

May/June 2014

Vol. 7, Issue 5

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JOEL DEBOER

Knock On Wood For Springtime Muskies

Tackle the timber for early season success

If I let you in on an often overlooked early season musky hotspot, “wood” you be inclined to fish it during the impending opener? I bet you “wood!” Timber, brambles, blow-downs, log-jams ... whatever you call submerged wood on

your favorite body of water, it’s an absolute musky magnet during the months of May and June!

Having surmised that wood is indeed a musky attractant the question now becomes, “What wood is good wood?”

Any given reservoir, river or flowage most likely contains a fair, if not good, amount of the fibrous structure. Surprisingly, the “good” wood and “good” weeds share some common attributes. The first is their relation to deeper water. Gener-



Bulldawgs, like jigs, are dynamite musky baits when fishing wood.

ally speaking, the best of the snags, blow-downs, etc. in a section of river or flowage will be positioned near deeper water. This generally means adjacent or even directly in the river channel itself.

A second common attribute shared by good wood structure is size. A larger or more developed weed bed will hold fish more consistently than a smaller or less developed one. The same holds true when deciding which aquatic thickets are most deserving of your time. Large trunks or stumps are going to be more productive than skinny ones. A fallen



Andy Grimm displays firsthand another good reason to fish rivers during the early season.

tree with a large canopy will be a more consistent fish producer than that of a tree with a small one.

A blow-down or snag can be a big-fish magnet if it provides adequate cover, especially if it is located within proximity to deep water and the main flow of current. By this I mean that there are sufficient branches to provide the shade, asylum and ambush potential these top-of-the-line predators are looking for. Wood by itself can be as great a structural element as any vegetation. Stumps, while they provide little in the form of shade or shelter to a musky, do hold a great deal of forage. It is for this reason that stump fields, particularly those containing larger, older stumps also need to

continued on page 7

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JERRY KIESOW

Fly Fishing In Wisconsin

Tying original recipes: the "Bonny" Red Hackle

Last issue I told you about and showed you how to tie the original Pheasant Tail nymph as tied by Mr. Frank Sawyer, MBE (Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire). I really enjoyed doing that story, so I decided you might like to know about the very first artificial fly ever tied.

"Over two hundred years before Christ, Theocritus wrote of fishing with 'the bait fallacious suspended from the rod,' but failed to tell of its color or method of construction." (Fallacious means false, deceptive.)

Then, "... in the third century after Christ AElia wrote as follows: 'I have heard of a Macedonian way of catching fish ... They fasten red (crimson red) wool round a hook, and fit on to the wool two feathers which grew under a cock's waddles, and which in color are like wax.'"

These quotes come from the late Mary Orvis Marbury's book, "Favorite Flies and Their Histories."

It is believed these writings refer to the same fly. Therefore, man's first attempt to catch fish on an artificial fly happened over 2000 years ago. It is an interesting story. You should read it sometime.

My first question upon reading it was: will that fly still catch fish? The only way I knew how to find out was to tie up a few and fish them.

According to the book, there are three different ways of tying the Red Hackle, or as it is sometimes poetically referred to, "The Bonny Red Hackle." All three flies are pictured in the book, which is what I followed to duplicate them.

The original fly is a simple soft hackle pattern: red body, light brown hackle tied at the head. The next mentioning of the fly, from Walton's writings, the "rudy fly," is tied with the red body and light brown hackle, but the body is ribbed "with black silk." Finally, further along in history, the fly is renamed the "Soldier Palmer." This is because the entire fly is palmered with the light brown hackle. As I said, this fly has a very interesting history.



Note the variables in this first artificial fly ever tied, the "Bonny" Red Hackle. From the top: wet fly hook tied with red thread, ribbed with black thread, dark hackle; wet fly hook tied with red thread, light hackle; salmon hook, red floss, black floss ribbing, black thread, ginger hackle; streamer hook, red floss with white thread underneath but finishing with black thread for the head, ginger hackle; and a new one tied on a wet fly hook, red thread, light hackle, and a wool body, just like the original recipe.

My second question had to do with the flies pictured in the book. All three patterns were professionally tied with modern products. Modern, that is, for

1892, when the book was first published. My question: how did the flies really look 2000 years ago? Unfortunately, I do not have that answer. (I am old, but not that old.)

Because of the second question, I have, over the years, tied the pattern several ways with different materials. All use the original recipe, but they all have subtle differences that can be seen when placed side by side. Check out the accompanying photo and caption.

Here is the basic tie, with commentary:


Hook: Your choice. I have used wet fly hooks and streamer hooks, even a few salmon hooks, in sizes 10 through 6.

Thread: This has been an evolving material. I started with black, went to white, and am now tying with red. Why? Read on.


Body: On my first flies, I used red floss for the body. This turned very dark when it got wet because of the black thread underneath. Then I switched to white thread under the floss so it would stay brighter when wet. Recently, I have used red thread, no floss, for the entire fly. I am also tying a few using red wool wrapped around the shaft as was described in the original writing.


Hackle: Mostly, I use ginger, but I have tied some with a lighter "wax" color and some with a darker shade of wax. (As I write this, I am thinking I might tie some streamers with the hackle forming a wing instead of a collar.)

What is interesting is that all variations have, so far, caught fish. Not all the time, of course. No fly does but they're consistent enough that I carry them in my vest and fish them. To date, one or another has caught brook trout, bluegill, northern pike and steelhead. Not bad for a pattern that is 2000 plus years old. I call that a keeper.

See you in the river. Keep a good thought! 


Jerry enjoys all aspects of the outdoors. To keep track of what he is doing and where, see his photos, and read some of his other writings, including his book, "Tales of The Peshtigo Putzer," check out his website: jerrykiesow.com.






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JOHN LINDEMAN

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We all got through a winter described with single words unfit to print and by catchy phrases like "Polar Vortex!" Now it's time to reward ourselves by planning as many fishing trips as possible before the next deep freeze returns in about 140 days.

The challenge, like every year, is finding fish the first time you launch the boat. That is easier said than done. However, if you approach the 2014 open water inland lakes fishing season with a plan, you may just avoid the "Dry Net Syndrome" that often afflicts those who don't have a plan.

Surviving the coldest winter in decades guarantees us that the ensuing spring will offer an interesting challenge: a spring season that may extend into July. So let's face that challenge and get to our plan.

First, one must reset expectations. Most of us are fresh off the annual Wisconsin walleye run. Each year we are spoiled by easy-to-find, willing-to-bite spawning walleyes. After the spawn, however, fishing becomes a constant search for active fish. And that is where all the planning pays off.

Your approach should be the same ev-

ery year. No matter where you decide to fish, you must identify three specific areas in a body of water. They are: spawning, post-spawn and spring walleye haunts. These spots are easy to remember because that is where you located active walleyes in previous years.

Take Green Bay, for example. Every little trickle of water that dumps into the Bay plays host to some sort of spawning run. The males come early and leave late. But the biggest females get there just as conditions peak and leave almost as fast. That's the spawning area.

After the rigors of procreation pass, it's time to eat while warming up and resting. Post-spawn areas might best be described as shallow flats with dark bottoms that absorb the sun's energy. One spot like that on Green Bay is the massive shallow flat where the Fox River unloads into University Bay.

Spring haunts, our third key area, are mid-depth breaks and shallow humps or reefs. These areas stand ready to receive hungry walleyes as competition for food over post-spawn flats heats up.

The distances between these key areas are relative. On the Winnebago chain, walleyes that finish spawning near Eu-

reka and Fremont flush several miles downstream in a single day. Other years the same walleyes hold up in those same rivers until the forage is all but depleted. In a sense, walleyes are much like people. We cruise past potential eating spots until the shortest drive-thru line is found. Walleyes look to have solitary schools of forage all to themselves.

The plan comes together when you link your key spots with the word on the street. Savvy anglers extract information from various online fishing forums, local bait shops and stealthy chit-chat at the boat launch. Where fish are not being caught becomes just as important as where they are.

Understanding this planning process is simple; applying the plan is the hard part. You have to trust your instincts and follow the progression from one key spot to the next. Line up the word on the street with your key areas and fish with confidence.

Never forget the travel corridors, short or long, between these key areas. Look for anything that might cause traveling fish to congregate. It could be an obvious bridge support or a subtle mud-to-gravel transition line.

A little planning didn't seem to bother Newberg's Mike Gaglione. A late May wind turned things considerably cooler, but the fish kept biting.



Our new friend, Polar Vortex, may have pushed spring all the way into July, but you can bet the 2014 walleye run has finished. Scratch spawning areas off the list and move to the next key area. See you on the water. I will be somewhere between post-spawn and spring, even if it is July.

Thanks Polar Vortex, it has been... 

Wisconsin native John Lindeman has turned his passion for fishing into a business that provides effective products with innovative twists. The owner of Kingdom Fishing Innovations enjoys all types of fishing from small creeks to the Great Lakes. He can be reached at jlindeman@gokfin.com.

DEBOER, from page 4

be added to your milk run.

A category of lures that cannot be ignored for the brush-busting musky angler is the jig. The jig and shad really shine in the oft colder water temperatures encountered during the early season. As for particulars, I have found the jigs made by J-Mac and Li'l Hustler to be more than adequate for this type of fishing. Begin by tipping the jig with a large wider bodied trailer such as a six-inch or nine-inch (depending on the size of the jig) Mister Twister Sassy Shad. I prefer this style offering to an oversized twister tail for two reasons. First, the wider body offers a larger profile and second, when rigged correctly, it helps the jig fall at a slower rate.


I prefer to work my jigs more like swim baits. The advantage here is that you can allow the jig to drop and

make contact more readily, even swimming the lure through potential hazards as the guard wards off hang-ups much more so than baits with an exposed hook. This style fishing requires vigilance as the strike is often nothing more than a "tick" or jump in the line. During extremely tough conditions, swapping the plastic for a chub or sucker minnow can be the difference between getting bit or not. It's a more painstaking method of fishing but one that can be absolute lights-out for muskies in the spring as well as throughout the season.

When packing the boat for the day, it's also a good idea to bring along some sort of lure retriever. No matter how well you pay attention or work your lures, at some point you're going to get hung up. Accept that fact now and deal with it later. I prefer the extendable style such as the model manufactured by Frabill because not only does it work well and lay nicely on the floor of the boat, but it

doubles as a push-pole in close quarters when I'd rather not be running my trolling motor.

I spend a great deal of time on the Wisconsin River and its flowages, giving me ample opportunity to fish the likes of stumps, logs and blow-downs on a regular basis. While we catch plenty of muskies from rocks, weed cover and suspended, becoming proficient at fishing wood has allowed me to add another dimension to my early season musky fishing and will do the same for you. If you're willing to knock on wood, you'll catch spring-time muskies!

I'll see you on the water. 

Joel DeBoer owns and operates Wisconsin Angling Adventures guide service, based out of the greater Wausau, Wisconsin, area. He specializes in muskie, walleye and smallmouth bass. You can reach him at 715.297.7573 or at www.wisconsinanglingadventures.com.

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GORDON PAGEL

Wolf River Country

White bass in May: a “shore” bet

For landbound anglers successful outings are highly dependent upon timing, since location is mostly dictated by public access. You are limited in your ability to change position, so you have to focus on when to be there.

May is the right month in Wolf River Country to target white bass, and the lower section of the river offers the best opportunities for successful shore fishing trips. Winneconne, Fremont, and Gill's Landing at the mouth of the Wau-paca River provide consistent success year after year for shore anglers. New London has plenty of public access but doesn't always draw the numbers of fish for consistent success. However, high water levels this spring may provide the conditions needed to make New London a “hot spot” for shore fishing this year.

In Winneconne, the iconic Winneconne Bridge is the obvious access for fishing, but there are other possibilities that shouldn't be overlooked. Especially as the water warms and the fish become more amorous, they can be found quite shallow and near shore. The public boat docks on the west shore, south of the bridge can be very productive at this time. Wolf River Resorts, located on the east shore and north of the bridge, is another good location as things heat up. For \$5 you can fish off their seawall for the day. All of these locations can put you within reach of the same fish being targeted by the guys in the boats.

