

September/October 2008

Vol. 2, Issue 1

On Wisconsin *Outdoors*

With the Dick Ellis Experts

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Photos By Dick Ellis

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DICK ELLIS

ON WISCONSIN OUTDOORS

Velvet beams & writer schemes

There is a special gift given to a hunter that only comes with time in the field. It is an instinct, a sixth sense, or simply the ability to better see the prey that he will hunt some time during the year than the non-hunter around him; even when that animal is hidden in its own environment. If you are the wife of a veteran deer hunter and don't hunt yourself, you have probably answered, "How did you see that?" in response to his pointing out a deer buried in foliage from your truck traveling down the highway.

On June 24th, there were factors in this hunter's favor that won't exist over most of fall. The deer were wearing their summer brown that contrasts with the deep greens of summer foliage as starkly as black on white. And even the largest bucks are relatively unafraid of their most dangerous predator during those lazy days of June and July; they have not been hunted in six months.

I was one of an endless line of cars and trucks in suburban Milwaukee, and "he" was initially just a two foot line of horizontal brown lost 70 yards out in a canvas of brush. It was mid-afternoon and the sun was

bright. There was no head or antlers or flicking tail. Just a thin brown line that in my hunter's mind was backbone. Still, already I hoped it was him. Maybe a spike. Maybe something bigger. But just maybe, the special one that makes the hunter's foot touch the brake and his eyes scan first to see if it's a deer at all. And then to ask...is it him?

I did the turn into the industrial park and took the return trip to see it "all" again, this small patch of brown that said so much; or nothing at all. My hand felt for the camera and the telephoto lens that a reporter keeps by his side but touched nothing. The camera was on the desk a few miles west. The digital memory card was in my pocket. There were fishing photos to turn into a disc, and I cursed my professional laziness for not being ready, especially when just a hint of antler shrouded in summer velvet broke the brush line to the east.

The 10-minute trip home was a 30-minute ride in my mind, the memory card was jammed home into the body of the camera and the telephoto lens replaced on the run. The return trip was another eternity, and

Continued on page 25



During the last week of June, a large buck in full antler velvet is caught on camera by the writer in suburban Milwaukee. The antlers should continue to grow into August and bucks may still be in velvet when the Wisconsin September bow deer season opens. (Photo by Dick Ellis)

ANTLER DEVELOPMENT



(Photo by Dick Ellis)

According to the website www.whitetailstewards.com, the two circular areas that grow antlers from a buck's skull are known as pedicles. Antler pedicles start developing on the frontal bones of male white-tailed deer fawns during late fetal development. After birth, early stimulation from testosterone is then required for final pedicle development. When bucks reach four to six months of age, antlers begin to grow from the pedicle. Overall, pedicle formation occurs through a process known as intramembranous ossification, whereas antlers grow by endochondral ossification.

Antler growth nationwide begins between mid-March and early April. In response to changes in photoperiod, growth hormones from the pituitary gland trigger the release of insulin-like Growth Factor (IGF), which stimulates antler growth. During this time, the soft growing antler is covered with hairy skin, called "velvet," consisting of thousands of blood vessels, cartilage and nervous tissue. Growth of antlers is very rapid, and some deer species are capable of growing nearly one inch of antler per day.

Antlers continue to grow through August or September. As day length decreases in autumn, the pituitary gland indirectly increases the secretion of testosterone and testicular volume increases. In response to these increases, antlers harden through calcification. In this process, soft tissue is converted directly to bone by the deposition of minerals (mineralization) within the matrix of cartilage and blood vessels in the developing antlers. The velvet eventually dries up and falls off. Bucks rub their antlers against brush and trees to aid in velvet removal.

During the rut or whitetail mating season, antlers remain as hard polished bone with sharp tines. Hard antlers enable bucks to fight, posture for dominance among rival males, and display for does. Between late December and early January, according to the website, testosterone levels decrease and cause the union between the antlers and pedicles to weaken. The

antlers then are shed. Once shed, skin grows over the wound left by the cast antler. The entire process starts again in spring. *W*



Will the fawn caught by Wisconsin outdoor writer Bill Thornley near Spooner in May live to be a buck of a hunter's dreams? In addition to age, other factors including genetics, habitat and nutrition must come together for it to happen. (Photo by Bill Thornley)

JASON GAURKEE

ON WISCONSIN WATERS

Lake sturgeon strategies

The giant among Wisconsin's inland freshwater fishes, the bottom dwelling lake sturgeon, is a living fossil and a relic from the middle ages of fish evolution. This modern day dinosaur made its first appearance about 100 million years ago in the Upper Cretaceous period of the Mesozoic era, just about the time that the dinosaurs made their abrupt exit from Earth's ever changing stage. Today the lake sturgeon retains many primitive characteristics that have been lost or modified in other fishes.

The sturgeon may very well be Wisconsin's most valuable natural resource. Why not? They've been here for eons. Wisconsin's sturgeon waters represent only a handful of lake sturgeon fisheries in the entire Northern hemisphere. As far as sheer fighting ability, they make muskies look like cupcakes, smoke the feistiest steelhead, and outbait the biggest flathead

catfish. These dudes are tough!

PRIMITIVE TACTICS

Fishing for sturgeon is one of the few cases in fishing where simple is better. For openers, you will need to equip yourself with several heavy action fiberglass rods. On those rods you will need a bait casting reel capable of holding lots of line. Choose a model with a line-out alarm. Speaking of line, make sure it is at least twenty-pound test and again, plenty of it. Attached to that line you will want to tie a slip sinker rig consisting of an egg sinker and a large hook. Bait that hook with a glob of crawlers, a sucker, redbait chub, or even cut bait.

Fall locations on a river system are fairly cut and dry. To catch sturgeon, seek out the deepest holes available on a stretch of river and you will find them. Prime holes are often in an

inside bend of a river. These areas take the load of the current and are scoured out from high water periods. Some holes I've found have held dozens of sturgeon and produce fish all day. When a prime hole is located, position your boat (or if fishing from shore position yourself) just upriver from that hole and cast your offerings downstream. Now all you have to do is wait. It shouldn't be long.

BEING IN THE KNOW

Fishing for sturgeon is actually quite simple. Knowing where, when and the ever changing bag and size limits, well that's another story. Hook and line fishing for sturgeon begins

September 1 and runs until September 30 on Wisconsin-Michigan boundary waters. The Wisconsin River from the Wisconsin Dells Dam downstream opens September 1 and closes October 15. All other waters (Chippewa River, Flambeau River, Yellow, Little Yellow and Danbury Flowage chain of lakes) open to sturgeon fishing have a September 1 opener and close October 15. Note: The October 15 season closure and length limit are subject to change. Check for the latest information at fishingwisconsin.org.

MENOMINEE RIVER

The majestic Menominee River separates the Upper Peninsula of Michigan from Wisconsin and offers two different sturgeon fisheries, those being the lower Menominee and the upper Menominee. The lower is a relatively short stretch of river starting at the Hattie Street dam and going to the bay of Green Bay. Traditionally this is trophy fishing at its best. When fishing this stretch, focus your efforts near the 41 bridge connecting Wisconsin to Michigan. Be careful though. The area just upstream from this area is dangerous and can only be traversed with a jon boat.

The Menominee River above the Hattie Street dam offers miles and miles of productive sturgeon fishing. One noted area to pay attention to is the Wausaukee area. This particular stretch offers some fantastic holes and is truly a numbers area. Again, navigating this area can be tricky so be careful.

WISCONSIN RIVER

The Wisconsin River downstream from the Dells Dam is perhaps the best sturgeon water on the Wisconsin. The first two miles of water from the dam down past the Rivers Edge offers several fine holes to fish. Like the upper Menominee, this is more of a numbers fishery opposed to a trophy factory. If you need some help, contact Dave Ehardt, a local guide. He is as knowledgeable as any sturgeon guide on the Wisconsin.

THOSE OTHER PLACES

Besides the Menominee and Wisconsin River systems, the Chippewa River (Sawyer Co.),

Flambeau River (Iron/Price Co.), Jump River (Rusk Co.), and the Yellow and Little Yellow River (Burnett Co.), too, offer some decent fishing opportunities. Our state record lake sturgeon, a 170 pound 10 ounce monster came from Yellow Lake in 1979. So these fisheries do offer trophy potential as well as numbers of fish.

When the cool nip of fall air is upon us, the splendid colors of summer's past fill the northern Wisconsin horizon, and you hear Wayne Larrivee's voice calling another Packer victory, its time to be sturgeon hunting. Fishing for sturgeon is one of the most enjoyable types of fishing there is. Give it a try. You'll love it. *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.



John Faucher with a nice size Menominee River sturgeon. (Photo by Jay Hintzke)

On Wisconsin Outdoors

With the Dick Ellis Experts

Hunting, Fishing, Trapping, Travel
and Outdoor Humor

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Published bi-monthly by ON WISCONSIN OUTDOORS, LLC. Subscriptions are mailed first class.

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DAVE SURA

SHORE BETS*Harboring Fall Browns*

Just as the Green Bay Packers football season starts, brown trout will migrate to harbors up and down the shores of Lake Michigan in preparation for their spawning migration. This is one of the best times to target and catch these hard fighting and beautiful fish. With two strains of browns stocked each year, the angler has the opportunity of catching fish for several months each fall as well as the opportunity of catching a true trophy.

WHEN TO FISH?

September? October? November? December? Yes to all of these months. Fishing usually begins in early September as the first of many migrating fish approach Great Lakes harbors. As the water slowly cools later in September, more browns appear in and around harbors giving the angler a better chance at landing a brown. As we enter the month of October, especially after most of the salmon have entered the river, brownie fishing really begins to pick up. This is the time to start putting more time into fishing. The cooler the water gets, the better the fishing gets. Fantastic fishing continues into November. When many people are chasing whitetails, you'll find me hunting browns along the shores of Lake Michigan, as this has been my best time for catching numbers of fish. Limits of fish as well as trophy pre-spawn Seeforellen browns are very common at this time of year. Many fish over 15 pounds are caught daily. Good numbers of fish remain in and around harbors through December and even beyond. Due to our recent mild winters, harbors in Racine, Kenosha, as well as others, have remained open longer allowing fishermen the opportunity of fishing browns past the holiday season.

TIME OF DAY

Unlike summer salmon fishing from shore, fall pre-spawn fish stay near shore all day as they're preparing to spawn. Therefore fish can be caught at all times of the day. I still prefer to fish in low light as browns, like most fish, are more active at these times. However, I remember hearing Al Lindner say something like, "The best time to fish is anytime you can get on the water."

LOCATIONS

Locating pre-spawn browns isn't

difficult. Any harbor along Lake Michigan will hold browns. Early in September when the first fish appear I usually start on the lakeside of the pier or at the harbor entrances. Fish will stage in these areas early in the fall before entering the harbor and river to spawn. As the air and water temperatures drop, the fish move into interior areas of harbors. After the fish move into the harbors they become more concentrated. Find areas of current, floating piers, and iron walls as these areas hold fish. By using a quality pair of polarized glasses you can visually locate pods of fish as they move around the harbor. Be careful when fishing inside many Great Lakes harbors, as large areas are privately owned. Check for signs or ask the harbor office to make sure the areas you want to fish are open for public access. Milwaukee, Racine, and Kenosha harbors have several public areas such as breakwalls, parks, and boat launches which provide the angler plenty of space to fish.

EQUIPMENT AND TACTICS

The equipment needed to tackle fall browns is similar to that you would use to catch steelhead or salmon along the Great Lakes. I recommend 8 to 13 foot salmon/steelhead rods like the 9 to 13 foot St. Croix's that I use. Bass and walleye equipment will work (although I don't recommend using it), so you don't have to purchase new equipment to fish for browns if you're just getting into it. Reels that match the rods should hold at least 200 yards of 8-pound-test line. Monofilament and braided lines can be used although braided lines have less memory than mono and can handle more abuse and tangle less.

LURES

There are several types of lures that work well for fall browns. Casting spoons such as Little Cleo's, KO Wobblers, Kastmasters and Moonshine Spoons are all good choices. During the day, colors such as green, blue, and orange with silver are good choices. Gold and orange is also effective at hooking browns. At night glow-in-the-dark colors are excellent choices. As with the daytime colors, green, blue, and orange glow are the best. A simple cast and retrieve method works best when using spoons. It's simple and effective. Stickbaits are another great

choice for getting bit. My favorite is the Rapala X-Rap. I like this bait because of castability. Other excellent choices are floating Rapalas, thundersticks, Dave's kaboom baits, and Lucky Craft lures. Color options are never ending. Some of my favorites are blue and silver, white, orange and blue, ghost, hothead, clown, and perch. Try a variety to find out the hot color.

Cast and retrieve, or use as a jerk bait, are the best ways to retrieve stickbaits. Use both methods to determine how the fish want the bait worked.

PLASTICS

Plastics are another option for putting fish in the box. Crappie tubes in the 1-1/2 inch and two-inch sizes with 1/32 and 1/16 ounce heads are good choices. The best colors are white and chartreuse. Fish the tube under a float several feet off the bottom. Slowly work the bait back to shore twitching it then letting it sit. This can be a deadly method for fall browns. Substitute a Berkley Gulp minnow for the tube and work it the same. Or take off the float and cast it out and work it back with a jigging retrieve. Experiment with both methods as both work.

