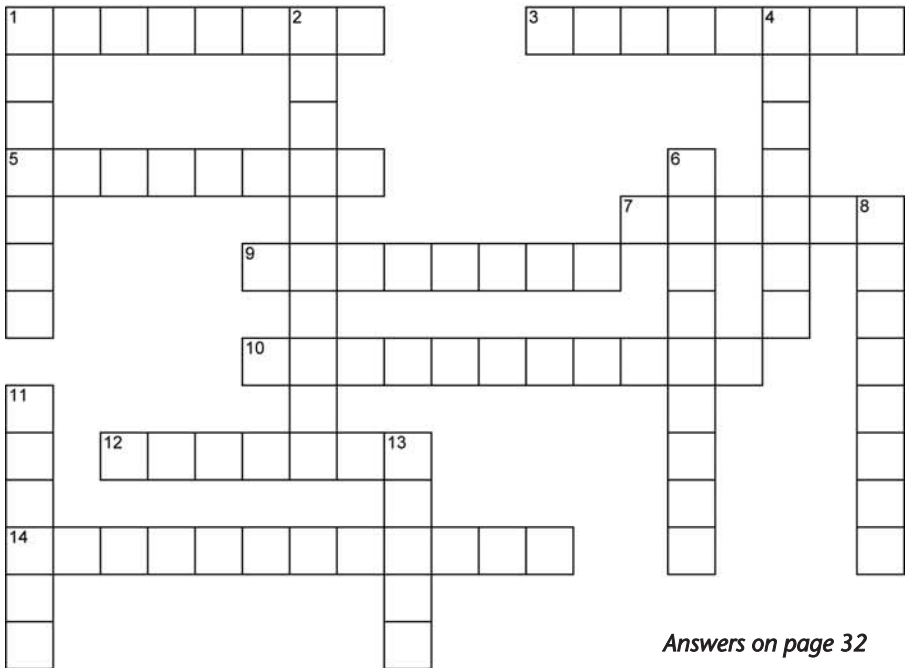
"People are not going to violate in front of a warden," she said as she picked up a pair of binoculars.

Our first encounter was with a gentleman ice fishing for trout in the Southport Marina. He had finished for the morning when we pulled up. Niemeyer stepped out of the truck, announced who she was, asked him some questions about his activities, and then requested to see his fishing license. He responded that he had lost it and had not gotten a replacement. That is a problem and it turns out to be a common violation.

Of the anglers she checked on this morning, both violations involved people having purchased licenses, but

Continued on page 26

Outdoor Criss Cross



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Answers on page 32

ACROSS

- 1 How fast a bullet travels down range.
- 3 Half rifle, half bow.
- 5 Holds ammunition.
- 7 For hunting, you hire them. For fishing, they're on your rod.
- 9 A type of splashy, top-water lure.
- 10 Estimates range.
- 12 Shoot-N-C _____.
- 14 Another name for blackpowder rifle.

DOWN

- 1 Small calibers are used for _____ hunting.
- 2 Brand of clothing insulation.
- 4 Popular Wisconsin musky bait.
- 6 Game camera that touts "faster trigger speed."
- 8 Plastic baits from Northland Tackle Company.
- 11 Big-time turkey call manufacturer.
- 13 Long part of an arrow.

S. WILKERSON

SURPLUS FIREARMS

Veteran of the Osterfront

No nation suffered more during the course of World War II or contributed more to the victory over Nazi Germany than the Soviet Union. While the exact number will never be known, conservative estimates are that more than 20 million Soviet soldiers and citizens perished. By way of comparison, the United States lost approximately 600,000 soldiers in all theaters of the war.

By the time the western allies landed at Normandy in June of 1944, the Soviet Union had already turned the tide of the war. The Osterfront had become a mass grave - 80 % of all German casualties occurred fighting Hitler's war for "Lebensraum (Living Space)" in the east. Well before British and American bombers had a decisive effect on German industry, the Wehrmacht had been bled white at the gates of Moscow, in the streets of Stalingrad, on the steppes of Kursk, and in countless other Osterfront (Eastern Front) battles.

Germany launched its attack on Russia in June of 1941 with the First World War's best rifle, the Mauser Model 98. Slightly modified in 1935, it became the 98K, still a five-shot, bolt action repeater, firing 8 mm cartridges and weighing over eight pounds. It was a relic compared to the semi-automatic M1 Garand rifle fielded by the United States.

Poorly prepared and led, the result of the officer corp purges of the 1930s and Stalin's stupidity, Russian soldiers died and surrendered by the millions in the first year of the German invasion. In this environment, the 98K was good enough. Soon, it would not be. Blinded by early conquests, Hitler and his generals made numerous strategic and tactical errors, not the least of which were the atrocities committed against Soviet citizens and soldiers, many of whom had originally welcomed them as liberators from Stalin's tyranny. As the Red Army went on the offensive, the 98K would prove woefully inadequate in the face of Russian hordes armed with submachine guns and ready to reap bloody vengeance.

At the onset of the war, the Red Army was so ill-prepared that its soldiers sometimes went to battle without rifles and ammunition. If there was to be another war, that would never happen again. Soviet citizens and soldiers would be armed, and many of them with the weapons of



Russian captured Model 98Ks are among the hottest rifles on today's surplus scene. Prices have escalated in the past several years and rumor has it that there may be no more to be imported. (Photos by Dick Ellis)

their former foes. While the western allies destroyed captured German arms, the Russians collected and refurbished them in preparation for the next war.

This month's feature is one such weapon, a rebuilt Model 98K manufactured by Mauser in 1944 and captured or surrendered somewhere on the Eastern Front. From there, it, and perhaps millions of others, were returned to Mother Russia where they were disassembled, refinished, rebuilt and stored. Some were later used to arm communist insurgents in Korea, Vietnam and China. Others were put away in armories throughout the former Soviet Union where they would languish for decades, covered in grease and shellac, later to be sold to collectors of the capitalist west.

