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On Wisconsin *Outdoors*

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John Ellis

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JERRY KIESOW

FLY FISHING IN WISCONSIN

Tying your own tackle: nymphs

I was standing thigh-deep in the Milwaukee River about 50 feet in front of the Thiensville dam. Every once in a while a steelhead or rainbow trout, up from Lake Michigan on a mission to propagate its kind, would attempt to clear the fast flowing barrier. I wanted one of those chrome rockets on the end of my tippet.

I had been casting a variety of standard patterns: Woolly Buggers, egg-sucking leaches and eggs. Nothing interested them. I retrieved my fly again and opened one of my fly boxes. Maybe they were actually hungry. I selected a mid-sized black nymph.

Those of you who are familiar with the tales about which I've written during the years know I love to fly fish the tributaries of Lake Michigan in spring and fall for trout and salmon. I have several fly boxes specifically designated for those species. But, in addition to the specialized patterns, I always carry nymphs—especially in spring when the steelhead are in the rivers.

Unlike salmon, steelhead feed while on their spawning run, and they do not die after they spawn. Nymphs, for them, are a natural food to be eaten while on their journey.

Fly fishers know that nymphs are standard fair for all trout, from brookies to lake-run browns. What some don't realize is that these critters are also important ingredients to the diet warm-water species such as panfish and bass. Therefore, it's important for you, as a fly crafter, to know and understand how to create frauds for all of these fish.

NYMPHS, DEFINED

There are a multitude of recipes for nymphs, and each uses a wide variety of materials. Rather than give my students several patterns to tie, I have created a pattern that uses the most common ingredients and techniques required to tie most nymphs, so they become aware of the different materials and techniques. I call it, "The no-name nymph."

Hook: No. 10-20 nymph hook. (In the photos I'm using a No. 10 Mustad S80-3906)

Thread: Pre-waxed black. (8/0 or 6/0 depending on the hook size. A variety of colors are used.)

Tail: Pheasant tail. (Bits and hackle fibers, sometimes hair, might be called for in specific recipes.)

Weight: Optional. (Can be a strip of lead wire or a beadhead.)

Abdomen: Tan or light brown dubbing. (I use synthetic dubbing. You'll find there are countless materials used for dubbing.)

Back: Pheasant tail—optional. (Many recipes do not have backs.)

Rib: Copper wire. (Might be tinsel, Flashabou or a

variety of other colors of wire.)

Thorax: Peacock herl. (Often this is another dubbing material/color, sometimes ostrich herl, occasionally chenille.)

Legs: Mallard flank. (Hackle fibers, strands of hair or sometimes rubber legs.)

Wing case: Grouse tail. (Pheasant tail, and turkey or goose wing sections are common.)

(Fig. 1) Start by wrapping the hook shank with thread, beginning two eye widths back from the eye and stopping at the bend. Take four to six pheasant tail fibers and secure. Bend the excess fibers back for use as the back later. If you want to weight the fly, now's the time to do that. Lay a strip of medium lead over the top of the shank and tie it in, finishing the wrap back to where you started.



(Fig. 2) Tie in a strip of fine copper wire for future use. Apply dubbing material to your thread and dub the abdomen from the tail forward, covering $\frac{3}{4}$ of the hook shank. Tie off and remove excess material. Pick the dubbing with your bodkin, so the abdomen looks fuzzy. (I will break in here to address dubbing. If you have never dubbed before, I strongly suggest you begin with synthetic material, which I use often. It adheres to your thread much easier than the natural materials do. To get the dubbing on your thread, take a very small amount of the material, stretch it out and twist it onto your pre-waxed thread. Continue to twist the material, always in the same direction, as you wrap it around the hook. It takes a bit of practice to master this technique.)

(Fig. 3) Bring the pheasant fibers over the top of the abdomen to form the back, keeping them close together and tight. Tie off and



Continued on page 9



In 2009, Dick Ellis works the Pestigo River for smallmouth bass with a fly rod ...

THANKS PROLINE

You know what kind of outdoor equipment you like. Fabulous companies wait to take care of all of your field needs, and we don't tell you what to buy. But, if you like picking up On Wisconsin Outdoors at no cost at 600 locations throughout Wisconsin you can thank our regular advertisers (like Suzuki, Dave's Turf & Marine, Kolpin PowerSports, Mathews, Schrade Knives and all of our partners on Explore Wisconsin).

Proline Boots has supported OWO since the beginning. I bought my hip waders from Proline and have a new pair of field boots on order. It's my own "thank you." I will tell you that for a guy who works and plays in the field every week, Proline Boots are excellent boots, and this message didn't cost them a dime.



... waits for woodies on a Kettle Moraine creek.



... and crosses a northern Wisconsin river in a search of a backcountry buck.

So if you do like OWO, before you buy your boots or waders, look at ProLine. I'm putting my own money where my mouth is—and where my feet step—that you'll like what you feel.

See you in the field. I'm the guy still warm and dry in the snow and streams.

—Dick Ellis

LUKE HARTLE

WAITING ON WISCONSIN

The tag dance of a bear hunter



For the majority of Wisconsin whitetail hunters—and Minnesota whitetail hunters, too—autumn deer hunting is a given. It's never a matter of if, but just a matter of when. We buy our over-the-counter tags, check the season dates and head afield as soon as the law allows.

But for bear hunters, life doesn't work this way. For a Wisconsin bear hunter, a "long wait" is measured by years rather than hours. And in Minnesota, although the odds of an annual bear hunt are far better, it's still a long way from guarantee.

I simply can't wait that long, leaving to chance that my "tag dance" around the mailbox will serenade the

"He's so big I have to shoot him for fear of losing my life."

Two years ago I had the privilege of hunting black bears with Rick and Colleen Liske, owners of Agassiz-Waterhen River Lodge and Outfitters. Then I went back last year. And I'll be there again this year. The bear hunting is that good.

Boasting 100 percent opportunity, and a kill rate that includes more than 30 percent color-phase bears, it's going to take some incredibly sweet talking to get me to hunt bears anywhere else. Plus, I've seen more 30-inch walleyes get caught by hunters after they fill their bear tag at Agassiz Outfitters than I've witnessed



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bear gods, tempting them to deliver a tag that defies the odds of preference-point accumulation.


MAKING IT HAPPEN

Thankfully, attaining a Passport is an over-the-counter venture, and Canada is extremely close—a place where the phrase, "luck of the draw," doesn't exist.

So while I could be sitting on my hands this spring, waiting on preference points that likely won't be cashed until the end of this decade, I'll be sitting in a bear stand in Manitoba, waiting for Mr. Eight-Footer, or Mr. Cinnamon, or Mr.

anywhere else.

So, come mid-May, when I'm praying to draw my Minnesota bear tag, I'll be sending those prayers from an Agassiz bear stand. I hope to see you there.

For more information about Agassiz-Waterhen River Lodge and Outfitters, visit: agassizoutfitters.com, or call (888) 468-3394. 

Luke Hartle is OWO Managing Editor. He hails from Minnesota but lived and attended school in Wisconsin and returns annually to hunt and fish.

JIM TOSTRUD

IN WISCONSIN'S WHITETAIL WOODS

Prayers from the Hellhole

About 6 years ago I met a farmer who was looking for someone to lease his property, and I was looking for a farm I could really get to know, with the potential of taking a big buck. From the first day I knew I'd found a good friend and a great farm on which to hunt.

After walking the land with the farmer, Tony, he invited us to take an evening stand and just try it out before we made up our minds about leasing the farm.

My first night on stand I had an unbelievable encounter with a beautiful 10-point buck that put on a show that will be etched in my mind forever. The great thing is that I got the whole thing on film. Due to the fact that the farm is located in an earn-a-buck area, I had to let this gorgeous buck walk right under my stand and torment me for more than 20 minutes.

When I got back to the house, I told my hunting buddies, "We are taking this lease," and that I had a new quest to find this 10-point I saw, which I nicknamed Muzzy. I hunted that buck all season, and although I had a number of encounters, I never scored.

Then opening weekend of gun season rolled around. During the first drive I pushed through a thick pocket and a shot rang out, then I heard Tony shouting my name. I responded, and all I heard was, "Muzzy is dead!"

As I walked out of the woods toward the downed deer, I had mixed emotions. But given that Tony was the one who had taken Muzzy, I was okay with it.

During the past few years we've had our ups and downs on the farm. I've had way too many close encounters with some trophy bucks, and more times than I want to tell you, earn-a-buck has killed many chances for me to pull the trigger on a big buck, so I often am forced to roll the video camera and just watch.

I love filming my outdoor experiences, but I would think sooner or later things would go my way. Over the years my hunting partners have taken some big bucks, in fact, a number of bucks I have filmed. I made Tony and myself a promise: When I took a buck on Tony's farm, he would be impressed when we came to the end of the blood trail.

ROLLIN' ON

With each year came more footage, and more missed opportunities. It was like I was jinxed. As the archery season

drew closer, I found myself very busy guiding, filming and editing my television show and working on my art business. I really enjoy shooting my bow and tried to shoot as much as I could before the season started.

Then it happened, the news that changed everything. I come from a very close family, family means everything, and my older sister, Barb, was going to have to undergo some very

After Barb's second brain surgery—which went well—both my mom and my wife, Denise, came to me and told me they wanted me to go hunting. They both knew how special time in the woods is to me. Even though I was reluctant, it wasn't hard to talk me into going.

As I drove, the phone rang; it was my brother and hunting partner, Mike. He informed me that our buddy,

As we left the barn, Tony stopped me and said, "J.T., remember there's no earn-a-buck rule this year, so I don't want to hear any excuses."

On my way to the other side of the farm the next morning, I saw a very big 10-pointer in my headlights, which got me fired up. I arrived at my stand and it was like seeing an old friend. I climbed up, sat down and smiled. I was sitting in the woods on Halloween morning waiting for my own trick or treat.

As the sun came up, I heard the resident turkeys calling and a tom even sounded off with a gobble. I smiled and knew I was where I was supposed to be. Then I saw a doe appear from out of nowhere with a beautiful 2-year-old 8-point hot on her trail. This, of course, got me all fired up again.

As I filmed the courtship, I was having fun. When the pair disappeared in the brush, I was already excited to see what I got on film. Then I heard a twig snap behind me; I turned to catch another 8-pointer. I fired up the camera and got about 30 seconds of film of him passing through. My day was already made!

TRICK ...

Things slowed down and, as I sat there, my mind was filled with all the people that mean a lot to me that were going through so many difficulties. I lowered my head and prayed for my friends and family—these were selfless prayers.

With hopes that the Lord was listening, my prayers were interrupted with a snap of a twig right under my stand. I opened my eyes to see a very unique 2-year-old 11-pointer. I don't know how he got there, but he was just there. As I looked him over, even though he was a cool looking buck, he wasn't a shooter.

As he walked out from under me, I decided to see if I could get away with drawing my bow and playing catch and release. I grabbed my bow as he walked away from me. I was waiting for him to turn broadside so I could draw, and when he got about 10 yards away, he stopped and looked right at me.

Just then I heard something across the creek behind me. I turned and looked over my shoulder just to see a big rack coming my way. I knew without a doubt the buck was a

Continued on page 23



Although it took more than 6 years, the author finally harvested a mature whitetail from the farm where he was forced to watch his friends and family harvest big deer year after year.



They say good things often come in threes, but harvesting only two mature whitetails within one calendar year is nothing to complain about.

"I made Tony and myself a promise: When I took a buck on Tony's farm, he would be impressed when we came to the end of the blood trail."

serious brain surgeries. Hunting would have to wait.

The first surgery was touch and go; I found myself in prayer everyday. Then I found out that my good friend and hunting buddy, Donny, was very sick and was facing his own struggles in life and was not going to be able to hunt with us this year. I quickly found my list of prayers getting longer.

Tommy, had shot a big 10-point and told Mike that the deer movement was heating up. This really excited me; I couldn't get there fast enough.

When I arrived, the barn meeting was already underway. I was disappointed that Tommy's buck had slipped through his fingers and just vanished. We agreed to look more after the next morning's hunt.

JOEL "DOC" KUNZ

ON WISCONSIN RIVERS

The shocking truth

Each spring crews from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR), headed up by Fisheries Biologists Ron Bruch and Kendal Kamke, work the spawning grounds of the Wolf River tagging walleyes. It's work that's important in the management of the resource and has been going on for a couple of decades.

Fish are measured and tagged, then released to resume their spring ritual. Later, many of those fish are caught by anglers and information is returned to the DNR. Others are recaptured during subsequent shocking efforts where they are once again measured and released. This information helps the DNR understand growth rates, year class and population density over a long period of time. Now this may not seem like astounding news, but there's a part to this story that should be told: the amount of volunteer time, effort and donations needed to perform this yearly ritual.

Tagging walleyes is an expensive proposition. Kamke informed me that he bought 15,000 tags to use in 2010 totaling \$8,100. There's also the need for truck and boat gas, maintenance costs and general supplies such as forms. Add salary costs for the DNR employees who operate the three Winnebago unit shocking boats and you have what adds-up to a pretty penny.

But none of it could go on unless it was for the volunteer efforts and donations made from individuals and groups such as Walleyes For Tomorrow. It's these people and organizations who provide funding for the boats, motors, generators and other equipment necessary to operate the shocking boats.

But there's more needed than money and donated boats. It would be impossible to perform the act of shocking, catching, measuring and tagging the walleyes without the manpower provided by the many volunteers who work each spring.

Crews of two or three people help net fish in a choreographed effort,

desperately trying not to smack each other in the head with the back-end of a 16-foot long net pole. It's hard work but an amazing amount of fun for any fisherman. It's exhilarating being perched on the front of the large flat-bottom boat, watching as walleyes appear before your eyes from the flooded grass. Getting as many walleye as possible safely into the collection tank is important, so concentration and diligent effort is expected.

A VIEW FROM THE BOW

Meeting at the launch, it's a great feeling to see the big green "Boom Shocker" show up. Strapping on a life vest and heading out toward a spawning marsh, you see the envy in the eyes of many anglers. Some shout questions, others just go about their business catching fish.

After entering the marsh, shocking booms are put in their holders and spread out in front of the boat. The holding tank is filled with water and the generator is started. The netting crew gets ready on the bow where they must stand on rubber mats, or electrical current is not properly directed into the water. Now ready, the boat proceeds slowly through the flooded marshes and wooded areas where there is ample depth, fresh current and grass.

You see an amazing number of walleyes at times. While most of the fish escape the paralyzing effects of the amperage being applied to the water from the dangling electrodes, many are shocked enough to be netted. They are stunned for just a few seconds, so getting them in to the net as quickly as possible is important.

It's also important to capture as many as possible. Every fish tagged gives the DNR additional chances to interact with anglers. That, in the long run, helps them manage the fishery which helps provide us a vast resource of walleye fishing on the system. That resource provides jobs and brings tourism dollars in large amounts and provides countless recreation hours and a Friday-night fish fry for those who use the system. If there is enough

crew and a collection boat available, the shocking boat will transfer the fish and continue to gather more walleyes while the collection boat measures and releases the fish. That speeds up the process and allows for the tagging of a larger number of walleyes.

Crews will rotate, giving netters a chance to take a break, eat lunch and help with or watch the measuring and recording process. If the shocker is the only boat at work that day, they will tie up to a tree, measure the fish, record the information and release them. Some are kept for additional study, such as aging, but only a small number.