Fremont, like Winneconne, once offered the angler an opportunity to connect with the Wolf River's walleye and white bass via the State Highway 10 Bridge. When it was replaced in the 70s, that tradition ended. Then in 2000 State Highway 10 was rerouted to bypass Fremont, and a new bridge was constructed a short distance south of the Village. The Village took advantage of its location to create Fisherman's Park. Located on County Road H just south of Fremont,



Fishermen's Park, under the Highway 10 bridge in Fremont, is a consistent “hot spot” during the white bass run in May.

the park is actually under the bridge at the start of an outside bend in the river. A prime spot and perfect location for fishing from shore!

When the white bass are at their peak, the public docks in Fremont located between the Bridge Bar and Channel Cats will produce fish, too. In fact, any dock this time of year can produce fish. It's a good time to stay with one of the many resorts located on the river. You may never have to leave their dock to fill your cooler!

Several bends up river from Fremont on County Road H you'll find Red Banks Resort. Their docks are located on one of the more productive fishing holes on the river. For a daily fee of \$5 you will have no trouble filling a bucket with white bass during the run. Live bait, food, and beverage are available at the bar and grill. During the season they open at 5:00 A.M. every morning for breakfast and stay open until closing or everyone leaves, whichever occurs first. I recommend the half-pound “build-a-



burger” for \$6.50, medium rare.

The county boat launch at Gill's Landing at the end of County Road F, east of Weyauwega, is another location to get in on the white bass run. The seawall between the bar and the boat ramp provides ample access to the river. Gill's Landing Saloon & Tube Trips is open for lunch and dinner and located right on the river.

Between Gill's and New London there is limited shore access to the public, but the City of New London makes up for this deficiency. Much of the public access in New London can be attributed to the development of the Wolf River Sturgeon Trail. The entire trail along County Road X makes for ready access to the white bass run. Taft Park, St. John's Park, and the Bernegger River Walk are all good bets in the downtown area. The river walk also offers handicapped accessible fishing piers. With all the opportunities available in New London, some will be more productive than others at any given time. Start your trip with a visit to Johnny's Little Shoppe of Bait for the best current information on the local bite.

This is by no means a comprehensive list of all shore fishing opportunities, but it does highlight some of the best. Be courteous and helpful to other land-bound anglers. You might be surprised of the local knowledge you can gain, including the most effective baits and presentation for existing conditions.

For specific lure, bait and presentations proven highly effective for white-bass, visit www.onwisconsinoutdoors.com under “Inland Fishing.” Click on Gordy Pagel's Wolf River Whitebass.

OW

For a comprehensive list of resorts, bait shops, and boat rentals in the Fremont area visit travelfremont.com, wolfriverresorts.com, redbanks.net, thelittleshoppeofbait.com.



DAVE DUWE

Putting Bluegills To Bed

Warmer temps mean more fish

Although temperatures remain cool, we can all look forward to the warmer weather of early summer, which is my favorite time of year for bluegill fishing. Bluegill will spawn in mid-May through June; they prefer to spawn when the water temperature reaches 70 degrees. This is when I often find active bluegills in less than three feet of water. I search for the warmest water on the lake, typically on a sunny shoreline.

I choose locations like the back of bays or channels and look for soft, muddy bottoms. They seem to warm more quickly and hold more fish. The softer bottoms contain more vegetation, which provides both food and shelter for the bluegills. Fishing in the shallow water makes it pretty easy to sight fish for spawning bluegills. I use my Minn Kota trolling motor to slowly cruise the shallows and locate spawning fish. Bluegills create a cylindrical pattern in the bottom vegetation when they spawn, which is a dead giveaway to their location. If you have kids in your boat, you can get them involved by using them as bluegill spotters. Just give them your polarized glasses and cut them loose. In early summer, most lakes are very clear, and making long casts is important so you don't spook the fish.

This time of year the preferred bait is leaf worms or wax worms. I use a small Thill fixed spring bobber and an ice jig.

I like Snyder Lures' Waxie Rig. This jig provides the bait in a vertical presentation. For a horizontal presentation, I use the Froggit, also by Snyder Lures. Offering the bait in two different presentations doubles your chances of catching fish.

You always want to use the smallest bobber you can get away with to keep the bait off bottom. Occasionally you need to add a few split shots to maintain the bobber's neutral buoyancy. Gary Snyder of Snyder Lures thinks that the most important thing is to keep the jigs as natural as possible. Most of the baits the bluegills are eating fall slowly, as would something natural in their environment. If you find that your jig is falling too fast, you can slow the fall by adding a small piece of plastic to the jig. Small plastics can even entice more fish to strike, adding a different color and wiggle to the presentation.

Sometimes when the fish are deeper, I switch from the fixed bobber to a slip bobber. Make sure when attaching the slip bobber knot that you don't pull it too tight on your line, because this can weaken your line in that spot. I like to position the bait about six inches or so off bottom or the vegetation. When using slip bobbers, pole length is critical. I always use a 6-foot, 6-inch or longer pole. This helps with longer casts while allowing good hook sets. My reel is spooled with four-pound test line.

One of the best bluegill lakes in Wisconsin, and the one I guide on the most, is Delavan Lake. Located in southeastern Wisconsin, it's about one hour southwest of Milwaukee and one hour north of Chicago. Delavan Lake has a maximum depth of 52 feet with a plentiful supply of shallow bays and points, which are excellent locations for bluegills to spawn.

All fish are vulnerable during spawning and bluegills are no exception. We need to protect our resource and return the females into the water. With this in mind, enjoy the start of the summer and some of the best bluegill fishing of the year. *WD*

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



Author's son Nate with a Delavan Lake bluegill.



DAN MOERICKE

An 'Up Nort' Report

A tradition of fishin'

There's a lot of stuff in this world that doesn't last 30 years. Computers, most cars, a high percentage of marriages, and businesses are some that leap to mind. So when I tell people that this May will mark the 30th annual Great Walleye Assault, it raises a few eyebrows.

Thirty years ago a couple of buddies and I decided to take a long weekend in May to camp and fish near Boulder Junction. We called the trip the "Great Walleye Assault," or GWA (Gee-way) for short. I sent out a couple of handwritten newsletters in advance of the trip to ramp up the anticipation. Times were simple. We had a tent, a 14-foot boat, some food, and a healthy supply of beer. That was about it.

Roll the calendar ahead 30 years. Our group has grown to seven, and the old handwritten newsletters are now e-mailed to an address list numbering over 60. It gets distributed geometrically from there. Camp set up and take down has become a task equivalent in complexity to a shuttle launch. Since a few guys in our group have cabins in the Eagle River area, I've been asked on a regular basis why we don't just stay there. The answer is simple: tradition. GWA wouldn't be GWA if we weren't camping.

At the core of this tradition of fishin' is a group of guys that are fun to be with, on the water or off. We're all middle aged but marching rapidly towards geezer status. While Deano is officially retired,

the rest of us still show up for work on a more or less daily basis. Employed or not, our calendars all say "GWA" on the second week of May. One guy even had to tell his boss that he wouldn't be able to make a trip to Switzerland because "he was busy" that week. Priorities.

When it comes to the actual fishing aspect of the trip, we do our share. The typical day starts around 7:00 AM with coffee, calisthenics and breakfast. (By "calisthenics" I mean a brisk walk to the outhouse.) Breakfast is followed by a gathering around the campfire to determine who will fish with whom and which lakes will be targeted. Normally, we'll fish hard until a semi-mandatory rendezvous back at camp for happy hour, fish cleaning and dinner. We then go out and fish until dark, followed by a campfire and a Leinie's or two. The next day we do it all again.

While the trip is called the Great Walleye Assault, over the years we've developed a real affinity for catching crappies as well. I'd guess that at least as much time is spent in pursuit of golden slabbers as is spent chasing walleyes.

Camping in northern Wisconsin during the month of May can be an adventure. We've seen everything from heat waves and sunburns to snow storms and ice-covered lakes. The latter happened last year and the way this past winter has gone, I'm suspecting we'll be dealing with that again this year. No matter ...

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MIKE YURK

Bassology

The case of the sinking worm

Most plastic baits do not sink on their own. They float, and the only way to get them to sink is by adding weight, such as a jig or a bullet-shaped sliding sinker in what most fishermen consider the traditional Texas rig.

That is not the case with sinking worms. They sink on their own without any weight because they are made with a heavier, denser type of plastic. It is elementary, as Sherlock Holmes would exclaim to Dr. Watson during their many mysteries together.

These worms cast easily since they are heavier than normal plastic worms, allowing them to sink with a slow, tantalizing side-to-side movement that bass find hard to resist. In the history of bass fishing, sinking plastic worms is a relatively recent innovation, and it's taking bass fishing by storm.

Texas Rigs

The basic Texas style rig has been the initial start for many fishermen first experimenting with sinking worms. Rig the sinking worm just like you would any normal Texas style rig but omit the weight. I usually use a 3/0 normal worm hook. Insert the hook through the head of the worm, slide it up the shaft of the hook and then push the barb of the hook an inch or two farther back in the worm.

Texas rigging is the best way to fish sinking worms if you are working an area with flooded timber or submerged logs. With the hook buried in the body of the worm, it prevents many hang-ups as the bait crawls right over the top of logs and branches.

Going Wacky

It didn't take long for fishermen to start experimenting with new rigging methods, and soon the wacky worm was born. Wacky rigging is hooking the worm through the middle of the worm, allowing the worm to hang loose on both sides. I admit it took me a bit to warm up to the idea of wacky worming, but now it's the way I normally fish sinking worms unless I am fishing submerged logs and trees.

I believe fishermen are innovative by nature, and it didn't take long for someone to come up with using O-rings rather than just hooking the worm through the middle. Using O-rings makes it tougher for fish to tear the worm off the hook. Before using O-rings, a sinking worm would not usually survive more than two or three strikes. By using O-rings you can fish a sinking worm for as long as an hour or two. With O-rings I go through perhaps a half dozen worms during the day, whereas before I used them I could go through a 20-pack of worms.

Tools Of The Trade

To rig a sinking worm with O-rings you will need an O-ring tool. It is a plastic or metal tube that looks like the front part of a ballpoint pen. In the thin end you push on an O-ring. On the open end of the tube insert the first half of the sinking worm. Then slide the O-ring across the tube until you slide it on the worm. Put the hook through the O-ring and you are ready to fish. The O-ring tool can be found in sport stores or in catalogs for about \$10.

The best O-ring is a 3/8-inch outer diameter with a 1/4-inch inner diameter. You can normally find them at any hardware store, usually 10 to a pack. Many of the tackle companies carrying sinking worms also provide larger packages of O-rings in 100- and 200-count.

For wacky rigging I use a 2/0 Gamakatsu Finesse Wide Gap hook. Since most of my bass fishing is catch and release, I mash down the barbs on the hook with pliers, making it easier and quicker to release fish. If I am Texas rigging the worms, I leave the barb on so the hook will stay in the plastic worm.

Sinking worms come in lengths from three to seven inches. I normally use the five-inch worms for both Texas rigging and wacky style. The shorter versions might work well on those days when the bass are finicky.



Mike Yurk shows off a bass taken in the early season by using a sinking worm wacky style.

I try to keep color choices simple. From opening day until early June, anything with red in it seems to be the most effective. For the rest of the season I normally use a watermelon or June bug color and a blue sparkle or black and blue mix worm.

Whether you Texas rig or use the sinking worm wacky style, it is heavy enough to cast by itself. I work it like any other plastic bait by allowing it to sink and bring it back by just lifting the rod tip a couple of feet at a time.

It truly is elementary, as Sherlock Holmes would say. *W*

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.

DIANE SCHAUER

Kids Don't Float

New program helps keep boaters safe

It's a perfect storm when good public relations, boater safety, and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources all come together. That's exactly what happened when the *Kids Don't Float* program was introduced in Wisconsin in 2012.

