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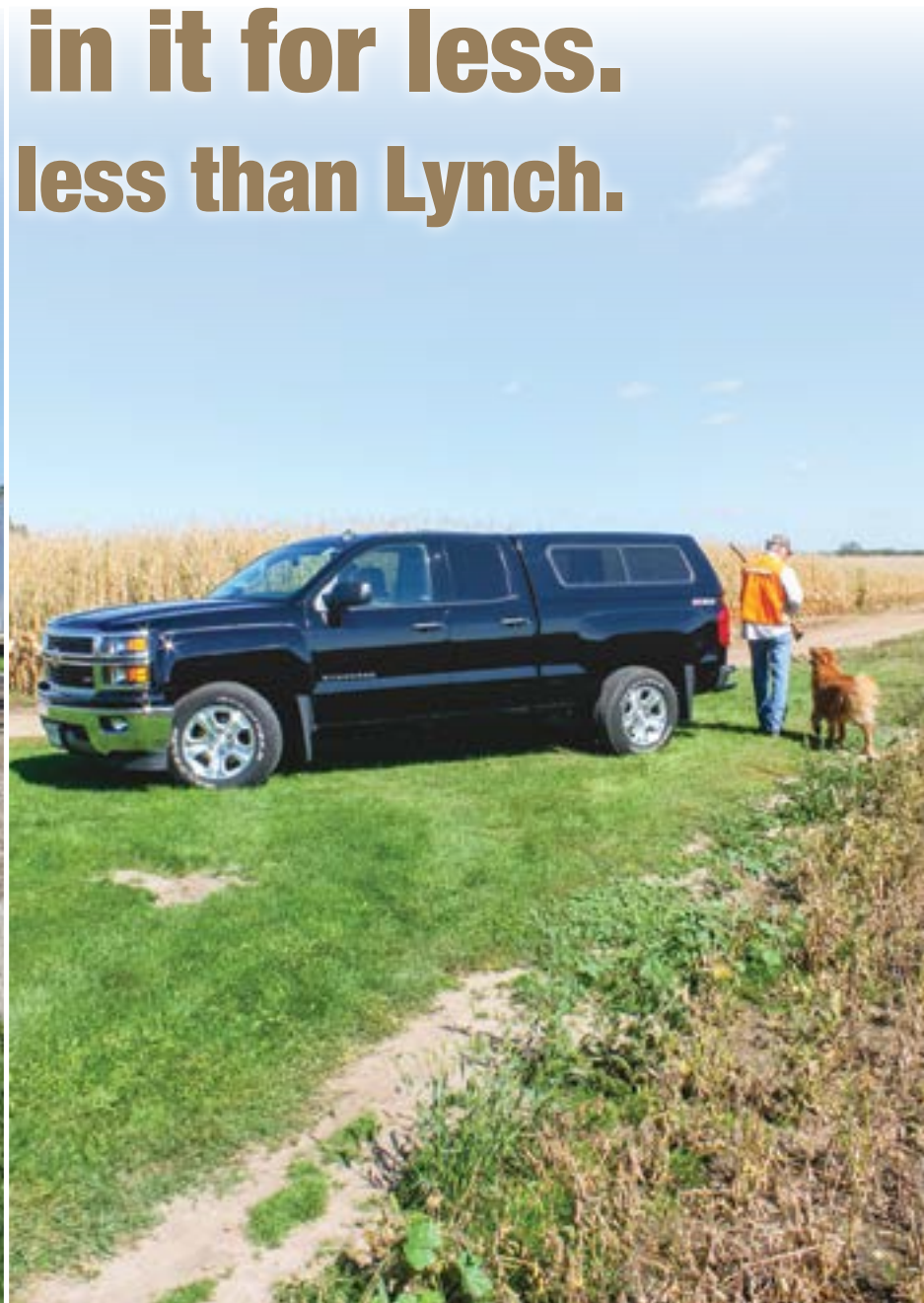
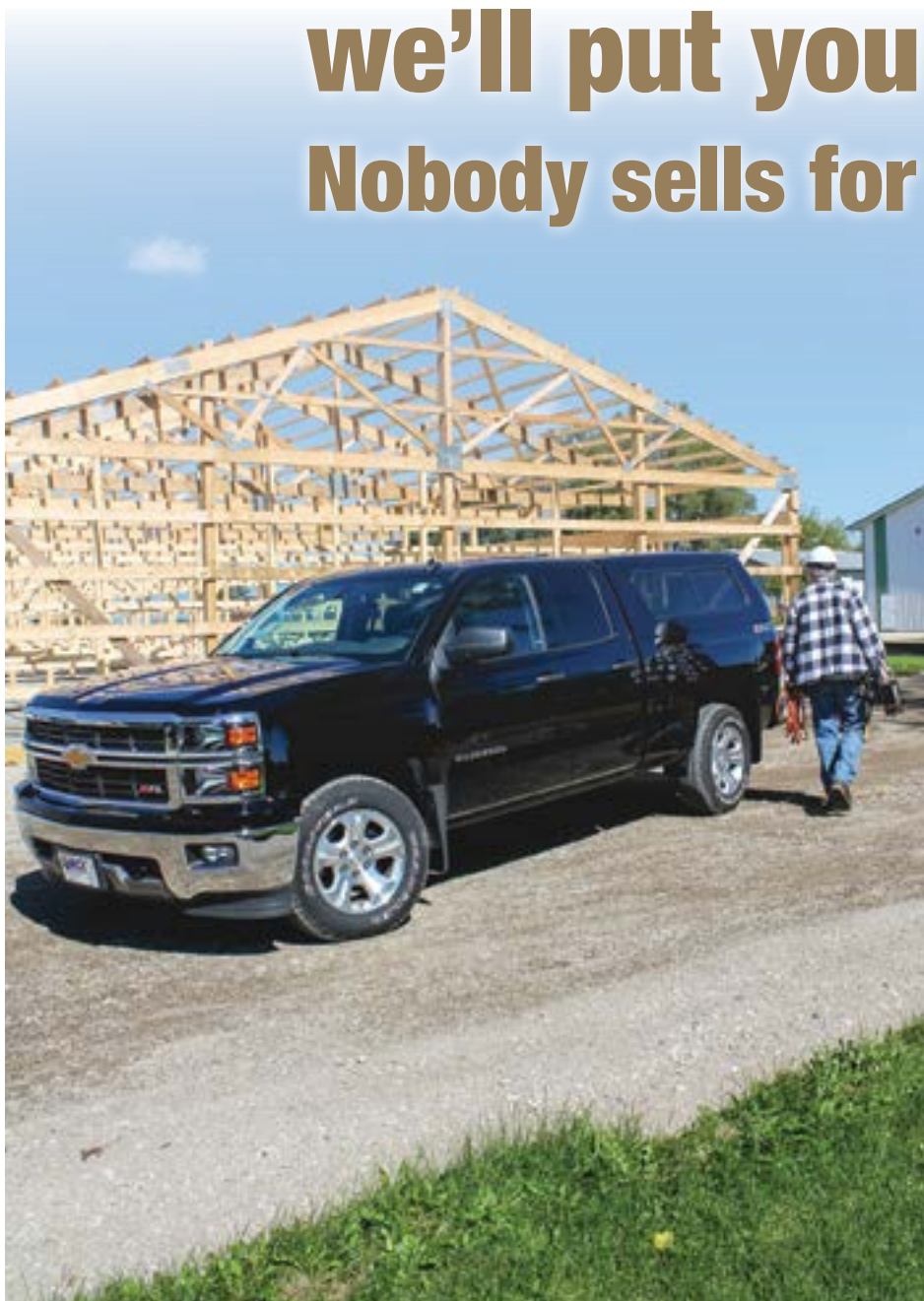
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TOM CARPENTER

Cubs Corner

Wisconsin deer hunting: an evolving tradition

After 41 Wisconsin gun deer hunting seasons, I've just about seen it all. What's most amazing is that the tradition has changed so much since I was an excited Badger Cub bursting at the seams waiting for Opening Day to arrive. And, yet, in many ways, our deer hunting traditions have stayed the same.

Let's start with the change. Like it or not, season structures, bag limits and hunting rules are ever-evolving. Throw deer hunting politics and barstool biology aside and it's just a different deer hunting world now than it was 10, 20, 30 and 40 or more years ago.

You, too, have plenty of gray around the temples if you can remember the old party permit days of one doe tag per group of four hunters. And when I first started hunting, it was a three-day either sex season in southern Wisconsin. Those antlerless rules were not in play because there were so many deer around but because there were so few whitetails that nobody would have bothered to hunt for bucks only.

Compare that to the way antlerless tags are (or have been) treated as a commodity in many corners of Wisconsin and the way an antlerless deer is often a no-big-deal carcass tossed into the back of the pickup. When

my brother shot his first deer, a nubbin buck in 1969, he got his name in the paper with the 89 other hunters who tagged a whitetail in Green County that year.

Land ownership patterns and attitudes, along with hunting styles, have changed dramatically as well. As the '70s evolved into the '80s and early '90s, deer populations started building, gun hunting got better and better, and the "old" ways of hunting still held on.

After sitting still for an hour in the morning, you got busy and started pushing deer. We did well as a small family unit with little "nudge" drives, and I still take great pride in being the orchestrator of our maneuvers.