The Wolf River and Fox River hatcheries are an important resource to the Winnebago system and valuable assets to the people of Wisconsin. Each year, volunteer crews work with DNR personnel to gather information that has helped make the Winnebago system one of America's top walleye fisheries—a fishery that, according to Kamke, should continue to produce great fishing for decades to come.

That opinion is based on information gathered during last fall's trawling efforts where the second-largest year-class ever showed up. Those fish will show up again this spring as the 10- to 12-inch fish that keep anglers busy between keepers. They will again show up in a few years in the marshes where many of them will be tagged, measured and released to join those who have gone before them. For More Information

To learn more about this great



DNR Fisheries Biologist Kendal Kamke struggles to pose with an armful of healthy, pre-spawn walleyes.

fishery and get a chance to register to join a netting crew with the author, make sure to visit Ice Breaker 5, March 12-14, 2010. It's a free sports show held this year in Fremont to talk about the great fishing in the Wolf River and Winnebago system.

Get fishing tips and techniques from local guides, resort owners, outdoor writers and touring pros. See Kendal Kamke's "State of the Lake" presentation, which discusses all the information gathered during spring and fall shocking and trawling efforts. There will be boats on display, tackle for sale and a full list of seminars. See us at Channel Cats/Fremont Event Center, log onto wolfrivercountry.com, or check-out our Facebook page for more information. 

Joel "Doc" Kunz is a 2005 "Readers Choice" Award winner, member of the Association of Great Lakes Outdoor Writers (AGLOW) and a member of the Wisconsin Outdoor Communicators Association (WOCA). Visit Doc's website at www.wolfrivercountry.com.

**On Wisconsin
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NATALIE BEACOM

HUNTERS HELPING HUNTERS

Accessibility



Mirrored walls aren't just for the dance clubs of Milwaukee anymore. The unique design of a GhostBlind ground blind gives hunters with physical disabilities the freedom to hunt nearly anywhere.

As hunters, we are often keenly aware—even relish—those seemingly inconsequential physical moments in the field. We plod carefully through the sorghum, the damp reeds hitting our legs as we ready to flush a ringneck, or we suspend from a white pine having climbed up in stand for an aerial view of the field.

Even more simply, we are aware of the physical needs of the sport when we trip and are lucky enough to catch ourselves before notifying every animal in the forest of our whereabouts, or curse as we adjust our legs when they've fallen asleep from the knees down. It's easy to take advantage of these moments that require any level of physical agility.

But for some hunters, those physical moments in the field are earned.

Quietly maneuvering a wheelchair down a path to a hunt site, or managing a crossbow with limited upper mobility as that trophy buck appears, are moments no less visceral for people who are disabled, but can offer an additional set of challenges.

Fortunately, physical ability does not preclude outdoor lovers from enjoying our state's natural resources. A whole population of disabled hunters enjoys hunting experiences and is not excluded from Wisconsin hunting opportunities. Physical disability has a very broad spectrum from type and severity to those disabilities that may be temporary or permanent. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) offers

permits for Class A, B and C hunters, and sets guidelines to be inclusive for those with disabilities—from wheelchair-bound to the visually impaired.

NO HUNTER LEFT BEHIND

Spring turkey and autumn deer seasons are popular hunts for disabled hunters, and Wisconsin provides ample opportunities to permit hunters within disabled hunting zones as well as access to public and private land throughout the year. Equally as ample are opportunities to join mentored disabled hunts with the DNR or

"In 2009, more than 6,000 new disabled hunters applied for permits in Wisconsin and, based on the continued number of opportunities and support for disabled hunters, these numbers stand to increase in future years."



guided hunts with local guides.

More and more, companies that outfit hunters with supplies and gear are receptive to the needs of their disabled customers by making adaptations to their products. GhostBlind Industries, Inc., located in Marietta, Ohio, manufactures mirrored ground blinds. They recognized how a simple adaption to their product's engineering would afford wheelchair-bound hunters the

freedom of mobility when drawing their bow.

GhostBlind's Chet Burdette explained that the shoot-through ports between the main panels of the blind's design allows for additional independence and freedom in the field. The GhostBlind products also take into account other factors involving the disabled hunter including, portability, weight and ease of setup.

In 2009, more than 6,000 new disabled hunters applied for permits in Wisconsin and, based on the continued number of opportunities and support for disabled hunters, these numbers stand to increase in future years.

As general awareness of the disabled outdoor enthusiast grows the term "accessibility" is a word that our disabled hunting peers can use equally from wooded forests to parking lots. *W*

Natalie Beacom is a librarian and freelance writer residing in New Berlin and enjoys spending time hunting and fishing throughout Wisconsin. She can be reached at natalie@onwisconsinoutdoors.com.



TOM CARPENTER

SPRING TURKEY PERSPECTIVE

Shooting shortbeards

Sprawled at the edge of a Green County field, my lovely-sounding turkey calls were falling on eager ears. A gaggle of jakes loved what they were hearing, but the big boss bird—a longbeard preoccupied with a couple hens—would head off the upstarts every time they tried to head toward my calls. He wasn't coming, but he sure didn't want the shortbeards to get any action.

Eventually, in the spring turkey woods, a jake will approach your calls. Do you shoot or wait for a gobbler? Let's examine the sometimes controversial but always intriguing topic of shooting jakes during spring turkey hunting seasons.

SETTING YOUR SIGHTS ON A SHORTBEARD

Wisconsin's harvest data shows that annually about 25 percent of the springtime kill consists of jakes, those young gobblers not quite a year old. The percentage of jakes in the harvest used to be higher, when turkey hunting was new in Wisconsin, but hunters have become more selective in waiting for an adult gobbler. Still, with almost 30 years of turkey hunting under their belts, a full quarter of successful Wisconsin hunters bring jakes home.

Actually, the percentage of jakes in the spring harvest is directly related to productivity (hatching success) from the previous spring. The percent of jakes in the harvest will rise after a good hatch and good winter survival, but fall if the hatch is poor and/or winter



For the author, there's no less thrill—or sense of accomplishment—when hunting jakes instead of mature gobblers.

survival is bad.

Some hunters believe that shooting young birds will hurt the local gobbler population. The experts seem to disagree.

"As a biologist, I'm indifferent to shooting jakes," said Ted Benzon, a senior big game biologist with the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks (GFP). "There's nothing wrong with it or right with it. It's a hunter's personal choice. Either way, a male bird is leaving the population."

Wisconsin's Keith Warnke used to manage our state's turkey program. He

told me: "Seventy percent of male turkey mortality in Wisconsin comes at the end of a shotgun barrel. Gobblers have very high survival rates, and a jake is a gobbler. A male turkey is a male turkey. Right now there's not a need to restrict shooting them."

Does shooting a shortbeard remove a 2-year-old, bread-and-butter gobbler from next spring's population? Yes. But consider a few corollaries that are also true.

- The longbeard you're not shooting today is likely to be there next year, too, because gobbler survival is so high.
- Birds (especially jakes) wander. Some disperse for good, some new birds come in. You're not necessarily preserving that jake for yourself next year. That might sound a little selfish, but it brings up another point.
- If production was adequate last spring, there is an excess of jakes on the landscape. Taking one, if the opportunity arises, isn't going to measurably hurt your chances at a longbeard next year.

And don't rationalize letting a jake pass by saying he's an inferior bird. Jakes are wild turkeys with a full year of survival under their belts. No, a jake is not the wary bundle of caution that an old gobbler is. But throw that shortbeard in with a bunch of other jake ears and eyes, let him get thrashed about by

the boss gobbler a couple times, blast a load of copper-plated number fives at him, and you have one hard-to-call bird.

My good friend Kenny Crummett, an excellent turkey hunter from West Virginia, contends that many "hung up" longbeards you can't see are actually gobbling jakes that want to avoid the butt-kicking they might get if a big gobbler is accompanying the amorous hen that is calling. If that jake is so easy, why doesn't he just rush in to your calls?

In the end, shooting a jake—or not—is a personal choice. If you do shoot a jake, don't feel ashamed. The biologists and game managers agree: You're not really killing your or others' chances for a longbeard next year. And the hunting is challenging.

Still, many hunters choose to pass-up jakes. That's fine. If everyone shot jakes, there might be a problem. But don't downplay the accomplishment of someone else who does choose to shoot a jake. It's still a wild and beautiful bird they are proud of.

A lot of us are fence-sitters, holding out for a longbeard but then getting more comfortable with the idea of taking a jake as the season gets old. There's nothing wrong with that, either. Who can argue with a strategy that keeps you hunting longer and having more fun? But experienced fence-sitters know: The only problem is that the jakes will be nowhere to be found when you really need one!

TO TAKE A JAKE

The cranky hens from the start of this story finally led the old gobbler away, leaving the gang of five jakes free to inflict their will on that horny hen calling from the woods. They cautiously approached, and a couple of the birds even gobbled.

At 25 yards, my pounding heart couldn't take it anymore. When one turkey separated from the group, I let him have it. Pulling down my facemask and walking over, I knelt down and admired the beautiful shortbeard for a few minutes and then had an interesting thought: My smile couldn't have been any wider if I was slinging a longbeard over my shoulder. *W*

Native son Tom Carpenter writes about the outdoor world for a variety of national and regional publications.



TOM CARPENTER

BADGER BIRDS*American Robin*

If robins weren't common on most of Wisconsin's landscape, you and I would get more excited when we see

one. But in spring, when winter's last gray snowbank holds on in the shade but the lawn is open and the ground thawed, an American Robin doing her shuffle-stop hunt in the grass is a mighty wonderful sight. Robins are worthy of our admiration and respect in many ways, so step back and take note in spring, summer and fall.

Look for the familiar "red breast" which is actually its own unique shade of orange, a yellow bill, dark head

and a dusky gray back. "Robin sized" is familiar to all.

Watch for big and burly "country robins" when you're in the field hiking, camping, fishing or hunting. Town birds seem more slender.

Listen for this thrush's beautiful and melodious song, a pleasant cheerily-cheerily-cheerily-cheerily. Robins also make a loud chut-chut-chut call when alarmed, or to keep track of each other.

Realize that a robin with its head cocked sideways is not "listening" for earthworms. With eyes on the side of its head, this is the only way the bird

can see an earthworm in the grass or burrowing just below the surface.

Plant berry bushes and fruit trees to attract robins. They love crabapples, plums, mulberries, wild grapes, cherries and every kind of berry. Fruit is a staple food in late summer and fall.

Did you know that more and more robins are wintering in the Midwest, including Wisconsin? This happens in wooded areas where naturally freeze-dried fruit remains on shrubs and trees as a steady food source. *W*

KIESOW, from page 3

Fig. 4

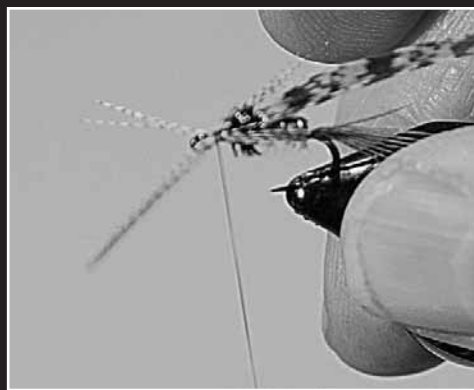


Fig. 5



Fig. 6

trim excess. Wrap the copper wire over and around the back and the abdomen spacing it so it forms three sections. Tie off and trim. Tie in a section of grouse tail for future use. Attach the peacock herl.

(Fig. 4) Create the thorax by wrapping the herl around the hook forward to one-and-a-half eye widths from the eye. Tie off and trim.

(Fig. 5) Take three fibers of mallard flank and tie them to one side of the thorax. Repeat on the other side. Tie off and trim.

(Fig. 6) Bring the grouse fibers over the top of the thorax, keeping the legs spread out from the sides of the wing case. Tie off and trim. Form the head,

and apply cement.

And there you have it: the no-name nymph.

After tying this fly, you will have been introduced to, and gained experience in using: The tail sections of two game birds—pheasant and grouse—in three different applications, including tail, back and wing case; the use of wire in two ways—rib and weight; how to dub; and one way to use two very effective materials—peacock herl and mallard flank feathers.

WHY AND HOW TO USE A NYMPH

Nymphs are everywhere in all waters and all fish feed on them at one time or

another. To many species nymphs are a main part of their diet. Nymphs are the "underwater" stage of life of mayflies, caddis, stoneflies, etc. They are what emerge from the eggs and crawl around the bottom of the lakes, rivers and streams before rising to the surface to hatch, mate and die. To fish, they are very tasty and nutritious.

HOW DO YOU FISH A NYMPH?

Remember, they are bottom dwellers. That, then, is where you have to put your fakes, which is why many tiers add weight when they tie. Mostly I fish nymphs upstream, casting across, taking in the slack as it

comes toward me, then releasing line and mending as it comes past and continues along. As it comes to the end of the drift, I allow the line to tighten and the fly to rise as if the nymph was emerging to the surface.

Oh! And did my switching to a nymph help me to get one of those chrome bullets on my tippet? You bet it did! Enjoy the early spring fly-flinging.

Keep a good thought! *W*

Jerry Kiesow fly fishes in Wisconsin year round, and teaches fly tying and fly fishing in the Grafton area. If you have questions about his classes, contact him via email at mrmrsprg8@wi.rr.com.

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DICK ELLIS

ON WISCONSIN OUTDOORS

Fishing for fishers



Wisconsin trapper Dan Virnig of Phillips in Price County tagged this 45 inch, 18 pound fisher after tracking the animal and finding a black ash where the predator had killed a porcupine.

Although an opportunistic feeder and relatively easy to trap, fishers have been scarce as the season nears conclusion in the rugged country near Phillips, in Price County. Even a veteran trapper can't bring to his ambush what's simply not there. The lack of fisher sign, in particular with the abundance of snowshoe hares and grouse as prey in this beautiful pocket of Wisconsin, has Dan Virnig somewhat perplexed.

Virnig leads an observer across scenic maple ridges and down into a lowland cedar swamp bending around a beaver dam where another camouflaged conibear body-grip No. 220 trap is carefully set. If a fisher does fall for Virnig's enticement of liquid scent and muskrat bait, it will hopefully trip the offset trigger and be dispatched quickly with a blow behind the head.

Like most trappers, Virnig is keenly observant; he's an excellent hunter seeking an advantage. From the truck, he easily identifies tracks cutting the snow to cross the back roads. On the trail, he tells the visitor several times exactly where another coyote will exit the woods and leave its mark. At each place, Virnig reciprocates with a long stream from a scent bottle. The game, eventually, will allow Virnig to trap the animals.

"They say if you have wolves you won't have coyotes," Virnig says. "Well, we have both."

He's walked a trapline since age 10, when his dad showed him each step necessary to mislead mink, muskrat, fox, beaver, coyotes, bobcat and fisher. Later, his knowledge grew as his father-in-law passed on more lessons from the field. The tracks of the fisher, though, have been more difficult to find recently on these trapping grounds. He's had past successes, and begins his quest each year late in the season when pelts are valuable.

"Otherwise, you're just trapping the animal to kill it," Virnig says, as he finds the first of two undisturbed traps. "The fishers have been here in recent years. With all the grouse and snowshoes around, I just can't believe that they're not here now."

