

July/August 2011
Vol. 4, Issue 6

On Wisconsin *Outdoors*

with the
Dick Ellis Experts

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JERRY KIESOW

Fly Fishing In Wisconsin Grasshoppers

In the 2008 July/August issue of this publication, I wrote a story about terrestrials. It was a broad look that included just about anything that falls into the water—ants, caterpillars, beetles, grasshoppers, moths, even berries. Today I'd like to concentrate on one of those critters—the grasshopper.

A Bit Of History

I am not exactly sure when the first grasshopper pattern was tied. Some patterns use the Don Gopen technique of spinning deer hair and trimming it to form the head as he did on his Muddler Minnow. Gopen introduced his fly in the late 30s. The Letort Hopper is one example.

I know that in the late 40s/early 50s, a pattern, then called the Michigan Hopper, became popularized by the well read outdoor writer Joe Brooks. As a matter of fact, he expounded on its virtues so much that it became known as Joe's Hopper; the name it is identified with today. This fly is totally different in color and silhouette but it catches fish.

A few years later, another well known author and tier, Dave Whitlock, designed his own pattern called Dave's Hopper, using the general idea of the Joe's but with a more accurate profile. All three patterns are still popular, because they all catch fish, along with a multitude of other hopper imitations.

The Pattern And Variations

I tie the above hoppers, plus some of my own design. The recipe listed below is one which is basically Joe's Hopper, but I tie it with a foam body.

Hook: #6 streamer, as fine a wire you can find so it floats longer.

Thread: Brown.

Tail: Red bucktail.

Body: Yellow closed foam (the original Joe used yellow wool dubbing). Palmered with brown hackle spaced like ribbing.

Wings: Turkey wings, back to back, lacquered.

Hackle: Brown and grizzly mixed.

Variations of this particular pattern can be: larger and/or smaller hook sizes, 6 through 12; you can use black thread instead of brown (you can always use black thread); the tail can be red hackle fibers or even a strip of red wing feather. (I like bucktail, because it is a tougher material and holds the fly on the surface better.)

As mentioned above, the body can be dubbed with either wool or some other dubbing material but it must be yellow. I used foam, because the foam floats better than the dubbing. Other patterns I use if I forget to put my hopper box in my vest are: a yellow Muddler Minnow and the Hendrickson; both fished dry.

Where And How

Grasshoppers live in fields; grass. You won't find them in a mature forest. To fish hoppers you need to find water running through a meadow. Or, believe it or not, the lawns of homes and cottages around our lakes and rivers also harbor hoppers, so don't overlook this fly when searching for panfish or bass this time of the year. A natural rule of thumb

is: Walk the land. If you move the critters (grasshoppers), fish the fly.

How do you fish a grasshopper? Well, you catch one in a net. Impel it on your hook and let it kick its legs. Not exactly. But you do make your fly kick and quiver and put up a bit of a fuss just like the real ones would do.

Basically, I try to cast onto the grass at the edge of the water. Then I "drop" it from the grass into the water, then let it rest from the fall. This is how it happens in real



Whether you fish small creeks, lakes or large rivers, if grasshoppers jump from you as you walk the shore, put a fraud on your tippet.

life. After the fly has rested a bit from the fall, I make it kick and churn up the surface as if it is struggling to get back to dry ground. Hopefully, it will not make it. Hopefully, it will become lunch.

This is not a fly to be fished at early dawn or late dusk. The little critters will not be naturally moving then. This is a fly to fish during late morning or even midday; once the dew is off the grass in the morning and before it gets too cool in the evening.


Although originally designed for trout, these frauds will catch their fair share of smallmouths and bluegills.

A Quick Story

On a warm, late morning in August, I eased the canoe from our pier and began casting. My target for the day was smallmouth bass, now lying in the shade. Because I had kicked up many grasshoppers on my way to the river, I opted to use one of my frauds.

Bouncing the fly off some fallen wood, I twitched the hopper and had an immediate response. But, it was not the smallie I expected. Rather, a chunky bluegill spun the leader round and round, not wanting to come to me. But it relented and so did nine others that morning. Smallmouth? Never saw one.

In Conclusion

If you are in an area where you walk the shore and kick up critters that leap high and wide, tie a grasshopper to your tippet. Odds are something will take it for brunch. 

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 e-mail at mrmrsprg8@wi.rr.com.



Author's box of grasshopper patterns with Dave's Hopper on the left, Joe's Hopper on the right and the Letort Hopper at the bottom.

DIANE SCHAUER

Death In The Water

The aquatic invasion

Waterfowl are dying in large numbers. Since 1996 more than 35,000 birds, mostly coots, lesser scaup, teal, buffleheads and ruddy ducks have died in the Shawano area. From 2002-2010 the same killer has taken out an estimated 100,000 waterbirds in Pools 7 & 8 along the Mississippi River. More than 7,000 waterfowl have died in and around Lake Winnibigoshish, Minnesota, since 2007. These huge numbers demonstrate a very serious threat to waterfowl and waterfowl hunting throughout the upper Midwest.

According to a 2009 report by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the 66,000 waterfowl hunters in Wisconsin spent more than \$19 million on trips and equipment and had an overall economic impact of more than \$26 million. In Minnesota the 52,000 waterfowlers spent more than \$28 million with an overall impact of more

than \$43 million. That's a lot of duck hunting going on!

Yet the birds are dying by the tens of thousands. So what is killing these birds? A number of our lakes and rivers contain non-native parasitic trematodes, or flukes. The trematodes are ingested by the birds and take up residence in their intestinal tracts. These parasites then feed off the blood of the birds' intestinal walls and produce eggs.

While the birds decline, they excrete the trematode eggs into the water, and the life cycle of the parasites begins again. The birds become listless and die within 3-10 days of infection.

During some of the life cycle of the trematodes, they are free-floating in the water. For other stages they use a non-native snail, the faucet snail, as one of their hosts. The faucet snail can harbor three different types of non-native parasitic trematodes, each of which kills



The small size of the faucet snail makes it an easily consumed but often dangerous food for waterfowl. The size also makes it easy for a boater or angler to miss when cleaning equipment before moving from one body of water to another.



The faucet snail becomes infested with parasites that can injure or kill waterfowl.


waterfowl.

Some faucet snails will contain more trematodes than others. If the snails don't contain a lot of trematodes, the birds may not die unless they eat a lot of the snails. If a bird only eats a few snails, but those snails are highly infected, it can be enough for death to occur. This can happen to waterfowl that eat primarily vegetation, because the snails can attach to plants and be consumed accidentally by the bird.

Lesser scaup and coots are snail-eating divers. They are the two species that have been impacted the most by the faucet snails and their trematodes. Greater scaup and a wide assortment of migrating waterfowl have suffered losses as well. Although the trematodes are not known to be a health risk to humans, it is recommended that hunters not consume sick waterfowl.

As a member of Ducks Unlimited and Wisconsin Waterfowl Association, I know that waterfowlers travel between wetlands, between lakes

"Since 1996 more than 35,000 birds, mostly coots, lesser scaup, teal, buffleheads and ruddy ducks have died in the Shawano area."

and between states. We do not want to move these snails and/or their accompanying trematodes around. Our hunting traditions and our economy depend on healthy birds and a healthy environment for them to live, reproduce and migrate. 

Diane Schauer is the aquatic invasive species coordinator for Calumet County.

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So what can we do?

For years I've been writing articles for this paper asking anglers not to move plants, critters and water between waterbodies. Now I'm asking waterfowlers to adopt the same habits. Remember to inspect boats; trailers; and equipment, including decoys, blinds, ropes and dogs, for aquatic plants and animals. Remove all attached vegetation, critters and mud. Additionally and most importantly, drain all the water from your boats and all equipment. Clean all of your gear thoroughly if you are moving between waterbodies. Not only is this the right thing to do, but in Wisconsin it's the law. 

DICK ELLIS

On Wisconsin Outdoors

Big kings highlight action off Algoma

Kevin Naze wasn't yet at the end of his "rope," but with the King Salmon apparently skidat-tling for Michigan, things were getting too close for comfort. "Six hundred feet," I said as line continued to burn off the reel and the big Chinook continued to show us just who was boss on this shimmering blue block off of Algoma. "650 ... 700 ..."

A king salmon better than 20 pounds was already in the cooler, keeping company with another good chinook and three beautiful steelhead, or Great Lakes rainbow. With just over three hours on the water far off of Kewaunee County working 200 to 300 feet of water, this bonus Chinook altered all plans of heading to harbor.

Naze, Algoma-based outdoor writer and lifelong angler on these beautiful waters, kept one eye on the spool as he scrambled to complete the job of retrieving five other lines in preparation for our trip in. I was on the rod, orders of the skipper, but it was solely Naze's expertise that had put us on the fish. If this King's leash, growing longer by the second, hit 800 feet and the fish still wouldn't come to us, Naze would change the game. He would take his old, reliable 18-foot Starcraft to the fish ... or run out of line.

The screaming drag was really music to our ears and a tune that had actually become a bit of a golden oldie since sunrise. We had gambled and won in the outdoor writer's ongoing game of rolling the dice. My three-hour drive northeast from the western suburbs of Milwaukee to Algoma meant a 1:30 a.m. departure. Although weather conditions were tame enough Tuesday for Naze's small boat, recent prevailing winds



Lake Michigan and Lake Superior harbors from Keno-sha to Superior offer fishing charter services that make anglers young and old smile. This happy fisherman found good fishing with Captain Zach Burgess and Why Knot Charter Service in Algoma. Contact them at 920.559.7473 or www.whyknotcharters.com (see ad in this issue). (Photo courtesy of Zach Burgess)

had taken fish far out from the harbor and pushed the thermocline where we would find our targets at depths of 200 to 300 feet. Despite his experience, confidence, and proven track record, Naze couldn't guarantee finding those fish.

"You can come now or next week," Naze had said Monday night. "Next week we might not be able to get on the lake at all depending on conditions. Right now it's real calm but the fish are out there far and deep. We're dealing with five days of north, northeast winds and that brings in the warm surface water between 65 and 70 degrees and starts stacking it up near shore, which pushes the thermocline down and out away from shore. The fish like that cold water between 45 and 55 degrees."

Just after 4:30 the next morning in the predawn black, we were bouncing over the wakes made by much larger boats in route to our hunting grounds. To the south Mars hung with a full moon. To the east, changing shades of grays, purples, and oranges told us another brilliant Lake Michigan sunrise would soon arrive. And the running lights of a comfortably spread 30 or 40 boats verified that Kewaunee County has a certain reputation among those who chase the trout and salmon of Lake Michigan.

"I think rainbows and kings are the Big Two," Naze said as he began setting the flies and spoons on downriggers that would be taken to our target depth on 10-pound weights, which release with a strike. According to DNR creel census and the actual charter captain's reports, Kewaunee County leads the entire state in catches of chinook, rainbow, and lake trout. We just experiment until we find the speed that the fish want. We adjust until we find that sweet spot."

It didn't take long, despite his small boat and the narrow swath cut on this huge water without the use of planer boards. With five dandies on ice three hours later, our bonus king gave us one final thrill. When the line counter reached 731 feet, the fish began to give a little. Twenty minutes later, the 20-pound plus chinook finally gave up the ghost.

