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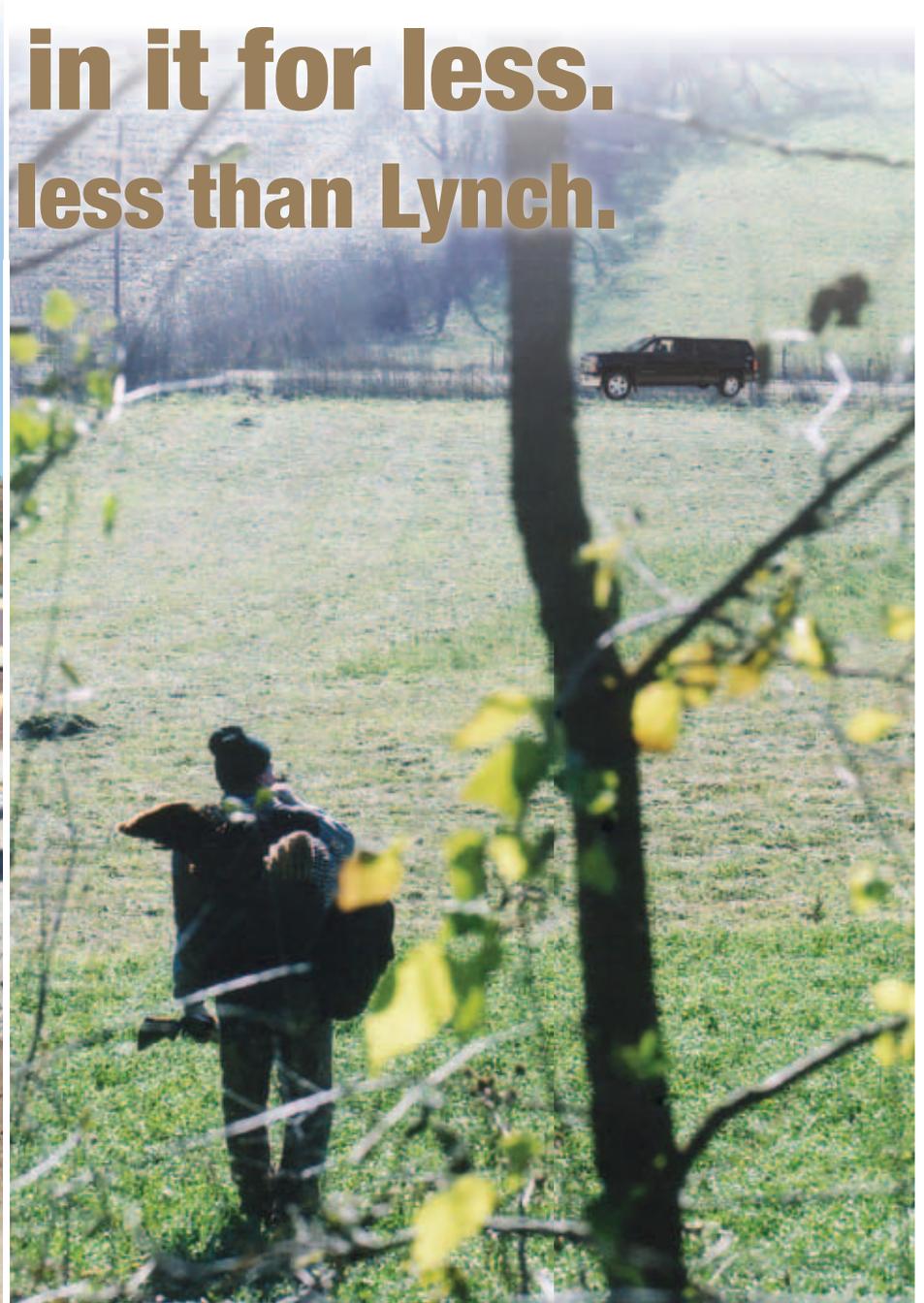
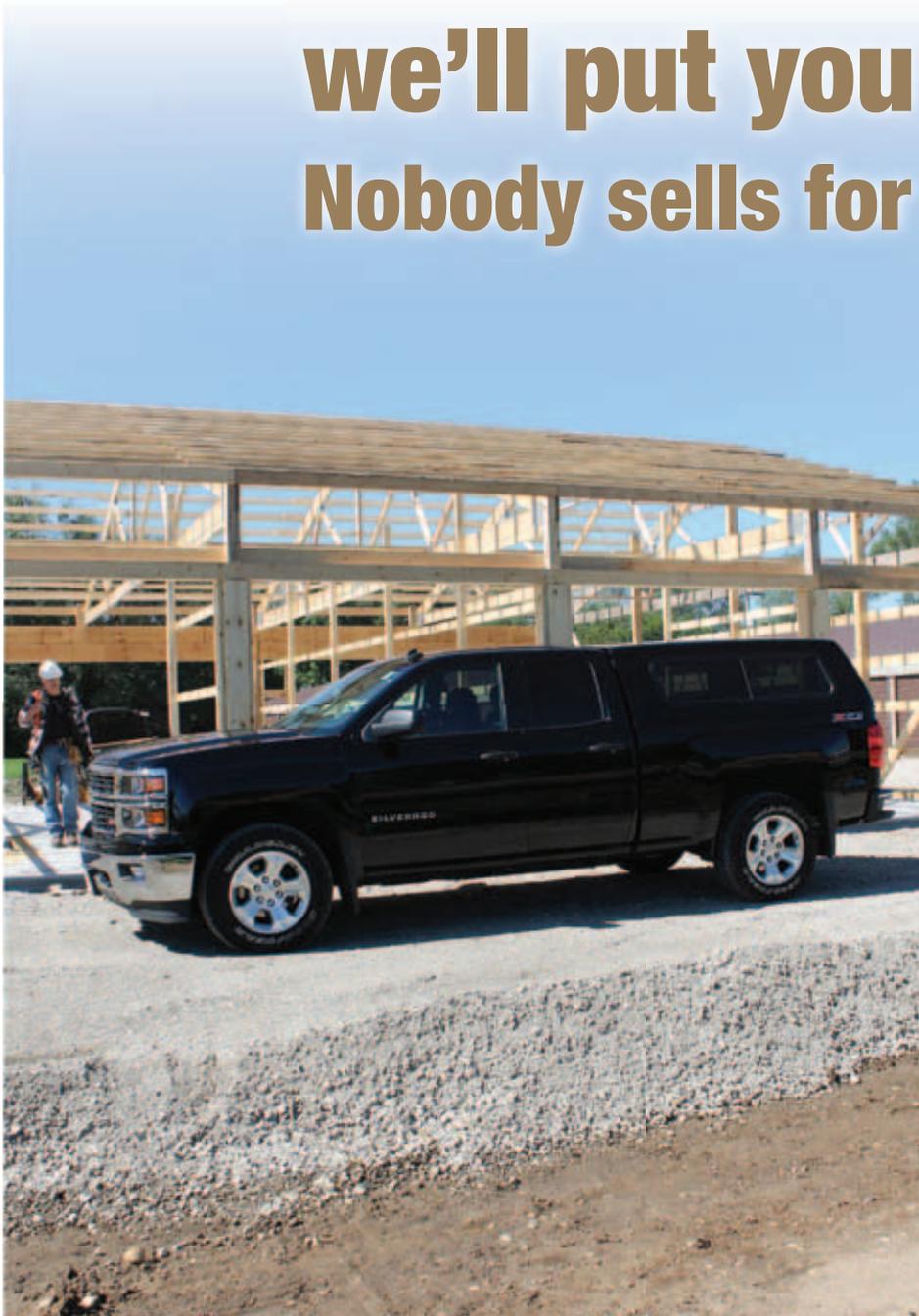
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GARY ENGBERG

Gary Engberg Outdoors

Last ice bluegills

If you are a panfish fanatic, and especially a bluegill fisherman, this article is for you. This year's winter in south-central Wisconsin hasn't been the greatest for most ice anglers. The ice came early toward the end of November. Much of December was like November should have been, and then the cold came and stayed for much of January. It warmed up till the end of the month with hardy anglers wading and open-water fishing below the dams on the Wisconsin River.

When I bluegill fish, I like to jump from hole to hole. I drill most of my holes when I first get on the ice or use existing holes. The weather this winter in south-central Wisconsin had inconsistent ice and little snow cover. There were mild days in January with water on the ice that I wouldn't drive on, so walking was the mode of transportation.

Friendship is one of the reasons I ice fish. Catching and eating fresh bluegills is great, but the camaraderie of spending the day on the ice with friends can make a poor fishing day a good day. Catching fish is a bonus.

The lake closest to me for catching big bluegills late is Madison's Lake Mendota on the Madison Chain of Lakes. Lake Mendota is famous for its winter perch fishing, but not as many people know of the last ice bluegills. Instead of fishing 50 to 70 feet deep for perch, you can fish in water 10 feet and less for big gills. "Big" varies greatly depending on whom you talk to. Some anglers consider bluegills over 8 inches big, while others say big bluegills have to be at least 10 inches or 1 pound, which a 10-inch fish out of Mendota weighs.

Though it's possible to catch these bruisers anywhere on the lake, University Bay is the lake's best late ice spot. Most of the Bay is relatively shallow, but you still have to be extremely careful of poor ice this time of year. One reason fishing is good now is because shallow water warms quickly and attracts fish and bugs in the food chain. After a cold winter, water a degree or two warmer is substantial to a cold-blooded fish. I suggest wearing a life jacket since the ice is melting fast and safety is still the most important factor when going fishing in the late winter. It's also smart to have a set of ice picks.

Often the fishing is the best when there is open water near shore, making getting on the ice a challenge. There may be some open water before you can get on the ice, but someone has usually put out wooden planks to give access. I don't highly recommend this to everyone and especially not children, because it's like going out on first ice. Most of the Bay's water is shallow. Bring a friend along for safety now instead of fishing alone.

There are always "old" holes in the Bay, so a hand auger or a spud works well to break them open. If you have a few holes in the same area, jump back and forth between them till you find the aggressive bluegills. Vary your jigging techniques, jig size, colors, and what you dress your jig with, be it live bait or plastic. I've found that tear drops, dots, rat finkies, and the Cobra jig all work well when dressed with a wax worm or two. Sometimes plastics work wonders when live bait will barely get a bite. The Techni-Glo tails, wedgies, and finesse plastic work on Lake Mendota's giant bluegills. They don't cost much and come in many colors and shapes, so stock up on these and store them in a film canister.

Use 2# or 4# pound Stren Ice line tied to your ice jig and have a sensitive light rod with a spring bobber to detect the slightest bite. Powdered graphite



Matt Johnson with two biggies.

sprayed on your reel's gears will keep any reel running smoothly should the weather turn cold. Good electronics are also a must!

University Bay has a considerable amount of wood on the north shore and weeds around much of the Bay. This is a choice spawning area later, so the bluegills can move in and out from shallow to a little deeper water at any time. Many bluegills spend their entire lives in the Bay.

The end of February and the first weeks of March are the best times to catch these big girls. This bite isn't a long one, but if you hit it right, you're in for some bluegills that most people only see in pictures. ☺

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

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a novel
from JOHN LUTHENS...

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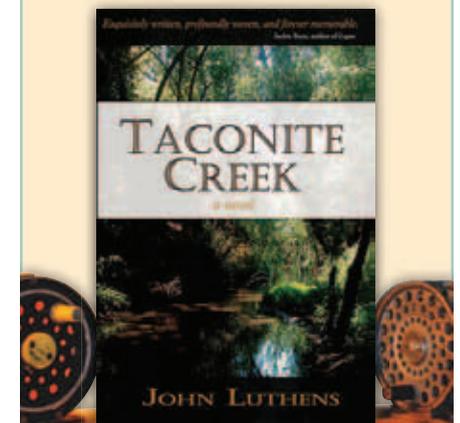
The process can be simple, with nothing more than a cane pole and a length of line, the sun sparkling on a backyard pond and the rising of a bass beneath the shaded willows.

It can also gravitate into a lifetime of specialized equipment and dropping into uncharted trout waters. Either way, fishing, like reading a novel, is what you make it.

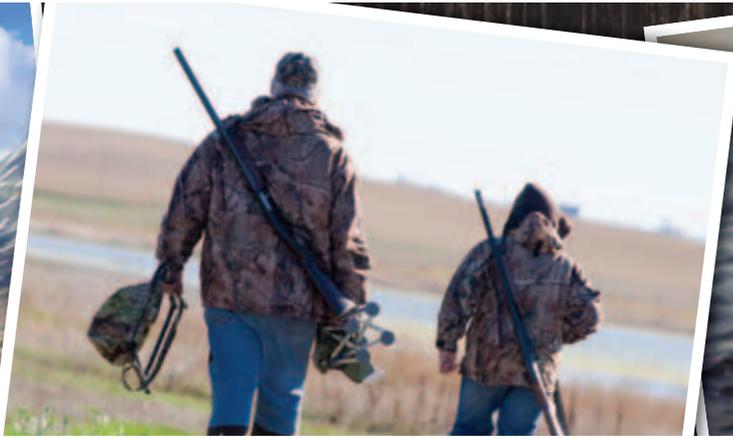
Taconite Creek is a story of going after life with a passion. It is a story of man versus nature, and it is a story of opening an iron mine in a virgin wilderness. It is about seeing with your mind, and of learning for yourself instead of settling for what others tell you. Two memorable characters in the novel tell it like it is:

"Uncle Jack and Ernie: arguing in dizzying circles about political direction and iron – about anything and everything really. But mostly, it was about Taconite Creek and trout fishing."

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JOHN LINDEMAN

Ditch The Wax Worms 'The Riv' offers winter fix

In an attempt to maintain my fishing sanity each winter, I've found myself repeating a simple poetic phrase each morning as I doctor up that first cup of bad work coffee.

"Winter is winding down and I'll be on the water soon."

The little quip pops into my head every year as the Super Bowl fizzles to an end. It perks me up sometimes, but I quickly slip back into the dumps when I catch a glimpse of my lonely fishing boat loaded down with empty flowerpots and lawn furniture pushed against the wall of the garage.

It's okay to attempt to work through winter's monotony using a verbal mantra but once you shout "stuff it" to yourself in response to the statement, it's time to take appropriate action.

Open water intervention is the only cure but also part of the problem. Win-

ter is winding down, yet the limitless fishing opportunities in Wisconsin are covered with equally limitless slabs of ice. The insensitive may suggest ice fishing, but I can't hear a thing that a guy who uses wax worms has to say while I'm pouting.

