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Vol. 6, Issue 4

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DICK ELLIS

On Wisconsin Outdoors

Better late: Expert turkey caller prefers season six



Neal Herrman of Barron contemplates strategy in an attempt to locate a gobbler during the final season of the Wisconsin turkey hunt. He would call in and tag a gobbler two days later. (Ellis)

Time was fading fast on the Wisconsin 2011 spring turkey season. Any gobblers rising to the roost at day's end on this Friday near Barron in northwest Wisconsin would have already survived five, 5-day seasons ... 25 days ... plus the first three sunsets of this final challenge. "Would have," though, and survival itself becomes long odds when Neal Herrman waits with his arsenal of calls, cradling a Benelli scattergun meticulously sighted in for long-beards to 60 yards.

Most often, the spring season carries hunters from the unpredictable weather of a Wisconsin April to the warm May days of mosquitoes and ticks. Usually, as time runs out on season 6, full foliage offers the hunter cover and a chance to move toward any gobbler willing to betray his position with a verbal invitation to any hens still willing. It's that lonely posture with most hens already on the nest that now makes Tom vulnerable. Although a favorite of few hunters, season 6 is Herrman time.

"It's the best chance to kill a boss gobbler," said Herrman. "He's lonely. There aren't many hens and the bachelor groups have not yet formed. They can be very responsive to calls. The biggest gobblers I ever tagged were taken in season 5 or 6, including

a 26-pound Tom at the end of May that would have been two or three pounds heavier when the season started. A gobbler is like a rutting buck. They don't eat; all they're doing is strutting, breeding and chasing other gobblers off."

In 2011, the cold spring has changed the game on the 300 family-owned acres of lightly rolling hardwoods surrounded by tamarack swamp and 120 acres of tilled fields. Tree buds are just opening, and the hunter can see the full moon rising through 100 yards of open woods. Under normal conditions he might see just 10 or 20. There are hunter's risks in Mother Nature's procrastination. Tom's extraordinary vision is nature's most valuable gift in keeping him alive. The hunter can move toward a bird he knows is out there, but it's with a "hold your breath" tenseness that only eases when he settles in at the base of the next tree trunk to try the call again.

Herrman sits alone and contemplates his move. He knows Tom is near and lonely. Since Herrman's imitation of a hen's fly-down cackle, Tom has answered the hunter's clucks, purrs, cutting and yelps with "thundering" gobbles. But he's hung-up now and apparently unwilling to move from his secure spot

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ROB AND STEVE TOBIN

Trout Time ... All The Time

Techniques for fishing the Great Lakes

Fishing Adventures.

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Lake trout caught by Steve Tobin, jigging, December 30.

While living as a Bay View resident for more than six years, I discovered something special: hard-hitting Great Lakes trout in my backyard. But where do I start? There are so many different techniques and seasons used to find and capture these beasts. The only thing I knew was that I didn't want to troll; instead, I wanted to catch these trout on lightweight stand up tackle. The buzz around Milwaukee anglers today is you do not need a huge 30-foot boat and ten large trolling rods to get the job done. First, see what you have in your fishing arsenal already. Most likely you don't need to invest thousands to get started.

As winter progresses into January and February the marinas and harbors of Lake Michigan start freezing up and the brown trout move in to spawn and chase baitfish in shallow water. This is my favorite time to land trout, which, did I mention, is through the ice? How cool! If you're lucky enough

to hook up with a giant, it's going to be awhile; 10 to 15-minute battles are common. The setup is simple: 38-inch fiberglass jigging rod spooled 8-pound fluorocarbon line, tie on a jigging spoon, blade baits, 1/8-ounce jig with 3-inch gulp minnow, hair jigs or tube jigs; they all work great. On my tip-ups, I use an 8-pound fluorocarbon leader, #8 octopus style hooks and a medium size split shot, tipped with a medium golden shiner or fresh spawn sack. Now let's fish.

Water clarity is a big factor in hooking up with these finicky fish. I have found in clearer water you should downsize your presentation: go to small shiners and spawn sacks. In dirtier water, go flashier. Be super careful when venturing out on the lake ice. Aerators and lake current in the marinas can make the ice thin in spots. Every year I start out walking on five inches and then find myself on two inches of nasty black ice. Bringing a partner and a spud bar to help find good ice is a must. Lastly, stay away from the crowds. Trout spook easily; a lot of drilling and running around and it will be the "Dead Sea" out there fast.

The ice on Lake Michigan doesn't hang around too long, and in March the lake trout season opens. You can bet I will be out there in our 17-foot Lund boat. All you really need is a dry boat ramp, 7-foot medium rod and 8-pound fluorocarbon leader. I like to jig a 3/8-ounce darter head jig and a 4-inch gulp minnow or blade baits a foot or two off the bottom and hang on. These lakers fight hard, head shake

after head shake. The toughest part is locating the trout. A good locator will help you catch fish faster. Look for schools of shad or the trout sitting on the bottom.

Another great tool is the i-Pilot GPS bow-mount trolling motor. You can set it to lock your position over the gorging trout, allowing you to vertical jig with much more ease. Anchoring in the Milwaukee harbor is illegal, so staying over the bait is crucial in catching fish consistently. If the weather is windy and the water is too rough and you cannot be in the harbor, go back to your ice fishing spots and slow roll crankbaits for the remaining trout still chasing shad in the shallow water.

For those who don't have a boat or don't enjoy sitting on a bucket freezing your kiester off, you, too, can still catch some spring and fall trout. The steelhead trout in late March and April move up the Milwaukee River and many other tributaries to spawn. With miles of public river access available to cast your luck, these beautiful trout can give you one heck of a workout, hitting spot after spot.

The two ways I catch these fish are simple. First, find deep pools along fast moving tail-outs, while drifting a spawn sack right on the bottom with a long 12-foot float rod accompanied by a slip bobber, #8 hook, and 8-pound fluorocarbon line. Fresh spawn sacks and a little practice mending your line is the trick. Once you get tired of holding that long rod, pick up your 7-foot medium action rod and tie on a




Steelhead trout caught by Rob Tobin on a spawn sack, January 27.

#3 Spinner. Throwing the flashy lure upstream and slowly retrieving it back can trigger hard hitting steelhead. You cannot beat standing in the river with a long "chrome" steelhead spooling out your drag trying to break you off.

Steve and I are rookies of angling compared to some legends who fish Lake Michigan daily. We continue to learn from them every chance we get. I suggest hiring a professional guide to teach you some great tips to start fishing these versatile techniques. There are so many ways to catch these beautiful trout, and you don't have to live in Milwaukee. There are great harbors, marinas and tributaries from Racine to Door County.

This world class fishery is buzz-worthy these days, and with fishing pressure always on the rise, we as anglers have to understand the importance of catch and release. Brown trout can grow as massive as 40 pounds. As magnificent as these fish can be, they also taste terrible. I hate hearing from other fisherman on the ice or at the boat launch complaining that the fishing was slow, but they have a 20-pound brown lying in the parking lot. Kudos to International Game Fish Association for introducing a Catch and Release All Tackle Division allowing anglers to get recognition for record-sized fish caught using only an IGFA tape measure and photo. If more anglers threw back a few more fish this year, I bet we could beat the world record every year and maintain the world class reputation that the shorelines of Wisconsin have proved to be.

Good luck and be safe out there. 

Rob and Steve Tobin are avid deer hunters and waterfowlers and fish throughout Wisconsin.



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TOM CARPENTER

Get Ready For Ice-Out Panfish

April bluegill secrets

When sunny March and April days melt the last of our ice and Wisconsin's lakes start warming up a little, panfishermen get one-track minds, and the target is usually crappies.

I love crappies as much as the next guy. My heartbeat quickens when a bobber sinks slowly away as a papermouth inhales the minnow and swims off. A crappie puts out a nice little fight that, on ultralight gear, feels mighty good after a long winter. And there's nothing more handsome than a basket of flopping, silvery, speckle-sides.

But bluegills! Whoosh goes your float as a slab-sided bruiser smacks your nightcrawler half, angleworm or grub. Circling, tugging and straining side-to-side, a bluegill fights like nothing else that swims. And a stringer or basket packed with a mess of sunfish is a sight to behold—green sides flecked with purple, burnt-orange and bright yellow chests, handsome black ear flaps and tropical-blue gills. And the resulting sweet fillets, fried in my old black cast-iron skillet, are beyond magnificent.

So when April's open water beckons and it's time to head to a good shore fishing spot or drop a boat in, bluegills are my panfish of choice. April

isn't the easiest time to consistently find sunnies, though. You need to arm yourself with a few key strategies for locating the fish and then put the right techniques to work to catch them. Here are April's bluegill secrets.

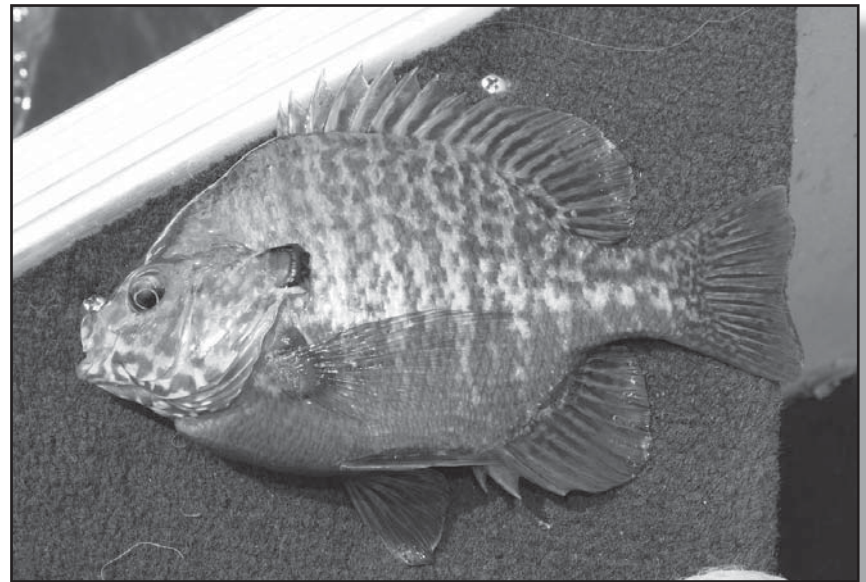
April's bluegills are nowhere near ready to spawn. That happens when the water temperature hits 68 to 72 degrees Fahrenheit, which happens in late May and June as you move north through Wisconsin. But with water temperatures only in the 40s and, later in the month, into the 50s, you need to look for "micro" areas of warmer water where the sunfish will be more active.

Bays and coves out of the wind but in the sun (think the north side of a lake or any sun-drenched shoreline) are good, especially if the bottom is dark or mucky. Since weed growth is nonexistent now, the fish usually hug the bottom for cover.

Search the water column to find the fish. Don't assume they're in two or three feet of water. While a clear and calm day might bring sunfish into the shallows to chase the forage that congregates there, April's unsettled weather often keeps the fish deeper than you would think. Six to 10 feet is often about right, depending on the day.

Fishing Fanatic?

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April is a great time for fat, sassy, and colorful springtime sunfish.

There are no hard-and-fast rules to finding bluegills in April, so you need to be mobile and search them out. Work shoreline areas, starting shallow and methodically probing out to that 10-foot break. A good technique is to inch along with your trolling motor, casting here and there, until you find a pod of fish. Then anchor up.

Fortunately, once you find April bluegills, especially on nice-weather days, the fish are usually willing biters.