I've got to be honest, though. Some of the most fun you could have was participating in the big mid-week or late-season pushes, when families and friends would team up for major deer drives. There was always action, we were safe with never a close call, and whitetails were shot. Plus, local stand hunters benefitted from all the activity as deer moved about the countryside and then tried to get back to their core ranges.

Today, you hardly dare push a piece of cover for fear of ousting "your" deer to the neighbors. And hunting has

gone sedentary, with only morning and evening sits. Deer just don't move the way they used to have to.

But here's what hasn't changed about Wisconsin's gun season. You still see orange hanging on clotheslines the day before the season begins. Sons, daughters, grandsons, granddaughters, cousins, nephews, brothers, sisters and friends gather back home, at the farm, or in deer camp. Cards are played, stories retold, memories relived, friendships renewed and life's news shared.

Dad is gone now. My brothers are scattered far and wide. I make the pilgrimage south to my native deer hunting country alone. But friends await; there's a warm trailer in the Jordan township woods; and laughter, jokes and big plan plans for tomorrow, opening day, can be heard. It's deer season and I am where I am supposed to be.

Stepping outside into the night for a breath of the cold and pure air, I look up at the same ten thousand stars that looked down on me so long ago, hear the muffled laughter from the good friends back inside and think, I am home.



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

ROBB MANNING

Hunter's Safety

End of an era?

This is not a typical Everyday Carry column, and it doesn't really deal with weapon carry. Instead, it deals with something near and dear to my heart, gun safety—most specially, hunter's safety. Everybody who knows me knows that I'm a stickler for gun safety: the legit kind that keeps people from being hurt.

I've been hunting since around age 14, probably even younger. I didn't grow up in a hunting household, so everything I learned I got from friends and reading magazines. It's not that my father was anti-hunting. He supported my hunting; hunting just wasn't for him. I can understand where he was coming from. He was a Korean War vet and fought in what is considered the worst battle in Marine Corps history. I think he just wasn't into taking any more lives.

Long story short, I never took hunter's safety and was grandfathered in by being born a year before it became

mandatory. Since those days, the Marine Corps did a pretty good job of instilling a sense of gun safety, so I really didn't plan on taking gun safety until my oldest turned 10 this year. Months out, he was telling me, "Sign me up for hunter's safety. I want to take it as soon as I hit 10." I don't think I've ever seen someone as excited to start hunting. I signed him up, and since I had to be there anyway, I took it, too.

I'm glad I did, because I've been blessed to see "giving back to the community" at its finest. I signed up for the class taught by Scott Sager out of West Bend, who has been doing hunter's safety since 1986. He's got a crew of fantastic people. They put a lot of time and effort into training people, none of them gets paid, and they each truly care about what they're doing.

This isn't an "everything ends happy" story, though, as the Sager group is retiring from teaching Hunter's Safety; we were their last class. With all the hard work they've put

in over the decades, their family's retirement from teaching the class is well deserved, except no one else is stepping up to teach it, leaving a void. And it's not just here. All over the state the numbers of people volunteering to teach hunter's safety are dwindling.

If you have taken hunter's safety in the past, you know how important it is. Step up and consider volunteering. We need people to teach our kids and grandkids. Perhaps your kids and grandkids have already taken hunter's safety. Maybe you don't have kids, so you think it doesn't affect you. Consider the tens of thousands of new hunters entering the woods in Wisconsin. They'll be in the woods next to you. Do you want them untrained in hunter's safety?

Robb Manning served in the U.S. Marine Corps for nearly 11 years, where he developed a passion and knowledge for firearms of all types. Since 2010 Robb has been a gun/hunting writer and also films gun and gear videos for his YouTube channel, 762x51n80.



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LEE GATZKE

NextBuk Outdoors Birthday buck

My son, Tom, has the good fortune of having been born smack dab in the middle of the time period encompassing the main white-tail rut, November 5th. A November 5th birthday for a bowhunter means there's a pretty good chance that the birthday boy will spend some, if not all, of that day on stand hoping for a present from Mother Nature. So it happened for Tom the day he set up his portable tree-stand in a place that showed promise based on recent scouting.

The day was sunny but cool, and the newly-fallen leaves crunched under foot as humans and wildlife went about their business. The tree where the stand was placed was spared from the selective cutting of the woods a few years before. Being a young oak still carrying its brown leaves, it afforded good concealment while most of the surround-

ing trees were completely barren. Tom settled in with high anticipation for an exciting hunt. Scanning the woods around him revealed many openings that had become overgrown with raspberry bushes. Between the leftover logging slash and raspberry thickets, the place was an almost impenetrable maze—perfect habitat for a deer to elude humans.

Migrating birds, squirrels and chipmunks provided the entertainment while thoughts of birthday bucks played in Tom's mind. Crunchy leaves betrayed a doe as it moved through the jungle of brush and momentarily into an opening in a raspberry thicket behind Tom. As he slowly turned his body to get into shooting position the doe moved through the small opening. More crunching followed, and soon Tom's big buck daydreams became reality. A mature buck, carrying a droptine off its right

Toms' birthday present carried an 8-inch droptine as part of its 13-point rack.



main beam, was just behind the doe, and he, too, made it through the opening before an arrow could be flung. The buck stuck close to the doe as she moved off, never offering another clear shot due to much brush and logging slash in the way. The doe would stop periodically to feed on acorns while the buck ignored feeding and concentrated instead on just keeping close to the doe. They moved

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TOM CARPENTER

Deer Stand Secrets

How to really hunt from your stand

Stand hunting is much more than just sitting in the woods. Turn your deer stand experience into a *real* hunt and greatly increase your chances for success this gun season.

The best stand hunting advice I ever got was from my friend Marlin Madison, an old-time deer hunter who I would pit against any of today's hotshot T.V. hunters. Merlin worked the big woods of north-western Wisconsin and east-central Minnesota for over seven decades, and he had well over 100 whitetails to his credit—many of them shot off lonely stands back in the middle of nowhere.

Merlin told me: “When you're hunting from a stand, you need to be *hunting*. Most guys sit there making all kinds of movement, daydreaming, jerking their head back and forth, looking at the ground, even dozing. But you have to *work*—listen hard, look closely, move slowly and only when necessary—and be ready.”

Minimizing movement is the first step to good stand hunting. It doesn't take much to send an approaching whitetail skulking in the other direction. One wayward hand movement or one ill-executed foot shift can do it. Settle in, get comfortable and let your eyes scan and your ears listen.

Most hunters look for a whole deer. A better plan is to look for pieces and parts: the horizontal line formed by a whitetail's back or belly; four vertical legs; a patch of white from a deer's throat or rump; the twitch of an ear; the flick of a tail. Success only comes when you see the whitetail before it's upon you.

Stand hunting's biggest sin is setting your gun down. Reaching for a gun takes up critical time and makes too much movement. Instead, keep both hands on your gun and keep it in a relaxed yet ready position. (On your lap if you're sitting and cradled if you're on your feet.) You want to make only a minimum of motion to get ready to shoot.

Rehearse for a minute when you arrive at your stand. Think through the shots that might prevent themselves, get that gun up, and make the slow swing you might have to execute. Imagine where a deer might stop.

Wear soft wool or fleece outerwear that won't make noise brushing against twigs




Here's how to really hunt from your stand this gun season.

or bark. Take time to prune branches. Work out squeaks or creaks in your stand beforehand. If you're on the ground, clear leaves and debris away from your feet so you can make foot shifts noiselessly.

Maintain focus. Become interested in the parade of birds and other nature that one sees from a deer stand. You're more likely to hear the hoof-fall of an approaching deer if your ears are at work listening to that distant flock of geese, for instance. Likewise, trying to identify that bird flitting through the bushes is the perfect way to notice the twitch of a deer's ear or the flick of its tail.

Tell yourself that success is just around the corner, behind that tree, over a hill, hiding in that marsh, walking this way along the deer trail. Believe that a half minute from right now you could have your deer. It can happen that fast!

What about when a deer approaches? Excitement, trembling hands, fast breathing ... why hunt if you don't feel that way in the presence of a whitetail? But channel your focus. Make careful and calculated movements. Only move that gun when the deer is looking the other way or its head is behind a tree. If the whitetail is moving, you can usually get by with some smooth motion. Slow, confident and steady are the watchwords. Squeeze off the shot.

Good luck this season! 

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

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FRED SCHAFFHAUSER

The Rut

Bowhunting's most magical time

There is no doubt that the best time to kill a monster buck is when you have an opportunity. Most often those opportunities come on opening weekend when bucks are still in their summer patterns or during the rut when a buck's guard is down in pursuit of breeding. Without a doubt, the rut is most exciting.

There are great whitetail scientists using years of data to predict the exact timing, duration and intensity of any given year's whitetail rut. I will leave exact predictions to them. Generally in Wisconsin, it is best to bowhunt between the last week of October and the first two weeks of November. In our experience, November 5, 6 and 7 are the dates most quality bucks have been taken or seen on stand by our customers.

The rut has many phases. As a bowhunter I am most interested in the pre-rut and seeking and chasing phases of the rut. These are the most dynamic times to be in the woods. Generally, that period is when bucks are most mobile, reckless and im-

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This buck was captured on film numerous times throughout September and October, but it was not until November 9 that he was filmed in daylight.