So-called "serious" collectors are not much interested in Russian Captured 98s (RC 98s). There is virtually nothing "original" about them, except their battle scars, and serious collectors crave originality. An unfired, matching numbers, 98K brought back by a U.S. veteran in a duffle bag at the end of hostilities is worth far more than a conglomeration of unmatched, reblued parts with an Eastern Front provenance.

Obviously, Russian armorers weren't considering the needs of advanced American gun collectors when they thoughtlessly and totally disassembled captured 98s, threw the parts into bins without any pretense of sorting rare versions from the common-as-dirt kind and - horrors!! - obliterated every swastika proof mark they could find.

Having suffered under the swastika, those toiling away in Soviet armories after the war weren't much interested in preserving any remnants of the Nazi occupation. Rather, they defaced them with punches as part of



Intake Swastika proof marks increase the value of Russian captured 98Ks.

the rebuilding process. Quite a number of RC 98s, however, do have their swastikas intact, and these command a premium. A rifle with its receiver stamped with a death's head or single rune "S" denotes that it had been repaired by its Nazi owners in an SS armory, quite possibly one located in a concentration camp.

With the exception of those on the stock, this month's featured version had intact swastikas buried under a thick coat of authentic Cold War-era, Eastern Bloc goop. Copious amounts of denatured alcohol applied to wood and metal revealed them, a very nice laminated wood stock, and a mid-gloss blue finish on the metal.

Closer examination displayed light pitting on the exterior of the bolt and above the wood line of barrel. Pitting wasn't so light under the woodline, rather it was moderate to severe, although not enough to affect the integrity of the steel or the safety of the shooter. It was enough to be disappointing, just like the bore, which, while it had very strong lands and grooves and did shine some, was pitted. One should probably expect that of a rifle that was fired in battle, under horrific conditions, who knows how many times, with corrosive

ammunition.

Although far from pristine, this rifle is probably in better shape than most ordered from the major importers. In fact, it was hand-picked. Expecting an RC 98 with glistening metal, mirror-like bores, and fine wood stocks from a luck-of-the draw mail order (or anywhere else) would be a mistake.

What can be assured is a historical relic that will work and may look good after the nasty red shellac is removed. Be warned, however, that while hideous in appearance, many collectors consider the shellac to be part of the gun's history. That being the case, they believe that it should be preserved. I say hooley. The shellac was put on as a temporary wood preservative for the same reason cosmoline was put on its metal parts. Any amount of use will cause the shellac to flake off, so what's the point of making an effort to preserve it?

Even the rare find with an excellent bore, however, may not produce tack-driving accuracy. Barreled receivers were rarely returned to their original stocks by Soviet armorers resulting in sloppy wood-to-metal fit not conducive to bulls eyes.

Rarely costing more than \$300, RC 98s are an inexpensive way to start an interesting gun collection. The number of variations are immense and prices have nearly doubled in the past several years. There are few better bets on the surplus market and only one other soaked with as much history - the 98's Soviet counterpart, the Russian 91/30.

In fact, every gun collector should own both and can for less than \$400.

W

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

KEVIN MICHALOWSKI

DOG TALK*Food for thought*

During a recent visit to the vet for some puppy shots, the vet said Cocoa, our new yellow Lab, was looking great, but warned me, "Let's see that she doesn't weigh more than 25 pounds at the next visit."

It seems the American penchant for obesity also extends to our pets, and this can be particularly troublesome for young dogs, especially large breeds. Puppies that grow too quickly have a much greater chance of developing hip trouble than do dogs that are kept at their proper weight. This is common knowledge among reputable breeders and trainers, but the average dog owner seems to love a chubby puppy. Couple that with the average puppy's desire to dive into a food bowl as if the food offered is the first seen in days, it's easy to see why many people overfeed young dogs.

But, of course, there are differences of opinion. And one came up when I took Cocoa to her very next appointment. She weighed in at 22.6 pounds and the vet promptly told me, "She looks a little thin."

I reminded my vet that she had told me just three weeks earlier to keep Cocoa under 25 pounds by the next check-up. Adding that I had been carefully following the feeding directions stated on the Purina Puppy Chow (for large breeds) bag, I countered that Cocoa appears to be doing very well in all aspects of her puppyhood, with the possible exception that she can't sit still when anyone under 10 years of age wanders too near.

Still, the vet told me to increase Cocoa's feed a bit and said, "It's pretty hard to overfeed a puppy."

Knowing I was about to increase the pup's feed anyway, I opted not to start an argument and just agreed to keep Cocoa on the appropriate feeding schedule.

In this case, I disagree with the vet. You can overfeed a puppy. And in doing so you are not only endangering the puppy's health now, you are establishing a pattern that will likely lead to an obese adult dog. With dogs, as with

people, extra weight does nothing good for the body. Joints deteriorate faster, other medical problems appear earlier in life and, as a rule, life expectancy is shortened.

The solution to all of these problems is education and following through with a proper feeding program. I'll state clearly that I am not in the employ of the Purina Company, nor do I receive any discounts or

special privileges by mentioning them. But I have found the Purina website (www.purina.com) to be an outstanding resource for information concerning all aspects of dog care.

True, this is a promotional website with a vested interest in getting people to use Purina products, but beyond that it is helpful, insightful and easy to use.

Here is my favorite entry on the Purina website concerning feeding puppies: The amount of food offered to a puppy will vary depending upon its size, activity, metabolism, and environment. For the best results, develop a regular feeding schedule, such as three small meals a day for younger pups. You can gradually reduce to one feeding in the morning and one in the evening as your puppy ages. An overweight puppy not only presents a poor appearance, but the excess weight can cause bone abnormalities. Anytime owners have questions or concerns about their animal's body condition, they should consult their own veterinarian.

Proper feeding instructions are included on each bag of Puppy Chow and should be followed unless your veterinarian gives you other instructions. If you do that, you will insure that you are properly feeding your new best friend. *W*



Much like people who watch what they eat, properly feeding your new best friend will allow him to lead a healthier life, and very likely keep him around longer.