Luckily for me, I met an Old River Rat a few years back over one of those bad cups of coffee. I think he heard me when I mumbled my mantra.

Milwaukee's Tom Linske didn't know it, but he was about to offer just the intervention I needed. He suggested an early March float down the Wisconsin River, minus the wax worms.

Soon after, Tom had me in his boat on a stretch of the Wisconsin River below the dam in Wisconsin Dells. I knew I was in good hands when the owner of River's Edge Bait Shop called out Tom's name as we walked into the shop.



Appleton's Jon Markley can't help but smile while getting an open water fishing fix on the Wisconsin River.

There are a few ways to approach walleyes and saugers on this stretch of the river, but with Tom I learned to perfect my vertical jigging skills while slipping downstream with the current. In the morning, Tom would suggest this and I would do that. Tom would catch a few fish and then I would do what he said. By afternoon I immediately did what Tom suggested.

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TOM LUBA

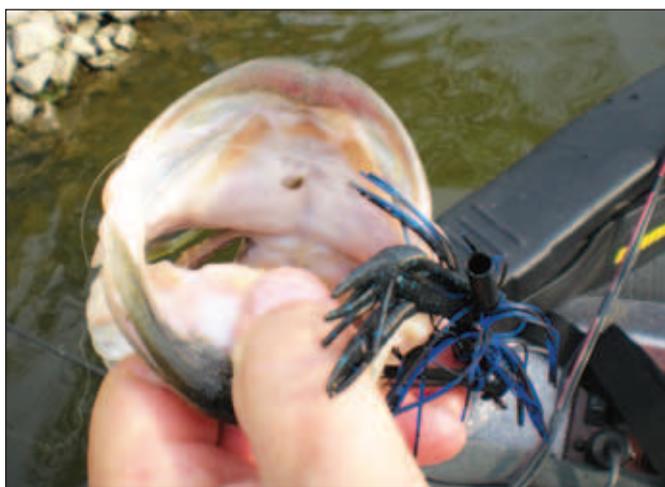
Bumpin' Bottom For Bass A recipe for spring bassin' success

This recipe doesn't call for \$15 crankbaits or \$25 swim-baits, so your wallet can rest a lot easier. Instead, as someone suggested to Dustin Hoffman in "The Graduate," think plastics.

Plastic baits will catch largemouth all year long and are excellent in spring. Plus, they are fairly inexpensive. So when one of our friendly northern pike scissors off my tube jig, it's not that big a deal to grab another from the package and get right back to fishing. Have that happen to a \$15 hardbait and I might end up in the bottom of the boat in the fetal position crying like a baby.

The nice thing about a lot of today's plastic baits is that they have fish attractant added during the molding process. Others are infused with salt to get the fish to hold on longer for a good hook set.

To effectively catch bass on plastics, putting a bait in the water is only the first step. If fishing plastics is new to you, knowing what your bait feels like in the water is important. Occasionally, bass can literally hammer a bottom bait. At other times, like in cold water or after fronts, they can suck it in so easily that you won't even know it's happened. If you know what your rigged bait feels like as it moves through the water, you'll be able to set before they spit it back out. That feel is the big reason a really good bottom bumper can look like a wizard while a less experienced angler may get picked up, dropped and not even know it.



This spring bass popped a jig tipped with a plastic crawfish. Plastic craws are deadly on jigs early in the year.

With that in mind, here are some of the elements in my spring plastics recipe with an eye toward color and size.

- 4 1/4-inch YUM Vibra Tubes, Green Pumpkin and Watermelon Seed colors
- 3 1/2-inch Bass Pro Tender Tubes, Smoky Shiner and Green Pumpkin colors
- 5-inch Senkos, Black/Blue Flake and Watermelon/Red Flake
- 7-inch Berkley Power Worms, Black and Watermelon Seed colors

continued on page 7

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CLAY HELLER

Making The Cut

Seven must-have baits

Tell me if this has ever happened to you. You are headed on a weeklong musky trip to Lake of the Woods, or any other destination of your choosing. You pack up every piece of musky gear that you own: rods, reels, net, bump board, release tools and baits—boxes full baits. Big baits, small baits, six different colors of the same bait in three different sizes all packed into the boat. Away you go to pick up your partner for the trip, who, by the way, has every piece of gear that he owns sitting at the end of the driveway. Into the boat goes his gear and you are off.

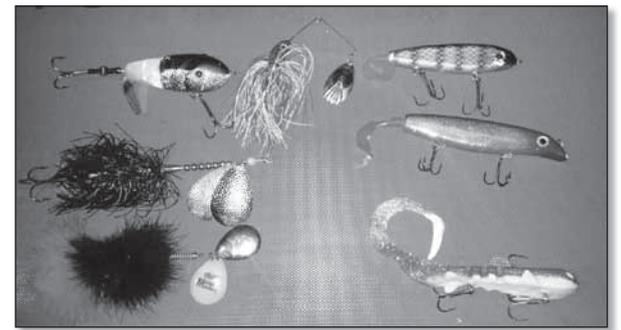
Day one of the trip is usually spent tripping over tackle boxes and throwing all the new baits that you bought for the trip. By day three you are lugging most of the boxes out of the boat and up to the cabin to make room, and you've got a handful of baits in the boat that you are going to be throwing for the rest of the week.

My partner and I have done this exact song and dance more times than I care to admit. Let's face it. We musky anglers are to baits as Carrie Bradshaw is to shoes ... we can never have enough.

These baits that make the cut and get to stay in the boat the whole trip are what I would consider must-have baits for any musky angler. They allow you to fish many different situations that you may encounter on any given trip. Color choices can vary quite a bit depending on the body of water, so we'll save that for another

time. I would just like to focus on the lure styles listed below.

1. Prop style topwater bait. These are great search baits that allow you to cover water quickly and locate active fish.
2. Large bucktail. It's no secret that the big double 10-bladed bucktails catch fish. I like to have one ready to go at all times. They are a great option to pair with a topwater up front to really run and gun and cover water.
3. Small bucktail. Sometimes you may find that the muskies are only chasing bigger blade baits but not eating. Downsizing to double eights or even a small single-bladed bait and throwing some speed at them may be what it takes to trigger a strike.
4. Safety pin spinner bait. These baits will allow you to fish thick cover without fouling and wasting casts. They can also be slow rolled and fished deeper than the standard inline spinners mentioned above.
5. Glide baits. Depending on the situation, these can be fished very fast and erratic to try to trigger a reaction strike and cover water or slow and methodically to really work an area over that you may have seen a fish on earlier.
6. Jerk bait. The dive rise action of a jerk bait will allow you to work it through some heavy cover, as it will back its way out of a lot of situations. You can fish it



Go-to baits column one: Lake X lures F.B., Llungen Lures, DC10, Mepps Marabou. Column two: Llungen Lures Nutbuster. Column three: Phantom Lures Softail Phantom, Pandemonium Tackle SRJ and Tackle Industries Super D.

through open pockets in weeds. It can be a good choice to follow up with when the guy up front is throwing a spinner.

7. Soft plastic. These baits can be fished many different ways from a straight cast and retrieve to a pull-pause retrieve. They can be fished fast or slow and worked in all different depths of the water column, making them very versatile. They also make a great throwback lure.

I get asked quite often what my favorite musky bait is. The truth is that there are so many variables that picking just one bait is nearly impossible. This list is what I usually have rigged up and ready to go. I'm confident that I will catch fish with these on most days. The trick is to have the right color and size of each one for that particular day. 

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.

LUBA, from page 5

- 3- and 4-inch Berkley Chigger Craws in Black/Blue Fleck and Watermelon Seed colors
- Silicone Skirted Bass jigs, Black/Blue and Green Pumpkin colors in 3/16-, 1/4-, 3/8- and 1/2-ounce
- Gamakatsu or other quality hook, 2/0, 3/0, 4/0. 5/0 Z-Bend worm hook, regular and wide gap
- Slip cone sinkers 1/16-, 1/8-, 1/4-, 3/8-ounce sizes—maybe add in 1/2 ounce based on cover you fish

Jigs need to be added into the plastics mix, as you can use a variety of plastic trailers on them. I use the Chigger Craws and shorten to fit the jig size.

This selection should give you options to cover all early season approaches. Jigs are one of the best spring big bass baits available. Tubes are great when fish are on the spawn beds or ready to move up. And Senkos are a great finesse bait that drifts slowly to the bottom when you stop the retrieve. It works well when deadsticked, which is letting it sink to bottom around cover and not moving it. This can be very productive when the fish are tentative.

I'll use a fluorocarbon line on baitcast set ups for most of my fishing, usually 10- to 14-pound test. If I use spinning gear, I'll use mono with a 2- to 3- foot fluorocarbon leader. Fluorocarbon sinks, is a lot harder for fish to see,

and it is more abrasion resistant than monofilament. But in my experience, mono is easier to use on spinning.

It's not that you can't catch spring bass on topwaters, Rat-L-Traps or spinnerbaits. I just happen to feel that jigs and plastics will catch more fish in the long run.

It's also smart to remain flexible. Good recipes stand the test of time. But that doesn't mean you can't tweak your ingredients if you find an approach or a plastic, like a Beaver-styled bait, for instance, that the fish in your area like better. 

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.

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JERRY KIESOW

Fly Fishing In Wisconsin

What will this spring be like?

Remember last year? I don't. I have wiped it from my memory. (That's not quite true, but forgetting most of it is my preferred choice.) All I remember is not fishing for steelhead until late April last year and that I have had better spring steelheading; however, I do remember another extreme: the spring of 2012.

2012 was not a typical spring, either. March 16th found a friend and me fishing for steelhead that were already making redds preparing to spawn. The water temperature was 51 degrees, the air 68. Normal? Far from it for mid-March. But in four hours I caught a 27-inch buck steelie and a 28.5-inch hen. My friend lost one rainbow and had several other hits. It was a fun day. On that particular day the fish were partial to our newly-tied, fancy egg flies.

The following week, with temperatures still in the high 60s/low 70s, I decided to see if the suckers were in. (I wanted a few for pickling.) The creek was full of them. If they would have held still, I could have walked across the stream on their backs.

The first hour and a half the fish refused any of my offerings. They were intent on only one thing: propagating. Then, for whatever reason, they slid off the shallow riffles and moved into the deeper side pools. (Did they need a rest? Sex can be exhausting.)

During the next 20 minutes, drifting a small black nymph on a 5X tippet, on my 3-weight, I took the three fish I wanted, plus I caught and released a few more. By the way, catching suckers on light tackle is fun.

Back at the truck I put the fish on ice and drove to the Sheboygan River to see if I could hook up with any steelhead.

The river was running strong. Egg flies would not work here and the 3-weight would be a tad light. I switched to the 8-weight and opted for a modified Mickey Finn streamer I had concocted several weeks earlier for just such an occasion.

I entered the water cautiously and cast the streamer slightly upriver. I allowed the fly to drift the full length and stripped additional line while mending. I

let the fly swing at the end of the drift in front of a likely-looking pocket and held it there for a few moments, allowing the fly to pulsate back and forth in the current. After a few seconds, I retrieved it in short pulls before lifting and casting again.

On the third cast, a 25-inch female took the fly on the drift and the fun began. Not only did I have to contend with the strength of the fresh chrome fish, but the fast-moving river too, which that lady used to her full advantage.

Finally, after moving both the fish and myself into slower water, I could net her. My intention was to release her, but when I lifted her for a photo, she spit out her eggs. When I returned her to the river, she was unresponsive. She had died. I never had that happen before. Needless to say, she was added to the freezer.

On the trip home, I stopped off at a wooded area where I knew I could find the final few items I wanted to go with the fresh fish on the grill. Plastic bag and small gardening spade in hand, I dug a bag full of ramps—wild leeks. Combined

Author with one of the two steelies he caught in mid-March.



with fresh mushrooms gathered from a local grocery (not morels, darn it!), I cooked all on the grill.

This goes to prove that catching fish is not the final joy of fishing. I never keep all the fish I catch, but every now and again one for the grill is welcomed.

As I tap this out on the keyboard while the snow falls, I wonder what will this spring be like.

See you in the river. *W*

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: jerrykiesowoc.com.

GLENN WALKER

Cold Weather Largemouth

Catching bass when the temps are low

When the water temperatures have yet to begin their climb, the activity level of a largemouth bass is still on the minimal side. They are ready and willing to eat, but downsizing your presentation and slowing down your retrieve will help you save your day from being a total bust.

An effective lure to target largemouth when the water temps have dropped is a simple piece of plastic, the soft plastic stickbait. I cast a Texas-rigged soft stickbait out and let it slowly sink to the bottom. This is one of the easiest and most productive ways to fish this lure. The slower and fewer moves you make with your rod and reel the better. Figuring out how the bass want the bait is crucial. Sometimes the bass will just want the bait on its initial fall, or they will only hit it when it's lying their motionless on the bottom.



A hefty spring cold water largemouth.

Another finesse application that I go to when fishing cooler water is a shaky head. I fish this on a spinning rod/reel combo spooled with Fluorocarbon line, which is the same rod I fish my stickbaits with. With this combination I can make long casts, feel light bites and get a big bass into the boat! The majority of the time I use a shaky head jig that weights 3/16 ounces, because it allows me to make a long cast and I can maintain a good sense of the bottom, which is important since that is where the fish holding cover I'm targeting are located.

What makes the shaky head technique/lure so versatile is that you can just shake the jig upon it resting at the bottom. This retrieve is very effective when casting to isolated cover, so you are able to keep the bait in the strike zone for the longest amount of time possible.

I like to dress my shaky head with a finesse worm as it gives the bass a nice compact presentation to key in on. If they want some bulk, I rig a small creature bait on the jighead.

For the colors of my plastics I like to keep it simple and always have a supply of green pumpkin, watermelon, red flake and black/blue on hand, but having some outlandish colors is a must as well. Water clarity dictates which color I go with.

Finesse just doesn't mean fishing small lures; it also means fishing slow. When that water is cold and those bass aren't moving much, they are looking for a big meal when they do want to feed. That is why tying up a jig is still a viable option; you just have to fish it slow.

continued on page 13

More bass tactics online.
OnWisconsinOutdoors.com/inlandfishing

JIM SERVI

A Different Look At Fishing With The USA Ice Fishing Team

A whole new meaning to bringing home the trophy

It's estimated that there are just shy of two million ice fishermen across the United States. Of those, only five are part of the USA Ice Fishing Team that will compete in the Ice Fishing World Championship in Kuopio, Finland from March 23 - 29, 2015.