My favorite rig is a slip-float setup, which makes it easy to explore different depths. Nightcrawler halves make prime bait; use size 6 hooks (long-shanked ones are easier to remove from sunnies' mouths). Waxworms make good April baits too, but use flashy little ice-fishing jigs instead of a bare hook. Twister-tail jigs and PowerBaits also work well.

Bluegills coming out of a long winter
continued on page 6

GARY ENGBERG

Gary Engberg Outdoors: Shed Time



Bucks can begin to lose their "racks" anytime from late winter to springtime. Every year, there seems to be more and more shed antler hunters out looking for antlers from big bucks as soon as they can get into the woods. The amount of snow on the ground and the outside temperature can greatly affect when one can get out and cover some territory. Big antler sheds can bring good money to the hunters who sell them, and then there are others who just collect them for displaying in their homes or "man caves." I've found antlers in January and also found them in April, so if the snow

(AT LEFT) Shed hunters with their shed-finding dog

cover is minimal and the temperature bearable, get out and start looking for those sheds.

The winters in the last decade have continued to get milder, which has allowed shed hunters to get out into the woods earlier and earlier. The competition for sheds is with rodents and other animals that chew and devour the antlers for their mineral content. Antlers can be chewed up and destroyed by animals in a few hours or a day at most when found by these hardy winter residents.

Hunting for shed antlers is hard work and very time consuming. One often has to put in many hours and even days to be successful. A good

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ROBB MANNING

Every Day Carry

The carry lifestyle

Choosing to carry a firearm for personal protection is a decision that shouldn't be taken lightly. You can't go about it half-heartedly. There is of course the legal ramifications for using deadly force—an entirely different article—but there is also the act itself, of carrying a weapon. One thing I've learned is carrying is not so much an act as it is a lifestyle.

If you choose to carry, it's not an "only when I need to" proposition. It's every day. You can't just decide one day

you'll carry, the next day you won't, and then the next day you only carry when you go to such and such part of town. It doesn't work that way; or at least it shouldn't. A firearm is a serious tool; it's not like choosing which jacket, belt, or pair of shoes you're going to wear for the day. First of all, in self-defense it's not *you* that chooses when you're going to need the firearm. If you don't have it with you when you need it, it doesn't do you any good. Second, you need to carry it enough so as to be familiar with



it so that you can carry with confidence.

As is preached by CCW advocates, bad guys don't make appointments as to

when they will victimize you. You won't know when and where they'll attack, so

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CARPENTER, from page 5

are hungry for some meat, so one of the most irresistible baits of all is a live minnow. Look for the smallest baitfish you can find and hook them through the lips on that size 6 hook (I like the blood-red colored ones or gold to add a little flash). One other advantage of minnows: they seem to attract the biggest sunfish and you don't get bothered quite as much by the little guys.

Here's one of my best shore fishing tips: be stealthy, because bluegills are often closer in than you think. Clomp up and start flailing the water and you'll spook any pod of fish that was in the area. Don't think you have to heave your bait out as far as you can get from shore. Sunfish might be only a half-cast out.

Rig up a couple rods and get ready! April sunfish action is waiting. Put April's bluegill secrets to work and secure a mess of some of the prettiest, tastiest fish that swim. *WO*

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

ENGBERG, from page 5

analogy is to compare shed hunting to the deer scouting that you do every year before hunting season. The more time that you spend in the woods, the better are your chances of finding antlers. After a long winter and too much inactivity, the exercise that you get from searching the woods, valleys, and fields is welcomed. Another thing to consider is that the more time spent in the woods looking for sheds can also improve your hunting and outdoor skills.

The first step to finding shed antlers, and probably the most important, is locating the area where the deer have been spending their winter. Now, deer can be in a completely different area than they were during the hunting season. For me, the key is finding the food source that the deer have been using in the winter. In Wisconsin, there usually is waste corn, wheat, and soybeans from farmers for deer to feed on during the winter months. But winters with a deep snow cover can make finding food difficult for all animals.

I suggest that you drive around country roads early in the morning or late in the afternoon with a pair of good binoculars looking for deer. Once you find deer, start looking for some bucks.

The bucks should now be in loose, bachelor groups.

Next, it's necessary to get permission to walk on the property where you've spotted deer. Buy a plat book for the county that you're searching and start knocking on doors for access. Most people will give you permission to walk their land if searching for sheds. This is much easier than getting permission to hunt someone's land during the deer season.

Once you have permission to walk and search someone's land, the next thing to do is get out and start walking. Try to concentrate your search on the feeding and bedding areas of the deer. Focus your search on thickets, fields that border woods, grassy areas, and any other place where you can see that deer have been bedding. Most racks or sheds are found in areas like this because this is where the deer are spending most of their time. Check locations where you've found antlers before, because deer can often lose their antlers in close proximity to previous years. This time of the year it doesn't take much for bucks to lose their antlers. Jumping over a fence or rubbing against a tree can often be enough to jar a deer's antlers loose.

Antler hunting can be great fun for the whole family and a good way to spend

some time in the woods before next hunting season. It's relaxing, and, as I said before, a good way to get some valuable exercise and improve your hunting skills.

I've heard of dogs that have been trained to hunt and find shed antlers. Again, the locations to concentrate on are used trails and paths, fencerows, and the edges of fields and woods. Some shed hunters say that they find many sheds within 30 to 40 yards of the woods, next to the fields where the deer have been foraging for food. The reason that fencerows are prime spots to look is because deer often have to jump over them and the impact from landing can often loosen their antlers. If you find half a rack, keep looking, because the other half can be close by.

Shed hunting is much like looking for morel mushrooms. It's hard to find the first ones, but once you do, finding more is much easier. People even take vacations to areas that are well-populated with deer to look for antlers. Sheds can be used for decorations, and some talented hunters even make wall hangings and chandeliers from antlers that they've found.

With a minimal amount of snow on the ground, the time is here, so get out and start looking for these trophies of the outdoors! *WO*

Visit Gary at garyengbergoutdoors.com.

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LEE GATZKE

NextBuk Outdoors

Late winter scouting revelations

It seems as though I've been following this same cardinal for a half hour, bumping him from bush to bush as I wind my way through high and low ground searching for deer sign. Late winter warm spells have a way of waking me from a level of hibernation I fall into at the beginning of each New Year. Increasing daylight and receding snow signal the start of a window of opportunity to begin scouting for deer. The window closes once the landscape turns green again. I feel now is the best time to determine how deer are using the landscape. The clues they have left behind since last fall are very noticeable in the bareness of late winter.

The wide variety of cover I've been walking includes sedge meadow, cattails, and tag alder swamps in the lowlands and cedar thickets, hardwood stands, pine plantations, and overgrown former farm fields in the uplands. This public hunting spot had a lot of transition cover that needed investigation to determine how the deer travelled and where they bedded and fed. Some of the places were familiar to me since I'd hunted there before, but other spots were virgin to my eyes.

One spot I'd hunted this past season showed how the deer had used alternative trails to avoid my stand site while passing through. Approaching the spot way back in the swamp, my thoughts reverted back to the day I'd hunted here. I recalled hearing deer moving through heavy cover as they skirted my stand, probably having winded me. My desire for learning how they travelled through this spot, and where I needed to relocate my stand



The author scouting the bare landscape of late winter for clues that will help him succeed in the upcoming deer season. The best and safest time to scout swamps is when they are still frozen and the snow has melted.

site to avoid being winded, brought me back here as winter melted into spring. I combed the thick cover for sign that would help me figure out how to hunt it this coming fall. Crawling through brush and tag alders, I was swallowed up in the heavy cover, invisible to anything except the cardinal who was now following me.


As I stood in the dense cover and thought about how far back in the swamp I had come, it occurred to me that if I twisted an ankle or came up lame in here, it would be real difficult to get out or have someone get in here to find me. It's one of those things I rarely think about—usually when I get

into a situation that is obviously risky.

Surrounded by the tangle of brush in my remote swamp location, I also had the feeling of being an intimate part of nature. A slip up out here and you were in the same boat as any swamp critter that gets into trouble. It leveled the playing field and made for a closer connection with those further down the food chain from us humans. Just being here made me a part of nature with all its vulnerabilities and freedoms, struggles, and discoveries. Hunting deer is not the sole reason I visit these places. I am glad to be here even if there wasn't a deer track or buck rub within a half mile.

The wildness of this place was intoxicating. The upcoming spring will bring a rebirth of life to this thawing swamp, and so it is with my rebirth of appreciation for the wild places that scouting for deer bring me here.

The remote swamp can be an alluring magnet for all it can reveal but must also be respected as a place that can be unforgiving to those who tread there. Cattail swamps attract deer looking to avoid humans, and some humans venture in after them. Mats of floating cattails can spread over pools of water and muck, making them something like quicksand for whatever takes a wrong step through them. When you can feel the "ground" or cattail mat you're walking on rise and fall with each step you take, beware! One time I clung to the bases of cattails while plunging through the cattail mat up to my armpits. Five feet below, my probing feet never touched anything solid. "How deep is this black hole," among other things, came to mind as I struggled to pull myself out. After a long, cold, sloppy, walk back to my truck, I spread a sheet over the driver's seat, took off my pants and boots and headed home.

By timing your swamp scouting trips to when they remain frozen but the snow has melted, you can avoid being sucked into the goo and they are safe and easy to navigate. Sometimes I push that envelope, and that's when I encounter the dark side of scouting. 

Lee Gatzke is a member of NextBuk Outdoors, creators of tactical deer hunting videos. Gatzke can be reached at www.nextbukoutdoors.com.

DIANE SCHAUER

Take A Kid Fishing

Nonprofits making a difference



Fly tying lessons, Jefferson Park, Menasha.

We all hear the phrases “Take a kid hunting” and “Take a kid fishing.” It seems that we can all agree that getting children outside, in the woods or on the water, is a good idea. It seems easy, right? But what if the parent doesn’t know how to hunt or fish or doesn’t have equipment?

I’ve been involved in a number of extraordinary kids fishing events. The good news is that anyone who wants to help teach a child to fish can lend a hand at events held all around the state every year. Kids fishing events are organized by a variety of groups, fishing clubs, lake associations, and nature centers, to name a few.

The first weekend in June is Wisconsin’s Free Fishing Weekend. Anyone can fish on that Saturday and Sunday without a fishing license. This

provides a great opportunity for a family to decide if fishing is an activity they want to invest in. Find an event, take a kid, or go and volunteer to help.

Since 2008 I’ve attended a Free Fishing Day event held by Heckrodt Wetland Reserve at Jefferson Park in Menasha. Luke coordinates the event and does an amazing job. He invites members of the Fox Valley Chapter of Trout Unlimited to teach children how to tie flies. I go to chat with families about the threat aquatic invasive species pose to lakes and rivers and all the critters that live in them. Best of all, A Fish Tale and More comes to this event.

A Fish Tale and More is a nonprofit organization based on getting kids fishing. Their Mission Statement is, “Making a positive difference, inspiring and educating kids while having fun and creating memories that last a lifetime through fishing.” They mean it.