BAIT

Spawn either tied in sacs or in the skein is another choice for hooking up on a Lake Michigan brown. Fished under a float or on the bottom with a



Duwayne Pagel of Antigo holds one of many harbored fall browns on Lake Michigan. (Photo by Jason Gaurkee)

slip-sinker rig are the best ways to fish spawn. Making a slip-sinker rig is easy: slide a half-ounce slip sinker on the main line, and tie on a barrel swivel, two feet of 8 to 10-pound mono and a #6 octopus style hook. When fishing it under a float, switch the plastic described above with a #6 hook. Cast it out and let the bait do the work. You can use these tactics in tandem with one of the artificial bait methods I talked about earlier.

This fall when your favorite football team isn't playing or is getting beat badly, pick up a pole and head down to the lake. You won't be disappointed as the opportunity of landing a 15-pound or better brown is a real possibility. So get out this fall and try harboring fall browns. *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.

DENNIS RADLOFF

THE STERLING APPROACH

Big baits or small baits for muskies?

As we enter September there is already a noticeable change on the water. The days are starting to get shorter, the nights are getting longer, and water temperatures are starting to cool. This will mark the movement of muskies from deep breaks and open water, back into the rivers, shallow bays, and flats.

One of the most often asked questions I hear from folks is: "What size lure works the best for muskies?" While this is a simple question, the answer can get a little detailed depending on the situation. Time on the water is always our best source of information when it comes to catching muskies, and the main thing I always try to determine on a daily basis is: "What is the mood of the musky?" When it comes to defining the nature of a musky, there are two words that describe this beast best: predatory and territorial.

When muskies are in a predatory mood they are active fish, on the prowl, in search of food. This is the ideal opportunity to 'match' the forage base with a smaller lure and cover water fast. Generally a smaller lure that mimics the forage will make a great target for an active musky and allow

you to cover more water, contacting more muskies.

When muskies are in a territorial mood, they are inactive fish that are not actively feeding. When confronted with this situation I like to pick a spot apart, working through an area much slower and making sure to cover it thoroughly. I also like using large lures in the situation for the main reason of trying to mimic an 'intruder' or 'competitor' in the musky domain. Given the territorial nature of a musky, this invasive presentation can often entice a musky to strike as a warning to the intruder.

Taking a look at the musky in this perspective can help make a shorter order of making your decisions on the water when it comes to deciding what size lures you should be using. Give this approach a try this year...and you will be sure to contact a few more muskies! *WR*

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.



Sterling Guide Service client Mark Rowe with a predatory musky caught on a small lure. (Photo by Dennis Radloff)

... HISTORICAL WISCONSIN ...

from the archives of *The Echo*

Peter Turney of Mellen, who had just returned to his hometown of Mellen after serving in the Army during World War II, caught this dandy musky near his home. His son, Pete, said his dad caught over 30 large muskies that summer, the largest measuring about 48 inches and weighing well over 20 pounds. Turney, who fought in the Battle of the Bulge, and was in the second wave of soldiers who stormed Normandy Beach, passed away in 2004.



"REEL" MEN BLEED

Are You a Wisconsin Blood Brother?



Be a Hero.
Give Blood.

Tom Carpenter,
OWO Columnist

TERRY BITZ

OUTDOOR CONVERGENCE

Questioning the Conservation Congress



This 53-inch musky was caught in 2007 by Paul Keller while being guided by OWO columnist Dennis Radloff. Green Bay has the ability to produce big fish and likely could produce even bigger fish if given the chance.

Does the Wisconsin Conservation Congress still represent Wisconsin citizens? Many people in the state are beginning to believe the answer is “no.”

The Conservation Congress is a public institution that was created back in 1934 to represent citizens in regard to outdoor concerns. The Congress is made up of delegates from each county who are elected by Wisconsin residents during the annual DNR and Conservation Congress spring hearings. These hearings are held each April in every county around the state.

During the Congress's portion of the meeting, the public is able to submit proposals, via written resolutions, for rule changes they would like to see in regard to outdoor regulations. The proposals are voted on by the public at the meeting. The proposals that pass are sent to the Rules and Resolutions Committee where they are assigned to study committees. The study committees

meet in the fall to discuss and vote on the proposals. Proposals that make it out of those committees often go on to a statewide vote by attendees at the following year's spring hearings.

In 2007, a group of anglers who were concerned about protecting the developing musky fishery in Green Bay, submitted resolutions in 26 counties asking that the musky regulation on Green Bay be changed. They proposed to increase the minimum size limit to 54 inches which would further limit the harvest of the musky population.

The proposal passed in 25 of the 26 counties with a vote margin greater than three to one. However, when the proposal came before the Great Lake Committee of the Conservation Congress, it was voted down.

The vote by that committee and similar votes by other committees on other resolutions have caused numerous people around the state to

question the role of the Congress and the resolution process. Dennis Radloff, who helped craft and organize the musky resolution, was frustrated that small numbers of people on a committee could kill off a proposal that enjoyed such widespread support.

“It seems like a decent process in theory. We thought we could get something done by following the process. I am shocked the proposal's rejection came down to a handful of people,” said Radloff.

It wasn't just the vote that frustrated those involved with the musky proposal. People who attended the meeting said committee members seemed to express open hostility towards musky anglers and their catch-and-release ethic. Greg Wells, one of the proposal's organizers and a member of the state's Muskie Management Team, attended the meeting and was surprised by some of the committee members' comments. He believes the proposal was not handled professionally.

“I don't think it was handled well at the committee,” said Wells.

Some anglers have questioned whether the committee has a harvest mentality and therefore inclined to vote down size limit restrictions based on their own desires to harvest fish. Dale Maas, who chairs the Great Lake's Committee, denied that claim.

According to Maas, the proposal was voted down because the DNR fishery biologist in attendance did not support the proposal.

“There was not a lot of biologic support. As lay people we depend on the DNR biologist,” Maas said.

That would seem to make sense; however, in this case, there was no biologist present to represent the bay. According to Dave Rowe, who is now the biologist for Green Bay, the position was still unfilled at the time of the meeting and he had yet to take the job. He and the biologists in attendance worked on other bodies of water and did not have data or experience with the fishery to give direction on whether or not the proposal had merit.

It appears that the public are not the only ones who are frustrated with the process. Robert Bohmann, the Vice-Chairman of the Conservation Congress, submitted his own resolution this year calling on the Congress to make process changes. His proposal suggests a procedure change that allows resolutions with two-thirds majority support to be automatically advanced as a statewide advisory question.

“Every year I see resolutions that fail at the committee level due to the personal agendas of certain committee members,” said Bohmann. “We are to represent all the citizens. I have a hard time with 24 (committee) people making these decisions when these resolutions have received such broad support.”

According to Bohmann, the votes by committees to reject broadly supported proposals are why the Congress sees the same resolutions being submitted year after year by citizens. This would certainly indicate that the system is currently not working as intended and one reason the public is becoming increasingly frustrated with the process. Many now believe that the process no longer functions and is a waste of time. Maas disagrees with that sentiment.

“The process does work. The results may just not be what they wanted,” he said.

Kurt Thiede, who is the DNR liaison to the Conservation Congress, agrees with Maas. “I certainly don't feel (proposals) are a waste of time,” he said.

I personally believe that the current Conservation Congress process seems to be failing the outdoor public. When legitimate proposals with broad based support are unable to make it out of committee, but proposals such as the cat-hunting resolution make it to a statewide vote, there is something wrong. *W*

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

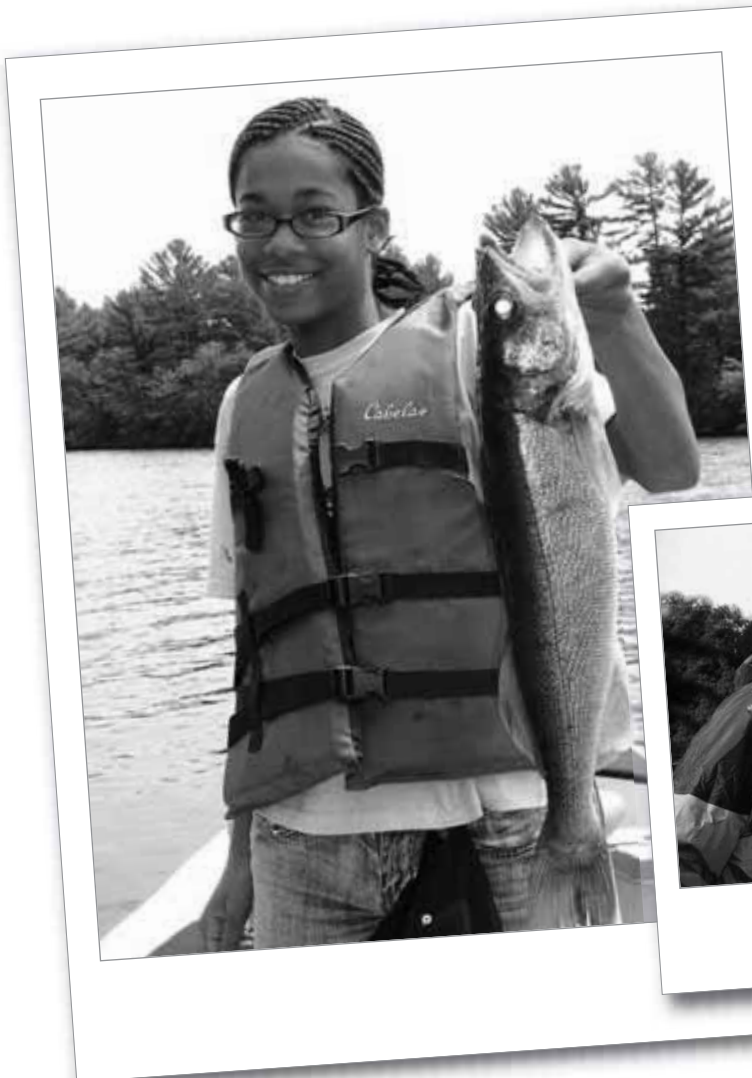
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PHIL SCHWEIK

LINES FROM A HOOKSETTER

Seriously ill kids find fish & fun with the experts



LEFT: Jocelyn from Maryland likes the walleye she caught with a little help from Wisconsin guides during the Kippenberg Creek Kids day of fishing south of Wausau on Half Moon Lake. RIGHT: Troy from Maryland and one of many professional guides helping out pose with the beautiful walleye he caught during the Kippenberg Creek day of fishing for kids with life-threatening illness and their families.

At first glance it just looked like another fishing tournament on the Wisconsin River. For those of us spending the day fishing with seriously ill kids and their families, though, it was so much more than that. It was a day to remember.

Kippenberg Creek Kids of Gleason, Wisconsin, is a nonprofit organization that provides hunting trips, fishing trips, snowmobile outings, and other outdoor adventures for children with life-threatening illnesses. These adventures are provided with food and lodging

included, all at no cost to the children and their families.

Last year I was approached by Kippenberg Creek Kids founder Larry Beyer and Bruce Phaff of Halfmoon Bar & Grill to see if it was possible to take a few kids from the organization on a guided fishing trip. Several Wisconsin guides as enthusiastic as I was with this unique opportunity ended up helping to host seven children and their families for a day of fishing, dinner, and festivities including awards and prizes for the kids who attended. The entire event

took place out of Halfmoon Bar & Grill, on the waters of Halfmoon Lake in Mosinee, Wisconsin.

This year Larry and Bruce again contacted me about taking the kids fishing. In response to their inquiry, I assured them that there would be no restrictions on the number of kids that we would accommodate. Our Hooksetters group of professional guides along with other guides and members of the community would be ready to help out in any way to get these kids on the water.

Over a period of a few months, Larry and I talked several times. The number of children wishing to participate kept growing. I could tell that Larry was getting nervous about us being able to hold up our end of the bargain,

but I assured him that we would have enough people to take the kids out.

As the big day—July 12—approached, Larry informed me that he had nearly 25 children and their families ready to go fishing with us. Wow. What a difference one year can make. The number of guests had more than tripled, but we were ready. I contacted a few groups in the area and a few other area guides. In no time we had a huge number of people willing to help out. The support was overwhelming.

When July 12 arrived, so too did 22 children, their family members, and several members from Kippenberg Creek. We all met at Halfmoon Bar & Grill in the morning. At first, organizing the masses proved a little confusing, but after brief introductions, all of the children and their families were matched with guides and ready for one great day of fishing.

The kids were also each given a gift bag with food, drinks and some other trinkets, including water pistols for taking aim at their guides while on

the water. Once the gift bags were handed out the hunt was on! The boats were off, with everyone heading to their own favorite location. We were all to rendezvous at the bar at noon for a photo shoot of the kids' fish and a great buffet style dinner.

The fishing was awesome and the looks on the kids' faces as they caught their fish are etched in our memories forever. The day was literally picture perfect. Once arriving back at headquarters, the kids who had experienced a wonderful time on the water were greeted with a shore bet for more fun. Sheriff's department personnel were waiting with their squad car and truck pulling the sheriff's boat. The fire department was there with a rescue vehicle and a big, red fire truck with sirens blaring. One of our local race car drivers, Scott Vesely, waited with his race car that each kid could sit in. They sure loved it when Scott revved up the engine of that fancy car.

After all the excitement settled down, a photo shoot of the kids and catches, their families and guides took center stage. Who in Wisconsin doesn't like their picture taken with a trophy...or ten? Finally, it was time for dinner. We all sat down to a country-style buffet.

With satisfied bellies and contented hearts, each and every child was called out to receive several prizes and awards simply for attending. Christmas had arrived in July. Handing out the awards and prizes was very emotional for everyone; it brought a tear to many an eye to see the smiles brought to the faces of these children who have endured so much hardship in so short a time in this world. To help make them happy even for just one day is worth any and all effort.