Open trials for the 2016 team were held in Rhinelander on February 27 - 28, 2015. This isn't the type of ice fishing that most are used to. These guys are fishing with 1-pound test line and palm rods, without the luxury of power augers and shanties. If they don't catch fish in a matter of minutes, or sometimes seconds, they're on the move. As coach Brian Gaber says, "It's more than just fishing." Last year only 12 dedicated fishermen from all across the Midwest showed up to test their skills in hopes of representing the United States.

Gaber has been coach since 2010. With a background in Geographic Information Systems (GIS), he does the "tactical game planning" for the team and is able to map lake bottoms and determine

where the fish are.

Last year the intense try-out started with heats to determine physical ability. Cones were spaced out over 100 yards, and the competitors had to drill 10 holes on the way down and 10 on the way back through three feet of ice on area lakes. The fastest was cruising along at approximately 4.5 minutes. Brian cautions that "the physical side scares a lot of guys away from trying out."

Competitors transitioned toward head-to-head fishing where the fishermen competed one-on-one. Part of the challenge is that they have to move each time they catch a fish, similar to international competition.

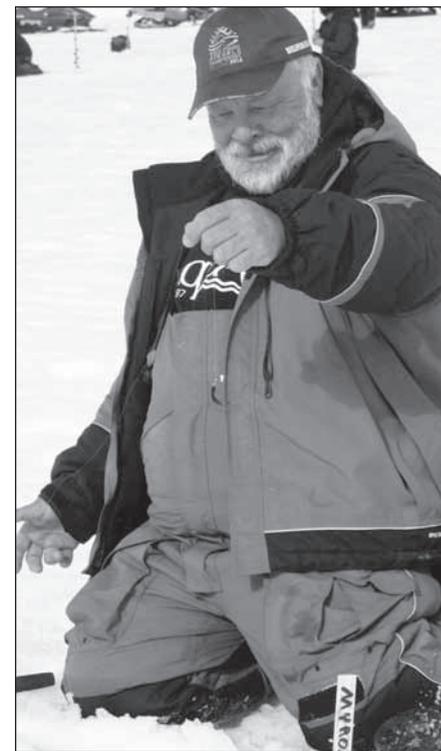
Lastly, they held count heats, which are comparable to the actual international competition. All of the fishermen are turned loose in a zone marked by cones to see who could catch the most fish. All fish count and they generally pursue panfish and catch them as small as one inch.

The coaches then tallied the fish and released them. After one hour, the leader had 17 fish, and the winner on Crescent Lake finished with almost 40 fish in two hours. Then they were off to Washburn Lake to do the same thing.

Unlike ordinary fishing, there are strict penalties. You can't be within five meters of a competitor, leave a rod unattended and must watch your auger placement. Any penalty results in a yellow card and the fisherman's catch will be zeroed out in that grid.

Countries involved in the Ice Fishing World Championships take it extremely seriously. Gaber says that Russia and Poland often have over 100,000 fishermen try out for their teams. Some take it so seriously that even competitive ice fishing is prone to performance enhancing drugs (PEDs). According to Gaber, the Lithuania bronze medal team from 2013 tested positive for PEDs and will have to forfeit their medals, making the U.S. team the bronze medal winners.

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Perennial USA Ice Team member Myron Gilbert shows off his big catch.

PHIL SCHWEIK

Wisconsin River Walleye Run

Rules to add quality to quantity

Annually on the Wisconsin River near Wausau we expect our walleye run from early to mid-April. The run can be early or late. Timing depends on several factors: water temperature, amount of daylight and water flow.

Most spring run anglers focus on that magic water temperature of 34 degrees. If you wait until the water is that warm, you have missed your best opportunity at targeting what could be the largest walleyes of the season. Your better bet at landing a true trophy means you're on the water well before the water reaches that optimum temperature. The 34 degree mark means large females are dropping eggs and are not very interested in feeding. You will, however, see plenty of action from smaller (male) walleyes that are scattered everywhere looking for spawning females.

To target pre-spawn walleyes and

trophy fish, start much earlier in the season. Look for areas other than water located directly below the dams, which is where most anglers fish. Deep pools down river hold great numbers of fish and finding them is easy. These locations offer water depths generally from 12 feet to over 20 feet where walleyes have staged throughout the winter months.

Secondary areas adjacent to the deepest locations in the system typically hold the largest fish in the area. These may be underwater inlets off points from the shoreline or river channel, an eddy or an inside current break with less or no current supporting it, or even a shallow area directly above a wintering hole that has increased water flow with re-directional current flows or breaks. In some instances the current may actually be heading back up river, and it is in these locations that you will find precise current breaks that will hold fish very

tightly in the non-current areas between the two different flows of water.

When fishing these areas, you will generally find yourself targeting water depths of less than 10 feet. These are transition areas that offer pre-spawn walleyes easy access to food with little or no current to fight—the perfect holding and staging area until they are ready to spawn.

When it is time to spawn, these fish move off these deeper pre-spawn areas to nearby spawning grounds with heavier current and shallower water—sometimes less than one foot. At this point anglers will see more of the 14- to 18-inch walleyes as the larger spawning walleyes are doing their duty. The walleyes typically stay in these locations from two days to two weeks depending on water temperature and current flow.

If you're not out there every day, you could miss the spring run. I



Nick Laska with a giant spring walleye.

have seen both tortoise and hare runs. No magic formula determines when the fish are going to move into these locations. When targeting spring walleyes, my search begins as soon as I can physically get on open water, and these areas are searched until I find them and they have completely run out their spawning cycle. This period is usually from mid-March through mid- to late April.

Finding walleyes is the hardest thing

continued on page 21

TOM CARPENTER

Cubs Corner

Dam good times

Like so many memories that suddenly pop into our consciousness, this one must be triggered not by a particular sight but by the familiarity of some special scent on the air, a bird song from the trees, or the angling play of springtime sunshine from a high-blue sky.

It is that transition time of earliest spring. The landscape shows no trace of the green that will soon explode across the hills. But mercifully, the snow and cold are gone. The brown hayfields, golden corn stubble and black plowed ground, butting up to the gray of leaf-bare oak forests, offer the appearance of a neat, manicured and orderly world—a place finally free of winter's grip. A soul can feel it.

The old Chevy Impala, as big as a tank and with a trunk expansive enough to haul a coulee-country whitetail or two after every fall hunt, carries us faithfully over the shouldering hills and through the winding valleys. You can smell the dirt, the cows, the woods—Wisconsin—when you crack open a window.

It is Saturday. Dad worked hard all week and needs to get out, get away, do something other than toiling to earn a living or working on house projects on those dragged-out weekends between the end of rabbit hunting season and the start of “real” open water fishing.

As today is a bridge between the old season and the new, it is also a bridge in our sporting year: a trip to the dam at Yellowstone Lake, where we will fish the open water below for hungry crappies (and whatever else may bite), while the lake above rests beneath a rotted, honey-combed cloak of ice that is somewhere in its own seasonal transition from the solid form of water to liquid.

The sound of gushing water over the dam and the smell of the flowing river with a hint of dead fish wafting about are music to my ears and perfume to my nose after a winter being cooped up.

A small minnow dangles below a bobber, cast out to an eddy in the flow. The sun glints and glares. Maybe there will even be a little sunburn on the ashen cheeks after today.

The fishing itself is not fast in the still-cold water, but it's fast enough for a fishing-starved soul just happy to be outside. Here and there, a bobber sinks slowly

down as a crappie swims away with the lively minnow in its paper mouth. A quick hook-set, a short battle, and another speckleside joins its brothers and sisters on the stringer.

Dad catches the most fish. He has the patience to tease them, working the bait back toward shore ever-so-incredibly slowly. The movement gets crappies' attention, and the speed suits their metabolism just fine in this temperature of water.

I cast, wait a moment or two and retrieve, then cast again to new spots in an impatient search for hungry fish. But Dad, plopped on his upside-down bucket, is the main reason we will have fish for dinner tomorrow night.

During a break in the action, I climb into the hills, walking the barren woodlands. Last fall's faded russet leaves are smashed down from a winter under the snow, and sunlight reaches the forest floor. I still love the distinct smell of decaying oak leaves. Maybe that's one of the scents that takes me back.

A few more crappies bite. A chill creeps into the air: The sun is going down on this early April day.

We pack it in and load the gargantuan trunk with rods, the metal tackleboxes of yore, a couple minnow buckets, and a pail full of 27 flopping crappies. I sneak a look back at the dam and the river as we pull out. Weather willing, we'll come back again next week.

On the way home, we stop at a bar-and-grill in Argyle for dinner. No McDonalds here then or now. There's music from a jukebox and glowing electronic Old Style beer signs (the real thing, because this was the real time), with red canoes and smoking campfires moving on the screen. Hamburgers and fries and a juice glass of beer never tasted so good.

It is dark now, stars shining above. I shiver a little in the cold air despite my sunburned face and decide that's one of the best feelings a guy can ever have. On the drive home, the combination of sunshine and fresh air and exertion overtake me and soon I am drifting asleep as the star-washed hills march past ... and then I am here again. 

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



SUZETTE CURTIS

Recipes by Suzette

Try some smelt!

With the onset of the spring fishing season, my husband soon looks forward to our local community smelt fry. While it's always delicious, curiosity prompts me to think of ways to prepare it so that he will look forward to smelt at home as well. Here are a couple of smelt recipes that you can try. Enjoy!

Baked Smelt

- 2 lbs. smelt, cleaned
- 6 strips bacon (uncooked)
- 2 medium tomatoes, diced
- 1 yellow or orange bell pepper, diced
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped
- ¾ cup Panko breadcrumbs
- 3 T. butter, melted

Preheat oven to 400°. Spray bottom of 13 x 9 baking dish. Place half of smelt along bottom of dish in single layer. Top with three slices of bacon and half of the tomatoes, peppers and onions. Repeat with remaining smelt, bacon, tomatoes, peppers and onions.

In small bowl, combine melted butter and bread crumbs; spread mixture evenly over top of baking dish. Bake 15 to 20 minutes until fish are firm and breadcrumbs are browned.

Pan Fried Smelt With Butter Sauce

- 2 lbs. smelt, cleaned
- 4 T. flour
- Salt and pepper
- 1 ¼ sticks butter, divided
- 2 T. light olive oil or grapeseed oil
- 2 T. shallots, finely chopped
- 1 T. dried parsley
- ½ tsp. tarragon
- 1 tsp. Worcestershire sauce
- ½ tsp. anchovy paste
- 1 T. capers, chopped

Heat oil and 4 tablespoons butter in large sauté pan. Mix flour, salt and pepper in shallow dish; dredge smelt in flour mixture. Fry smelt in batches over medium high heat until browned and firm; transfer to serving plate and cover to keep warm.

When smelt are finished, reduce heat slightly and add remaining butter to pan. Sauté shallots one to two minutes, then add remaining ingredients. Stir and heat through one to two minutes more. Pour sauce over smelt to serve.

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

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DAVID DUWE

Springtime Bite Shore fun

Fishing is a sport that young and old can participate in equally. As a very young boy I lived a couple blocks from a river I fished all year long. With the love of fishing and a father who didn't have a boat, I had to fish from shore. Most of the waters around my house allowed public fishing. With a young son of my own, I find myself fishing from shore again. Early spring is a great time to shore fish. The shallow bays and channels warm quickly, drawing fish from their winter haunts. The first fish to move the shallows on most lakes are the crappie and bluegills.

This is the time of the year when the bluegills and crappies move from their wintering locations to the warmest water in a particular lake. This is usually less than five feet of water. Many times, I am fishing the edges of a lake with the middle of the lake still frozen. Keep in mind that the north shore of lakes will warm first because the sun will hit it most of the day. These areas will usually have a soft muck bottom. For most of the year, these shallow haunts are often weed-choked and unfishable. In early spring, the emerging vegetation hasn't had an opportunity to grow.

I choose locations like the backs of bays or channels, and I look for soft muddy bottoms as they seem to hold more fish compared to harder sand bottoms. The softer bottom holds more water warmth. The softer bottom also contains more vegetation, which provides both food and shelter for the bluegills. Occasionally, it can be hard to find the bigger bluegills; they tend to move a lot depending on the weather. The prime locations don't seem to change from year to year, so if you found them in a particular spot last year, there's a good chance that they'll be back this year.

The preferred bait is leaf worms or wax worms. I use a small Thill fixed spring bobber and an ice jig. I like a tear drop or Lindy Fat Boy. A tear drop provides a vertical presentation,

A good time catching fish!



while the Fat Boy presents the bait in a horizontal manner. By presenting the bait in two different dimensions, it doubles your chances of catching fish. You want to use the smallest bobber you can get away with that will keep your bait off bottom. When fishing really shallow water, your bobber will seldom go under. The slightest movement or twitch indicates the fish has bit, and that's when you need to set the hook.

When fishing from shore, I recommend a longer pole: at least 6 feet 6 inches teamed with an ultra light spinning reel spooled with some 4-pound monofilament fishing line. Because of how light the bobber rig is, wind can be a real problem, yielding shorter casts and an inability to detect bites. For greater success, chose your days accordingly.

In early spring the panfish are in the shallows and they are really concentrated. Don't over-harvest and be selective about which fish you keep.

Some good fishing can be had on many southeastern Wisconsin lakes. My favorite shore fishing spots are Lake Geneva, Delavan Lake, and Turtle Lake in Walworth County, Wisconsin.

Dave Duwe is owner of Dave Duwe's Guide Service and guides the lakes of southeastern Wisconsin, specializing in Delevan Lake and Lake Geneva. Find him at fishlakegeneva.com or fishdelavanlake.com or contact him at 262.728.8063.

TOM CARPENTER

Badger Birds American redstart

Where did a name like redstart come from? *Start* is the Old-English word for tail, and this little warbler's bright red-orange start flashes beacons of energetic color in forest and garden. America's earliest settlers named this handsome bird quite aptly.

Spring is a great time to see redstarts in Wisconsin. These handsome birds invade our state with the arrival of warm weather and the emergence of insects, their main prey.

Look for a small, mostly black bird with bright orange-red tail margins and similarly colored patches on the chest and wings. Females are olive-brown

with bright markings of yellow in the same places. The belly is creamy white.

Listen for the American redstart's high-pitched song with an accent on the last note: *see-see-see-see-seeo* or *see-see-see-see-sway*.

Know that American redstarts (and many other warblers) require brushy, second-growth forest to hide from predators, find food, make nests and raise their young. Logging, fire and other forest disturbance benefits redstarts and many other songbirds.