"This fishery is such a blessing," Naze said. "Once you know what you're doing and watch the weather you can come out here in any size boat and expect to catch fish. If you have a boat but not the experience, go out with a charter boat first. It's well worth the money to pick the crews' brains and learn the subtle secrets."

According to Jon Jarosh, Director of Communications for the Door County Visitors Bureau, the abundance of charter boats makes it easy for anglers to get to the spots where big fish are being caught. For those pulling their own boat, there are also ample launches and ramps throughout Door County to accommodate them, a claim that can be made by Kewaunee and all Wisconsin counties on the Great Lakes welcoming anglers and their families as a vital part of the tourism industry.




The 2010 winner of the Kewaunee Door County Salmon Derby and \$10,000 in cash was Thomas Valacak with this 28.16-pound king salmon caught near Washington Island.

"In July and August, salmon is probably our most popular species to fish for here in Door County and the annual Kewaunee Door County Salmon Derby attracts a lot of fishermen during that tournament's 9-day run in 2011 from July 23rd to July 31st," Jarosh said. "Last year a 28.16 pound salmon won the top prize, but they've had 40-plus pound fish win it in the past."

The tournament offers a first place prize of \$10,000 in cash. \$40,000 in cash and prizes are also awarded. But more than anything else, people come to Wisconsin's Great Lakes for the fishing.

"You hear of the giant Kings of Alaska but those trips are rare," Naze said. "This is world class Chinook fishing and it's right here. I fished out of British Columbia and an 18 pound king was the big fish. They get bigger fish than that out here every year, every month, every week, every day. Fishing the Great Lakes, both Michigan and Superior, is awesome.... just awesome."

For more information on the Kewaunee Door County Salmon Derby, connect with www.kdsalmon.com. For Door County charter boat, launch, or visitor information call 1.800.527.3529 or connect at www.DoorCounty.com or info@doorcounty.com. Anglers interested in fishing Lake Michigan or Lake Superior can contact a local tackle shop, google online, or call the number of the local chamber of commerce in the port of your choice. Included is the southeast Lake Michigan fishing hotline at 414.382.7920, the Kewaunee County hotline at 1.800.626.3090 (or 920.487.3090), and the Door County hotline at 920.743.7046. 

Editor Note: Ellis fishes the Great Lakes with local experts annually. This column combines an Algoma trip several years ago with updated 2011 information for the reader.

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MIKE FOSS

Diaries Of A Wisconsin Outfitter

Bear hunters to the rescue

With another great year of bear guiding behind me (2010) and a filled bear camp for 2011, summer has again arrived, and my bear-scouting ritual has begun.

While prepping bait stations in spring over the years, I've always noticed bear activity well before bait is even placed at the bait pits from the previous year. It seems bears that frequented the bait stations the previous year have a great memory and will often venture back once out of hibernation to see if those mysterious goodies once again have fallen from the sky.

Some might see this as trivial, but I'm a firm believer, the more you know, the better at it you will become, so I wanted to see for myself and expand my first-hand knowledge ... so I put an experiment to the test.

Operation: Recon

On April 20, without the use of bait and well before any foliage had even thought of sprouting, I placed my first trail camera on one of my favorite bait stations. One week later I was anxious to see what I had for pictures, and the camera revealed, three days later, that I had my first visit from a decent young bear that will weigh in around 200 pounds by this year's bear season.

While viewing the pictures it dawned on me that I wanted this experiment to be in a very natural setting. I didn't want to disrupt the area, because bears have a great sense of smell and curiosity, and they will know something is going on if I continue to walk in their territory and leave my scent all over the place while checking the trail camera.

Hard as it was, I reset the camera

and left it alone for a month. With the foliage in bloom I returned on May 25, hoping the batteries in the trail camera lasted—which they did—and I was excited to compare pictures from the past month.

As I transferred pictures to my computer and viewed them, time and date patterns started to develop. What has been discussed between bear hunters, in articles, stories, forums etc., I had proof of sitting right before me. Although this is only being done one time, the outcome would likely be the same if I were to do this multiple times.

So what's the pattern? Other than hunting pressure, do bears gradually become more nocturnal as the foliage shrinks as fall approaches? Yes. I reversed the pictures, starting from the most recent date, and lined them up accordingly.

For the first two weeks all the bears' visits were well after dark. As the foliage slowly increased, so did the bears' daytime (legal shooting hours) activity. This is exactly why I try to avoid setting bait stations in open timber. As September rolls around, foliage shrinks, and I guarantee the bait activity that was great during the summer months will gradually drop off by the time hunting season starts.

To increase your odds on a great bruin, find the darkest, nastiest tangled mess of woods to set that bait station. Bears will feel more secure, and chances are it'll show itself while you're on stand.

Looking Ahead

Once again, I have some very special return guests appearing at my bear camp this year. Dr. Danny Riley and Valentine Vogel are working on a black bear research study of muscle




Foss' research has shown that the foliage state of black bear habitat plays a major role in bear activity. During early spring and late fall when there are few leaves, bears travel heavily at night. But during early fall, when leaves are still thick, bears are more willing to travel during daylight hours ... and more importantly, during legal shooting hours.

atrophy. I e-mailed Vogel to explain, and this is his e-mail response:

Muscle samples have been collected from active summer bears and end-of-overwintering bears, but it is crucial to collect samples from the fall timeframe. This is accomplished by collecting muscle samples from hunter-killed bears to prove our hypothesis that inactive overwintering bears lose both body weight and muscle, but maintain the correct amount of muscle to be able to get up and move at short notice.

Humans in clinical bed rest maintain their body weight but their muscle is not maintained without exercise. Our goal is to figure out how the bear links muscle mass to its body weight because this knowledge can be applied to preserving muscle in humans during extended bed rest and during

microgravity weightlessness during spaceflight. The research will also provide medical benefits such as cardiovascular disease, organ transplants, osteoporosis, anorexia, and for people on kidney dialysis, and cancer research. The generosity of hunters is extremely valuable in our research study.

Cool stuff! 

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

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NATALIE BEACOM

Watching From The Shadows

These are the 'good guys'

It sounds like a quote lifted from a Clint Eastwood spaghetti western or a phrase John Wayne might declare slowly to an outlaw. It could even be what your mom called after you as you ran out of the house with your .22 LR on a summer afternoon, but I attribute one of the most apropos quotes I've heard to a Wisconsin conservation warden.

It was near the end of the weekend-long hunter safety training that the area conservation warden joined us. The younger students' eyes got a bit wider as the young officer entered in uniform, duty belt filled and firearm holstered. They would discover in his short talk that there are consequences to ignoring regulations in the field at which point, with utmost poise and seriousness, the warden says, "If you have to look over your shoulder before you do something, it's probably the wrong thing."

In its pure simplicity, how true is this statement? Chances are if you're looking over your shoulder in the field or on the water in Wisconsin, you might find yourself looking at one of our state's conservation wardens. As law enforcers that protect and serve both our natural resources and our people, it's a job to which they are devoted.

Wilderness 'Urban' Myths

We all have that friend of a friend who tells the story about the time a friend of a friend told them about a violation that occurred. Usually, the story's origin was urban myth to start and with each subsequent telling has been embellished to the point that you hesitate, if believe it's even true, but the ending always concludes with how, from seemingly thin air, a warden appears.

Not all myth, the formal recipe for this phenomenon is one part circumstance, one part instinct, but mixed with extensive training. Conservation wardens, as the title suggests and the badge enforces, are stationed to preserve and protect our natural resources, philosophy and outdoor heritage.

A four-year degree or associate's degree in related fields, completion of training at the Wisconsin State Patrol Academy, mentoring, and field

training are the components necessary to become a member of the Warden Service. Also imperative is a strong understanding and appreciation of conservation ethics.

Wardens are responsible to enforce and command a field as diverse as firearm and boat safety to wildlife poaching, drug trafficking and invasive species in our waters and woodlands—all in a day's work.

"Wardening" has evolved over the past decade. No longer do wardens function simply as law enforcers issuing violations and investigating infractions, but they are tasked with outreach, education and community involvement. These elements of community-based

a safe, enjoyable and successful hunting experience was available to the participants.

Similarly, Jim Horne, a conservation warden serving 25 years to Shawano County, exhibits the same level of dedication. Warden Horne works tirelessly during the annual Sturgeon spawning with DNR biologists and Sturgeon for Tomorrow volunteers to preserve and protect Lake Sturgeon in the Winnebago system from illegal harvesting. Not only does this involvement help preserve a significant fishery and its habitat, but it exemplifies how partnering with the community promotes broadening conservation efforts for all to bear responsibility for



Wardens are responsible to enforce and command a field as diverse as firearm and boat safety to wildlife poaching, drug trafficking and invasive species in our waters and woodlands—all in a day's work.

wardening are what Bureau of Law Enforcement Chief Warden Randy Stark considers a "cornerstone of the service. Realizing the importance of local community, conservation is a local endeavor."

It's not uncommon for wardens to traverse the state for conferences or programs, assisting with Learn-to-Hunts, participating in outdoor expos, conferences, visiting schools and various other activities throughout the state.

Guts And Gratitude

Having the opportunity to participate in a Learn-to-Hunt event for black bears, I experienced firsthand the level of commitment of wardens in the field. In northwest Wisconsin's Burnett County, Warden Chris Spaith coordinated for months and added hours and miles to his day to make sure various landowner relationships were developed, trail cams were installed and images emailed, and preparing and filling bait sites in order to ensure


our shared natural resources.

A Changing 'Office'

A significant shift is taking place in both the population and demographic of Wisconsin's hunting population. The next few decades show a significant decline in shooting sports, and it's of concern for many. However, the Warden Service has stepped up to help ensure hunting opportunities for future generations. Chief Stark acknowledges the challenges, but also has vision for how wardens can affect the future positively. By continuing to create safe, enjoyable hunting experiences for people, by acting as ambassadors for hunting, working with local organizations and by continuing to enforce our laws, the hunting heritage will be perpetuated. Learn-to-Hunt programs, newer mentored-hunting requirements, and the Knowles Nelson Stewardship Program are examples of opportunities which ultimately help ensure that future generations are connected to the natural world.

The Wisconsin landscape has shaped the natural understanding of many well-known environmentalists within the conservation movement; from Lapham to Leopold. Wisconsin continues to shape conservationists. Chief Stark is proud of this appreciation of the natural among Wisconsinites and sees, "a deep conservation ethic in this state. The people of Wisconsin understand the importance of our natural resources and a conservation ethic is woven deep into who we are."

No different than our local fire and police, librarians, or mail carriers, conservation wardens are integral to our communities. As avid outdoors people, our wardens hunt and fish the same fields and streams we enjoy. The steps they have taken professionally to enforce the laws protecting our environment and our people model the steps we can take as well. Of course, our uniform might consist of blaze hats, waders and camouflage, but it allows us the opportunity to represent outdoorsmen and women with the same respect for our shared natural world.

So, there's no need to look behind us, for as our state motto boldly claims, we only need to "look forward" to a continued future of a safe, clean and beautiful Wisconsin. 