This is an event that I know I will be proud to be a part of year after year. To personally see the difference we all make pulling together as one in the lives of these children is something I will never forget. What's in your bag, Wisconsin outdoorsmen and women, for the Kids of Kippenberg Creek? *W*

Connect with Kippenberg Creek Kids at www.kippenbergcreekkids.com.

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

CAPTAINS JERRAD & ROY KALMERTON

ON THE PROWL WITH THE WOLF PACK*September salmon and tips for your charter*

If you had been longing for that monster salmon of the year, but haven't had the luxury of time, September is the season to cash in your vacation time. Four year old pre-spawn salmon are best targeted by boat at the river mouths. Salmon feed typically in low light. Be on the water early or late with an arsenal that includes glow-in-the-dark baits, body baits (J-Plugs, Hordes, stick baits) in salmon colors of glow, white and green. If you're trolling in the river current, remember to tap up your speed when going down river to make your baits look the same as going up river.

Two and three year class fish are still plentiful in deeper water. Many of these fish can be taken on the same baits as the river-bound four year olds, but don't overlook the flasher/fly combos. We've had good luck with the rotator style flashers, primarily the e-chip flasher or coyote. Don't hesitate to pull the monster 11 inch rotators and tip them with a fly approximately 30 inches behind the flasher.

A great way to capitalize on these fish with the limited time left in the season is to call upon the expertise provided by a charter boat and its crew. They furnish everything you need for a successful catch and have a finger on the heart-

beat of the bite. Before embarking on a particular charter service you'll want to give them a call and ask a couple of questions. This way you'll be informed of the current fishing trends and become familiar with

the operation itself. This also enables you to get a cursory personality read on the crew before the day of your charter.

The captain and crew of the boat, after all, become part of your party, and as important as the fish catch is your enjoyment of time and company while on your fishing adventure. Be sure to inquire about the boat you will fish from on the day of your charter to avoid any surprises. Many times charter services will have a website for you to peruse that will have specifics of their operation. For a current fishing report or charter information, call 920.918.9653 or visit www.wolfpackadventures.com. We also offer guided goose, pheasant, mourning dove and duck hunts with trained bird dogs, and guided inland fishing trips year round targeting all species of gamefish and panfish throughout Wisconsin. *W*



Another day on the water with the Wolf Pack.

Captain Roy C. Kalmerton and sons operate Wolf Pack Adventures in Sheboygan. Contact Roy at 920.918.9653. For fishing reports and hot bait of the day, go to www.wolfpackadventures.com.

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From Jigs to Surface Baits

Those other autumn musky lures

By Joel DeBoer

Autumn is a time revered by many musky anglers and for good reason - recreational boat traffic begins to taper off, the vivid fall leaves and landscape here in Wisconsin are spectacular, and the muskies pack on the pounds offering the potential for the heaviest fish of the season. Autumn is a time when many musky fishermen get "tunnel vision" of sorts, at least in respect to their daily repertoire. Ask many musky anglers what their favorite offerings are for this time of year and more often than not jerkbaits (including the soft rubber style lures) or live suckers are the only options mentioned. These are excellent choices for provoking a musky strike during the fall, but far from the only baits a fisherman should consider using. Let's take a look at some often overlooked presentations that produce muskies for my clients and me up until freeze-up, and given the chance will do the same for you too.

Without a doubt bucktails and spinnerbaits are some of the most popular and productive musky lures available, and yet few musky anglers utilize their potential in the fall. A perennial favorite during the hot months of summer, the misconception that these style baits only perform in the heat is held by many fishermen, both novice and experienced alike. Bucktails and spinnerbaits will produce fish all autumn long; in fact, there are times when their productivity surpasses any other lure style, including traditional jerkbaits and crankbaits.

One of the keys to using bucktails successfully during the cold water period is to slow your retrieve down. The high speed retrieves of summertime need to be replaced by much slower, even crawling/slow-rolling speeds. Much of the time I am using bucktails or spinnerbaits later in the season I am working the bait just fast enough that the blades are just spinning and the body is riding barely over the structure itself; this is a key component to scoring consistently on hair baits during cold water periods, especially as the season progresses.

Depending on the depth of the water I'm fishing as well as wind and current conditions, I like big fluted or willow leaf blades on my bucktails



Joel DeBoer (left) and Brett Jolly pose with the result of a late fall trophy musky hunt.

coupled with a large body for added bulk and silhouette such as the Tandem Mepps Giant and Magnum Musky Killers and the Buchertail Magnum Buck. As with my musky spinnerbaits, I add a good sized trailer off the rear hook using a hitchhiker to keep it in place. When selecting a spinnerbait for fall musky fishing, I mostly opt for a heavy head and single spin blade; my personal preference is the Mag-10 model Llungen Lures Nut-Buster. I complete the presentation by adding a large rubber or pork trailer which not only adds bulk, but works as a teaser to help provoke strikes.

One of the first baits it seems disappears from many musky anglers arsenals as the water begins to cool are surface baits. Quite possibly the most exciting of lure families to use, surface baits also play a significant role in catching muskies during the fall. I have caught muskies on surface lures with the water temperature as low as the upper fifty degree range. In my experience, the topwater bite is best in fall during the lowlight

periods of early morning and especially in the evening through the first couple hours of dark.

Prop style lures such as the Topraider and Super Topraider continue to work well with the water in the upper to mid sixty degree range. As the water cools below that mark, look for slower moving baits such as the Hawg Wobbler or large creeper-style baits to produce the most action. Whether in clear or stained water, there remains a solid shallow water musky bite right up to turnover, and large slow moving baits will provide some of the last action on top of the year. If you're hanging up your surface baits because it's September or later, you're missing out on muskies. Period.

Perhaps one of the most effective of autumn musky presentations is also one of the most overlooked and under-used - jigs. I'll be the first to admit fishing with jigs, especially for muskies, is not the most exciting of venues; that is, until your rod doubles over with the weight of a trophy fish attached! Jig fishing for big toothy

critters is a relatively simple affair as anglers need only a relatively small assortment of gear to be prepared.

Begin by selecting an assortment of quality jigs ranging from ½ oz. - 3 oz. Good musky jigs are a bit trickier to find, but a well supplied outdoors store such as Rollie and Helens or Gander Mountain should be able to supply you with what you need. I carry an array of jigs with me, both dressed and plain throughout the year, but especially in autumn. A healthy supply of trailers such as large (6"-10") twister tails and paddle tails should also be on-hand. Live bait makes an excellent trailer as well, and can often score big for you under the toughest of conditions.

When it comes to working a jig for muskies in the fall, both casting and vertical applications will produce fish. Casting and retrieving a jig for muskies tends to work best with a swimming retrieve. It is crucial to watch the line at all times during the retrieve to detect strikes. After casting and letting the jig settle to the bottom, use the reel itself to manipulate the bait causing it to rise and flutter in the water column. I prefer to point my rod tip at the bait itself and then reel a few cranks before letting the lure settle again. I repeat this scenario until the bait is at the boat, again finishing with a boat side maneuver - yes, muskies will hit jigs on a figure-eight!

Vertical jigging for autumn muskies works tremendously along deep weed lines, along sharp breaks, or over the top of deeper structural elements. While working these areas, a slow lift-and-drop technique works well; it is imperative to pay attention to your bait as strikes are often subtle and easy to miss, even from the largest of fish. The bottom line when jig fishing - if it feels funny, set the hook!

Jerkbaits and live bait surely have their place in fall musky fishing, but to be on top of the game, keep your "toolbox" full and stay flexible, that means having and using bucktails, jigs, and surface lures - who knows, you just may end up boating the largest musky of your life! *W*

Joel DeBoer is a musky guide and owner of Wisconsin Angling Adventures guide service in north-central Wisconsin. Contact him by phone 715.297.7573 or www.wisconsinanglingadventures.com.

DAN MOERICKE

AN "UP NORT" REPORT*Handling a skunk*

"ANYBODY who has been fishing for any amount of time and says that they've never been skunked is a stinky liar. It happens to all of us..."

This publication is full of great advice from great fishermen on how to catch everything from bluegills to muskies and everything in between. These guys are obviously in that elite 20 percent of anglers who catch 80 percent of the fish.

I've been fishing long enough, and with enough really good fishermen that I'd like to think that I'm in that 20 percent club too. Occasionally, though, Ma Nature pitches a shutout and you find yourself leaving the lake with an odiferous cloud hanging over your boat. You've been skunked! To read all these other guys' articles, you'd be led to believe that they've NEVER encountered a skunk. Let me just say this...fishermen lie. ANYBODY who has been fishing for any amount of time and says they've never been skunked is a stinky liar. It happens to all of us.

Sitting around the campfire the other night, cold Leinie's in hand, I gave some thought to the proper way to handle one of these less-than-successful outings. How does one properly handle a "skunk?" Here are some tips not on how to catch fish, but what to do when you don't....

First of all, I'd have to say that there are two entirely different kinds of skunks: those that occur on waters that you're familiar with and those that occur when you venture out onto a

body of water for the first time.

When it comes to the latter, the handling of the foul stench of the skunk is relatively simple: the lake is declared a 'mudhole,' and you move on. Not your fault. There were no fish to be caught and the idiot who sent you there is roundly cursed and a dead sucker is placed to rot inside the hubcap of his SUV. Last winter, my buddy Puck got me to walk out through a foot of slush onto an unknown lake where our augers hit nothing but mud when we penetrated the ice. His truck still stinks.

The stickier of the two situations comes when you find your livewell empty, coming off a lake that you've fished successfully on dozens of occasions. The fish are there. You've caught them before. But you couldn't catch even one today. Here are a few chestnuts that you might pull out to try and subdue the nasty polecat you've been collared with:

- ▶ *The wind was all wrong. I couldn't fish the spots I wanted to.*
- ▶ *Should've had minnows/crawlers/leeches/tadpoles/ worms/stump-grinders/etc. (whatever lure or bait that was not in the boat at the time).*
- ▶ *There was a huge hatch the night before. The fish are full.*

▶ *Water was too warm/cold/riled/clear/calm. [Pick one.]*

▶ *Guess that's why they call it fishing, not catching.*

▶ *Forgot my solunar tables. Should have been here sooner/later.*

▶ *Hey, a bad day fishing is still better than a good day working.*

Of course, you can always look on the bright side of the skunk. When the fish aren't cooperating, it's a great opportunity to check out new spots and new structures. Hey, why not spend the time learning a little more about the lake? That could even mean finding a previously unknown blueberry patch. My buddy Puck once actually wrote off one of his skunks entirely as a blueberry picking trip and said he really wasn't fishing at all...so the skunk really never existed. Brilliant!

Once skunked, it is also accepted practice to announce to the lake upon departing the landing that you've developed a grudge toward it. My buddy Lard once had a triple grudge going against Trout Lake before a successful outing finally cleared the air.

A critical part of handling the skunk is this: once the skunk is official, it's imperative that you be the first to

"My buddy Puck once actually wrote off one of his skunks entirely as a blueberry picking trip and said he really wasn't fishing at all...so the skunk really never existed. Brilliant!"

declare that you'll clean the fish this time, so it's your buddy's turn next time. I learned this from my buddy Jackson, who, I think learned it from his father.

Of course, the most important tool in dealing with any skunk is to have plenty of ice cold beer in the cooler. As long as you do that, there is no such thing as bad fishing. There is only good fishing and great fishing. Great fishing is when you actually catch something.

Now, with fall coming, it's time to start working on my hunting excuses. *W*

Dan Moericke is an avid and successful Wisconsin fisherman from Wausau and an occasional guest on outdoor fishing programs. On the water, he always tells us some version of the truth.

JJ REICH

REICH ON*Idaho float trip brings pigs on bacon*

Its name is "Bacon." Good name. Everyone loves bacon: toddlers, college kids, balding thirty-something guys (like me) and pretty much all members of AARP. Fishermen often order huge plates of it, next to eggs, while resting in Wisconsin restaurants after early-morning fishing trips. But I'm not talking about wonderfully-greasy slices of meaty heaven. I'm talking about a fishing fly.

Recently, I went on a business trip to Boise, Idaho. I decided to extend my stay and try fly fishing on one of the beautiful rivers located in this gorgeous state. I met up with some friends-of-a-friend, Rob Brownfield and Jeff Lewerenz. These two seasoned fishermen have fly fished together for over 15 years. Rob owns their drift boat and Jeff ties the flies—a perfect team. The two enjoy spending many summer days together drifting down the river catching and releasing huge trout. Never having cast a fly before, I felt lucky to tag along for a day to learn how they do it.

In just one minute of riding in the truck with these guys, I knew I was going to like them. As soon as we left the hotel parking lot, Rob pulled the rig over and stopped. Rob then turned to me, "OK, we know you're an outdoor writer. If you reveal any of our secrets—I will kill you." Jeff laughed nervously from the back seat. "OK, now that we have that over with, would you like some sunflower seeds or an apple?" Rob continued politely, acting like nothing violent happened. Jeff laughed again. Yep, nothing starts out a fun day of fishing better than a good old-fashioned

threat. This was going to be a good day.

After the hour-long truck ride, we arrived at the river. Jeff and Rob always lock up a bike with flat tires at their exit spot. It gives them a more realistic reason to beg for a ride when trying to hitchhike back to the launch ramp to get the truck. "Hey man, can you give me a lift? My bike has a flat" (well, two flats that originally happened back in 1998).