Do you know why redstarts flash their colorful tails and wings so often and conspicuously? Avian biolo-



gists theorize that the action and color combine to flush insects into the open, where the redstart acrobatically flutters to snatch its meal off a leaf or twig or out of mid air.

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

LINDEMAN, from page 5

To this day, I still match the weight of the jig to the flow of the current, keep my line vertical to the water at all times during the drift, and I never put a jig in the water without a stinger hook off the back.

The river is an easy fish but not always an easy catch. A locator is a must, especially since water levels can vary with whatever is happening at the dam. It's always nice to know if you're over that 50-foot hole or coming up on the rocky shelf marked by the milk jugs.

From December through April, walleyes generally congregate in 10 to 20 feet of water in classic current breaks that continually wash forage past our toothy friends. Saugers, on the other hand, prefer the deeper stretches of the river. Both of these locations are perfect for vertical jiggers.

Three-way rigs and floating jigs with slip sinkers are favorites of those who prefer to anchor in strategic locations. Anchoring above the area fished allows

your offering to swing with the current and rest downstream from the boat with minimal slack in your line.

Since that first February trip to the "Riv" with Tom, I have been able to get my open water fix each Wisconsin winter. Every year is different, especially last year with that polar vortex we had. After December 2013, it was lights out until late April 2014.

River's Edge is always willing to share information regarding the ice on the

river. Other launches that offer winter access to the Wisconsin River are below the Castle Rock and Petenwell dams. Don't forget about the Mississippi River. It's all about finding a reliable source at each location.

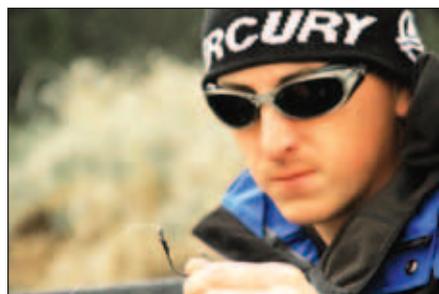
My favorite remains the Wisconsin River at the Dells. There are not too many places that offer walleyes, saugers and some of the best scenery in the world as a backdrop. Get out early and get out often. The fish are there, so beat the crowds try-

ing to time the walleye spawning run.

Thanks, Tom. It's been 15 great years of open water fishing intervention on the Riv. All it costs is a couple dozen minnows and a bad cup of coffee. 

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.

WALKER, from page 8



Rigging up for a spring day on the water. Photo by Brandon Wikman

I like to use a 1/2-ounce black and blue jig with a super chunk trailer, as this will help draw a reaction strike out of the bass. And with a heavier jig I can cast the jig farther, thus covering more water.

When I get my jig out to the cover I'm fishing, I let it sink all the way to the bottom. Be sure to watch your line on the fall, because a bass may hit your jig on the fall and your line may only twitch a slight bit. Once my bait hits the bottom I just let the rod do the work. Ever so slightly I lift it up and then let it sink.

As the air and water temperatures begin to drop, don't be afraid to bundle up, grab some of your favorite finesse lures and go out in search of that big ole bass that is still ready to bite! 

Glenn has been fishing tournaments for over ten years, spreading his passion and knowledge of the sport via articles and videos. For more information, check out glennwalkerfishing.com or on Facebook at facebook.com/glennwalkerfishing.

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DICK ELLIS

Coming And Going On The Wolf

Post-spawn walleyes, pre-spawn white bass cooperate



Guide Randy Williams of New London watched as the wet-fly carried over the river to disappear into the soft flow of the Wolf. With the line riding current downstream, Williams ripped the florescent fly in, quickly reeled back the slack and ripped again. The sting of a large white bass spelled the end of a mini-drought and the beginning of another day of excellent fishing on the famous vein above Fremont.

The white bass run that draws anglers from all over the Midwest is just starting on the Wolf and is even more popular, Williams said, than the spring spawning run for walleyes that he also labels “spectacular.” On this late April outing just prior to the opener of Wisconsin’s inland fishing season, we would be targeting post-spawn walleyes moving back downstream to Poygan, Butte Des Morts, Winnebago and Winneconne with white bass moving up off the lakes to spawn.

Just below our boat we had watched our partners Louis Woods of Fremont and Gordy Pagel of Appleton harness a good walleye. Soon they had moved even farther down to find walleyes in good size and numbers receptive to their drift tactic vertical jigging minnows.

It’s only a matter of time—on this morning a very short time—before these anglers find fish. They have an arsenal of answers when the white bass aren’t playing and the walleyes won’t bite. Most vital to their quiver is experience on the system and a “back of my hand” familiarity of the lakes and connecting river. Woods worked for years on the river as a guide. Retired teacher Williams was introduced to the spring runs by his father and never stopped fishing the system over the three decades since. And Fremont Chamber of Commerce board member Pagel just loves the river and surrounding area and knows where to find the fish.

Monday, after Woods’ walleye broke the ice, the Wolf challenge was short-lived before Williams took us farther upstream to find the white bass willing to take a fly, a small crankbait or a Wolf River Jig every five minutes. We would eventually quit on the white bass before they quit on us and found walleye action every bit as steady toward Fremont where these anglers said they would be.

“The last couple of years the walleye



With a late April goal to catch both post-spawn walleyes moving down the Wolf River to resident lakes and pre-spawn white bass moving up, Gordy Pagel of Appleton and guide Randy Williams did just that.

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run has really been good,” Williams said. “Walleyes for Tomorrow (WFT) and the sturgeon clubs have really improved the spawning habitat, and the walleye fishermen are releasing those nice big females and keeping the small males for eating. There is just so much action with the white bass. There is no limit (size or number), and it really is a bigger draw than the walleye run.”

The action doesn’t stop when the runs conclude. Anglers can expect continued action on walleyes and white bass and good action on virtually all species of game and panfish as the year progresses.

“When the white bass leave the river, the walleyes turn on again in the river,” Woods said. “I’ve never believed all the fish come back down in April. A lot come down in May and June. When those minnows hatch from the early northern pike spawn, every fish in the river is waiting for them. There is no reason to leave. They stay and eat.”

Returning walleyes are also targeted on the lakes through June. Smallmouth bass in quantity and quality hit until ice-up. Channel, flathead and blue catfish will provide good fishing from the third week in May through late September. Largemouth bass fishing is very good from mid-May through June.

These anglers call July the best multi-species month for fishing, including “awesome” bluegill angling, catfish, northern pike and walleyes on the lake. August means huge pike—some in the 40-inch plus class—on the submerged eel grass flats of the system’s lakes. Throwing buzz baits is the key to triggering the big fish strike.

“How can you not fish for these crap-pies (in August)?” Wood asked. “They taste great and there are so many to catch. In September, the white bass and walleyes also follow big schools of shad coming up the river like a recurrence of the spring run.”

“I think that the fishing here is as good or better than it was when I was a kid, and it was great then,” Woods said. “Everything is right here that a fisherman would want to target. We’re bringing Canada back to Wisconsin. It’s like Canada. You can catch as many fish, but it’s right in our backyard.” 

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RON STRESING

Early Season Steelheading

Tight lines and frozen fingers

As winter's grip starts to loosen on the Wisconsin landscape, something interesting begins to happen. Warm spring rains, snow melt, and run-off into Lake Michigan tributaries trigger a spawning run of the rainbow (steelhead) trout that inhabit the lake. From as early as late February or early March the trout begin to ascend streams like the famous Root River in Racine for the annual spawning rituals. Along with frozen fingers, running noses and ice in your rod guides, it's possible to catch a few of the Great Lakes' hardest fighting and arguably best eating salmonids. Here are a few tips to help that happen.

If there were one phrase to best sum up how to approach early steelhead fishing, it would be "low and slow." Trout are moving slowly, as the water temperatures tend to be just above freezing. Being cold-blooded means the trout's metabolism is about the same. Most fish are inclined to stay low in the water column during daylight hours. Currents tend to be moving fairly fast, so the fish seek out cover, undercut banks and other places with breaks in the current as well as cover and slack water. Trout will stage in areas like this, and often where you find one trout, you will find more.

Spend a little time "reading the stream," as the English call it, and find these staging areas. The next step is getting a bait into the trout's strike zone. These fish are not going to chase a bait, and those hard strikes you get sight fishing steelheads on gravel nests will be rare. The trick is getting the bait down to the fish and hitting them in the nose with it.

Natural baits or flies: either one will work; the secret is presentation. Natural baits like night crawlers, red worms and spawn sacks should stay within six inches of the bottom while making drifts through likely staging areas. If your bait occasionally "ticks" the bottom, you are doing it right. The use of a slip bobber works wonders and makes reading strikes from fish a lot easier. Oftentimes the strike will consist of the line simply

stopping. If in doubt, set the hook. The old trick of adding a brightly-colored piece of yarn to a natural bait works two ways. It may make the bait a little easier for the fish to spot in stained water, and the yarn will also tangle in the steelie's teeth.

All species of eggs used in sacks do not work equally well. Brown and lake trout spawn seem to work the best, with steelhead spawn a close second. Remember to keep the spawn sacks about dime sized. Those golf ball-sized sacks that worked so well on fall-run Chinooks are a little oversized for a sluggish rainbow.

Fly rod anglers like me will toss spawn-imitating yarn eggs and various natural-colored nymphs. Weighted yarn eggs or bead head nymphs are worked slow and deep in cover or deep holes. Read up on the fly fishing technique called Czech Nymphing. Developed in Eastern Europe, this method of working fish on the bottom of a stream is deadly. In its most basic terms, you just about drag the stream bottom for fish with a nymph. Some fish will end up being foul hooked and, of course, must be released.

Fly rod purists will probably want my hide for this, but it often pays to add a little scent attraction to a fly. Soft cheese worked into the fly or tipping the fly with a red or wax worm can do wonders. If simply drifting the bait with a fly rod, try a strike indicator (fly line specific bobber) to work a desired level in the water column.

Wool gloves, a hat and socks are a must and having a hand warmer or two along isn't a bad idea. If the current is swift, a wading staff might come in handy. Use caution and check before wading into potentially deep water. No steelhead is worth drowning or hypothermia. Good luck! ☺

Ron Stresing has been an outdoor writer since 1996 and has had articles published in Midwest Outdoors, Fur-Fish-Game, and Badger Sportsman magazines. He lives in South Milwaukee with his wife, Donna. ...

DIANE SCHAUER

Invasive Plants

Threatening the future of hunting and fishing in Wisconsin?

When you think of hunting and fishing in Wisconsin, traditions, family, friends and camaraderie come to mind. Whether fishing on calm waters or enjoying the sounds and scents of the woods while hunting, experiencing nature enhances our quality of life in this state.

According to a report prepared for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, 2.9 million people participated in some form of fish and wildlife-related recreation in Wisconsin. That's a lot of hunting, fishing and wildlife watching. It also means there's a large amount of money being spent. In fact, hunting-related expenditures in Wisconsin totaled \$2.5 billion in 2011, and angling brought in another \$1.5 billion.

Hunting, fishing and related outdoor recreational activities mean lots of jobs for many people throughout the state. We can all think of some industries that benefit, including sales of hunting and

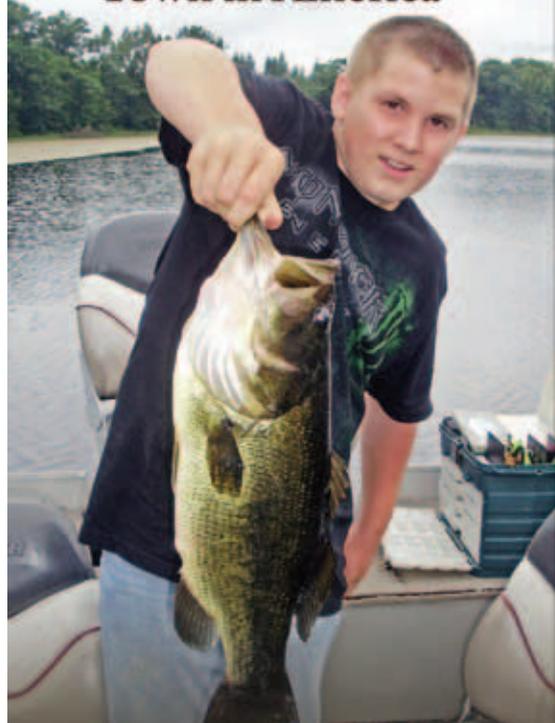
fishing apparel and equipment. It promotes the hotel and motel business and food service, including all the little restaurants that we treasure. It also impacts manufacturing, real estate and rentals, finance and insurance businesses and much more.

Nearly three million residents participate in outdoor recreation generating about \$4 billion in revenue. But there are serious threats to this valuable recreation. Some threats are obvious, such as the destruction of habitat or the pollution of lakes and rivers. The spread of invasive species is another huge threat to the health of fish and wildlife habitat.

In the United States, about three million acres are lost to invasive plants each year. Our natural habitats on public lands are being lost at the rate of 4,600 acres a day to invasive plants. All types of habitat in Wisconsin are threatened. Woodlands are being taken over by

continued on page 25

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TOM CARPENTER

Reflections On Turkey Calling

Keep it cool or yack it up?

Depending on who taught you to hunt turkeys, you probably have definite opinions on how much and how loud to call.

Although I started hunting Wisconsin turkeys decades ago, my apprenticeship came at the hands of two old turkey hunters from the mid-South. As a budding addict to spring turkey hunting, one five-day-long hunt in Wisconsin each year wasn't going to build my knowledge base as fast as I needed or wanted.

Enter Kenny and Mike. It wasn't as easy to make contacts in those pre-Internet days, but somehow I hooked up with a couple of lifelong turkey hunters who were willing to take a neophyte Yankee gobbler chaser out and teach him a thing or two. Kenny and Mike colored my thinking on calling. Both were of the cluck-and-wait school.

Kenny, a pot-bellied and good-natured West Virginian who was also one of the most patient hunters I ever met, would yelp very softly. Mostly he liked to sit where turkeys would eventually end up on their daily circuit. Kenny clucked a few times an hour to let the birds know he was there and wait them out. I killed a Mountaineer State gobbler in a deep forested hollow on his farm. We hardly uttered a peep of calling.

Mike, a chain-smoking, high-strung Tennessean,

found it hard to contain his energy. He loved running and gunning at midday. But morning and evening were for long sits and just a little light turkey talk, if any.

My late afternoon Tennessee gobbler heard maybe three clucks from Mike's call before I shot the silent bird at 31 paces.