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

SUZETTE CURTIS

Recipes By Suzette

Outdoor edibles

I thought I would try a little something different with this column, so instead of sharing recipes for wild game and fish, I have decided to share recipes for wild edible plants. Here are just a few things you can do with wild plants, but this is truly only a drop in the bucket. ^{OW}

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. recipesbysuzette@onwisconsinoutdoors.com

Deep Fried Dandelions

25 to 30 dandelion blossoms

½ cup canola oil

1 egg

½ cup milk

salt & pepper to taste

½ cup flour

Pick dandelions close to the stems. Once you have collected your allotment, rinse the dandelions and cut off the greens on the underside of the blossoms (There will still be a few green strands among the yellow blossom, but cut as much of the greens that point downward as possible.). Place the rinsed flowers upside down on toweling to dry.

Heat oil in large skillet over medium-high heat.

Whisk together egg, milk, salt & pepper in shallow bowl. Place flour in separate plate or shallow bowl. Dip dandelions in egg mixture, dredge through flour, and place in pan with the heated oil. Fry, turning once, until golden brown.

Remove fried dandelions from pan and place on toweling to drain. Serve immediately. I like to serve these with a dipping sauce, and a simple one is to mix 1/3 cup mayonnaise with 2 tbs Dijon mustard.

NOTE: Do not use dandelions from areas that have been treated with chemicals. Also, look for full, yellow blossoms as they fry up the best.

Pickled Ramps (Wild Leeks)

By Missy Daubner

Missy gave me a jar of these pickled ramps to try, and they were wonderful. She says they are great in Bloody Marys (which I can believe), but we ate them right out of the jar, and they were fantastic. She was kind enough to share her recipe as follows:

Brine:

3 qts (12 cups) water

1 qt (4 cups) vinegar

1 cup salt

Combine above ingredients in pot on top of stove. Boil and cool.

Pack clean and trimmed wild leeks, onions, garlic, dill (fresh or dill weed), grape leaves (for crispness), and red pepper (if you like them spicy!) into pint or ½ pint jars.

Fill jars with brine and cover. Put jars in cake pan with 1 inch of water in the bottom.

Bake at 275 degrees for 1½ hours.

This recipe makes 10 quarts, but you would probably have to dig for several days to get that many so adjust accordingly.

Wild Nettle Soup

My mother sent me this recipe because we have so many nettles in our area. Even though I've been meaning to try it, I haven't gotten around to doing so as of yet. But I think it sounds interesting, and it's certainly a good chance to utilize some of these pesky weeds in a positive way. Just remember to use gloves when picking and preparing the nettles.

½ lb bacon

1 medium onion, chopped (or try chopped wild leeks—unpickled)

1 large bunch of young stinging nettles, coarsely chopped

water

Fry bacon in large pot or Dutch oven until crisp. Remove bacon from pot and set aside. Saute onions/leeks in bacon drippings until tender.

Place nettles in pot and add enough water to about ¾ full. Bring to a boil; reduce heat, cover, and simmer for about 15 minutes.

Ladle soup into bowls and serve immediately with reserved bacon crumbled on top.





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JOEL KUNZ

On Wisconsin's Rivers Central Wisconsin trout-about

Well, as an angler who spends most of his time chasing walleye, I had not considered the availability of trout in my area. I was under the misconception that trout were something people traveled “up north” to find with any consistency.

Places such as Tigerton and Crivitz were names I heard when I talked with people who fished trout within a reasonable drive from my home in New London. But that changed recently as I was talking with my friends Jim Gaulke and Rob Hartfiel. Both of them have talked with me about their conquests locally, some of which had me quite surprised. For instance, I found out that catching a Brown Trout of 17-20 inches in some of the areas' small streams is not rare. In fact, both friends talked about fish of 12 to 13 inches being quite common if you knew what you were doing. That's good eating! I love fresh trout. Grilled in an iron skillet and served with a few fried potatoes and some baked beans, you've got me thinking back to when I was a kid.

I was fortunate enough to travel with my friend Ken Short Sr.; his son Kenny; and Hienrick Horstmier, a foreign exchange student from Germany, to Yellowstone Park in 1974. We outfitted out of Cooke City,

Montana, went in to the mountains on horseback and caught Cutthroat trout to our hearts' desire. The taste for fresh trout, tubers and beans developed on that trip would keep a trip or two to a couple of Waukesha County stocked lakes or Lannon Quarry on the docket each spring. Rainbows were the target; some up to 12 inches.

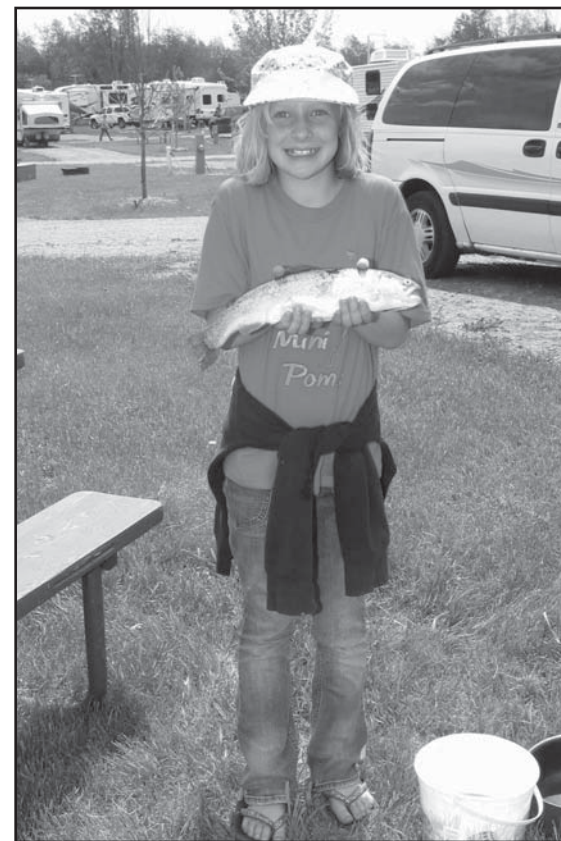
Once I moved to New London, I guess fresh walleye made me forget just how good a fresh trout is. When I got the chance to change that, I was all ears. Here is what I learned: There are numerous good spots throughout Waupaca, Portage and northern Waushara Counties. These spots include some creeks, small rivers and even a few lakes, including parts of Waupaca's Chain of Lakes. Although there are some anglers who work hand-tied presentations with a fly rod, both of my sources talked about light spinning equipment and nightcrawlers. I've heard some stories of big fish being caught on Rapalas and that in the

right situation a Wolf River rig and perfect size minnow can be irresistible, but for the most part a big juicy nightcrawler is what catches fish consistently. Obviously, deep water is a key due to water temperature. Trout like cool water, so shade, cut banks and deep pools are the key locations.

The nightcrawler is usually hooked “wacky” style, (that means in the middle) and let to slide through the prime areas. It's pretty simple fishing with detecting the bites and knowing when to set the hook; the key to catching fish.

The Waupaca, Portage and Waushara County destinations my friends fish include Emmens Creek, Murry Creek, Radley Creek, McLean Creek, Spring Creek, Flume Creek, The Walla Walla River, Pine River, Waupaca and Tomorrow River. Some of these are Class 1 trout streams with good natural reproduction, others are Class 2 waters that require some stocking to keep populations up. The DNR has a good county-by-county map of Wisconsin trout streams available online at <http://dnr.wi.gov/fish/species/trout/streammaps.html>. It is a good resource for finding the roads you need to access these areas and some of the many Class 1 waters that are tributaries to some of the above more well-known waters. Of the 22 listed Waupaca Chain of Lakes on <http://waupacachainoflakes.org/lakeinformation.aspx>, 15 are considered as containing trout.

Although his roofing company keeps him very busy, my friend Jim Gaulke still finds some time to fish for trout when he can. Like his longtime heritage in the metal roofing industry, row trolling for trout with a “Cowbell Rig” is a family tradition. Commonly



called a “School of Minnows”, this wire Christmas tree of fluttering spoons runs just ahead of the lure the fish is supposed to hit. A predator prey response is triggered as the lure “chases” the smaller fluttering “school” of fish-shaped blades. The same principle is applied on Lake Michigan on a bigger scale; point is, it works. Electric trolling motors can replace the arm work but not the pulsing motion of a rowed boat. Consider this when working the baits, especially if the fish don't seem real interested in your presentation.

All in all I'm looking forward to a little close-to-home trout fishing this year. The shore lunch will revive some great memories and provide a flavor my taste buds have been missing. Spend a little time getting away from the group spots and make sure to observe all the rules and etiquette that apply when walking a stream. If you do so, you are almost sure to catch some nice trout and enjoy a day in central Wisconsin that this outdoor writer did not know existed. You might even catch up with Rob and I sitting over a hot cast iron pan enjoying a lunch from the gods.

OW

Joel “Doc” Kunz is a 2005 “Readers Choice” Award winner and member of the Association of Great Lakes Outdoor Writers (AGLOW). Visit his website at www.docswaters.com or his new project www.lifeonthewolf.com for information on fishing in the lower Wolf River area of Wisconsin.



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DENNIS RADLOFF

Battle Of The 'Bulge'



Jeff Swanson with a beautiful musky taken 'bulging' a bucktail over the weeds.

The more things change the more they stay the same. In the world of evolving bucktail innovations there remains a onetime tested tech-

nique that still works the same today as it has over the years.

"Bulging" bucktails is far from a new method when it comes to musky fishing. It is however, a little harder to do all day long in the wake of double-10, 12, and 13 blades.

This technique is used effectively over the tops of weeds. It's achieved by cranking your favorite bucktail back to the boat at a very fast retrieve speed as soon as it hits the water; fast enough so the blades are literally 'bulging' just under the surface of the water.

This retrieve was a little easier to do in the "old days" when a Mepp's Giant Musky Killer was considered a "big" bucktail. Now with "Double Cowgirls", "G-Trains", "DC-10's" and the ongoing variety of "Big" bucktails, maintaining the pace necessary to achieve bulging has become a difficult task all day long. This is where some of the equipment innovations can make using the technique for extended periods more manageable.

First, the proper rod and reel will make bulging your bucktails over long time frames an easier task. A good

bulging rod is a Medium Heavy in either 8-foot or 8-foot 6-inch length. These long rods with a heavier tip will make casting the large bucktails significantly easier with the rod length and leverage doing most of the work for you.

Now that you have the bucktail out there, how do you get it back in all day long at the required high rate of retrieve without wearing out? Replacing the standard "double paddle" reel handles with a "power handle" will make a big difference. "Power handles" offer greater leverage and usually have only one "paddle" to hold onto. These "power handles" also require less revolutions to crank your line in, making it much easier to "bulge" or "burn" your bucktail back to the boat.

One hair-raising thing to look for when watching your bucktail "bulge" all the way back to the boat is the appearance of a bigger bulge behind your lure. Most often muskies following this presentation will create their own bulge under the surface since they will be coming fast and high in the water column. If they don't hit before the

bucktail reaches the boat, you will be able to transition to a nice, big "fast" figure-8 with the long rod you are using. Often, if not usually, this initiates a strike right next to the boat!

Bulging can be a great way to cover water and trigger mid-summer fish that might otherwise stay hunkered down in the weeds.

Get out and bulge your bucktails this summer. Finding the adrenalin rush that comes with the wake of a following fish and the satisfaction of posing for photos with a "bulging" musky should not cost you unnecessary fatigue. With those bulging memories as she swims away, in fact, when using the right equipment, you will be up and throwing again in anticipation of the strike from the next big girl who thought she was safe hunkered down in the weeds. *WO*

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 through his website sterlingmusky.com or at 262.443.9993.