At the launch, Rob must have forgotten his scary threat to kill me if I shared their secret fishing spot with OWO readers. Because he allowed me to take a photo of the huge, clearly-labeled map of the exact location of the public boat launch.



Once on the water, I learned that Rob and Jeff's favorite, secret, home-made fly had a name. Its name is "Bacon." Good name. They say all fish in Idaho love "Bacon." It has caught almost everything that they cast at. Out of fear for my life, I can't show it to you, but I can say Rob caught a fat pig using "Bacon." (Hey Rob, here's a

tip for you—if you feel the need to threaten people's lives, so that they don't tell the world about your "secret fly," then you may want to remove it from your hat when they take a photo of you for OWO!)

The "Bacon" is a large, brown weighted fly on a line rigged with strike indicators (floats). We cast it along the shorelines while drifting down the



river. But throughout the day we often stopped and got out of the boat to work pools and eddies."

Final total? Well, the guys did pretty well, catching and releasing about a dozen fish including several pigs. I did OK, for a rookie. I hooked one fish while



hitch-hiking back to the truck.

But what a great western-river adventure. A special thank-you to Rob and Jeff for taking me under their wing, trusting me with their secrets, and in particular for not killing me. Yet." W

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.





RAY HOWELL

KICKING BEAR*Bowfishing the Petenwell*

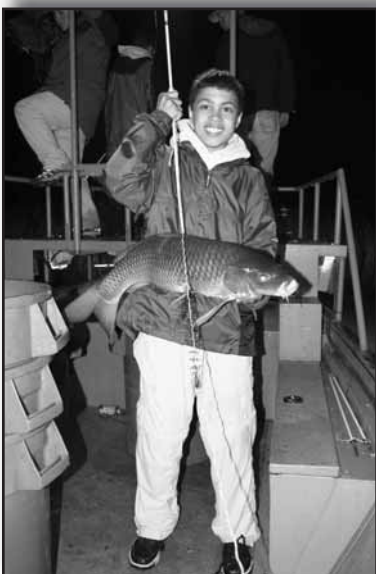
The river erupted into a volcano of mud and water splashing high into the air as the arrow hit its mark and hollers of excitement echoed throughout the Petenwell Flowage.

Plans were made several months ago to take two kids who had attended the Kicking Bear camps on a bowfishing outing. Jeff and Cindy Braun from AMS Bowfishing know firsthand the positive impact bowfishing can have on kids by getting them into the outdoors and involved with something exciting and challenging. They have been great supporters of Kicking Bear since the first camp eight years ago.

This was Michael and Tyus's first bowfishing experience. They had no idea of what fun was in store for them. We set up two Diamond Edge bows with AMS Retriever Pro Reels, made a cardboard carp to shoot at and did our practicing in the yard on a Block target.

We met Jeff and Cindy at 3:30 p.m. Cindy was already out shooting carp and when she returned to shore for us, her plastic barrel was already half-full. That really fired the boys up.

The day was overcast and muggy with spotty rain showers—perfect as far as I'm concerned when it comes to bowfishing. As we were cruising toward the shallows, the fish were boiling everywhere. The closer we got, the more the excitement built. Michael and Tyus had their bows in position and their fingers on the strings. The first few shots they took were more of a learning experience, shooting off a loft on a boat.



A nocturnal carp falls to a well aimed Tyus arrow.

We were about eight yards out from the cattails and two large carp showed their backs. It was all one motion—Tyus drew his bow and released—and the arrow connected soundly. The line continued to scream off his reel and the fight was on. Tyus eventually won the battle. Using his Retriever Reel, he brought the fish to the side of the boat where Cindy grabbed it and lifted it onto the deck. It was time for high-fives all around.

As soon as Tyus got his arrow knocked again, he had another opportunity and another score. After several near misses and adjustment of his aim to compensate for the illusion of the target beneath the water, Michael followed suit. As the fish hit the barrel, there was a lot of whooping and hollering on deck.

All afternoon we weaved in and out of rows of cattails and across

the food, he asked the Lord to stop the lightning so we could go back out again. Sure enough, we found ourselves taking the boat off the trailer and launching it back on the Petenwell.

There were all kinds of questions being asked by Michael and Tyus like, "How are we going to see the fish?" and "How are we going to shoot our bows at night?" Those questions were answered immediately after Jeff turned the generator on and the boat lit up with halogen lights all around the bow.



Michael scores on a Petenwell monster.



Tyus and Michael with the rewards of a Kicking Bear carp 'hunt' on the Petenwell hosted by Jeff and Cindy Braun of AMS Bowfishing. Ray Howell is at far right.

shallow flats. Several times there were so many fish erupting on the water that it sounded like a freight train coming across the flowage. None of us wanted to get off the water when the lightning started to strike but we didn't want to end up like those fish!

While we were putting the boat back on the trailer, Jeff suggested going into town to eat. If the weather improved we could return after dark. When Michael gave the blessing on

We could see into the water up to several yards in all directions around the boat.

We found ourselves trolling along the cattails. Again, it took a little practicing, but soon the barrels were filling rapidly. On one occasion, everybody on the bow of the boat was yelling, "Look at that monster!" That's when Michael released his arrow. He had made a perfect hit. This fish was huge! We were afraid he was going to

pull the arrow right back out of it, so Tyus gave him an assist. The second arrow guaranteed that fish was going to be in the boat. As I pulled the fish—over 20 pounds—from the water, the excitement was overwhelming. It wasn't five minutes later and Michael was into another monster. Then Tyus too put a Boone and Crocket carp into the boat. The night water splashed like fireworks as the arrows found their mark!

Hours went by but you'd never have known it. We were all having so much fun—the time just slipped by. About 1:30 in the morning as we were trolling into a new patch of cattails, all the lights went out and everyone in the boat was completely silent.

"I think the generator ran out of gas," Jeff said.

"Let's get some more in it," responded Michael. "There are more fish to shoot!"

Unfortunately...or maybe fortunately, we called it a night. I truly believe that if the generator wouldn't have run out of gas, we'd still be there.

Jeff and Cindy are great fishing partners. The combination of bowfishing and doing the Lord's work by helping to save others is what life is really all about. Matthew 4:19 *W*

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.

DICK HENSKE

GOLDEN ROADS

Florida surf fishing right medicine for Badger retirees

Although offered primarily as a future option for the retired angler watching the cash flow, all Badgers with an eye on an upcoming Florida spring vacation should take note—hot fun in the Deep South with rod and reel has no age restrictions. We just happen to have more time. Now, in fall, is the time to begin planning your own trip.

Last year, as you chipped ice from driveways in the 30-below-windchill temperatures of the Great State, fellow Wisconsinite Ron Koebernik, Russ Cerk of the U.P., and I continued our retirement rituals of February/March in pursuit of the Florida flounder, sheepshead, pompano and whiting. This trip for honorary officers of our Not-So-Over-The-Hill-Gang, Rexnord retiree Koebernik of Lake Tomahawk, Freeman Chemical retiree Cerk, and me, a retired elementary school principal now residing in Manitowish Waters, is an annual salt-water assault done on a budget that guarantees fabulous fishing.

Our home away from home is northern Florida in the upper panhandle where it's less expensive and they advertise great beaches, no high rises, no stop signs, and no college parolees on spring break. On the Internet you'll find St. George Island and Mexico Beach near Apalachicola, 100 miles south of Tallahassee. Florida can be expensive, but you can rent off-season for a fraction of

the cost. This becomes a playground for Georgia residents starting in April, when prices drastically rise and we're on our way home. In January, February and March it's a little cooler but to Wisconsin residents, it's paradise. This will be our tenth year in the South, and our wives love it every bit as much.

Expect temperatures from 60 to mid-70 degrees in the day with nighttime temperatures in the 50s and 60s. Huge vacation homes that routinely include four bedrooms and four baths will average \$2,000 for 30 days (your four-couple split?) with even less expensive rental costs elsewhere. Those homes may be a block or two off the water, but sugar-white beaches wait just a short stroll away. Ocean-front homes are also reasonable. You can also camp on St. George Island in the state park and there are other campgrounds in the area plus other inexpensive housing for people who need to stay on a restricted budget.

Many communities are dog-friendly. It's too cold to swim at times but there are ample swimming pools available and people walk the sandy beaches on the ocean side and watch the dolphins. It's a kind of barrier island with the bay behind you with most of the fish action because the water warms quicker; as the water warms, the fishing gets even better. The bay side has the weeds and the rushes and it can get buggy without the ocean winds.

A non-resident annual license is \$30.00-plus.. Current surf-fish targets in 60-degree water temperatures include flounder, sheepshead and whiting. Other sportfish like redfish and sea trout are in by late February, with the trout moving back into the warming bay after wintering upriver away from colder water.

We recommend a stout rod and good reel with 10 to 20-pound-test line. Salt water requires clean-up with a hose following each outing to protect the gear. A boat is not necessary, but we bring knee-high boots to wade and better reach the surf and rock where the flounder come to feed on baitfish and shrimp.

We purchase nickel hooks by the 100 from Rienke's in Milwaukee before departing, one-ounce "football" sinkers that slide above a swivel rig,

and dress the arsenal with several choices of live bait depending on the target. Artificial lures are the rare choice. Sheepshead prefer fiddler crabs or small crayfish. Fiddler crabs are taken simply by finding their sand holes and catching them in the sun. Frozen shrimp purchased anywhere are cut and used for whiting which are an oceanside target. Bull minnows and other baitfish are caught in the surf with cast nets and frozen or used fresh for flounder.

A flounder is like fighting a 10-pound bluegill. They average between 11 and 16 inches and must be 12 inches to keep with a daily limit of 10. They're absolutely delicious. Sheepshead run an average of 16 to 18 inches but will be as big as five to six pounds. Look for breakwater, cuts, rocks, or fish the piers. They're a barnacle-type eater but they are not a roughfish like the sheepshead of Wisconsin are considered. They're very tasty, the top-eater fish. Whiting are like the Wisconsin walleye, averaging 11 to 13 inches.

Our group labels whiting 'number three' of the three species as table fare but still a very good eater. Flounder provide four fillets, two top and two bottom; sheepshead provide a big fillet off the back; and whiting offer walleye-like fillets.

Finally, a little equipment tip from Dixieland. "Crappie poles" purchased for only about \$15.00 in the South are invaluable tools for conveniently reaching surf fish. Made of fiberglass, the rod extends three or four sections with an eye on the end that enables the angler to reach out over rocks and other likely ambush places.

It's like a golf ball retriever. It's not made for heavy fish but we put 20-pound-test line on a 14-foot rod and send it out there. You get one on, you know it.

(Dick Ellis Note: Don't be frustrated or expect to have the expertise that Dick Henske has with this rod initially. I golf



Badger resident and Rexnord retiree Ron Koebernik of Lake Tomahawk shows the delicious flounder and striped sheepshead taken routinely in balmy weather from the beaches of St. George Island near the Florida panhandle during the winter months.



Sheepshead, whiting and flounder are readily available in the Florida surf throughout the winter months. Thirty-day rental for four bedroom, four bath homes is extremely affordable.

with him. He's almost constantly using the ball retriever so will naturally be more acclimated to the Southern crappie rod.)

The ocean is full of fish. Like anywhere else though, you have to find them. Ask the local anglers and the local bait shops. You will find them. Don't forget your hats and sunscreen.

Use the Internet if you want to try this area. Check out areas like Mexico Beach, Cape San Blas, Alligator Point Apalachicola, Port St. Joe, Panacea, Steinhatchee, Cedar Key, St. Marks and Panama. We scouted the area the first year and found what we wanted—reasonable prices and a few golf courses within 25 miles of our home away from home. Fringe benefits are miles of white sand beaches, birds and state parks. See you in Florida. *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.

DICK ELLIS

ON WISCONSIN OUTDOORS

Goodbye Blue



At age 15, Blue recovers a Grant County wild rooster sporting 23-inch tail feathers during opening day of the 2007 Wisconsin's pheasant season. Blue flushed the bird after a 90-minute hunt with no activity in 70-plus degree temperatures. The writer said a final goodbye to his dog, a month shy of 16, August 5, 2008

Ninety minutes of hard work in the long grass probably feels like a full day to a 15-year-old mongrel. But Blue pushed forward on his wobbly wheels under a hot Grant County sun, slowly probing the standing corn, the pumpkin patches and the winds for any lingering scent of wild pheasant. The game is as old as the first hen that busted cover when Blue was still shy of age one.

Our opening day of the 2007 Wisconsin pheasant season had been uneventful since the noon hour whistle carried the coveted message to "begin again." For 15 seasons, Blue and I have searched for the wild roosters, usually, though, avoiding these opening days and the masses of hunters and dogs like the plague. There would be time enough from late Octobers through the Christmases to work the Wisconsin fields alone, just Blue and me.

But tactics change as time becomes precious and a dog loses his ability to chase down the wild runners in the long grass. Years ago, Blue's nose would put him on the birds and I would either keep up with the chase and be rewarded with a shot or risk watching and listening as a cackling rooster busted cover just in front of a closing blue-eyed mongrel. What Blue has never lost, even at 15, is an uncanny sense of smell and the desire to still press those wild pheasants that refuse to take to the skies unless pushed by a

good dog. Or...tricked by a different kind of plan.

Saturday morning, Blue had his breakfast with Previcox that allows him to hunt with little pain. We climbed in the Chevy truck, again, for the two and one-half hour drive to Grant County. The odometer reads 182,000 miles plus. That means 87,000 highway miles since I bought it, with Blue right next to me. Before that, it was the GMC finally sold for next to nothing with 203,000 "Blue" miles on it. Before that, it was a beat-up Toyota. I forget the yardage.