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DENNY MURAWSKA

The Floppy Doe Of Duck Lake

Inspired by a mother's instinct

It has been many years since we stayed in our cabin on Duck Lake in Eagle River. The winding road along the chain of lakes has always been dotted with cabins. People enjoy the many deer in this relatively protected haven. Many of these deer are fed, and some are so tame they will come and eat right out of a bucket. Having habituated themselves to humans, they wander the area at all times of day and seem relatively unconcerned about being hunted or harassed in any way. The biggest danger to these creatures is traffic.

I first spotted one of these casualties one day while taking a walk foraging for mushrooms. A rather large doe appeared, and I could see one of its front legs just dangling uselessly and flopping around as she walked. I was immediately sorrowful for the animal and wondered what mishap could have led to what appeared to be a horrible condition. I could only imagine the pain and suffering it must have been in. One thought was to report the poor thing to the DNR and have them put it out of its misery. It was a real heartbreaker. I then pondered taking control of the

situation with my archery equipment at hand and the season open; however, I was certain it would horrify many of the numerous cabin dwellers. Heck, it could have ended up on somebody's front lawn.

Over the course of a few days, I saw the "floppy doe" a number of times, each one a gut-wrenching experience of wondering how much pain an animal can tolerate and still somehow carry on. One morning I encountered the neighbor next door and began relating the sad story of the afflicted doe. He immediately affirmed that he was familiar with this particular animal. What he told me came as quite a shock. Evidently, this deer had been limping around the area for quite some time. In fact, it produced a fawn in the spring and raised it just as any fit mother would. I was dumbfounded! All my initial visions of a life of agonizing pain and misery inflicted on this unlucky creature were blown away like smoke from a campfire.

Here was a wonderful, amazing creation of God. I often ponder what mammals think and feel. I suspect they don't spend much time being anxious over the future. They probably don't understand what happens to them even when it hurts. It has to be accepted and they carry on. There are times I wish my mind worked in the simple present as their brains must, free of anxiety about the future and regrets about the past. In many such ways they surpass us in their mental perfection.

Although I am sure this animal is long gone, her memory stays with me, and those who saw her witnessed her valiant struggle against odds that would cause most humans to fold. She remains a symbol of hope and admiration for me, a standard to look up to and to learn from. *W*

Denny Murawska has been a contributor to the wacky UP Magazine, Wishigan, Verse Wisconsin, and The Pulse. His church is the pine cathedral that surrounds him at his home near Black River Falls.

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DAN MOERICKE

The “Up Nort” Report

You'll have to wait

Those are words that make us all cringe. Seems like a lot of life is spent waiting for stuff. As a kid, it might have been a birthday, summer vacation, a family trip or Christmas. As an adult, it might be stuck in traffic, at an airport or the DMV. (Or for the return of Leinie's Classic Amber.) Waiting is agony. Time stands still.

These days, the thing that I'm *always* waiting for is bow season. Ice fishing is fun, spring turkey hunting is a blast, and being out in the boat is good for the soul. But while all of that is going on, in the back of my mind I'm counting down the days until I can once again be sitting in the woods with my bow.

The waiting gets even tougher once the trail camera pictures start. A new set of pictures is like opening a present on Christmas morning. You don't often get what you were hoping for, but there's that rare occasion when your expecta-

tations are wonderfully exceeded.

I received such a surprise when I checked my trail camera in mid-August. A beautiful 8-pointer with a split left brow tine filled the frame on multiple pictures. It was a new spot that I'd decided to scout based on a tip from a buddy who said he'd seen a nice buck while driving past that area. I don't know if this was the same buck he saw, but no matter, it was something to be excited about. Who knows? Maybe the one he saw was even bigger!

My Buffalo County friends are probably laughing at this. “Wouldn't take my bow off the hanger for a 125-inch deer” is one comment I've heard. Or, “He'll be pretty nice next year.” To each their own, but I've been hunting the north woods long enough to know that passing up a buck like this in anticipation of seeing one bigger is like planning to win the lottery. Good luck. Slim chance.

Unlike all of the T.V. hunting “celebrities” (and I use that

Hopes of seeing a buck like this one keep the author waiting in his treestand.



term loosely), I have *not* given the buck a name. It's a wild animal roaming the Nicolet National Forest and not some head of livestock. Nor have I calculated the buck's antler “score” since it really doesn't make any difference to me. I'd be thrilled to put my tag on this animal regardless of what

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DICK ELLIS

Mississippi River Paradise Earning his wings on Pool 9

Packed into a fleeting two-month window of opportunity, the Wisconsin duck hunter usually can expect incredibly diverse experiences: fluctuating weather, different targets. No area reflects this more than the Mississippi Zone. In 80-degree weather in early September, this report began taking shape in a Pool 9 blind with expert waterfowl guide Todd Lensing waiting for birds to cooperate during the early goose and experimental federal teal seasons. By the time the book closes on the 2015 seasons, Lensing's Flyway Fowling waterfowl clients will likely see freezing cold and snow and migrators of numerous species in the hundreds of thousands, including the coveted canvasback.

According to Lensing, although national weather systems push those migrators from the prairie pothole states and Canada into Wisconsin, local weather greatly influences the kind of activity hunters here experience. Lensing also offered other interesting facts regarding the Wisconsin seasons.

"We raise a lot of wood ducks here, but the river is mainly a staging area for migrating birds," he said. "Through the years, bufflehead, gadwall, widgeon, puddle ducks and divers come and go at certain times. I call them calendar birds."

By the last week of October, he said, gadwall and widgeon will be on the river in huge numbers and gone again soon after. He verifies what he sees locally on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife website fall flight surveys from mid-October through the end of the season.

Most blue wing teal shot in Wisconsin,



A black duck in the foreground with canvasback and mallards in the background show a piece of the diversity of the Mississippi flyway, and Wisconsin overall.

Lensing said, were born and raised in Wisconsin, and 70 percent of mallards bagged in Wisconsin are also locally-bred birds. The early teal season concluded the second year of a three-year federal experiment that will be made permanent only if Wisconsin hunters show the proper identification skills and restraint on the trigger to keep the shooting of non-teal species low.

The green wing teal is a hardy bird that Lensing clients have shot at the end of November. Blue wings migrate south with minimal early drops in Wisconsin temperature.

"We need less than a 25 percent error rate over the three experimental seasons," said Lensing, whose groups shot 27 teal without error in 2014 and five teal in 2015. "Over 25 percent and we could lose the season."

Lensing does not believe that cold fronts in Canada in late November and early De-

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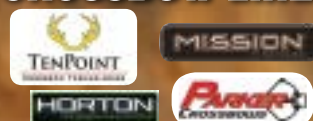
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RON STRESING

Steel Shot For Upland Small Game

It's not just for waterfowl anymore!

The use of steel loads actually has a number of advantages for use with upland game. If you are also going waterfowl hunting, there is no reason to carry two kinds of ammunition and risk being caught accidentally possessing lead shot loads while hunting waterfowl. I used to carry two different hunting vests: one stocked with lead shells, the other with steel, to help avoid having this happen. Steel shot is also required when hunting mourning doves on public land. Being already loaded up with steel would make any doves flushed when hunting pheasants or other small game on public land legal "targets of opportunity." The same goes for incidental shots at waterfowl, like passing mallards or wood ducks flushed out of a cornfield while pheasant hunting.

Most folks today carry shotguns with interchangeable choke tubes, and that provides the shooter with a great advantage. But what about older guns like my SKB auto-loader with a fixed full choke? Smaller diameter steel shot like #4 or #6 steel will flow through the fixed full chokes of most modern shotguns with no damage. The heavy plastic wads used to protect the barrel will compress enough to avoid choke damage from occasional use. That being said, would I use steel in a classic side-by-side double barrel? No way! If in doubt, err on the side of caution and contact the firearm's manufacturer or a competent gunsmith.


Cost and other advantages: steel shot shells are now considerably cheaper than lead shot counterparts. Most boxes of Winchester or Remington lead shot pheasant loads run about \$12.00 - \$14.00 per box. Comparable steel X-Pert or Sportsman steel loads are usually less than \$10.00 per box. Steel shot also reduces "feather draw," the nasty habit lead shot has of pulling down or feathers inside the meat of a game bird. Being lighter in weight, one ounce of steel #6 shot has a much higher pellet count than one ounce of lead shot. This allows for a greater number of pellets in your pattern, more pellet strikes on game, and all with less felt recoil.

Grouse, woodcock, doves and pigeons: try lighter 1-ounce loads of #6 steel through open improved or skeet chokes. Most shooting is within 40 yards, and steel shot and open chokes work wonders inside that range. Go to #4 steel with modified choke for longer ranges.

Rabbits and squirrels: for close-range rabbits kicked out of brush piles or in heavy cover try one ounce of steel #6's with improved or skeet choke. In more open areas, go to modified choke and #6 or #4 1 1/8-ounce loads. Rabbits are not very durable, and two or three pellets in the body will generally deliver a clean kill. Squirrels, on the other hand, require a lot more killing power. The thick hides and muscular bodies of squirrels require three to five deep

penetrating pellets, minimum. If not cleanly killed, they can escape into a den or nest in a tree. I suggest 1- or 1 1/8-ounce loads of #4 or #3 steel with a modified choke.

Pheasants: for most shooting at stocked birds at public hunting grounds or a game preserve, one ounce of #4 or #6 steel shot is perfect. For wild birds, or when the stocked birds tend to flush wild, go to 1 1/8-ounce of #4 or #3 shot. A rooster pheasant and a mallard duck are similar in size, so whatever steel load/choke combination you have the best luck with on mallards should give you about the same performance on pheasants. Going to high velocity 3-inch loads of #3 steel might just be the ticket for far flushing late winter birds.