The Wisconsin program is based on one started in Homer, Alaska, in 1996 to combat that state's high rate of youth drowning. It's an honor system in which *Kids Don't Float* stations are placed at boat launches stocked with life jackets sized from infant through adult. People borrow the life jackets for free before going out on the water and return them when they dock later that

day.

It's called *Kids Don't Float* because the greatest percentage of people on boats wearing improperly fitted life jackets are children. That makes sense as life jackets are expensive and kids grow quickly. Instead of using a poorly fitted life jacket, visit a *Kids Don't Float* station and find the correct size to use for the day. Taking some of your kids' friends out on the lake for a day? Borrow life jackets so you can have fun and everyone stays safe. Life jackets are available for all sizes of boaters and anglers, from infant through adult extra large.

When the program was launched in Wisconsin, twelve stations were set up around the state. Twenty four new stations were placed in 2013. The locations of the life jacket loaner stations currently include eight in West Central Region, seven in Southeast Region, two in South Central Region, eleven in Northern Region and eight in the Northeast Region. More are pending placement in 2014.

Funding of the stations comes to the Department of Natural Resources from a federal boating program. Unfortunately, the federal funding will be less for 2014, so

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This Kids Don't Float Station is located at Stockbridge Harbor and is managed by the Quinney Fishing Club. Look for them statewide.

TOM LUBA

Search Baits = Valuable Tools

Test the waters

When you set foot on a new bass lake, there's always the main quandry: do I fish fast or do I fish slow? If you don't know the water, it makes sense to just start fishing and cover as much territory as you can.

Most successful anglers have at least one search bait in their tackle bag that they go to in certain situations. For largemouth, one of the best search baits I've found is a Rat-L-Trap. With a ¼- or ½- ounce bait loaded with rattles, you can toss it a country mile. With all those rattles, it gets the fish's attention.

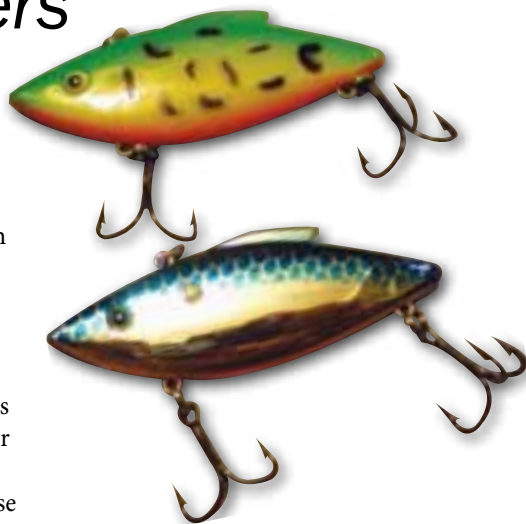
The Rat-L-Trap doesn't have a prescribed depth to run, like lipped crankbaits. It sinks (but there are floaters in the Bill Lewis Lures line, too), which means that as you search you can automatically adjust the depth based on what you are fishing. It can be run at any depth, from buzzing it right under the surface to letting it flutter down along a point or a deep weed edge.

Case-in-point: I remember fishing with my brother one chilly April day in northern Illinois many years ago on a small man-made lake that was being parceled out at a subdivision. It was shaped like a mini reservoir, complete with a variety of arms to investigate. We had just turned into a long narrow arm, and as we moved in, a fish swirled toward the back end of the bay. My brother pushed the trolling motor a notch, then cut the power. He fired a ½-ounce Trap one of those aforementioned country miles. It landed a few feet from where the fish surfaced. He jerked the rod tip and started reeling. I swear I heard the rattles chugging like a freight train right up to when that bass inhaled the bait. The fish made a massive swirl as it tried to turn. A few minutes later a fat 4 ½-pound spring largemouth was netted and in the boat.

Searching doesn't mean you should tear down the lake at 100 miles an hour. Make sure you put your casts in areas that have obvious potential, with fish having access to wood and inside weed edges.

Having a favorite go-to bait doesn't mean that you'll catch all your fish on your search bait. But once you find them, you can go over the area a lot slower. Pick off the fast biters with the Trap. Then drop down to a plastic worm, a jig or a soft plastic stickbait like a Senko to get the ones that want a slower presentation or are holding real tight to cover.

The Rat-L-Trap you throw doesn't have



Rat-L-Traps make excellent search baits, especially for largemouth and smallmouth bass. The rattles really get their attention.

to be anything fancy. I like a chrome finish, in silver or gold, with a black back. Those will mimic a lot of the bait fish in most waters. Toss in a bluegill/bream color and you may not need anything else.

I usually throw a Trap on a 6 1/2-foot medium heavy Quantum baitcast rod with a matching Quantum bait cast reel with 12- to 14-pound Berkley Vanish Transition fluorocarbon line. The line sinks to help keep the bait down. It also stretches less than monofilament, which makes it easier to get a solid hook set.

If you're not sure where to begin your search, think back to the lakes you fish. If you can find similar areas, those would be good places to start. In spring, look for the warmest water you can find. In our case, it was in the back of an arm, but the water temperature was still only in the 40s. Later in the year, look for shallow weed beds, deeper weedlines where you can fish a Trap over the top of the mid-depth weeds and along the deep weed edges, or tapering points with weeds or other cover present that can concentrate the fish.

There are a lot of baits, from spinnerbaits to buzz baits to crankbaits, that can be retrieved fast to cover water. Even Carolina rigged plastics can be dragged along at a decent speed and used to locate fish. Talk to several different anglers to discover their favorites. For me, the versatile Rat-L-Trap is the best option for a variety of areas, shallow to deep. *W*

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

JOHN LUTHENS

Categorizing A Trout River

The Brule

In 2011, the Wisconsin DNR began a comprehensive review of the state's inland trout season. Surveys were mailed out to lapsed trout fishermen asking why they'd left the sport and to probe current trout anglers about category regulation perception and season preference. These surveys were the first step in assessing an inland trout system that had not been reviewed in 25 years.

The trout review continued in April of this year, with advisory questions put forth at the Conservation Congress spring hearings to explore possibilities of extending the catch and release season and creating a uniform catch and release season to include counties and sections of water that are currently closed outside the regular season. The possibility of extending the regular trout season into the middle of October was also on the ballot.

According to Statewide Trout Coordinator Joanna Griffin, the goal of the trout review is to minimize confusion, optimize opportunities for all types of legal trout fishing methods and harvest, with a foremost goal of protecting the resources.

"We are in the process of going over the information, seeing what we have and communicating with all stakeholders, and from there we hope to develop a plan for the future of Wisconsin inland trout fishing," said Griffin.

While I don't profess to understand all of the statistics, I understand the honest concern and hard work that goes into



The Bois Brule River in Douglas County.

protecting the future of Wisconsin trout fishing. I've developed an appreciation for the research involved in managing state watersheds for all fishing preferences while taking into account the dynamic climate and topography of Wisconsin.

A trout fisherman's favorite water mirrors the heart of the matter. The runs and pools of a river are not always easily washed into regulation. There's more than the age-old argument of live bait versus artificial and whether the thrash of spotted fins should be set free or turn into the solid feeling of a trout thumping in a creel bag.

For your trout fishing pleasure, I submit to you a Category 5, special regulation water: 44 miles of wild Douglas County river and my own experiences on the Bois Brule.

A lower stretch of river below the dividing line of U.S. Highway 2 opens the last Saturday in March for steelhead fishing. From there, the Brule winds north to meet its destiny with Lake Superior. It's a storied tradition that often involves snowshoes

continued on page 24

Driftless Lodge



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CLAY HELLER

Spring Fling

A one-two punch for spring muskies



A nice musky caught short line trolling an early spring transition area.

As I sit here to write this there is still a lot of ice on the local lakes, but musky season in the southern part of the state is set to open on May 3rd. Hopefully, we won't have to set tip ups for opening day. All joking aside, spring can be a great time to tangle with a big toothy critter, and as with any time of year, location is the key to consistently hooking up.

Muskies tend to spawn when the water temperatures reach 52-55 degrees. This piece of information will help you to decide where to focus your attention. Depending on water temperatures the muskies may still be in spawning areas, usually shallow areas with soft bottoms preferably on the northern side of the lake. The northern side of the lake receives the most direct sunlight at this time of year and the water will warm faster. As water temperatures rise the muskies will move from the spawning areas to transition areas to recuperate from the strain of the spawn. These areas can be anything that can provide cover giving muskies an area to feed and rest adjacent to spawning areas.



This fish was caught off the same way point casting a bucktail.

There are several ways to effectively fish these areas. One of my favorite is to short line troll, with smaller, shallow running crank baits. Some of these include the Diesel from Musky Train and the SS Shad from Smoker Tackle. Trolling allows me to keep several baits in the strike zone at one time while covering lots of water. What I will usually do is make a handful of trolling passes through an area that I believe will be holding muskies. While I am trolling through the area I will be marking the newly developing weed edges. When I get bit, I will drop a way point on my GPS so I can duplicate that pass. A lot of times you can pick up multiple fish from the same area.

After I've made my trolling passes, and hopefully caught a fish or two, I will go back and cast the areas, concentrating on the new weed growth that I marked out and any spots that we contacted fish while trolling. You will most likely contact the most aggressive fish in the area with a trolling presentation, but if you go back and work the areas with a casting presentation, you can oftentimes score another fish. When casting the areas, I like to use small glide baits, twitch baits and small bucktails. Some of my favorite baits for this are Phantom softail gliders, Slammer drop belly gliders, Bucher baby shallow raiders and Mepps marabou spinners.

Give these ideas a try this spring and try to get that first one out of the way early. Enjoy the 2014 musky season and I will see you on the water. *OW*

Clay Heller operates HP-Outdoors. He guides on the waters of southeastern Wisconsin from April through November. Contact Clay through his website at hp-outdoors.com or at 920.256.0648.