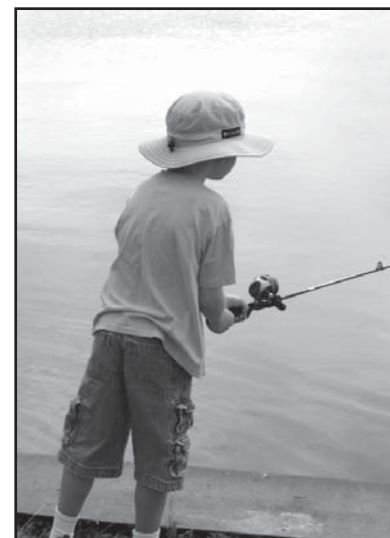
On that first Saturday in June 2012, A Fish Tale and More arrived early at Jefferson Park with their trailer loaded with gear. In 2011, they brought 120 fishing rods and reels and didn’t have enough. This year they brought 140 sets of gear. They provide all the equipment and bait for children for free. In 2012, over 165 children fished from the shore of Jefferson Park. Two hundred thirty-six fish were caught. Twenty-two fish were caught by Caiden, the #1 young

angler.

Caiden started fishing in 2011. I saw him at many kids fishing events around the Winnebago system that summer. Caiden spent the summer studying fish and fishing and catching more fish every time out. It was good to see him back at it in 2012. His skill and knowledge have continued to grow. This child is living up to A Fish Tale and More’s mission statement.

There are other, smaller kids fishing events that take place that same weekend. On the Sunday of Free Fishing Weekend, I took AIS info to the seventh annual Kids Wish for Fish. This event is sponsored by the Brickyard Fishing Club on the east shore of Lake Winnebago. The attendance is by invitation only and held to less than 20 children who normally wouldn’t get out on a lake in fully rigged boats. Yes, they actually go out fishing on Lake Winnebago.

There are volunteer co-captains with one child and one parent/guardian per boat. Each child is given a personal floatation device and all the instruction and attention they need. They fish for about four hours and return to the Brickyard Fishing Club for weigh-in and a hot lunch. Each of the children receives a rod and reel, a tackle box with gear, and t-shirts. All the fish caught are cleaned, divided equally between the children and sent home with them in a



cooler with instructions on cooking their fresh fish fillets.

The goal of the event is to make each and every child feel like the most important person in the world. It’s really special, and the dozens of volunteers deserve credit for taking time to introduce the sport to these kids.

None of these events comes cheap or easy. The cost of Kids Wish for Fish is about \$3,000 per year. In 2012, Community First stepped up to finance and sponsor Free Fishing Day for Heckrodt Wetland Reserve. If you can, volunteer to help at a local event. Consider being a sponsor and provide gear, prizes, or money.

This winter, as the snow and sleet ping off your windows and you dream of summer, think about how you can help. If you want to, it’s easy to find a way to take a kid fishing. *CS*

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

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MIKE YURK

Bassology

Part I: Search baits

There are times we need to search for bass. We need to find where they are and/or what they are hitting on. This happens most often when we fish new lakes or lakes that we haven’t fished often or recently. New and different water is especially challenging. You pull away from the landing and start to look around. Where do you think the fish will be? Sometimes you will luck into them, but more often than not you have to search for them.

You can blindly go searching, and that is where luck comes in. Or you

can have a method that makes it easier to quickly eliminate unproductive water so that you can concentrate on better areas and find what the fish are hitting.

First of all, assemble your baits into a simple, effective presentation that will search out fish in a number of different waters. Not only will this help you find where the fish are holding, but it will also make it easier to pinpoint what baits will be the most successful for that lake. I have always had a penchant to keep it simple; I

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DAVE DUWE

Panfish Bites

Avoid the crowds and get an early bite

In early spring most Wisconsin anglers are battling the crowds associated with the river walleye spawning run. I am avoiding the crowds and catching the early season panfish action. Panfish in early spring can be some of the best of the year, big and plentiful.

My favorite lakes in southern Wisconsin are Delavan Lake and Lake Geneva, both in Walworth County. These lakes are very clear and warm more slowly than a murky or shallow lake. Warm sunny days tend to make the panfish more active. I find that the afternoon bite is usually better after the water has had the full effect of the daytime sun.

Look for the fish in the shallows of the particular lake you are fishing. Usually, I choose areas with a dark bottom with green weeds. The dark bottom absorbs the heat of the sun, raising the water temperature. The green weeds provide cover for the newly hatched microorganisms, which are the

major food source for the panfish while also adding oxygen to the water. Brown or dying weeds emit carbon dioxide to the water, and large concentrations can suffocate the panfish. Panfish prefer stable weather in spring, and fluctuating temperatures will move the fish from the shallows to deeper waters making them more difficult to pattern.

I start my search for bluegills in two to three feet of water; sometimes they are in even less than two feet. The basic ice fishing set up is all that is required. Use a small bobber and a small ice jig. My favorite jig is the Lindy Toad in orange or chartreuse tipped with spikes or wax worms. An ultra light spinning combo spooled with 4-pound Silver Thread is preferred.

On windy days a longer pole is necessary to allow the angler a better hook set percentage. A long pole allows you to get the bow out of the line due to the wind and to get a solid set. Make long casts, fishing slowly; retrieve about



Author Dave Duwe with a Delavan Lake crappie. (Photo by Dick Ellis)

a foot of line at a time, pausing to allow the jig to settle. The bite can be very subtle, hardly moving the bobber. Any extra resistance requires an immediate hook set. The bluegills are in pre-spawn mode at this time of year so don't over-harvest the larger fish that need to spawn in order to sustain the fishery.

Crappies are a little more difficult to pattern, due to the fact that the weather changes can really make them nomadic. I start in four to six feet of water, and, if needed, deeper from there. When crappies are in pre-spawn, the smaller male fish move up first with the females

hanging in the deeper water. I start in a shallow weedy bay of the lake. On Delavan Lake, it is normally Viewcrest Bay, and on Lake Geneva, I like Trinkes.

As nomadic as crappies can be, I drift with the wind until I find some active fish. Once feeding crappies are located, I anchor. After they stop biting, I continue the drift. Due to the water clarity, making long casts is critical. Bait selection is a hair jig or small plastics. My preferred colors are purple or chartreuse, fished beneath a bobber.

Suspend the jig two or three feet

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JOEL "DOC" KUNZ

On Wisconsin's Rivers

River time!

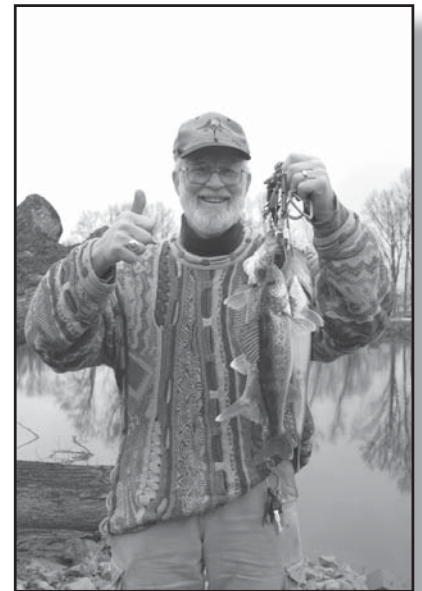
Once again it is my favorite time of year as college basketball winds down to the nation's biggest games and anglers head out in droves to the state's numerous walleye and sauger-filled waterways in search of a tug on the line. A love affair that started in high school has stayed with me to this day as I watch and listen patiently for the land signs that signal the beginning, and progressions, of the spring run. Today's anglers are much more aware of the characteristics of many of the state's walleye and sauger-producing waters than anglers were when I started fishing seriously. We fished the "Dells," Nekoosa, Castle Rock, and Petenwell dam areas on the Wisconsin River in relative seclusion. When we went to the Mississippi, there were fewer boats by far than you will see on any given day in this new fishing world. High

powered electronics have made the fish easier to find when on the water, and the Internet spreads information about river and fishing conditions light years faster than news got around Mayberry from Floyd's Barber Shop back in the day. That makes competition for everything from parking spaces to prime fishing locations something we should expect and prepare for in order to have the best time possible. Here are some suggestions.

First, don't drop everything and go where you just saw a guy on TV catch a bunch of fish. Why join the throngs of people who react to the show and descend on the location like locust when you can choose something less crowded or a time when it will be less crowded? For instance, go after the day crowd has left and set up for a little night fishing. Also, realize the

show you saw had to be shot, edited, and produced prior to airing, so you are looking at what happened in that location a week ago OR MORE! Look at the river system the show focused on, note the water temperature and any changes in the weather pattern since the filming date and make a game plan from there. If it's a river system with a dam, they can't go too far. If it's the Wolf, the main body of fish could be miles from where the show was filmed and the locust are gathering. Better yet, do a little homework and find a smaller or less popular alternative and go catch some fish.

Tactics are pretty simple for early season walleye and sauger. I like to anchor in a safe area and work a jig near the boat. I prefer to night fish because the fish will use shallower water and there is less traffic by far. It takes



It's thumbs up to the 2013 spring walleye run. (Photo by John Faucher)

some simple preparations, but I have found it to be worth the effort most times. Pre-spawn fish will use inside bends and places off the main current to travel towards their spring spawning destinations. On rivers such as the

continued on page 21



DENNIS RADLOFF

Dave's Fishing Expo: April 21

For the 16th year in a row Dave's Turf & Marine of Watertown will be hosting their annual *Fishing Expo!* This event has become a yearly tradition, occurring about two weeks before the game fish opener, which will be May 4th this year.

This free event is open to the public and operates much like a mini sport show. One of the main attractions is the new boat lines from Princecraft offering a wide selection of fishing, deck, and pontoon options. Mercury and Evinrude will also have current motors on display with expert staff available to answer questions and help people

determine what type of outboard motor would work best for the type of on-water activities they are pursuing.

Another great opportunity at Dave's Expo is the chance to talk with some of the exhibitors including On Wisconsin Outdoors, Cutting Edge Outdoors, Smokey's Musky Shop, Rock River Fishery Rescue, Sterling Guide Service, plus many more.

Throughout the day, the crowd favorite of the event is the seminars. The seminars are conducted by industry fishing experts like Tom Newbauer, Dan Bush, Lynn Niklasch, and yours truly ... Captain Dennis. The seminars



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always cover all species of fishing from panfish, bass, walleye, pike, and of course muskies. Another great element of this venue is the intimate setting, making it easy to interact on a "one to one" level, asking specific questions and finding the answers to many tricks of the trade when it comes to getting results on the water.

The staff from Dave's is available all day long, hosting a friendly environment, and Dave is always happy to show and talk with folks about his vintage John Deere tractor display.

Door prizes ranging from boat accessories, fishing gear, and even guided fishing trips always bring smiles to the faces of attendees and prove to be the ultimate bonus to a great day of fun and fishing knowledge.

If you have attended in the past, then you know the great time that will be

had again this year. If you have never experienced Dave's Fishing Expo, then I urge you to mark your calendar. Come on out, have a great time, and get ready for the upcoming 2013 fishing season with the gang.

Captain Dennis Radloff 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.



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ELLIS, from page 3

on the edge of a swamp bordering the hardwoods. Herrman reaches again for a bloodwood and black walnut double-sided short-box. Instead of a hen call, he aggressively manipulates the cover over the wood to precisely duplicate a challenging gobbler. Soon, he watches for the first time as the bobbing red head of Tom rises toward him from the fog hanging over the swamp

Herrman's own rise in the world of turkey hunting has been meteoric. He



hunted turkeys initially in 2000 with a push button call and a near empty bag of knowledge. By the time he had killed his first gobbler in 2001, his calling was impressive enough that he was asked to judge the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf) state chapter calling competition.

By 2002 he was successfully turkey hunting in the U.P. of Michigan, Nebraska, Kansas and South Dakota, targeting the four subspecies of wild turkey. In 2008, he completed the coveted Grand Slam in Florida by tagging the Osceola, having previously bagged Eastern, Rio Grande and Merriam subspecies.