Using only non-toxic shot has very few down sides and lots of advantages. The most obvious is that it eliminates the chance of a warden finding that stray lead load left in your jacket from an upland game hunt. Modern steel hunting loads perform better than most people realize and deliver great results in the field. The environmental benefits are just a nice added bonus! 

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.



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DICK HENSKÉ

Oh, Canada

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Canada offers an appeal that won't quit. The beauty of rugged and unspoiled wilderness is humbling. The areas are vast and private ... a place where you can travel for miles and have your breath taken away with every glimpse. Memories of endless clear, sparkling freshwater lakes and infinite tracks of pristine forests will work gentle on the mind, even back home in Wisconsin.

Three generations of our family planned an overdue trip targeting bear and walleyes. My grandson Brendan is a career Army sergeant stationed at Fort Campbell, Tennessee, and my son, Steve, of Stevens Point, found only four days to hunt and fish. We knew from past experience that Margaret Chambers and family, owners of Sturgeon Lake Lodge north of Ignace, are the best hosts and guides in the area. Their resort and outpost on huge Sturgeon Lake is known for its lake trout but offers access to numerous lakes filled with walleyes and northern.

Sturgeon Lake Lodge is 400 miles north of Wisconsin, 12 hours north of Stevens Point. Travel up the east shore of Lake Superior north of Duluth (Hwy. 61) to the Pigeon River Boarder crossing. Maps and licenses are available at the tourist center after crossing through customs. For helpful rules on crossing the border, connect with onwisconsin-outdoors.com and click on Bear Hunting.

Upon arrival Margaret showed us the bear pictures she had on cameras. All six sites baited for us were hit daily, with trail photos of two cinnamon bears, lots of sows and cubs, and six other shooter bears.

Eighty eight-degree weather stopped bear activity, and time became an issue with the boys' tight schedule. Before the weather cooled, only cubs were seen. On the third day, Brendan, who had not hunted in ten years due to tours in Iraq and Korea, shot a 350-pound bear in the evening and double-timed it back to the resort. He and Margaret enlisted help from the fishermen and they gutted and hauled the bear back to camp and put it in the cooling room with ice packs.

I tagged a bear that evening, so we had two bears to process the next day. The resort has great facilities for the chore. Brendan learned how to skin, cut and package the bears, with about a fourth of the meat cut into meal-sized packages, and the rest was bagged in small chunks to grind up at home. Pork butt was mixed with the bear meat for hamburger, plus Italian sausage and great spices. The remaining meat was taken to Stevens Point for summer sausage.

Steve bowhunted all day Tuesday from a treestand while we worked on the bear. He had no luck but did enjoy seeing seven moose. The hunt bait sites have stands to meet needs. As an old codger using a .35 Remington lever action, I sat on an elevated rock far enough away and had no problem with the bear scenting me. A wheelchair accessible stand is available.

If we had more time, Steve would have scored. But we did have a great hunting experience ... one that we will relive many times.

With tags filled, we enjoyed great fishing during the day on two of our four days. The resort has boats and motors on back lakes abundant with walleye and northern. The first lake was loaded with cooperative 1½- to 2½-pound walleyes taken on jigs and night crawlers. Margaret, a fabulous hostess, made a great fish fry for everyone staying there.

The second lake was a ten-minute walk-in. We fished the windy shore and could not believe the size of the 2- to 4-pound walleyes taken one after the other from this 400-acre gem. We kept a few fish to eat at camp and three to transport home. You are allowed a daily bag limit of one under 18 inches and one over 18 inches on a conservation license.

Sturgeon Lake is primarily a lake trout lake, but you can land big walleyes trolling the bays. One couple we met used their own boat and had over 100 strikes, boating 68 Lakers between 24

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DICK ELLIS

Northern Wisconsin Outfitters

15 bears down, monsters elude tags

In the world of Northern Wisconsin Outfitters' (NWO) black bear hunting, the hunter often must travel long distances to hunt Bayfield County, won't see his stand until opening day, and is totally dependent on the work of guides to bring the bears to bait. Diligent preparation, then, is crucial to 100 percent shot opportunity for the tag holders waiting as long as eight years for the tag.

"We had 100 percent opportunity to fill the tags," guide Mike Foss reported. We had 17 hunters. Fifteen bears are down."

NWO began to place a few teaser baits in April to gain the bears' initial interest. By May many more stands were baited, and by July all bait stations spread over 60 miles were in play and bringing bears in routinely.

"We're baiting two times each week by July and three times weekly by August," Foss said. "Hunters started arriving Sunday for the Wednesday opener. They are shown their stands and by Tuesday are baiting themselves."

This reporter was in the Washburn camp Thursday. Four bears were already tagged despite 82-degree temperatures and high winds that can keep bear activity down. The largest bear early in the season was PJ Cashman's 300-pound boar tagged in his first hour on stand.

Many hunters are inexperienced bear hunters due to the number of application years necessary to secure a kill tag and choose not to wait for a larger bear. But the mystique of the monster bears of Bayfield County captured on trail cameras or seen by the guides during baiting runs often monopolizes camp banter. "Ghost" a boar estimated at 600 pounds and "Bus-15," expected to weigh as much as 800 pounds, captivate the imagination and can cause skin to crawl around a fire.

"Ghost and Bus-15 were coming in just after dark, but the hunters on those stands didn't wait. They filled their tags on other bears," said Foss. "If it was me, I would burn a tag waiting for those enormous bears. The good news is that after

the hound and baiting seasons, they're still out there."

"This year we had two hunters hunting Ghost from two stands that he is using set a half-mile apart. Where and if he showed up would depend on the wind and so many other variables. You can tell when he's around. Other bears are uneasy or won't come in."

Long-time NWO guide Robert Haas has developed a love-hate relationship with the mammoth boar he nicknamed after a first encounter while baiting in 2012. Bus-15 he believes is as large as 800 pounds. The boar, he said, has also developed its own ritual of actually tracking the guide in the baiting fields and leaving in its wake an unusual and hair-raising calling card.

"I don't know if he doesn't like me or if he is just leaving his natural mark," Haas said. "Trees get chewed up and debarked where I'm going in. He follows me. It's like a couple that shouldn't be married. I bring the food. It could kill him and he knows it, but he still wants it."



Successful opening day hunter PJ Cashman with his 300-pound boar taken in Bayfield County.

The boar, Haas said, will approach the bait but stand at 75 yards sniffing the winds for danger for five minutes before moving in.

"The bear has been chased by dogs, maybe wounded in his life. He has been trained by the hunters to survive," Haas said. "He has no neck. He has an enormous track. You will have a very slim op-

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JIM SERVI

Learning To Trap Again

Find water and you'll find furbearers

The smell of fall is hard to describe but unmistakable. Those who spend time outdoors in the fall hunting, fishing, trapping or just exploring know exactly the scent that I'm talking about. It's the crisp, cool air combined with the leaves falling, and that means trapping season has arrived. This month, my Learning To Trap Again journey focuses on common furbearers found in and around the water. While all furbearers naturally gravitate toward water, furbearers like muskrat, mink, beaver and raccoon live most of their lives in or near the water.

For any trapper who lives close to water, muskrats were probably the first species they ever trapped. Muskrats are a rodent, averaging 18 - 24 inches in length with a long, scaly, black tail. They are found wherever there is water in nearly every corner of the United States.

Targeting their houses or dens is one of the most effective ways to trap muskrats. Ponds, lakes and backwaters often have houses protruding above the surface, and streams and rivers will have bank dens. Feedbeds are another great place to find muskrats. They eat all types of aquatic vegetation including cattails, sedges, rushes and water lilies, but also snack on clams, mussels, crayfish and small fish when they can find them. Find the food source and you'll find muskrats. Some of the best traps to use are #1 Longsprings and #110/#120

Conibears.

Mink are vicious carnivores, with a long sleek body roughly two feet long, and will kill anything they think they can handle. They especially love muskrats. Though #1 Longsprings and #110/#120 Conibears also work great for mink, my personal favorite is the #1 and #1 1/2 Coilspring simply because it has a little more holding power if a big 'coon comes along.

Blind sets work great for mink. Follow a creek, stream or pond edge and you'll eventually find something that will funnel mink and other animals. When you find it, you have the perfect mink set. If you're unable to find the right blind set, a baited set also works great. Any meat or fish will cause the mink to search and creates an ideal trap set.

Although raccoons can be found virtually anywhere there is food, you'll almost always find them along water. Blind sets and bait sets work well for raccoons, but box sets and live traps can also be very effective. Meat and fish will surely work but so does anything sweet as many of us have discovered with campground bandits. The important thing to understand with raccoons is that they are strong. Stake them well and make sure you have a trap that will hold them.

Nature's engineer, the beaver, is the

continued on page 17



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To read the entire story on how one fisherman's snoring almost cost him his cabin partners, connect with onwisconsinoutdoors.com. Click on "Inland Fishing." Scroll down to story.

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DICK ELLIS

On Wisconsin Outdoors

To stay in the field

To the heart of the matter, an aortic aneurysm was going to kill me.