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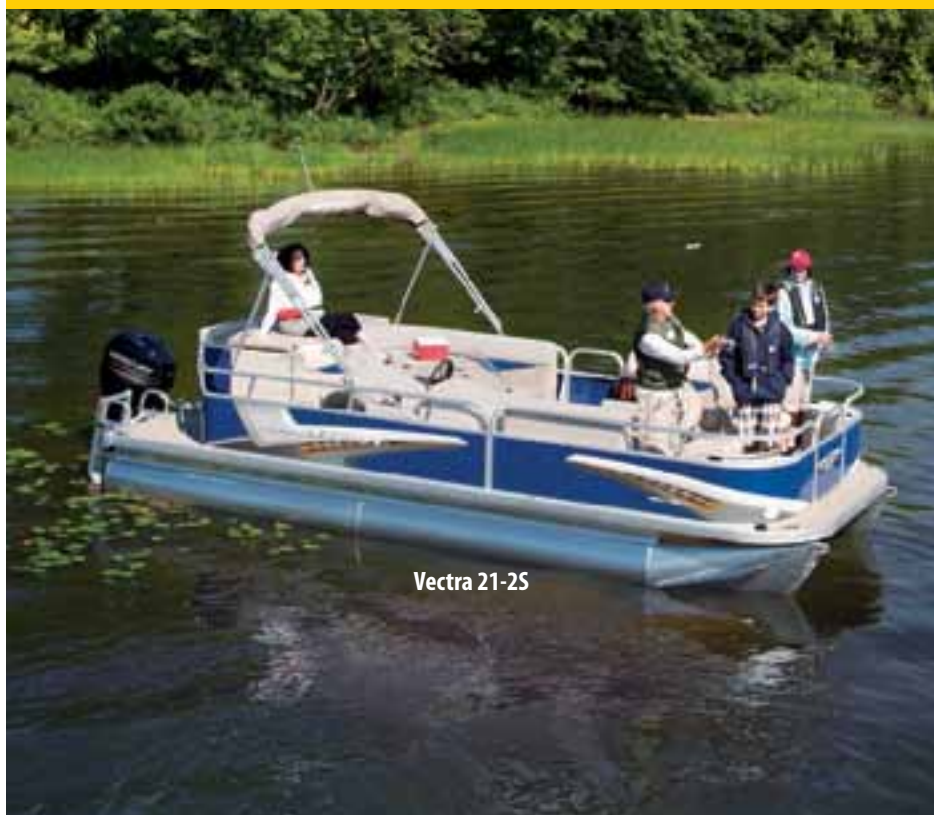
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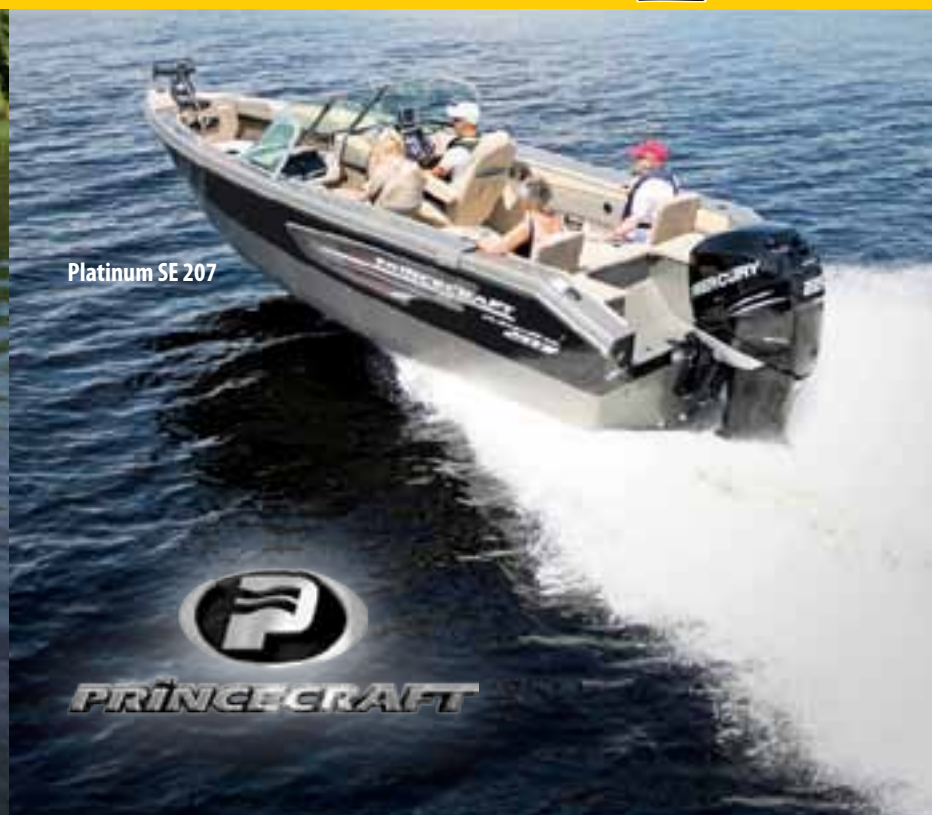
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GLENN WALKER

Crankbaiting For Bass

The multi-level approach

A crankbait is a lure that no bass fisherman is without in his/her tackle box. Anglers are attracted to these lures by their eye-catching paint jobs and new flashy computer-generated designs. Some may view the crankbait as a simple bait that you catch fish on any time of year and at any location just by casting out and reeling it in. This may work for you, but to truly capitalize fishing your crankbait you need to know which one to use, at what depth and what cover.

One of my favorite ways to target shallow cover, especially laydowns and rip-rap, is tossing a shallow running crankbait, specifically, a square-billed one. What makes square-billed crankbaits unique is that you can bring them through heavy cover and they'll bounce off the structure and not get hung up. This also helps generate a reaction bite out of the bass.

This technique can work all year, but I predominately use it in the summer when the bass are up shallow feeding. My three main color groups are shad colors, bluegill patterns and bright chartreuses when I'm fishing stained rivers. As I mentioned above, shallow crankbaits work well along laydowns, stumps and rip-rap. Early in the season as the inside weedline is still sparse and lined with scattered clumps of weeds, a good tactic is to rip your shallow crankbait out of those clumps.

Fishing the mid-depths with a crankbait is a great way to search out weedlines for active pods of fish. Sometimes you may get one bass on a crankbait and then have to slow down to catch the rest of the school; other times you could catch fish on that crankbait all day long.

When the mercury starts to climb, many bass on lakes will head out to offshore structure that is located in the cooler, deeper water. One of the best ways to generate a reaction bite out of these bass is to toss a deep diving crankbait and bring it right in front of their face! Many times these bass that are located on offshore structure in deep water are schooled up. By throwing a crankbait you are able to efficiently have your lure make contact with the cover, whether it is rock, weed or timber. The other advantage to using a deep diving crankbait is that you can cover water quickly and determine if the school is active. If it is, you can load the boat with some big bass in a short span of time.

Selecting a good deep diving crank-




The hit of a hefty bass on a crankbait is one that gets the blood flowing!

Photo by Greg Walker

bait is important, because if that bait isn't running correctly, it won't generate that strike and will do you no good. As far as color selection goes, I stick to four color choices: shad patterns for when the bass are feeding on baitfish, crawfish for late summer, chartreuse patterns for when the water has some color to it or the bass want a bright color, and a bluegill pattern when they are feeding on bluegills along weedlines.

Regardless of what style of crankbait or what depth I'm targeting, I rely on similar gear throughout. One of the key pieces to crankbait fishing and the ability to land fish with a crankbait is having a rod that has a lot of give to it so when a bass hits and runs, the rod gives so the hooks won't rip out of the fish's mouth.

I use the 7.01 gear ratio reel when fishing shallow so I can cover water quickly and the 6.2:1 ratio when fishing deep so I can slow down my retrieve when bringing in those big cranks. The same goes for selecting my line. When fishing shallow, I use 17-pound mono so my bait doesn't sink as much, but when I'm looking to get the most depth out of my baits, I go with 15-pound fluorocarbon.

Now that you have the 411 on crankbait fishing in all levels of the water column, I hope you are heading to your local lake or river to go catch some bass tossing a crankbait. I know I am! 

Glenn has been fishing tournaments for over ten years, spreading his passion and knowledge of the sport via articles and videos. He keeps busy fishing events across the Midwest, but the Mississippi River in southwest Wisconsin will always be home. Glenn's sponsors include: Buck Knives, Humminbird, LakeMaster, Mercury Marine, Minn Kota, ORCA Coolers, Plano, Rayjus, RC Tackle, Seaguar, Snag Proof, The Rod Glove, TroKar, Wright & McGill and Zoom Baits. For more information check out glennwalkerfishing.com or on Facebook at facebook.com/glennwalkerfishing.



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PERRY HINTZ

What Is The Difference Between American Trap And International Trap?

New Wisconsin facility will feature international-style trap field

American Trap is the most popular form of clay target shooting in North America. It is widely practiced at clubs and facilities all over the state of Wisconsin. The new WTA Shooting Complex and Learning Center in Rome, Wisconsin, will have 30 trap stations capable of holding large events. This spring it will also feature something that is new to the state: an International Trap field known as a “bunker” or “trench.” Bunker is very popular outside of the United States and has been an Olympic sport since 1900; however, we have only 45 locations that currently offer International Trap. We are fortunate to have the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and the National Rifle Association to provide funding to help bring International Trap to Wisconsin.

Here's a brief comparison between the two. For simplicity, I'll concentrate on the difference between the American and International disciplines for the game of



Fifteen trap machines in an Olympic bunker.

“singles.”

American Trap uses 108 mm clay targets that are thrown by a single machine located at approximately ground level and covered by a trap house. There are five stations 16 yards behind the trap

house, and each competitor shoots at five targets from each station. The trap machine oscillates randomly left to right within a 44-degree arc (up to 22 degrees right and left of center) and throws a target 50 yards (approximately 42 mph) at a fixed height. The competitor does not

know where in the 44-degree arc the target will emerge.

In American Trap, each shooter is allowed only one shot per target. When shooting American Trap for practice or fun, a squad of up to five individuals will shoot a round of 25 targets. Most competitions usually require each athlete to shoot four rounds, or 100 targets. Over and under, pump, semi-automatic and single barrel shotguns 12 gauge and below are used, and shotshells containing up to 1 1/8-ounce payload are permitted.

International Trap was introduced to the Olympics in 1900 and is vastly more popular outside worldwide, particularly in Europe. International Trap is also referred to as Olympic Trap or Bunker Trap. The course of fire in an International Trap competition is 125 shots for men and 75 shots for women. Two shots per target are allowed. There is an additional final round for the top six competitors

continued on page 23

 The advertisement features a background image of a hunting dog in a field. In the foreground, there is a pheasant. The text is overlaid on the image.

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TOM CARPENTER

Badger Birds

Rose-breasted Grosbeak




A bright and rosy-red bib, sandwiched between a pure white belly and a sooty black topcoat, attracts your eye to a male Rose-breasted Grosbeak like a beacon in the greening woods. It makes for a stunning feathered package indeed—an explosion of colorful contrasts that makes your heart glad on a fine spring morning. These colorful thick-billed birds winter in tropical rainforests, but they return with warm air to Wisconsin each spring to nest and raise their young on a diet of insects, berries, buds and seeds.

Listen for the crisp, rich song similar to the robin's.

Look for a female Rose-breasted Grosbeak—a streaked brown bird with a prominent white eyebrow. Both male and female Rose-breasted Grosbeaks are about robin-sized, though more slender.

Feed black-oil sunflower seed from tray feeders to Rose-breasted Grosbeaks. Their big bills effortlessly crack most any seed, even cherry pits!

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Did you know that Rose-breasted Grosbeaks are also called “potato bug birds” because they love to eat those pests and other insects? 

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

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LEE GATZKE

NextBuk Outdoors

Taking inventory

Another tough winter is behind us. Prolonged deep snow and bitter cold is really only an inconvenience to us humans. How would you survive a tough winter without the shelter your home provides? Deer do and enough of them somehow live to warrant hunting seasons to further control their numbers each year. Now that spring has arrived, the deer that made it through winter can begin to recover and enjoy the easily accessible and expanding diet that the greening landscape offers.

As the flora erupts anew, turning the countryside from brown to green, we humans actively patrol the landscape. Fishing, turkey hunting and searching for mushrooms are a few excuses I use to get out of the house and breathe some fresh spring air.

In early May, while out roaming the countryside, I wonder what deer have survived and will be available to hunt come fall. Winterkill has had an impact statewide the last couple of years. During normal winters when winterkill isn't so prevalent, I look forward to hunting bucks and does

in the upcoming season. When winterkill is widespread, I think twice about taking a doe.

News of how the deer have fared this past winter has now been reported on a statewide or regional basis. I use that information and couple it with my own local knowledge of deer numbers to determine if I personally feel comfortable with shooting a doe. More often than not, winterkill hasn't been an issue where I hunt for the past three decades. Over the past two years winterkill has been an issue and it has made me think that shooting does may not be a good idea this year.

My sights will definitely be set on a buck this upcoming season, but personally, I like to let a buck get some age on him before shooting him. Depending on what is available where I can hunt, I prefer to set my sights on the older bucks. In some areas a two year-old buck is all I can hope for. Other areas offer older bucks, so I adjust my goals accordingly. Whatever I'm after, I need to do my homework to determine what is available to hunt and position myself in an area where the deer are living.



This fawn is proof that a doe was nearby; however, the wandering author never laid eyes on her. He did see her fresh tracks, revealing that she was in the area.

Sometimes there are so few deer that I simply need to find a new spot.


Walking the ground I have access to hunt, be it public or private, gives me some idea of what shape the local deer herd is in. Concentrating on fresh deer tracks gives clues as to numbers and size of individual deer. Actual sightings while out scouting potential deer spots are inconsistent depending on the type of cover encountered, so the abundance of fresh tracks is a better barometer of deer numbers. Those same tracks also give you an idea of the sex and age classes of deer living there. While gathering this information you are beginning the process of taking inventory.