"Each turkey has traits that make it difficult to hunt," he said. "The Eastern turkey is tight-lipped during the day.

"A gobbler is like a rutting buck. They don't eat; all they're doing is strutting, breeding and chasing other gobblers off."

The Merriam is the opposite. He'll talk all day but travel three miles. I've called them in from three-quarters of a mile."

Herrman tagged his 50th turkey in 2011. His highlight season came in

2009 when he hunted and tagged nine spring birds in Wisconsin, Nebraska and Kansas. In 2008, he had entered and taken 2nd in the Wisconsin state turkey calling contest at Prairie du Chien. He has since taken 2nd place several times each in Iowa and Wisconsin state competitions and was the 2011 Minnesota State champion. Herrman is on the Pro Staff of Hooks Custom Calls of Arkansas. His personally crafted calls can be found through Hooks Custom Calls and at stores including Cabela's and Sheels All-Sport of Eau Claire.

Those calls, referred to as "strikers" for pot or friction calls, are turned on a lathe by Herrman using 18 exotic and domestic woods. One pot call, he said, can sound like a different turkey with each striker. In the field, Herrman




Neal Herrman glasses Barron County fields for gobblers during the final season of the Wisconsin turkey hunt.

hot temperatures. On a recent hunt we walked right past a gobbler that remained quiet as we called. On the way back we tried a tube call and he fired up. That's why carrying different calls are so important."

Tom continues from the edge of his swamp toward the challenging gobbler on the hardwood hill. Instead of claiming new hen companionship, at 46 yards he is met with a 12-gauge load of 3-1/2-inch heavy shot number-7 delivered from Herrman's Benelli Super Black Eagle II. With the shotgun sighted in to quickly kill a turkey at 60 yards, the Tom, just under 20 pounds, never takes another step.

"I pattern the gun to 60 yards and I'm very confident to that range," he said. "Treat it like you're sighting in your deer rifle. Why wouldn't you sight it in? I hear of people missing at 40 yards and I wonder if they shot their gun. If it's set up right, you shouldn't have a problem. If it's not set up correctly, you're not doing the bird justice."

For this bird, the hunt ends on the shoulders of expert turkey caller Neal Herrman of Barron. More than 50 gobblers have taken the ride before him.

"An extra tag costs \$10.00," he said. "I like to just be out here during the late seasons to hear the gobbling. Make your own decisions. But to me, it's well worth it." 

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Dick Ellis is an award-winning outdoor writer and publisher of On Wisconsin Outdoors. Follow Dick's blog on the website at OnWisconsinOutdoors.com



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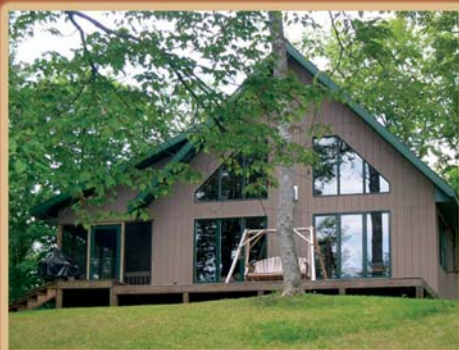
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BILL SCHULTZ

Kayak Fishing Wisconsin

To paddle or not to paddle?



Becky Schultz kayaking for smallies in Door County.

To paddle or not to paddle? This is a very interesting question when purchasing a fishing kayak. I looked up the Merriam-Webster definition of “kayak” and it read: “a long narrow boat that is pointed at both ends and that is moved by a paddle with two blades.” When I was looking for my first fishing kayak, I decided I wanted to be a paddler. A few years later I was asked to join the National Fishing Pro Staff for Wilderness Systems Kayaks. Wilderness Systems produce fishing kayaks that, like the definition states, are paddle powered. In recent years a few companies have developed popular self-propelled fishing kayaks. However, across the industry, in this fast growing fishing niche, most kayaks still rely on paddle power.

I kayak fish because I love being on the water catching and releasing smallmouth and largemouth bass. But an important bonus is the exercise I get paddling from spot to spot. I usually paddle at a moderate to quick pace. It's smooth and easy with the lightweight paddles, with oversized blades that push more water. I also truly enjoy the smooth, rhythmic cadence of paddling a kayak; it's actually therapeutic.

Having spent a number of years fishing from a kayak, I feel I have more control with a paddle and appreciate the maneuverability a paddle offers. This is important on the many clear inland lakes I fish where a quick stop, turn, or backing up is necessary when I spot fish or great-

looking structure to fish. I haven't fished from a self-propelled kayak but have fished with anglers who use them. They can move along at a nice pace, but I can move faster with my sleek traditional fishing kayak and the lightweight paddles I use.

I'm on shallow rivers and often in shallow water on the lakes I fish. Traditional fishing kayaks can handle a few inches of water with ease. Shallow water is a challenge with self-propelled kayaks due to the propulsion unit, which extends a foot or so below the kayak. This can also be a concern on lakes where weeds rise near the surface. The unit can be raised, but that can be cumbersome on a weedy lake and on rivers where the depth can go from deeper water to a few inches in a matter of seconds. Price is also a consideration. A nice sit-on-top fishing kayak can be hundreds of dollars less than the self-propelled models. I've talked about the important consideration of transportation and storage in past columns. Propulsion units can be removed, so both types of kayaks can be transported and stored easily. However, kayaks with propulsion units will be heavier than a similar length traditional fishing kayak—another consideration.


I've given you a few reasons why I'm a “paddler” rather than a “peddler,” but here are a number of reasons why a kayak angler might prefer self-propulsion. A big one is hands-free fishing. By not having to paddle, your hands are free to fish more

than when you have to paddle. Also, anglers who enjoy trolling will appreciate a self-propelled kayak, which is great for trolling. An angler may have a shoulder or arm condition making paddling difficult, so self-propulsion using leg power gets you on the water to enjoy this great sport of kayak fishing.


On the other hand, a knee or ankle condition might help you decide to be a paddler. A paddle is still necessary with a self-propelled kayak in case the peddle mechanism has a problem, for tight maneuvering, and for backing up. So good news: self-propelled kayaks fall within the dictionary definition of a kayak. Even though paddling does offer more exercise, self-propelled kayaks still are a nice form of exercise.

Trolling motors are another form of non-paddle power for a fishing kayak, and most traditional kayaks are able to be fitted with a trolling motor. I've never used a trolling motor on a fishing kayak but have a couple top kayak angling friends who have fitted one of




their kayaks with a trolling motor. Their reason is, with limited time to fish, they can cover a long distance to that special fishing spot quickly. One fishes a reservoir that is a two-hour paddle from where he puts in to where the best fishing is. I can understand that, but once at the hot spot, it's all paddle power.

Last year I caught my first open water smallmouth bass on March 18 and am hoping for another early spring for all us kayak fishing enthusiasts to get on the water as early, whether paddlers or peddlers. A great place to see every type of fishing kayak and all the accessories is Canoeopia at the Alliant Center in Madison, March 8-10. I'll be there both Saturday and Sunday with Wilderness Systems and will give talks both days: “Kayaking for Monster Door County Smallies.” 

Bill Schultz has caught thousands of smallmouth bass on the waters of Wisconsin. He is an active outdoor writer/speaker and can be reached at www.smalliecentral.com.



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Spring is in Rice Lake! Connect with hundreds of miles of ATV & UTV trails. Fish, canoe, bike, golf and dine ... we have it all. When the day is done, relax in one of our 7 excellent hotels. Download our sample travel itinerary. **Click on Barron County.**

Whether you're looking to spend the day fishing on a beautiful Northwoods lake or hit the trails on your ATV or UTV, **Washburn County has what you're looking for!** Relax at a lakeside resort or hit the trails directly from your campground. There are plenty of lodging options to choose from. Start planning your next vacation today! **Click on Washburn County.**

Adams County Petenwell and Castle Rock Parks, on Wisconsin's 2nd and 4th largest lakes, are open year round for camping with heated shower/restroom facilities, game room, concessions, swimming beach, boat launch, and fishing. **Petenwell Park also offers an ATV camping area with immediate trail access.** **Click on Adams County.**

Experience Spring in Douglas County. **Fish the world-famous Bois Brule—Spring Steelhead season starts March 30.** Catch the annual Douglas County Fish & Game League Sports Show April 19-21. ATV, hike or bike our hundreds of miles of trails. Camp in our state forest and parks. Order your free Travel Guide and Trail Maps today. **Click on Douglas County.**

Test your skill on our **Class IV Whitewater on an adrenaline filled rafting trip** or fly through the forest canopy on our exciting zip-line tour. No matter your pleasure, we have what you crave in Marinette County – the real north! **Click on Marinette County.**

Think Spring! Escape cabin fever and discover Richland County. It's time to dust off the fishing gear and explore over **267 miles of Class I and Class II Trout Streams.** A place for all seasons! Richland County is the "Wisconsin" that everybody's talking about! **Click on Richland County.**

Explore Price County. We've saved a place for you! March is the time to take a final ride on our 500 mile snowmobile trail system, to enter the last **Ice Fishing Rumble** of the season at Roll-In Point Resort or to pig out at a **Wild Game Feed** at the Birch Island Resort. On April 16th the Tuscobia State Trail opens for ATV/UTV riding. Call 800.269.4505 to request a brochure. **Click on Price County.**

Now that the end of game fishing is over, Panfish season is aplenty with good Panfish on all area lakes! Make your arrangements for Spring fishing in Polk County... it will be good! Also, now that warmer weather is here, get your hiking boots dusted off and explore **hiking trails throughout Interstate Park** along the St. Croix River ... the scenery is worth it. **Click on Polk**

County.

Sparta may be known as the "Bicycling Capital of America," but there are also **300 miles of funded snowmobile trails throughout the county to ride all winter long!** Also popular is cross country skiing and snowshoeing. **Click on Monroe County.**

The Waukesha Gun Club is **Wisconsin's largest shotgun only club.** It features 29 Trap houses, a Sporting Clays course, 7 Skeet ranges and three enclosed 5-Stand venues. The Waukesha Gun club lies on 88 plus acres and has a spacious clubhouse. Banquet, shooting event, private party or just a place to hold a meeting, remember the Waukesha Gun Club. **Click on Waukesha County.**

Clark County has something to offer for every season! Spring is impossible to resist. It's time to get outside—**go hiking, biking, hunting, fishing, and horseback riding.** Farmers markets and greenhouses will be in full bloom soon. Join us for our Spring Studio Art Tour the last weekend in April. **Click on Clark County.**

As the weather warms, **bikers and hikers can enjoy miles of scenic trails in Green Lake County!** Options include the Mascoutin Valley State Trail, also known as the "cookies to ice cream trail;" Loop the Lake trail; or the Tuttle Creek Trek with a stop at a public beach. For maps, **click on Green Lake County.**

Spring is around the corner and great **Lake and Land Buys can be found on my First Weber website!** Waushara, Marquette, Waupaca, Green Lake Counties ... "Where Up North Begins!" **Click on Waushara County.**

EXPLORE WISCONSIN at OnWisconsinOutdoors.com

The **"Smelt Run" in the Chequamegon Bay** usually starts the 3rd week in April after the ice leaves the Bay. Smelt are approximately 4 to 5 inches in length and are pulled in by a seine or dip net. Ashland Lake Superior's Hometown is the "Historic Mural Capital of Wisconsin." Call 800.284.9484 or [click on Ashland County](#).