FINDING THE FISHERS

Wildlife Biologist John Gilbert, section leader for the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission, has studied the animal extensively and believes the decline of fishers near Phillips and in other regions of Wisconsin might be part of a natural fluctuation of numbers following the mammal's reintroduction to the state decades ago. Drastic increases of population numbers, followed by severe declines and eventual stabilization, often occur when a species is introduced to high-quality habitat.

Fishers, Gilbert said in an interview from Ashland, inhabited Wisconsin beginning at about 1900, but were extirpated here by 1920 due to habitat loss from agriculture, logging, fire and over-trapping. Following nearly 40 years with no fishers in Wisconsin, the mammal was reintroduced in the 1950s and 1960s with releases of 150 fishers in both Clam Lake and Eagle River by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

(WDNR), UW-Stevens Point and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

According to Virnig and Internet sources, the beautiful animal can reach lengths up to 40 inches and requires extensive, uninterrupted wilderness to thrive. As a tenacious carnivore that also feeds on mice, squirrels, snowshoe hares, rabbits, birds, shrews and deer carcasses, fishers were in large part reintroduced to keep in check a porcupine population raising havoc on the timber industry by debarking and killing trees. Fast and agile, fishers are believed to leap from tree to tree in pursuit of squirrels.

According to Tane Crossley of the WDNR Bureau of Wildlife Management, a fisher will attack the face of a porcupine until the prey is too weak to defend itself, and then flip the porcupine over to attack its vulnerable belly.

"The fisher is a horrific carnivore," said Virnig. "It's like a wolf that climbs. I once caught a 45-inch, 18-pound fisher, and that was the only one I've ever trapped with quills in its face."

Because the fisher was reintroduced to ideal habitat with abundant food sources and little competition for that food, Gilbert said its recovery was rapid. The number of fishers eventually exceeded the carrying capacity of the land, initially near the original release areas, and those regional numbers then declined again beneath carrying capacity numbers. Eventually, the population numbers stabilized and leveled off at the carrying capacity numbers, dictated in part by the amount of prey available.

"What generally happens in excellent habitat with all kinds of food is that the population exceeds that carrying capacity, and the food available then declines below the carrying capacity, and eventually settles out," Gilbert said. "Depending on where you are, population numbers can be at different stages of this fluctuation."

"I began to see the same decline of fisher numbers as that Price County trapper about 5 years ago near Clam Lake where they were first released,"

Gilbert added. "Fishers have been near that release site for 45 years, but they haven't been everywhere for that long. They might have taken 20 years to reach Price County, thus, they've only been there 25 years."

With time, Gilbert said that most areas of Wisconsin with fishers will experience the population increase, decrease and stabilization more in balance with available prey. Statewide, he said, fisher numbers are leveling off, but local population numbers might not yet mesh with overall numbers.

THE END OF THE LINE

This Virnig trapline tour in late December ends uneventfully. He will eventually fill his one allotted state fisher tag with a big female the final week of the season. His full attention through January and into February will then turn to coyotes and fox.

We head for the truck. Dan Virnig continues to play the cat-and-mouse game with the scent bottle and the carnivores exiting the swamp, exactly where he says those tracks will be.

One final thought hangs with the visitor: It probably won't be a very good January or February for the coyotes and fox of Price County. *W*



Just because you aren't seeing fishers doesn't mean they're not nearby. Here, a fisher steals a bit of meat from a bear bait when it thought no one was watching.

Dan and Holly Virnig own and operate Birch Island Resort, including three two-bedroom cabins, bar and restaurant on Wilson Lake, a "Class A" muskie lake on the Phillips Chain of Lakes. Dan also guides a few bear or deer hunts per year on private land. The scenery is beautiful and the fishing and grouse hunting of Price County are excellent. On many other activities, visitors can also ice fish, use the cross-country ski or snowshoe trails, or simply come for the wildlife viewing. Take it from me: Your hosts are friendly and accommodating. Contact them at: (715) 339-3151.

SUZETTE CURTIS

RECIPES BY SUZETTE*Surf 'n turf–Wisconsin style*

In the last issue I told you I would share venison recipes from my brother- and sister-in-law in South Carolina, my mother in North Carolina and my friends in Kentucky. The two recipes from South Carolina came through perfectly, but unfortunately, I did not fulfill my promise with the other two. So, here are the venison recipes from North Carolina and Kentucky as promised (as well as two new fish recipes). *W*

Suzette Curtis of Oshkosh cooks for a family of hunters and fishermen, and says she tries to fill their menu with recipes for meals made with venison, upland birds, and fish. She does just that with great expertise. Email recipesbysuzette@onwisconsinoutdoors.com.

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Venison Parmesan

By Dorothee Bigler

2 lbs. venison steak or chops, cut into bite-size pieces	One 6-oz. can tomato paste
3 tbsp. olive oil	½ tsp. salt
One egg	1 tsp. pepper
1 tbsp. milk	½ tsp. sugar
1/3 c. parmesan cheese	½ tsp. dried marjoram
2/3 c. Italian seasoned bread crumbs	Two cloves minced garlic
One large onion, finely chopped	2 c. water
	2 c. shredded mozzarella cheese

In large skillet, heat oil over med-high heat. Meanwhile, whisk egg and milk in a small bowl. Combine parmesan and bread crumbs in large plastic bag. Dip venison pieces into egg mixture and place into plastic bag. Toss venison in the bag until completely coated. Brown coated venison in hot oil and transfer into greased 9x13-inch baking dish.

Add onions to skillet and sauté until tender. Stir in tomato paste, salt, pepper, sugar and marjoram and garlic. Slowly add water, stirring constantly. Bring mixture to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer uncovered for 5 minutes. Pour mixture over venison in baking dish.

Cover and bake for 50 minutes at 350 degrees. Remove cover and sprinkle with mozzarella cheese. Return to oven for 10 more minutes until cheese is melted. Serve with buttered egg noodles and a side salad.

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**Venison Poppers**

By Ryan and Casey Goodman

1 lb. lean venison, cubed
12 small jalapeno peppers
1 lb. bacon
One bottle Italian dressing
4 oz. Worcestershire sauce

Split and remove seeds from peppers. Place one pepper half together with one venison cube and wrap in bacon strip, securing with toothpick. Repeat with remaining peppers and venison cubes. Marinate all in mixture of Italian dressing and Worcestershire for 4 hours.

Grill 15-25 minutes, turning poppers while cooking. Allow to cool slightly before serving.

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**Asian Fish Packets**

Four fish fillets (approx. 6 oz. each)
8 oz. sliced mushrooms
1 c. chopped zucchini
4 tbsp. chopped scallions
¼ c. soy sauce
1 tsp. powdered ginger
2 tbsp. sesame oil
¼ tsp. black pepper

Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Cut four pieces of aluminum foil approximately 18 inches long. Place one fish fillet on each foil piece and top with equal amounts of mushrooms, zucchini and scallions.

In small bowl, mix together soy sauce, ginger, sesame oil and pepper; pour mixture over fish and vegetables, distributing evenly among the four. Fold two sides of foil toward middle and crimp to seal; also crimp to seal sides.

Place foil packets on baking sheet and bake in center of oven for 12-15 minutes. Carefully transfer packets from baking sheet to dinner plates. Serve immediately with a side of brown rice.

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Dijon and White Wine Fish Fillets

By Charlotte Shimel

1½ lb. fish fillets
¼ c. white wine
¼ c. olive oil
2 tbsp. Dijon mustard
2 tbsp. chopped scallions
1 tsp. dried parsley
1 tsp. dried tarragon
Salt and pepper to taste

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Rinse fish and pat dry. Place fish fillets in a shallow baking dish and sprinkle with salt and pepper. In small bowl, whisk together remaining ingredients and pour over fish. Cover baking dish with foil and let stand at least 30 minutes. Bake (covered) for 10-12 minutes.

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JOEL DEBOER

WISCONSIN ANGLING ADVENTURES

Whiskered walleyes of spring: the channel catfish

Springtime in Wisconsin is a glorious season for a variety of reasons. For starters, the spring season signifies an end to winter's grip for another year, and new tree buds and flower blossoms act as a promise of things to come.

As early spring weather arrives, so does the first open-water angling of the year, with excellent fishing opportunities for walleyes, sauger, northern pike, steelhead and brown trout to name a few. One of the joys of spring fishing is "scratching the itch" of getting a good bend in your favorite rod, and battling a fish.

Left off the radar by most anglers during this time period, whether on purpose or inadvertently, is the channel catfish. Catfish? In spring? You bet! With catfish, even in the spring, if it's a fight you want, then it's a fight you're going to get.

PLAYING WITH THE KITTENS

Getting rigged up for chasing channel catfish is relatively simple, although high-quality equipment is a must as even mid-sized channel catfish are dogged fighters who refuse to give up until the very end.

I typically use a 7 or 7½-foot long St. Croix rod in a medium to medium-heavy action—depending on the size of the cats I expect to tangle with, as well as the amount of weight required to maintain control of my presentation. I prefer to use braided line, such as Power Pro, as the abrasion resistance often comes in quite handy when muscling a big catfish away from wood, bridge pilings or other potential obstructions.

I spool my Power Pro on a high-quality bait-casting reel, such as an Abu

Garcia 6500-C3; the reason for the 6500-C3 is not the line capacity, but the bait clicker—an invaluable tool when running multiple lines. On the "business end" I use all Mustad Demon circle hooks, and carry with me an assortment of heavy barrel swivels and egg or bank sinkers ranging in size from 3/8 oz. through 6 oz.; typically, however, sinkers in the 3/8-oz. to 1-oz. weights will suffice.

Although typically thought of as a quarry to pursue only during the steamy summer months, channel catfish can provide anglers with sport year-round, even through the ice. As with any species of fish, connecting consistently begins with understanding location.

The earliest days of spring finds the bulk of channel catfish residing yet in their wintering holes. Any search for channel catfish, when working deep holes and pools, should begin at the head of the hole or pool, as this is typically where the most actively feeding fish typically position themselves.

Although catfish activity levels are typically at some of the lowest of the year during this cold-water period, anglers can still connect with good catches of fish. The best presentations are those that remain in the strike zone as long as possible.

WORRY ABOUT THE DETAILS

Slip-sinker or Wolf River rigs work well when baited with pieces of fish and allowed to sit directly on the bottom. An overlooked but highly effective method of catching channel catfish during this period is vertical jigging. Use your electronics to locate areas holding numbers of fish and then subtly work a jigging

spoon, such as a Northland Buckshot Rattle Spoon tipped with a minnow head or two, right in front of the fish; this can be a very effective and exciting method of scoring on cats from winter through spring.

While a variety of prepared baits exist on the market, there truly is no substitute for the real thing when targeting channel catfish, especially the big ones. Natural bait, whether fresh or a bit ripe, chunked or cut (especially when indigenous to the body of water you are fishing), is hands-down the No. 1 producer for channel catfish. While baits such as chicken livers, cheese, etc. do account for their catfish each season, big channel catfish are like any trophy game fish—they didn't get that way by experimenting and taking chances too often, so keep your presentations natural.

As temperatures gradually increase, channel catfish activity will increase as well with their subsequent rising metabolism. Anglers often look for the "magic" temperature in respect to when fish turn on and off; with channel catfish in spring, there is no such number.

Typically, channel catfish appear to begin putting on the feedbag following the first solid run of warm, sunny, spring-like weather; depending on which part of the state you are in and what kind of body of water (lake versus river), this may find water temperatures ranging anywhere in the 40- to 50-degree range.

Although catfish activity will have increased, fish will still be looking at avoiding areas of direct current. As such, while some fish might still be using holes, especially where bottom irregularities aid in deflecting current flow, a majority of the channel catfish will utilize shoreline areas such as wing-dams, deadfalls and other current breaks.

As the weather continues to improve and temperatures rise, channel catfish will be on the move as they actively search out food and spawning



Although often overlooked, channel catfish provide plenty of fight and tasty fillets any time of year—but especially during early spring.

habitat, with spawning typically taking place when water temperatures reach around 75 degrees. This pre-spawn period can be one of the finest fishing periods for channel catfish as the fish are on the prowl and eating readily.

Okay, so they're not walleyes, and not typically what most anglers think of when thinking of species to pursue in spring; however, in many Wisconsin rivers and flowages channel catfish are not only plentiful, they grow to good size. They are rugged fighters who will test both the skill of the angler and the durability of his or her equipment.

Throw in the fact that the smaller specimens are absolutely delicious, and you have a quarry worth paying attention to this spring. If you're looking to scratch that itch this spring, give channel catfish a try!

I'll see you on the water. *W*

Joel DeBoer owns and operates Wisconsin Angling Adventures guide service, and specializes in musky, walleye, and small-mouth bass, based out of the greater Wausau, WI area. He can be reached at 715.297.7573 or visit his website at www.wisconsinanglingadventures.com

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MIKE YURK

BADGER STATE BASSOLOGY

Bass fishing at its finest

The upper Midwest, and Wisconsin in particular, has some of the best bass fishing in the country. This might come as some surprise to some fishermen, especially those who live down south. But in my experience—and I'm sure many other Wisconsin bass fishermen can attest—that doesn't come as a surprise: We do have great bass fishing here.

When many fishermen think of fishing in Wisconsin, they think primarily of walleyes and muskies. Our waters are famous because of those fish. People have visited Wisconsin from all over the country, and in some cases from around the world, in pursuit of our famed walleye and muskie fishing.

All of our major waterways, such as Lake Winnebago and the other lakes connected by the Fox and Wolf Rivers, the Wisconsin River and the many lakes throughout our beloved north country, are nationally renowned because of walleye fishing. This is further attested by the number of national professional walleye tournaments that are held every year on Wisconsin waters.

BEHOLD: THE BASS

Bass fishing for many years in Wisconsin has often been ignored, at best, or even completely dismissed, at the worst. While growing up in east-central Wisconsin in the 1950s, 60s and early 70s, no one fished for bass. I, as well as many other fishermen, pursued walleyes and trout with little or no thought of bass fishing. As much as I fished during those years, I never caught a largemouth bass. I caught a few smallmouth bass by accident while walleye fishing—but that was it.

Smallmouth bass fishing has had some following over the years in Wisconsin, but it seems that few people

"Perhaps it has been that bass fishing has been so long overlooked in Wisconsin in favor of walleyes and muskies that we have been lucky enough to develop such a good population of bass."

bothered to fish for largemouth bass here. I didn't catch a largemouth until after I joined the Army and got stationed in the deep south. But once I found bass, I became hooked on them.

In the course of a military career that lasted more than 20 years, I spent half of those years in Europe and the other half down south. I fished for bass in Virginia, Alabama, North Carolina and Missouri. Many fishermen consider those states as having our country's prime bass fishing waters.

I retired and moved back to Wisconsin, settling in the northwestern corner of the state. Taking what I learned about bass fishing down south, I started to bass fish in Wisconsin and found, to my amazement, that the bass fishing in Wisconsin beats anything I ever found down south.

For example, in Alabama they had a 10-fish limit on largemouth bass with no size restriction on most of the lakes. In the years I fished there I seldom remember catching my limit. Today, in northwestern Wisconsin, it's not uncommon to catch and release 25 fish in a day. In fact, anything less than 20 fish is considered a slow day.