"An overweight puppy not only presents a poor appearance, but the excess weight can cause bone abnormalities ..."

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.

BITZ, from page 24

not having that license on them.

"We see more people are not carrying their licenses," she said.

Niemeyer noted that people who lose or forget their license often ask if the warden can look up the license in the system. The warden can, but the violation is the same whether the angler never purchased a license or forgot it at home.

Over the years, Niemeyer has gotten to know many of the local outdoors people, even those who have occasionally violated the regulations.

"Some of these guys I have been chasing for years. It's a cat and mouse game," she said.

I asked her if she's ever been in situations she would consider dangerous.

"Absolutely. The same people the police encounter, we encounter too," she said. "You can never become complacent. The nice guy could hurt you."

She has been in a couple of fights while on the job and occasionally people get into arguments with her or try to run away. Niemeyer depends on local law enforcement to back her up since there are only a handful of wardens in the region. She says she has developed a close working relationship with the sheriff's department, since

much of her work occurs out in the county.

"I should write a book someday. Some of these people come up with crazy ideas," she said.

She and another warden, for example, came upon a person who was using his fishing license as bait on the Pike River. When she asked him for his license, he reeled in his fishing line and showed them his pink-colored license hanging on the hook.

Besides doing her work, she spends time talking to various groups about outdoor issues and safety. She also spends a lot of time doing follow-up and paperwork for her job.

"The more we are outside, the more paperwork we have to do," she said. "I don't have my own secretary."

"So besides being outdoors, what is another benefit of the job?" I asked.

"We get a lot of cool toys," Niemeyer said, laughing. Words from a lone Kenosha warden...playing a very important game. *W*

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DICK ELLIS

ON WISCONSIN OUTDOORS

The wariest gobbler

Two hours into a “last chance” spring turkey hunt, the gobbler answered the hen call deep from within a wooded hollow in the rolling farm country of Grant County. Maybe, with a lot of patience and a little luck this Tom, already a survivor of the first five of Wisconsin’s six split seasons would now be without the companionship of hens and vulnerable. Then again, with declining success rates correlating with each split season as the heavily-hunted birds become streetwise to hunter calling and decoys, maybe not.

In the wee hours, I had taken the long ride from Waukesha County to Wisconsin’s southwest and zone 11 in driving rain for a final crack at success. Fresh in my mind was the April encounter with a gobbler that had fallen for the enticements of my mouth calls to flirt with a decoy at 30 yards. I had missed the perfect shot.

By luck of the draw I had pulled a second permit and a second opportunity to fill a tag. Thunderstorms gave way to a billion stars just 20 miles east of Fennimore. The agony of a blown opportunity was about to give way to the ecstasy of the most memorable hunt of a lifetime, more challenging and rewarding than any hunt of any kind in an outdoor reporter’s life in the field.

Sitting, moving and calling from the field edges with the diaphragm call from first light into the first two hours of a new day brought no response from any gobblers. From deep in the hollow as I beckoned from a long thin wooded finger connecting woodlots and surrounded by rolling fields of greens and browns, Tom finally answered.

Our conversation would continue virtually non-stop throughout the day. When we did occasionally cease our banter, it was only as we jockeyed for position. My 47-year-old body was becoming ripped up in thorns, wet and muddy as I was again able to use the excuse of hunting to play in the dirt

like a little boy. Would he ultimately gobble 200 times? 300? I do not know, but his verbal enthusiasm was without rival.

At times, I would angrily scream without interruption for 30 seconds for

him to come to me, as he simultaneously gobbled non-stop for me to come to him. The conversation was so intense that I guessed it

would draw in another bachelor Tom.

Soon, it did. A big gobbler moved in full strut silently across a plowed field to me. Given the opportunity I would tag either bird. When the intruder first gobbled at 60 yards, I had high hopes of my “hollow” gobbler showing himself to the competition.

Instead he moved quickly toward the field, his dominant gobbling intensifying. The intruder tucked and literally ran. My boisterous Tom retreated again to his lair, leaving us in our stalemate and me to wonder if I was hunting a special bird.

When the noon whistle of Fennimore sounded, I had hunted one Tom for five hours. I had not yet seen him. An hour later and one-half mile from his introductory gobble, my eyes finally were fixed on a still white spot at 150 yards in a tall grass field. “That’s him,” I thought, and watched the head shake and turn red as he gobbled in answer to my now familiar sweet talk. He assumed the full strut position, but remained “hung-up” and in no hurry to jeopardize his own safety for another feather in the harem hat.

Still stalemated, he exited the field demanding that this “hen” follow. I countered by moving 200 yards just inside the woodline bordering the field to take a stand where I had watched him strut. I would not call. If I “knew” Tom at all from this chess game, he would panic in the silence and return to the field and my new ambush.

I settled in against a tree, relieved again at completing a move without detection. This new, low visibility lair was no different than the haunt of a big buck that has learned to survive. If



Dick Ellis hunted one very verbal gobbler for eight hours over hill and valley in season six in late May before tagging the big Tom at 10 yards in extremely thick cover. The bird weighed 26 pounds and carried an 11-inch beard.

Tom did return, I would have just eight yards in the rolling field to locate and kill him. Behind me, the forest where he had disappeared was a thick mass of thorns and undergrowth. I rested my gun toward the field and silently waited.

At 15 minutes, a bit panicked myself, I risked a whispered “hello.” I had guessed wrong. The gobble was shattering from the vegetation behind me, less than 40 yards. I spun around the tree on elbow and shoulder, came again to the shooter’s position and waited. A tense 10 minutes later, I manipulated the mouth call to extend a near non-audible greeting. His return solo told me he was in my lap. Still, I could not find Tom.

The minutes passed. Tom’s bobbing red head appeared through a wall of thorns. When the shotgun barrel slowly found that place, the bird had disappeared to another. When the bright red target reappeared in the jungle, it required a seemingly time-eternal swing of four feet to place the bead of the barrel where it had to be for a quick kill. At just 10 yards, a full

choke load of number 5 shot found only head and neck.