Surprise ... Surprise! **Lake Michigan Rainbows turn into River Run Steelheads** when they hit the River mouth. Boy, do we have a Surprise for them this year. Sheboygan River dredging and habitat work is complete from the mouth to the Kohler dam, new habitat underwater fish structures, and deeper holes. Check out these Surprises with **Wolf Pack Adventures** for a memory of a lifetime. [Click on Sheboygan County](#).

There's no shortage of fun in the Northwoods of Wisconsin. Climb into the mouth of a giant fiberglass fish at the **Freshwater Fishing Hall of Fame in Hayward**, opening for the season on April 15. Reconnect with nature by hiking, biking or ATVing the hundreds of miles of trails in the Hayward Lakes area. [Click on Sawyer County](#).

March is one of the best months to see **dozens of bald eagles along the Mississippi River!** Or you can always go fishing—still some backwater ice, along with open water for boats. Visit the **Grandview Motel in Ferryville** and we'll share any information we have. [Click on Crawford County](#).

Heading to Milwaukee for **The Sports Show?** **Port Washington** is a half hour north of there, so stop and check out where you are going to use that new fishing gear you got. Or check out the marina and its easy access to the downtown for your next charter adventure. [Click on Ozaukee County](#).

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GLENN WALKER

Spring Bass Fishing On The Mighty Mississippi

Baits for a successful season

The Mississippi River offers anglers ample opportunities to catch impressive numbers of quality largemouth and smallmouth bass in the spring, as you can start fishing for them as soon as the ice is off the water compared to waiting for the fishing opener in May. As you look to stock up for your spring fishing trip, consider these bait selections for river bass fishing success.

One of my favorite ways to fish for big spring largemouth bass on the Mighty Mississippi is flipping a jig or Texas-rigged plastic. I'll flip either a green pumpkin or black/blue tube Texas rigged because the tube is a nice compact presentation and mimics a crawfish very well. Or I'll flip a ½-ounce jig in a black/blue color combination.

Using a heavy action flipping rod that still has a soft tip will allow you to make long pitches, get a solid hook set yet still feel the lightest bite. I like to work my way against the current when fishing down a rip-rapped shoreline or a slough and making a pitch to every stump. Bass will move up on a rip-rapped bank because it will have warmer water. Putting a plastic creature style bait

next to a stump is a great way to catch a big largemouth preparing to spawn.

The main channel of the Mississippi is lined with rip-rap and at any given point can hold bass. The trick is to locate rip-rap that has a point or other cover, such as some wood, on it as well.

When flipping plastics in spring, I use Fluorocarbon because it is extremely sensitive, allowing me to feel the lightest bites, and it is abrasion resistant so I can bring it through the nastiest laydowns lining the river bottom and not have to worry about my line breaking.

The backwaters of the Mississippi River located around Prairie du Chien on Pool 10 offer ample opportunities for anglers to target bass hanging out around submerged timber. Start by locating sloughs and backwater lakes that are close to deep water, and as the water warms look for shallow water bays that have higher water temperatures.

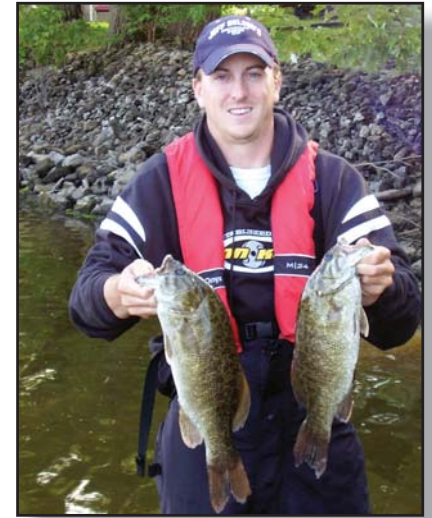
Springtime on the Mississippi usually means fishing stained water, and a single Colorado blade spinnerbait is one of my top choices. The blade puts off a lot of vibration for the bass to key in on. My top two colors are

white and white/chartreuse. I like to fish spinnerbaits in backwater sloughs and lakes with lily pads, submerged laydowns, and stumps.

Fishing a rattlebait has been one of my most successful ways to catch big pre-spawn smallmouth and largemouth on the River. Fishing this lure on wing dams, rip-rapped banks, and flats triggers violent strikes from these fat fish. If your lure gets hung on a weed, be ready for a strike. Many times a bass will hit as your lure comes free.

My key color for any rattlebait in the spring is red craw. Using this method on the Mississippi near La Crosse, Wisconsin, has yielded me numerous pre-spawn smallmouth bass, including a 5-pound, 1-ounce fish that took big bass honors in a tournament. This pool has numerous areas that are fish producing, so using a rattlebait will allow you to cover water and quickly find the most active bass.

Many times anglers have issues with losing bass on rattlebaits because it is easy for fish to throw the lure. I combat this by using a high quality crankbait rod, which has a very soft tip that gives



Glenn shows a pair of spring smallies.

when the fish makes a run or jumps. This rod also has good backbone, so you can muscle in big spring bass.

With the temperatures starting to climb and the days getting longer, it's time to get out and chase some big Mississippi River bass. *W*

For more information, to see instructional videos, and to follow Glenn through his tournament season, check out glennwalkerfishing.com.



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JERRY KIESOW

Fly Fishing In Wisconsin

Jig hooks for flies? Why not?

In the autumn issue of one of the popular fly fishing magazines the subject of using jig hooks for flies was discussed. Not the jigs themselves, with the heavy heads, just the hooks. I found it interesting. One reason for using these hooks on certain patterns made sense to me, so, of course, I tied some. Unfortunately, I did not tie them soon enough to actually fish them. (I have tank-tested them and they look good.) However, by the time you read this, I hope to have at least wet a pattern or two. I will report in the May/June issue.

What did I learn when actually tying some of these lures? Follow me.

First, let me say that tying flies that ride with the hook up instead of down is not new. How long have we been tying the Clouser Deep Minnow? Decades. So the concept is not new. According to the author of the story, using jig hooks is not new to some tiers, either. It was for me.

The hooks I used were Mustad 32756, #8 and #4. They have a 90-degree bend in the shank (those and other configurations were pictured in the article). I tied a couple of nymphs (which the author said he had not yet tried): my Rapids Nymph, the Pink Squirrel, a Prince, and something I dreamed up as I tied. I created a crawfish pattern, a conehead streamer, a beadhead Woolly Bugger, and a synthetic Woolly Bugger. All flies were tied with additional weight so they will be able to be fished along the bottom and/or cast to submerged brushy structures.

That is the advantage to the jig hook; because the bend of the hook rides up, it gets snagged less in brush or on deep logs and rocks. It can even slip through early emerging weeds. I have several places in mind where I will be giving these the acid test. I have lost many flies in one particular spot, but I have also caught some nice fish. I should do better if I am not replacing flies all the time. We will see.

I found there is a learning curve when tying certain patterns when the bend of the hook is up in the vice. For instance, when attaching tails. Because the jaws of the vice are now directly behind the bend in the hook and not

below it, some tails end up spread more than you are accustomed to. Is this a real problem? For some patterns, maybe.

The tails, which are biots, on my Prince ended up spread wider than normal. However, on my Rapids Nymph, which has a hair tail, the tying was a bit different because I kept bumping into the hook point when attaching the hair. But the end result was the same. Will the wider spread biots make a difference to the fish? Time will tell.

I also found that trying to finish off the head of the fly on the "neck" below the eye is not a good idea. You will get a better looking, and much stronger, fly if you forget that the neck is there and pretend the eye is where it would normally be. The tie will be easier, stronger, and look more natural.

I found that a beadhead at the bend of the upturn on the hook works well. If you want to have the bead "crawl up" the shaft a bit, put the bead's large hole on the hook first. If you prefer a more normal look to the fly, put the bead on the hook small hole first as you normally would. Then the bead will stop at the bend.

Even when I use beadheads or dumbbells or whatever, I add a bit more weight to the shank to ensure that the lure will run deep. Will this cause casting and presentation problems? Those are things we will be looking at.


According to the author of the

article, another advantage to these hooks is the way they can be worked when retrieved. He claims the hook gives the fly more up and down action. I am not so sure about that. I can weight any hook, and as long as I use a loop knot I can get good up and down swimming action on the fly. Maybe he doesn't use a loop knot. Do you? Perhaps we should discuss that next time.

Anyway, I like the idea of the upturned hook and am looking forward to using these "new" flies as soon as possible. Spring will be a good test, when the water is still cold and fish are still slow and low.

Finally, two things: first, if you have any questions, go to our website, www.onwisconsinoutdoors.com, scroll down and click on fly fishing. You can email your questions to me from there. Second, get out there as soon as you can, wet a line, and enjoy.

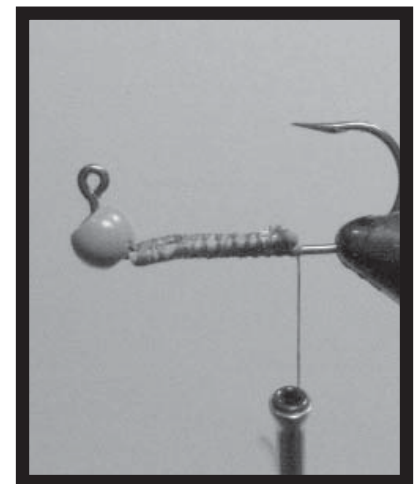
Now you will have to excuse me. I have to make a few adjustments to the next batch so they look better than the first. It's part of the learning curve. See you in a river.

Keep a good thought! 

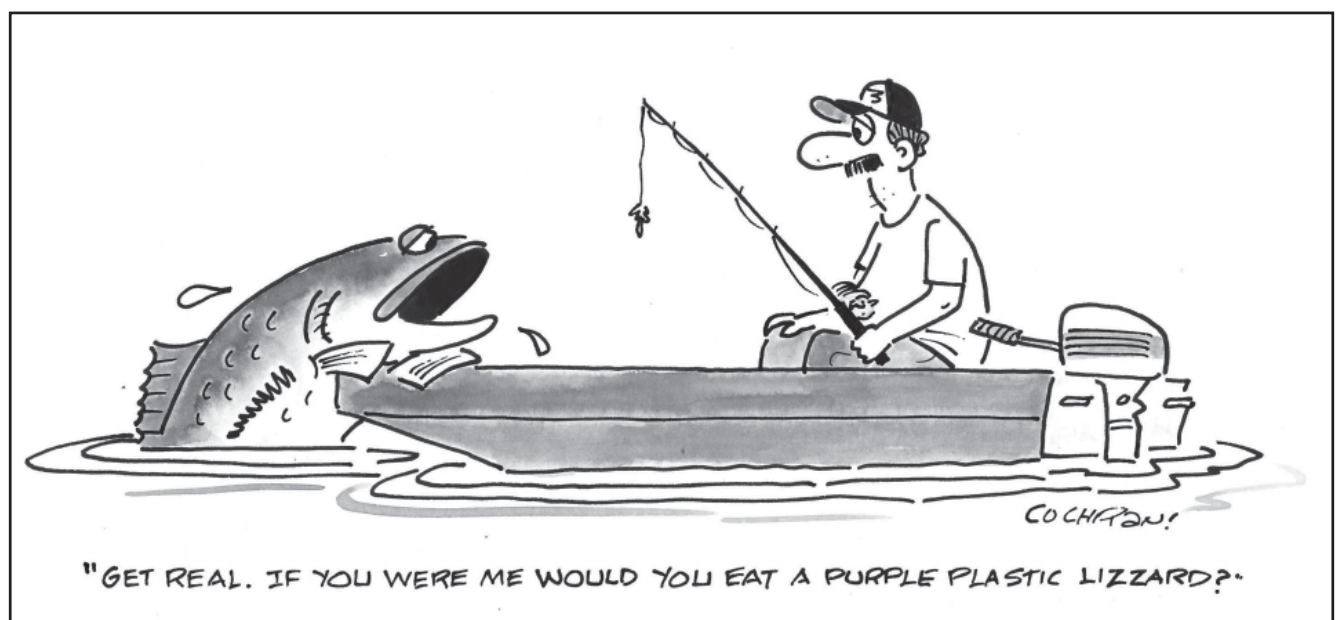
Jerry enjoys all aspects of the outdoors. He will be conducting fly fishing classes at Riveredge Nature Center, Newburg, beginning in May. To keep track of what he is doing and where, to see his photos and read some of his other writings, including his book, "Tales of The Peshtigo Putzer," go to his website: www.jerrykiesowoc.com.