TODD BOHM

Wounded Warriors In action, Part II

The weekend of May 21-22, 2011, saw Wisconsin Angling Adventures hosting our second annual "Cast and Blast" for the Wounded Warriors in Action. Wounded Warriors in Action was founded in 2007 by retired Lt. Colonel John McDaniel as a way of supporting and helping to heal the wounds of decorated combat veterans from the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts through adventures in the great outdoors. This year central Wisconsin was proud to host two veterans for the "Cast and Blast" weekend: Matt Tennessen of

Kaukana, who was an Army National Guard member from Rhinelander and was wounded in Afghanistan, and Josh Krueger of Hubertus, who was a Marine wounded in Afghanistan.

After arriving Friday evening and purchasing licenses and spending time getting acquainted, the vets hit the rack in anticipation of two great days of turkey hunting. As the sun rose Saturday, the veterans were treated to a symphony of spring sounds, including birds, sandhill cranes, ducks, geese, and, of course, turkeys. Josh and guide Tony

Kopchinski had numerous hens and Toms work the field they were hunting but were unable to get a shot. Matt and I hunted hard but were disappointed in the number of birds we saw.

After lunch, rain, and rest, we headed out again in the afternoon to new locations. Josh and Tony continued seeing birds, but Matt and I were struggling. As evening drew to a close, Matt and I made a decision to move our blind to a different field edge, and little did we know at the time, we had made the right decision.



Sunday arrived with some small thundershowers in the morning, but we anticipated having a great hunt. By 6 a.m. Matt and I still hadn't seen or

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JOHN LUTHENS

Fish Tales *Ode to da bait shop*

A bait shop can be as important to the fishing craft as a favorite rod, reel or lure, bringing you comfort and confidence on the water. And just as your favorite rod and reel remembers every fish battle ever fought, a good bait shop brings back memories: sounds of air pumps blowing bubbles up and through schools of minnows in the tanks, the sharp wet smell of the minnows, and the quick flops of flashing silver as a dip net scoops likely bunches out of the tank.

A good bait shop likely has walls arrayed with colorful baits in all shapes and sizes. Rods should be stacked in bunches in available corners. A disassembled reel might rest on the counter where a couple local characters lean, studying the reel's inner workings with the shop owner and swapping fish tales. Laughter and stories float through the air, mixing with the smell of coffee brewing.

It becomes more than a place to buy bait and tackle. It's a place where fishing knowledge is gathered and shared; where fishing locations and tactics are freely given—with the occasional fib and wild goose chase slipped in for good measure.

I walked through the doors of Fish Tales because time was of the essence. I had one night free after work to fish the Oshkosh area of Lake Winnebago. Though I work less than a mile from the western Winnebago shoreline and fishing season was in full swing, I hadn't had a chance to fish the area yet. Bait store information was what I needed. It wasn't long, though, before the small bait shop atmosphere took me in. I found myself less hurried. I browsed the hanging walls of lures and checked out the minnow tanks. Soon I was leaning on the counter looking at a disassembled reel that the owner was repairing and chatting away.



Memories of time spent in and out of bait stores as a boy is one of the reasons Cory Vanvonderen opened Fish Tales, a small bait and tackle store north of Oshkosh, this past February. "I'd go to all the bait shops with my father and grandfather," Vanvonderen said, standing behind the counter. "There would be local fishermen standing around the store, talking about what was biting where. It was such a neat atmosphere. I've always remembered it."

In a renovated bank building, next to a small post office on Hwy A between Oshkosh and Neenah within shouting distance of Lake Winnebago, he works to recreate that atmosphere of information. "Anyone walking through the door and asking where the fish are hitting will get the best information I have. But at the same time, some people come in to talk and want to keep their favorite spot a secret; I'll respect that. I won't let out, say, that the bluegills are hitting in the lily pads by the fallen log out in the bay. I'll say something like, 'I've heard they're hitting near wood or try fishing around lily pads.'"

I mentioned something about fishing for bluegills with a fly rod and small poppers and Cory pointed me towards Asylum Bay, a large sheltered cove just north of Oshkosh. "The action is a little slow right now, but the ones getting caught are really big," he told me. He also mentioned something about largemouth bass being on the prowl there. I found out that he knows a thing or two about bass and discovered another reason he opened the shop.

"Before opening this store, I fished professionally on the bass circuits for six years," he said. "I finally got a little

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JJ REICH

The Reich Stuff

Take an uncle fishing



"If you want to preserve the sport of fishing, your ultimate goal is to get someone (anyone!) who normally doesn't fish to buy a license and spend a day on the water."

So much of the outdoor media encourages you to get more kids and women outside with a fishing pole in their hands, and that's great. But with all the hoopla and push to take youngsters and females fishing, it's easy to overlook the low-hanging fruit: your friend, family member or co-worker.

My Uncle Bob is a retired high school teacher, as well as a football, wrestling and softball coach. He doesn't fish much. He has a lot of other hobbies, interests, chores and responsibilities that fill time. But, we finally convinced

him to spend a few days with us to do some walleye fishing.

We hired guide Brian Brosdahl to be sure to put Bob on fish and help teach him how to work a hook and line. Uncle Bob picked up on it quickly and even out-fished all of us that day, bringing back a bucket of walleyes and perch for the fryer. Later, he told me he loved it: basking in the sun, smoking cigars, reeling in some 'eyes and joking around with us. And that's what it's all about.

If you want to preserve the sport of fishing, your ultimate goal is to get someone (anyone!) who normally doesn't fish to buy a license and spend a day on the water. Does it matter if that person is an older man or woman? I don't think so! *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 at kampptales.com.



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Take a trip to Green Bay for a ride on Bay Beach Amusement Park's new roller coaster, the **Zippin Pippin!** This replica of Elvis' favorite coaster features a ride for just \$1. With 18 park rides at just 25 cents to \$1, it's affordable family fun. [Click on Brown County.](#)

Carson & Barnes Circus is coming to town! Tuesday, August 16th, 2011, in Sparta. [Click on Monroe County.](#)

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As the lazy days of summer approach, one might think things slow down a bit. Not so in Clark County. **4th of July celebrations, community festivals, County Fair, Highground,**

quilt shows, farmers markets, museums, bike races, camping, hiking, swimming, fishing, canoeing, kayaking and ATVing on the best trails in Wisconsin. [Click on Clark County.](#)

From the Puffs of Brat smoke at the area's summer festivals to the **Powder Puff all women's fishing tournament**, the weather is not all that's heating up, so is the trout and salmon fishing with Wolf Pack Adventures. Salmon once again dominate the Lake Michigan catch. [Click on Sheboygan County.](#)

Port Washington celebrates summer with: festivals, including the only **Maritime Tall Ship Festival** in Wisconsin this summer; outdoor concerts, weekly sailboat races, a great farmers market, and more. Plus some great new stores and restaurants have opened their doors and are waiting for you. [Click on Ozaukee County.](#)

The **2011 Lumberjack World Championships** - Celebrating Hayward's timber sport at the lumberjack bowl on Lake Hayward. The professional competition provides world class thrills of block chopping, hot sawing, speed climbing, bucking, Jack and Jill sawing and boom running. July 29-31. [Click on Sawyer County.](#)

Come and explore Price County ... We've saved a place for you! You'll find **low fishing pressure on area lakes** and rivers, light traffic on our motorized and non-motorized trails, fun family events, along with **affordable lodging and services** all in our quiet neck of the Northwoods. [Click on Price County.](#)

Fishermen are having luck catching walleye, bass, and northern on the 500 lakes in Burnett County. Families and friends are enjoying **wilderness trips on the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway** (St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers). Start a wilderness tradition with your favorite group today! [Click on Burnett County.](#)

Get down and dirty in the **caves at Ledge View Nature Center** in Calumet County. Cave tours are offered Saturdays and Sundays and offer a glimpse at the world underground. Above ground you'll find cliffs and panoramic views. [Click on Calumet County.](#)

Waukesha Gun Club invites you to check our web site regularly for up-to-date activities and hours. **Leagues** in all venues continue all year. Summer brings **multiple Registered Shoots**. The **WTA State Trapshoot** is coming up July 12-17. Try **Wobble Trap**—you have to see it in action to see how fun and challenging it is. Our summer hours now include Tuesdays 4-8 pm. [Click on Waukesha County.](#)

The Annual **Chequamegon Bay Tagged Fishing Contest** is May-October. 12 fish are tagged with DNR tags! Pins can be purchased prior to fishing for \$5.00 at local bait shops. Top prize is \$1,000. [Click on Ashland County.](#)

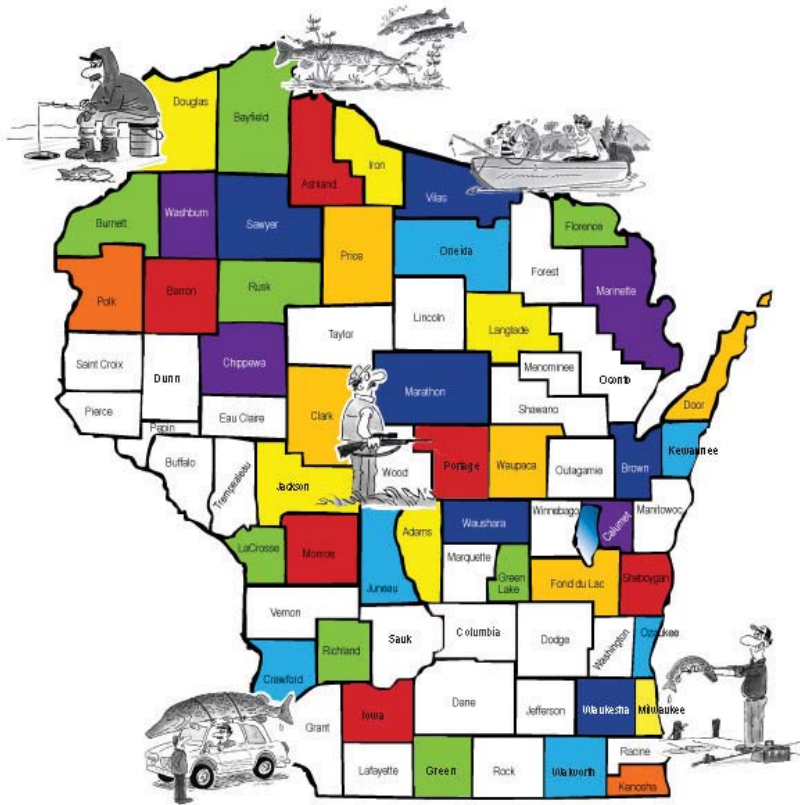
The fish are biting big time in Ferryville on the Mississippi River. Perch are really hitting. Bass, walleyes too. Use the **Ferryville Boat Launch** to access the best fishing on the river. July 23 is **River Bluff Daze & Antique Tractor Pull**. [Click on Crawford County.](#)

Great events to draw you down South, Southwest Wisconsin in Green County, that is. The fun includes the 4th of July Celebration in Twining Park, Monroe; the **Green County Fair; Farmers Market, Cars on the Square and concerts**-all in Downtown Monroe Square; Covered Bridge Days; and **Wildflower Art Festival** in Brodhead. [Click on Green County.](#)