Once you've walked/scouted an area a few times you'll have a good idea of whether it's worthwhile to gather further information or abandon the place altogether. Collecting more data about a location can be done a variety of ways. Glassing or talking to people who live or work in the area will provide valuable facts, but my favorite method is to utilize trail cameras. Trail cameras capture images of deer night and day and they monitor the landscape 24/7.

They also clearly show images of the deer that inhabit the area and capture a high percentage of the local deer population. That information allows you to become familiar with the individual bucks, does and fawns living there. Within the past few years the use of trail cameras has become legal on public lands. Trail cameras have taken a lot of legwork out of determining the make-up/inventory of the local deer population where I hunt. With the information they provide, you'll know if you are investing time in a place that can offer the kind of hunting you are looking for.

However you choose to determine if an area has a hunt-able population of deer, be it by walking, glassing, trail cameras or tips from locals, taking inventory is the first step toward being successful this fall. Right now is a good time to start. *WG*

Lee Gatzke is co-owner of NextBuk Outdoors, producers of tactical hunting videos. In grade school he chased rabbits with his homemade bow and arrows, which lead to a passion for hunting bigger game all over the Midwest and western states. In between hunting seasons Lee is usually scouting for his next buck....



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Finding morel mushrooms is a welcome reward reminding us that we've made it through another winter.

JJ REICH

The Reich Stuff

Turkey taxidermy decisions

Last spring I was lucky enough to harvest a mature, good-looking gobbler. I've always wanted a full-body turkey mount, and I finally made the commitment to buy one. If and when you decide to pull the trigger on some turkey taxidermy, there are many things you need to know.

Here's what I learned as I sifted through a laundry list of options, trying to decide what style of mount to get:

Turkey taxidermy is tough to do right, so you'll want to go with a taxidermist that has a strong reputation and long track record of high-quality work. After the taxidermist is chosen, it becomes decision time—you'll need to answer the following questions to figure out exactly what you want to order.

Do you want the mount on the wall or on the floor? Typical wall mounts include a bird on a limb, flying, or harvested and hanging from its feet. Typical floor mounts are set on a table or a pedestal. On one hand, a wall mount gets the trophy up high and out of the way. But a floor pedestal mount allows for a variety of "habitat" base options and keeps the trophy at eye level for more close-up views.

How do you want the body positioned? Different body positions dramatically change the look and attitude of your mount. Consider four major elements: head placement, stance, wing set, and tail fan arrangement. The many combinations of these factors achieve different looks, including a gobbling turkey, a tom in full or half strut, an alert or relaxed posture, and many others.

What direction do you want your mount facing? You can choose from a side-profile mount, a mount with the bird looking straight out with its back against the wall, or a trophy positioned at a quartering angle.

What wood do you want for your display fixture? You'll need to choose the type of wood for your tree limb, plaque or pedestal. Or you could choose to do the woodworking yourself.

If choosing a pedestal mount, what habitat do you want? For common habitat, most hunters choose to replicate the place where they shot the bird. For example, a hunter who shot his or her tom in the western mountains might opt for a base that features pine cones, pine needles and rocks.



Last spring, OWO contributor JJ Reich finally pulled the trigger on buying a full-body turkey mount.

To help answer these questions, visit several turkey taxidermy websites to see examples of mount types, body positions and habitat options. And don't be afraid to ask your taxidermist lots of questions. A good one will spend plenty of time on the phone with you so you'll understand and feel comfortable with all your options.

For my trophy, I chose a pedestal mount of a walking gobbler in corn-field stubble. I couldn't be happier with the turkey mount decisions I made. The memory of a great Wisconsin hunt will always be proudly on display. I enjoy it every time that I walk past it. *OWO*

JJ Reich is a writer for several national hunting and fishing publications and is the author of Kampp Tales™ hunting books for kids at: www.kamptales.com.

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MIKE FOSS

A Bear Guide's Roadblock

Late snow, hard start for baiting

With the opening of the 2014 bear baiting season here, I look out my window in Washburn, Wisconsin, over more than 30 inches of snow. April in southern Wisconsin may mean open water and walleye runs. For this bear guide in Bayfield County, spring is still an idea and winter the reality keeping me from work that must be done before the hunters arrive to fill their September tag.

Preparation for the 2014 season to ensure that bears habitually come to bait stations set over 30 square miles prepared for 15 hunters, and the actual hunt, will be especially hectic in Zone D. The DNR recognized a growing bear population and allotted 1000 additional tags to keep numbers in check. Our camp is already booked with hunters waiting an average of nine years to earn the kill tag.

With much remorse, I've had to turn away many other hunters without the experience, land or knowledge to bait their own bear. All I can do is refer them to other experienced and reputable professional bear guides in Zone D. Procrastination is the enemy of the inexperienced bear hunt. A hunt should be planned one or even two years

ahead of drawing an expected tag.

Despite the snow, the fever to venture into the big woods and scout bear is strong. Unlike last year, I can't ... I won't ... wait an extra month to select station, start bait, and place a trail camera. Anyway, one of my trail cameras remains stranded from last year's muzzle loader deer season. I lift the snowshoes from the wall, dress for a spring journey, and head to the truck.

Soon I find that the county road to access the long last camera is not plowed. But it's warm and the sky is blue and the sun shining. I find the snowshoeing surprisingly easy going, and the first day out on a new season is rejuvenating. The snowshoes carry me, but I carry the familiar "what's over the next ridge" attitude of the northern Wisconsin hunter.

My thoughts are my own and that means bears, bear hunting, and the task at hand. Bears have always intrigued me and they still do. I wonder, as the long line of screened prints mark my path, can bear suffocate from all this snow? Can the extreme cold of 2013 and 2014 harm or even kill bears? When they emerge from the den, what do they first eat?

With the recovered camera again mine and the first bait stations of the year scouted, the 2014 hunt is officially in motion. A guide finds comfort in that. I head home under a dropping sun and once there, but still hunting for the facts, connect with a true bear expert, Dr. Danny Riley. He is Professor of Cell Biology, Neurobiology & Anatomy and Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation at the Medical College of Wisconsin, directing a black bear research project in Wisconsin for many years.

If a bear went into hibernation with an insufficient fat supply, Riley said, its muscles would begin to break down. This would lead to urination and generation of ammonia odor, which enables wolves to locate and kill bears in a den. Even if vacating the den with a sufficient fat system and depending on fat reserves, a bear will need weeks to restore a normally functioning digestive, urination and defecation system.

Eating new grasses, leftover acorns and other vegeta-



A black bear feeds on a road killed deer in Shawano County in April, 2014. Bears are often killed by vehicles while feeding on roadside carcasses.

tion, the bear will not gain weight the first month out of the den because the intake of calories is inadequate. If no food is found, they are likely to retreat back into the den to a lethargic, lowest energy-consuming state to survive. By the second month out, they should find enough food to gain weight.

"The big males patrol the edges of highways as the snow melts looking for road kill meats," Dr. Riley said. "This is why I advise hunters to drag carcasses off the side of the road into the woods. The bear alongside the road often get hit and killed. Some of the biggest males that we took in for dissection and research came from road-killed spring bears.

The more you know about bears, the more you want to know. I spent two full days on snowshoes scouting new areas for bear. I am tired, sore, lost a few pounds and will do it all over again until the snow melts.

Maybe we have more in common with the Wisconsin black bear than we know. Good hunting. 

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

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TOM CARPENTER

Cubs' Corner

Days you'd want back

How do you measure the worth of a day? Do you ever think about days you'd want back? Not because they didn't go well and you wanted to forget them but because they went so right. Here is such a day.

It was May, just a few years back. I was home, down in the singing hills in southwestern Wisconsin, taking a week off work doing some late season turkey hunting and visiting my father. My mother had recently passed away and he needed the company.

I juggled in a few early morning turkey hunts, returning to spend the rest of each day with Dad doing yard work, taking care of business and running errands together, cooking some meals (and eating out), visiting and such. The turkey hunting wasn't going so well, which didn't really matter. But then my fortunes changed.

On my way out of the woods one sunny morning, and on a hunch, I snuck off a ridge, moving down toward a secluded hollow that had a small clover field in the bottom. Peeking around a bend in the tractor trail, I spied two bright-red-headed turkeys working their way slowly through the greens.

Like a snake, I slithered ahead through the woods, ending up at an ancient white oak and peeking out. They were *right there*. I raised my shotgun, clucked once on a

mouth call to say I called and to get the birds to raise their red heads, then promptly dropped a 16-pound (for real!) jake. I was elated and Dad was mightily impressed when I got home.

We had the whole day ahead of us. "Let's go fishing," he said. "Sure," I replied, already heading downstairs to rig up a few rods. While Dad no longer had his boat, the shore fishing could be good with the water still on the cool side and the panfish working close to shore.

We headed toward Blanchardville, relaxing in a country cafe for lunch. A stop at the bait shop near Yellowstone Lake procured us a couple boxes of nightcrawlers and a bucketful of crappie minnows.

"How's your day going?" asked the friendly proprietor as he rung me up. "Pretty good," I laughed. "I shot a turkey this morning; I had a beer and a burger for lunch; and I'm with my Dad and we're going fishing." He just smiled, shook his head and laughed back.

By now it was midafternoon and the cool but sun-filled day was its peak for warmth. We sat in sweatshirts and jackets along Yellowstone Lake's eastern shore, and the fish were biting. Nice crappies would occasionally suck in a minnow and our bobbers would sink slowly down, down, down the way they do when crappies bite, and Dad



was his old self, using an ultra-slow retrieve to tease the speckle-sides into inhaling a minnow.

We listened to the songbirds sing and saw elegant waxwings, scarlet cardinals and yellow goldfinches. We watched ducks fly by. There was conversation about Mom, about hunting in the hills that shouldered off to the horizons, about trout fishing in the cool streams that ran through the coulees. We talked about my junior high days, before sports got a kid so busy and how we would come here with our boat during the panfish spawn, fishing until dark and then cleaning a mess of bluegills by lantern light at home, collapsing in bed after saying, "Let's go again tomorrow."

For a while Dad just dawdled around with a piece of nightcrawler on his hook, teasing crayfish in the shallows and smiling, crappies forgotten and his mind some-

where other than on what had happened over the bad winter.

As the sun descended we packed up, snapped a couple pictures and got ready to go. I realized I was tired but renewed. I think Dad felt the same and had forgotten his problems for a while. We drove home as sunset raked its orange glow over the green hills. My heart felt warm and I was glad I'd be able to sleep in a little the next morning.

In my mind's eye is a file of great days spent outdoors. This was one such day I would certainly want back—just the way it was. Sometimes late at night, when sleep is slow to come, I pull up such memories and replay them slowly, steadily, savoring the feeling in my heart, and soon I am there.

WO

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

HINTZ, from page 16

following qualifications.

International Trap uses 15 fixed-angle machines that are positioned in a ground level 60-foot-wide bunker, which gives the targets the illusion of coming out of the ground. There are five shooting stations, and the target may come out any of one of three different machines. The machines are computer controlled to deliver 10 left, 10 right and five straightaway targets to each competitor in a random sequence. The 110 mm targets are released from 1.5 meters to 3.5 meters high, measured 10 meters from the bunker, and must travel a distance of 76 meters, so depending on the height, they fly between 60 and 75 mph. The angles are up to 45 degrees left or right, double the angles of American Trap.

The process of a round is as follows: there are six shooters, one to each station, with the sixth shooter initially starting at a holding station behind position one. Each shooter has up to 10 seconds to call for the target. After firing, the first shooter waits for the second shooter to complete firing, then moves to station two, with the shooter on station six moving to station one. Moving from station to station continues until all six shoot-

ers have shot 25 rounds. The guns may be loaded with action open moving between stations one through five but must be unloaded and open walking from station five back to one. This open action requirement discourages the use of pump or semi-automatic shotguns. Rules specify that shotguns larger than 12 gauge are not permitted and shotshells may only contain up to 24 grams (7/8 ounce) of lead shot.