The Badgers were destroying a weaker opponent by halftime, so Blue had to listen to me make "cackle" noises so that he understood another bird season had arrived. I hope I didn't scare that lady near Lake Mills in the Camry. Doesn't everyone make cackle noises in their truck on opening morning? I pondered writing this story and wondered if at Blue's age it could possibly be another tale of success. For some reason the movie "Young Doctor Frankenstein" came to mind. In my mind, Gene Wilder was exclaiming gleefully "Alive...Alive!" upon learning that his monster has come to life.

Yes, I will tell Wisconsin readers that Blue is still alive and well. Although he is no monster, he too has been pieced together first as a mongrel by nature and through the years as a patient by the vets. Most recently it

was two ACL surgeries over three years.

I stopped at Bender's Grocery in Fennimore for a ham as a gift of appreciation to the landowner. She had given permission to hunt on the phone the day before. Blue and I pulled into the familiar farmyard and bounced up the dirt road to the vast, rolling acres of knee high grasses blowing in the winds.

Instead of trampling the cover like yesterday in search of scent, we walked trails and farm equipment dirt roads splitting the grasses. If a bird had passed through, Blue would know it and he would "tell" me with his body motion. Like any life-long friends, we communicate well. If Previcox has been a miracle for Blue's pain, adrenalin rushes delivered via pheasant scent has been the cure-all that sends him back to his youth and somehow allows him to push the chase again.

Most often, Blue, picked up in the inner city of Milwaukee on a cold December morning as a puppy and brought home on my lap, is a flusher. Frequently though, he pushes the roosters only to freeze over the wily bird in a bizarre mongrel point that includes a slightly cocked head and tail slowly wagging like a metronome keeping time with the lyrics..."We got you now, we got you now, we..."

Our "secret weapon" now that Blue cannot run well is silence in the field. Blue leads slowly. I follow quietly. When he crosses scent, Blue presses the bird which often takes flight in front of the scattergun instead of hanging as long as possible to the safety of cover.

After 90 minutes, Blue was tired and Husky-hot. He's a cold weather boy. No hiding places had been uncovered and Blue showed none of the "birdie" behavior that I covet. Three water breaks in less than two hours to keep Blue fresh had interrupted the hunt. Another 20 minutes or so, I


guessed, and I would be lifting him gently to the Chevy seat for the ride home.

We came to a narrowing point of pumpkin patch and tall broom grass reaching into the CRP. Blue took his familiar adrenalin shot..."bird"... and began to probe for the best way into the bamboo and the pheasant that we both knew was there. It took three minutes. Blue lead me around the point and down the other side 60 yards where a hen exploded in escape. Blue disappeared into the cover, and I waited gun up, for a repeat performance of a show that we have taken in together 1,000 times before.

A series of ground-bound clucks came first, a call of distress from a surprised rooster on the run. An all-out cackle of a monster bird taking flight came next. The rooster made it across the barb wire fence and over the desert of grasses before crashing down with the shotgun report of an .870.


Concerned that the bird wasn't hit hard enough, I lifted Blue over the fence to help in recovery. He sat down in a slump instead, and I spent the next few minutes perplexed and searching for the rooster I feared was only hurt, under the watchful eye of a mongrel. His nose went up then, to take in the talk the cooperating winds were sending him. And he slowly

rocked to his feet, to walk a straight line 25 yards to a bird that was dead in the long grass.

"Thank you Blue," I said, cradling his beautiful head in my cupped hands. "Little wonder I love you so much. We should really do this again some time." 



Reader Note: This story was written for newspapers that carry the Ellis syndicated weekly column in October of 2007.

To read the Ellis column written August 5, 2008, the day Blue died, visit www.onwisconsinoutdoors.com. 

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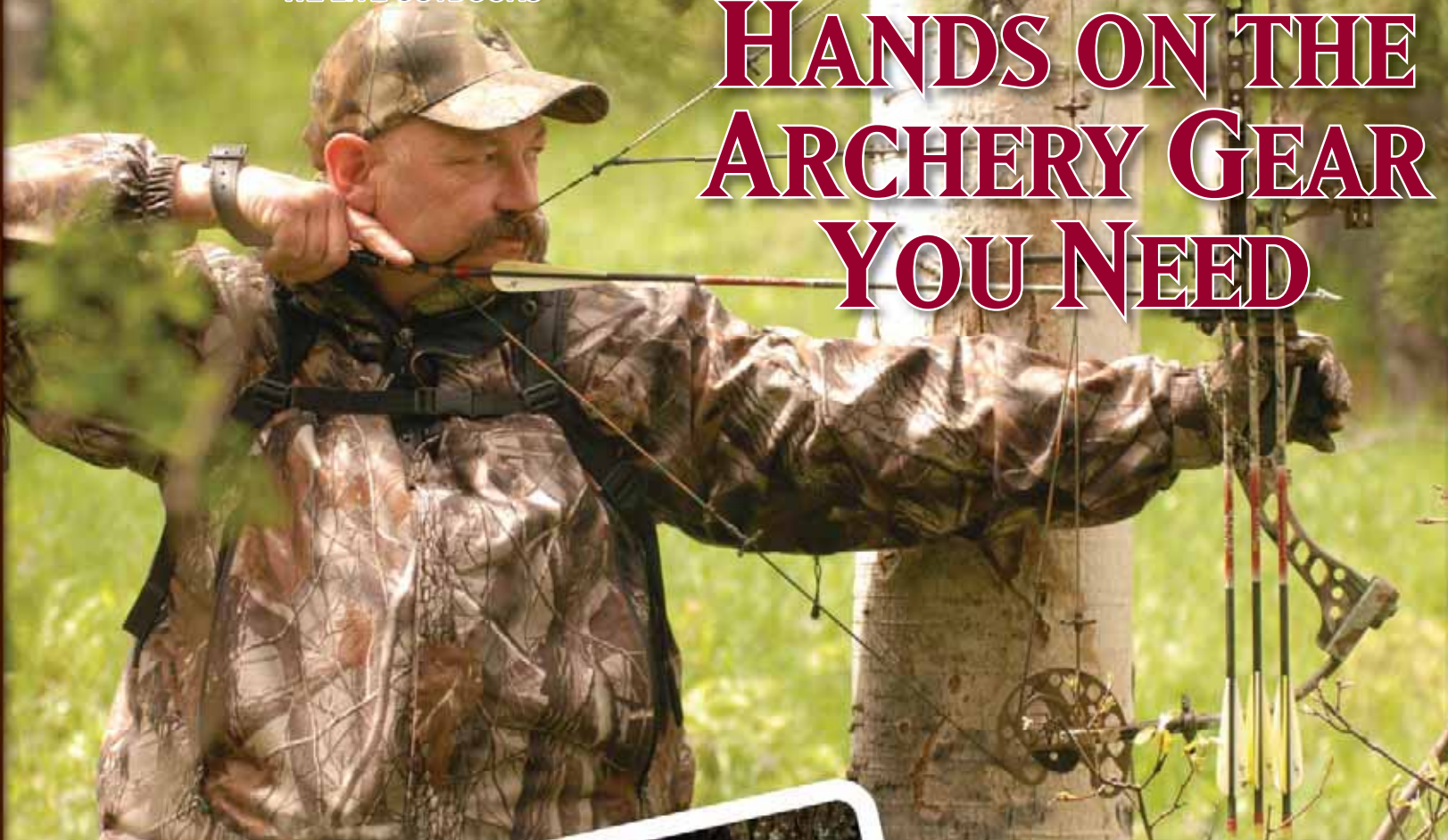
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TOM CARPENTER

BADGER BIRDS*Mourning dove*

Mourning doves represent love, peace and goodwill, so to some people it's odd that we also hunt them. Those folks don't understand how many millions of mourning doves fill our Wisconsin skies. There are plenty of doves for the hunting that keeps their populations in healthy check... and plenty of birds to enjoy in our backyards.

The mourning dove's song sounds very sad, hence their name. But these birds are beautiful, and happy to behold: with pinkish-buff breast, black-

spotted wings, powder blue and rosy accents around the neck, and a prominent black eye surrounded by a light-colored ring, a close-up look at a dove reveals an elegant and subtly attractive bird.

Listen for the mourning dove's distinctive five-note call: hoo-ah hoo, hoo, hoo. The last two notes trail softly off.

Marvel at mourning doves in flight. They are both graceful and fast, reaching flight speeds up to 40 to 45 miles per hour with ease. Doves make

clattering, whistling warning calls when flushing.

Look for mourning dove nests—flimsy, almost laughable affairs built of twigs or sticks in a bush or tree, often an evergreen.

Attract mourning doves with a bird bath or garden pond (these birds love shallow water) and seed on the ground—sunflower or sunflower hearts, millet, cracked corn or other grains. Doves will also visit tray and platform feeders.

Did you know that a pair of



doves can produce up to five broods per year? (No wonder we can hunt them and enjoy them for nature watching.) Both parents work to raise the young.

TOM CARPENTER

CUB'S CORNER*Bowhunting teaches responsibility and respect*

You could probably say that I grew up bowhunting, and that bowhunting helped me grow up. Many Badger state folks of my generation can say the same. It happened during those magical years in the late 1970s and early 1980s when deer populations were starting to really build across Wisconsin, but not everybody was realizing it.

My brothers and I figured it out though, mostly through squirrel hunting. A southwestern Wisconsin woodlot on a crisp September or October morning is a fine place to see deer if you're hunkered up motionless against an oak or hickory, .22 in hand, waiting for squirrels.

When we would compare our big fox squirrels, handsome gray squirrels and extensive notes back at the car after a bushytail session, we always seemed to have deer tales to tell: a doe that stared you down, the yearling that walked right up to you, a four-point buck (imagine that, a buck!) feeding on acorns right there.

Bowhunting was just beginning its surge, and we jumped on the haywagon. The squirrel populations in Green and Lafayette Counties rebounded nicely when we exchanged .22s for compound bows (bracket-mounted wheels and all), but we didn't put a commensurate dent in the deer population those first couple years. We sure had fun trying, though.

Some of the stories are epic. There was the evening I crouched in a brushy fencerow between two woodlots and

shot five arrows—yes five—and had nary a deer hair to show for it.

Small game hunters were working one of the forests, and soon three deer—a doe and two fawns—came sneaking down the edge of the cornfield (about 15 rows had been cut earlier in the fall for silage). It was a perfect setup: I was well hidden and the deer would be 15 short yards away, with nothing but air between us.

Shaking, I drew the bow. All three deer paused. I picked one out: whoosh! Over its back. The trio ran into the corn, then came back out. Like I said, there were a lot of deer and they were innocent. So: whoosh! Arrow number two was on its way, also passing high.

Soon a doe—this one a big old Roman-nosed matriarch—came lumbering along. I repeated the same exact two-miss process on her. There I sat with one arrow. But not for long. Here came another deer. This was a little fellow but I didn't really care at that point. I drew, aimed, let go ... whoosh! The arrow clattered through the corn for miss number five.

Later, when I told the farmer, he made me account for all five arrows, and somehow I did it, though it took several hours of searching the next day. He needed me to be responsible—for his machinery and potentially his cows.

Success eventually came—through hard work and putting in my time. Those are the hallmarks of good bowhunting, and they teach both respect and responsibility. It's good for

the youngsters of any day and age to take on something "a little harder" and have to work at it. That describes bowhunting to a T-square.

Here are some thoughts on getting the young bowhunter prepared for a few mornings or evenings in the tree-stand this fall.

Just be there, be their guide. I still surmise that I would have connected with one of those five arrows, had someone been there to whisper me through the scenario. I was a pretty good shot, but "doe" fever got the best of me.

Get the right equipment. Draw weights of 40 to 50 pounds are fine for the young shooter. Let them shoot what they can handle without a struggle. Make sure the draw length is suitable too. Take time to get good advice and proper equipment from a reputable archery dealer.

Teach good form. If you don't know good form, get help. My dad wasn't interested in bowhunting. He loved his squirrel hunting. (This was okay—he was a good "pusher" for us once we had archery gear.) But Dad knew enough to hook us up with a bowhunting club—the Marshall Bluff Bowhunters in Monticello, where there were plenty of the finest kind of folks to teach us good shooting technique.


Practice often. A fifteen-minute practice session a day during the weeks leading up to the season is time well spent with your young protégé, as valuable as any woods time. Speaking of

that, get out and scout together—look for signs, make plans, set stands.

Go over shot scenarios. Put a little pressure on the young hunter during practice sessions: "This one's it—one chance, one shot." Use a deer target as the season nears, so the young shooter gets used to not having a bullseye. And shoot the real things—broadheads—for the last couple of weeks before season.

Keep hunts short. Don't go for marathon sits, but try for an hour or two. That's long enough for a young body to sit still, especially so in bowhunting, where you're generally exposed and movement needs to be minimal. If your new bowhunter isn't a morning person, don't torture him or her. Instead, stick to afternoon/evening hunts.

Teach the basics of blood trailing, and hope that you have the opportunity. I studied everything I could, and tracked my first buck successfully for 100 yards on six drops of blood.

Don't focus on success, but on being there. To be outside amongst the glory of fall—September and October is the perfect time of year—is the reward. Match that reward with respect and responsibility, and you have the formula for helping build a fine young sportsman. 

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



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MIKE FOSS

DIARY OF A BEAR GUIDE

Zeroing in on the monster of Bayfield County



SUZUKI
KINGQUAD 750AXI 4x4

Wisconsin guide Mike Foss chooses the Suzuki King Quad 750 AXI 4x4 Camo ATV when guiding clients for black bear and whitetail deer in rugged Bayfield County.