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Walleyes, pike, bass, muskie and jumbo perch. Come and experience the big 5 of freshwater angling on your next **Ontario Canada fishing vacation**. All waiting for you at Manotak Lodge. [Click on Waupaca County.](#)

Looking for **family entertainment?** Marinette County has two free waterski shows that offer two shows each week from June through August. See themed waterski shows from both the **Crivitz Ski Cats** and **The Twin Bridge Ski Team**. [Click on Marinette County.](#)



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Grab your paddles to canoe or kayak the **St. Croix National Scenic Riverway**. Stop at the National Park Headquarters in St. Croix Falls to chat with a park ranger. They can give you tips on where the fish are biting! Enjoy one of over 400 lakes in Polk County! Take in the **Pro Bass Tournament** on Balsam Lake on July 16 and Polk County Fair on July 28-31. Call for a free Visitors Guide. **Click on Polk County.**

Why Knot Charter and Guide Service invites you to try out Lake Michigan for King Salmon out of the **number one port on the lake, Algoma**, with two beautiful boats to choose from, 34 and 25 ft. Also try the **Bay of Green Bay for Walleye** aboard the largest walleye boat. **Click on Kewaunee County.**

Bring the whole gang to the Cable Area and experience what a real family

vacation is. Watch the kids' faces light up as they catch their first fish, listen to their laughter break the silence of the night, and the joys of **'real family time'**. Start your vacation here! **Click on Bayfield County.**

Passionate about fishing? Cast your line in the **St. Louis River**. Walleye fishing has been fantastic, and trophy muskies are starving for your lure. If ATViing is your style, we have **Wisconsin's largest county forest** with over 1,200 miles of roads and trails that wind and loop through the 272,000-acre forest. **Click on Douglas County.**

The fishing is GREAT in Juneau County with **two of the five largest lakes in Wisconsin**. They provide excellent walleye, bass, northern pike, and pan fish. Petenwell is also producing significant catches of musky. **Castle Rock and Wilderness County Parks, along with Buckhorn State Park**, offer numerous camping sites. **Click on Juneau County.**

Great fishing and boating—lots of fun in the sun at the **Big Chetac Resort in Birchwood, WI**. Relax and enjoy a break from your everyday routine with a vacation in northern Wisconsin. **Click on Sawyer County.**

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TOM CARPENTER

Cubs Corner

Make some 'berry' good memories

For most kids the Fourth of July means holiday cookouts, camping trips, parades, band concerts, and fireworks. While all these symbols of Independence Day were a part of my childhood as well, I had an additional signal that high summer had draped itself upon the landscape. It usually happened on one of those first hot-and-sultry summer days that comes right around the Fourth itself.

First, Dad would cut the top quarters off a couple milk jugs, leaving the handles to loop through our belts so that the remaining container could dangle below. We'd put on long but lightweight pants, lace up leather hunting boots and head to the woods. Our destination was often a place where we'd hunted rabbits the previous January; some logged-over woodlot choked with brush and brambles. Sometimes we walked the railroad tracks. Occasionally, our path followed a trout stream.

What on Earth could we be searching for at the height of summer amongst all that vegetation and muggy air? Black raspberries! Botanists call them *Rubus occidentalis*, but we just called them black caps. Black raspberries grow across Wisconsin in sunny locations that have been disturbed by logging, fire, windstorms, grazing, machine work, or any other activity that clears land and opens it

up to the sunlight but allows it to start growing back wild.

Many folks mistakenly call black raspberries "blackberries." But blackberries are a different species and bear much bigger berries than the sweet and hardy natives we know and love in Wisconsin. True black raspberry canes usually have a purple-lavender hue over pale green. Young canes produce the most berries.

Off we'd go, in the heat of the day, to pick black caps. We'd loop the milk jugs to our belts; the better to have two hands to pick with. Once I got to be a teenager, I somehow understood the allure a little more than I did when I was young. It was time with Dad that mattered, and it was an activity he loved for some odd reason. Never mind that most of it was spent sweating, thirsty, and getting poked and scraped by the thorny canes.

Dad seemed to take particular pride in surviving the ordeal. His skin always was, literally, thin. The sharp thorns would tear his arms to shreds. In defense, he sometimes wore the cut-off sleeves of an old denim jacket (yes, just the sleeves) with a string connecting them behind his shoulders to hold his invention up on his arms.

Midday was prime time for berry hunting. The fishing was slow then. The grass and foliage were perfectly dry, and the bugs would lie low in the heat

of the day. Dad knew how to get around the thirst factor: with a stop at a country tavern or small-town bar between stops; a 25-cent tap beer for him and an orange pop for me. Quite a reward for enduring the excursion.

But the gallons of berries we brought home were the real rewards. There were berries for your morning cereal ('They'd turn your milk purple.'). We'd sugar them and put them on ice cream. We'd sugar more and freeze whole quarts' worth to use in the winter. Mom would use fresh ones now and thawed ones later to make berry pies and cobbler to die for. Neighbors and friends always received a share of the bounty too. Landowners received a portion of the take from their acreage; an investment that usually paid off in hunting permission come squirrel season, rabbit season, and sometimes even deer season.

With the late and wet spring we had this year, and ample rains into June, the black raspberry picking should be excellent well into July and maybe right through the end of the month the farther north you go.

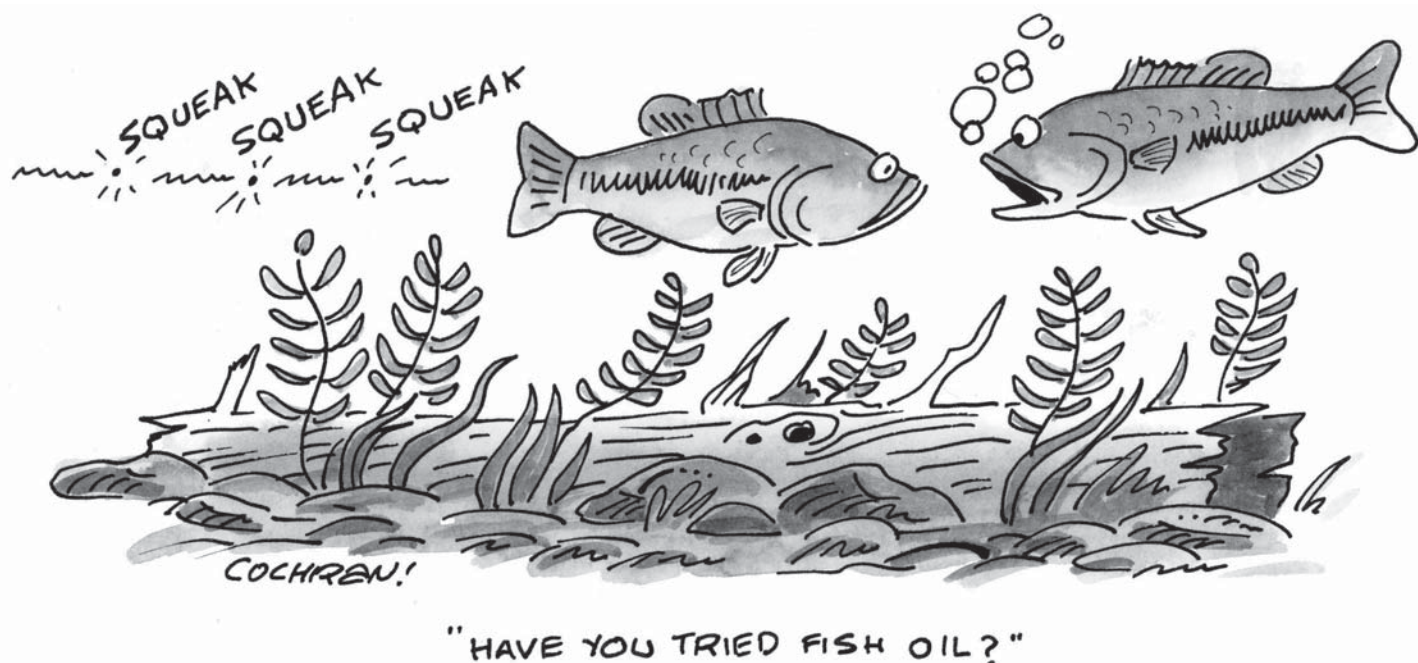
Take a kid out and pick some black caps. The black-purple berries are sweet to eat and packed with nutrition too.



Stress the harvest aspect of what you're doing, using the wonderful bounty that nature is offering up. And stress all the follow-up benefits the family will enjoy because of your berry-picking teamwork. Berries for your morning cereal. Add sugar and make a sweet sauce for ice cream. Make a pie. Throw berries into any cake recipe or make black cap pancakes or waffles. Sugar up some berries (a cup of sugar per quart) and freeze up containers for next winter.

Make the activity fun. Keep it to an hour or so. I like to smash down paths for little folks to follow in to a berry patch. Let the kids get dirty, and let them eat all they want as they pick! Picking black caps is a simple way to be together and do something outdoors when you don't want to be sitting around an air conditioned house this summer. And you'll create memories that will last a lifetime. *WC*

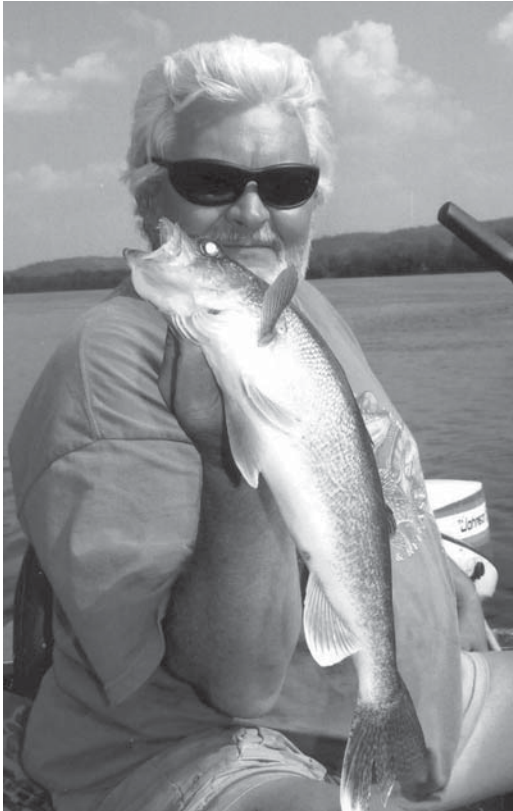
Native son Tom Carpenter writes about the outdoor world for a variety of national and regional publications.



GARY ENGBERG

Gary Engberg Outdoors

Fish and float the Lower Wisconsin River



As the summer warms, there comes the time when fishing can get tough on most inland lakes. Sometimes I wonder if fish getting lock-jaw is more than a myth! Once we get into late June and July, anglers have a couple of choices: fish early in the day and be off the water before the sun gets too high in the sky, fish at night for fish that feed nocturnally (bass, walleyes, muskies, and crappies, to name a few), or fish rivers where the fish aren't affected as much with the day-to-day weather. Fronts and barometric changes don't seem to affect river fish as much as lake fish. River fish have to feed every day just to maintain their body weight in the river's constant flowing current.