Two flankers to either side of the bunker who both keep the score assist a certified USAS referee standing behind the shooters. One flanker will mark a paper score sheet and the other a flipper board that shows the scoring status clearly to all with large tiles: white to show hits, red to show misses.

Due to its difficulty, the scores in International Trap are about 20 percent lower than American Trap. Perfect 125s are very rare; breaking 120 of 125 is a World Class score. Scores of 110 to 115 are competitive at the National level.

The new bunker at the WTA Shooting Complex and Learning Center should be open in early May, and the first major event will be a USA Shooting Junior Olympic qualifying match that will run concurrent with the

WI SCTP State International Championships on June 7th and 8th. Participants in this match will be eligible to travel to Colorado Springs from July 6th to 13th to participate in the USAS Junior Olympic Championships. For information about the match, contact Perry Hintz at phintz36@wi.rr.com. WO

Perry Hintz has been involved in youth shooting sports since 2008 when his son Jordan joined the BHS Demons Shooting Team. Along with Jordan's high school coaches, Perry mentored his son to multiple state and national titles in ATA, high school, and SCTP competition. Perry is currently the WI SCTP State Advisor for International Trap, working to expand opportunities for young Wisconsin athletes.



TOM CARPENTER

May Gobblers

Seven setup sins

Everybody wants an early-season turkey tag. But May offers some of spring's best hunting. One of the keys to success, especially as the season progresses, is making a smart setup. Avoid these seven sins of the setup and feel the weight of a gobbler over your shoulder this spring.

Sin #1: Set Up Too Far Away

The first sin, one that will doom the situation before you even start calling, is to set up too far away from a gobbler.

Nothing good can happen when you're a long way from a gobbler. He might have hens with him and ignore the long-distance lady; lose interest when you don't meet him half way, the way nature works things; meet a fence, ditch, creek, thicket or other obstruction; or get intercepted by a real hen.

Get within 100 yards of a gobbler. If you can get closer without spooking the bird, do it.

Sin #2: Make His Trip Difficult

That gobbler will not come all the way in if he meets any obstacle or difficulty along the way. So scout hard. Travel your hunting grounds when it isn't turkey season—during small game or deer season or on wintertime hikes—and learn every nook, cranny and feature of the land.

Barbed wire fences, especially the old-fashioned ones with "basket weave" bottoms, are trouble. Ditches and creeks, steep-sided gullies and ravines, swamps and thickly-grassed marshes can all halt incoming birds too.

Know your hunting territory intimately and only set up where you know the bird has a clear and easy path to get to you.

Sin #3: Enjoy A Pretty, Panoramic View

It is natural to want a good field of view so you can see the gobbler approaching, monitor his progress, adjust your calling to match his mood and prepare yourself for a shot. But a panoramic view often results in a hung-up tom standing there gobbling at you from well out of shotgun range, trying to get that hen (that he should be able to see) to come out and show herself.

Make your setup in a spot where the bird will be within shotgun range the first time he appears to you.

Sin #4: Suffer In Discomfort

Don't get so excited that you plop down hastily and without attention to your own personal comfort. That rock in your butt cheek, the thorn in your hip, the kink in your twisted back, the crick forming in your neck, the broken branch sticking your back, or the ants creeping up your leg can test your resolve to remain statue-still.

With your comfort in mind, take a few moments to get positioned so that you can stay put without fidgeting or shifting for as long as it takes to call that bird in.

Sin #5: Commit To One Approach

Setups often fail at the very end, with the turkey coming into shotgun range but approaching from a different direction than you expected. Nothing is more frustrating than having a bird *right there* but you can't shoot because your shotgun muzzle is pointing the other way and you can't swing it back.

You can seldom predict a gobbler's exact approach. He will sneak, loop, veer, dawdle, sidle or tiptoe his way around and almost never come from the direction you expect.

Set up with your "off" (non-shooting) shoulder facing the direction you believe the bird will come from, but clear out leaves from your feet and make a quick practice for shifting your aim if needed.

Sin #6: Neglect To Move

No matter how good your setup, some turkeys just aren't going to come in.

Whether he is with hens, has got somewhere else to go or simply isn't hot and bothered today, some setups just won't work. You have to identify these times and decide when to make a move.

Move your setup when you're sure the turkey isn't going to come in to your current position.

Sin #7: Give Up Too Soon

Moving your setup is often essential. But it is a sin to get antsy and take off prematurely.

There is no worse feeling than standing up and hearing the dreaded putt-putt-putt alarm clucks of a gobbler while glimpsing his big red head streaking away. It's hard to know when to get up and move and when to stay put a while longer.



May turkey hunting can be great, but a good setup is important. Avoid these seven setup sins and call in a green-woods gobbler.

Give a bird at least one-half hour after you hear its last gobble.

Conclusion

If the journey to turkey hunting heaven means walking out of the spring woods with a bounce in your step and a big old gobbler slung over

your shoulder, then a smart setup—and avoiding the sins that will derail it—is the path to turkey hunting salvation. *WO*

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

LUTHENS, from page 11

and crumbling ice shelves.

I'm all for tradition, but I prefer to leave the early-season Brule to the diehard experts. The lower river also remains open until November 15 for lake-run browns, salmon and steelhead. That's a time of autumn smells, golden leaves, minimal ice in your rod guides and big trout. Bait fishing is allowed and it's more in tune with a tradition I'm prepared to handle.

The river above the highway bridge opens and closes with the regular inland trout season, which seems cut and dried except for a 100-yard stretch of river between the old concrete highway bridge and the new one that traffic uses. It's a no man's land that I've never been legally certain of. You'd think such a small slice of water shouldn't matter, but the biggest native brook trout I've ever taken came from beneath an alder tangle there.

For a mile above U.S. Highway 2 the river is open to all legal types of fishing. There are stretches of whitewater with deep cuts that hold nice browns. If you hook up with a dandy and get bowled over in the rapids and washed downstream, no one can hear you yell over the roar of the current.

The upper stretch of the river, between County Trunk Highways S and B, (known as Stone's Bridge and Winnebago in the native tongue), holds virgin pine, float-

ing gardens of flowers and cedar waxwings buzzing on a downstream breeze. A canoe is the best way to handle the upper river. There's square-tailed brook trout hiding under every log, artificial lures only, and the scenery is such that you may forget to fish at all.

You can't legally fish below U.S. Highway 2 at night, but during the open inland trout season it's allowed on the river above. Feel free to stumble home off any part of the Brule in the dark if you get lost. You're not breaking any game laws, but stumble around long enough and you'll be praying to run into a warden. Night fishing should be left to the creatures that belong there. Either way, if the mosquitoes don't carry you off, the wolves might.

I'd go through the varying bag and length limits for various species of trout on different sections of the Brule, but with my poor casting, limiting-out seldom becomes an issue. At least in that regard the regulations for this trout fisherman on his favorite Category 5 waters aren't complicated at all. *WO*

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

DICK ELLIS

On Wisconsin Outdoors

Hunting the late season gobbler

If you're thinking that the glass is half empty because you can't hunt that spring gobbler until one of the last periods offered in Wisconsin, think again.

Yes, Tom has already been shot at by every hunter and his cousin across Wisconsin in periods A through D. He's heard the calls. He's seen the decoys. If he's still standing, he's a smarter boy. Not only are the remaining Toms streetwise, but most of the gobblers to be tagged in 2014 have already taken the ride off the field on the hunter's shoulders. There are far less birds out there than there were before you even take the spotlight.

But bet your best mouth call that you'll have far less competition, too. The hunter's tag is already filled, he didn't score, or a slip bobber sliding under the surface is far more appealing. The stage is yours.

The game is late for Tom, also. That harm of fun he had for weeks has left him for the nest and he's looking for more of what he was liking so much. This is the man-without-morals equivalent who may have had too much to drink at bar time. Tom's not drunk, but he is intoxicated on nature's drive, seeking a little more attention from just one more hen. He's ripe for the bad decision. You have your own bearded bird standards for what you will fasten your tag to, but this is absolutely the time when the monster gobbler is vulnerable.

I have killed the late season trophy Tom after a long duel and experienced the great satisfaction of misleading others only to blow the final confrontation. Without getting too complicated, consider these three themes of advice from a hunter who can relate to both late season ecstasy and agony and who considers the late season spring turkey tag the ultimate field gift.

Start quiet. Tom might be right in your lap at daybreak, of course, but in the later seasons, especially, do not be afraid to build that call to a virtual scream. I have had partners I was calling for tell me of an answering gobbler that I could not hear. And I have heard answering gobblers so distant that I initially doubted were in response to my calls ... until his




An eight-hour 6th season duel that included literally hundreds of answering gobblers and maneuvering by hunter and bird over hill and hollow ended with Ellis tagging the 26 pound, silently approaching Tom in nightmare-thick cover at less than 10 yards.

gobblers verbally grew on the winds to become a shattering demand for attention close enough for the scattergun.

A lonely, verbal Tom will gobble often in late season once you start his engine. You might be talking to him for hours. He probably didn't get this far by being dumb. When he does shut up, you shut up too, do not move, and get ready for the shot. He's coming. Believe it. That means don't turn your head for a peek and don't adjust. You should have done that when he was talking. Remember, this advice comes from a hunter intimately familiar with the agony.

Finally, have patience. It's a hunter's most valuable possession. You have to connect the calling with Tom's grand appearance, and sometimes, especially in late season, that might mean an all-day affair from first gobble to shot.

You're holding a late season tag? Lucky you. That glass is already half full. Here's to your Tom. 

SUZETTE CURTIS

Recipes by Suzette

Try it smoked

A favorite fish of my husband's is black cod. During several visits out west and to Alaska he has had the opportunity to sample black cod in multiple restaurants and prepared in different ways. Because I wanted to surprise him for our anniversary a few years ago, I did some research and found that I could order black cod from our local supermarket, which I do about once per year. The best way to prepare it, in my opinion, is to put the entire fish in the smoker for five to six hours and then poach it over beer. With a little butter, salt and pepper it is absolutely delicious. This led me to think about some of the wonderful fish and game we have here in our state and ways that smoking can enhance our dining experiences. Even if you have your favorite smoking recipe already, here are a few more to try.

Smoked Pheasant

1 whole pheasant
Salt & pepper
Marjoram or tarragon
Stuffing
Hickory chips
Butter

Stuff bird with your favorite stuffing mixture and tie legs. Sprinkle salt, pepper and either tarragon or marjoram over entire bird. Place on rack in roasting pan, cover with foil and roast for about 1 hour at 325°.

Meanwhile, soak hickory chips in water and get smoker ready. When bird is finished roasting, brush with melted butter and place on rack in smoker. Smoke for 1 ½ to 2 hours until pheasant turns a nice golden brown color.

Smoked Fish

1 quart water
½ cup salt
½ cup sugar

Combine all ingredients for brine. Place fish (about 10 pounds for this recipe) in brine container and weigh down with a plate to keep fish submerged. Cure for 5 to 6 hours; remove fish from brine and rinse with cold water. Place fish on paper towel-

ing and let sit at room temperature for 1 to 1 ½ hours.

Meanwhile, soak wood chips (hickory or mesquite) in water and prepare smoker. Before smoking, an additional choice of seasonings may be rubbed into fish: garlic, brown sugar, maple, Cajun seasonings, etc.


Place fish on racks in smoker and smoke for about 6 hours. Fish should be firm and take on a somewhat darkened color when done.

Smoked Turkey Breast

Boneless turkey breast
½ cup coarse salt
1 tsp. thyme, divided
2 T. brown sugar

Mix salt, ½ tsp. thyme and brown sugar together and spread over entire turkey breast; roll up breast and tie. Place turkey in a glass dish, cover and place in refrigerator overnight or at least 8 hours.

Remove turkey from refrigerator; unroll, rinse and pat dry. Place turkey on paper towel and let sit at room temperature for 1 hour.