A syndicated columnist in 2010, I would travel the state usually with little more than a pen and notebook jammed in a camo pocket and a camera slung over my shoulder—the bare necessities needed to pound out another weekly field story from a new location in Wisconsin's big outside.

The “office” ranged from Bayfield County bear camp to a Racine County steelhead tributary and everything in between over 20 years. My great wife of 25 years, Lori, supported the idea that covering the field as a journalist was a job. My high school-aged daughter was into enough activities to transform me regularly from outdoor writer to spectator. Life was moving on, and a big slice of it was still hanging out there in front of me.

I was you ... give or take a daughter or son, your own spouse, and another life of your own making. I was counting on staying around to watch Taylor grow with Lori, meet some grandkids, hunt, fish, catch the Packers, grow a business. I was going to take life for as much as it would give.

I was 52 years young. And an aortic aneurysm was going to kill me.

As usual, I felt great. The few times I didn't, I turned to a doctor who had proven time and again over many years

that he would start by listening to me and believing me. Nick Turkal, M.D., had been my Aurora Healthcare family physician at St. Luke's in Milwaukee for more than 25 years. Not only did I reap his medical expertise, his office has been a great place to compare bird dogs and talk turkey hunting.

Turkal and nurse practitioner Becky Schultz took care of me. Then, if specific medical expertise was needed, they would refer me to the right specialists. When Turkal was named CEO and President of Aurora Healthcare, I remained one of his patients. His office visits, designed to keep him on the edge of family practice, were scheduled around his administrative schedule and responsibilities.

Under Turkal's direction, I walked into St. Luke's for a first ever stress test and echocardiogram. Hours later, while delivering these *On Wisconsin Outdoors* papers, the call came that I needed to return immediately. When an aortic aneurysm is detected, a measurement of five centimeters is life threatening. An aneurysm rupture takes 15,000 Americans annually. This aneurysm, a weakening or ballooning in the body's major artery just outside my heart, was 6.8 centimeters.

I checked into St. Luke's emergency and then the cardiac care floor. Waiting in a wheelchair prior to beginning two days

of thorough testing including CAT scan, abdominal ultrasound, and cardiac catheterization that injected dye into my heart to diagnose potentially blocked arteries, Turkal unexpectedly met Lori and me. No doubt, the head of all Aurora was bringing his certain calm to news that was taking us mentally on an unwelcome ride. The good news was that my heart was sound and healthy with no artery blockage and no abdominal aneurysms were detected. I was scheduled for open heart surgery to take out and repair the aneurysm.

The St. Luke's surgical and cardiac teams were unsurpassed. When surgeon Dr. Paul Werner walked into my hospital room pre-op, he called this a “bump in your road.” He told me to expect a long life. The surgical results of the aneurysm are considered a cure with no additional care related to cardiac disease required. Soon I would be doing everything I ever learned to love in life.

Five years later, not only am I doing all I ever did in the field, Lori and I attended Taylor's white coat ceremony last week as she enters pharmacy school after four years of college. She's living. I'm still watching. Maybe I will meet those grandkids. Regardless, every day is bonus time.

Many medical experts have called the detection of this aneurysm a “fortuitous discovery.” I had no symptoms. Pure luck




Bonus time. Ellis took this rutting buck in November 2014 from a portable treestand.

has given me an opportunity to live. I think it begins with medical experts who start by listening, knowing that decisions they make literally mean life or death for the man or woman sitting in front of them.

A recent report from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services states that 34 percent of all Wisconsin deaths are due to cardiovascular disease including coronary heart disease, congestive heart failure and stroke. CVD is the leading cause of death among men and women.

What about you? We're a lot alike, remember? We want to squeeze this thing. On the eve of the Wisconsin deer season, may I recommend you start by reading the adjacent article by Aurora Interventional Cardiologist Louie Kostopoulos?

And one more thing ... I'll see you in the field. 

LOUIE KOSTOPOULOS, MD

Keeping Your Ticker Healthy During The Hunt

The year 1973 marked the end of a 14-year long run for the television series *Bonanza*, a classic western series about widower Ben Cartwright (played by Lorne Green) whose efforts to ethically raise his three sons on their vast ranch included the principles of treating others with dignity and respecting the land.

For those of us born in 1973 or later, hunter's education has become a seemingly mandatory step towards safely participating in harvesting wild game in Wisconsin. Having completed a hunter's safety course, I've come to appreciate living in a state that emphasizes the same principles of Ben Cartwright—to respect and protect our natural resources.

These courses help hunters be prepared for nearly everything they may experience in the woods, from gun safety to proper clothing and diet. Yet one aspect of hunting that isn't discussed in the class and, in my opinion needs to be, is heart health.

Hunting And Heart Health – By The Numbers

In Wisconsin, hunting represents 36 percent of outdoor recreation activity in the state, with more than 750,000 Wisconsin resident hunters, according to the 2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation Report by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Wisconsinites tend to take advantage of the hunting season with an average of 14 days per hunter (83 percent of all hunting days), and 99 percent pursued game inside our state's borders.

Accidents also are an unfortunate part of the hunt, but a historic look at the DNR's annual hunting incident report shows a year-to-year drop in incidents and fatalities since 1967, coinciding with the introduction of hunter's education. Yet in 2011, three hunters died from heart attacks on opening weekend of deer hunting season, more than a season's worth of firearm-related deaths, based

continued on page 18



Interventional cardiologist Louie Kostopoulos with a doe he tagged while bowhunting.

WILLIAM F. KENDY

Who Needs A Compass Anyway?

You do!

In today's high tech world almost everyone has a smart phone with a built-in compass and even a GPS system. So why fool around with an old-fashioned compass? Here's why.

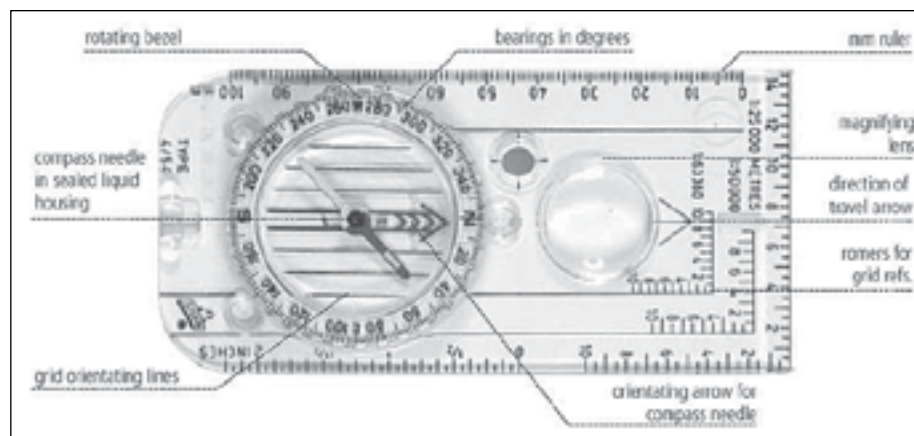
You are deer hunting and leave your cell phone at camp. Or you forgot to recharge it the night before and it has no juice. You are on stand and catch a glimpse of a buck working away from you. You start following him and suddenly you have no clue where you are and are completely turned around. Now what?

In most cases you are not that far from some type of road, path or waterway. You may have to break brush for a while, but if you have even a general idea of direction, you will run into something you can follow to get out. That is where a good old-fashioned mechanical compass comes in handy.

While this sounds like an obvious observation, there is no excuse for not familiarizing yourself with your hunting area by using a map—preferably a topographical (topo) map. Also, have an idea of where the main roads, trails, waterways, and other landmarks are.

Compasses come in all shapes, sizes and price ranges depending on how sophisticated you want to get. With proper care, they last a lifetime. I still have my first Silva compass that I got over 40 years ago and it continues to work like a charm.

A compass that you can use in the woods has a base plate with a line of direction of travel arrow (to point at



where you want to go), index lines and measurements, a liquid-filled capsule in a revolving housing that is marked in degrees and directions, a magnetic needle with one end painted red that points to magnetic north, and a red orienting arrow.

A couple words of caution. Be sure the compass isn't near metal because the metal will affect the needle and give you an incorrect reading. Make sure that the red magnetic needle is aligned north; otherwise, you will be walking in the opposite direction of where you want to go. It is an easy mistake to make.

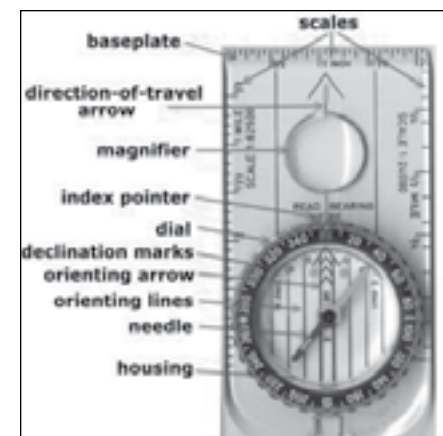
To find out which way is north hold the compass level about waist high, turn the degree dial until the orienting arrow lines up with the magnetic arrow (remember the old phrase "when the red is in the shed") and the direction of travel arrow is pointing north.

Consider this. You are hunting directly east of a north/south road. If you get turned around, you can find your way back to the road by simply traveling west. It is exactly opposite. The only

problem with this scenario is that while you will reach the road, you have no clue whether you will end up north or south of where you want to be. If you want to hit closer to the mark, you need to take a bearing to determine the direction from one object to another in degrees.