I would highly recommend a fishing and float trip down the Lower Wisconsin River this summer and especially in hotter weather, because if you get hot, you can motor up to a sand bar and jump in the river for instant cooling. The Lower Wisconsin River (LWR) starts below the last dam on the river at the twin cities of Prairie du Sac and Sauk City (Sauk Prairie). The Wisconsin River flows free from these Sauk County towns to its convergence with the Mississippi River some 90 miles downriver. There's some great fishing in this stretch of river with little, if any, competition and few other people.

There is little water in this stretch of the river that is deeper than 12 feet. There's a deep scour hole below the Prairie du Sac Dam with water close to 40 feet deep, but this is an exception and this is near the

dam where high spring water has caused the deep hole. Depth is a relative thing on this stretch of the Wisconsin River. The stained water and current flow allow fish to live comfortably in shallow water. The water temperature can get close to 80 degrees, but it still is refreshing in the sunny days of summer.

The water in the LWR isn't made for big V hull walleye boats or even bass boats. The Lower Wisconsin River is made for canoes, small fishing boats, and flat-bottomed Jon boats. A 20-horsepower Mercury outboard is more than sufficient for navigating this wide and shallow river. Mercury Marine also makes a four-stroke jet engine that is the "ticket" when combined with a Sea Ark, Alumacraft, or Tracker Jon boat. The jet engine allows you to travel at full speed in only a foot of water. The Mercury four-stroke jet engine is a dream for river anglers coming in 40- and 60-horsepower models!

My ideal river boat would be a 17-foot-wide Jon boat made by Sea Ark with a wide beam, a Mercury 40-horsepower jet engine, a Minn-Kota bow or transom trolling motor with at least 70-80 pounds thrust, two Anchormate anchors for the front and rear, and Lowrance electronics. You need plenty of power in your trolling motors, because running against the current can use up battery power. The good anchors are for holding your boat in any position that you may need. Two anchors prevent you from swinging. The Lowrance LCD electronics come in handy in the deeper water, but when you are less than 4 or 5 feet, your view is limited by the river's flow.

The Lower Wisconsin River is full of fish, but being able to get at them is half the battle. The fish species that are present and in good numbers are: walleye, sager, shuteye, northern pike, muskie, smallmouth bass, largemouth bass, channel catfish, flathead catfish, sturgeon, perch, white bass, bluegills, crappies, and many species of roughfish. On any given day you may catch eight to 10 different species of fish. This is what makes a fishing outing on the Wisconsin River so much fun! You never know what is pulling on the end of your line. I've had days when it's possible to fish for hours and not catch the same species of fish twice.

The best methods for fishing in the warmer months are trolling, casting crankbaits, and fishing live bait close and near any structure like downed timber, islands, rock bars, and anything that breaks the current and gives the fish something to hide behind.


When trolling, I find that a speed of 1.0 to 2 MPH is best. But sometimes fish want something faster to troll at, and speeds above 2.0 MPH will trigger reaction bites. For gear, I use a 7- to 7 1/2-foot G. Loomis casting rod with an Ambassador 6500 c-3 bait casting reel spooled with 12-pound Berkley Trilene monofilament. I let out enough line to allow my crank baits to bump the bottom and bounce off

the rocks. Some of the best crankbaits are: Shad Raps, Wally Divers, Rip Sticks, and Mann's Minus 5s. Hot colors include: black/chrome, blue/chrome, shad, firetiger, and orange.

Trolling both up and down the river catches fish. The important thing to remember is to have your crankbait run straight or true and bump the bottom. As I said before, increasing your speed will trigger fish, and try to troll in an S pattern so that your crankbaits will pick up speed and slow down as you turn.

Live bait will always catch fish in the Wisconsin River, so have an assortment and keep them cool and fresh. Drift a three-way and nightcrawler for any fish species. Try anchoring above snags and log jams for big catfish and possibly a trophy walleye. The hardest thing is finding some deeper water and keeping your boat off the sand bars. The fish are there and waiting!

There are good boat landings in Sauk City, and the Wilderness Fish and Game store has about everything an angler could want, including good live bait and good fishing information. There is a nice boat landing on Highway Y just west of Sauk City. Next to the boat landing is a canoe rental operation, Black Hawk River Runs (608.643.6724), that is a long-time institution and business in the area. Sauk City has everything else that you could want: food, gas, bait, and motels. If you don't have a small boat, one can be rented from Black Hawk River Runs or one of the other rental operations. One can rent a canoe, float the river, fish, and camp for a day or two while enjoying the fishing and scenery that the Lower Wisconsin River offers.

One last thing to remember: Walleyes must be 18 inches to be legal and saugers need to be 15 inches and the daily bag limit is three of any combination. If you make your trip during the week, there is little, if any, boat traffic and you can have the river to yourself. Have fun and catch some fish! 

Information: Wilderness Fish and Game store, 608.643.2433 for bait, gear, and any fishing and camping equipment that you may need. Black Hawk River Runs 608.643.6724. Guides: Wally Banfi 608.644.9823; Terry Frey 608.220.6366.

Contact Gary Engberg at 608.795.4208, or gengberg@garyengbergoutdoors.com or visit his website at www.garyengbergoutdoors.com



LEE GATZKE

Blood Brothers Outdoors

Low impact summer glassing

Summertime is viewed by many deer hunters as a time to concentrate on fishing, golfing, painting the house, or a host of other fair-weather activities. Thoughts of picking up our favorite hunting tools to pursue our favorite big game animal hardly enter our minds as we lie on the beach soaking up rays. Satisfied that we've already done our postseason scouting, planted food plots and lined up permission to hunt a new property, we feel now is the time to take a break and kick back to recharge our batteries.

The beauty of keeping an eye on the local deer herd during the dog days of summer is that it doesn't require much in the way of boot leather or sweat. Summertime glassing of deer is a fun activity that can be shared with family and friends. Cruising the back roads in an air conditioned vehicle, scanning the countryside with binoculars or a spotting scope

is a low impact, but effective, method for keeping tabs on the deer you'll be hunting this fall. Kids love to "spy" on deer and watch all kinds of nature's wonders through a pair of binoculars. It's a great way to get kids interested in nature and hunting at an early age.

Now I See

I do most of my glassing in the evening as deer are feeding, both from my vehicle and from the ground. Watching them feed from a distance doesn't seem to bother them as long as I stay in my vehicle or hidden in some cover. Deer stay on predictable feeding patterns in summer and don't wander much, so when you locate them they will likely stay close by for weeks at a time.

While glassing, you get to pinpoint where they enter the crop field or feeding area and get to take inventory on the deer in the local herd. This information will be valuable to determine where you will be hunting when the season opens. Knowing the feeding patterns that summertime glassing reveals puts us in the ballgame as the bow season draws near.

If you've been persistent with glassing right up to mid-September and beyond, the opening week of bow season can be the best time to tag your deer; even better than the rut. Deer stay on their summer

patterns until late September, so deer you have been glassing all summer will have feeding patterns that you will be aware of.

Knowing when and where a deer will be on its feet in daylight is the key to being able to kill it. Glassing from a road or a place with a good view of the surroundings that does not alarm the deer of your presence is a low impact way of keeping tabs on deer without spooking them. Most of the time I never leave my vehicle while glassing, but some places require that I get out and hike to a vantage point to glass an area that I cannot see from a road.

Low profile glassing is key in preventing deer from knowing they are being watched, whether it be from a vehicle or on foot. Avoid alarming the deer in any way that could cause them to relocate, which in turn could ruin your opportunity to hunt that deer when the time comes. Quietly setting up a stand in an area you've glassed and having deer walk by unaware is your reward for time spent behind the lenses. Summertime offers opportunities to do a wide variety of outdoor activities; add glassing deer to the list. *WO*

Lee Gatzke is a member of Blood Brothers Outdoors, creator of practical and tactical deer hunting videos. Gatzke can be reached at www.bloodbro.com.



LUTHENS, from page 13

burnt out." I wondered aloud how anyone could get burnt out fishing for a living. "It wasn't just the time on the water. It was all the sponsorship commitments and all the traveling," he said. "It got to the point where fishing wasn't fun anymore, so I opened this shop as a way to stay in touch with fishing without spending all that time on the road."

On the way out I picked up a couple of streamer flies that Vanvonderen ties himself. I also bought a dozen nightcrawlers as a form of fly fishing insurance. With the bait I was presented a neat little laminated Fish Tales bait card with a row of a dozen small fish printed along the bottom. Punch all twelve and your next live bait dozen is free.

It's not unlike a card for coffee, which I grabbed a cup of from the pot behind the counter before heading out to fish; got to have coffee to fish. Cory told me he keeps it brewing from the time he opens at 5:00 AM, to closing time at 6:00 PM., seven days a week.

"I believe in being reliably open, especially early in the morning and later in the evening—the best times for fishing," he said, then added, "Since the building is an old bank, there was already a built-in drive-through window." Needless to say, Vanvonderen now uses it as a drive-through bait window for those fishermen in a real hurry to get on the water.

After a final look at some of the mounted Winnebago fish on the bait store walls, I headed for Asylum Bay to try for a live one. Bluegills dimpled the surface of the bay, but I was unable

to entice any to hit my popper. I rigged another rod with a slip bobber and nightcrawler and floated it out into the water beneath one of the overhanging willows that dots the shore of Asylum Bay.

As it began to darken, a Great Blue Heron flew in from behind and landed down the shore a short distance away to fish with me. From his quick darts into the water, it looked like he was having better luck than me. I tied one of the streamer flies from the bait shop onto my leader. A full moon rose from behind the tall willows on a point. Bluegills or not, it was a beautiful night to be out on the shores of Winnebago.

I'd decided to about call it quits and was stripping in the fly line when the line went rigid and began moving out again. My rod tip thrashed up and down, and after a bit of a fight, I landed

the biggest largemouth bass I'd ever caught. It wasn't a trophy by any means, but on a 4 weight fly rod it was plenty exciting.

I took a picture before tossing the fish back into the bay. I doubt if it was my fly fishing prowess that hooked the fish, but I can't wait to get back to Fish Tales bait shop and lean on the counter, showing off the picture and telling anyone in the place who will listen that it was. *WO*

John Luthens travels Wisconsin, visiting favorite trout waters and exploring back road country often from the family cabin, near the Bois Brule River in Douglas County. Fishing the Winnebago system is a favorite pastime. He chronicles his outdoor journeys from his home in Grafton, where he resides with his wife and two children. Contact him at Luthens@hotmail.com.

TOM CARPENTER

Badger Birds

Belted kingfisher



Wisconsin's creeks, small streams, river backwaters, lakeshores, ponds and marshes all offer the kingfisher what it needs: shallow water. These handsome birds perch on limbs or power wires or hover above their prey, then drop beak-first into the water to impale a minnow, crayfish, tadpole, frog or other unlucky victim. The kingfisher then returns to a limb to eat its meal. Relatively clean, clear water is essential for these sight feeders to locate their prey.

Look for a bird a little bigger than a robin, with a blue-gray back, creamy

white throat and chest and a long, black, dagger-like bill. In a bird world exception, the female kingfisher is more brightly colored than the male, adding rusty-colored flanks and chest band. Both males and females sport disheveled crests.

Listen for the kingfisher's distinctive call, a squawky rattle.

Watch for the kingfisher's unique nesting setup. A pair works together to excavate a 1- to 8-foot-long tunnel in the mud of a stream or ditch bank.

Observe a kingfisher dispatch its prey by pounding it silly on a branch.