Meanwhile, soak apple chips in water and get smoker ready. Oil smoker rack, place turkey breast on rack and sprinkle remaining thyme over top. Smoke for 2 to 3 hours until internal temperature reaches 140°. 

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

On Wisconsin
Outdoors

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Whether it's an invigorating ride on the trails, looking at the scenery off the beaten path, or cruising through the coulees, Sparta is a choice destination. The simple pleasures of the countryside spark renewed energy into the soul. For more information, [click on Monroe County](#).

County Teasers

Spring in Wisconsin's north woods is the time for openings ... Walleye, Musky and Bass fishing and ATV, bicycle and hiking trails. Check out our current and accurate fishing and trail condition reports. Start planning your getaway today by ordering your **free** maps and visitor information. **Fun** times are guaranteed! [Click on Price County](#).

Summer is almost here! Really! And what better place to spend it than on a lake, river, or in the woods of **beautiful central Wisconsin!** Hundreds of **great properties** for sale! A chance to win dinner and a night at Silvercryst Resort on Big Silver Lake. Drawing Labor Day. For details [click on Waushara County](#).

Get someone hooked on fishing. Take them **whitebass** fishing in **Fremont** during the **whitebass run**. Local lore says peak fishing occurs when the lilacs bloom, but that varies depending on where you live. Instead, **text whitebass to 71441**. We will send you alerts when the run starts and updates during. [Click on Waupaca County](#).

New for 2014 is the Lake Winnebago Tri-County seasonal boat launch permit. This \$50 pass can be used at any Calumet, Fond du Lac or Winnebago County owned launch on Lake Winnebago (eight launches in total). To get your permit, contact the Calumet County Parks Department at 920.439.1008. [Click on Calumet County](#).

Fun time in Ferryville on the Mississippi River. Use the Ferryville Boat Launch (Pool 9) to access the best fishing on the river. **Open all year** and the docks go in as soon as spring river stage allows. There is great fishing in the area with access at Ferryville and from the bank just north of the Village limits. Spring IS here and hunting/fishing season with it. [Click on Crawford County](#)

We all thought it would never get here this year—we're talking spring! It's here now, so come out of hibernation and see for yourself. We have open water for fishing, clear trails for biking and more! Download our free mobile app! [Click on Ozaukee County](#).

The Waukesha Gun Club is **Wisconsin's largest shotgun only club**. It features 29 Trap houses, a Sporting Clays course, seven Skeet ranges, and three endorsed 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. [Click on Waukesha County](#).

Ashland, Lake Superior's Hometown, is the "Historic Mural Capital of Wisconsin." Enjoy a walking tour of the beautiful murals downtown. Check out these great events: Chequamegon Bay Birding & Nature Festival, May 15-17; Apostle Islands Inline Marathon/ALMT Half-Marathon on Madeline Island, June 14; Superior Vistas Bike Tour, June 28. [Click on Ashland County](#).

Early summer is the best time to go fishing on Walworth County lakes. As the water warms the fish will begin their seasonal spawning, making them easy to catch. This is a great time to take a kid fishing. Dave Duwe's Guide Service, 262.728.8063. [Click on Walworth County](#).

SCHAUER from page 10

more public and private support will be needed to continue to expand this program throughout Wisconsin.


A number of *Kids Don't Float* stations were placed right here on the Winnebago system at Winneconne, Jefferson Park in Menasha, Neenah Park and Recreation and Stockbridge Harbor. One will be placed at High Cliff State Park in 2014.

Many businesses and organizations participated in this program. Gunderson Cleaners chose to be a donation site for life jacket donations statewide. They took them in, cleaned them, and gave them to the Department of Natural Resources for distribution statewide. Here on the Winnebago system, the initial donation of life jackets came from Scheels All Sports. With the donation of life jackets by individuals and/or businesses, more funding can be directed to construction of additional stations.

After the first season of the honor system life jacket loaner stations on the Winnebago system, there was an INCREASE in the total number of jackets at the end of the year. People whose children had outgrown their life jackets donated them to the stations. Nice!

Who can help? How can you help? You've read already that businesses can assist in gathering, cleaning and donating life jackets. Here in the Winnebago system, the maintenance and management of the stations is done by a variety of groups. The Coast Guard Auxiliary takes care of the stations in Neenah and Menasha, while the Quinney Fishing Club monitors the station in Stockbridge. The Parks Departments and Villages also participate in the agreements and management of the stations in Winneconne, Neenah, Menasha and Calumet County.

A scout looking for a project to earn his Eagle Scout ranking will be building the *Kids Don't Float* station for High Cliff State Park. If you are a member of a lake association and you are interested in having a station at your boat launch, get involved. Do you know of a youth group looking for a service project? This is a good one. Are you a member of a fishing club who believes in encouraging people to learn to fish? This is a great way to get new anglers out on the lake. Think keeping people safe on the water is a good idea? Donate time, money or help however you can. There are lots of ways to participate in the *Kids Don't Float* program. Find one that fits you.

For additional information on Wisconsin's *Kids Don't Float* program, contact Charles.Horn@Wisconsin.gov. 

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

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OnWisconsinOutdoors.com

KATHY STRONG

Giving Back: The Other Side Of The Coin

Sine Aqua Mortis, Part I

As consumers of our natural resources, we all have the moral obligation to give back. For most of us in the Midwest who enjoy hunting and fishing, giving back means belonging to and spending money at banquets for Ducks or Whitetails Unlimited, Pheasants Forever and similar organizations. We know that our license fees help fund conservation efforts, and some of us participate in highway clean ups or maybe even put out wood duck or blue-bird houses. Really getting down and dirty isn't often part of our efforts to give back for the wonderful opportunities we have to harvest our game and fish.

A group of Wisconsin/Minnesota/Iowa students recently had the opportunity to give back in a nontraditional way, getting down and dirty to experience an adventure of a lifetime. How did this group end up in the high desert of Arizona?

It all started 24 years ago during Desert Storm. The Foundation for North American Wild Sheep MN/WI Chapter, now the Wild Sheep Foundation-Midwest Chapter, a group of individuals who enjoy hunting wild sheep and have a vested interest in preserving these animals, historically helped fund waterhole projects and other conservation efforts throughout North America to benefit wild sheep and other wildlife. In addition, members who could donate their labor for these projects.

Each year the Arizona Desert Bighorn Sheep Society builds or redevelops five or six waterholes in collaboration with Arizona Game and Fish Department and other agencies responsible for the management of desert bighorn sheep habitat. The projects are usually scheduled January through May and require one weekend to complete. Funding comes from the Arizona Desert Bighorn Sheep Society, various Wild Sheep Foundation Chapters, including the Midwest Chapter, and private donors. Most of the labor is done by volunteers, with the only paid workers being the employees of the Arizona Game and Fish Department who are paid their regular wages for planning, coordinating and overseeing the projects.

Several Midwest Chapter members planned to travel to Arizona in 1990 as volunteers to work on a project in the Mojave Desert on the Yuma Proving



Emily Noyes MN, Chase Friendt WI, Ryan Miller MN, Brody Miller MN, Serena Fields MN, Jay Stowater IA, Morgan Vennie WI, Lane Reinikainen WI, Justin Meyers WI, Haley Krehmeyer WI, Allison Becker WI, Skyler Ruetz WI, Kathy and Larry Strong WI, John Babler WI, Val and Oscar Carlson MN.

Grounds Laser Missile Testing Site that the MN/WI Chapter was funding. Air travel was markedly depressed at that time, so one of the airlines offered free airfare to one person under 18 for every adult who purchased a ticket. The idea was born that every adult member who could volunteer his or her labor would sponsor a student to travel with him or her and work on the project. Our Midwest group was able to provide twice the number of volunteers for the same cost in airfare. The hope was not only to provide more workers for the project but to raise awareness in youth of the need to conserve our natural resources, possibly influence their career choices, and instill a lasting interest in nature.

Ten youths participated in that initial project, which proved so successful that in subsequent years eight more youth projects were funded, several through the generosity of the Oscar Carlson family and by the Midwest Chapter. The most recent project was initiated in March 2013, at the Spring Conference


of the Wild Sheep Foundation Midwest Chapter, when a call was made for members to donate \$1000 sponsorships to fund expenses for students to work on a project. Twenty sponsors came forward and the wheels started rolling. A call was put out for applicants who were interested in attending.

Five young ladies and seven young men, grades 8 through 12, were chosen to fly to Arizona with five chaperones. Early on Feb 20, 2014, the excited group met at the Minneapolis airport just as a major snowstorm was moving into the area. Everyone passed security and settled in to what for many was their first flight and first opportunity to venture into a new part of the country. Despite the worries about the impending snowstorm, the flight to Phoenix went off as planned.

The project our group was to work on was Catchment 689 near Newman Peak in the Picacho Mountains north of Tucson, which we accessed by travel-

ing miles of rocky, dusty, undeveloped paths through the desert. Camp was set up and supper waiting for us when we arrived shortly after dark that evening. Canvas tents—one for boys and one for girls—complete with cots and nothing else, served as deluxe accommodations for the next three nights. Some of the students didn't notice the announcement on the gear list that nights are cool in the high desert. Nighttime temps dropping to 32 degrees, along with excitement about being there, kept many of the students from getting much sleep.

Read more about the waterhole project in the next issue of OWO.

Happy hunting. 

Kathy Strong is owner of Yellow River Game Farm and Piddle Creek Kennels in Barronett, Wisconsin, and is a dog trainer, breeder, guide, hunting dog competitor, and Life Member of the Wild Sheep Foundation-Midwest Chapter. For more information on hunting, dog training, pups and/or started dogs, contact Kathy at 715.822.8071.

ROBB MANNING

Everyday Carry

Carry-9 rundown

Whether you call them sub-compacts or micro-compacts, this segment of handgun is immensely popular. It gives the user a full-power cartridge, in the 9mm, but in a handgun smaller than yesteryears' .380 ACP offerings. Here's a rundown on the most popular that I have fired.

Glock G26 Gen4. It handles well, it's ultra-reliable, it's accurate, and it has a good trigger—crisp with a solid reset. With no manual safety, this is a simple to use handgun that is fast to engage with. It's slightly thicker than other sub-9s—the mag is double-stacked—but that also means it holds 10 rounds instead of the six, seven or eight rounds of its peers. It also means you'll get a better grip, so it's pleasant to shoot. From a carry standpoint, Glock really got the proportions right with this one. It has a short grip height, for reduced printing, but retains a longer slide length, which runs along the axis of your torso and doesn't print. It uses magazines from other Glock 9mm, so you can carry G17 mags as spares, which gives you 17 rounds per mag. It comes with three 10-round magazines.

Kahr PM9. This is the smallest 9mm carry pistol that I'm aware of; the only pistols I've seen smaller are .380 ACP and lesser calibers. It's small enough that it can be concealed with just about any clothing and is excellent for pocket carry. It's reliable and has controls similar to Glock—there's no manual safety. The trigger pull is a little long with a break that isn't as crisp as the G26 or PPS, but it's still a good trigger. This has been my carry gun for a while now, in warm weather and when discretion is of the utmost importance. It comes with one six-round and one seven-round magazine.

Ruger LC9. This is the pistol that set off the micro-9 craze. It was my first carry gun, and it's logged more miles than any of my other carry guns. It's very dependable, small, and is an excellent choice for an everyday carry gun. After about a year of carry, the slide spring on mine became a little weak, which I've been told is not uncommon with any micro-9, and the slide rattled a little when I walked. Ruger promptly sent me a replacement spring, free of cost, and it's been fine ever since. The only drawback is the unnecessarily heavy and long trigger, which would be acceptable if it didn't have a manual safety. The only one of the bunch that is hammer fired.