Beginning in May, Foss baits several times a week for bear clients spread over 20 square miles of tough backcountry near Washburn, and twice daily as the September season approaches. He needs a machine as tough as the country. For endless chores from scouting to tree stand placement, to hunter transport and retrieval of tagged game, Foss depends on the King Quad 750.

"I'll take my Suzuki," Foss said. "I also manage wildlife food plots including spraying herbicides, tillage, seeding, and fertilizing, and I transport ice fishing clients far out on Lake Superior. I need a reliable machine because Wisconsin hunters rely on me. I need the best."

Mike Foss works hard for his clients 12 months a year. Hard enough that his black bear clients enjoy a success rate of 88 percent and his deer hunters know from history that a buck for the record book is always a distinct possibility.

His Suzuki works as hard as he does.

SUZUKI
Way of Life!

Finding the perfect ambush in our quest to tag Snaggle Tooth during the fast approaching September, 2008 Wisconsin black bear season was not an easy task. Despite his elusiveness since I first encountered this 500 pound monster seven years ago and his ability until recently to stay clear of the cuddeback cameras I had set across my baiting territory in Bayfield County, Snaggle Tooth likes to be near human activity. Like other bears, he is the home owner's worst nightmare when it comes to bird feeders. When it comes to hunting him, he knows that the smorgasbord of goodies we place several times weekly in the bait pits just doesn't fall from the sky. He will use his keen sense of smell to his greatest advantage. He will use his intelligence to find our stands.

It is how a bear learns to survive the seasons to become a very big, old bear. It is why he is almost never seen at a bait station being watched by a hunter on stand and when he is, most often it is only with a few minutes left during legal shooting hours. He comes upwind silently like a black ghost under cover of darkness. It is also why only the experienced, patient hunters who are willing to let average bears come and go knowing that the big bear may never show at all will be placed over the bait stations we have readied in our effort to take Snaggle Tooth.

To keep these big bears guessing, our hunters will use portable, climbing treestands. Using a "climber" offers distinct advantages: the bear is not aware of a stand prior to the season and we can easily change locations in response to changing wind directions. If a bruin is close by when the hunter is climbing, it also mimics a bear climbing a tree, possibly encouraging the nocturnal bear to visit early.

To fool any seasoned bear, we attempt to make the animal feel secure. Like a kid with his hand in the cookie jar, we want him to feel like he is getting away with something every time he visits a bait station. Snaggle Tooth has a wide range and we have set three baiting stations over two miles specifically targeting him. The stands have been prepared for one traditional archer, one hunter who will use a compound bow, and one using a 45-70 rifle. The stands have allowed us to get



The guide guesses right and captures Snaggle Tooth on Cuddeback camera one month before the September black bear season at bait station number one in Bayfield County



Mike Davis of Whitewater shooting a .44 magnum revolver handload helped put the 2007 Foss camp success rate at 88 percent. (Photo by Dick Ellis)

in, bait quickly, and get out. With the help of ATVs that will carry 15 hunters to their stands and haul out harvested bears, we are maintaining 23 bait stations total over 35 miles of public and private Bayfield County backcountry.

I have had an eerie feeling of impending success about one Snaggle Tooth stand in particular. It rests on a little knoll only 12 feet wide with a narrow finger that gently slopes downward into that tangled mess where a big bear can find relief from the heat of summer and feel secure for a fast escape. By mid-July, my sixth sense or lucky feeling was verified. We stood re-baiting a station just hours after the cuddeback camera had captured Snaggle Tooth sitting in the same spot, gorging himself on the pie filling and pastry we had left with his name on it.

He is incredible. The long tooth that earned him his nickname juts from the side of his jaw. The photos taken from about eight feet show a damaged nose probably sustained years before in

a brawl with a then-more dominant bear. Most impressive, he is all of 500 pounds and more; and a rare Wisconsin black bear indeed.

Seasoned bear guides know that daily baiting in a big bear's bedroom will send the senses to full alert. Eyes continuously scan the thick underbrush as you walk in, most often alone, with another pail of sweets that the bear has learned to claim as his own. A guide's hearing heightens ten-fold. Will that monster bear wearing a not-so-friendly attitude materialize in the tangled mass? Seeing Snaggle Tooth on camera precisely on the stand I am traveling to and knowing that he is near has magnified this hair-raising "bear mode."

Joe, my bear "apprentice" who is helping me prepare for a bear camp has no bear experience and many questions. Recently we slowly, quietly moved through the tangled forest carrying new bait. With a soft whisper I told Joe that we were almost to the Snaggle Tooth station. "Why are we whispering?" he asked with a puzzled look. "It's the natural thing to do in the woods," I said, saving the lecture about a hunter's stealth being imperative to success for later.

Ten steps later, I felt his heavy slap on my back as his yell of "Look at that!" shattered the silence and initiated my apparent heart attack. With thoughts of the monster bear on top of us, I grabbed for my bear spray but, heart pounding, followed Joe's pointing finger to the ground instead.

In one highly irritated breath I whispered, "Joe, don't you ever.... wow, what a nice set of antlers." Sometime last winter, a big buck felt secure on this knoll knowing he would not be bothered. He bedded down and lost the trophy rack that he had proudly displayed all fall. I had walked past those shed antlers on at least three occasions, but my focus had been up, looking for the perfect tree stand, not down.

Yes. I have a very good feeling... a lucky feeling...about Snaggle Tooth bait station number one. *W*

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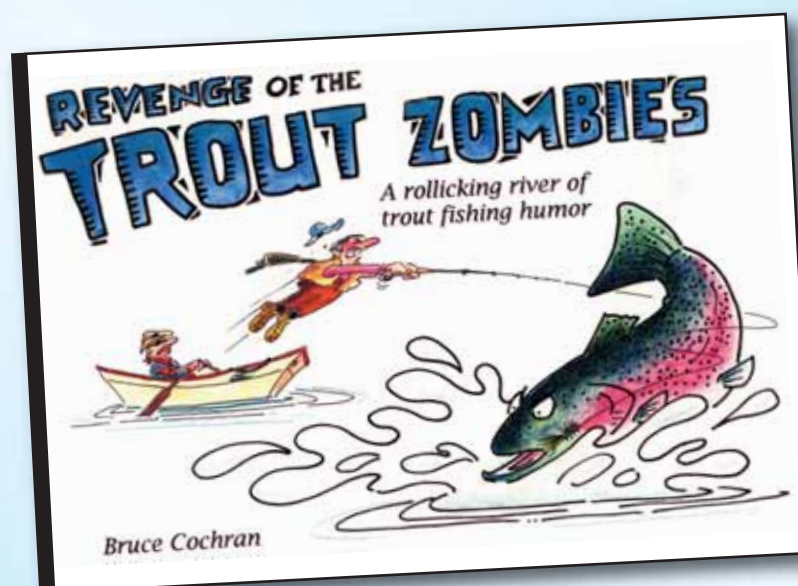
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Bleat, Rattle & Grunt

A three-step approach to calling rutting bucks

By Todd Bohm

I first became hooked on using calls for big bucks in October, 1999. After losing a difficult football playoff game with the team I help coach, I headed to the woods to immerse myself in the peacefulness of the woods and to find some solace over the heartbreaking loss. Settling into my treestand that late October afternoon, I waited about twenty minutes for things to quiet down and then grunted softly on a grunt tube. What happened next was something right out of television outdoor shows.

A massive ten-point buck came crashing into the logging road that I was hunting and stopped 20 yards away looking for the buck that had invaded his territory. Steam was coming from the buck's nose and a three-foot piece of pine bough from a recently rubbed tree was caught in his antlers. Catching my breath, I was able to draw and put a well placed arrow right behind his shoulder. The buck sprinted off only to crash 70 yards away. Since that day, I have made deer

calls a critical part of my deer hunting arsenal. Using deer calls isn't a guarantee of shooting more and bigger bucks; but in my opinion, properly used calls give the hunter a huge edge, especially during the rut.

TYPES OF CALLS

From October through the end of the bow season, I never enter the deer woods without three of my favorite calls—a grunt tube, a doe-in-heat bleat-call, and a set of rattling antlers. With countless manufacturers of quality calls on the market, personal preference plays a huge part in selecting what calls to purchase. Personally, I have used the MAD buck growl, a Woods Wise Hot Ma-Mah doe-in-heat bleat-call, and a pair of shed antlers that I use for rattling.

TECHNIQUES

In my experience, I have found that the 'when' and 'where' to use deer calls to be much more important than who makes the call. Doing your home-

work to locate big buck hang-outs is crucial to the success of using calls. Calls are useless if you are hunting in an area that doesn't hold big bucks.

Probably the biggest hurdle a hunter has to overcome is the notion that calling deer is going to make a lot of unnecessary noise and spook deer. When I first began to regularly use deer calls, I struggled with the idea of making a lot of "deer noise" that might spook deer, especially on those days when you know the bucks are moving. My advice to you is...use those calls!

I truly believe that when used properly, deer calls will not spook deer and will pull deer into range that you may not have even seen. When calling deer, I have had more luck in the morning—especially those mornings with a light frost and little wind that have the big bucks on the move searching out does.

Once it becomes light enough to see, I will softly blow on my bleat call. If I have no response after a couple of minutes from this call, I will use my grunt tube and softly blow on the call—letting any bucks within hearing range know that an intruder may be making moves on the estrous doe. Once again, after a few minutes, I will begin using my rattling antlers—starting out softly at first but eventually building in volume to let any bucks in the area know that two intruder bucks are fighting over the doe. This entire sequence from bleat to rattling will only last about two-and-one-half minutes of actual calling. I wait approximately 30 to 45 minutes between calling sessions.

The bucks I have called may act in a variety of ways, from the grand entrance the buck made at the beginning of this article to the other bucks that slipped in silently from behind me, trying to sneak in on the action. Again, my experience has been that stand location is critical in being a successful caller. Using a quiet approach to your stand and paying careful attention to wind direction are crucial for the hunter to have success using calls.

Another tactic I have employed in



Calling bucks can offer archers one of the most exciting shows in the Wisconsin woods. (Dick Ellis)

conjunction with my calling has been the use of a buck decoy. I have been using the Flambeau Boss Buck and think for the money, it is extremely realistic and fairly easy to transport. Again, when using a decoy, location is critical. The decoy must be set up so that bucks can see it. Inside field corners, clearings, or logging roads are all good areas to use your decoy.

SUMMARY

Using deer calls can be an exciting and memorable way to bowhunt for big bucks. Patience and planning are crucial in determining the success for these hunts. Don't give up if your first attempts at calling deer don't produce. Not every day may produce a big buck but when calling works, hold on for the experience and hopefully the buck of a lifetime! *W*

Todd Bohm is a lifetime educator and principal in the D.C. Everest School District. He is an avid fisherman and hunter who guides the waters of Central and Northern Wisconsin specializing in all species of fish including trout. He can be reached through Wisconsin Angling Adventures. Contact Todd at 715.297.7573 or at www.wisconsinanglingadventures.com.



TODD LENSING

OBSERVATIONS FROM A WATERFOWL GUIDE

Factors steering Canvasback regulations

After enjoying a two-bird daily canvasback limit in 2007, the Canvasback season will be closed in 2008.

According to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service:

After a record canvasback population estimate last year, followed by this year's low estimate, Service staff reviewed survey methods, data and analytical procedures, and found nothing unusual. Declines in canvasbacks counted were widespread, occurring in the same areas that experienced the increase last year. Based on the harvest estimate from last year's season, it is clear that harvest alone is not responsible for the drop. Canvasback estimates typically have higher variations than for many other species.

Although it is possible that the large change in population estimate is simply the result of normal sampling variation, the Service has no data to suggest this year's population estimate is not accurate.

Using this estimate and the approved Canvasback Harvest Strategy, the allowable harvest this year did not permit a nationwide canvasback season. There was sufficient allowable harvest to permit the Central Flyway to continue their hunter's choice experiment, and all Flyways recommended they be allowed to do so.

The breeding population estimate (489,000) of canvasbacks this year was 44 percent below last year's estimate (865,000). Pond counts in Canada were also down 39 percent from last year. The estimated harvest in the U.S. last season was 125,000.

Under current conditions, the canvasback harvest strategy predicts an allowable harvest of 24,700. Since allowable harvest is less than the



Todd Lensing clients are guaranteed a hard working guide and an enjoyable day on the Mississippi River. Contrasting this year's season closure, in 2007, canvasback hunting was very good with a two bird daily limit. (Photo by Todd Lensing)

predicted harvest under a restrictive duck season (61,000), the canvasback harvest strategy calls for a closed season.

Don't forget, the breeding population count is not the same as the overall population count. If the breeding population is down, it doesn't necessarily mean the overall population is down, only that there weren't as many breeding pairs this year.

One other thought to keep in mind is that canvasbacks, unlike most other duck species, are not opportunistic, meaning they return to the same areas they were born and raised, regardless of conditions. Simply put, dry conditions equal less nesting. With that said, a full season and a two

per day limit in 2007 had very little, if any at all, to do with this year's breeding population. *W*

Editor's Note: the author stresses that he is not a waterfowl biologist. Although he uses direct quotes from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, much of this story stems from his personal observations on the Mississippi River every day of the Wisconsin waterfowl season as a veteran Wisconsin guide.