I realize now that these places and the birds themselves had a distinct bearing on the hunters' approach to turkey calling. West Virginia and Tennessee have had turkeys on the landscape since Colonial times. Hard calling usually shuts birds up and sends them running the other way. Call-loving gobblers were quickly removed from the flock, and they didn't breed any new call-loving gobblers.

I'm still a reluctant and soft caller. Successful habits learned long ago are hard to kick. But I learned something a little different in Montana.

Hunting along a tributary of the Little Missouri River in an April snow gale with my friend Ben, we looped out across the prairie to get ahead of a group of turkeys moving along through the brush and trees. We cut in to the ribbon of cover and set up at a couple of cottonwood trees.

I let out a few clucks. "They aren't going to hear that," Ben, the Montanan chuckled. "And even if they did,



One little string of yelps on the slate followed by a total of three clucks on the mouth call brought in this gobbler.

they wouldn't come. Get on that thing!"

A half hour later, breathless from yacking every kind of sound imaginable out of my mouth call, I stood over a hook-spurred gobbler that had finally drifted our way. Lots of loud calling was the only path to bringing in that bird. Plus, the process was fun.

So what's the right answer? Call a little or call a lot? Call in a whisper or yack it up? Here in Wisconsin the answers are not so clear.

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DICK ELLIS

On Wisconsin Outdoors

Night hunt for predators

The night moves toward the 4:00 AM mark, and the bitter cold is relentless with its message that maybe it's time to move again. Coyote hunter Terry Russ and a reporter have been on two stands since midnight. Blending with the snow-covered ground in white camo, Russ hunkers down and prepares to bring another fruitless vigil to a conclusion with an aggressive series of howls.

The electronic calls shatter the night and carry over the sloping field and wood lines where these hunters wait in ambush. Depending on the time of year, Russ will send a lonely mating howl, a pup in distress call, the squeal of a dying rabbit, or tap into his arsenal for some other invitation to trip the varmint trigger. He will sit for an hour, move and sit again, seven times on average before his efforts reap rewards and the florescent green silhouette of an approaching coyote illuminates his spotting scope.

This season, his Wisconsin tally rests at 12 coyotes. None of them has taken

a step after the shot, some at distances over 200 yards. Russ can shoot; his AR15 in .223 caliber is resting on a bi-pod in the snow. He's not a deer hunter or any other kind of hunter. In Wisconsin, he needs a small game license, there is no bag, and the season is open year round. Russ has taken more than 550 coyotes total, including about 250 in Wisconsin. If you're a landowner losing livestock, Terry Russ is your friend.

When his Russ's Tree Service slows in the winter months, he takes the predator hunt to states in the south and west including South Dakota, Wyoming, Montana, Arizona, and Texas. Occasionally, primary coyote hunts lead to bonus tags on red and grey fox or bobcat.

Because of his marksmanship and expertise hunting coyotes, Russ was recruited by OWO for reasons two-fold: firearms writer Stuart Wilkerson built a Midwest Industries AR15 for a story series in this publication and sought a predator hunter's expert evaluation on the rifle's performance in the field. I



Terry Russ used the Midwest Industries AR15 to take this coyote at 150 yards.

would shadow Russ on this night hunt to tell the story of a Wisconsin coyote hunter.

I had watched Russ sight in the Midwest Industries' engineered rifle in February. It was no surprise that, after watching tight groups pepper the target at 100 yards just above the bullseye in preparation of potentially much longer shots, a coyote was killed with one perfectly placed shot by Russ with the gun

at 150 yards. Wilkerson's rifle was not fitted with night optics. Russ had waited for a full moon, and the results were brutally accurate.

As the new morning plods toward first light, a 70 percent moon offers adequate visibility for the observer on a fence line 50 yards to the hunter's right. Russ is in the open field. He knows from experience that with minimal move-

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MIKE FOSS

2015 Bear Hunt

Late season start for baiters means challenges

If you have not received your 2015 Class A bear permit in the mail by now, you probably will have to wait another year. Though, this year that might not be such a bad thing. At first glance, the record number of 10,690 permits issued and a quota set of 4,750 is a great thing. But let's take a closer look at season dates.

With the hound hunters going first this year, I assumed prior to any DNR regulations or news being released that the bait sitters' opener would be set for the second Wednesday in September, like almost any other year. Instead, with an opener of September 16, the bear hunter over bait will likely have to put even more effort into tagging a trophy bruin. Experience tells me we'll have our work cut out for us.

As a professional guide working for decades in Wisconsin to achieve 100 percent shot opportunity for our hunters, I know patterns develop, including what we can expect due to hunting season conflicts. With such a late start date for baiters in 2015, ruffed grouse, archery deer and a few other seasons open September 12, a few days prior to the bear bait opener.

As a guide I am not so worried about a grouse hunter occasionally walking through our stand area, or any human activity. Bears are smart, will avoid the conflict and eventually venture back to the bait station. But too many similar disruptions can turn a bear habitually moving in legal shooting daylight hours into a nocturnal creature. For a hunter on a guided hunt or a hunter with only a few vacation days to fill his tag, time is precious.

More concerning is the archery deer hunter who utilizes bait, where legal. Although unintended, deer bait piles quickly have the attention of bears, which slows down visits to bear bait stations that had been active all summer long. With too many season conflicts and menu alternatives, bear bait stations can even be completely abandoned by the bears.

Hunter conflict and decreasing bear hunter success rate initiated by season dates are magnified by natural movement of bears correlating with the amount of foliage in the forest. Several years ago, I observed spring bear behavior and activity on trail cameras before any foliage emerged at one of my bait stations. All springtime visits prior to vegetation emerging were nocturnal. As the foliage slowly started to emerge so did daylight activity. It was so obvious to visually witness and understand how important that thick foliage and cover was to these skittish black ghosts. In reverse, I know the 2015 late bear opener and late September receding of foliage will also initiate a decrease in bear activity during daylight hours. I see it every year.

You lucky 2015 Class A bear permit holders shouldn't panic. That is not my intention. Consider these words a what, when and why bear education meant ultimately to help you become a better bear hunter. Through all my seasons of guiding, success rates at Northern Wisconsin Outfitters have remained a consistent 95 percent. We expect that. Some years, though, we also know we're going to have work a little harder to reach that goal, like in 2015 ... and we can't wait to



Due to a comparatively late season start in 2015, bear bait hunters may have to work harder to fill that tag.

get started.

Mike's note: Thank you for following our bear stories in OWO. For those hunters who were expecting a bear tag this year and tried to contact me by phone, I apologize. If you're as far south as Milwaukee, perhaps you heard my loud scream from Bayfield County. What you could not see was the look of horror on my 9 year-old grandson's face when he accidentally deleted all the bear hunters' messages on the land line phone. Please call again. And 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.

CARPENTER, from page 18

In many areas of our state, especially the classic southwest hill country, over 30 generations of turkeys have been hunted. Sometimes these birds take a cautious approach. In other areas, namely, the farther north you go, the birds are still pioneering new territory. Gobblers are eager to find hens. Calling hard can be a key to success.

As Wisconsin straddles the difference between those mid-South birds we hardly called to and the Montana tom that made me breathless, so must you take a flexible and open-minded approach to turkey calling. Take stock of the situation, gauging the "temperature" of the bird you are working, and make calling decisions from there.

Calling soft to start is always a good plan. If birds don't hear it or react, what's the harm in getting more aggressive? I am convinced that turkeys don't know the difference between human calls and the sounds of real turkeys. (Some of the worst turkey calls I have ever heard came from real birds!)

Is the calling natural coming at a time when turkeys would be calling? Is the bird you're working just lonely? Does he need a little encouragement, or a lot of pleading?

I have hunted long and hard for pat answers to the turkey calling conundrum of whether a gobbler chaser should keep it cool or yack it up. The answer is to have multiple skills in your arsenal and be flexible. 

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

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ELLIS, from page 19

ment, a coyote won't pick him up, in particular with careful placement of a decoy and riveting calling to hold an approaching predator's attention.

With his own AR15 and night vision Raptor scope resting on the bipod, Russ uses a monocular spotting scope to scan the field. A final flurry of calls apparently is unproductive. Russ slowly stands for one last look before we will move again but immediately drops again to the snow, readjusts the bipod stand and settles over the rifle. A single .223 report rips open the Waukesha County night. The target is down, but Russ is not done.

A pup-in-distress "ki-yi" call does not bring in a coyote mate, a surprising post-shot tactic that Terry says often works. "They come in to the distress call to kill the pups," Russ says. "Mother nature senses weakness. These coyotes are protecting their territory."

Russ rises and brings the rifle to me. "He's not big but he is down and he's really out there," he says. "He never moved. Scan the field and you'll see him way out by the wood line."

The night lights up in florescent green through the scope. I quickly find the distant carcass. We move up the incline in the field through deep snow to recover the animal.

The kill is actually a red fox taken with a broadside vials shot at 257 yards. Red fox season remains open and Buss knows it, but he is disappointed. He doesn't shoot Wisconsin fox in a personal effort to bolster numbers.



Terry Russ shot this red fox at 257 yards at 4:00 AM with Ellis watching.

"I thought it was a coyote," he says later. "I wouldn't have shot it if I had identified it as a fox. I'm surprised he came in to this calling. A fox usually stays away. He doesn't want to get eaten."

Hunters know that not all hunts go as planned. This observer can empathize. Russ though, is a prepared hunter with an extraordinary ability to shoot. He eliminates the hunters' worst nightmare of a wounded animal.

The clearest message from this night in the field? A predator that answers a Russ call will almost certainly not live to howl about it.

If you're experiencing livestock or deer losses due to coyote predation, call Russ at 414.422.9298. 

SCHWEIK, from page 9

to do. Catching them is the easy part. Consider three methods when targeting spring walleyes. The first and most common method is a simple jig and minnow combination worked on the bottom. The jigs are typically 1/16th ounce to 1/2 ounce depending on current and/or depth. I like oranges, greens and yellow, which stand out in our stained river water.

Second, run crankbaits like Rapalas and Thundersticks in water depths of less than five feet and/or when the walleyes are holding tight to shoreline areas and rocks. The crankbaits work their way through shallower water without getting snagged and often produce larger fish than jig and minnow combinations.

The Wolf River Rig is the third spring choice. This is a three-way rig with a bell sinker set about a foot off one link and another single hook or floater set about three feet back off the third section of the

three-way. The single hook or floater is then baited with a large fathead minnow and let to sit or float off the bottom. This method is primarily used in water less than 10 feet deep with strong current. The heavy bell sinker will keep the bait on or near the bottom, and the live bait will attract walleyes moving up or down river to traditional spawning areas.

With only weeks to target what could be the best walleye fishing of the year, use every available option. Learn a few basic holding places for walleyes and elementary methods for targeting them. Then expect an opportunity to catch more and larger walleyes. 

Phil is the owner of Hooksetters Guide Service in central Wisconsin and Hookset Adventures in Eagle River, Wisconsin, which keeps him on the water over 200 days a year. Phil Lives in Mosinee, Wisconsin, and can be reached at pschweik@dwave.net, on his website: hooksetters.biz or hooksetadventures.com, at 715.693.5843 or on Facebook at Phil Schweik.

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NEAL HERRMAN

Tagging Tom

Turkey talk with a Wisconsin expert

For many avid turkey hunters, all other hunting is just a way to burn time until our season arrives. That time is now, with another spring turkey season looming just over the horizon like a hung up gobbler finally ready to make its grand appearance.

You've drawn your tag and maybe even bought an extra. Whether you've been chasing birds for a few years or this is your first season, consider a few words of advice that may help fill your tag this spring.

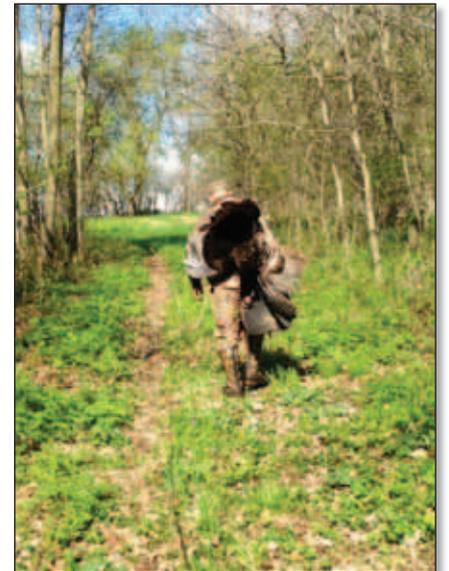
Early seasons A and B can literally be a coin flip in regards to weather. I've hunted in snow storms and 70-degree temperatures during these first seasons. You can't control the weather, but female companionship is already the prime motivator dictating gobblers' movements. Not all hens will be receptive to breeding this early, but others will be. Odds are you'll encounter larger flocks of birds still trying to figure out who's the boss. The only thing that will limit turkey action is heavy winds and heavy rain. But these birds are still killable if extreme caution dictates your movement.

With no foliage on the trees, military stealth is key. A turkey only needs to have one or two inches of its head over a rise to see you coming. This is why I'd rather forget my calls in the truck instead of my binoculars. Turkeys have 10 times our vision. I level the playing field with my 10-power Swarovskis. They're a great learning tool to observe how the birds are interacting and responding to your calling.

Most early season tips can be applied to any turkey season:

1. Learn the properties you'll be hunting and how turkeys use them.
2. Find roost areas. In Wisconsin turkeys generally utilize two or more.
3. Where are food and water sources?
4. Where do the birds prefer to spend their day?
5. Do the birds stay on your property all day?
6. Use multiple decoys: two to three hens and a jake or breeding pair.

Mid-seasons C and D generally mean flocks broken up with gobblers' movements restricted by hens they are already



The author carrying out a season D gobbler.