Smith & Wesson M&P Shield. The only pistol of the group that recommends an out of box break-in period. I did have two malfunctions in the first 100 rounds but haven't had any issues since. This is an excellent pistol and does everything you need and does it well. I did find one issue (for my large hands it was a bit of a deal breaker): the safety. It is a little too "low-profile" for my thumb to properly flick off. I had to really press with my thumb in a concentrated effort to take the safety off, which I didn't like. With gloves on ... forget it. The M&P Shield would be near perfect if Smith & Wesson gave you the option of no manual safety like they do with the full size M&P. It comes with one seven-round and one eight-round magazine.

Walther PPS. It's probably the most overlooked sub-9 on the American market, but it's the most accurate and smoothest shooting of the bunch. It is more pleasant to shoot and handles better than most compacts I've fired. It also has an excellent trigger. The unconventional magazine release is part of the lower trigger guard but is easy to master with a little range time and makes inadvertent magazine drops nonexistent. It comes with three backstraps, and when you remove a backstrap, it de-cocks the striker, rendering it unable to shoot, which makes for a great keyless safety system. This is a very well done carry pistol. If you're on the market for a sub-compact 9mm but don't want the harsh recoil that they're known for, this is the one I recommend.

I've been blessed to try a lot of carry guns, and if I weren't a gun writer, I would have bought and carried any one of these guns and probably not have tried any others. All of the five would make an outstanding choice and would make an owner very happy. *W*

Robb Manning served in the US 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.

	LENGTH (inches)	HEIGHT (inches)	WIDTH (inches)	WEIGHT (ounces)	MAGAZINE CAPACITY	MSRP
 GLOCK G26 GEN4	6.41	4.17	1.18	21.71	10/15/17/33	\$549
 KAHR PM9	5.42	4.0	0.9	14	6/7	\$786
 RUGER LC9	6.0	4.5	0.9	17.1	7	\$449
 S&W SHIELD	6.1	4.6	0.95	19	7/8	\$449
 WALTHER PPS	6.3	4.4	0.9	20.8	6/7/8	\$735

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America's Gun

Wisconsin's own Midwest Industries is expanding the AR-15 into virtually every shooting niche

For generations, America's Gun was the venerable bolt action Model 1903 Springfield. The Springfield, with its clip-fed, five-round magazine, reigned supreme in the hands of soldiers, hunters and target shooters. Today that honor belongs to the semi-automatic AR-15, and in terms of versatility and adaptability, it beats the Springfield hands-down. An AR-15 can be a self-defense, hunting or target rifle and is easily reconfigured from one to the next in literally minutes.

"It's the Erector Set of firearms," Midwest Industries, Inc., owner Troy Storch said. Midwest Industries is located in Waukesha and is one of the premier manufacturers of AR-15 parts, accessories and firearms. "You can go from mild to wild and everything in between with an AR," he noted. That could never be said of the Springfield.

Like the Springfield, the AR-15 began as a battle rifle designed in reaction to better weapons in the hands of America's foes. The Springfield's predecessor, the Krag-Jorgeson, proved itself totally outclassed by the Model 1895 Mausers fielded by opposing forces in Cuba during the Spanish-American War. The Mauser could lay down—and maintain—a devastating field of fire against U.S. troops armed with Krags, or worse, single shot "Trapdoor" Springfields. Unlike the Krags and Trapdoors, which were, respec-



The accessory that started it all: Midwest Industries Tactical Light Mount

tively, slow and slower to load, Mauser magazines could be charged five rounds at a time by virtue of their stripper clips.

In the early days of the Vietnam War, the .308 caliber M14, while an excellent rifle, proved to be too heavy, unwieldy, over-powered and impossible to control in full-auto mode. Not so its chief adversary, the compact Kalashnikov. After a less than stellar debut in the jungles of Vietnam in

the mid-1960s, the AR-15 evolved into a credible, and far more accurate, antidote to the AK and remains so today.

American sportsmen have always valued function, accuracy and value in their firearms, which, undoubtedly, explains the explosive popularity of the AR-15 platform, particularly over the past decade. Fueled by the widespread sharing of information over the Internet, burgeoning aftermarket, and American ingenuity, the AR-15 quickly became the rifle of choice for millions of shooters. The days of having to purchase specialized firearms for various uses came to an abrupt end once AR-15 prices began to drop as more and more manufacturers entered the fray. The AR-15 would prove to be able to do it all, competitively, on the target range and in the field, in calibers ranging from .22 to .50.

Initially, AR-15 enthusiasts could choose between high quality and expensive parts and accessories or cheaper imported versions of dubious quality. There was virtually nothing in the mid-price range until Midwest Industries came into the picture 10 years ago, owned and operated by Troy and his business partner, Wendy Abts. Troy, a long-time tool and die maker and firearms enthusiast, looked at the AR-15 accessory field at the time and knew he could do better.

continued on page 31



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Great gear for the woods, fields, and waterways



MEOPTA: M-RAD, 3-MOA

This high quality optic is made in the Czech Republic. I've been a Meopta fan since the first time I looked at one in a Frankonia store in Germany a few years ago. They build into their scopes all the quality and toughness found in German and Austrian optics but at half to one-third the price. The M-RAD is smaller than most reflex sights, giving the versatility of being mounted on a tactical rifle, shotgun, or even a handgun. I've used it on an AR and a shotgun and it works outstanding. It's tough as nails and bright enough to use on even the brightest of days. It has two modes, day and night, with eight brightness settings for each mode. A pair of CR 1632 batteries lasts for over 520 hours on medium day mode. It mounts securely to any MIL-STD-1913 rail and comes with two spacers to adjust the sight axis height. It also comes with a well-stocked cleaning/maintenance kit, including extra batteries. It has automatic shutoff. \$459.99. OWO tested and recommended.

meoptasportsoptics.com/us/



FREMONT KNIVES: FARSON BLADE SURVIVAL TOOL

A design based on an ancient tool found in the Great Red Desert near Farson, Wyoming. The people who lived in this area used the crude tool for cutting, slicing, chopping and skinning. The people at Fremont Knives took high quality stainless steel, and, using modern manufacturing methods, they captured the versatility of the ancient tool. The blade is made out of 4cr15 steel and is razor sharp. The handle comes wrapped in eight feet of 550 cord, which works excellent to affix the blade to

a stick for use as a hatchet. Since there's no knife handle, the overall thickness is only .14 inches, and, with an overall length of six inches and width of 3.1 inches, it makes for an ultra-compact blade/tool that you can fit in your back pocket. \$49 w/ Nylon Sheath, \$69 w/Leather Sheath. OWO tested and recommended.

fremontknives.com



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sebileusa.com



PLANO: GUIDE SERIES TACKLE BAG

A soft-side tackle box made of heavy duty 600 Denier polyester with reinforced stitching. A tray is molded into the top to hold a StowAway tray for easy access to your favorite lures. An elastic tie-down strap secures the tray in place. A molded base provides impact resistance and water proofing to protect your valuable tackle. The 3500 Series includes five 3500 ProLatch trays; the 3600 comes with six 3600 ProLatch trays; and the 3700 includes six 3700 ProLatch trays. Various pockets and pad-

ded pockets provide protection and storage for sunglasses, pliers, wallets and other valuables. 3500 Series (\$49.99), 3600 Series (\$69.99), 3700 Series (\$79.99).

planomolding.com



STORM: WILDEYE LIVE BABY BASS

This is one of the most realistic lures I've ever seen. Holographic flash foil makes it look very realistic, while mimicking the flash given off by real life fish scales. 3-D holographic WildEyes are a dead replicate of real fish eyes. The internally weighted body makes for a lifelike swimming action. The soft outer body is durable for longterm use. It also comes in Bluegill and Redear models. \$5.99 (per three-Pack).

www.rapala.com



FOXPRO: CROOKED SPUR GLASS POT TURKEY CALL

A radical, ergonomic shape not only fits in the hand better, but it also gives it multiple striker zones so that you can change the pitch to sound like different birds. Perfect for making Ol' Tom think there's a harem waiting for him. It can produce the volume to reach out to distant birds but can also reproduce soft and subtle sounds. The striker has a predator call built in for distress sounds, when that opportunity arises. The pot is made from Maple and the striker is European Beech with a Walnut stain. It also comes in a slate version. Made in the USA. \$59.95.

gofoxpro.com

If you have recommendations for good gear that works for you, tell us about it at ellis@onwisconsinoutdoors.com.

WILKERSON, from page 29

Midwest Industries' first product was a better tactical front sight mount to which a small flashlight could be attached. These mounts were one of the first must-have accessories among AR owners at the time the company formed. Such mounts were in high demand by law enforcement agencies and soldiers because their attached flashlights allowed them to illuminate dark environments in tactical situations. There was an obvious need for such an accessory among civilians, as well. With a small, powerful flashlight attached to the rifle, it was easy to ascertain if something that "went bump in the night" was or wasn't a threat.

"We're not especially innovative in numbering the parts in our catalog," Troy said. "The light mount is part number one and everything that is added is in sequential order. That mount is still one of our best sellers." In fact, it was such a success that Troy was eventually able to quit his day job and devote more of his time to Midwest Industries.

Many other accessories and parts of Troy's design have followed over the years. In quick order came handguards, gas blocks, sling adapters, billet lower receivers and more. Throughout its evolution, Midwest Industries gained the knowledge, confidence and brand loyalty that has allowed it to branch off into firearms production

with the MI 300H Hunter in .300 AAC Blackout caliber.

When you purchase a Midwest Industries' product, you are supporting American workers and industry. Like all of their products, the MI 300H is virtually 100 percent made in the United States, right down to the packaging. In fact, 95 percent of the rifle is made of components produced in Wisconsin, such as its Criterion match grade barrel. "It is the ultimate deer hunting rifle," Troy said. "It's light, powerful and extremely accurate." As an added bonus, the 300H is probably the coolest-looking rifle you will see in the woods this fall.


Much of Midwest Industries' success is owed to Wendy and her use of the Internet to gain exposure to their products, says Troy. "Early on we recognized the importance of the Internet in marketing," Wendy explained. "I believe there is a direct link between the company's success and our use of the Internet to introduce new products and communicate directly with our customers." The Internet is such a vital part of the company that Troy and his employees are often on AR-15 forums answering questions and responding to comments.

Midwest Industries is much more than a purveyor of AR-15 products. They are a major player in the Kalashnikov accessory market, which is no easy trick. Kalashnikov tolerances vary wildly from one manufacturer to the next and even from one gun to

another made by the same manufacturer. Due to their innovative design, Midwest parts can fit practically every Kalashnikov currently on the market.

That's not the end of Midwest's story. The company stocks virtually every AR-15 part imaginable at its retail store located at W292S4498 Hillside Road in Waukesha, along with bags, field gear, water filtration devices, slings, targets, ammunition and more. They also have an outstanding selection of firearms for sale that is well worth the trip to see from wherever you live.

Midwest Industries does more than sell products. Their hands-on experts can help you build your own personalized AR-15. They welcome you to stop in to see what's possible from their vast array of parts, accessories and completed firearms. If you want to learn how to safely and properly build your own, take one of Midwest Industries' AR-15 Basic Assembly and Trouble Shooting classes.

For more information about Midwest Industries' products, firearms, and training classes, contact them at 262.896.6780, on the Internet at midwestindustriesinc.com or by email at info@midwestindustriesinc.com. 


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

MOERICKE, from page 9

GWA marches on.

One of the really great things about maintaining this tradition for so long has been watching the slow but steady invasion of GWA by a second generation of fishing die-hards. The majority of us have sons or sons-in-law who look forward to spending time in fish camp with their dads or fathers-in-law. There are no video games, just time on the water and time in camp—memories in the making.

We're always looking for ways to make GWA better, make camp a little more comfortable, and make our non-fishing friends a little more jealous. Over the years, GWA has gotten a little bigger, a little longer, and I'd like to think a little better. The trip now runs 10 days and our wives (God bless 'em!) seem to be pretty okay with that.

The second week of May will once again find me camping with a great group of guys in northern Wisconsin. Just thinking about it provided comfort during the coldest, snowiest winter on record. Thirty years is a long time. The tradition of fishin' continues. The next 30 could be even better. 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.



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