With or without any other type of weight, the author always adds some extra weight to the shank of this type of hook.



If you want the beadhead to "crawl up" and around the bend in the hook, put the large hole on the hook first. If you want the beadhead to stop at the bend in the hook, put the small hole on the hook first. Either way, add additional weight to jig hooks so they run deep.



JJ REICH

The Reich Stuff

A pro's calling advice



The author wearing a big smile and kneeling next to 10-time NWTF Grand National Champion Chris Parrish as he poses with his big Kansas gobbler taken in 2012.

Last May, I had the rare opportunity to hunt with Chris Parrish in Kansas. I was thrilled to have the opportunity to learn from a true professional. Parrish has more than 30 years' of hunting and competitive calling experience and is a 10-time Grand National Turkey Calling Champion. After the hunt, Parrish gave me the following three pieces of advice on how I could improve my calling abilities:

#1 - Buy turkey calling CDs and DVDs of real hens interacting with gobblers

According to Parrish, a hen yelp is the primary call you need to master, but don't neglect other sounds. "Many times, a turkey will come in clucking and purring. Learn to do this. Become proficient at cutting and gobbling, too," he explained. "These shocking sounds can make a turkey respond when he doesn't want to."

So learn to make exciting cutts and gobbles, as these raise curiosity and are enticing to gobblers who are eager to breed. But also incorporate inviting sounds such as relaxed clucks and purrs into your calling mix, because most turkeys are attracted to calm companions.

#2 - Practice your calling months before the season

"It's like knowing all the words to your favorite song on the radio. When it first comes out and you hear it all the time, you can sing every verse perfectly. But if you don't hear it for a while, you start to forget the lyrics," he explained. "It's the same with turkey calling. You need to practice over and over again, even year-round, until all the sounds, rhythms and cadence are second nature."

Besides practicing, he also said that most callers stare at their friction call when practicing. Don't do that. "Practice your friction calls with your eyes closed. In a hunting situation, you shouldn't be looking at your call when you play it. Instead, you should be looking at your surroundings, watching for approaching turkeys."

#3 - Having a long-distance visual on a turkey makes calling much easier

"If you have a visual on the turkey, you can get a good understanding of how interested he is in the situation. If he's gobbling and strutting toward you fairly quickly, you can probably call to him all the way to the gun barrel, and he's going to tolerate it," said Parrish. "Enjoy the show. When turkeys are in that type of mood, they're a lot of fun to call to."

But when you see that you are dealing with a cautious turkey, one

DUWE, from page 9

below the water surface or a foot or so above emerging weeds. It is very infrequent that I use live bait. If you need to use it, try a Thill slip-bobber rig tipped with a crappie minnow, also fished above the weeds. Similar to the bluegills, the retrieve needs to be slow with many pauses. A spinning combo is again the gear choice to make with clear 4-pound Silver Thread line.

Though crappies and bluegills are a month away from spawning, yellow perch spawn right after the ice is out. Typically they spawn when the water reaches 45 degrees compared to the high 60s for crappies and bluegills.

My favorite perch destination is Lake Geneva with its large population of aggressive biters. Different from the bluegills and crappies, I find perch in two to eight feet of water on hard sand or gravel bottom with scattered weeds. The presentation I prefer is a Thill bobber, plain hook and a minnow. On Geneva, it seems that the bigger minnow, the bigger the fish. Experiment on your

body of water and see what produces best for you. Clear water makes long casts a necessity. I accomplish this using a 6-foot, 6-inch light action Fenwick rod, teamed with a Mitchell reel with 4- to 6-pound test Silver Thread line.

Panfishing in early spring can also be productive for shore anglers. The fish are in the shallows close to land and readily accessible. Both Delavan and Lake Geneva have shore fishing opportunities. Actually, there have been several times when shore anglers have done better than those of us in the boats.

On most inland lakes in Wisconsin, game fish season is closed, so don't even consider keeping one. Make sure it's panfish only!

Stay close to home and avoid the walleye crowds and catch the first panfish bite of the year. *WO*

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 fishlakegeneva.com or fishdelavanlake.com.



"AT LEAST NOW WE WON'T HAVE TO PUT UP WITH THAT @#!* GOBBLING EVERY MORNING."

that makes long pauses to study the terrain or drops his feathers into half-strut position on the way in, then you're probably dealing with a smarter, older turkey. "This turkey is in tune with what's going on," he said. "Shut up or call super soft, letting him make his move in."

In conclusion, Parrish's calling ability during our hunt in Kansas was quite impressive. I harvested a gorgeous 22-pound gobbler with

1.25-inch spurs and a 10-inch beard, because he was able to call in a hen that was dragging the big boy behind her. For me, this hunt was indisputable proof that being a better caller makes you a better hunter. *WO*

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

TOM CARPENTER

Cubs Corner

First turkey: Noah nails a gobbler

If you don't already take advantage of Wisconsin's spring youth turkey weekend with a young hunter in your life, you need to. The turkeys are more abundant now than at any other time of spring. Plenty of two-year-old birds are around, and they like to gobble and come to calls. Even the big, old veteran boss gobblers have their guard down a little.

It all adds up to an excellent chance to call in a gobbler for a young hunter. Last spring, Wisconsin's youth weekend produced a first gobbler for my son Noah. It was, all around, a perfect weekend.

We headed down toward my friend's Green County farm on a warm, sunny Good Friday. After visiting with a neighbor farmer, where we also needed permission to hunt, we ended up at Scott's house. More visiting and an old-fashioned country dinner of ham and homemade scalloped potatoes ensued. Even though we were stuffed to the gills, Noah and I knew we had to go look for a turkey in the morning.

At dusk we were standing in a secluded hayfield when a couple gobblers started sounding off in a woodlot across a larger field just to our east. As we listened to the serenade, a huge orange moon rose above the timber, bathing the landscape in soft light. We walked back by moonlight, got ready for the morning, and climbed under the covers.

Staying right where you hunt definitely has its advantages. We woke up 20 minutes before shooting time,

got dressed, walked across the road and up a field lane. Dawn was just breaking over the rolling hills, woodlots, and fields as Noah and I set up in a point of timber jutting into the plowed field the birds had been gobbling near last evening.

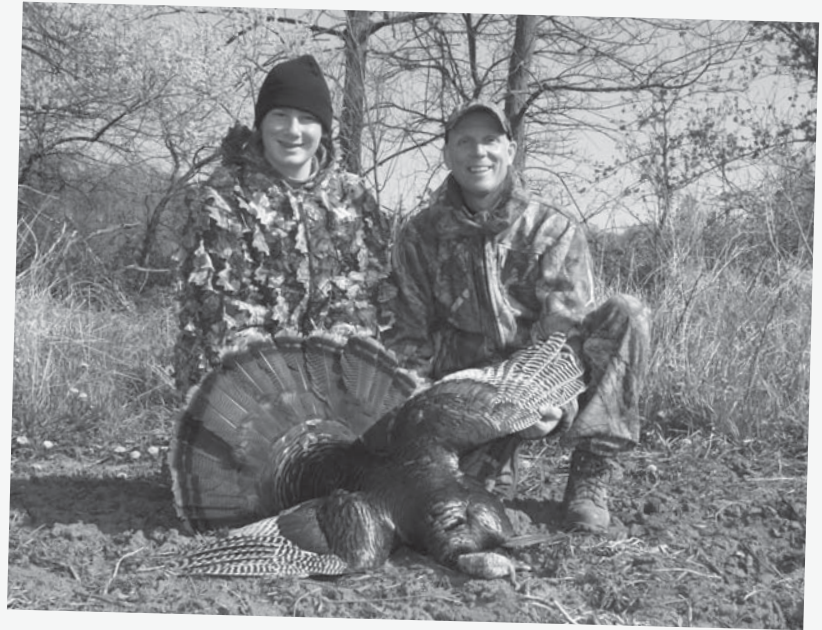
Lusty gobbling filled the frosty early April air as the sun pushed over the horizon. A couple gobblers and several hens exited the woods across the field, and I called lightly, but the toms stayed in that area with the hens.

By the time the sun had been up for an hour, the turkeys left the plowed field through a gap in a brushy fencerow. This was our chance! We picked up our decoy and gear and quickly walked the quarter mile over to that fencerow. I found a couple good-sized trees next to one another, and we settled in for a long wait.

I knew the birds liked the secluded field corner we were watching and might eventually come back. We spent an enjoyable couple hours in the now-warm sun, and every once in a while the gobblers would courteously gobble from behind us at my calls. That kept us on our toes.

But about 10:00 AM, the mood changed. The gobbling got steadily more intense and louder. Then it stopped. I clucked one last time and told Noah to get ready. A minute later I heard him whisper, "Oh, my gosh."

Moving just my eyeballs, I saw what he saw: two gobblers had stepped through the brush and into our field. I softly whispered instructions, and



The author and his son, Noah, with the young hunter's youth season gobbler from Green County.

the young hunter raised his gun. With no hen in sight, the toms were getting nervous, starting to putt and walk off. But Noah kept his composure, aimed carefully, and pounded the trailing bird at 35 yards.

I hobbled over on stiff knees to secure the bird, and soon Noah was there. We hugged, laughed, admired the handsome turkey, and let out a big breath. We'd hunted hard, found success, the day was beautiful, we were together, and life couldn't have been any better.

We talked a little bit in the sun about the turkey hunting lessons we had learned. Dawn isn't the only or even best time to shoot a bird. Keep at it. By midmorning, hens often ignore the gobblers and the toms go looking for love. We stayed put, stayed hunting, kept on them, and the gobblers finally

returned to look for that "hen" they had been hearing. And there we patiently waited.

Back at the farm we cleaned the bird (it weighed 23.1 pounds, not bad for a first gobbler), then went into Monticello for a cafe lunch. We helped with a few farm chores, visited a couple other farmer friends, and watched a movie at night. The next morning we got up early to stand behind the barns and listen to the turkeys gobbling. They obliged. And we promised them we'd be back again this spring. *WO*

This year's youth turkey weekend is April 6-7. Go to www.dnr.wi.gov/topic/hunt/turkey for more information.