Now I will be the first to point out that if you want to catch a truly huge bass, the waters down south have us beat. A big bass in the land of Dixie is generally considered anything weighing

more than 10 pounds. For us, anything more than 6 pounds is considered a big fish and worthy of putting on the wall or having a replica made.

What we lose in size we more than make up for in numbers. When it comes to catching fish in the 1- to 4-pound category, there's nowhere that beats Wisconsin. Between two fishermen in my boat, we have had 100-fish days. The fish ran from 10 inches to 4 pounds, but it was certainly more than anything I ever found in all my years fishing down south.

Fishermen down south often keep bass to eat. There's nothing wrong with eating bass and when I lived down south I ate my share of them, too. But since returning to Wisconsin I never keep bass. Like many Wisconsin fishermen, when I want to put a meal of fish on the table I go for walleyes, perch or any of the panfish species. Many bass fishermen believe strongly in catch and release fishing.

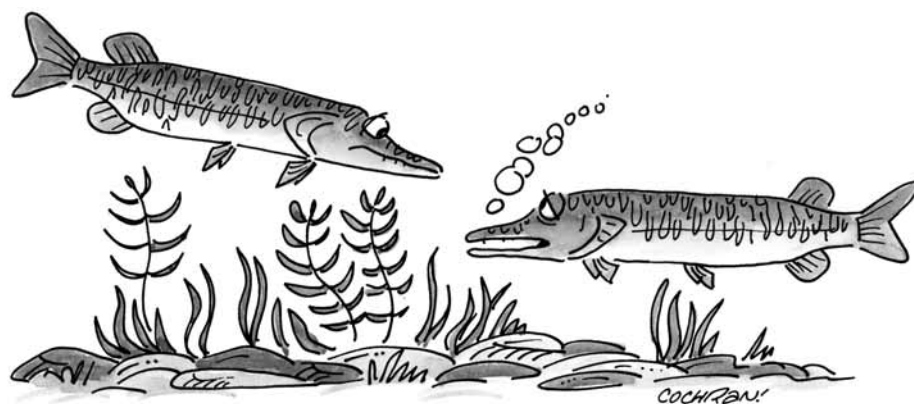


Bass, like the one author Mike Yurk is holding, are commonplace in Wisconsin waters.

Perhaps it has been that bass fishing has been so long overlooked in Wisconsin in favor of walleyes and muskies that we have been lucky enough to develop such a good population of bass. It also has helped that since we have such good-eating fish such as walleyes and perch, that few fishermen keep bass to eat. The catch and release ethic has found a good response in bass fishermen up north. All this has contributed to our having great bass fishing.

We in Wisconsin are very lucky. Not only do we have great walleye and muskie fishing, we also have some of the country's best bass fishing. It might have been overlooked for many years, but today our bass fishing is second to none. *W*

Mike Yurk began writing about the outdoors for newspapers in central Wisconsin in the late 1960s. During the past 40 years he has published more than 600 articles in national and regional outdoor publications. He has published five books, both fiction and nonfiction, on outdoor subjects. He is a retired Army officer and lives in Hudson, Wisconsin, near to some of the best bass fishing in the country.



"SOMETIMES I FEEL LIKE I'M JUST A BLIP ON THE DEPTH FINDER OF LIFE."

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PRESENTS

— Fishing Guide —

DENNIS RADLOFF

Winter Boat Tips

By Dennis Radloff

While many of us are counting the days until we can launch our boat back into open water, there are several things we can do during this time of year. These are some of the details that often get overlooked until the last minute or become factors midway through our open-water fishing season.

By addressing these issues now we have the luxury of ordering any parts if necessary and the benefit of being able to spend out time fishing when open water returns.

BUNKS AND ROLLERS

Regardless of what type of trailer carries your boat, both bunks and

rollers take a great degree of wear throughout each season. Now is a great time to check and service these items. You can easily inspect the condition of your bunks or rollers by use of a "cherry picker," or engine hoist.

Before you get started, you want to block your trailer tires on both sides to prevent the trailer from rolling. Keeping your bow strap attached and secured to the bow eye, remove one transom strap, leaving the other in place.

For the sake of illustration, let's first use the right side of the boat. Remove your right side transom strap and attach a chain from the hoist to the transom eye. Be sure the transom strap on the left side is still secured along

with the bow strap being secured as well, keeping the boat from shifting on the trailer. You can now use the hoist to lift the right side of your hull up and off of the bunks or rollers.

If you have a bunk trailer, you can inspect the condition of your carpet and check to see if the bolts are tight and secure. If you have a roller trailer, check the rollers for any flat spots or any rollers that might not be rolling freely.

While conducting this inspection, never put your hands or fingers between the hoisted hull and trailer surfaces that the hull has been raised from. In addition to this safety precaution you should also have a partner or spotter available to assist

with this process.

Repeat this process to check the other side. You can also use this method to hold the boat up and off the trailer in order to remove and replace any bunk or roller parts necessary. Conducting this simple procedure now can save you from having to waste valuable fishing time when the ice finally leaves. *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 Dennis at www.sterlingmusky.com, or call 262.443.9993.



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TODD BOHM

PLAN NOW, PLANT LATER

Prepping for food plots

Early spring is an ideal time for hunters and wildlife enthusiasts to begin planning the how and what of food plot planting long before the implements break ground. With snow covering the soon-to-be prepared plots, it's the perfect time to improve your knowledge of plots and crops, plan locations for the plots, clear land and decide what crops you will put in to attract, grow and hold mature bucks. When sitting down in the spring to plan my fields, I have tried to follow a four-step plan that looks like this:

STEP NO. 1: TYPES OF CROPS

The food plot industry has become a multi-million dollar giant. There is a multitude of different products that all claim to have the ability to grow huge bucks and turn your property into a deer Mecca.

Your first job is to become a student

of agricultural crops and deer habits. There is a great amount of well-researched literature that takes a hunter through the planning and planting phases. Most of these books thoroughly discuss different crop options. Some of my favorites include: Ultimate Deer Food Plots by Ed Spinazzola; Quality Food Plots distributed by QDMA; Farming for Wildlife magazine by Biologic; Quality Whitetail magazine by QDMA, and a huge array of on-line articles such as those written by QDMA. Other resources available to today's deer farmers include local agricultural extension agents, foresters and wildlife biologists.

As you spend time researching the crops you are going to plant, keep in mind the planting zone of your property, topography, availability of equipment and the types of plots you are planting. Once you narrow down your



Successful food plots start long before implements and seeds ever hit the ground. Just like when hunting, planning well ahead of time will help ensure later success.

list of possible crops based on these factors, you are ready to move onto the next step. In central Wisconsin, my list of favorite crops include corn, brassicas, clover, soybeans, sugar beets and chicory.

trees and brush. The hunter can clear brush/trees and prepare the new plots for bulldozing if necessary and planting when temperatures allow.

STEP NO. 2: LAY OF THE LAND

As you spend time learning about crops, this is also a great time to become more familiar with your property. My two favorite ways to do this are through satellite photos and legwork.

There are many different satellite photo providers for hunters to choose from and hunters can purchase enlarged photos from these vendors. During the spring, I use erasable markers to write and draw on my maps. These maps include existing food plots, stand sites, prospective food plot areas, deer trails, scrapes and rubs. With map in hand, I also spend a lot of time walking my land looking for sheds, examining existing deer sign and planning areas for future food plots.

Keeping a map of food plots each year is helpful. I can plan crop rotation to ensure good soil nutrition. It also helps me see changing deer feeding habits.

STEP NO. 3: CLEARING LAND

Early spring is a great time to clear new land for food plots. The snow is starting to recede, temperatures are moderate and there are no leaves on the

STEP NO. 4: TYPES OF FOOD PLOTS

The amount of acreage you have will also dictate the types of food plots you put in. Land owners with a large amount of acreage will be able to put in a variety of plots that include larger "feed" plots and hunting plots. Smaller tracts of land will best be suited for just the hunting plots. Using the information you have gained from research, map study and legwork will allow the hunter to best determine where these plots will be planted and what will be planted in them.

Planting food plots is not just a springtime activity. Successful food plot farmers make this a year-long hobby. I've been planting food plots for many years, yet I go through these same steps each spring. The planning I put into my plots now allows me to forge ahead when planting time arrives. Plan now for big bucks later. *WB*

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. Contact Todd at 715.297.7573 or visit his web site at www.wisconsinanglingadventures.com.



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REVIEW

Suzuki KingQuad 750 PS

Back in 1991 Suzuki ruled the 4x4 ranks with their 288cc KingQuad. With a triple range transmission and independent front and rear suspension, the KingQuad set new standards in the Utility 4x4 ranks. Today the supreme ruler in Suzuki's lineup is the KingQuad 750AXi Power Steering.

The KingQuad's motor borrows some impressive technology from Suzuki's road race motorcycles. The fuel-injected, single-cylinder engine features a liner using Suzuki Composite Electrochemical Material (SCEM) for improved heat transfer, lighter weight and tighter piston clearance. It uses a four-valve, double overhead cam head with 36mm intake valves and straight intake ports. Vibration is reduced with two balancer shafts and rubber engine mounting. To help lower the machine's center of gravity and seat height, the cylinder is canted forward 48 degrees.

The CVT-type automatic transmission features both high and low ranges plus reverse and neutral. Gear changes are handled by a gated shifter mounted on the left. A parking brake is found on the left handlebar. The KingQuad can be run in two- or four-wheel drive, or for the most demanding conditions, in four-wheel drive with differential lock.

The EPS is controlled by its own Electronic Control Unit that measures the torque being applied to the steering stem by the rider and by impact with trail obstacles. This information, along with data on vehicle speed, is transferred to the ECU, which then applies current to the power steering unit to reduce steering effort or impacts being fed back to the handlebars.

Suzuki made a number of frame and steering changes specific to the EPS model to improve handling. In terms of suspension, five-way preload-adjustable shocks are used front and rear, for 6.7 inches of wheel travel in front and 7.7 inches

in back. The independent rear suspension is kept in line by a sway bar that was redesigned to complement the EPS and other chassis updates. Along with Suzuki's engine braking system, the KingQuad is slowed by dual hydraulic disc brakes up front and a sealed oil bathed multi disc system in the rear.

Onboard storage compartments include one on the right front fender and another at the rear of the machine. The tubular steel racks have a capacity of 66 pounds in the front and 132 pounds in the rear. A removable rear hitch provides a towing capacity of 992 pounds.

The addition EPS added 13 pounds, so Suzuki cut weight by removing the recoil starter and reducing the thickness of some low wear components, while different materials were used for others. At 672 pounds wet, Suzuki managed to keep the EPS-equipped KingQuad within 7 pounds of the standard KingQuad 750AXi.

TEST RIDE

Whether idling or running down the trail, the KingQuad 750AXi's engine is a smooth and quiet operator. The EFI system is greatly responsible for a seamless power delivery, from idle to redline, making the big bore easy to handle in slow, technical situations as well as in fast, open terrain.

High range works well in sport riding situations. The gearing allows you to cruise along between 25 and 30 mph low in the RPMs, saving fuel and adding to the machine's smooth, easy to ride feel. On long, steep ascents the engine never stopped pulling even if the revs dropped a bit at the summit. We could have climbed hills with less speed had we downshifted to low range, which allows for gnarly climbs and plowing, pulling or rock crawling. Engaging four-wheel drive and/or differential lock is



easy and reassuring.

The machine feels nimble in the tight stuff and predictably stable at speed and on sidehills. Adding one notch of preload to the front shocks made the overall ride more balanced and better suited for fast trail riding, rarely displaying the wallowing feeling found on some full size 4x4s. The KingQuad soaked up hits of varying sizes from rocks, roots and huge dirt clumps on a freshly plowed hillside, never deflecting off line thanks to its IRS and EPS. The power steering eliminates harsh feedback to the handlebars while still feeling connected to the trail. Steering is precise whether you are snaking through the trees or entering a corner at speed.

The machine's engine braking helps control speed in high range and allows the machine to crawl down hills in low range. We salute Suzuki for separating out their front and rear brakes. The fronts offer plenty of power and the rear offers decent power and is extremely durable.

Ergonomics is another area where the KingQuad shines. The

relationship between the bars, seat and pegs feels very natural. The seat is extremely comfortable and easy to move around on, and the footpeg and floorboard combination is the best in the business.

At \$8,699 the KingQuad 750AXi Power Steering is a great buy, costing the same as several of its non-power steering-equipped competitors. Overall we were very impressed. The KingQuad 750AXi looks great, works well in every area of performance, and with power steering, excellent ergonomics and smooth power delivery, it is an ATV that is comfortable for all-day work or play. While some big bore utilities start sounding clunky after a short time, our KingQuad held up to several punishing test sessions and still sounds and operates as smoothly and quietly as the first time we fired it up. When it comes to getting the best long-term value, Suzuki's power steering-equipped 750 may be the King. *W*

This article originally appeared in Off-Road.com, August 11, 2009.

JJ REICH

THE REICH STUFF*Springtime snows*

Tim and Corey used more than 1,400 wind sock decoys, strategically positioned on the edge of a prairie pond or a stubble field, providing passing birds with the safety of water and a feed source.



Sharing a bed in a hotel room with a hunting buddy is rarely fun. To avoid awkwardness, sometimes it's best to rent the suite that has a bunk bed—even if that room is adorned in SpongeBob décor.

Springtime, South Dakota, snow geese and SpongeBob? Yeah, it's a killer combination.

It was March, and that meant spring break! But instead of lying on my back on a warm Florida beach (keeping my eyes open for bikini babes), I found myself lying on my back in a muddy, corn-stubble field (keeping my eyes open for snow geese) and my shotgun trigger-finger ready for action. My hunting buddies and I were about to blast away the winter blues and welcome spring once again.

When hunting snows during spring, good guides make all the difference. A guide who is committed to spend a lot of scouting time to locate the birds and get landowner permission to hunt them can make all the difference. Local knowledge is key to finding the birds; guides will typically spend countless hours of windshield time driving around to locate birds, and even more cell-phone time talking to other guides to keep up on the migration.

And don't forget: Snow geese are a smart group of birds—they are very skeptical of decoys, probably because

they are shot at 7 months of the year. So you need a guide who owns expensive gear such as thousands of decoys, "Vortex" decoy-motion machines and super loud electronic calls to entice the birds to land within scattergun range.

We choose Corey Ganser and Tim Brown of Northern Migration Guide Service. Over the course of a weekend they worked hard to show us what it takes to be hardcore goose grinders.

Although it was a bit frustrating not getting the endless shot opportunities I've seen on TV, it truly was amazing watching the massive amounts of birds fill the high skies of South Dakota in March. All in all, Corey and Tim were please with the volume of the birds we saw, but the lack of wind limited our chances. If we did have good wind, this could have been a gangbuster shoot totaling more than 100 harvested birds. We'll be sure to pray for wind in 2010! *WR*

JJ Reich is an outdoor writer who contributes product-related articles to several national publications and is the author of Kamp Tales™ hunting books for children (www.kampptales.com).



A special thanks to Corey Ganser and Tim Brown from Northern Migration Guide Service. NorthernMigrationGuideService.com; 320.291.2092 for making this OWO adventure a success.