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

Tip of the month

Have you ever wondered why ducks always seem to want to land with the coots or why you can buy coot decoys from almost any major decoy company these days? Is the black bird with red eyes and green feet really what attracts ducks? In my opinion, I think not. To me, ducks are attracted to coots because of the motion. Coots are always on the go, and are aggressive feeders making a lot of commotion in the water. So if you are having trouble competing with these strange looking birds, try adding more motion to your decoy spread. My personal favorite is the old-fashioned jerk cord. The simplicity of this system allows you to control how much and when you put motion in your spread. So before you get rid of all your mallard blocks and switch over to coot decoys on those frustrating days when the ducks only want to land with the coots, think about why this is.

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Passing the Baton

Mourning dove season perfect for student hunters



Nathan Duwe, 5, holds up a mourning dove during a recent hunt with his dad. (Photo by Dave Duwe)

By Dave Duwe

With the birth of my son, Nathan, almost six years ago, I thought my hunting days were going to be limited. Thank goodness for the mourning dove. I have been hunting

the dove with my son since he could walk. All I needed was a couple of lawn chairs, a shotgun and shells, and a sippy cup full of juice.

Nathan and I do what is called pass shooting. The birds fly by, and you shoot at them. The birds are

deceptively fast and easily missed. I hunt areas with a good source of food and water, such as old gravel pits, winter wheat fields or public hunting grounds with a lot of open prairies. Make sure you have permission to hunt any private areas.

Some people may frown upon taking such a young person hunting, but I can assure you that safety comes first. My son has learned that guns are not toys and that his role in these hunting trips is strictly to help watch for the birds.

I like to use decoys. Mourning doves seem to like to be with their buddies. They are very easily drawn into the decoys. I will use a Remington 870 pump with a modified choke. I prefer using #8 shotgun shells, but 7 ½ will also work. The larger the number, the smaller the shot in the shell, which correlates to more lead in the pattern. These are your basic trap loads.

In Wisconsin, the mourning dove season was established in the fall of 2000 after many hearings and debates. The dove is one of the most abundant and widely distributed birds in Wisconsin. Data from the US Fish and Wildlife service indicate that four to five million doves migrate from Wisconsin each fall. Doves are

very prolific birds; each pair produces multiple broods a year. Their habitat needs are very diverse. They need trees for nesting and roosting, a food source and a water source. Other than that, they aren't too particular about where they go. Almost 100 percent of their diet is comprised of weed seeds and grains. I prefer hunting them near winter wheat fields that are close to a shallow pond.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources estimates that 20,000 to 30,000 people may choose to hunt doves with an average harvest of five doves per hunter. The harvest prediction is 100,000 to 150,000 birds from the fall population. The season this year will run from September 1 through October 30, although it may be extended, so make sure you check your local regulations.

Some information for this article was provided by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

WDNR

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 or www.fishdelavanlake.com.

ELLIS VELVET, from page 3

when I slowed the truck and made a parking place off the narrow county highway out of the path of traffic, I knew he was gone.

The truck was at a precarious angle leaning to the ditch and vehicles slowed to see why this nut would be climbing up on his truck with a camera swinging from his neck. Too much hot sun perhaps? One slightly inconvenienced passer-by, in fact, labeled me just that in friendly greeting, with a colorful adjective thrown in at no extra charge. This is normal behavior to a Wisconsin outdoorsman, though, and I guessed that the large majority of people passing this spot had no clue a deer was here at all.

Growing disappointment from futilely scanning the pockets of scrub brush disappeared when impressive velvet antlers popped above the bush-tops. The animal had no doubt jerked up

from feeding in the instinctive manner of all whitetails' continuous scrutiny for danger. Seconds later, the head with eyes literally masked like a bandit by the thick brush materialized in a hole of vegetation. He had moved, but not far. He was big, as big as I had hoped in my "what-if" scrutiny of every deer shrouded in summer or fall cover off of every Wisconsin highway traveled.

He was on me immediately and our eyes locked at 60 or 70 yards. A big, old buck has lived to remember close encounters with the human predator and learned to survive because of it. The telephoto found him, and when the red square I had placed on his head like crosshairs in fall signaled "lock-on", I squeezed a first photo, and breathed a sigh of relief.

A love of hunting and fishing and writing is why I first stepped into this. But as the years slip by, a reporter would

rather capture the perfect photo than secure a carcass tag. It is why I will wait on my belly on the ice with camera ready, waiting for a friend to set the hook with the strike and capture a bending rod rather than feel the weight of the fish myself. It is also why the first special photo tucked away safely in the camera does indeed mean relief.

We've all watched a photographer snap off an automatic series of continuous photos as his cover girl poses. My cover boy wasn't posing, and his very demeanor told me a big buck becomes reeducated very quickly to new danger. Without taking his eyes from me, he would give me less than 30 seconds of his time to take 16 photos. Several were unobstructed shots of the headgear and much of his body. A final shot was only antler above brush as he hurried off to places with no hint of this danger.

Unlike many hunters, I don't know

when I approach a trophy buck felled by a rifle round just how many points he has. Counting points is a luxury and measuring the spread is part of my ritual after the tag is secured. I was similarly intrigued after these "shots" with what I would find at home with photos transferred from camera to computer.

He's an 11-point full velvet buck, with two months of antler growth yet to determine what he will look like today. He has long brow-tines with one brow tine split, and an estimated 20-inch spread.

The hunt is here. Actually, the hunt began June 24th. I "got" my buck. He's a cover boy. WDNR

Read more Dick Ellis columns at the website www.onwisconsinoutdoor.com. Dick's syndicated column is posted weekly.

S. WILKERSON

SURPLUS FIREARMS

Gun shows . . . the good, the bad, the ugly

Odd, here I am in the metropolitan Milwaukee area on a Saturday afternoon surrounded by thousands of guns, thousands more rounds of ammunition, and lots of people dressed in camouflage, and yet, I don't feel threatened or scared. You know, scared like I might feel towards closing time at Summerfest, surrounded by beer-fueled punks who know they have nothing to fear from lethargic security guards and disinterested police officers.

How can this be? How can there be so many guns in one place, some of the dreaded evil "assault rifle" variety, and no one is succumbing to their siren call of mayhem? Not a shot has been fired. Stranger still, I don't see hordes of gangbangers exchanging drug money with racist rednecks for semiautomatic rifles with military characteristics to be used to expand their crack cocaine empires.

Could Stuart Carlson and the editorial board of the Journal-Sentinel be wrong? Are there really people who are interested in buying and selling guns who aren't merchants of death?

Surprise! It's true. Anyone who wants to take the time can easily discover through a Google search of FBI statistics that the vast majority of gun-owners and sellers are law-abiding citizens. I have yet to see any documentation from credible sources

that indicates that Wisconsin gun shows are a major - or minor - source of firearms by criminals. And no, I don't consider Mayor Tom Barret a credible expert on firearms, or anything else for that matter.

While there is no doubt that gun shows don't promote criminal activity, they sure do harbor their share of fibbers and outright liars. Many of these guys make car salesman look honest in comparison.

Take the guy at today's show trying to pawn off a CETME G3 for \$1,000 as an original. It was, in fact, one of the miserably assembled parts guns sold a few years ago for several hundred dollars. Built on out-of-spec U.S. made receivers, these guns frequently don't fire, and when they do, they often don't eject spent shells. This seller was the same clown that last year was shilling a Frankenstein conglomeration of used AK-74 parts as original East German. The proof? He pointed to its Hesse 74 marked receiver. Sure, Hesse is a German sounding name, but the receiver was made by Hesse Firearms of Minnesota, and not very well, either.

I couldn't tell you how many French Foreign Legion MAS 36s I've seen or SS 98Ks. Hint. There's virtually no way of telling, but there are a lot of sellers advertising them as such. Buy the gun, not the story.

No M1 Garand with its barrel

stamped "Blue Sky Imports" came back with Grandpa from Normandy. Similarly, an AK-47 marked MAK 90 is not a pre-ban worth \$1,000. If it has a pistol grip, muzzle brake and a bayonet lug without the prerequisite U.S. parts, it's not only a fraud, but an illegal one, at that. And if it's an M1 carbine among several being sold complete with their CMP certificates and boxes, they're being sold by someone who's a liar and a cheat. When you buy a firearm from the CMP, it's with the understanding that you aren't purchasing it for re-sale purposes and you sign a contract to that effect.

There are some gun sellers that are a wealth of knowledge. I learned quite a bit about the care and feeding of Garands and carbines from older gentlemen specializing in US firearms and parts. Often times, collectors will rent tables at gun shows just to show off their guns. Nothing is for sale, including the advice. At one recent show, a vendor gave me a little lesson on Nazi-era daggers and, when I told him I was interested in Cold War cutlery, he walked me over to a fellow who had them for sale.

There are also just plain jerks. Not long ago, I was in the process of buying some new-in-the-wrap M1 carbine magazines. I asked the seller if I could unwrap them to make sure they weren't rusted. "No," he said.

Well, then, how about if I buy them, and if, after I unwrap them here at the table and they're rusted, could I exchange them for others? "No," he said. "Well, there's one lost sale, Einstein" I thought, and put them down along with a Bulgarian AK-74 magazine I was also going to buy. I then left, never to return. Based on some weird principal, or knowing the magazines were junk, Goofus lost a \$75 sale. Actually, more than that. Goofus has some desirable stuff, but I now just walk past his table, as does my gun show crony, Toothpick Jim, who watched this exchange.

When it comes to gun shows, in addition to bringing lots of money and a bore light, take along a healthy dose of skepticism. Unless there are documents to prove it, don't believe every story you hear and never let any uncollaborated tale figure into the price. No one knows if Sgt. York used a Model 1917 or a 1903 Springfield while picking off all those German soldiers, so if someone claims he's selling his rifle, tell him to prove it.

The same goes for Grandpa's Garand brought back from the beaches of Normandy. *W*

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

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(Photo by Dick Ellis)

DUANE HARPSTER

THE WISCONSIN CONSERVATION WARDEN

Serving our good customers

"Customers."
That is what many game wardens call those folks that we find in violation of the law, with those that we encounter more than once earning the title of "good customers." I was reminded of this while at a retirement party for an old warden friend a little while back. At the party, one of this warden's customers came up and spoke after dinner, relating that he had been a customer, and that he always felt that "wardens were just part of the sport."

I have had some pretty good customers of my own over the years, and worked with wardens that had professional introductions to those same customers. Dick Abney, who was the Crandon warden, had one customer whom he "shared" with the wardens from Antigo. Between them they caught this fellow many times, and there was never an ugly incident or cross word. When the fellow died in an unfortunate accident, the wardens considered going to pay their respects, but thought better of the idea.

Another customer of Dick's was difficult to catch for quite a while, despite numerous complaints. But after finally capturing him for the first time, Dick caught him numerous times, and so too did the neighboring Florence County warden. One day the fellow was confronted in his truck far back in the boonies on the crest of a hill. The guy got out and turned to the warden. "What am I doing wrong?" he asked. "I didn't get caught for years. Now I get caught all the time."

Probably my best customer, John, was a fellow that I caught half a dozen times over the course of ten years. Like most fish and game violators, he was a likeable guy, but a guy who just didn't let the rules bother him all that much. Each time I caught him it was for deer related violations, except that one time when he killed a bear.

Two other wardens requested that I to go along on the investigation because I knew John and where he lived. That was the only time things got unfriendly. In fact, my compatriots got John pretty fired up, and in the ensuing disagreement John's arm got broken. Despite that, he and I remained on friendly terms.

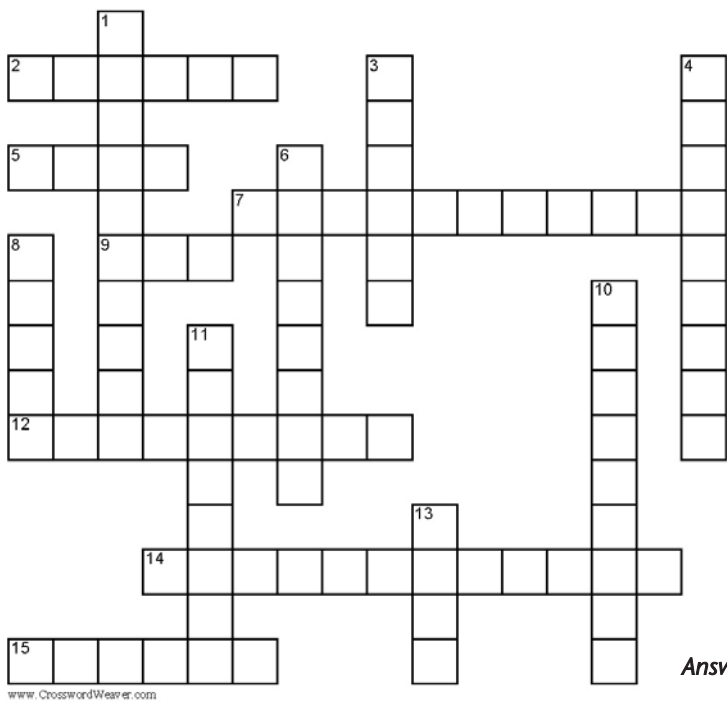
The last two times I captured him, it was for shooting at the decoy from his car on opening day two years in a row. On the second occasion, John smiled and



shook his head. "We gotta stop meeting like this," he said.
Hmmm. Didn't he realize that conservation wardens are just, "part of the sport?" *W*

Duane Harpster is a retired Wisconsin Conservation Warden.