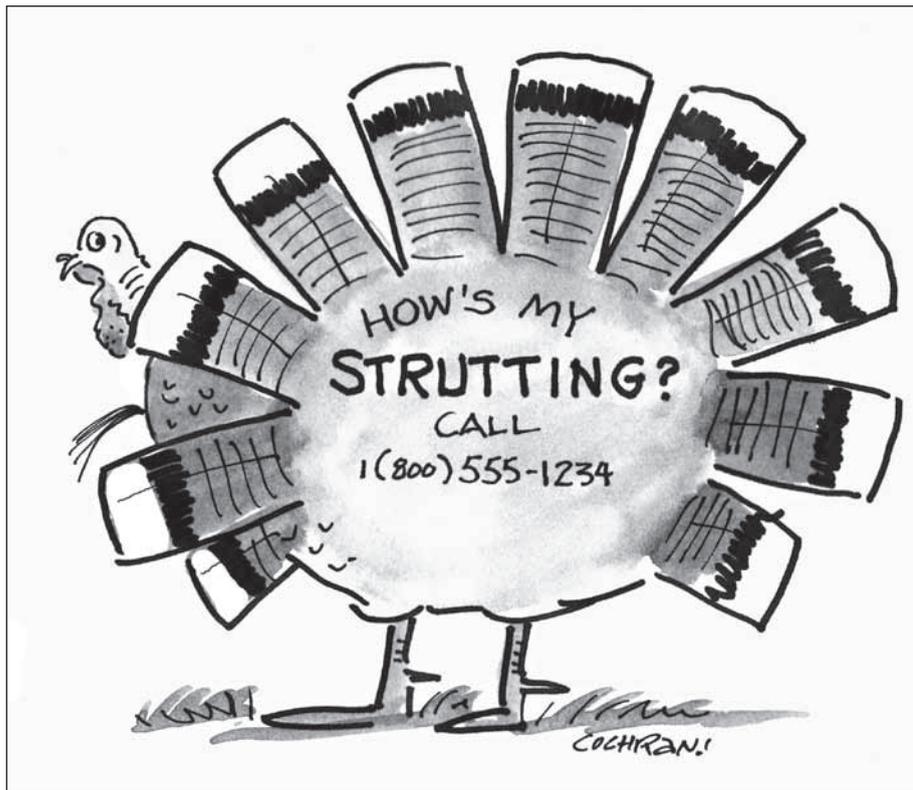
with. These "henned-up" toms can lead to tough mornings of hunting. Hens often fly out of the roost and straight to the gobbler while he's still in the tree. He pitches down, where the hen leads him away from you, the competition, especially when your calling enables her to pinpoint your exact position.

A few tips to help punch your tag:

- 1 Do very little calling when birds are on the roost.
2. Remember where you've seen the gobbler strutting and head there at least an hour before birds normally do.
3. Utilize your entire season and hunt afternoons. Hens have gone to nest by 10:00 - 11:00 AM, leaving tom lonely and looking for love. Be there for a love connection.
4. There's generally enough cover at this point, so sit in the woods more and use a hen decoy 30 - 40% of the time.

Late seasons E and F can be exceptional. One problem you may encounter is the dreaded jenny, a young hen that will lead a gobbler around all day but who is unable to breed because she's physically immature. The more you call Jenny, the farther away she'll take the gobbler. Unlike the boss hen, she avoids confrontation and does not want to share her tom with anyone.

continued on page 23



HERRMAN, from page 22

For the late season tag holder:

1. Have several properties to hunt. Don't ever think public land has been over-hunted at this point.
2. Be mobile and ready to burn some shoe and truck rubber looking for birds.
3. Many older gobblers are alone, but they're old for a reason. Call sparingly and use the "three P's" to tag these smart birds: patience, persistence and position.
4. With full foliage the expectation, I rarely use a decoy. Sit in the woods and make tom come to you.

Make sure your equipment isn't the reason you don't have a gobbler on your back. Practice your calling and learn to use different types of turkey calls. Shoot your turkey gun and experiment with different loads and chokes. Cover all your bases, do your homework and you'll get that chance to punch your tag on the greatest game bird in the world. 

Neal Herrman has been turkey hunting for 16 years. He has harvested birds in seven states and has two grand slams. Neal won calling titles in Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota and placed top 15 in the nation. He is on the Hooks Custom Calls pro staff and designed their strikers. Neal is an active member of the NWTf.

SERVI, from page 9

When asked what the secret is to making the team, Brian says, "If you love to fish and love to compete, we'll teach you the rest." He goes on to say that "making the team is more than just being able to drill holes and catch the most fish. We're looking for those that can live by the code of conduct, deal with adversity, think on their toes and make good team players."

Many of these fishermen are guides or charter boat captains. Others work in industry and several are parents. But they all have one thing in common: they want to be the best ice fisherman in the world. To do that, they will have to improve upon their 12th place finish in Belarus during the 2014 Ice Fishing World

Championships. Gaber says they've made adjustments and the guys already look better than at this time last year. As soon as the ice conditions were ready in northern Wisconsin, they were practicing and making plans to bring back a medal from Finland. If you want to track the team or try out this year, follow them at usaiceteam.com. 

Jim Servi is an outdoor writer, educator, consultant, and a Local Field Director for the US Sportsmen's Alliance. He is currently serving in the US Army Reserves and is a veteran of Afghanistan and Iraq. This lifestyle gives him maximum time to hunt, fish, and trap everything that is fair game in Wisconsin. Jim lives in the middle of the woods on the family farm outside Wausau with his wife and two boys. Contact Jim at Jimservi10@gmail.com.

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Visitors and locals alike love the short but sweet **smelt season in Chequamegon Bay**. The "smelt run" usually starts around the third week in April, shortly after ice-out on the bay, and lasts only 12-14 days. There will be a smelt hotline during the month of April. Call 800.284.9484 or [click on Ashland County.](#)

Looking to plan your summer ATV vacation? Check out the Washburn County ATV Scenic Tour, offering over 35 points of interest along the 100+ mile trail system. UTVs welcome on all county ATV trails! Order your Scenic Tour brochure, maps and visitor information today to start planning your ATV getaway. [Click on Washburn County.](#)

The Sparta Area Chamber of Commerce is excited to share the Elroy-Sparta Trail opening on May 1st for the 50-year celebration. Lots of activities planned throughout the summer. For details [click on Monroe County.](#)

The opportunity to see dozens of bald eagles is excellent in early spring along the Mississippi River! It's also a great time to go fishing—still some back-

water ice, along with open water for boats. Visit the Grandview Motel in Ferryville and we'll share any information we have. [Click on Crawford County.](#)

Spring will arrive in Wisconsin's northwoods soon ... start planning your spring Walleye fishing or ATV and UTV riding adventure to Price County, Wisconsin, now and be the one that got away! [Click on Price County.](#)

Fun time in Ferryville on the Mississippi River. Ice fishing at De Soto Bay is great for Perch, Crappies, and Northerns. There is still ice fishing in the area with access at Ferryville and from the bank just north of the Village limits. Ferryville Eagle Day celebration is March 7 from 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM at Village Hall. Hooting Contest at noon with medals and trophies! Spring is coming and hunting/fishing season with it. [Click on Crawford County.](#)

Fun time in Ferryville on the Mississippi River. Use the Ferryville Boat Launch (Pool 9) to access the best fishing on the river. May 2 is opening day for fishing season and the docks go in as soon as spring river stage allows. There is still ice fishing in the area as of March 1 with access at Ferryville and from the bank just north of the Village limits. Spring IS coming and hunting/fishing season with it. [Click on Crawford County](#)

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HEIDI RICH

The Eagle Has Landed

A day on the Fox River

Living in a heavily-wooded neighborhood in southeast Wisconsin, hawk sightings are fairly common. I was fortunate enough a few years ago to watch one bathe itself in my backyard birdbath. Late at night I often hear an owl chatting it up in my backyard, which is nothing compared to having witnessed one take a dip in my neighbor's pool on a summer afternoon about 10 years ago. But to see an eagle outside captivity—make that a bunch of eagles—is truly a rare opportunity.

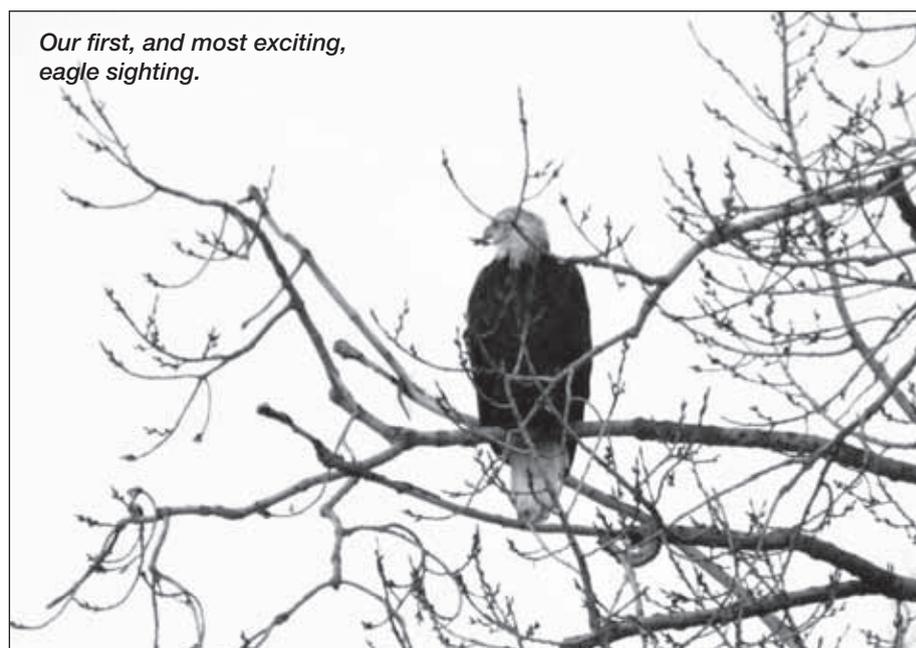
On a whim, my husband, Brian, and I decided to participate in A Day with Eagles Along the Fox River, an event whereby several parks, environmental societies and wildlife centers, among other locations, offered guided indoor and outdoor eagle viewing. Our five year-old daughter, Sophie, was excited to spot her first eagle.

It was around 10:00 AM on Saturday, January 17 when we arrived at the Fox River. We stopped the car along the river near Lawrence University in Appleton and took a walk in search of our first eagle. Almost immediately Brian spotted a regal-looking bald eagle high in a treetop. Our binoculars got a lot of use within just a few minutes of our arrival.

I lived in Appleton for several years and always enjoyed the beauty of Lawrence's campus; however, I had never made it inside any of the buildings. Lawrence's Warch Campus Center, which opened in 2009, offered eagle viewing, complete with several pairs of binoculars and a high-powered telescope for the general public to use from the third-floor wall of windows in the Somerset Room. We were thrilled to see Brian's aforementioned eagle race toward the water and retrieve a fish a second later. Said eagle could be seen munching his snack in the same tree we had originally seen him. The telescope proved to be a much better bird watching tool. We could see detail that our binoculars were too weak to pick up.

A PBS documentary, "Nature: American Eagle," was thoroughly enjoyed in Warch's cinema. We also sat in on a talk given by one of Lawrence's biology professors about eagle populations and food resources and a presentation given by the WDNR on declining contamination levels in the Fox River, which has contributed to higher numbers of eagles nesting there.

We wanted to visit at least one other eagle viewing destination, which brought us to the Paper Discovery Center muse-



Our first, and most exciting, eagle sighting.

um, also on the Fox in Appleton. By this time, our friend Will and his son, Jonathan, had joined us. Being that Jonathan is the same age as Sophie, we wanted a kid-friendly environment to round out our day.

The Paper Discovery Center used to be the Atlas Mill, where—you guessed it—paper was once manufactured. While there, we saw some equipment used in the early days of papermaking and took part in hands-on displays. There were eagle-themed crafts for the kids, and Sophie and Jonathan each made their own piece of paper in the Purdy-Weissenborn Paper Lab. The kids got to expend some energy in a play area designed to look like rollers used in the paper milling process.

While in the heavily-windowed part of the museum, we had a great view of more eagles sitting in and flying to trees. Here we saw couples and groups

of eagles. Many were in flight, and it was impressive to see the wingspans of these majestic birds.

Though most eagle watching events took place in January and February, you still have a chance to get in on the action. March 7 is Bald Eagle Watching Day at Ferryville Village Hall and Fire Department. Visit the DNR's website, dnr.wi.gov/topic/WildlifeHabitat/baldeagle.html, for more information on eagle watching in Wisconsin.

If you've never been eagle watching, I highly recommend you travel to Ferryville on March 7 and/or plan a trip next year to the many sites that provide information and tours. It's a family-friendly activity that young and old will learn from and enjoy. *WR*

Heidi Rich is Copy Editor of On Wisconsin Outdoors. She enjoys ATV riding, snowmobiling and target shooting with her husband and daughter in Oconto County.

Waterfowl USA Southern Wisconsin Chapter

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Proceeds will support waterfowl and wildlife habitat conservation projects throughout Southern Wisconsin.



Jonathan and Sophie (with their dads) making paper at The Paper Discovery Center in Appleton.

DONNA LENSING

Meet Sarah Outen, World Traveler

“Do you have a room for me for the night?”

The Mighty Mississippi River is a beautiful backdrop.

As owners of a small roadside motel in Ferryville, on the Great River Road, this is a question we hear regularly. But our visitor at the end of January was truly special. She was wearing a helmet and I could see her bicycle in the background outside. When I asked if she was really riding a bike in the dead of winter, I was amazed to hear her story unfurl.

Sarah began her extensive journey in 2011 starting in London, England and has been making her way around the world, literally, doing it totally with human power. Besides bicycling, she kayaks and rows her specially built boat. She explained that her vessel is similar to the lifeboats that are on cruise ships. She is currently about three quarters of the way around the planet. If all goes well, she will begin rowing across the North Atlantic by spring.

It was certainly inspirational to be able to chat with this remarkable human being. Sarah arrived after dark. Her intention was to continue another 25 miles south before stopping for the night but was advised along the way that the road between Ferryville and Prairie du Chien was a little more treacherous than her previous mileage, especially in the dark. It's narrower and is bordered by cliffs, guard rails and drop-offs. We were glad she chose to stop.

Sarah spends most of her nights camping. She related that she slept in her tent in Canada when it was thirty below zero. Her source of heat? Candles. There is no one who accompanies her in a vehicle, so everything she needs is packed onto her bicycle, including her small tent, food, her Smartphone and tablet. One of the things she was grateful for was the Wi-Fi we have at the Grandview Motel.

Our guest was curious about the jar of sand we have on our office counter. I explained that it was sought after for fracking and is being mined throughout the driftless regions of Minnesota, Iowa and Wisconsin. Sarah had seen

signs along her travels exclaiming “Sand = Jobs.” Now she understood what they meant.

As we chatted, a train went lumbering past and I told her how the train traffic has greatly increased with the tankers moving the Bakken crude oil from North Dakota to the Gulf of Mexico. Sarah found this fascinating. All of the cost, controversy, and effort that go into the mining and drilling for oil in order to keep our vehicles on the road and her current mode of travel is a simple bicycle.

As we ate together that night, we talked about Sarah's journey. Our 16-year-old daughter, Ruby, asked why we wouldn't let her do something like that. Our answer to her was simply that she could do it. Just make a plan and go for it.