When trout fishing is slow on a stream, kingfishers have provided me with many hours of entertainment.

Did you know that a kingfisher's nesting tunnel goes up? This helps keep the nest chamber from flooding if the water level rises above the entrance hole. If the water does get that high in a summer flood, the bird will go through the water to reach the entrance. *OW*

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

TOM LUBA

Small River Smallmouths

Mind your 'Ps' and 'Qs' ... and 'Vs'

When I was young, I had an elderly aunt that would occasionally baby-sit. I felt sure she was a presence from the dark side, as, invariably, her first comment to my younger brother and me was to, "be sure to mind your 'Ps' and 'Qs' ... or else."

When you're eight or nine, a statement like that, especially the "or else," was akin to throwing down the gauntlet. Ps and Qs be damned! We were gonna raise a little hell, just for the, well, heck of it.

As I got older, poking fun of the Ps and Qs kind of lost its thrill. So I minded them more since that got me a lot more leeway to do things I wanted. Funny how a devious mind works.

About the same time, I was finally old enough to go smallmouth fishing at the local creek. It was there, hip deep in a peaceful gurgling stream, that I learned to mind another letter, too: the "V."

As I fished different areas of the little river, I paid attention to where I caught bass. What I discovered was that the smallmouth hung near objects that broke the current flow, thereby giving them a resting place from which to ambush their next meal.

That's where the Vs came in. Most small river obstructions are rock and

wood, and the current splits around the immovable object and forms a "V" in the current. The fish can lie right in front of the object in the slack water at the start of the split or behind it, thereby watching two areas that funnel food past a hungry bass.

While wood and rock form the most visible current breaks in a small stream, they aren't the only cover bass will use. Small weed clumps give the fish a more subtle hiding place. And shallow sand bars can also deflect the current and provide ambush areas. Sometimes the only hint they are present is a subtle boil on the surface as the water hits the structure and the upward water push gives it away.

Fishing upstream to downstream is key when fishing small river current breaks. Everything moves downstream, and the biggest fish usually stake claim to the best resting/ambush locations.

When wading, get as close to the water as you can. Look at it this way: If you're on shore, you are a much more visible presence as you move and the cast and retrieve motion could spook any bass present. I learned years ago that it is better to enter the water as stealth-fully as possible, moving upstream and sliding your feet. That way, you are a lot lower in the water in relation to fishing from the bank. And,



as you slowly move upstream you are not splashing water by moving your legs up and down. Plus, any sediment you stir up slides behind you and is washed downstream.

As far as presenting a bait as you wade, I look at three different presentations based on what you are throwing:

"Quartering" the current, by which you toss a bait and retrieve it at about a 45-degree angle from upstream to downstream, works well for blade baits and crank-type baits. You need to reel these a bit faster to create the crankbait wiggle or to make the blade spin, as this is what attracts the fish. An inline

spinner, like a Mepps squirrel-tail with a gold blade, was the first bait with which I ever caught a small stream bass, and it remains a solid fish producer to this day.

A rattle bait, like a Bill Lewis Rat-L-Trap Tiny Trap in chrome or gold with a black back, also needs to be quartered to get the wiggle and the rattles going. Crank them across the front of the "Vs" and around obstructions so fish behind the snag are targeted. What's nice about a Rat-L-Trap is that you can also let it freefall as it sinks, then pump it back up to trigger a strike.

For jigs, I'm OK with a more

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BOHM, from page 10



heard a bird. Matt had said walking out to the blind in the dark that he only wanted to hear a tom gobbling on the roost. Patience paid off, as at 6:05 a gobble erupted from the woods across from the field we were set up on. This was followed by another gobble, then a double gobble, and shortly after a triple gobble.

Fog had set in on the field we were hunting when Matt leaned over and started counting ... one, two, three, ... six, seven, ... ten. I threw up the binoculars and amazingly watched five jakes and five toms emerge into the fog-covered field. Within a minute the five jakes engulfed our decoy spread and for the next ten minutes entertained us as they milled around. The toms shook the woods as they gobbled continuously but would not approach the decoy. Matt was treated to quadruple gobbles, and with the fog covering the field, you could not have asked for a better scenario. As the birds started moving away, Matt made a decision to harvest a Jake and within seconds the bird was on the ground. Josh also had great action that morning as numerous hens milled around the blind and a tom worked within 30 yards without offering a shot

opportunity.

As both veterans returned home on Sunday afternoon, another chapter for the "Cast and Blast" weekend came to a close. Great memories and friends were made, and more importantly, the healing process from the war was hopefully helped. This event would not have been possible without the help of several businesses and individuals from the Wausau area. Special thanks go out to: the Grand Lodge by Stoney Creek for outstanding accommodations; meals provided by the Log Cabin restaurant; hunting access to properties by Yaeger Auto Salvage and Sampson Creek Ranch properties; and turkey mentoring by Tony Kopchinski of the Mosinee Sportsman Club. 

Special thanks and recognition go out to all of our veterans who have given so much to protect the freedoms we enjoy in this country. Stay tuned for 2012 as "Cast and Blast" returns bigger and better.


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. www.wisconsinanglingadventures.com or call 715.297.7573.

LUBA, from page 22

straight upstream to downstream retrieve as that makes it easier to keep it at a preferred depth. For live bait, like a leech, I like to balance the sinker weight vs. the current flow so it moves downstream as natural as possible. You can quarter it or bring it straight downstream as long as you can drag it into the current break where a fish may be waiting.

I've fished the "Vs" on small rivers for years, and if I had any doubts about how fish relate to the current breaks, they were erased early on. I was waist deep in a small, clear river close to

home, working a pool from a stationary position. At one point I glanced behind me. When I looked down into the water, there were three bluegills and a northern pike, resting in the slack water V created as the current broke around me.

When it's all said and done, I don't think I'd like to be remembered as a current break. But it reinforces the fact that fish are opportunistic and will use whatever they have available to get into position for their next meal. 

Tom Luba is a free-lance outdoor writer and bass fishing fan from New London, WI. Tom fishes as much as he can and never gets tired of setting the hook.

DAVE DUWE

Rollin' In The Mud

The cat days of summer

As the summer heats up, fishing tends to slow; some people call this period in summer the "dog days" of summer. To avoid the "dog days", I head to the Rock River near my house for the "cat days" of summer. Most river systems in Wisconsin contain catfish, and summer is a great time to catch them. My favorite river systems to catch catfish are the Rock River and the Wisconsin River near the Dells; both are loaded with Channel Catfish, with an occasional blue or flathead.

Last summer I was invited to go catfishing with an old river rat, Mike "the Butcher" Fleck, my local Piggly Wiggly meat cutter. Mike is an avid catfisherman and always has the fish dialed in! We arrived at the boat launch on the Rock River at about 8 p.m. Mike wanted to get set up before it got too dark. Though catfish can be caught any time, Mike believes nighttime is the right time for the biggest success. As we slowly moved down river, Mike made me sign a confidentiality agreement to protect his honey holes. The best locations are the deep holes that are associated with a fast current. The depths of the holes are between 10 and 20 feet deep on the Rock River.

As a rule, catfish will spawn immediately after the white bass spawn on most river systems. Mike has two theories on when the best time to go is. The first is any full moon period after the middle of June, and the other is when the Cottonwood trees drop their cotton fuzz on the surface of the water. Catfish can be caught all summer long.

The live bait rigs we used were pretty standard river methods: one was the three-way swivel rig (Wolf river rig) and the other is the slip sinker rig. In both cases the bait was positioned on or near bottom. The three-way rig consists of a 2/0 bait holder hook on 17 lb monofilament on an approximately 18-24 inch leader tied to a three-way swivel. The sinker Mike used is a 1-2 oz bell sinker on an 8-12-inch dropper line. The weight of the sinker is determined by the speed of the current. For a faster current, use the larger weight. The slip sinker rig is the same 2/0 bait holder hook on an 18-inch leader tied to a swivel with an egg sinker on the main line. Mike likes the 30 lb Power Pro. He believes that this line gives you a greater hooking percentage in the current.

The bait we used was nightcrawlers and cut bait. The cut bait were small pieces of suckers Mike bought from the bait shop. The rods were heavy action 8'6" poles with some old baitcasting reels on them. Mike does paint the tip of each of his poles with glow-in-the-dark paint. It helps to indicate a bite.

After we casted out, it didn't take long for the first bite. I reeled in a 2-3 lb channel cat. Mike was very excited that it was a great "eater." Mike says he prefers eating catfish over walleye. I personally think he's nuts, but we are all entitled to our opinions. The Rock River contains a lot of catfish; the larger fish are 15-20 lbs. On this particular outing we caught 10 fish ranging in size from 2 to 13 lbs.

Night fishing on a river can be dangerous, so make sure you go out with someone who knows the system well. And don't forget that summer nights often require one other very important piece of equipment: the bug spray with 100 percent Deet. Apparently, we weren't the only ones looking for dinner that night!



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.



S. WILKERSON

Surplus Firearms

Blissfully ignorant

Ignorance can be bliss or a word that rhymes with “rich” when it comes to firearm purchases. Some of my most brilliant gun buys came about through sheer dumb luck. Conversely, some of the most ill-advised were the result of hours upon hours of research.

One of the best buys I ever made without having any idea what I was doing was an M1A several years ago. The rifle was put together from a virtually new G.I. M14 parts kit on a new Springfield Armory, Inc. M1A receiver. (Springfield Armory, Inc. is no relation to the United States national armory once located in Springfield, Massachusetts.) M14 clones made from honest-to-goodness GI parts are far more desirable among those in the know than newly manufactured commercial replicas. This particular M14 clone wasn't built on just any parts kit, either. Most M14s were built by Winchester and Harrington and Richardson. The real Springfield Armory also built some, but the most coveted are those built by rocket engine manufacturer TRW. My M1A, with the exception of its after-market flash hider/ bayonet lug and the previously mentioned receiver, is all TRW. Trigger group, barrel, bolt, charging handle—all of the important stuff—are the genuine article.

I knew nothing about M14s when I obtained the M1A and apparently neither did the dealer. It was sold to me as a Springfield Armory, Inc. M1A, and, according to the seller, sported a

National Match barrel and a glass bedded fiberglass stock, in addition to G.I. parts. As I recall, he also claimed it was a 1980s vintage rifle hence all of the parts were G.I. After I got the rifle, I started doing research, and, in time, learned the “National Match” mark was just a run-of-the-mill acceptance stamp. The stock was a Springfield, Inc. standard grade, meaning it was surplus G.I. to which Springfield had applied a textured black paint job. Other than the fact that it was made out of fiberglass, there was nothing glass bedded about it.

Eventually, I e-mailed Springfield with the serial number of the receiver. They promptly replied and informed me that the receiver left their factory in Illinois in July of 2001. In other words, they didn't assemble the rifle; somebody else did. Whoever he or she was, he or she did a great job. The gun is very reliable and accurate.

In time, I posted an inquiry on an M14 discussion board about the parts kit from which this gun was assembled. I learned that it probably came from Israel in the 1980s when the Israelis sold them off as surplus. Upon their return to the United States, the receivers were removed from the rifles and destroyed, as per the BATF, and the

remaining parts sold. Many of these kits came from virtually new guns. After receiving them from the United States, the Israelis apparently fielded very few of them. The parts on my gun had their original finish and looked virtually new.