I was physically exhausted and even mentally tired. Like each of my rare duels with trophy animals, true satisfaction mingled with a bit of remorse as I fastened a tag. For the first time in years a worthy Tom would not be on a roost as the sun slipped in the west. It had been at eight hours from first gobble; the longest hunt. I had a mile walk out under a burning sun with a very large bird on my back.

On the butcher’s scale at Bender’s Foods in Fennimore, Manger Gill Pierick would weigh the Wisconsin gobbler at 26 pounds. The beard would stretch the tape to 11 inches. Many special hunts in a lifetime are anticipated; the hunter works to know an animal’s terrain and habits and then works to tag him. As many, I think, are stumbled into, unexpected, and only wear the label of “special” when the hunter looks back, and remembers.

Planned or accidental, patience is the hunter’s most valuable possession. I will remember a Fennimore Tom, and the longest hunt, forever. W

The Bigger They Are

Little buck fought from the heart



It's not always the biggest rack in the forest that shows the most heart. The author enjoyed a rare show of defiance near Spooner from a nubbin buck with true grit. (Photo by Dick Ellis)

By Bill Thornley

From a distance, a fox is a fox. And I'm sure that if a fox could reason, he would have trouble telling one human from another as well. But up close, the story changes.

We tend to think of animals as a species, a basic group whose numbers are all alike in every way. But the more I am around animals, the more I am convinced this is not the case at all.

As with humans, there are small differences in every animal. A shorter snout here, a small mark there. Not much, but just enough to identify each animal, regardless of species, as a unique individual.

This brings up the matter of personalities. Anyone who has a pet can tell you that animals each have different personalities. In a litter of puppies, for example, you're likely to have one dominant animal, one coward, one runt, and so on. While they might look much the same, one of those puppies is likely to nip your hand, while another will lick it. Still another might whimper and shy away at the thought of being petted, while his brother might love the feeling of a human hand.

This is one reason I cringe when the "experts" say something along the lines of "Black bears hardly ever charge," or other such blanket statements. How would you like to meet up with the one nasty one that will? If animals do indeed have personalities, there is bound to be one grouch in the population.

I recently met up with an animal grouch. Or maybe he wasn't so much a grouch as he was just full of fire ...

I could tell he was a little whitetail buck the minute he stepped out of the woods. The tiny buttons on his head gave him away, but he also carried himself differently from the does and other fawns that were starting to come out to feed. Weighing all of about 80 pounds, the little guy still had a feel of confidence about him.

I watched the deer from my back window. They come out occasionally to search for tidbits in the old garden. That night there were about five does and the little buck, by far the smallest in the group. I figured he was probably a fawn of the year, but watching the little tough guy prance around I wondered what his father must have been like. It seemed to me that Junior might have had some pretty impres-

sive genes in him.

His body was small, but already muscular. He looked like the little kid on the playground who you just know is going to turn out to be the star athlete some day.

The little group of deer munched calmly on old

tomato plants, standing corn and bean sprouts as the afternoon sun neared the southwestern horizon. Just before dark the does seemed to get nervous, their heads popping up to look into the woods. A few moments later another buck, a fork horn, stepped into the garden.

He was by no means huge, but he probably outweighed Junior by a good 30 pounds. His rack was small, but he was a mature animal.

Junior continued to munch away.

The fork horn started to chase the does out of the garden, shaking his head and kicking with sharp hooves. It was cold that night, and he apparently didn't feel like sharing his salad. Then he turned to Junior.

The little guy lowered his head as if to spar. I thought this was strange, since he had nothing but buttons for antlers. The fork horn also lowered his head. The two began gentle shoving, much like bucks do in early fall.

Surprisingly, Junior held his own against the bigger deer.

This continued for about a minute, but as the shoving went on it became apparent that the larger buck was losing patience with the young upstart. He started to swing his head

and lash out with his hooves. I expected Junior to run for his life. But he didn't.

To my astonishment, the fighting soon turned nasty. The fork horn cornered Junior against an old fence and kicked him so hard that white belly hair flew into the air.

Perhaps thinking the fight was over, the bigger buck turned away. I couldn't believe my eyes as Junior lowered his head and rammed the fork horn in the rump. By this time I was ready to grab some popcorn and start cheering.

The fork horn turned quickly and hooked Junior, lifting him right off his feet. The button buck did a complete flip and landed on his side. The fork horn turned aside, and once again the button buck hit him in the rump. What a little fighter!

The does had come back by this time, and were running around like kids watching a fight in the school yard. Junior walked away from the bigger buck and I thought the conflict was ended. But spinning around, Junior headed back toward the fork horn, nailing him squarely in the side and sending him crashing into the fence so hard that snow flew in all directions. The way he lowered his head on his stout little body, Junior looked more like a goat than a deer.

The fork horn stumbled, regaining his footing, and headed for the hills. It was great! Junior had stood his ground and overcome a much bigger foe. And the foe even had the advantage of having antlers. It was one of the strangest encounters I've ever seen. Whitetail deer never fail to amaze and fascinate me.

Junior had all the makings of a dominant buck, even at this tender age. If ever there was a cocky, confident animal, he's the one.

I don't think he fought the fork horn to defend the does. I think he just didn't like being pushed around. This is not to say he would have taken on a 10-pointer. No, he probably would have had the good sense to run like mad.

But someday he might get his chance. He isn't king of the woods yet, but that night the little buck with the big heart was certainly an animal to admire. *W*

Bill Thornley is an outdoor writer from Spooner.

JJ REICH

REICH ON*Sweet and sour pork*

Spring turkey hunting in Mississippi usually provides all the excitement a hunter can handle. Throw in a bonus hog hunt, and the combination was sweet and sour.

"Tom, I love hunting turkeys, but if I'm flying south this spring, I want to go after some wild hogs too!"

I was talking to my Mississippi friend Tom Wiley, brand manager and inventor of Flextone Game Calls, owned by Wildgame Innovations. Wiley had just invited me to chase some spring gobblers with him.