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The Cable area can keep you busy all Spring inside and out! Check out our calendar of events on Explore Wisconsin and plan your **Spring vacation in Bayfield County**. *Click on Bayfield County.*

Port Washington's **"Hot in the Harbor"** extravaganza, featuring the famous chili cook-off, steel drum band, and indoor sidewalk sales is on March 13! It will put you in the mind of our summer festival season when it really is hot in the harbor. *Click on Ozaukee County.*

Fish Burnett County's **late season ice** and then support Crex Meadows by attending their Spring dinner. The upcoming **summer ATV trails** open May 21, 2010. *Click on Burnett County.*

"Warmer weather brings the best in **canoeing, kayaking, paddlewheel boats, hiking, biking** and so much more. It's all here in Polk County. *Click on Polk County.*

Experience the thrill of men's and women's professional bicycle racing June 19, 2010 when the **Nature Valley Grand Prix** comes to Menomonie. See the top-ranked stage race on the USA Cycling National Racing Calendar. *Click on Dunn County.*

ATV riding begins in Price County with the opening of the Tuscobia State trail on April 15th, the Flambeau Trail

System in the Chequamegon Nicolet National Forest May 1st, and the Georgetown Trail on May 15th. Come ride with us this Spring! *Click on Price County.*

1000 lakes welcome you...to Washburn County... If you're looking for a quiet lake for the fishing opener, be sure to check out Washburn County, including the communities of Spooner, Long Lake (Walleye Capital of Wisconsin), Shell Lake, Minong, Trego, Birchwood (Bluegill Capital of Wisconsin), and Stone Lake. *Click on Washburn County.*

Experience the "thrills and chills" of Marinette County **whitewater rafting** in the spring. Season begins in early April in "The Real North ... Marinette County". *Click on Marinette County.*

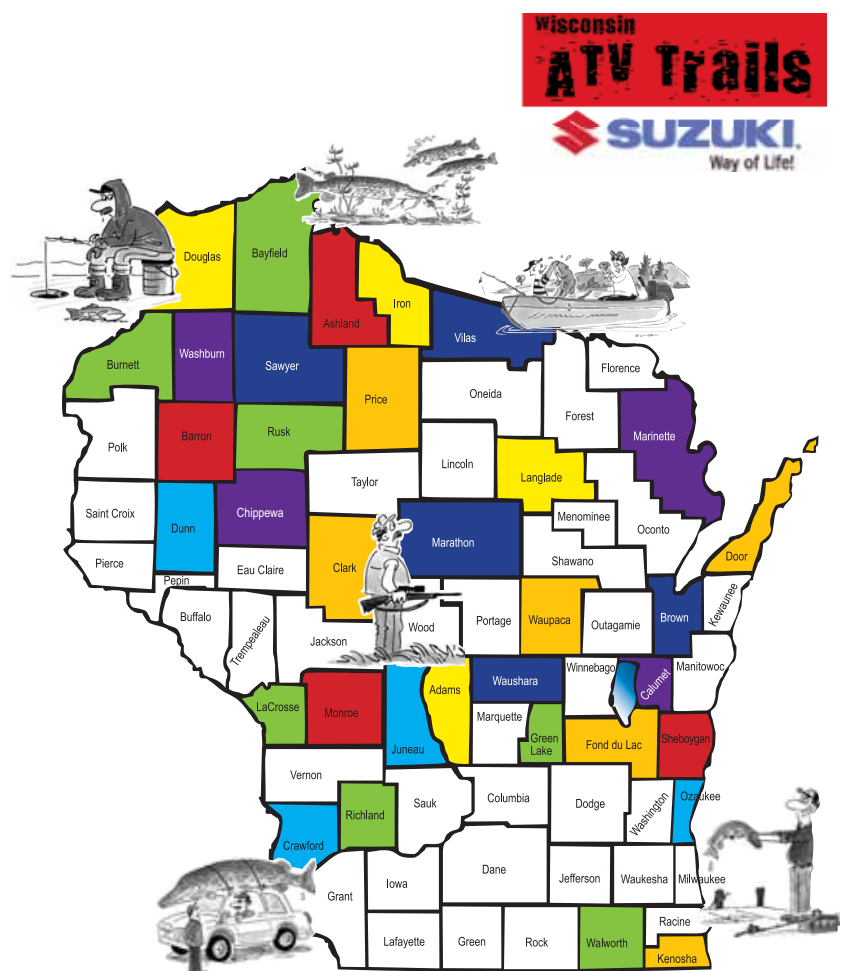
If our **500 miles of snowmobile trails** aren't enough winter-time fun for you, **bring your fishing rod** and enjoy another highlight Antigo is famous for. *Click on Langlade County.*

It's time to plan your get-a-way to Manitowish Waters in northwestern Vilas County. Learn more about our beautiful slice of Wisconsin by watching **Discover Wisconsin April 3rd and 4th**. Check your own local listings for channels and times. *Click on Vilas County.*

Are you one of nearly 40 million anglers in the United States? Then get ready for a "reel" good time. The 24th Annual **Jaws Fishing Derby** is right around the corner June 4, 5, and 6. This "Superior" weekend fishing tournament is held on the waters of the west end of Lake Superior and St. Louis Bay.

Continued on page 20

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DUNN COUNTY

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CLICKING, from page 19

40 awards offered for lake trout, salmon, walleye and northern. [Click on Douglas County.](#)

Why travel to Canada when great fishing and fabulous scenery waits in Iron County on the Turtle Flambeau Flowage. Better watch your line and not the shale rock and timber shoreline closing under a beautiful sunset...you just might lose another walleye in the wood or smallie rising to a surface lure. [Click on Iron County.](#)

April means **smelting outdoors** in Ashland, the home show indoors and so much more. Chequamegon Bay, the doorway to Lake Superior, means **gorgeous scenery** and wonderful fishing for literally scores of freshwater and Great Lakes sport fish all year round. [Click on Ashland County.](#)

The natural beauty of Hayward Lakes draws generations of families to return for fishing and relaxation. This is a paradise for anglers in search of some of the **best freshwater fishing anywhere**. Woods...Waters...World Class Events. [Click on Sawyer County.](#)



The 26th Annual **Treeland Walleye Challenge 2010** will be held May 7, 8 and 9. Entrees for this catch & release only tournament limited to the first 300 adults. 4x4 ATV Grand Prize. In addition to scores of awards, cash prizes include \$1000, \$500, and \$250. [Click on Sawyer County.](#)

Big Chetac Resort and Big Chetac Lake mean relaxation and **great spring crappie fishing**. Catch the first warm weather of the season and a mess of big silver slabs for the frying pan. [Click on Sawyer County.](#)

Relax! You're in for an experience you won't soon forget. Whether you're spending time on our beautiful lakes, river or streams, hiking, biking, enjoying a round of golf, ATVing or snowmobiling, or relaxing by your campfire, you'll know why we're **"Worth a Closer Look"**. Juneau County offers nourishment for the soul. [Click on Juneau County.](#)

Does your association or club plan meetings around the state? Why not try **Green Bay for your next event?** Unique venues like Curley Lambeau's Cottage

on the Bay of Green Bay...or the 1,700 acre Reforestation Camp will be a big hit! Better yet, a boat rendezvous on the Fox River! Call Denise today at 888-867-3342. [Or Click on Brown County.](#)

Pre-spawn and spawn walleye fishing starts on the open Wisconsin River in March. Expect 50 to 100 fish days with the average walleye 14 to 18 inches but with good numbers of fish also taken in the 24 to 30 inch class. We know the river. Rely on Hooksetters Fishing Services. [Click on Marathon County.](#)

The fabulous **Wolf River walleye run** starts in March. Come and catch the frenzy with Wolf River Outfitters and don't forget to plan your summer trip for multiple species fishing with guides who know these fish. And this river. We grew up here. [Click on Waupaca County.](#)

It's not too late to plan for the Fremont Area world class **whitebass fishing on the Wolf River**. You may have to wait until the walleyes get out of the way. Of, just come early and meet both species coming and going for their annual spring run. [Click on Waupaca County.](#)

Why wait for the North Country musky season to kick in, or the quality waters of Green Bay and the Fox River? We don't wait. **Great musky fishing** starts south of Highway 10 the first Saturday in May. We know Okauchee, Pewaukee, Oconomowoc and how to put the slob of the southeast in the boat early. Meet Sterling Guide Service. [Click on Door County.](#)

Come and see the **beauty and mystery of the Mighty Mississippi** and while you're here plan on staying at the Grandview Motel where our view of the river is second to none. [Click on Crawford County.](#)



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If you're looking for a unique hunting adventure on the Mighty Mississippi where we have the **largest migrating concentration of canvasbacks in the county**, contact Flyway Fowling Guide Service. Hurry...dates fill up quickly every season. *Click on Crawford County.*

In Walworth County, expect some of the **best panfish action shortly after ice out**. Big crappies and lots of them are available shortly after ice out on gems like Geneva and Delavan. Connect with Dave Duwe's Guide Service. *Click on Crawford County.*

Great Camping on Wisconsin's Big Water...Petenwell and Castle Rock. See everything we offer with an online visit to the Adams County Park & Rec. *Click on Adams County.*

A blanket of fresh snow on over 300 miles of snowmobile trails and many cross-country ski trails have left Chippewa County trails in great condition. With Ground Hog Day behind us and more winter dead ahead, **there's plenty of time to come enjoy winter activities** in Chippewa County. *Click on Chippewa County.*

Hardwater panfishing with the Wolf Pack will remain hot throughout March until the rivers **open and frantic steelhead and brown trout fishing** takes over. We'll slide right into May and some great. Great Lakes fishing from the luxury of our charter boats. *Click on Sheboygan County.*

Fishing continues to flourish on Sheboygan's area tributary streams to Lake Michigan, and now is the time to book your fishing adventure. We invite you to catch the spirit and **experience Lake Michigan Charter fishing**. *Click on Sheboygan County.*

2009 meant the **best river walleye fishing** for both quantity and quality in northeast Wisconsin. The same is expected this April, with May bringing guaranteed trophy smallmouth bass fishing with many fish in the five and even six pound class. *Click on Marinette County.*

We have just the place for you to **put your feet up, walk a nature trail, indulge in exceptional shopping, experience extraordinary fishing or golf** on one of Wisconsin's top rated courses. We're the Green Lake Area communities of Berlin, Green lake, Markesan, Princeton and Ripon. *Click on either Green Lake County or Fond du Lac County.*

Barron County is home to over **300 spring-fed crystal clear lakes carved by glaciers** during the ice age, ranging in size from just a few acres to over 3000 acres. Long Lake is Wisconsin's "Walleye Capital" and Birchwood Lake is the "Bluegill Capital" of Wisconsin. *Click on Barron County.*

Attention **Sledheads! Get deep in the Sparta powder with our 300 miles of well-groomed trails**-a gorgeous mix of fields and tree tunnels with watering holes, parking, hotels and gas stops right where you need them! *Click on Monroe County.*

Are you a Wisconsin bear hunter? Then you'll want to keep track of Northern Wisconsin Outfitters and legendary Bruins like Snaggletooth. *Click on Bayfield County.*

If you love **hunting, fishing, wildlife art and outdoor videos**, you'll not want

to miss an online trip to Jim Tostrud's Wildlife Visions. *Click on Kenosha County.*

Get lost in Lacrosse County. Our **beautiful river bluff country and gorgeous Mississippi sloughs teem with wildlife**. That's enough of a catch. But it's likely you'll hook up with a trophy class walleye, bass or panfish and never see another boat. *Click on Lacrosse County.*

Unwind your mind in Rusk County. Hundreds of miles of **snowmobile, cross-country and snow-shoe trails. 250 lakes and flowages** for walleye, pike, bluegill and crappie. Shopping, dining and historic attractions. *Click on Rusk County.*

Clark County restores your connection to nature. Hunt deer, ruffed grouse, bear, turkey and small game on over **133,000 acres of public hunting grounds**. Our rock-strewn rivers and streams abound with fish and wildlife. Catch it all with rod or camera. We're waiting for you. *Click on Clark County.*

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Dave Bohn at 262-970-9533 / widbohn@yahoo.com
To compete in the Wild Game Stew Cook Off, please Contact
Jim Caughey at 262-993-1643 / jcaughey1@wi.rr.com.

DAVE DUWE

BIG-TIME BROWNIES*Spring on Lake Michigan*

Jason Bonk with a nice early spring brown trout

Here in Wisconsin we have a period in spring when the ice is soft and the gamefish season is closed. As depressing as that sounds, we're actually blessed. We have a "Great" fishing opportunity: Lake Michigan. Lake Michigan is the third largest of the Great Lakes by area, behind Lakes Superior and Huron. Its surface area is 22,400 square miles with an average depth of 279 feet and a maximum depth of more than 900 feet.

HOMEMADE BROWNIES

With warm spring rains and warm-water discharges from power plants along the shoreline, brown trout are drawn to the warm waters for aggressive feeding. Brown trout fishing can be productive from Sturgeon Bay to Racine/Kenosha.

Some of my favorite locations are the Sheboygan Power Plant, Milwaukee Harbor and the Oak Creek power plant. Don't overlook the small feeder creeks and tributaries that flow into the lake; they will also add warm water into the system and often hold brown trout.

Brown trout will become active near shore in early spring, especially March through May. Lake Michigan can allow open water action almost all winter long depending on the

severity of the winter.

As a rule, I work a depth range of 5-15 feet of water. With fishing in such close proximity to shore, the average angler with a smaller boat has access to this quality fishery. Fishing shallow waters in a small boat enables you to move with more stealth, not spooking the shallow trout.

Also, cloudy days have a tendency to be better than sunny because it eliminates the shadow a boat can make. This bite is temperature related, so waiting to fish until later in the day can make the bite better.

One of the greatest concerns with small craft fishing on Lake Michigan is the wind. The best/safest wind for fishing the west shoreline of Lake Michigan is a west or south wind. This

will keep the warmer water near shore and the waves manageable. An east wind creates a threefold problem: water clarity, weeds and debris, and colder water that gets blown to shore.

Water Clarity—Brown trout don't bite well in muddy or dirty water conditions. This is caused by the wave action beating the shore. Typically, I will fish the cleanest water possible.

Weed and debris—With a wind out of the east, weeds and wood pieces get stirred up and they make trolling crank baits on planer boards a tough proposition.

Cold Water—Cold water gets blown in from the colder main lake, moving the warmer water in turn moving the fish.

Make no mistake though: Ultra-clear water can be as difficult to fish as really muddy water. When fishing in shallow water, you want some color to the water as this will bring the fish off the rocky bottom where the fish are hiding and make them more active. I try to key on the zone between the clean water and the murky water. This seems to be the "yum-yum" zone for actively feeding brown trout.

TACKLE AND TACTICS

For early spring brown trout fishing, I use a light presentation. This is a perfect application of your walleye trolling rods. I use a line counter Abu Garcia 6500 on a 7½ to 8½ feet long medium-action rod. The reels are spooled with 10-pound test Silver Thread or Trilene line.

My lures of choice are crankbaits. You need to experiment with the color

patterns for the specific conditions you're fishing. Captain Pat Kalmerton of Wolf Pack Adventures (www.wolfpackadventures.com) prefers the natural color patterns; patterns including red and black produce the best. His go-to baits are Storm Jr. Thundersticks, but I often prefer Smithwick Rogues or Bandit walleye crank baits. Using chrome/blue or chrome/black are good choices as these lures will match the smelt baitfish within the system.