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

KUNZ, from page 9

Wisconsin, this migration is interrupted by a dam, which concentrates the fish. On the Winnebago system, walleye can spawn in areas on the Fox or Wolf River, a process that is normally determined by water flow, level, and temperature at the time the fish come out of the big lake and head upstream. Usually the majority of the fish go up the Wolf River to procreate in the spawning marshes, backwaters, and shallow lakes from Fremont through New London to Shiocton and above. As they go upstream, every inside bend on the river is a potential "black

and gold" mine. Once we get to mid-April, all of Wisconsin's rivers are pretty much in post-spawn mode. Fish will be returning to the vast areas of water from whence they came, and anglers will be out looking for them. Drifting and jigging stretches of river off the main current line and the sandy areas I call "whoop-de-doo" will usually produce fish. Sometimes they will hold up and rest in "eddie" currents where the swirling, circling water gathers baitfish, making for an easy ambush point. Make sure to check with your local bait shop for good information, a current report, and up-to-date observations. One more thing: if you call the bait shop, don't buy

minnows from the gas station.

ICE BREAKER 8

March 16 & 17

Speaking of good information, I will once again be hosting ICE BREAKER 8, which will be held at Critter's Sports in Winneconne on Saturday and Sunday, March 16 and 17, 2013. Known for its fantastic lineup of speakers and information available on the Wolf River, Fox River, and Winnebago system, it is a family friendly event you are sure to want to attend. Show times, a lineup of speakers, and everything you need to

know about the show is available at www.critterssports.com. There will be boats on display, great deals on all sorts of fishing tackle and equipment, and some of the most knowledgeable people on the planet to talk to about walleye fishing on the Wolf River and Winnebago system. Your issue of *On Wisconsin Outdoors* will get you free admission to the show. Point right here and tell them, "Doc sent me." *WO*

For more information about the Wolf River system from Joel "Doc" Kunz, visit his website at DocsWaters.com or his video magazine at LifeOnTheWolf.com. You can find both of those pages and his personal page on Facebook.

PETER MICHAEL

Re-Living Wisconsin's Outdoors

Today's technology opportunities

It was a little after 9:00 AM. I had already walked home and back once. But after watching blue jays and having countless gray squirrels get my hopes up time and again the first couple hours of opening day, what 13 year-old first time hunter wouldn't take the five-minute walk back home to warm up and refuel with some candy bars? I was barely settling back in my stand before the first gray squirrel taunted me on a log not far from my natural ground blind.

Per 1993 Wisconsin deer hunting regulations, my father sat just on the other side of the narrow five year-old slashing. It had grown just enough that you couldn't see each other but you could hear one another shout.

The excitement of my first ever opening day of gun season had pretty much faded. In fact, I was almost bored. I love snow. Usually we had snow for gun season, but not this year. Then, yet

another squirrel started milling around, but I didn't even bother to look back up the hill at him. Stupid squirrels. I watched a blue jay peck away at its food nearby instead. But that squirrel just kept getting louder, like he was headed right for my stump and logs ground blind. So I casually looked over my left shoulder to see what the heck he was doing. My adrenaline kicked like a mule pumping, my eyes nearly came out of my sockets. A BUCK was walking about 25 yards behind me. Maybe a fork, maybe just a spike, it didn't matter; that buck was HUGE and walking towards some scent I put out in a shooting lane over my right shoulder.

Instantly I was in commando mode, using my stump back rest to hide my movements as I slowly settled into position to take out my long-awaited and intended target, my first whitetail deer.

You don't need a camera to remember an event like this, but sometimes it's not about the need but the want. And while you can "see" the memory in your head, no one else really can, no matter how well you tell the story. But with today's technology it's incredibly easy and incredibly inexpensive to turn one person's memory into a memory for all, or as many people as you'd like to share it with.

If you can't tell, I'm a big advocate of video in the outdoors. I started filming my adventures over 11 years ago, the last five of which have turned out some great memories and spectacular hunts as I got serious about it. It's led me to develop several online hunting shows, start my own video production company, and got the attention of the Sportsmen Channel. Filming the outdoors is my passion, and more and more it's becoming my career. Not everyone is as serious about it as I am and that's okay. I still recommend it to everyone just for the fact that you can preserve the memory of the hunt for generations to come. Some people will find out they love it; others will decide it's extra work they don't care to do. But love it or hate it, filming hunts is a new trend in the outdoor industry.

But like most things, trying something new is a little tedious and even a little scary at first. That's where I come in. In this column, Re-Living



The author hunts with the camera and more traditional methods. He is producer of Battle Scraps.

Wisconsin's Outdoors, I'll draw on my experiences in the woods of Wisconsin and share the knowledge I've gained in my 11-plus years of filming to help you capture the best memories you can on video.

We'll talk about the best video equipment that suits your needs and budget. I'll share dozens upon dozens of techniques and other tips that I've found to help capture the best quality footage when filming the outdoors. I'll even discuss the basics of filming and storytelling that they teach you in fancy film schools, for free.

Some of you may only want to film a few things to share with family and aren't worried about always getting the hunt on video. Some of you might be trying to start your own hunting show or make it onto an existing one. And some of you are somewhere in between, just wanting to learn some things about filming the outdoors. Whatever your goals, you'll find something useful in every column whether you're a beginner or practically a pro.

So get ready to pick out a camera. In fact, I'll discuss cameras in the near future, so you'll have one on hand when you're about to make your next hunting memory. This time you'll get to RE-LIVE it, and so will your friends and family.

Oh, and that spike of mine—it didn't take long before I settled my open sight 7mm .08 right behind the shoulder

as he quartered away from me. BOOM! He nearly buckled right in his tracks, mustering just enough strength to jump over some logs and stumble ten feet to his final resting spot. Shot through the heart, and I was to blame. I was so excited I could barely manage to find the whistle in my pack to alert my father of my need for assistance, as if he didn't know. Dead deer or not, he would be checking on me.

As he appeared through the young poplars, I remember my dad's grin as he peered at me standing over my first deer, a buck to boot. Making sure both our weapons were safe and grounded, he gave me a hug no bear could ever muster. Neither of us could stop smiling as I retold the story.

I remember virtually everything about that morning, waking up early with Dad, walking to the stand with my flashlight, the squirrels, the midmorning warm up, the deer, the shot, Dad coming through the trees, gutting the deer, telling mom. Most firsts are unforgettable and vivid, but now that my dad's gone, I'd sure love to see him on that day again and again and again. If I had video of it, I could. *WO*

Peter Michael of Big Rock Outdoor Productions is an outdoor videographer, producer, writer, and, of course, hunter from northern Wisconsin. He's spent the last 20 years chasing game around Wisconsin and the last seven years developing outdoor media. Visit bigrockoutdoorproductions.com.

Battle Scraps: Is It The New Dream Season?

Battle Scraps is an online-based reality hunting competition series featuring average, everyday hunters who really define "work to live and live to hunt." Competitors who take part in the Battle Scraps series, whether a two-person team or solo competitors, film their own hunting adventures as best they can. Battle Scraps is about the story of regular unpaid hunters and their experiences in the outdoors, all captured on \$300 HD cameras from local electronics stores.

Whether it's a new trail camera, top of the line scents, or the latest hunting products or services, those who compete on Battle Scraps will have a chance to win something truly useful in their hunting adventures. A team wins based on votes by the fans and points earned on the production end of things.

Anyone interested in watching episodes, connecting with or voting for teams, or being on Battle Scraps, connect with battlescraps.com *WO*

YURK, from page 8

believe that it is better to fish a handful of baits well than to fish a bunch of baits haphazardly.

There are a few baits that I call “search baits.” They successfully cover a variety of water. I have confidence in them and feel that it is just a matter of time before one of them will start catching fish. The key is to cover a lot of different water easily and quickly.

My first choice for search baits in deeper water is crankbaits, and my favorite bait is the Jointed Shad Rap by Rapala. I use both #4 and #5. The other crankbait I use is the lipless crankbait, and my favorite in that variety is the Rattlin’ Rapala in sizes five and seven. The final bait to add to the crankbait collection is the Salmo Hornet in sizes four and five. It has a larger plastic bill and will dive deeper than most crankbaits, so I use them in water that is deeper than ten feet. The larger baits will go deeper than the smaller size.

As it is with all baits, there is a wide variety of colors, almost too many to choose from, so I just use one color for the most part: silver and blue with an orange belly. I have been using it for years and have found it to be an exceptionally effective color. There is something about that color combination that just catches fish, and I have been sticking with it.

The second search bait needs to cover shallower water but must be versatile enough to encompass different types of cover. There are two baits that fall in that category: the spinnerbait and a new bait called the ChatterBait. The spinnerbait has been around for over 50 years, and the ChatterBait has invaded bass fishing in the last ten years or so.

Both baits are perfect for shallow water but can be used in deeper water by just letting them sink before starting to retrieve. They can also be used on the surface like a buzzbait by just retrieving them fast enough that they flutter across the surface. Additionally, they can be worked over the top of weeds and around both manmade cover, such as boat docks, and natural cover, such as brush piles and stumps. Because the hooks in both baits turn up, they will ride over cover, snagging a lot less than crankbaits or other baits with treble hooks.

Both baits came in a variety of colors, but I learned years ago from an old bass fisherman that you can use any color spinnerbait all you want as long as it is white. I have been following that advice ever since, and since I use the ChatterBait like a spinnerbait, I extend that line of thought to ChatterBaits as well. I use either ¼- or 3/8-ounce bait.

The third search lure is the plastic worm, but just not any plastic worm will do. The ideal plastic worm to search for

bass is the sinking plastic worm. They do not need any weight to sink since the plastic has enough density that allows it to sink on its own.

It is a versatile bait that can be rigged two ways: Texas or wacky style with a hook in the middle. In both cases the sinking worm will cover every type of water from shallow to deep. It has at times even taken fish from the surface or just below the surface. I have seen bass come up and hit it right off the top as the worm hits the water.

As these sinking worms are dropping through the water they have a lazy back and forth movement that triggers strikes. A lot of bass hit it as it is falling. The plastic worm is designed to be worked slowly, crawling it across the bottom.


As with all of our baits, plastic worms have a mind numbing array of colors from which to choose. In keeping it simple I use a couple of different shades of blue and a couple more in green. I also use a brown worm with a chartreuse tip. Those five colors seem to be more than enough for every type of fishing situation.

These few baits will help you search out where the fish are and discover what they are hitting on. Being able to cover different types of water and keeping it simple are the keys to searching for bass.

Author’s note: Selecting the right bait is only half the battle in searching



Having the right combination of search baits is an easy and effective way to find fish in new water.

for bass. The other part is where to look, and that will be covered in the next issue with Bassology: Searching for Bass: Part Two—Where to Look. 

Mike Yurk has published more than 600 articles in national and regional outdoor publications. He has published five books, on outdoor subjects. He is a retired Army officer and lives in Hudson, Wisconsin. Contact Mike at bassinmajor@yahoo.com.

MANNING, from page 6

picking and choosing when and where you’ll carry isn’t an effective plan. A firearm back home in the safe doesn’t do you any good when you need it. Besides, if we were able to tell when and where we were going to be attacked, we would just avoid that place at that time.

On the second point, the first time I carried as a licensed CCW holder it wasn’t a particularly comfortable experience. When I left my house, it felt like wherever I went all eyes were on me. I had absolutely no confidence that the firearm was concealed properly. I’m sure from my demeanor I looked suspicious to anyone who was watching me. By the end of the day I was so paranoid that everyone had busted me, it was a relief to get home.


I realized right away that I couldn’t become comfortable carrying if I just strapped on my gun when I left my home, so I began carrying all day—from the time I got dressed in the morning until the time I went to bed. As the days

went by my comfort level went up and I realized my concerns about everyone seeing my gun were just in my head. Carrying at all times allowed me to get used to every facet of carrying a gun; the extra weight on my hip, the type of clothing that I need in order to properly conceal my handgun, and also the movements that I make.