Quite frankly, had I known the gun was made from parts at the time I first saw it, I never would have bought it. It is now one of my favorite guns and worth significantly more than what I paid for it.

The gun I traded for the M1A was another gun I didn't research and one that I probably wouldn't have bought if I had. It was a Finnish Valmet M76, an AK47-type rifle in .223. At the time I bought it in 2002, I had some money burning a hole in my pocket and a need for a pre-ban assault rifle. The chances of the assault rifle ban being lifted were something like slim-to-none at that time, and I always wanted a “real” assault rifle. Nothing in that regard looked as cool as a Valmet or was put together as well as one other than the astronomically priced SIGs and HKs.

Once I brought the Valmet home it became painfully obvious that it was probably unfired. I was afraid to shoot the thing for fear of diminishing its value. Worse, magazines were virtually unobtainable and costly when you could find them. The same was true for all of its parts. The rifle sat in my safe for a couple of years before I traded it, unfired, for the M1A. I got exactly what I paid for it on the trade for a rifle that I could shoot and get parts for, albeit increasingly expensive parts.

Had I known what I was doing before I bought the Valmet, I never would have purchased it. As a piece of art, it was beautiful. The thing was made like a pre-war Luger. As a rifle, it was just too valuable in the condition it was in to shoot. I miss it, in a way, but don't really regret getting rid of it. Most of the time.

If my ignorance resulted in my owning a great M14 clone, my research led me to purchase one of the most over-rated AK clones made: a Romanian SAR2 in 5.45 x 39. If you could believe everything you read on the Web about the SAR 2 in 2003 (and I did), you would have “known” that it was as accurate as an

AR 15 and a lot cheaper. Oh, sure, some of them had canted front sights, gas blocks and trigger slap, but they were in the minority, and, best of all, they shot 2-inch groups or less at 100 yards with inexpensive Commie Bloc ammunition. “Phhhhhh,” I thought after reading all the glowing Web reports on the SAR 2. “Why should I spend \$900 on a common-as-mud AR when I can demonstrate my exclusivity, good taste and marksmanship with an SAR 2?” So I bought one after closely examining it for front site cant and hoping it didn't have trigger slap.

Turns out it had both. Didn't shoot too hot, either. I have actually fired a few sub 3-inch groups after installing a Russian sniper scope on it. Once the barrel warms up after, oh, 10 shots or so, it starts patterning rounds at 100 yards as opposed to grouping them. Despite its inherent inaccuracy, it always fires, which is more than I can say about some ARs I have been acquainted with.

Despite the fact that it rarely actually shoots anything remotely resembling a group, my SAR 2 will place all of its rounds on a standard small bore target at 100 yards. Some guns may shoot minute of angle (one inch) groups at 100 yards; my SAR 2 shoots minute of watermelon at the same distance. But, by golly, it will shoot without fail all day long, unlike most hunting rifles.

If I had known my SAR had canted sites, trigger slap and shot amazingly large groups, I never would have bought it. After expending some money on a new trigger group, fixing the front sight cant, and adding a folding stock, muzzle brake and super zoomy Russian Kobra red dot sight, I shoot it more than any other gun I own, which is saying something because I don't even know how many guns I own!

Yes, when it comes to firearms ownership, ignorance can be bliss. Just as importantly, mistakes can be traded and other guns bought until true joy and happiness are found. ☺

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

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TOM CARPENTER

Summer Sunfish Secrets

Nine strategies to catch keeper bluegills all summer long

In spring everybody's a sunfish pro. Summer changes all that. Daytime sun beats down. Water warms. Weeds grow. Bluegill head for cover or deepwater seclusion. A basket full of nice-sized sunfish is not quite as easy to bring home now as it was a few weeks ago. But you can do it. You just have to know where to find them and how to fool them. Here are nine strategies for doing just that, all summer long.

1. Stick To The Weeds

Once water temperatures reach the low- and mid-70s, big bluegills finish procreating and drift out to deeper water. In natural lakes the weeds now hold the sunnies. Go to the deeper edge of the weedline and fish close; bluegills love cover. Great weedline spots include points, inside turns, and other irregularities. Also, head out to the middle of a lake and find weedy humps and bars. Fish the deep drop offs and look for suspended fish too;

this is where you'll find the very biggest bluegills.

2. Find Security Blankets

In reservoirs, flowages, and other man-made waters, dark water limits weed growth, because sunlight can't get through. Yet bluegills need cover and will gravitate to whatever structure they can, such as: rock piles and other sandy or gravelly humps in the main lake; points; the edges of the main river channel as well as creek channels; and man-made fish attractors. Bluegills will suspend, but they will not stray as far from cover as crappies do.

3. Keep It Calm

Bluegills prefer little-to-no current. And they love cover. So in rivers look for summertime fish in: brush or wood well off the main channel; log jams in slack water; deep backwaters with plenty of weeds or brush; slow or still side channels; and behind points

where calm water pockets exist as the current deflects elsewhere. In short, any place the current softens to a standstill (or almost) is a good place for river bluegills.

4. Moon Them

Bluegills will often spawn two times, and occasionally three, over the course of a summer. These secondary spawns occur at monthly intervals, most often during full moons. So take some time to explore spawning areas again in July and August. Don't fish the bathwater-warm shallows, though. Work deeper water, 7 or 8 to 10 or 12 feet, for summer spawners.

5. Think Small, Think Ice

Sunfish mouths are small so use small baits. A full nightcrawler is too much; a lively piece is about right; so is one loosely hooked and squirming redworm. But one of the best ways to catch summer bluegills is to use ice fishing baits. Waxworms, mousies, and mealworms provide a fine mouthful for a summer bluegill. When offered in conjunction with a tiny and shiny ice fishing jig suspended below a tiny slip bobber or just jigged over the edge of your boat, these little baits can work wonders on big summer bluegills; so can tiny minnows.

6. Shimmy And Squirm

The best summer bluegill bait of all may be a small, lively leech. Shimmying and squirming as it ribbons out behind a hook, it really attracts bluegills. Be sure to use small leeches, the size that seems way too small for walleyes. Offer leeches below a slip bobber or create a slip-sinker rig with a 1/8 to 1/4 ounce bullet sinker (for weed-free operation) ahead of a swivel followed by 18 inches of 4- or 6-pound line and a size 6 or 8 short-shanked hook. Work this rig right along the deep weed edge in 10-20 feet of water. You'll pick up bonus bass too.

7. Rise To The Top

When the summer sun starts falling and the water cools a little, bluegills will drift up from deeper water to smack insects off the water's surface. Fly fishing gear of any type works well. Use a brightly-colored popper or sponge bug or most any dry fly. If you




prefer spinning or spin cast gear, tie the popper, bug, or fly directly to your line and clip on a float about two feet ahead so that you can cast your offering. Work it back slowly with little twitches. One of life's simplest pleasures is to fish away a warm evening filling up a basket with colorful bluegills that are smacking the paint right off your poppers.

8. Try Some Dam Hard Work

On a farm pond, start your search for summer bluegills along the dam or dike. A pond's deepest water usually sits at the base of this man-made structure. Use a slip-bobber rig to explore different depths until you find fish. Inlets of fresh water are also good places to look for summer sunfish.

9. Bug Them

Once summer wears on, crickets and grasshoppers make great bluegill bait. To catch crickets put out a big piece of cardboard on your lawn at dusk, then pick it up the next morning and grab the crickets congregated there. Net grasshoppers or pick them up on cool, dewy mornings when they're stiff. To fish a cricket or grasshopper dry, hook it lightly through the collar using a light-wire size 8 hook, and clip a small bobber two feet ahead. You can also fish these baits wet; add a split shot between hook and bobber. 

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



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OWO STAFF

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.

GAMEHIDE ELIMITICK CLOTHING

For \$35-\$65, GameHide's ElimiTick garments use Insect Shield Repellent Technology, a man-made version of a natural tick repellent found in chrysanthemum flowers. The odorless and invisible repellent technology is bonded into fabric fibers and is U.S. EPA-approved. Tests on ElimiTick clothing show garments are 97.9 percent effective on ticks, even after 70 washings.

"In addition to a variety of camouflage items, ElimiTick



clothing is now offered in new colors, including brown and tan. These are perfect for working around the farm, scouting deer or hanging treestands. I really like these Five Pocket Pants and the moisture-wicking Long Sleeve Tee; both are comfortable and lightweight."—J.J.R.

GameHide.com

ENERGIZER ULTIMATE HEADLAMP

For \$45, the Energizer Ultimate Headlamp is ultra-bright, dependable and durable. Like all Energizer Ultimate lights, these LED headlamps



are truly designed and built to meet the demands and needs of hard-core outdoorsmen like you.

"The Headlamp features five different lighting modes, comfortable strap, water-resistant construction, and a bright-white LED that delivers 100 lumens with a boost mode that drives light up to 130 lumens for up to 15 seconds. Seriously—this little light rocks." —L.H.

Energizer.com

CHAMPION EYES AND EARS COMBO

For \$29, combination package includes shooting glasses paired with sound-dampening ear muffs. It includes a set of 26NRR hearing muffs, coupled with shooting glasses that feature ballistic rated lenses which provide four times greater impact protection, meeting military standard ballistic resistance.



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ChampionTarget.com

BERKLEY GULP! ALIVE! CRICKET



For \$6, Gulp Alive Crickets feature the next generation in Gulp technology, stored in a jar of recharging juice. To fish, these baits look alive,

feel alive and taste alive! The Crickets have a natural shape, and used bait may be returned to the 2.1-ounce jar for recharging.

"I like the lifelike details on these baits and they are more durable and easier to care for than live bait. The 1-inch insects are available in many colors, including brown, chartreuse and green pumpkin."—J.J.R.

Berkley-Fishing.com

FRABILL HYBER-NET

For \$80, the 52-inch Frabill Hiber-Net has a revolutionary design that makes net storage fast and easy. A simple push of the grip opens the net to land fish. With a pull of the grip the net stores inside the handle,



making it ideal for storage. It features a strong, lightweight aluminum handle, knotless netting and a 24-inch deep net that can hold up to a 15-pound fish.

"The Hiber-Net is slick. It stows quickly and easily with a push or pull of the grip. And, a 72-inch version is also available to land those large Wisconsin lunkers. As an add-on, a new attachment option snaps securely onto the end of your Hiber-Net, converting it into an emergency boat paddle!"—D.E.

Frabill.com

SCHRADE STAG HANDLE KNIFE

For \$130, the Schrade fixed-blade Stag Knife was designed with input from Will Primos and his Pro-Staff



hunting team. It features 400 series stainless-steel, a large 5.8-inch blade and a genuine stag handle (handle sizes vary slightly). It also includes a high-quality, custom leather sheath embossed with the Primos logo.

"The blade on this gorgeous knife is super-sharp. I proudly use mine at deer camp to slice

venison jerky for my hunting buddies. Everyone comments on how nice it looks. It's definitely a conversation-starting knife that celebrates a great hunt."—J.J.R.

TaylorBrandsLLC.com

Product 6-Pack contributors include Dick Ellis (D.E.), Luke Hartle (L.H.) and JJ Reich (J.J.R.). If you have recommendations for good gear that works for you, tell us about it: email: ellis@onwisconsinoutdoors.com.



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