With the light line trolling presentation, I use the Little Sister planer board made by Z Boards. These boards are made in Sheboygan, and they feature an adjustable arm which helps prevent tangles. Ron Grawnien, owner of Z Boards, says, "The beauty of the board is its awesome tracking and the release of the board which allows the fisherman to fight the fish, not the board."

When using shallow-diving crankbaits, I put the lure 100-125 feet behind the board; deep-diving baits can be placed 50-85 feet behind the boards. Of course, the longer the distance behind the board the deeper the bait will run. Trout will be throughout the water column; however, the suspended fish are the more active fish. Trolling speeds of 1.5-2.0 mph will often put fish in your boat. *W*

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.

PRAYERS, from page 5

shooter. I came to full draw, and he stopped 6 yards away, right behind a tree—he had no clue what was about to happen.

I just had a feeling that I could thread an arrow between the tree's limbs, so I let it fly. My arrow hit its mark, and the buck ran 40 yards and tipped over. I couldn't believe my eyes. Then it hit me: I got so shook up, and I couldn't even stand, let alone climb out of the tree. I waited for my partners to come and get me so we could get the retrieval on film. Tony was thrilled that I finally took a mature buck on his farm.

... AND TREAT

Two weeks later was opening day of the gun season. I was fired up and

ready to have some fun. My plan was to hunt out of the same stand, which I'd nicknamed the Hellhole.

As the sun came up, the fog rolled in. It got so thick I couldn't see more than a few yards.

As the morning went on, the fog finally started to lift. Then I had a small buck come down off one of the ridges toward me. I let him pass but made him famous by capturing him on film.

Again I was compelled to pray for my friends and my family, and to thank God for the opportunity to be sitting where I was. Again, while my eyes were closed and I was in prayer, I was rudely interrupted by a grunting buck.

Now think of this: I was in a swamp where I could only see a few

yards. I could hear the buck walking and grunting, but couldn't see him. Then he worked his way up the ridge and I still couldn't see him. He walked across the ridge and grunted four or five times, but I never saw him.

This went on for almost an hour. I filmed a lot of it and was quickly becoming disappointed. Just then I caught movement and saw the rack of a mature buck appear. I swung the camera in that direction and got him in the rifle scope. As he turned broadside to walk away, I realized he was a shooter. I clicked off the safety and took the shot. Down he went.

As I sat there, I couldn't believe I'd taken another great buck from the Hellhole stand. I truly didn't know what

was lying in the marsh grass—I just knew he was a big deer. When I pulled that monster out of the grass, I could not believe my eyes! He was a main-frame 10-pointer with a lot of character.

As I stood over my deer, I received a text message from my brother; he'd shot a big 12-pointer. This was a great season: I was blessed with two great bucks. And I don't know if my prayers from the Hellhole helped, but I know they didn't hurt. *W*

Wildlife artist Jim Tostrud of Kenosha has dedicated his life to his love as an outdoorsman and a wildlife artist. He uses his art to share his respect and admiration for the outdoors and its inhabitants with others. Go to wildlifevisions.net.

TOM CARPENTER

CUB'S CORNER*Watch the waterfowl world come alive*

As spring slowly seeps across the landscape and replaces winter's gray grip, one of the year's great outdoor opportunities presents itself: The chance to witness the spectacle of spring's bird migration. This is also an opportunity to take a young naturalist into the field and continue to build an appreciation of wild things and wild places.

It's fun and rewarding to go birdwatching just for the sake of it. I guarantee the kids won't care that you're not trying to catch or shoot something. It's just another great reason to be with you, outside.

Some of spring's best bird-watching involves the world of waterfowl. Start your spring goose and duck watching as soon as the ice goes out. In a typical year, this can happen anywhere from late March to early April in the southern part of the state, and progressively later through April as you travel northward in Wisconsin.

Hearing Canada geese honking at night is probably your first sign that winter's hold is weakening. Look for them along marshes, ponds, lakes and creeks. Many years, geese will arrive before ice-out. No matter. The big birds seem to know they'll be swimming soon. Plus, they want to stake out the best nesting spots early. (It takes a long time to grow a goose to full size!)

It's fun to observe the ganders jockey for pecking order and compete with each other for mating rights. There's a lot of action. In some towns, geese may seem tame and pesky by summer, but now they make regal and heart-warming sights after a long winter. Kids love to watch them.

Ducks come next. Think of this migration as the inverse of what

happened in fall, when the little puddle ducks left early, then the big puddlers like mallards and wigeon came through, and finally, just before freeze-up, the diving ducks arrived. One of the benefits of watching spring waterfowl is that the birds are in spectacular breeding plumage now.

Diving ducks arrive first, only a few days (if that) behind last ice. You can see them on most any waterway, but focus on ponds and marshes, which open up first.



Bluebills (scaup) and ring-necked ducks (commonly called ringbills) are visible for a week or two. Look for their telltale white bellies, and black breasts and heads. Identify bluebills by their light-colored backs and slate-blue bills, ringbills by their dark-colored backs and namesake white rings around their bills. As a bonus, you might also see handsome red-headed ducks and canvasbacks mixed in.

Other diving ducks to observe include the tiny bufflehead (look for

the distinctive white crest on the male's iridescent purple-green head) and the common goldeneye (marked by a white spot on the male's shiny green head). Handsome common and hooded mergansers also make their appearance.

After the diving ducks leave to continue their journey north, the puddle ducks arrive, most often in the form of mallards. You can also observe the occasional wigeon and

pintail in Wisconsin, during migration. Each of these ducks is

quite a sight in its bright breeding plumage—green-headed mallards, wigeon with their white foreheads and green eye patches, and pintails with their cinnamon-colored heads and elegant long tails.

Gaudy-colored wood ducks will arrive later, and no bird is more impressive than a drake woody in full breeding regalia. Look for wood ducks on woodland ponds and reeks bordered by forest. Listen for the squeaks and squeals (not quacks) of wood ducks.

Finally, toward the end of April and on into May, when the water starts warming up some, the little ducks will return: green-winged and blue-winged teal. Handsome green-wings—with their chestnut-colored heads and green eye swashes—will continue their journey northward and westward to boreal nesting grounds. But many blue-winged teal will stay and nest right here in Wisconsin. Look for the male's bluish-gray head with bright white crescent ahead of the eye.

Other than the birds themselves, spring waterfowl watching has several additional attractions. One—you can do it on most any marsh, pond, lake or wetland close to home. You don't have to be in the wilderness at all. Two—you don't need to get up early. The birds will be there all day. And three—it's easy to equip yourself and your partner. A good pair of easy-to-use binoculars (in eight to ten power) is all you need, along with good waterproof boots and some warm clothes. Add snacks and hot chocolate.

Kids love getting a little mucky and muddy, and marshes and lakeshores are just the places for that, so let 'em have fun.

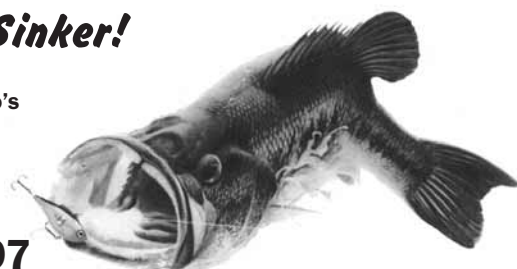
If you want to make an expedition of it, we have a couple world-class waterfowl destinations right here in Wisconsin, and the viewing is spectacular. The famous Horicon Marsh

(www.fws.gov/midwest/horicon) sees hundreds of thousands of waterfowl come through every spring. In the state's opposite corner, Crex Meadows near Grantsburg (www.crexmeadows.org) is another 30,000-plus acres of waterfowl heaven. Plus, there is much more than ducks and geese to see at each of these world-class wetlands.

You don't have to have a rod or gun in hand to have a great outdoor experience with your young sportsman or woman. Give spring waterfowl watching a try this year. Ducks and geese—and the important habitats they call home—can always use some more young fans. *W*

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Native son Tom Carpenter writes about the outdoor world for a variety of national and regional publications.

KEVIN MICHALOWSKI

DOG TALK*Name your training assistant*

When it comes to dog training, everyone can use a little help. Even the best trainers got started somewhere and still constantly look for tips and tricks to help them do better. They watch other trainers, ask questions and observe the goings on at competitions they attend.

But the average hunting dog owner does not have the same time to devote to dogs in the field. At best we can run short daily training sessions and maybe, maybe get a good session in on the weekend.

That's typically the best-case scenario. In the real world, we might go a couple days without conducting real training. Our dogs might sit in the kennel, seeing us only at feeding time and for a few minutes each day. It's not perfect, but it is what it is—and we have to live with it.

So, how can you improve your training skills and make the most of your training time? You can learn more about dog training by using some time during your busy day to read about dogs and training, or watch dog and trainers in action.

A good dog training book can be a godsend when it comes to helping you work your way through a tough spot. A video will let you see what you've been missing and show you how your training sessions "should" look. Trust me. Your sessions will not



always look like the ones you see in the training videos—Lord knows mine rarely do—but at least you have something to aim for while you have your dog in the yard or in the field.

A HELPING HAND

Let's take a look at a couple book titles I've found helpful over the years. The first is *Gun Dog Training*, by Bill Tarrant. In this book noted trainer and writer Tarrant profiles 20 of the nation's top trainers, getting their insight into how best to get dogs to do what you want. Trainers like George Hickox, Bob Bullard and Gary Ruppel all provide outstanding tips on every aspect of gun dog training.

If there is something you want to know about finishing a bird dog, this book will tell you. *Gun Dog Training*

is published by Voyageur Press of Stillwater, Minnesota, and can still be found in bookstores and online retailers.

Another good book is *The Ultimate Guide to Bird Dog Training*, by Jerome B. Robinson. With chapters on everything from starting your pup to how to build a callback pen for quail, the book truly gives you more information than you might ever need. But that's just enough information to help you create a great bird dog. Robinson's book was published by the Lyons Press back in 2000. You should still be able to order it from better book retailers.

Lest you think I'm only here to talk about pointing dogs, George Hickox has a great DVD designed to help dog owners through the first year of life with an upland retriever titles, *Great Beginnings: Training the Upland Retriever*. This hour-long video helps you with yard work and field work as it follows the life of Edy, a female lab.

The cool thing about this video is that it incorporates clicker training and e-collar training and shows you how to get the most of your young dog. Hickox also has a similar DVD for point breeds. Both are great helps. Find them at georgehickox.com.

The last book I will mention is *The Dog's Health from A to Z*. This 288-page guide will help you though the confusing array of health issues that face your dog. Don't think the book will replace a veterinarian. It won't. But it will give you a good idea of what's ailing your dog and let you know how serious things are.

The book is set up like a dictionary with definitions of the major elements of dog care. I would much rather the

book be arranged by symptom, to help diagnose an ailment, but with this book you do get a quick understanding of what your vet is talking about and how and why some things happen. Published by David and Charles, the book retails for \$24.95 and would be a welcome edition to any dog owner's library.

The one rule of dog training is that you can't do it alone. These books and videos will help you to get started or get over the tough spots you find during training. And best of all, if you don't find these helpful, there are hundreds more on the market. *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 Kevin Michalowski at askdogtalk@hotmail.com.



It's important to remember that it's difficult to train a dog alone. Getting help—especially through books and DVDs—will help you create a better gun dog.

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MIKE FOSS

DIARY OF A BEAR GUIDE

Success is best shared with friends

Did you get that Class A Wisconsin 2010 bear tag? By now everyone should have been notified if they did. If you did, congratulations! If not, hang in there. This is a great time of year to prepare yourself for when you do.

Looking for a bear guide service? Start making those phone calls now. Found a guide service? Your homework has just begun. There's an old saying out there, "leave no rock unturned." And now's the time to prepare yourself physically, and most of all, mentally.

The 2009 bear season was a historic one for Northern Wisconsin Outfitters. We have recorded many Pope and Young bears over the years, but never a Boone and Crockett worthy bear, and in 2009 we did just that. One of my clients, Craig Cichanofsky of Green Bay, shot one of those monster bears that every bear hunter dreams about. The official measurement is 21-2/16 Boone and Crockett Club points and the bruin weighed in at 639 pounds. Shooting a B&C bear is equivalent to shooting a 200-class whitetail; it just doesn't happen that often.

Once again my anticipation for the upcoming bear season and the thoughts of the great Snaggle Tooth and other huge bears is making this winter drag on. I can't wait for April 15th so I can once again place my bait stations, hang my trail cameras and attempt to outwit these crafty bears.

I have to be honest with you faithful OWO readers: I'm sitting here wondering what to write that I haven't written before about bears, and I now have writer's block. It would be simple if we had a polar bear hunt in Northern Wisconsin or even a Sasquatch or two; then it would be year-round action for me and more would be written.

When I started writing for OWO I was told to stick to hunting stories and not to write about products. Anyone that has written before knows what I'm talking about and should always follow the guidelines that your editor, "The Boss," has set.

I'm going to go out on a limb here and give a small product review, so please forgive me. Over the years with all the hunting products that has shown up at our camps, there has been a few, that we have noticed that have stood out from the rest. And when you do draw that coveted Class A bear tag, I truly hope you choose to hunt with us. But, if not, I hope this information still

proves helpful because it's what has been responsible for our success.

STICKING WITH WHAT WORKS

Almost everyone brings one to camp, and I probably have used and driven them all, but I have to say Suzuki's King Quad is my ATV of

choice. What a smooth ride from a workhorse machine. Power steering is available now on the King Quad 750 and 500 models, and it of course comes with camo options. Without one, my business wouldn't be as successful as it is.



Shouldn't this bear be sleeping? Well, technically, it is. Although most bears hibernate in some sort of structure, some will occasionally rest in the open and allow the snow to cover them as they hibernate.

choice. What a smooth ride from a workhorse machine. Power steering is available now on the King Quad 750 and 500 models, and it of course comes with camo options. Without one, my business wouldn't be as successful as it is.

Tracking dangerous game, especially at night, can be a hair-raising experience. For tracking we have used every flash light, lantern and spotlight imaginable, but I was recently told about a new flash light from Bushnell—the Torch. Unless something

else comes out on the market today that is better, this is the flashlight that I will continue to use. The Torch evenly distributes a square beam to prevent the formation of shadows. Conventional flashlights often produce circular patterns of light that are non-uniform. The Torch has a powerful 165-lumen output and a 1.5-

hour continuous run time—and its waterproof. It's perfect for bloodtrailing bears in the dark.

Good equipment plays a big role when it comes to hunting. When it comes to field dressing, skinning, quartering and de-boning, Buck Knives are hard to beat. From day No. 1, my guide service has used an assortment of Buck Knives for our chores. With a thick steel

blade for those big-boned animals, its reliable and has a lifetime warranty. You will always see one hanging from my belt at bear camp.

After a client is booked, one of the most asked questions from archery bear hunters is, "What broadhead do you recommend?" About half of the bear hunters in my camp each year are archery hunters, so I have seen most every broadhead out there: some I like and some I don't.