When you carry, there are certain nuances to your movements that you

someone’s hand with your strong side arm leaves your weapon exposed to someone grabbing it, and if the person shaking your hand knows what they are doing, they can hold your hand and grab your gun. Jumping and running can make your firearm do a lot of bouncing around, which can be obvious to onlookers. These are just a few things you have to be mindful of. It’s best to learn these things as you carry around

Eventually you’ll feel comfortable carrying and find that a lot of the things you do on a daily basis revolve around you carrying; the clothes that you wear, the places that you go (I won’t frequent establishments that have a “no weapons” sign in front, not even unarmed). Traveling outside the home also requires a little more planning. If you’re running errands and have to stop at five places but the third is your kid’s school, you better have a place to secure your firearm in your car.

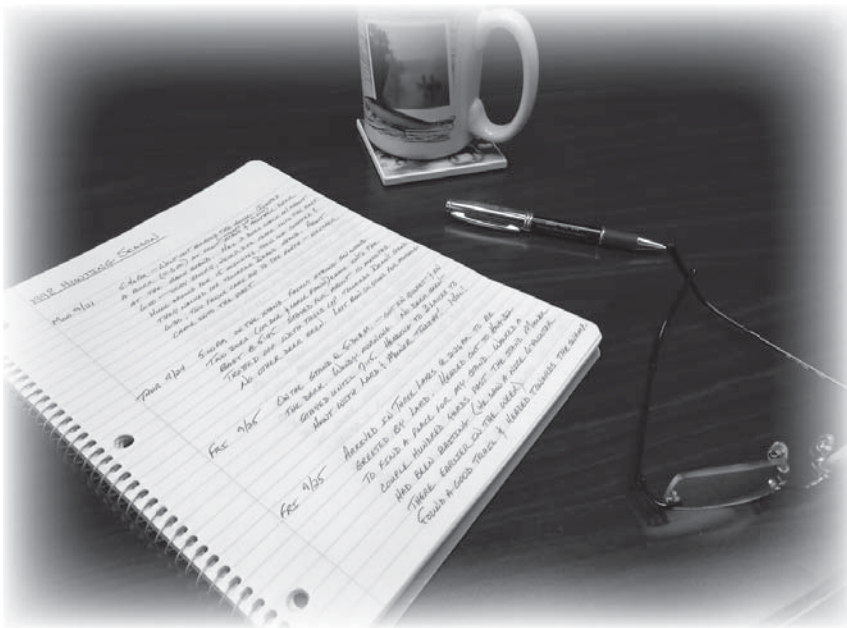
Once I embraced it as a new lifestyle, it became far more comfortable to carry, and now it’s second nature. In fact, much like my wallet or cell phone, I find that now when I leave home without it, I feel like I’m missing something. 

Robb Manning served in the U.S. Marine Corps for nearly 11 years where he developed a passion and knowledge for firearms of all types. Since 2010 Robb has been a gun/hunting writer, and also films gun and gear videos for his Youtube channel 762x51n8o.

“I’m not pushing you to carry your gun around your home all the time—that’s a decision you will have to make—”

have to adjust. A few examples: You have to be careful of how you reach for things; reaching up will lift your shirt and expose your firearm. Bending over to pick something up can leave your firearm exposed and pointing at someone’s feet behind you. Shaking

the home instead of out in public. I’m not pushing you to carry your gun around your home all the time—that’s a decision you will have to make—but I am suggesting that you do so at least until you are comfortable carrying, until it becomes second nature.



A simple hunting journal can bring to life memories that have faded with the passage of time.

My basement workshop is a mess. The recent arctic blast with its subzero temps was the perfect opportunity to start sorting through it all to restore some sort of order. So, on a cold January day, there I was rummaging through the clutter, pitching a lot of dust-covered junk into a garbage can, when I came across an old spiral notebook. Opening it, I found that it contained my notes from the 1998 and 1999 hunting seasons.

I'll admit that, as I get older, I have a lot more of those "hereafter" moments. You know the ones ... where you walk into a room and then stand there asking yourself, "What am I here after?" So the notebook was an unexpected treasure amidst the mostly useless stuff that had accumulated in

that corner of my workshop. To be honest, I had forgotten that I'd ever kept a hunting journal. And it gave me a good excuse to grab a beer and take a break from my clean-up chore.

For the next half hour I was able to relive a couple entire hunting seasons and some really special hunts. Certainly, the 10-point buck on my wall is a wonderful visual reminder of one of those hunts, but the notebook filled in the gaps and provided a backdrop for everything that had gone into it. It reminded me of a lot of the details that my aging brain had somehow forgotten.

One of my all-time favorite movies is "Grumpy Old Men," and my friends and I quote it often. It just contains a lot of wit and wisdom, especially on the subject of aging and mortality. In

DAN MOERICKE

The "Up Nort" Report Write it down

one scene, Grandpa Gustafson (played by the late Burgess Meredith) tells his 70-something son (played by the late Jack Lemmon), "In the end, all you've got is the experience! That's all there is, Johnny ... to everything ... the experience."

Keeping a hunting journal helps capture and preserve the experience. Pictures are nice. Mounts are great. But those are usually just the end results. To really capture the experience, it needs to be written down promptly after the fact. "What about video?" you say? Nah. I watch a ton of outdoor shows on TV, and in most cases it seems to me that it's more about making the video and plugging sponsors than it is about the actual hunt. When I go hunting I like to focus on the hunt and savor the moment, not worry about the battery life of my video recorder. For me, the distraction of trying to film a hunt would just get in the way of fully experiencing it.

Looking back at my old journal, the writing wasn't anything special, but it was sufficient to fulfill the purpose. Mostly, I captured the date, the place, what I saw, and who I was with—all the important stuff. Some entries were two sentences; some were two pages. Even the uneventful hunts are important in that they make those times when everything comes together just that much more exciting ... and more appreciated. Successful hunting trips

are not commonplace occurrences. If we all shot a giant buck or caught big fish every time out, it would cease to be special. Heck, for most of us, the catch or the kill is just a small part of it anyway.

For the past five or six years now we've kept a camp log at our annual May fishing trip (the Great Walleye Assault). On a cold winter night it's quite a treat to mix a cocktail and pick up one of the log books for a little reminiscing. There is always something that I'd totally forgotten about that will make me smile. Most of the time it has little to do with the fish that were caught. As Grandpa Gustafson said, "It's the experience, Johnny!"

I didn't make any New Year's resolutions this year, but I'm making one now. I will keep a hunting journal again this fall. I'm not sure what prompted me to keep a journal back in 1998, and I don't know why I quit doing it after 1999, but I'm going to start again. When it comes to fishing, catch and release is a great concept. When it comes to hunting, writing it down and reliving it is another one. Great hunts are just too rare/special to only experience them once. And you can write that down. Just sayin'.

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

TOM CARPENTER

Badger Birds: Red-headed woodpecker

Red-headed woodpecker populations in Wisconsin ebb and flow with the availability of dying and dead trees, which are essential for hunting food and excavating nest holes. Dutch elm disease, chestnut blight and other tree afflictions actually help redheads! But as snags age, deteriorate and finally drop, the birds must move on. These woodpeckers like to stash food by wedging nuts, acorns, seeds, fruits, berries and even insects under bark, in tree trunk crevices or between shingles.

Look for a handsome woodpecker with rich red head; white belly; black back, black wings with white bands; and a long gray bill.

Listen for the redhead's call—a squawky choy choy choy. These woodpeckers also drum in short, staccato bursts, lasting a second or two, when establishing territory boundaries or drilling for food.

Understand red-headed woodpecker habitat needs. These birds prefer open woodlands, parks, cemeteries, orchards, old pastures,

wooded neighborhoods, beaver pond meadows and timbered river bottoms. They require dead trees and snags.

Attract red-headed woodpeckers with sunflower seeds in a tube or platform feeder and with suet.

Did you know that red-headed woodpeckers often hunt insects from a perch, fluttering out to snatch their flying prey in mid-air?

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



GORDON PAGEL

Wolf River Country

A special kind of March madness!

“Here’s Johnny!” Remember Jack Nicholson insanely delivering that line in *The Shining*? Supposedly he was suffering from an acute case of cabin fever or spring fever, the result of being snow-bound at a remote, mountain resort for an entire winter.

Sound familiar? Though I don’t think a Wisconsin winter necessarily drives one to the murderous behavior Nicholson’s character displayed, I have no doubt it is responsible for a special kind of March Madness. Madness, leading to questionable behavior, frequently exemplified by a group of walleye anglers residing in Wolf River Country.

For the inflicted, it doesn’t require much to trigger the Madness. A small patch of open water is often all it takes and whether the river is still locked in an icy grip is irrelevant. The next thing you know, there’s a guy in a snowmobile suit, pushing a johnboat over the ice toward an opening barely big enough to float his boat! No. I’m not kidding. And as the ice progresses to go out, even in its more dangerous stage of ice jams, created by mini icebergs, more of the inflicted will join in the Madness! Can this behavior really be the result of an insufferably long Wisconsin winter?

Perhaps, but maybe there’s a better explanation.

Now most of you know the Wolf River is famous for both its walleye and

white bass runs. April is known as the peak for walleye and May gets the nod when it comes to whitebass. But DNR biologists and local anglers have long known, many fish move up river under the ice. Early ice-outs can make those fish available to the intrepid angler. And for the adventurous, the action can be fast and furious! But as is the case with all things in nature, timing is everything.

Chico’s Landing, south of Fremont in Orihula, can be an early season hotspot and provides access to the Wolf River and to those walleyes responsible for March Madness. Gary “Chico” Chikowski, owner of Chico’s Landing, has been known to come down with severe cases of the Madness himself. Last year there were reports of someone down by Chico’s pushing a johnboat over the ice jam to get to open water. It was a rumor, but if I were seeking information on ice-out walleyes, I might start with Chico!

Red Banks Resort, up river and just north of Fremont, sits directly on one of the best fishing holes on the river. Captain Bob Carl, along with his wife Rita, own Red Banks. Bob is a knowledgeable, local guide, and their resort opens March 9, 2013.

Winneconne is always an early indicator for walleye movement out of Winnebago. Winnebago and Butte des Morts walleyes have no choice but to pass under the Winneconne Bridge on



Wolf River Country March Madness at its best!

their way up the Wolf River, and with the constricted flow, currents open the river here early. Wolf River Resorts is a great source for current fishing information for bridge fishermen and boaters alike.

April will always rule as the time to be on the water for walleyes, but if you are seeking a cure for your March Madness, maybe this is the year to try something different. Quick limits of chunky males are not uncommon, if you hit one of the waves of fish right.

But don’t just show-up, call ahead for conditions and fishing reports. And maybe you should bring your tip-ups, too!

Wolf River Country resources:

travelfremont.com

redbanks.net

Chico’s Landing 920-446-3345

wolfriverresorts.com



Ice Jam at Chico’s Landing on the Wolf River.

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OWO STAFF

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www.championtarget.com

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www.gokfin.com

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www.weaveroptics.com

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www.sitkagear.com



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www.primos.com

Product 6-Pack contributors include Tom Carpenter (T.C.) and Robb Manning (R.M.). If you have recommendations for good gear that works for you, tell us about it at ellis@onwisconsinoutdoors.com.

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Waterproof



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- Large inside pocket for extra storage

100%
Waterproof



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