Living in the beautiful state of Wisconsin truly provides plenty of adventurous opportunity for many people, including our family. As motel owners, we have had the privilege to meet all sorts of remarkable folks. Many come here for the spectacular hunting and fishing, sight-seeing, visiting family and friends, and even shopping for vacation property. On occasion we meet that unique traveler who is up to something different. Last summer brought a man in his 70s who was cycling the entire Mississippi River to raise awareness for bone marrow donation.

We have met bicyclists who were riding across the U.S. from coast to coast. We have met folks kayaking or canoeing all or part of the Mighty Miss. There was a guy who was walking along the entire river. We've hosted travelers from all over the world and the Mississippi River was included on their itinerary of sites to see in this great nation. The wide variety of guests that stay at our motel makes for an interesting and rewarding business experience.



Aren't we so fortunate to call this place home? We wish all adventurers out there safe and memorable travels. Yes, you can attempt to go around the entire world with simple human-powered means like Sarah. You can go travel the whole state of Wisconsin. Go on foot, bicycle, motorcycle, or by car. Just get out there, experience our beautiful world, and have an adventure of your own!

You can follow and learn more about Sarah Outen through her website: sarahouten.com. 

Donna and her husband, Todd, have owned the Grandview Motel in Ferryville for nine years and also operate Flyway Fowling Guide Service, Pool 9 duck hunting outfitter. They have previously contributed articles to OWO and other outdoor publications. Contact them at 608.734.3235.

SCHAUER, from page 17

buckthorn and other woody invaders that prevent the growth of young trees. This causes the long-term decline of the forests and makes the areas impassable to hunters and hikers.

Turkey and pheasant hunters know the unpleasantness of encountering wild parsnip in grassland habitats. Wild parsnip can cause burns on your skin. Plants like teasel, buckthorn and multiflora rose can tear your clothing and your skin. Phragmites chokes rivers and hinders hunter's access to prime waterfowl habitat. Anglers know the difficulty of maneuvering through dense patches of Eurasian water milfoil.

How can we stop this habitat destruction? First, prevent the spread. Each and every hunter, angler, hiker and homeowner must take personal responsibility for their actions. Clean all equipment before entering and after leaving any area outdoors. Don't move firewood or known invasive species plants.

How do you stop an infestation in its tracks? Many people statewide are having success. Peter Ziegler,

Project Director for Wisconsin Waterfowl Association, wrote to me about one 10-acre wetland where they invested \$15,000 over five years to remove invasive species. The site is much improved. Julie Peterson of Wisconsin Pheasants Forever speaks highly of that group's habitat repair work. In Wisconsin in 2014, Pheasants Forever completed 714 projects on 8,088 acres, controlling invasive plants largely by burning. Peter and Julie both indicated that it will take additional resources to maintain their success. But this all requires money.

Lack of funding is the problem. There is very little funding available for control of terrestrial invasive plants for the counties and landowners who need help.

In the same 2006 report cited above, it is estimated that “State and local tax revenues generated from 2006 fish and wildlife-related recreation in Wisconsin were estimated to be \$480 million. All fish and wildlife-related recreation generated \$425 million in tax revenues to the federal government.” Given that the state and local governments receive \$480 million in revenue, as well as the number of jobs and businesses additionally

supported by hunting and fishing, it is critical to invest in protecting these habitats. So why is the state not providing more assistance for the prevention and control of invasive species?

The DNR has invested in the future of hunting through the Hunter Recruitment, Development, Training and Education Grant program. They reserved \$50,000 for the Learn to Hunt program, but what good will it do to train new hunters and anglers if the habitat the fish, deer, turkeys and other animals need is too degraded by invasive species to hunt or fish? Perhaps it's time for hunters and anglers to rally together to prevent and stop the spread of these invasive plants. 

“The 2006 Economic Benefits of Hunting, Fishing and Wildlife Watching in Wisconsin,” prepared by Southwick Associates, Inc., for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, 2007.

“Pulling Together: A National Strategy for Management of Invasive Plants, 2nd edition, 1998.

Diane Schauer is the Aquatic Invasive Species Coordinator for Calumet County.

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LEE GATZKE

Some Thoughts On Buying Hunting Property

An alternative or addition to hunting public land

After graduating high school, I went straight to work with a plan to save up enough money to go to college. Being single with an ever-growing bank account, temptation got the better of me. I used my college money to buy some hunting property and I've never regretted it.

With family farms on the decline, urban growth consuming former deer habitat, and land owner relatives choosing to lease their property, private land is harder to gain access to. Buying your own recreational property is a way to ensure you and your kids will always have a place to hunt.

So you're thinking of buying some hunting land. Northern Wisconsin has the least expensive land with prices rising as you go south in the Badger state. Northern Wisconsin is experiencing a decline in deer numbers, a situation that doesn't look to change in the short term, so that is an issue to be taken into account. A big plus for the North is the amount of public land available to hunt. Central and southern Wisconsin have more stable deer populations, but public land is limited. Here, buying private land with close access to public land should be a serious consideration.

While public land does see high hunter densities, there are many that offer quality hunting if properly scouted to learn where the deer "hole up" once the hunting pressure arrives. Buying private land anywhere in the state close to a piece of good public land expands your options of worthwhile places to hunt. You can never have too much land to hunt, and public land is an invaluable asset to take advantage of.

Scanning the newspapers or Internet for land gets you acquainted with what is available in your price range. Working with a Realtor who is familiar with the needs of hunters is a smart option. The right Realtor will be on the lookout for a property that fits your needs and the constraints of your pocketbook. They are also aware of properties that may not



Owning a recreational property insures you and generations to come will have a place to hunt.

be listed on social media.

Once you've narrowed down some likely properties, you need to walk them to see if they have the potential to suit your needs. The most important factor for productive deer hunting is the presence of bedding cover. If a property has bedding cover, it will hold deer and provide good hunting if the owner is cautious about how they hunt it.

A real advantage to owning your own land is that you can improve the habitat so deer will want to bed and feed there. A property that is properly managed will attract and hold deer, making for decent hunting. That said, properties smaller than a couple hundred acres can easily be over-hunted by even a modest sized group hunting it at the same time, as typically happens during gun season.

Here's why having access to public land is invaluable. By hunting both private and public land you reduce pressure on your private land, making it more likely for deer to remain there instead of fleeing onto your neighbor's place.

Speaking of neighbors, once you've narrowed your property search down to a few, knock on some doors and meet your potential neighbors prior to buying. You want to know if they'll be cordial toward you as a hunter. A neighbor who you cannot get along with can be cause for not buying that property. A good neighbor will keep an eye on your property when you're not around.

Wisconsin is blessed with some very nice public hunting lands, but you must be diligent with your scouting to be aware of ever-changing conditions to

stay on the deer. Not everyone is willing or able to do all the public land scouting necessary to get into deer consistently. Private land has the potential, if it is managed, to offer deer all they need to remain there, thus improving the hunting.

Many times owning and managing private land results in the deer coming to you, while public land hunting requires that you go find the deer. This is why as a private landowner who hunts a lot on public land I get the best of both worlds. 

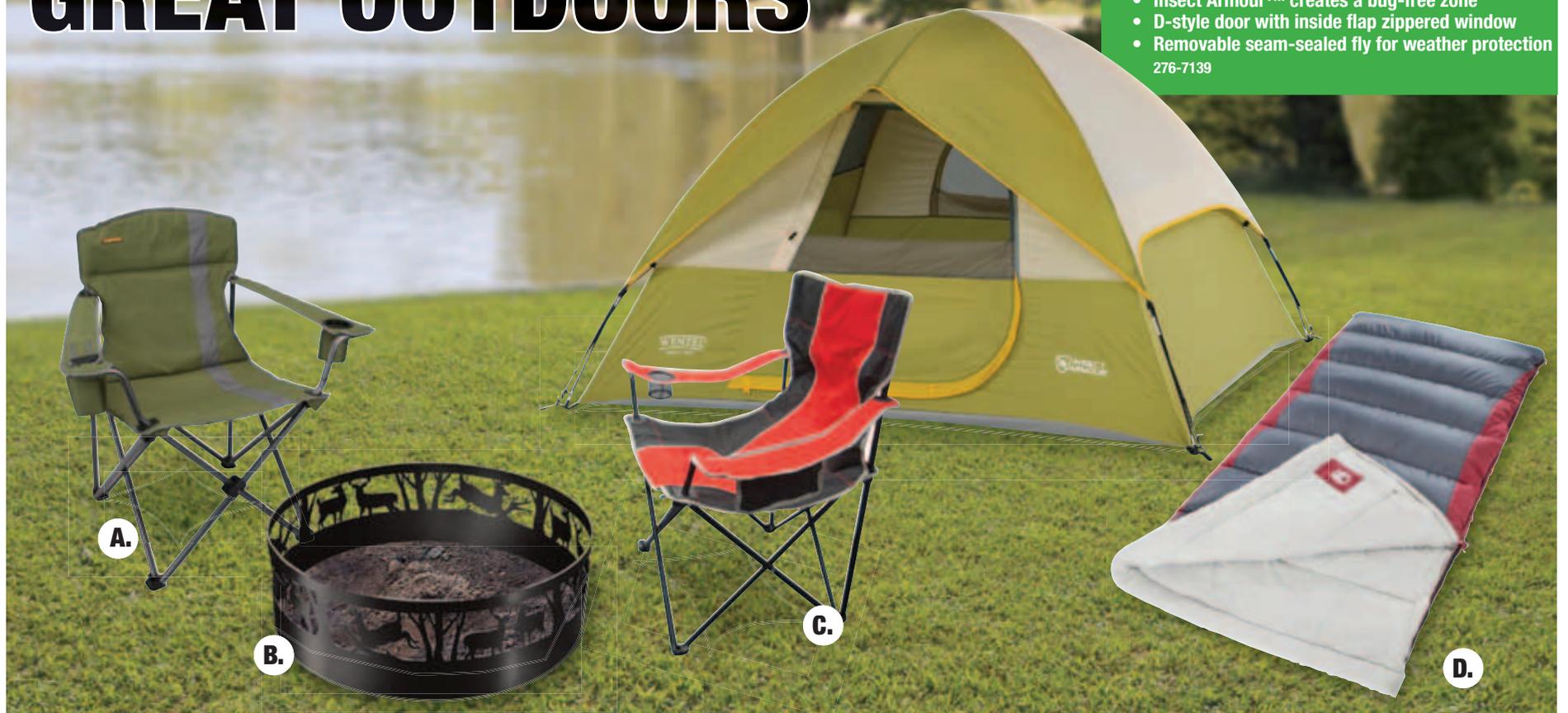
Lee Gatzke is co-owner of NextBuk Outdoors, producers of tactical hunting videos. In grade school he chased rabbits with his homemade bow and arrows, which lead to a passion for hunting bigger game all over the Midwest and western states. In between hunting seasons Lee is usually scouting for his next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

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STUART WILKERSON

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SAFETY REMINDER
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Learning gun safety and marksmanship with a BB or a pellet gun was, not so long ago, many kids' initiation into the world of firearms. Today, most of them live in urban areas and even the use of a spring action BB gun is illegal in backyards. Many boys and girls have never shot a BB or pellet gun because there is no place to shoot them. But they have played video games. In fact, a lot of children and young adults' introduction to shooting is through such games. This isn't necessarily a bad thing—video games are fun—but I've yet to see one that starts out with lessons in firearm safety, sighting and shooting before segueing into zombie apocalypse action.

In an urban environment, how does a parent or grandparent teach the correct use of a firearm to a child? The answer is airsoft. Airsoft replicas are basically electric-, spring- or gas-powered toy guns that fire round plastic pellets between 150 and 400 feet per second, depending on the type and quality. Airsoft quality and appearance varies greatly from inexpensive clear plastic, low velocity, short-lived versions found in discount department stores to high quality realistic replicas of actual firearms like those at Airsoft Headquarters/TacticalToyStoreUSA.com.

Prior to buying my then 12-year-old daughter a .22



rifle, I wanted to see if she really had any interest in the shooting sports, so I bought an inexpensive airsoft "submachine gun" from a chain store. I didn't expect much for \$35 and I wasn't disappointed. The department store toy worked reliably about 60 percent of the time, had the trajectory of a rainbow at seven feet, and could barely penetrate a single sheet of newsprint.

Despite its shortcomings, my daughter loved it, especially on full auto. So did I. The thing was a blast and she learned the rudiments of firearms safety and marksmanship. We had a lot of fun until it broke. The only person who didn't like it was Mom, whose pri-

mary objection was the blue plastic pellets she kept finding on the basement floor after someone dropped the backstop.

Based on the fact that my daughter enjoyed target shooting with an airsoft replica and understood the basics of firearms safety, I bought her a good quality .22-caliber rifle. Hindsight being what it is, if I were to do it again, I probably wouldn't. For some unfathomable reason, .22-caliber ammunition is still being hoarded and sold at ridiculous prices, and a trip to the often-crowded range is a 40-minute ride. An airsoft gun can be shot in the basement just about any time.

Instead of buying a .22, I should have gone to Airsoft Headquarters/TacticalToyStoreUSA.com and bought her a high quality airsoft rifle for less than \$150, which she could shoot virtually any time in the basement or in the backyard. (Keep your airsoft replica in a case at all times when not in use!) The cost of quality airsoft BBs is miniscule, a mere \$16 for 5,000 rounds. By way of comparison, a box of 50, .22 caliber long rifle rounds in today's hoarder environment will set you back about \$8 or more at many stores, assuming you can find it.

According to Airsoft Headquarters/TacticalToyStoreUSA.com owners and partners Scott Boyd and Jeremy

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STUART WILKERSON

Proven Performance

The Midwest Industries AR15 project excels on the range and in the field

Accurate, reliable and proven. That, in a few words, describes Round One of the Midwest Industries (MI) AR15 project. What began as an imposing pile of parts is now the only rifle I really need.

The project started last spring when I attended MI's AR15 Basic Assembly and Troubleshooting Class. Taught by Andy Yohnk, I learned that the most amateur of amateurs (like me) could assemble a custom AR15, the most adaptable firearms platform on the planet. Built by me to my specifications, with guidance and assistance from MI owner Troy Storch, retail manager Peter Bratz, and Andy, my AR15 will shoot groups of just under an inch at 100 yards. In the hands of a professional like coyote guide Terry Russ it will, with one shot, put down a coyote at 150 yards or more. With a heavier bullet, I would not hesitate to take it deer hunting.