About 9 years ago I started to see more and more of one particular broadhead, the G5 Montec. It is a stainless-steel, cut-on-impact, fixed-blade broadhead. What I noticed was after the kill, whether it was a pass-through or not, the broadhead was still intact. It has no moveable or breakable parts and can be easily re-sharpened. G5 is my choice for bears.

There are many great hunting-related products out there, many reviews good and bad, but these are some that I personally use and have seen used by clients that might help you in your next adventure. Here's the bottom-line: If you're successful with a piece of equipment and you like it—then use it.

Find out if the legendary big bear Snaggle Tooth returns in the May/June issue of OWO. I have brand new Cuddeback trail cameras ready to capture him." *W*

Mike Foss was born and raised in Washburn, Wisconsin. As a guide and owner of Northern Wisconsin Outfitters, has harvested bear and many deer, including several record book bucks. Off season, Mike spends time with his family and constantly scouting for new hunting areas and adventures. Northern Wisconsin Outfitters is now booking for the 2010 bear season. Go to www.northernwisconsinoutfitters.com or call them at 715.373.0344.



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S. WILKERSON

SURPLUS FIREARMS

The TT33 cheap shot

Firearm enthusiasts will remember 2009 as the Year of the Great Panic. With the election of avowed anti-gunner Barack Obama and Congress firmly in the hands of the traditionally anti-Second Amendment Democratic party, it was no wonder that a gun and ammunition buying frenzy ensued. The pack became absolutely rabid early in the Obama presidency when Attorney General Eric Holder announced the administration's support for a new assault rifle ban in order to combat the illegal flow of American weapons to Mexican drug cartels.

Holder's charge was totally bogus and despite the best efforts of the mainstream media to prevent it, the truth came out. Few guns crossed the border from the United States into Mexico and into the hands of the drug dealers. More importantly than the truth was the fact that Blue Dog Democrats immediately made it clear that they would not support the reinstatement of an assault weapon ban or any additional laws that prevented law abiding citizens from owning firearms. Holder scurried back under his desk to plot another day. Make no mistake, though, he and his buds will be back.

Eventually, sanity returned to the gun market, but not before I, for example, spent a good 20 percent more for an FAL than what I could sell it for now (which I won't anytime soon - it is one of the best guns I own). Gun prices, like those of houses, have plummeted. Conversely, the selection is wide and varied. There are some really neat guns out there for sale looking for homes. Many of them will be looking for a while; when you're unemployed, adding another gun to the collection is not on the top of the priority list.

Not every aspect of the Great Panic has dissipated. Ammunition is still scarce and ridiculously expensive. My guns that shoot .308 and 5.56 x 45 are sitting in my gun cabinets. At fifty-cents a round or more, I can't afford to shoot them. Not so some other guns in my collection. They are historically interesting, inexpensive to buy, and best of all, really cheap to shoot.

No better example of this exists right now on the gun market than the Romanian TT33 pistols as imported by Century Arms International. The TT33 will never win any beauty contests, but it would probably win most endurance contests. As far as bargains go, there

are none better. One major player in the surplus arms field is selling TTs in excellent conditions AND 1,260 rounds of ammunition for less than \$300! This gun is every bit as reliable as the much-touted 1911A1, plenty powerful enough, and at least as accurate as a garden variety .45 automatic. The big difference is that the least expensive, good quality .45 Auto round cost something like forty cents each. A TT33 round can be had for something like nine cents a round.

Made from honest to goodness machined steel, as compared to the cast steel frames of many 1911s, the TT33 is a great example of Old World Commie Block craftsmanship. Parts fit tight, metal polishing is better than most new commercial guns, bluing is dark and pleasing, and, unlike too many new guns, it will shoot right out of the box. In addition to Romania, TT33s were made in Russia (where they originated), Poland, China, Hungary and Yugoslavia. They are an affordable and interesting collectible.

An interesting collectible that shoots well, too, despite its way too tiny sights. Three-inch groups at 25 yards or less are not uncommon. Trigger pulls are in the four-pound range and recoil is manageable. The guns are thin and fit the hand well. Originally constructed without safeties (other than a half-cock), the BATF demands that TT33s have a safety added in order to be sold in this country. The ungainly mechanisms don't do the already challenged aesthetics any favors, but they do work. TT33s are also very easy to field strip, which is a good thing if you're shooting corrosive ammunition.

Another highly collectible, and also sorta ugly, but really cheap-to-shoot surplus firearm is the Mosin Nagant 91/30 rifles and its more attractive M44 carbine sister. If you have a Curios and Relics license, you can easily purchase an excellent example of one of these for less than \$200 via the internet. The super-accurate Finnish reworks are appreciably more expensive; primo versions of scarce models can sell for up to \$500. They will also shoot rings around the much more expensive Model 1903 Springfields and M1 Garands. The ammunition is also cheaper. A 440 round case of surplus 7.62 x 54 can be bought for less than \$100. Have you priced commercially made 30'06 lately?



What the TT33 lacks in looks, it more than makes up in affordability and reliability

Shooting surplus guns like the 91/30 and TT33 does have some drawbacks. Gun ranges are, too often, filled with Fudds shooting expensive bolt action rifles at 50 yards with giant scopes on them. Do not be surprised if they look down upon you as a knuckle-dragging neanderthal for sullying their shooting experience with - egads! - an ancient Commie gun made by slave laborers. Some Fudds literally fear for their lives at the site of a surplus gun, convinced that your "unsafe relic" will grenade at the first shot, peppering them with lethal shrapnel. Ignore these idiots for the idiots that they are. Only an enlightened (and frugal) few can truly appreciate the joys that come from shooting a surplus arm.

That joy will turn to horror if you don't clean your gun shortly after you're finished shooting corrosive ammunition. When I'm done shooting corrosive ammunition, I immediately spray the bore, bolt, and exposed metal parts with Windex. Many, perhaps most, commercial gun cleaners will not dissolve the corrosive salts that will quickly rust your gun if left unattended. Only water-based products will get rid of the salts. Probably the most effective cleanser of corrosive salt is hot, soapy water, which, as an added bonus, is so cheap, it's practically free. Yet another benefit of shooting cheap guns with cheap ammunition.

If the high cost of ammunition has got you down, do yourself a

favor: Look into the purchase of a firearm from behind the Iron Curtain. In this article, we only looked at two guns firing two calibers. There are a multitude of others, including SKS carbines firing the 7.62 x 39 round, Makarovs in 9 x 18, AKs in 5.45 x 39 and 8 mm Mausers. Some of the ammunition is not only inexpensive, but also non-corrosive.

As a political system, communism didn't have much to recommend it. In terms of their firearms, though, I can highly recommend them. Cheap, durable, historic, they are all guaranteed to increase in value as the years go by. Can you say the same for the typical Remchestergering hunting rifle?

APOLOGIES

From time-to-time, I receive letters and phone calls from readers. I really appreciate these and enjoy discussing firearms with you. Unfortunately, letters and the post-it notes that I scribble telephone numbers on often get lost. I do want to hear from you, and to facilitate that, Wisconsin Outdoors has assigned me my very own email address:

cheapshots@onwisconsinoutdoors.com

Thanks and good shooting. *W*

S. Wilkerson is an award-winning Wisconsin journalist, firearms expert and student of the Second Amendment. Contact him by email at cheapshots@onwisconsinoutdoors.com

TERRY BITZ

OUTDOOR CONVERGENCE

The perch migration



If you can handle the Bears fans, Lake Michigan should be your top destination for springtime perch.

Illinois is generally not thought of as a prime destination for Wisconsin anglers. And, for the most part, I agree with that assessment. There are good reasons those Flatlanders pack their vehicles and head north to Wisconsin for recreation. Illinois does offer some good fishing destinations; however, access can

look for the flotilla of boats out on the water.

Captain Doug Kloet of Doug Kloet's Guide Service has been one of the many anglers who have been able to take advantage of the rebound in the number and size of perch caught in this locale.

"On a good day we catch our limit

be limited. Many of the easily accessible others waters are mediocre fisheries that get pounded by the local anglers.

There are, however, some exceptions. One notable one is the perch fishing on Lake Michigan just south of the Wisconsin border. The fishing here can be excellent, especially late March through April.

The spot that gets quite a bit of attention, and is easily reached by Wisconsin anglers, is just outside the Waukegan harbor. In the spring, the perch tend to be holding in depths from 50-70 feet of water. The lake bottom there has areas of rock that attract bait-fish, the perch and consequently anglers. While the fish can be spread over a wide area, the general location is easy to find; just

of fish in a couple of hours," said Kloet.

The current limit is 15 fish per person and these are not the typical 6- to 8-inch perch found on inland waters; the fish here often exceed 12 inches with 15 inchers taken on occasion.

While many anglers wait until late April or May to chase the perch in "good" weather, Kloet says the bigger fish are easier to catch early in the season. He tries to get out as often as he can in March and April.

"When you first get out (in the spring), you hardly catch anything under 13 inches," he said.

According to Kloet, the size of the fish often declines as the season progresses. He believes the schools of big females scatter due to various reasons including spawning preparation and angler pressure. However, big fish are often caught right up until the season closes in June.

PAYING ATTENTION TO DETAIL

The rigging and presentation to fish for the perch is relatively simple. Small fathead minnows and shiners are often the bait of choice, though soft plastics are an option. Anglers commonly use three-way rigs that consist of a three-way swivel attached to the main line. A heavy 2- to 3-ounce sinker is tied to the bottom ring of the swivel. Attached to the side ring is a trailing line about two feet long which contains a small octopus-style hook.

Kloet also uses a drop-shot rig that contains a heavy weight hung at the end of the main line. One or two hooks are

tied a foot or two up the line. Simply drop either rig to the bottom and slowly bounce it up and down off the bottom.

Some anglers prefer to anchor onto a hotspot, but others will often drift though an area to contact feeding fish. If the winds are calm, many will utilize their trolling motors to slowly move around to look for active fish. Often the schools can be seen on the fish finder.

While the perch will occasionally smack the bait aggressively, often the only indication that a fish has taken the bait is that the line will get heavy. When that happens, reel up the slack in the line and set the hook.

Because this is a popular fishing spot, expect to have some company, especially on the weekends. The pressure is much lighter on weekdays and the boat launch is not nearly as busy.

One good option for launching is Winthrop Harbor located about 8 miles north. There is no launch fee and it offers an excellent boat launch and fish cleaning facilities.

I'm generally not fond of going places where I'm going to be surrounded by Bear fans, but when it comes to fishing for perch outside of Waukegan, I'm willing to make an exception. *W*

Doug Kloet of Doug Kloet's Guide Service can be reached at 262.705.7415.

Terry Bitz is a freelance writer who resides in Pleasant Prairie, WI. He can be contacted at tbitz@wi.rr.com, or visit his web site at www.outdoorconvergence.com.

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www.onwisconsinoutdoors.com

DAVE LEMKE

BACK TO THE BASICS

Dam torpedoes

As winter loses its grip to spring's thaw, rivers start to swell and bring a wave of torpedoes—the chunky walleyes on their annual spawning upstream migration.

The torpedoes in the swollen rivers sometimes encounter an obstacle in the form of dams. Many fishermen know that this is the spot for some fantastic walleye fishing and the amount of boats on the water gives proof to that. For the shore fishermen, this is the best time of year to catch walleyes.

After the spawn, the walleyes will go back to the open water where they originated from, leaving the shore fishermen less chance at catching the prized fish. Fishing from shore offers a great way to catch walleyes at the dams that congregate them.

From the Menominee to the Rock Rivers and in between, Wisconsin offers many opportunities to fish from shore for walleyes at dams. Many of these places end up being downtown in some pretty decent sized cities. Being from the Fox Cities, I have fished and caught walleyes at dams in Appleton, Kaukauna, Menasha and Neenah. Then there is Voyager Park in De Pere, where you have a crack at a truly large trophy walleye, all while fishing from shore.



While other fishermen were at home polishing their boats, the angler found himself submersed in hungry walleyes below the Appleton dam.

'BOATLESS' SUCCESS

Yes, I do have a boat, and use it to fish for walleyes on the rivers in spring. Warm sunny days can give you the itch to fish open water, but when the ice still locks the rivers, I grab my pole and head for the dams.

The river right below a dam is the first to open up, and many times fishing from shore is the only option. Believe

me, there will be some walleyes already there. Once you get to the dam, current breaks and eddies are spots you will want to look for to fish. Also, warm water discharge areas can be real magnets for these downtown torpedoes.

Fishing at this time of the year means some pretty cold water, and the walleyes can be finicky. One of my favorite spots has gravel at the end of a warm water discharge. I cast out a Lindy rig with a ¼-ounce Lindy sinker over the gravel. I drill a hole in the sinker, which removes weight and reduces resistance for when the finicky walleye picks up the bait.

After 18 inches of 4- to 6-pound monofilament line (super lines tend to sink to fast), I will use a No. 10 hook with a bead in front or a No. 10 Mack's Lure Glo Hook. The Glo Hook will help it float a bit and the glow will help fish locate the bait. Bait the hook with a minnow slightly larger than you would use for panfish. I cast the Lindy rig out over the gravel and let it settle for a while. Then slowly drag it by lifting the rod tip for about a foot, let it pause for a minute, reel in the slack, and then repeat the process again.

What is nice about the Lindy Rig is that when a walleye starts to nibble, you can open the bail and let the fish take the line. Another way for these light biting walleyes is to use a small hook or Glo Hook under a small bobber. Cast it upstream, let it float through the spot, and then repeat.

Certainly other methods will work when the fish are more aggressive. Bouncing a jig and minnow off the bottom back to shore is an old standby. Swim a jig with a plastic grub and tail just off bottom with a slow steady retrieve is another way. Also, casting a crankbait or spoon can entice a walleye to bite.

Just before dark and into the night is usually the best time, and if you want to brave the cold, early mornings can be effective, too. Depending on the weather, I have been to the dams as early as the end of February, but the first part of March is more the norm.

So that is where you will see me; the run is on. *W*

David Lemke operates Soaring Eagle Guide Service on his home waters of the Wolf River System and in Langlade, Forest, Oneida, and Vilas counties. Contact Dave at 920.585.5527 or visit his website at www.1soaringeagle.com.

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TOM LUTES

WISCONSIN'S WETLAND WARRIORS

Completing the circle: The waterfowl season starts now

I vividly recall when the notion first struck me to get more involved in waterfowl conservation efforts. I was on my first hunting trip to the Missouri Choteau prairie pothole region of Saskatchewan.

As is normal practice on the prairie, you do a lot of driving in the scouting process to locate concentration of ducks. During these scouting trips it struck me as unusual the amount of plowed ground right up to the edge of most of the wetland marshes. In fact, because it was a dry year, many of the temporary wetlands had been plowed or hayed. At the time I had absolutely no knowledge or experience in the science or biology of wetlands or waterfowl resources. However, I intuitively knew that what I was seeing out the truck window was a bad deal for the ducks and the duck hunter.

Coincidentally, shortly thereafter I was exposed to the Wisconsin Waterfowl Association (WWA) as a result of a wetland restoration project the WWA was doing on a piece of land that I lease. Through the prairie experience and being involved in my own little piece of "duckland," a fire was lit to find out more about what drives and endangers the resource that I love so much.

GET EDUCATED

Step No. 1 in the process was to educate myself on the various aspects of the waterfowl resource and the various types of habitat critical to their well being. I was fortunate to have my own little classroom in the small wetland restoration project I was involved with.