There are 360 degrees marked on a compass with north being at 360, east at 90, south at 180, and west at 270. With your compass oriented to the north, pick a landmark to the east, turn your body to face it, and point the direction of travel arrow at it. Turn the dial until the "red is in the shed" and read the degree markings on the dial. Let's say it is 45 degrees, meaning you will be traveling 45 degrees, which is directly north-east. To return, set your direction of travel arrow at 225 degrees (180 degrees plus 45) and you will be walking southwest. It is simply opposite but using degrees gets you closer to your destination.

When you are hunting, you don't want to spend all of your time checking your compass. In forested areas you



can't see great distances and everything looks similar, so try to pick something at your bearing that stands out and is unique, like a tall oak, group of pines or a hill and work your way there. When you reach your guide point, take another bearing and pick another mark. It is a little tedious but it beats walking in circles.

A compass is a handy, simple, inexpensive tool to keep you on the straight and narrow. It also forces you to think about where you are going and what is around you. You can use it in conjunction with a topo to more accurately schedule your route and triangulate to find out where you are when you are in the field.

Regardless of what you think is the right way to travel, always trust and follow your compass. *W*

Bill Kendy is a professional freelance business writer, consultant and speaker who is heavily involved in the firearm and outdoor industries. He is a lifelong hunter, shooter, fisherman and camper.

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HENSKE, from page 10

and 32 inches in six days.

A Sturgeon Lake Lodge cabin and a license to fish for a week costs just over \$300. Bring your own boat or rent a rig. The resort is on a well-paved road (599) just north of Ignace. Bear hunting costs \$1,400 plus your license. This includes cabin, guide, bait and bait sites, boat and motor, plus a Friday fish fry.

How good can it get? We had a great hunt and a premier fishing trip, plus the great hospitality provided by Margaret and her dad. I recommend the folks at Sturgeon Lake Lodge. They have very nice facilities, great fishing lakes, and

invaluable knowledge. The high number of repeat customers means they do it right. They also offer a boat-in outpost camp loaded with fish.

To connect with Sturgeon Lake Lodge in Ontario Canada:

Summer: 807.934.6933

Winter: 807.344.8265

Email: sturgeonlakerlode@shaw.ca

Website: sturgeonlakerlode.com *W*

Dick Henske is a retired Wisconsin elementary school principal who hunts and fishes Wisconsin, the western states and Canada. He winters in St. George Island, Florida, where he pursues many species of ocean fish.


GATZKE, from page 4

off about 70 yards and stayed in one place for around a half hour, the doe feeding on acorns the entire time while the buck kept close to her.

More leaves crunched from the direction the two deer came from when Tom first saw them. A 6-pointer had gotten a whiff of the doe and was following in her footsteps. The 6-point stopped as it entered the opening in the raspberry thicket where Tom failed to get a shot off earlier. The big droptine buck snort-wheezed from a distance and charged at the little buck, chasing him off past Tom's stand. As the buck returned to the doe he left behind, he again used the trail he originally travelled the first time Tom laid eyes on him. This would offer Tom a second chance for a clear shot and the birthday buck he had been hoping for.

Mr. Droptine was about to enter the one

opening Tom had as he convinced himself to take his eyes off the impressive rack to concentrate solely on putting an arrow in the buck's vitals. This was no easy task since the buck carried an 8-inch drop tine directly below the main beam from its 9-inch G2 tine, giving the appearance when viewed from the side of a 17-inch chunk of bone intersecting the main beam. With his sight pin now settled on the buck's vitals, Tom released the arrow as the buck stepped into the opening. The arrow struck home, passing through the vitals and moments later he went down.

Now there's a present you won't find in a catalog. 

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.

SCHAFFHAUSER, from page 6

pulsive. They are not in the breeding phase of the rut when they have found receptive does and are locked down, breeding often and not moving.

The whitetail rut in Wisconsin is the most magical time of year for bowhunters. All those bucks you have been only getting night-time pictures of start showing up in the daylight. One doe coming into heat and traveling through your land will most likely bless you with a train of all the bucks in the area. It is a time when we can do more than just sit and wait. We can actively change our probability of bagging a buck using calls, scents and decoys. Unlike September and early October where our best chance of bagging a buck is lying in wait over a food source or bedding area, the rut allows us to employ more tactics.


Rattling. In my past 36 years of bowhunting I have hunted many different parts of Wisconsin where buck-to-doe ratios differed significantly. Therefore, I have had ranging success rattling and calling. When rattling, make sure you are prepared for consequences. Rattling can bring in bucks fast and furious, but the opportunity to get a shot might be short lived. I like to stand with the bow hanging very close, and I always have a place to store my rattle bag or antlers. This is the most exiting way to call in a buck, and you won't soon forget the experience. Late mornings and early afternoons have worked best for me.

Calling. I have my best luck calling deer with a grunt call. Next to my bow I find it my most important accessory. I have more bucks come in to my grunting than any other attractant. I use it consistently to bring deer I see from my stand to my location and to get a better position for a shot. Recently I have

been using a grunt call during the rut, calling blindly every so often. Like rattling, start off soft in case the buck is closer than you think. I've had many experiences bringing in a buck ready to fight with a grunt call similar to rattling.

Scents. During the rut, especially in the early phases, using a doe-in-heat scent or a dominant buck scent can reap huge rewards. The rutting scents I have used have been met with indifference at worst. At best they have brought that buck in on a rope to the exact location I needed for a shot. I often use a drag with doe-in-heat scent to bring a buck right in to my shooting lane from great distances. Very rarely has a rutting scent frightened a deer away.

Decoys. Decoying a deer is not for everyone and not for every situation, but I can vouch for its effectiveness. Keeping a decoy scent-free is a must. I have used two-dimensional and three-dimensional lifelike deer decoys with awesome success. I generally prefer a doe decoy in a feeding position with a quality doe in heat scent added. When used properly and positioned correctly, decoys can take the focus off the bowhunter's position and allow for a close broadside shot.

No matter what method you use to bring that shooter buck within range, make sure you pack a lunch and stay all day. It only takes a moment to turn your hunt into the most memorable of a lifetime. Good luck hunting and may a hot doe cross your shooting lane. 

Fred is co-owner of West Town Archery in Brookfield, Wisconsin. An avid bowhunter, archery technician and target shooter, Fred has two national titles and several state titles in indoor target archery to his credit. Connect with him at westtownarchery.com.

**SERVI, from page 13**

largest rodent in North America with some weighing well over 60 pounds. Everything about them is made for life in the water, and you'll rarely find them far from it. Like muskrats, they can be targeted near their houses. On ponds, small lakes and marshes you'll find large beaver lodges made of sticks and mud along with dams and food caches. All of these are excellent places to start. Rivers and larger streams are a little trickier because they often create bank dens. However, even in these areas you'll see clear indicators of where they're eating with well-worn paths in the trees they're cutting. Nearly all of my beaver have come from these areas where they

leave the water on trails in search of their next meal. Because they are so large, beavers require heavy-duty traps like #330 Conibears or #4/#5 Coilsprings or Double Longsprings.

There are countless ways to trap muskrats, mink, raccoon and beavers, and this is just a drop in the bucket to get you started. The great thing about trapping is that it's a personal evolution as you find your niche.

Up next for Learning to Trap Again: Snaring Predators and Wily Weasels.



Jim Servi is a freelance writer who spends every opportunity he can in the great outdoors with his wife and three boys. Contact Jim at jimservi10@gmail.com.



DENNY MURAWSKA

Camo Dress Code


Are you as safe as you think?

Recently I had some slack time in my treestand to think about camouflage. (Yeah, I have a lot of slack time on my stand.) The prompt for this meditation was a situation the night before when I heard the promising crunch of footfalls moving toward my position. But something was wrong. The “deer” looked much darker and stockier than I anticipated. It turned out to be a respectable bear. With a hand wave and some sound I uttered, the bruin ran off into the shadows. That is how it usually goes; however, I do carry bear pepper spray and a pistol for backup.

I have always entered the woods during archery season in full camo without giving it a second thought. Now I wondered about bear hunters who are in the woods at the same time. It turns out that even though many are hunting with rifles, they are not required to wear blaze orange. *Hmm....* So when my wife and I set up my stand earlier in the year and she elected to wear a black hoodie into the thick forest, I thought that might not have been the brightest thing to do. Having always stayed out of the woods during the two-day youth gun hunt, I was not familiar with bear rules. And, of course, there’s always a chance a kid may be out with a .22 hunting squirrels.

There is potentially a significant risk for a hunter wearing total camouflage. If there are guns in the thicket, I want humans to see

me for what I am but stay invisible to deer. While deer do not see blaze orange like we do, it is highly reflective and stands out even in a black and white photo. A plain red will not. Obviously, I do not dress in blaze orange while archery hunting, so I often wear reversible garments that can be switched from blaze orange to camo when going to and from my stand or ground blind. Even during gun season, full blaze orange is not required. On my coverall pant legs, I have strips of blaze orange that Velcro on and off easily so leg movements will be visible to other hunters. Blaze camo patterns during gun season can help you blend in.


Remember, when a deer looks up during most hunting hours, there is a high contrast between the bright sky and dark branches. Most importantly, don’t move and try not to silhouette yourself against the horizon. Camouflage or not, a wary deer will bust you every time. Even if you are in a tent or box blind, it is not a bad idea to highlight some portion of it in blaze orange. On public lands it is the law, but even when you don’t have to, it may be prudent to advertise your presence with a visible color. There may be more guns in the woods than you think. 