At the heart of my AR15 Project Gun are MI billet aluminum upper and lower receivers, some of the best on the market and very affordable. Typically, AR15 receivers are made from forgings. An AR15 forged lower receiver is machined from aluminum poured into a mold in the basic shape of the receiver. A forged upper receiver is pressed into shape close to that of the finished product. Forged receivers can be susceptible to varying tolerances in the machining process depending upon how well the machinery is maintained and the operator's attention to detail. Loose tolerances can translate into poorly-fitting parts that could affect reliability, durability and accuracy.

The MI billet receivers are machined from a solid block of aluminum and are known for their precise machining, fine finishing and tight tolerances. Upper and lower receiver fit together hand-

in-hand and parts dropped in as they were supposed to. The upper features thicker walls for added strength and has an integral, T-marked rail for accessories. Among other features, the lower receiver has a reinforced buffer tube and an integrated trigger guard for additional strength. As an added bonus, the MI receivers are more aesthetically pleasing than far more common forged versions.

I suspect that the billet receivers had much to do with my rifle's accuracy. The MI Project Gun does not have a heavy target barrel but rather a standard chromoly 16.5-inch M4 type, with a one- to nine-inch rifling twist, which performed admirably. The barrel is free-floated by way of a MI Gen2 T-Series handguard, which certainly added to its accuracy potential, as does the adjustable-for-length Magpul butt stock. The fact that Andy fine-tuned the fitment of the handguards also helped with accuracy. This is



Wisconsin coyote hunter Terry Russ sights in the Midwest Industries' AR15 built by OWO firearms columnist Stuart Wilkerson in preparation for a hunt.

another good reason to choose MI when assembling your own custom AR15. The MI team members are experts with years of AR15 experience. If you run into a problem or need advice, they can be counted on to help you out.

When it comes to the Project AR15's accuracy, we can't discount the marksmanship of coyote hunter extraordinaire Terry Russ. Using Hornady Super Performance 53 grain ammunition, he can shoot less-than-one-inch groups with my AR15, which is pretty darn good considering the gun's non-target barrel and military grade, i.e., sort of heavy two-stage trigger. Terry bagged a coyote with my AR15, which has an old 3 x 9 variable Leupold scope mounted on su-

continued on page 30

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ROBB MANNING

Everyday Carry

The state of concealed carry in Wisconsin

In July of 2011 Scott Walker signed the Wisconsin concealed carry bill into law. The following November, the law took effect. A few months later, Wisconsinites started getting their permits in the mail and were legally carrying concealed for the first time.

The argument against concealed carry in Wisconsin was that there would be a return to Old West shoot-outs in the streets. It would be anarchy with a complete societal collapse. I remarked at the time that this hasn't happened in any other state after they passed concealed carry laws. But in Wisconsin, whenever a new law is being debated, opponents feel that we aren't capable of handling the same freedoms as everyone else.

Now that we can look at actual crime statistics, there has been very little change in the number of handgun-related deaths, which is consistent with what I have researched. During the 2002 - 2005 timeframe I was the editorial editor at the UW-Milwaukee newspaper, the UWM Post. During that time, the Wisconsin legislature had twice passed concealed carry bills, and twice former Governor Doyle had vetoed them. I set out to write an article about it, hoping to find all kinds of info as to how passing concealed carry would reduce crime.

But as I delved into FBI data, I found that it didn't. It didn't increase crime, either. In fact, data showed that as concealed carry was passed in a given state, it had little effect on handgun crime data, good or bad.

I'm sure there's a plethora of reasons for this, and not to oversimplify, but I think one reason is that most bad guys will modify their criminal behavior. If I were a bad guy doing bad guy things, I would be sure to conduct my badness in places with little chance of running into someone who is carrying a gun.

However, there is one important thing that needs to be looked at: that data doesn't differentiate between who it was that died, the bad guy or the good guy. In years before concealed carry, there was a good chance that if a bad guy had a gun when he committed a crime, it was the good guy who died. After the passage of concealed carry, more people are able to defend themselves, so the likelihood increases that the potential crime victim can turn the tables and make the bad guy into a statistic. Any one of those numbers in that statistic could be a bad guy and not a good guy, which is exactly why we want concealed carry in the first place.

As for the anti-concealed carry people's argument that there will be dead bodies all over the street, let's take a look at those statistics. To set a baseline, I'm going to include crime data from 2010 and 2011, the two years before concealed carry took effect, and 2012 and 2013, the two years after the passage. Unfortunately, 2014 isn't available yet.

According to the FBI Uniform Crime Reports, in 2010 Wisconsin had 63 murders committed with handguns. In 2011, that number dropped to 60. In 2012, as Wisconsinites were first getting their permits, the number rose to 85, and then in 2013 it dropped down to 70.

I would hardly call that "a return to Old West shoot-outs." For all we know, those additional murders could be rapists who attempted to rape a woman who could now legally carry a handgun. As a husband, son and brother to women, I'm 110 percent fine with that. Also, before jumping to conclusions about those numbers, you have to look at two things. First, there are other factors that can cause crime statistics to go up or down, most notably the economy. Second, you have to compare numbers with other states to see if there was a national trend.



Concealed carry opponents would have you believe there would be a return to this, but it didn't happen.

Let's look at two states that did not pass concealed carry at the time. In 2010 and 2011 the FBI reported that Illinois had 355 and 365 handgun murders, respectively. In 2012 that number jumped to 429, just as Wisconsin jumped, and in 2013 it dropped to 352, just as Wisconsin's rate dropped. California also has similar ups and downs at 953, 866, 899 and 805. If places that didn't allow concealed carry had similar ups and downs, perhaps Wisconsin's ups and downs aren't due to concealed carry.

Either way you look at it Wisconsinites who choose to carry a gun aren't bloodthirsty cowboys looking to gun down anyone who bats an eye. Wisconsin streets aren't littered with bodies from the aftermath, and the end of civilization hasn't occurred. 

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.

WILKERSON (AIRSOFT), from page 28

Mattson, many kids are now learning how to shoot safely through airsoft and later moving on to real firearms once their parents are confident they can handle the responsibility. A lot of them are also joining their parents in airsoft tactical games as well as basement and backyard marksmanship competitions.

In fact, every time I visit the Airsoft Headquarters retail store, the customers are often parents and their children. Airsoft isn't just for kids. At the affiliated Airsoft Arena located in Milwaukee, people of all ages gather to play a variety of organized games from capture the flag to rescue scenarios. There are both hardcore "Mil-Sim" (Military Simulation) players, as well as more casual players who find airsoft to be an entertainment outlet similar to paintball. (Except at only a fraction of the price!) Outside of the "pick up" games that occur at the Airsoft Arena, there are also highly structured Mil-Sim events that use ongoing storylines and concentrate on mission structure and unit cohesion.

Scott and Jeremy will tell you that while airsoft is generally safer than air guns, the use of protective gear is essential. Along with approximately 150 different airsoft model rifles and 100 unique pistols, Airsoft Headquarters/TacticalToyStoreUSA.com has all the protective gear needed for safe shooting, like eye and neck guards. Dedicated airsoft competitors will also find everything they need to compete, including training replicas that would be impossible to tell from their real world counterparts were it not for the orange muzzle caps.

If you, your children or grandchildren are interested in an inexpensive way to participate in the shooting sports, check out Airsoft Headquarters/TacticalToyStoreUSA.com. In the next edition of On Wisconsin Outdoors, we'll be doing just that when we explore the many airsoft options at Airsoft Headquarters/TacticalToyStoreUSA.com. 

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

WILKERSEON (MIDWEST), from page 29

per stable MI rings, under the light of a nearly full moon at 150 yards on private property in East Troy. Temperature was in the mid-20s with the wind blowing at about 5 mph. "Perfect coyote hunting weather," Terry called it. He shot the animal, "...right where I pointed the scope, just behind the right shoulder," from a sitting position.

Terry said that the Project AR15 "shot better than I would have expected." He also attributed its accuracy to the more rigid billet aluminum receivers and the barrel. Interestingly, the barrel is probably the most inexpensive one that MI sells. Terry was also impressed with the quality and functionality of the MI free-float handguard. He said that with it he would need only one rifle for day and nighttime use. A clip-on night vision scope, Terry explained, would fit right in front of a daytime scope, as would a laser and flashlight.

I am extremely happy with my AR15, which is the most versatile and accurate rifle I own. For hunting, target shooting or home defense, a good quality AR15 really is the only rifle you would need to own. Building them is fun and you can do it. Whether you roll your own or purchase a completed package, Midwest Industries is your one-stop AR15 shop. 

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D&H TACTICAL: AR & 1911 MAGAZINES

This homegrown company from Oconomowoc has been making M16/M4/AR15 magazines for a long time. In the early 1990s, when they were known as La Belle Industries, the Marine Corps issued me their magazines, so they've been filling government contracts since before then. Since then they've been increasing their presence in the civilian market, and now they've released three new products: 1911 .45 ACP 8-round magazines, 6.8 SPC II magazines, and 7.62x51 SR25 pattern magazines. All are stainless steel and 100% American made with a hostile environment finish. I have fired all but the 1911 magazine and they work flawlessly.

The 1911 magazine is an interesting feat, because they've increased the capacity from seven to eight rounds, yet it's the same length as a standard 1911 magazine. It comes with a combat bumper or flat bottom for concealed carry. It has a chrome silicon spring and a proprietary follower. Plus it has a takedown button in the baseplate for easy disassembly. \$19.99 for flat plate, \$21.99 for bumper plate.

When I was looking through their catalog, they had me at 6.8 SPC. That's my cartridge. Any company that makes quality 6.8 SPC magazines is a company I'll buy from, and this one is quality. They start with a thicker body than a typical AR magazine, somewhere between an AR and a Kalashnikov. It has a 25-round capacity, which is standard for full length 6.8 SPC magazines. It's a bigger case than is the 5.56/.223. They use a Magpul 6.8 SPC follower, with a proprietary spring design that incorporates an overbuilt 5.56 spring to push the heavier rounds up the magazine. Possible five- and 10-round magazines coming in 2015. \$24.99.

It's not always easy to find quality SR-25 pattern rifle magazines. I've had a lot that don't facilitate proper feeding. In case you're not sure what a SR-25 pattern rifle is, it's a large frame AR15 chambered in standard

length cartridges, such as the 7.62x51/.308 Win. It has a proprietary follower to ensure reliable feeding. It comes in five-, 10- and 20-round capacity. \$24.99 (20-round), \$20.99 (10-round), \$22.99 (5-round). *OWO tested and recommended.*

dh-tactical.com



SILENCERCO: THREADED BARREL

I've reviewed Silencerco suppressors in this publication and they are outstanding. Now they've taken that same commitment to quality to fill a void in the threaded barrel market: Glock barrels. Don't fret if you don't have a Glock. Barrels for other handguns are coming soon, but for starters they went with the most popular handgun brand: the Glock.

It's constructed of 416R stainless steel and has a Black Nitride finish, so it's made for the harshest of conditions. It would take a lot of neglect for corrosion to set in on this bad puppy. Unlike the Glock OEM barrel which incorporates polygonal rifling, the Silencerco barrel has conventional rifling. There are pros and cons to each type of rifling, but the big pro that the conventional rifling has over the polygonal is the ability to use non-plated lead bullets.

I have the Silencerco threaded barrel for the Glock G19, and it's an outstanding barrel. Currently available for Glock G17, G19 and G21. Coming soon: Glock G17L, G34, Sig Sauer P226, Springfield XD, Smith & Wesson M&P. \$220.

OWO tested and recommended.

silencerco.com

FLAMBEAU: MAD SMOKEY BABY TURKEY DECOY

There are dozens—if not hundreds—of turkey decoys on the market. Some are better than others, but they are all essentially the same because they all represent the same animal. This one stands out from the crowd. It's painted white to depict the grey phase a young turkey goes through. Apparently, turkeys see this white as a shade of grey. It has UVision paint that gives it a pigment-lacking look without actually lack-

ing UV Pigment.

It's lightweight and collapses into a compact package. The universal decoy stake will have it ducking and weaving with any slight breeze. It really stands out in the field and will have toms seeing it from far away. \$39.99.

flambeaoutdoors.com



FEDERAL: 3RD DEGREE TURKEY AMMO

How often have you seen a new product and thought, "That's so obvious. Why didn't I think of that?" This is such a product. It's a load that incorporates three different types of shot for lethal turkey killing at all ranges. First out of the barrel is Flightstopper No. 6 lead pellets, which open into a wide pattern for close-up shots. Next comes copper plated lead No. 5 shot for a medium-sized pattern for those mid-range birds. Last but not least is a tight pattern of Heavyweight No. 7 for sniping at birds at 50-plus yards. Federal says that at close range 3rd Degree has 60 percent larger pattern than comparable loads, and at 50 yards there are 69 percent more pellets into a 10-inch kill zone than comparable loads. It's available in 12-gauge, #5, #6, and #7 shot. Three-inch (\$17.99) and 3.5-inch (\$20.99).



federalpremium.com



YO-ZURI: 3DS MINNOW

Following in the footsteps of the 3DB family of lures, the 3DS series is smaller and is more appealing to freshwater fish such as smallmouth, largemouth bass, pike, trout, walleye, crappie and other panfish. It comes in 19 different patterns and color schemes resembling natural baits as well as other fish-attracting patterns. The 3D internal prism creates a flash that fish won't be able to resist. Internally embossed scales, fins and gills give it a realistic look. It can be retrieved straight for a tight wiggle action, or twitch it to entice the finicky ones. Made extremely tough out of a proprietary polycarbonate material with two black nickel treble hooks. Comes in 2 3/4-inch and 4-inch. \$8.99.

yo-zuri.com



BUCK: MINI SPITFIRE

The SpitFire knife series has been so popular for Buck Knives that they developed the Mini SpitFire. Its slim design is the perfect size for pocket carry. It weighs 2.1 ounces and has a 2 3/4-inch blade. The large thumb hole allows for one-handed opening, and it has a lock back mechanism for safety. The versatile drop point blade is made of 420HC stainless steel and has a satin finish. The 420HC offers wear resistance, corrosion resistance, and is also easy to resharpen. It has an anodized aluminum handle that comes in three different colors: green, orange and grey, and has a stainless steel pocket clip.

Hardly an hour goes by that I'm not using my pocket knife. I carry a lot of stuff in my pockets, so I don't prefer the large tactical-type knives. Knives like this Mini SpitFire are a mainstay in my pocket, because they fit and don't take up much room. \$45.

buckknives.com

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


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