In addition, I had a strong thirst for any type of information that would further my understanding of what made the duck factory tick. I read, attended field workshops and got involved with any organization that watched over the waterfowl resource, such as WWA, Ducks Unlimited (DU), Wisconsin Waterfowl Conference, USA Waterfowl and others.

I learned from many along the way, including individuals, conservation organizations members and state and federal biologists. One person who stands out in this education was Jeff Nania, who was the executive director of WWA at the time. Nania is high energy, very knowledgeable and passionate about wetland restoration. But his first love is teaching others and I was fortunate to absorb a little from him as we worked on my restoration project.



The author and Ruby after a 'Sweet 16' day of greenhead hunting.

"To most of us hardcore waterfowlers, waterfowl conservation is a life style and not just an event that lasts 60 days. Learning more about the resource and getting involved in conservation efforts is another step in the overall process."

It was here that I first learned that it's not about just digging a pond, but restoring the landscape to its historic state to allow the "system" of hydrology, wetland vegetation and upland habitat to properly interact and work the way it once did before man botched it up in the name of progress.

GET INVOLVED

The next step was to make the commitment to volunteer time to the cause. I first signed up to be on the local event committee for my local DU chapter. This was rewarding and yet another step in the learning process.

From there, and as a result of my further involvement with the WWA, I eventually became a member of the Board of Directors of the Wisconsin Waterfowl Association. This has allowed

me to learn even more and make a larger impact on the resource.

Even though I am a Director for the WWA, I'm not of the group that views all other conservation groups as the "competition." Sure we all are chasing the same dollars, but in the end I follow the old saying "it's all good." In fact, I would contend if we could ask the ducks, they would prefer we work together more, not less.

Multiple conservation organizations successfully exist, even in the same area such as waterfowl, because we tend to carve out our own niches. Over time these collective, but different efforts, will make one plus one equal three.

GET FOCUSED

In business, we often talk about if you try to be all things to all people all of

the time, you will likely fail. I was drawn to the WWA because they have a unique focus and niche in the world of waterfowl resource management.

The WWA is unique in several ways:

- All of the funds raised stay in the State of Wisconsin. Although there are many important areas in the North America that need attention, most notably the prairie pothole region in the United States and Canada, Wisconsin wetlands are particularly relevant to the Wisconsin duck hunter because nearly 70 percent of the ducks shot in Wisconsin are raised in Wisconsin.
- The WWA takes an active role at the capitol, fighting for hunter's rights. Most recently we have fought and made a difference in the Upper Mississippi CCP plan and the hunting rights on public lands purchased with Stewardship funds.
- WWA is the only organization that has its own field habitat teams that perform wetland restoration.
- WWA takes an active role in providing manpower and expertise to numerous environmental charter schools in the state.

GET REWARDED

To most of us hardcore waterfowlers, waterfowl conservation is a life style and not just an event that lasts 60 days. Learning more about the resource and getting involved in conservation efforts is another step in the overall process. It's very similar to the deer hunter who moves from hunting to managing a piece of land for whitetails. It's not only fun, but it will make you a better hunter and "extend" your season through out the calendar.

I'm not ready to say it is better than a bunch of canvasbacks cupped over the blocks, but getting educated on the resource and getting involved to make a difference provides a uniquely rewarding experience that completes the circle in the overall waterfowling experience. *W*

Tom Lutes sits on the Board of Directors and serves as president of the Wisconsin Waterfowl Association. For more information about WWA, visit wisducks.org, or call 800. 524.8460.

On Wisconsin Outdoors Board of Directors



Rex Rodsalotta

*Dear Rex Rodsalotta,
I was on the Winnebago hardwater for the first time during the sturgeon spearing season. There must have been 100 big, fat, bottom- sucking, smelly, gross things just laying there on the ice wallowing and gasping for air. Did you ever see anything like that?*

–Kyle Brown, Oak Creek

Dear Kyle,
Yes. I've been to the US Senate twice.

–Rex Rodsalotta



Hunter Daily

*Dear Hunter Daily,
Is man-made global warming true?*

–Sophie Richardson, Platteville

Dear Sophie,
As true as a Jim Doyle campaign promise that the Governor would not appoint the DNR Secretary.

–Hunter Daily



Conibear Smith

*Dear Conibear Smith,
Sturgeon spearkers use lures just like trappers. I watched some cool old timers' lower decoys to raise the sturgeon. Did you know that they speared a 212 pound state record? The media was going crazy!*

–Freddy Welsh, Cable

Dear Fred-O,
Sturgeon spearkers are the very essence of Wisconsin outdoors. And yes, when I first saw the cameras flashing, that leathery skin and that big, round mouth open but saying nothing at all, I thought I had tuned into a Nancy Pelosi press conference.

–Conibear Smith

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JARROD ERDODY

BLOOD BROTHERS OUTDOORS

Hunting for hunting spots

Shaking and sniffing from the flu, I picked up a popular hunting magazine from the rack while waiting for a prescription that would hopefully end my misery. "Four Hot Tips to Get Access on Great Hunting Land" the headline across the cover read.

Okay, I'll bite, I thought as I scrambled to page 40-something, hoping to read something profound and then hide my new secrets by placing all those issues behind the least popular magazines. What I read was this: Tip No. 1: Lease some land; Tip No. 2: Buy some land; Tip No. 3: Knock on doors and ask permission; and Tip No. 4: Hunt public land.

Wow, are you kidding? Hot tips? I was thinking my 4 year old would've known that much already.

One of the most common questions I see on our bloodbro.com forum and in emails sent to me is, "How do I get permission on good properties?" So in these late-winter, early spring months that find us pondering the next hunting season, I thought I'd offer some more detailed, applicable advice when it comes to finding that next hotspot.

TIP NO. 1: LOWER YOUR EXPECTATIONS

First, you're going to need to face the reality that strolling up to a landowner's doorstep out-of-the-blue and gaining exclusive permission to

hunt his 400 acre never-before-hunted-yet-teeming-with-big-bucks slice of heaven for free is simply not realistic. Yet, so many of us stubbornly pass on very good properties because they're less than our "ideal" property. Maybe it gets pounded by gun hunters. Maybe you'd have to share with others. Maybe you would only be allowed to hunt on Tuesdays. Whatever the stipulations the landowner has, if the property is good, then it's worth it to sacrifice these less than ideal conditions.

If there's one thing certain about the future, it's change. Getting your foot in the door and having a chance to build trust should be all you can ask for. You might not kill a good buck with "Lee & Tiffany tactics" on the property, but if good bucks are around, they've obviously found a way to survive. So, if you're willing to pattern the hunters and not just the deer, you could be in for some great hunting.

TIP NO. 2: SHORTEN YOUR TIMEFRAME

Keep your eyes on a certain property you think would be tough to get access on and keep a mental note of when it looks busy and when it's empty. Visit the landowner when things are slow and ask for permission for just that day or for a particular day or two. Tell him specifically that you're just hoping to hunt for a



Regular glassing from your vehicle is a great way of determining which spots are worth pursuing permission, and more importantly, when.

day or two. I think landowners are more willing to take a chance on a stranger when there's a short timeframe around the request. If you do get access, make a point to get to know them more and let them get to know you. This builds trust and might give you a better chance for more access next time.

TIP NO. 3: WILL YOU BE MY FRIEND?

If you suddenly inherited more land than you could possibly hunt, who would you share access with? I doubt you would put an ad in the paper inviting strangers to hunt with you. You'd call up your friends, right? We all do it.

When we need an electrician, we ask a friend for a recommendation. When we need a new bow, we ask our friends, "What do you shoot?" Well, if 'ol lady Tingley finally gets fed up with the deer eating her garden, she's going to ask her friends if she knows any nice hunters who might come out and kill some of her deer! The more you are known by your co-workers, church congregation, family and friends as a respectful, trustworthy hunter, the better your odds that your name will be given to those folks who are "asking around."

TIP NO. 4: FORGET ABOUT HUNTING

As hard as it might be, sometimes the best thing we can do for our hunting future is to pretend we don't do it. Stop by a neighbor's and introduce yourself just because it's a nice thing to do. Maybe strike up a conversation about the cool old car he has in his driveway. Let him get to know you and see you're a well-rounded person.

Don't necessarily offer to do some work for him for hunting, just offer to do some work for him, period. Do things for people because you're a good person and don't expect anything in return. Sometimes when we set aside our biggest passions and selfish motivations, the doors of opportunity open the widest.

I wish you all luck in achieving access to the properties of your dreams! *W*



The author scored on this big buck after gaining permission for just a short time during muzzleloading season after the landowner's family was done hunting for the year.

Jarrold Erdody is co-owner of Blood Brothers Outdoors (bloodbro.com), which makes instructional hunting videos geared toward killing mature bucks year after year. He is a proud father of three and owns Erdody Studios, which provides web design, graphic design, video production, and other creative services to a wide range of clientele, many in the outdoor industry.

PHIL SCHWEIK

LINES FROM A HOOKSETTER

Choosing the right fishing guide



Need a vacation? Fishing new water? Do you just want to go out and learn some new techniques?

These are some of the reasons why people hire fishing guides. But when it comes to hiring a guide, which one is the right one?

There are many conditions to consider when hiring the "perfect" guide, but with a little guidance, I'm sure we can find one that will suit you.

A GUIDE FOR ME

With all of the so called "guides" that are around today—and with the ease that it takes to get a guide license—how do I know which one is the right one to choose? How do I know which one is a good guide or which one is just out there to take my money?

Don't get me wrong there are plenty of good guides on the water but there are also a few substandard guides as well. I want the one that is going to take proper care of me and best fit my situation so that we end up having a great day on the water.

Here is a 10-step checklist to consider to see if the guide you choose is the right one for you.

1. Age

Will the guide be compatible with you and your guests due to his/her age? You don't want a 16-year-old guide taking out 50- or 60 year-old clients, or vice versa. It's a long day in the boat and on the water, and you will need to be able to communicate on a compatible level of knowledge and experience regarding many different issues that are both on and off the water.

2. Skill

Does the guide have the skill level you are looking for? Are you looking at learning new techniques or are you just going out for a day on the water? Can the guide provide

Check with tournament anglers or recent tournament postings. Many good guides are, or have at one time, been top tournament angler in their field.

5. Experience

How long has this person been guiding? Are they a greenhorn with a lack of skills or are they a seasoned veteran with a lot of knowledge and experience. Remember the old saying from way back, "time on the water." This has a lot of truth to it.

6. Personality

If everything else checks out, the personality of a guide can make or break a day. It's not always about the fishing; even on a bad day a fantastic personality from a good guide will turn it into a success, but the most excellent day on the water can end up being terrible because of a guide's



the information needed to make the day a success? Do they have knowledge and history of the water that you want and intend to fish?

3. Species

Is this the best guide for the species that you want to target? You're not going to hire a bass guide to take you muskie fishing, are you? You want a guide that is an expert in their suitable field.

4. Reputation

When it comes to hiring a guide, you want to check out their reputation. Go to or call local sporting goods stores and bait shops to find out all you can about a specific guide. They are going to tell you if the guide you have chosen is a good guide or not.

They will also tell you how long that this particular guide has been around and if they think he/she will do a good job on the water with you and your guests. They might even have a better choice for you to choose from.

7. Equipment

Make sure that the guide you hire has a clean boat and the proper equipment for your trip. You don't want to go out with a disorganized guide that doesn't have decent equipment. It not only sends a negative message but it says a lot about how your day is going to go.

8. Website

A lot can be taken from a guide's website; you just need to know where to look. Check out rates pages to see if

they are reasonable. Check out the guide's page to get the background and history of the guide. Check out the guide's message board and fishing reports to see if they have been doing their homework and if they have or have not been on the water. Find out what is biting and if the time you choose to go is the right time!

9. Articles

Check local newspapers or magazines for articles about this guide or check the internet for other publications from or about the guide you choose. If he is any good at all, there are sure to be at least a few.

10. Ask Around

Many times guides are referred to people by friends or relatives that either know them or have heard of them. Don't be afraid to ask around to see if the guide you choose is going to be the right one for you. Even go as far as to ask other guides about a particular guide you are thinking about hiring. Most of the guides know who the good ones are and they are going to tell you. *W*

Phil Schweik owns and operates Hooksetters Guide Service. As of October 19, Phil Schweik client's had caught and released 118 muskies, with a large fish of 51 inches and 35 pounds. Contact Phil at 715.581.2620 or by visiting www.hooksetters.biz.



JJ REICH

PRODUCT 6-PACK*Great gear for the woods, fields and waterways*

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

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The attention to detail on this pot call is quite impressive. And the call has features I've never seen before, such as a no-slip ring on the pot portion, plus a quick and easy striker-tip resurfacing tool built-in on the bottom of the pot. Plus the free DVD makes it an even better deal.

ZinkCalls.com**CODY HOLEI BOX CALL**

For \$75, this one-sided box call features specifically placed "holes" in the call's sides to generate remarkable acoustics. In addition, the innovative concave lid, combined with the stronger vertical-core design of the call's striking side produces easy,

precise and realistic hen sounds—yet requires very little chalk.

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Have you seen anything like it? Probably not. Anyway, the acoustic hole and vertical-core side makes for louder, high-quality sounds. Cody's Holei calls are available in wild cherry, chestnut, camouflage and walnut (pictured).

CodyTurkeyCalls.com**GOBEE MARINE BOW LIGHT**

For \$199, this wireless, remote-controlled searchlight is combined with a bi-color navigation light. The bow light installs quickly with a two- or three-pin bow socket and its extended pole ensures it will not interfere with your bow-mounted trolling motor. The 1,000+ lumens of powerful lighting can be rotated 360 degrees with a 90-degree vertical tilt and has 16 different programmable security settings.



This sleek spotlight looks and works great. The remote control makes it easy to adjust the light from anywhere. I like to keep the remote control in my pocket to turn the light on and off from shore, helping me see when loading my boat on and off the trailer in the dark.

GoLight.com**WILEY-X ZAK SUNGLASSES**

For \$126, Zak sunglasses from Wiley-X combine great looks, maximum eye protection, clarity and contrast, and feature rubber nose-bridge and temple gloves provide a secure and snug fit. Leash cord, zippered case and cleaning cloth are included.



If you need new sunglasses for fishing, you can't go wrong with Wiley-X. Comfort, durability, clarity and sleek design are these sunglasses' best features. A variety of frame and lens options are available, including polarized blue mirror with gloss black frame (pictured).

Wiley-X.com**CARRY-LITE PRETTY MAMA**

For \$35, the Carry-Lite Pretty Mama feeding hen is made from a hand-carved detailed mold that features a realistic paint scheme. Its

material is soft and pliable for easy folding and transport. And, the head was molded from a real freeze-dried taxidermy turkey head for life-like appearance. A wind-activated motion stake is included.



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CarryLiteDecoys.com**PRIMOS SONIC DOME TRIO**

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People who have trouble calling with the "standard design" of mouth calls are often surprised find out Sonic Domes calls fit, feel and seal better for them, because of the cover over the reeds. If you are one of these folks, try these mouth calls. They'll likely work wonders for you.

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JJ Reich is an outdoor writer who contributes product-related articles to several national publications and is the author of *Kampp Tales™* hunting books for children (www.kamptales.com).

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