"Well, I'm happy to hear that," Tom answered. "I love hunting hogs and the meat is delicious. Besides, the turkeys aren't cooperating for me much this year. They will be tough."

When I arrived, Tom told me he had some new Barnes crossbows we needed to try out. We couldn't use them for turkeys, but since we had some depredation permits for a local landowner, we could use the crossbows to take down some hogs.

I was excited. The plan was set: shotgun for turkeys in the mornings and crossbow for hogs in the evenings—a perfect combination.

Noxubee County, Mississippi has a reputation for lots of hogs, especially along the hardwood bottomland around Yellow Creek. Tom easily lined up a hunt for wild Russian boars on a 2,000-acre ranch that was managed for whitetails and wild turkeys. The ranch owner was eager for us to kill the porker pests. The hogs were ripping up deer bedding areas and food sources, which was booting off some of his whitetail population.

Landowners who have the goal of greatly reducing their wild hog population prefer that you hunt them over feeders and you shoot as many as possible. So in the days prior to the hunt, Tom had set up some ladder stands and loaded some feeders with corn that was enhanced with Wildgame Innovations' Intensi-Fire, a feeder additive attractant to jump-start the use of the feeders. The feeders were set to go off every 30 minutes from 5:30 until dark. Additionally, Tom piled up Wildgame Innovation's "Hog Heaven" granular scent attractant and poured sweet-and-soured corn-flavored "Pig Lickor," which is a liquid attractant, on



JJ Reich found tough turkey hunting in Mississippi but did find success hunting wild pigs that most landowners consider a nuisance. Permission to hunt is not a problem.

*"However while walking to his treestand,
Tom did see a giant 350-pounder.*

*The boar was so big that Tom had to do a few
double-takes to convince himself the black blob in
front of him was a wild pig..."*

the ground around the feeders.

I liked the idea of getting into a treestand during the green months of spring. A 20-foot-high seat would command a great springtime view. But, Hogs have great snouts and can easily smell danger. It's definitely not a sure thing that hogs show up every day, or will let their guard down long enough to present a good shot.

We only had two days to hunt, and we hit it hard. The first day proved that the turkey hunting was indeed difficult. We hit the woods from sun-up until 1:00 p.m. both days, but saw and heard very little action.

The first afternoon hog hunting was also uneventful for me. I just stared at a spouting feeder. However while walking to his treestand, Tom did see a giant 350-pounder. The boar was so big that Tom had to do a few double-takes

to convince himself the black blob in front of him was a wild pig. But Tom never had a shot at the beast. The pig never turned broadside, and Tom didn't want to take a risky shot with a crossbow while standing on the ground less than 20 yards away. Skewered porkers can get ornery. But soon the monster winded him and bolted down the gully.

On the second afternoon, Tom gave me the spot where he saw the heavy-duty pig. With just an hour left of shooting light, a decent hog appeared from the thick pine trees. This pig immediately sank its snout into a pile of corn soaked in Pig Lickor. But it was nervously looking back in the woods, like it was stealing his big brother's dinner and didn't want to get caught. My hopes were that the giant boar from the day before would come out to kick

this one's butt and start eating up the smorgasbord lying on the ground. Then maybe I'd get a shot and the whooper.


But that perfect scenario never became reality. Instead, the good-sized 130-pounder just kept crunching away. With just 10 minutes until quitting time, the hog turned and presented a shot. I released the bolt from the Barnett Revolution and it jolted the four-legged Russian porker.

With little light to navigate, deep swamps, and thick pines, I was a bit nervous about the task of tracking blood. Hogs are tough and can run off a ways before they collapse. It didn't help when Tom looked at the blood trail leading into the swamp, and hissed, "Do you have snake boots on? It's the thick sh... shtuff in there!"

I clenched my teeth and smiled. Yes indeed, I did have my knee-high snake boots on! I absolutely hate snakes.

We eventually found our prize and celebrated. We ended the hunt without a wild turkey, which left a sour taste in my mouth. But when the freezer is filled with plenty of pork sausage, life is sweet. With the help of a good friend, I got the taste of southern-fried hog hunting. And to top it off, it was my first crossbow kill. I hope that more of both will follow in my years ahead.

If you are a Wisconsin-born hunter, like me, and you're after a southern-state hunting experience, Mississippi is your ticket. The state has a bounty of public and private land hunts with high population of deer, wild turkey and waterfowl. But while you're at it, ask the guide, outfitter, or landowner about a bonus hog hunt. Most landowners do not like hogs on their property, and permission to hunt them is fairly easy to come by. Hog hunting is definitely an exciting adventure, plus removing destructive hogs helps in the never-ending task of wildlife management and conservation.

Learn more about hunting Mississippi at www.visitmississippi.org and check out products from Wildgame Innovations at www.wildgameinnovations.com. 

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.

DARRELL PENDERGRASS

OUT THERE

One man's dream is another man's ...

Believe it or not my seven-year-old son Jack has a paid subscription to *Outdoor Life* magazine, his name is on the cover and everything. That being said, it was no surprise when the recent April edition showed up in the mailbox.

However, it was a big surprise that I got to read it before the boy gunked it up with candy-bar chocolate and sugary gum from looking at the pictures of big deer and massive bears. "How come you never get anything like that, Dad?" It was also a surprise the magazine didn't get mixed into the gazillion horse-equipment catalogs and brochures my wife receives daily.

"I thought I cancelled that subscription," Queenie said about Jack's magazine. "Hand it over."

I tucked it under my arm and ran up the driveway and off toward the barn, looking back over my shoulder. On Queenie's command, her Boston terrier Rosie chased after me, but I managed to escape without getting bit.

My wife will sic that dog on me from time to time when I get out of range.

I love *Outdoor Life*. In the barn, seeing the 'Best Places To Live! Top 200 Town for Hunters & Anglers' headline on the cover actually made me smile, and led me to wondering if there were really places where men can still hide

and his humor column to the *This Happened To Me* features of real life animal attacks and woodland-mishaps.