Denny Murawska has been a contributor to the wacky UP Magazine, Wishigan, Verse Wisconsin, and The Pulse. His church is the pine cathedral that surrounds him at his home near Black River Falls.

MOERICKE, from page 7

the tape measure tallies ... and that’s all that really matters.

I have to report that my first two early season attempts at this buck resulted in zero deer sightings. Hunting in the north woods deer desert, that is not uncommon. Northern Wisconsin’s deer herd is in recovery mode after a couple of severe winters. Putting the clamps on shooting antlerless deer the past two years has definitely gotten things going in the right direction, but there just are not tons of deer roaming the woods. No matter. It was great to be settled in my climber ... waiting. Knowing/hoping that the next minute could be the one where this buck or maybe one even bigger might appear.

As the weather cools and leaves fall, I’m looking forward to many more opportunities to sit and wait. The bow season has finally arrived and the real waiting has begun ... 20 feet up a tree with my bow at the ready. The greatest time of year is upon us. This is when waiting is fun. Just sayin’. 

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

KOSTOPOULOS, from page 15

on historical data.

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in America and one of the leading causes of disability in both men and women, accounting for one-third of all deaths yearly in our state. Data also shows the greatest spike in heart attacks in Wisconsin and nationally occurs in the late fall and winter months as the weather changes and people are outdoors in the colder weather, especially during deer hunting season.

No local, state or national data exists that tracks heart attack event rates in hunters. A 2007 study by Michigan’s William Beaumont Hospital remains the only report to date that looked at the impact of deer hunting on the hearts of a volunteer sample of middle-aged men with and without pre-existing heart disease.

Results showed that the mere sighting of a deer evokes heart rates exceeding those seen during the stress test, among other relevant findings, including episodes of silent arrhythmias in subjects with heart disease.

Staying Heart Healthy During The Hunt


So as hunters, what can we do to stay safe and heart healthy during the hunt?

First, it starts with getting your health in order before the hunt. If you haven’t done so, have a checkup with your doctor before hunting season to determine whether you may be at risk for heart disease.

Risk factors can include being overweight, high blood pressure, high levels of cholesterol, diabetes, or if you’ve been a smoker. If you’re not active during the rest of the year aside from hunting season, it’s best you check with your doctor first.

Your doctor may recommend a stress test to see if you really should head to the woods, or put together an action plan to improve your heart health.

As hunters, we are bonded by our passion for the outdoors and the thrill of the hunt. But we need to make sure our bodies are ready for the hunt, especially our hearts.

Keep your ticker healthy with regular checkups and healthier choices throughout the year, and you’ll be able to enjoy many more memorable trips outdoors with your fellow hunters. See you in the woods. 

Dr. Louie Kostopoulos is an avid hunter and an interventional cardiologist with Aurora Health Care.

ELLIS, from page 8

ember send more birds into Wisconsin. He believes the large majority of migrators have already been pushed south with inclement weather and hunters see more late opportunities on the trigger when local weather prompts the birds to become active seeking food and open water.


“Those calendar birds are coming no matter what,” he said. “Then they’re froze out locally and looking for water like the Mississippi River. That’s why those last few days of the season can be so fantastic.”

On Pool 9, Pool 8 and Pool 7 of the Mississippi River, one of the major draws for hunters is the migrating canvasback, the King of Ducks. Pool 9 alone will draw 300,000 staging “Cans” on their journey south, with another 100,000 to 150,000 expected on Pools 7 and 8. The wild celery beds drawing the birds to rest and feed, Lensing said, “are the best I’ve ever seen.”

2015 canvasback daily limit is two birds, drake or hen. “Taking a bull Can is on most duck hunters’ bucket list,” Lensing said.

Collectively, he said, the waterfowl peak migration on Pool 9 of approximately 600,000 birds can be expected November 8 and 9, with 300,000 ducks of various species plus canvasbacks staging.

“That’s a lot of birds,” Lensing said. “But there’s a misconception that Pool 9 is an easy duck shoot. With concealment laws saying we can’t hunt 100 feet off shore or an island you can’t get to them. The birds are resting and feeding in the middle of the pool, and then we’re back to needing local weather to get them moving and hunt-able.”

“Are new migrators going to drop in the middle of the pool, with 100,000 birds already there, or are they going to drop in with my 75 plastic decoys? It’s tough. But the more birds that are here, the quicker the food source is depleted. Then they’re in the air looking for food and that helps. You certainly can’t shoot a bird that’s sitting out on the water. A lot of factors play into Wisconsin duck hunting.” 

Captain Todd is owner/operator of Flyway Fowling Guide Service, Pool 9 duck hunting outfitter. He and his wife, Donna, also own the Grandview Motel in Ferryville, located on the Mississippi River in southwest Wisconsin. Contact them at 608.734.3235.



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BILL CUNNEA

Pointer Puppy Training

Preseason practice

It's been six months since I took in the year-old female German Wirehaired Pointer puppy. The now 18 month-old puppy has settled down (relatively) and loves retrieving and playing with pheasant wings. As I write this, the pheasant hunting season is not far away.

I went to a local game farm and bought a live hen pheasant to introduce the puppy named Tinker to pointing—a reaction which is bred into the breed ... but not always.

An 18 month-old puppy is somewhat exuberant, and heretofore she had chased things—tennis balls, wings, dog toys, the occasional sock—but had never encountered a living thing to stalk, which is what the pointing instinct originally was selectively bred for.

So with the bird with an 10-foot long cord on its leg attached to a light stick from a tree, the dog on a leash, and me trooping in and out of the shed to hide the bird in the tall grasses and then to the house to get the pup, we went into practice: search,

locate, stalk, and point training.

It actually went pretty well. In my opinion, hunting dogs learn how to express their instincts by hunting. All the house and yard instruction is just a skeletal structure to which the actual behavior is attached. In the eight or so relocations of the bird, Tinker did the seeking, the locating, and the initial pause, which was the pointing of the pheasant. I reinforced her point by reassuring her and holding tight to the leash to make sure she didn't pounce on it. When the bird did flush to the end of its tether, I yanked Tinker back down and reinforced the point with her.

Professional trainers use barn pigeons extensively for this. I've shot two pigeons and had Tink find and retrieve the freshly killed birds or their frozen carcasses, but I don't have a lot of access to catching live pigeons, so this pheasant work is really her first live prey. Were my budget larger, or had I some grander plan other than just having a pointer to wander around with during pheasant season, I'd have had her on



First pigeon shot and retrieved.

live birds months ago, but we have time.

These are early days for the puppy, and with about a month before the season starts, we had no major setbacks. I think we have a chance.

It's quite fun to help a pup find her reason for being. *WC*

Bill Cunnea has been a writer, teacher, consultant and outdoorsman for over 30 years. He continues to be taught lessons by his dogs in southwest Wisconsin, where he's lived for more than 20 years. He's never caught a lunker nor shot a 12-point buck, and he has the lack of trophies to prove it.



Tinker on locked point over pheasant.

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STUART WILKERSON

The All-Americans

Henry Repeating Arms offers rifles in calibers that changed history and hunting

Winchester's Model 1873 lever action rifle may not actually have been "the gun that won the West," but a successor once ruled North American deer hunting camps. The actual gun that won the West was a different Model 1873, the single-shot Springfield "Trapdoor" in .45/70 caliber. This rifle, and its various incarnations, armed the United States soldiers that conquered the West.

For many years the .45/70 was also one of the most popular hunting rounds in America. Readily available, powerful and accurate, rifles chambered in this round helped settle the West. The .45/70's reign came to an end with the arrival of the lever action Winchester Model 1894 in .30/30 caliber.

Both the Winchester 1873 and 1894 can trace their ancestry to the lever action 1860 Henry Rifle manufactured by New Haven Arms, later known as Winchester, and designed by B. Tyler Henry. Winchesters are no longer made in America, but Henry Repeating Arms continues the legacy of B. Tyler Henry in Rice Lake, Wisconsin, with the pro-

duction of their .45/70 Lever Action and .30/30 Rifles.

The two rifles share a number of similarities. They have a limited lifetime warranty and are exceptionally attractive, well fitted and finished. Customers wishing something even more attractive can purchase "B" versions sporting octagon barrels and brass receivers and front barrel bands.

Stocks are made of American walnut, and metal surfaces are nicely blued. The .30/30 has a straight buttstock, and the .45/70 has a pistol grip buttstock. Both have rubber butt pads to reduce felt recoil. Rear sights are adjustable for windage and elevation in the traditional semi-buckhorn style, while the front is brass beaded. The .30/30 has a 20-inch barrel, and the .45/70 is 18.5 inches in length. Both guns weigh approximately 7.5 pounds and are about 39 inches in length. Unlike most traditional lever action rifles, the Henrys load through a magazine tube, not a loading gate. The .30/30 magazine holds five rounds, and the .45/70 holds four cartridges.

Smooth right out of the box, their le-



Made in Rice Lake, Wisconsin, both the Henry .45/70 lever action and .30/30 rifles are exceptionally attractive, well-fitted...and accurate. Here, Scott Heitman, also seen on the OWO cover, shoots the .45/70 at Wern Valley.

ver actions will get even better with use. For those wishing to extend practical accuracy, the HO10 .45/70 and H009 .30/30 are drilled for scopes. Expect groups of two inches or less at 100 yards. The triggers are some of the best in the industry; they break like the proverbial glass rod. Henry Lever Actions are easy to carry and shoulder. They point quickly and make for excellent deer hunting rifles.