Outdoor Criss Cross



- ACROSS
- 2 "Treat every firearm as if it were _____."
 - 5 Type of open sites.
 - 7 Ray Howell's OWO column (2 words).
 - 9 A type of rod.
 - 12 Gives you a birds-eye view.
 - 14 An eastern state with an elk herd.
 - 15 Shooting end of barrel.
- DOWN
- 1 Used to blend you in.
 - 3 A wild bird hunted in both fall and spring.
 - 4 A brand of 3M insect repellent.
 - 6 The popular ATV from Suzuki.
 - 8 "Safety _____."
 - 10 Wait until the deer turns _____.
 - 11 Maker of the ONIX 400 GPS.
 - 13 Shotgun ammo used for deer.

Answers on page 30

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PHOTO PAGE

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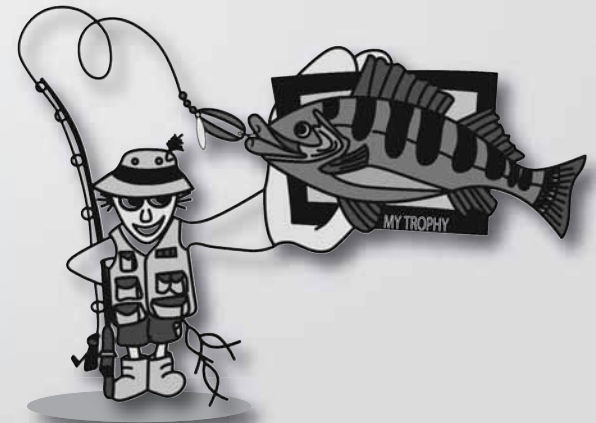
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KEVIN MICHALOWSKI

DOG TALK*Recovering hit birds*

Some pheasants hit the ground running. I've seen ducks that have dropped into the cattails only to waddle around the stalks doing their best to avoid hunters and dogs alike.

In each case, a good dog makes quick work of wounded birds on the loose. But to be effective, the dog must be trained to follow a scent path. Luckily, teaching a dog to ground track by scent is not all that difficult. All you need is some sort of scent, a tennis ball and a strong arm. Come to think of it, you don't even need a strong arm any longer.

The basic idea behind training a dog to track is to lay down a line of scent the dog must follow. There's no easier way to do that than squirting liquid bird scent all over a tennis ball and throwing it so it bounces through medium-length grass. The bouncing ball mimics the scent trail created as animals run and hop. It also leaves gaps in the trail here and there, forcing the dog to do a bit of searching to pick up the next hot spot. And by using a ball, there's no need to walk along dragging a canvas dummy on a string. The scent-soaked ball creates a new trail every time you throw it ... meaning you don't contaminate the trail with your scent and you're not required to put the dog away each time in order to keep him from seeing where you dropped the dummy when you create the trail.

But training a dog to track is not just as simple as walking out in the yard and throwing a scent-soaked tennis ball. There are a few nuances



A good dog makes sure you recover more game. Here the author, with his lab Echo, shows the results of a good weekend hunt where Echo hauled in birds for six hunters on the South Dakota prairie.

"The basic idea behind training a dog to track is to lay down a line of scent the dog must follow ..."

that will help you guide the dog through the training. Remember, helping the dog to succeed is the key to good training.

The first nuance is simple: the ball has to roll through the grass. This may sound obvious, but I've seen lots of people throwing a long lob out into the field and sending the dog after it. That's not tracking. That's just a

marked retrieve. To make the training session one where tracking is involved, you need to have the ball roll through several yards of grass that is tall enough to very nearly conceal the ball, but short enough to allow it to bounce and roll through. Then you have to throw it hard enough to move through the grass. A strong arm would be beneficial, but as I said above, it isn't

mandatory. The Chuck-It tennis ball thrower takes care of that for you.

The Chuck-It, available at most pet stores, works and looks a lot like one of those clay target throwers. It's a long plastic wand with perfectly sized cup on the end. The cup holds the ball until you whip it forward. It's no problem to throw the ball 150 feet or more. With a little practice, you'll have the ball bouncing through the grass in no time.

Once you can throw the ball effectively, put your dog at heel and douse the ball with scent. Throw it for effect, so it bounces nicely through the grass. Keep the dog sitting at your side. The dog will watch the ball rolling away. After the ball stops, count to 10 before sending the dog.

As you progress through the training, you'll need to introduce more distractions. To do so, simply make the dog follow you around at heel before sending him to make the retrieve. Your goal is to be able to send the dog in the general direction of the ball, have the dog cross the trail and follow it to the ball.

Most dogs learn the basics in a few training sessions. But the more you practice, the better your dog will be at tracking and finding wounded game birds. *W*

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



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On Wisconsin Outdoors Board of Directors

*Dear Hunter Daily,
I'm 12 years old and a first-time hunter. I've been reading the Mike Foss bear diaries in OWO and I'm a little nervous about something. Can Wisconsin bears really weigh 500 pounds? Are they dangerous? My family walks to their deer stands in the dark and I don't want to act scared.*

—Kevin Merriweather, Hurley



Hunter Daily

Dear Kevin,

Think of it this way...what are the odds of that snapping branch in the pre-dawn black when you can't even see your hand in front of your face actually being a bear? And a 500-pound bear at that. More often than not it's just a few wolves. Sure bears reach 500, 600, maybe 700 pounds, which means they could probably fit a whole arm or even a human head right in their mouth, but the sensible question is...are they carnivores? Usually not. Unless something is young and tender and slow...like a fawn or a...well, never mind. And sure they're fast as the dickens, can climb trees and have great nocturnal eyesight. By the way did you see the size of that tooth in the Foss column? Just remember Kev my boy, there's 600,000 Wisconsin hunters out there. Why would YOU be the one eaten? Anyway, if he is hungry hopefully he'll pick out a nice, chunky Illinois flatlander. Well, have a nice hunt. I hope this helped.

—Hunter Daily



Conibear Smith

*Dear Conibear Smith,
I just read the DNR recommendations on what to do if a wolf is attacking your dog. If it's on private land you can shoot the wolf. If it's on public land you can yell and scream and wave your arms. Any other advice you can give as an experienced trapper?*

—Larry Mondello, Montello

Dear Larry,

Do you know Beaver Cleaver? Anyway, when you wave your arms, make sure there's an iron skillet or maybe a maul on the end of those arms. Then we'll see who yells and screams.

—Conibear Smith

*Dear Rex Rodsalotta,
I can't fish. I'm depressed. Brett Favre left us for the Jets. What can I do?*

—Freddy Walsh, Lancaster



Rex Rodsalotta

Dear Freddy,

Here's what we do. We pull for Favre and the Jets. We pull for Aaron Rogers and the Pack. Remember now, old Brett stunk for a couple years before becoming the Great One so let's cut old Aaron some slack for at least two years. We don't believe any so called expert, pencil-necked beat writers who haven't named a story source in 10 years (according to one OWO scout who will remain unnamed). And we fish ... except from noon to 3:00 on Sunday afternoons.

—Rex Rodsalotta

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Jack from Merrill Wisconsin.

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Additional Submissions



Andrew, age 4, with a crappie caught on the Manitowish Chain in Vilas County.



Dominic, age 10, caught this king salmon on Lake Michigan.



Tony, age 12, caught this bass on Walsh Lake.



Lauren, with dad John Kubiak and a Rock Bass taken from Manitowish Chain in Vilas County.

Kuehl Kids PHOTOS



Submit your photo of a kid in the outdoors!
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Contact artist Johnathan Kuehl directly at kuehlarts@gmail.com or call (612) 812-9600.

TERRILL A. KNAACK

SACRED GROUND*Nature and reality*

The Madison Audubon Society recently held an "Audubon Adventure Day" at Faville Grove Sanctuary in Jefferson County, entitled "Prairies in Bloom." Bird watching, the lifecycle of butterflies, a look at the world of snakes, turtles, and salamanders, were all part of the day. People learned about prairies and wetlands as plant and animal communities. These ecosystems are a look at the unity of nature itself.

As the late afternoon breeze picked up, the nearly oppressive heat of the day waned, and the compass plants and other silphiums seemed to wave at the sun as they followed its path through the sky. We caught flashes of yellow from a hooded warbler and a meadowlark. As the prairie moved with the breeze, it was more than just alive. The impressions of light, color, sound, and smell called us to explore.

What would bring children, their parents, and grandparents out on a hot July day to experience prairies and wetlands, those parts of our landscape that were nearly erased from Wisconsin over the last century?

Prairies, woods and wetlands invite our attention. They have to be experienced to be understood, not read about, not watched on TV, or browsed on a monitor. Many who have experienced them recognize our prairie remnants, undrained wetlands, and restorations as some of the most beautiful and inspiring places in Wisconsin. These aspects of nature are not a distant reality. They are our reality, shaped by forces that across eons shaped our bodies, and the

remarkable phenomenon of human intelligence itself.

When we learn about the plants and trees indigenous to an area, we see how they are one with the soils, geology, and climate of the region. We discover a sense of place and that we too are part of that place. Rather than being a population that is basically not native to anywhere, we might find a feeling of belonging, by becoming aware of plant and animal communities that are an extension of our own communities. Protecting our few intact natural areas, and the restoration of the vast acreage of biologically degraded lands and waters in Wisconsin, perhaps can come about through this awareness and sense of belonging.

For ourselves, as well as our youth, learning about nature enhances our awareness of what it means to be human, and that the order and beauty of natural systems are fragile. A sense of responsibility can possibly grow from these insights. The man-induced disintegration of the natural world by

means of climate change, the spread of invasive species, and pollution, are not degrading the existence of some "other world." They are degrading the potential of our own children, the quality of life for millions, as well as our own health.

There are many ways we can expose our children to nature, including hunting, fishing, and hiking. In addition, try walking through an old-growth woodland this fall, canoeing one of Wisconsin's incredible

wild rivers, or listening to the wind through the prairie grasses. Get away from the din of the traffic and listen to the distant calls of grassland and woodland birds. Around every bend, there is life, beauty, and order. *W*

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



"September Morning - Faville Grove" by Terrill Knaack.



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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.

TRAIL'S END #307 TROPHY LEAFS

For \$12 a 12-pack, these scent dispensers from Wildlife Research Center are manufactured by embedding scent right into the plastic. They are easy-to-attach and very convenient (no mess). They're available in several cover scents or deer attractants, and are packaged in an airtight carrying case.



Trail's End #307 scent is one of Wildlife's first and most popular scents—they started production over 20 years ago, and it remains to be one of their best selling lures. At first glance, Trophy Leafs seems "gimmicky," but I was surprised how powerful these things are. And the plastic case also does a good job of recharging them for the next day.

Wildlife.com
(800) 537-8658

SHOOT-N-C BULL'S-EYE TARGETS

For \$7 per 15-pack of three-inch bull's-eye targets, Shoot-N-C self-adhesive targets create a large, bright yellow ring around every bullet hole to quickly identify hits on the target. Each target comes with shot cover-up stickers for continued use. Three-inch, five-and-one-half inch and eight-inch multi-target packs are available.

OK you're probably thinking, "Shoot-N-C targets have been around



forever...tell me something I don't know!" Well, the new-and-improved 2008 version features a fluorescent orange aiming center...did you know that? But besides the new orange dot, I like using these targets because I can see immediately where I shot, even without a spotting scope.

Birchwoodcasey.com
(800) 328-6156

CUSTOMIZED ONLINE TOPO MAPS

For \$9.95-44.95 (depending on options), MyTopo.com is an Internet-based, custom-printed mapping service that provides personalized maps of your hunting area, anywhere in the United States and Canada. The service allows you to choose from a variety of scales, navigational grids, sizes, paper and finishing options.



When trying to figure out what gift to give the farmers who let me hunt on their private land, I thought of the idea of giving them a customized map and aerial photo of their property. They don't hunt, but they greatly appreciated and loved having such a durable, high-quality and detailed map showing just their land.

MyTopo.com
(877) 587-9004

OUTDOOR EDGE SWINGBLADE

For \$76, this knife changes from a swinging drop-point skinner into a long, big-game gut hook at the push of a button. The knife features a rubberized, non-slip Kraton handle, a hand-finished AUS-8 stainless-steel blade, and also comes with a nylon belt sheath.



This is a well-made knife. I like the solid two-blade design and non-slip handle. When field dressing a deer, the long gut hook with the rounded tip allows me to reach into the chest cavity with both hands and cut out the wind pipe, without worry of stabbing myself (again).

Outdooredge.com
(800) 447-3343

BLAKEMORE ROCK'N RUNNER

For \$8, this jig is modeled after Blakemore's original Road Runner spinner jig, but features a "wobble blade" which produces more flash and vibration. It also has a bleeding-bait red hook and is available in several colors.



Lately, it seems "wobble" or "chatter" blades are a popular feature found on the front of lures. This trend is due to the fact that they work great on bass and other aggressive predatory fish. Plus, the vibrating blade helps block the hook from snagging grass and weeds.

Blakemorelure.com
(334) 567-2011

BAITMATE MAX GAMEFISH SPRAY

For \$3, Gamefish Max fish attractant comes in a convenient PocketPak spray bottle, making it easy to apply to both live bait and artificial lures. Its formula includes pheromones, scale fleck (to enhance lure visibility), natural fish-scented oils, and anise oil to cover human odors—all of which helps trigger fish to bite.



I like to include products from companies headquartered in Wisconsin. This company is out of Jackson, WI. The pen-style spray bottle is a nice touch; it's convenient to slip into your pocket, then just pop off the cap and spray it on your bait. *W*

Fishloveit.com
(800) 537-8658

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

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