From where I sat on a hay bale I could see the bug-eyed Boston terrier looking at me through the boards in the barn. It gave a low growl. It kept circling the door.

cold shiver went down my back. I've been bit by that beast before.

Outdoor Life editor-in-chief Todd Smith summed up what they were looking for in his journal. "We wanted to find slower-paced places where people put greater value on sunsets and clear streams than on McMansions and BMWs. A place where families come first, housing is reasonable, crime rates are low and folks don't shoot you funny looks if you walk into the local bank dressed in camo.

"To those lucky enough to be living in one of the towns we selected, congratulations. We hope you're living the dream."

Two thoughts come to mind. I live virtually in one of the top 58 places for an outdoorsman to live in all of the United States, selected over thousands and thousands and thousands of other outdoor places, and I neither catch many fish, nor shoot any deer. Obviously the magazine ranking is not based on my success. But I can imagine how lean my limited success would be if I lived in—say—the 150th greatest place. Better stay here, where I'm at.

As for living the dream? Busting from the barn and heading for the house, I middle-aged sprinted across the yard with the magazine rolled inside my jacket and a growling maniac Boston terrier at my heels.

Dream?

I'm living a nightmare. *W*

"I'll get to what it is you're all wondering.

*The No. 1 place
to live for outdoorsmen? ..."*

from their girlfriends and wives; where outdoor dreams don't simply die on lengthy lists of chores. I would like to live in one of those places. Most everything about *Outdoor Life* makes me smile though, from Patrick McManus

I did notice this issue has a disproportionate amount of 'male enhancement' snake oil advertisements and 'discreet home video' bedroom lesson proposals—which makes me wonder what other things Jack is getting to know about when he's studying raccoon trapping techniques. Outdoor magazines seem like a bad place to advertise such gimmicks. Speaking for myself, if I've got a hundred dollars to spend it's going to be on a new fishing reel, not to spice up things in the *boudoir*. Besides, I don't need my engine to be revving for an entire 24-hour day.

In reading I noted the 'Best Places' article. Quote: "Through Exhaustive Research *OL* Reveals America's Top 200 Towns For Hunters And Fishermen To Call Home." Alright. Seems the writers visited communities all over the country—from sea to shining sea—looking for the place with the perfect combination of fishing and hunting opportunities; to public land proximity; to livable gun laws. *Outdoor Life* is pro gun—but not obscenely so.

I'll get to what it is you're all wondering. The No. 1 place to live for outdoorsmen? Mountain Home, Arkansas. Which doesn't matter to us here in the Northland all that much. It's a long ways away from here, and we'd probably get sunburned if we visited.

But No. 58—well, No. 58 out of the entire United States, out of all of the places in the nation to wet a line or hang a deer stand—is Ashland, Wisconsin. Right here.

Queenie's little dog started digging viciously at the door, pausing every so often to snarl and drool. Then the dirt would begin flying again. A



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"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, Chequamegon Books & Coffee in Washburn, Grand View Food Mart and Redberry Books in Cable. Or send \$15 and \$3 for shipping and handling to Darrell Pendergrass, 52405 Otto Olson Road, Grand View, WI 54839.

Share OWO

Do you know anyone else that may enjoy reading *On Wisconsin Outdoors*? Next time you're picking up a copy for yourself, grab a couple extras for colleagues, family and friends.

On Wisconsin Outdoors Board of Directors

*Dear Hunter Daily,
Although the downward trend seems to be slowing according to the US Fish & Wildlife Service, the hunting and fishing sports are losing more and more participants. How then can we continue to stand in the face of attacks by anti-hunters, vegetarians, and Ted Turner?*

—Larry McDermmot, Black Earth



Hunter Daily

Dear Larry,
We need to stand together in unity and cooperation as a single body of sportsmen and women and in particular with respect for each other and we will persevere against all challenges. Look. I do it-despite working with a numbskull like Rex Rodsalotta just to the south of me- sitting there in his pretty little mirrored sunglasses, perfect flyhat and trout vest. He probably doesn't even fish and I know getting him to buy a cold one after a board meeting is like pulling teeth. Do you know he trims his mustache every week? He was the first one in seventh grade to get one of those fruity leisurely suits. Which reminds me... continued at www.onwisconsinoutdoors.com



Conibear Smith

*Dear Conibear Smith,
I don't trap and in fact spend every Sunday in front of the boob tube. But, do you think Bret Favre will stay retired?*

—Mark Sankey, Waukesha

Dear Mark,
No way, the man just can't do it. Few people know that I was Brett's backup during his first professional season when that consecutive game streak started. A few of us wore facemasks back then but not Brett. In fact, we're pretty sure he went through the season of '26 in a coma after a vicious hit. You hear about this. Another hit brought him back just before Eisenhower was elected. Brett actually retired in '36 too, but that might have been just coma babble. He'll be back.

—Conibear

*Dear Rex Rodsalotta,
If it stays cold into the May inland season, where do we look for walleyes?*

—Phil Rawson, Phillips

Dear Phil,
You want to look shallow for spawning fish through mid-May, on hard sand and rock. Also, it's fun to examine the walleye briefly for the first signs of Spring...the milking males...the egg laden females. You can usually find these just below the spear marks.

—Rex



Rex Rodsalotta

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INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITY

PARTNERS WANTED! Hunt Club / Retreat Wisconsin Dells Area. Looking for a limited ownership group of outdoorsmen for operational expansion. Unlimited Potential \$250K minimum required. See our ad, The Eagles Nest, on page 21. For info call Pat (414) 460-0166.

VEHICLES

2001 FORD EXPLORER SPORT 2/4 wheel drive, moon roof, good condition, 114,000 miles, asking \$5400 OBO. Must sell. Call (262) 894-6880.

2002 XT225 YAMAHA DUAL SPORT MOTORCYCLE, 1900 miles, electric start, VG, great gas mileage, asking \$2200 OBO. Call (262) 844-2801.

1998 XT 350 YAMAHA DUAL SPORT MOTORCYCLE, very good condition, 3500 miles, asking \$1800 OBO. (262) 844-2801.

1973 SUPER BEATLE: Purple, body good, floor pans good condition, not running now, but ran in the past. Best offer. (262) 490-4774.

Send 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

UPCOMING EVENT AND INTERESTING NEWS

Columbus Sportsman's Association (CSA)

www.columbusportsman.com

Youth Trap League will be held starting May 12 for anyone 12 to 17 years of age. Contact Steve Steinbeck at 920-887-3936 for more information.

May 3: 4th annual Introduction to Shooting Sports. Firearm & Archery Safety, Pistol, Rifle, Shotgun, Muzzleloader and Archery Shooting. Contact Paul Mayer at 920-927-3445 for more information. (Rain date May 4)

May 10: Annual Flea market where we sell anything from boats, guns, ATV's, trapping supplies, etc. It all depends on what the people have to sell. Contact Larry Schroeder at 608-576-8894 for information

May 17: Memorial Shoot (used to be the Shilling Shoot) along with our 10 gun raffle. Tickets are still available for this raffle. The shoot will be Individual or 5 man teams (Lewis - 100 bird) with additional prize money beside the registration fees. Contact Dan or Colleen at 920-326-5833 for tickets

May 17: Start of our 3D archery competition. Both Saturday and Sunday, continuing to the first part of September. Contact Dan Fehling at 920-927-5462.

The Chippewa Valley Chapter of the Ruffed Grouse Society

www.ruffedgrousesociety.org

will hold its 26th Annual Sportsmen's Banquet on Thursday, May 15, 2008 at the Ramada Inn Convention Center, 205 S. Barstow Street, Eau Claire, WI, beginning with cocktails at 5:30 p.m. Dinner will be served at 7:30 p.m., live and silent auction, games, drawings and door prizes; highlighted with the finest selection of quality firearms, artwork and collectable's. As with all RGS fundraisers, proceeds from this event will be used to restore and protect grouse and woodcock habitat. For more information and/or tickets contact Betthausen at 715-858-6604.

Mathews, Incorporated Receives Manufacturer of the Year Award

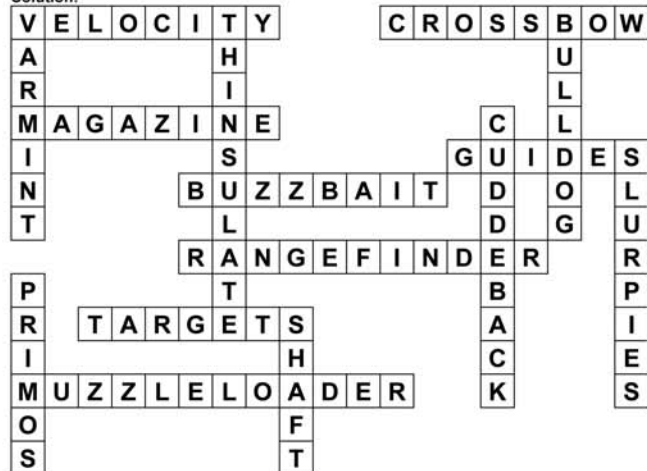
Mathews, Incorporated is one of 63 Wisconsin businesses nominated for the 20th annual Wisconsin Manufacturer of the Year Awards for outstanding achievements in manufacturing. Mathews, Incorporated of Sparta was recognized as the 2007 Manufacturer of the Year in the Medium Company category. The Manufacturer of the Year Awards recognize Wisconsin companies that demonstrate a commitment to business excellence which has a positive impact on the company and the state, making Wisconsin a better place to live, work and play. Mathews is the largest grossing archery manufacturer in the world. The company produces archery equipment including premiere bows, traditional bows, bow accessories, bow strings and apparel. Mathews has put approximately 800,000 bows in the hands of archery enthusiasts, and as the official bow of the National Archery in the Schools Program, 2.3 million youth have shot a Mathews bow.

George Curtis named 2008 Conservation Communicator of the Year for "It's Your Environment"

George Curtis, producer of the "It's Your Environment" cable television program, was named 2008 Conservation Communicator of the Year by the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation April 12 during a ceremony at the Ramada Inn in Stevens Point. Oshkosh attorney Curtis has helped educate the public about a myriad of conservation and environmental issues. His self-funded program generally features one or two knowledgeable guests discussing topics that often include habitat preservation, hunting safety, water quality protection, and stewardship of our natural resources. Curtis started the program because he believed "there was a critical need for the public to learn more about the environment."

Outdoor Criss Cross

Solution:



Puzzle on page 24

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!

Photos scans or digital files must be provided at high resolution 300 dpi and emailed to submit@onwisconsinoutdoors.com.

If we select your photo, the original caricature drawing will be mailed to you at no charge.

Interested in purchasing a caricature drawing made from your photo?
Contact artist Johnathan Kuehl directly at kuehlarts@gmail.com or call (612) 812-9600.

TERRILL A. KNAACK

SACRED GROUND

Winter Wilderness

It was a long pull of the sled to the cabin. What was long ago known in the northwoods as the moon of broken snowshoes was upon us. The snow, hard and crusted in places, lay deceptively deep in others. March thaws had not yet released winter's grip from the deep woods, though the sun reached higher day by day.

While most would have traveled south on the last days of winter, we chose an irresistible call to travel to a wilderness site four miles from the nearest plowed road. The trail was quiet. Only the distant notes of a raven and here and there the tapping of a downy woodpecker. A ruffed grouse, rarely seen among mature maple, hemlock and pine appeared next to the sled, then flushed to the lowest branches of an ancient hemlock, a definite exception to his normal habitat. The trail eventually crossed the faint prints of a bobcat on hard snow. Where the river rushed between islands of ice, were the tracks of a fisher. Later in the evening when the twilight shadows had grown deep blue, the moon, nearly full, peered over the Eastern horizon. The land lay quietly illuminated till the morning sun returned.

We live in a world where wild nature is experienced by a very small percentage of people. Most would hardly know where they could find such places here in the Midwest. Why would normal, intelligent people head back into winter, to a land of old growth trees, to lakes without cabins and homes surrounding them, and travel through deep woods where few others are met? Judging by the few such areas that exist today relative to our population they surely are understood to have little value. College students, retired professionals, and everyone in between seem to dream of green golf courses and beach hotels.

Many of the 19th century literary figures saw something quite different in nature. Thoreau, Emerson and Whitman, the transcendentalists, thought wild nature had much to



"A Prairie Garden" by Terrill Knaack.

offer, even when few had yet crossed the Mississippi. Thoreau said "In wilderness is the preservation of the world." He described the effect of being in a setting free of artificial improvements as being "subtle yet powerful." In the 20th century, John Muir, Aldo Leopold, and Sigurd Olson to name a few that had Wisconsin roots, made their case for wild lands as an inexhaustible resource for spiritual renewal, the study of ecological processes and a better understanding of what it means to be human. In the 21st century, these voices seem distant

and removed. The meaning of wilderness, as a vision of order and the work of powerful unseen forces of which we are a part, is fading away.

There are a few places yet where the quiet music of a clear water stream flowing out of an undeveloped watershed can still be heard. Does anybody really believe, as the poet Gary Snyder wrote, that "Nature is not just a place to visit. It is our home."

For those of you who wonder, watch the reaction of a child to butterflies in a forgotten corner of a field. There are a few that won't ask for a net

and run off. Their adventures truly begin where the side-walks ends. Take a group of high school students and show them the difference between an undisturbed native sedge meadow, an unaltered remnant prairie, a nearby habitat project, or a canary grass meadow, and they will see the qualitative difference immediately. There is no child I have ever met that did not delight in running down a trail to explore a wild place, find the next rapids or see what birds and flowers were over the next rise. Unfortunately, most never have such a real experience unless it is with an image on the Internet or television. For those who would like to find out, find a place if you can, away from the grinding of highways, the high-pitch whines of snowmobiles and motorboats. There are a few left, though rare in southern Wisconsin.

To really know what is there, you have to leave your cell phone behind, forget about the pressures of work for a while, and be able to listen not just outwardly, but inwardly as well.

Get out there! Notice the variety of grasses and shrubs that grow there, the species of trees. Are there bird sounds? What kind of tracks can you find? What native plant community is it? Take children along if you can. Those whose inborn powers of observation have not been dulled by too many electronic, attention-robbing devices can show you

the way. There is nothing in a truly wild place that is not worthy of study, nothing of which we are not a part and nothing that is not beautiful in its own way. If awareness and wholeness are our goals, we will not be disappointed.



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.

JJ REICH

PRODUCT 6-PACK

Great gear for the woods, fields and waterways

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

QUAKER BOY A' BANSHEE

For \$23, this versatile, waterproof box call is crafted with a walnut box and curved cherry lid. The new "rapid fire" rubber-band system creates fast yelps and cutts – just quickly tap the lid with your hand.

The call's lid is curved (the long



way). This means more surface area of the lid touches and vibrates the curved sides of the box, creating a different and unique sound. Also, the underside of the lid has a special, waterproof treatment that needs no chalk or other maintenance.

quakerboygamecalls.com
(800)544-1600

FOOD PLOTS FROM A TO Z

For \$10, this DVD teaches you how to grow productive food plots. The DVD covers all related topics from when and where to plant, how to take a soil test, overcoming common mistakes and more.



If you grow food plots in Wisconsin, it's a no-brainer to use products developed and tested right here in the Badger state. Antler King is headquartered out of Black River Falls, and has been manufacturing premium seed, minerals and related food plot products over 20 years. This DVD is just another great example of their high-quality goods.

antlerking.com
(715) 284-9547

GOBBLER GUILLOTINE

For \$39 a three-pack, these deadly broadheads by Arrowdynamic Solutions are designed for accurate and humane head and neck shots on turkeys. The broadheads sport long, stainless-steel, fixed blades with a lethal cutting width of up to 4" x 4" at 125 grains or 2.5" x 2.5" at 100 grains.

Watch the Internet videos of this product in action and you will be sold on its impressive design. But, if you see the product in live action, like I did, you will be absolutely amazed. You'll also have a wild turkey in your freezer.



arrowds.com
(512) 515-6299

BUCKWING HUNTING SEAT

For \$27, this lightweight, durable seat has 6 to 12-inch adjustable legs so you can correct your sitting position to any angle. The legs also fold flat for easy transport and there's a quick release snap on the carry strap so you can set up fast.



Did I mention this seat has adjustable legs? With a simple click and pull, you can stretch out each leg independently. This design helps you stay comfortable while setting up on the downside or upside of any slope, on any terrain.

buckwing.com
(800) 555-9908

FLIP-FLOP FILLET BOARD

For \$20, this durable fish cleaning board features a unique flip-flop design that clamps the fish's head or tail in place. The 7-inch-by-24-inch, plastic cutting board is portable, yet could be attached to a cleaning table.



Yeah I know, this contraption looks goofy. The task at hand is cleaning fish, not brain surgery! However, it works slick. Just clamp the head of a fish, fillet one side then flip it over to cut the other side. Plus, the rounded grooves allow for easy clean up of a usually slimy mess.

rockhillproducts.com
(330) 753-9500

ECHIP ELECTRONIC EMITTER

For \$15 a three-pack, EChips emit a tiny electrical jolt to replicate the live pulse of a distressed baitfish. EChips can be mounted on any hook, lure or

bait, and batteries are not required. Here's how it works: fish see the flash, action and color of your lure, and when they swim close enough, they

feel a pulse. I think the extra enticement of the pulse makes fish bite more often. EChips helped me catch a limit of salmon on Lake Michigan last summer, so I plan to try them on walleye later this year.

protroll.com
(925) 825-8560

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.kampptales.com.





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