The big difference between the two rifles is their calibers. Most deer hunters today are very familiar with the .30/30, and there is a good chance that they hunt with a rifle in that caliber. More deer have been harvested with a lever action .30/30 than any other caliber in history. At the turn of the 20th century, hunting rifles in .45/70 were very common. That is not the case in the 21st century, which is not to say that it is obsolete. In fact, all of the attributes that made the .45/70 so popular yesterday hold true today.

The main attribute is size. The .45/70 is a big bullet with an effective range of about 175 yards. After that distance, the round's trajectory drops fast. At any range, the .45/70 is making a much bigger hole than a .30/30 and is, consequently, more effective on game at any range.

Although touted as a bear rifle early in its career, about the largest game anyone

should shoot with a .30/30 is a white tail deer. On the other hand, a .45/70 in the hands of a capable hunter is adequate for any big game found in North America. It will also blast through brush, and its recoil, while certainly notable, is manageable.

Capable though it may be, the .45/70 cartridge is not as common as .30/30 ammunition, although most gun stores will have it in stock. It is more expensive than .30/30, which is justification to begin handloading. If you can live with these minor limitations, the .45/70 is a unique, accurate and fun-to-shoot round.

In any caliber, Henry Repeating Arms have earned a well-deserved reputation for quality, reliability, fit, finish, customer service and accuracy. By any standard, Henry Repeating Arms are great firearms, made here in the United States by people who still know that is important.

If you would like to handle a Henry Lever Action in person, visit Shorty's Shooting Sports, 2192 S. 60th Street in West Allis. For more information on Henry Repeating Arms, visit their website at henryrifles.com.

Stuart Wilkerson is an OWO gun expert and award winning columnist specializing in historical firearms and collecting.



Northern Wisconsin Outfitters' guides Robert Haas and Mike Foss wait at camp for more calls from successful hunters on stands.

ELLIS, from page 11

portunity to shoot that big bear. It would be like a deer hunter tagging a 200-inch buck."

"Are you spooked?" Haas is asked in the camp interview.

"I'm not afraid of bears," he says. "But Bus makes me nervous. Not many bears reach 700 pounds and he might be 800. He's just massive. Whoever tags him won't get him on the bait. He'll be shot trying to

wind the bait, if there is a window to shoot. It's going to take a lot of luck."

"But if it does happen, I have a tractor lined up from a nearby farmer to haul him out. There is no way he will fit on the carcass stretcher we use."

Connect with Northern Wisconsin Outfitters and guides Robert Haas and Mike Foss at northernwisconsinoutfitters.com or 715.373.01277 or 715.373.0344.

MIKE YURK

Hardwater Trips

Devils Lake, Red Lake, Lake of the Woods

The Midwest is blessed with great ice fishing opportunities. It is hard to pick out three to call the best, and I know I may be upsetting some hard water anglers, but my choice would be Devils Lake in North Dakota and Red Lake and Lake of the Woods in Minnesota.

There are a lot of similarities with these three waters, but probably the most important one is that fishermen on these lakes just simply catch a lot of fish. All three are large lakes with a multitude of ice fishing options and are easy to get to from anyplace in the Midwest.

You do not need to have a lot of ice fishing gear to enjoy ice fishing on these lakes. It is easy to rent ice houses that are warm and comfortable with ice holes already cut just waiting for you to drop a line.

I know a lot of ice fishermen who feel it is a necessity to have fancy fish finders, but you really don't need them on these lakes. To be successful, keep your bait within a few inches from the bottom and you will catch fish.

These three lakes make ice fishing convenient and easy for both the novice ice fisherman as well as the most experienced.

Devils Lake, North Dakota

If you look at a map of Devils Lake prior to the early 1990s, you see five smaller lakes, which included Devils Lake, scattered around and outside the city of Devils



Devils Lake is full of big perch. John Erickstad (left) of Lakeview Lodge and Doug Hurd show off some of the lake's perch.

Lake. In the early 1990s, a couple of winters of heavy snows coupled with very wet springs began to flood the lakes, swallowing up roads, houses, farms and wooded lands. Today, all the lakes are joined together to form one big lake, collectively known as Devils Lake.

Devils Lake is loaded with fresh water shrimp. Shrimp have been a major factor in the explosion of the perch population as they are a major forage for those fish. Perch in Devils Lake have a distinctive pink color to their flesh and a slightly sweet taste, all because of the shrimp.

Devils Lake has some of the best perch

fishing found anywhere in the Midwest. The biggest perch I have caught in the last couple of decades were caught in Devils Lake. On my first trip to the lake my fishing buddy, Doug Hurd of Eagan, Minnesota, caught a 1 1/4-pound perch. I was assured by local fishermen that there are bigger perch in the lake.

To catch perch we use two light ice rods with either a small ice jig or #8 hook under a slip bobber. Most of our fish were taken in minnows but wax worms also worked. The secret to catching these perch is to fish within a few inches of the bottom.

Fish Like A Pro.

OnWisconsinOutdoors.com/InlandFishing

More Than Perch

Devils Lake has a truly diverse fishery. The lake's walleye fishing is also very good. For walleyes, we use a little heavier ice rod. We rigged one rod with a hook under the slip bobber and the other with an ice jig. We used slightly larger minnows with both rigs and steadily caught fish.

Devils Lake has awesome northern pike fishing. On one trip a group of about half a dozen guys came in the cleaning house dragging stringers of big pike measuring from upper 20 inches to well over 30 inches. They were using larger minnows, suckers and chubs with tip-ups.

When I fished Devils Lake, I went through Lakeview Lodge, owned by John and Maria Erickstad. They can be contacted by phone at 701.665.5060. For other resorts, guides and services, check with the Devils Lake Chamber of Commerce and Tourism at 800.233.8048.

Editor's note: In the January/February issue of On Wisconsin Outdoors, look for Part Two - Red Lake and Lake of the Woods.

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

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TERRY RUSS

Terry's Tips For Beginning Coyote Hunters

For the beginner coyote hunter, good camo that blends in with natural surroundings is imperative. Gloves are a must, because your hands are usually moving with your gun or hand calling or using remote. A facemask is important because a white face stands out.

A camo gun also helps so there is no reflection from the sun. There is no need to buy a special gun if you are just starting out. Use your deer rifle for open areas and shotgun with full choke and buck shot.

Most importantly, practice shooting from a sitting position. Start out by using some hand calls and repeat until you feel comfortable. Most people don't realize that a coyote's hearing is outstanding, and they end up spooking the animal by slamming doors, banging equipment, talking, sky lining themselves, and walking into stands with the wind at their back.

When you get to your calling location, get set as quickly and with as little movement as possible. Try sitting with the sun at your back so coyotes are looking into the sun, and sit with wind in

your face or with a crosswind; you watch wind-side. Start out calling for one to two minutes, wait two to three minutes, then repeat. Start out with lower volume and work your way to louder volume. Call for about 15 minutes in the early season, and increase your calling time as the season progresses.

Go out and call, have fun and good luck.

For coyote control services, connect with Terry Russ at 414.422.9298 or at russtreeservice.com.

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vikingsl.com



NORTHLAND FISHING TACKLE: TUNGSTEN BANANA BUG

If you want to get to the bottom fast, look no further. The Banana Bug has a slim, compact profile and is molded from heavy-weight tungsten, so it smashes through slushy ice holes and then sinks like a brick, slipping through any brush that gets in its way. Great for panfish. When you hop it along the bottom, it mimics a feeding minnow fry. It comes in eight colors in three different sizes: #14 hook 1/28-ounce, #12 hook 1/16-ounce, and #10 hook 3/32-ounce. (\$2.89).

northlandtackle.com



MARCUM: LX-5i FLASHER

You have to be passionate to be an ice fisherman. There's no other way to brave sub-zero temperatures to slog over ice. MarCum brings that same passion with the most technologically advanced flasher-sonar on the market. It uses vibrant, crisp colors to represent vegetation, bottom, baitfish, fish, and your lure, all in the highest resolution possible. Increased viewing angles allow for viewing from all sides. It's also designed to impede snow buildup. It has 2,500 watts of power and the patented Moveable Zoom. Details, such as if a fish is backing away from your lure, are easy to discern due to Super Fine Line technology, which allows you to see target separation at .75 inch. (\$499).

iceforce.com



M-PRO7: SYNTHETIC GREASE

Though designed for military crew served and handheld weapons, the M-Pro7 synthetic grease is outstanding for conditions in which hunters often find themselves, especially cold weather extremes in Wisconsin. Other lubricants can gum up and become ineffective, but this one is rated for -40 degrees. It also works up to 560 degrees, which, with rapid fire plinking, can come sooner than one would think. If your duck gun ends up in the drink, retrieve it and it will still have a coating of lubricant and protectant. It is specifically formulated to adhere to metal, so even under extreme weather, you're covered. Plus, it won't run off into your action and gum it up like other products. (\$14.95).

mpro7.com

YETI: HOPPER

I've been a big fan of my Yeti 50 since I first got it. It's a big investment, but the ability to keep ice all week saves me a 40-minute drive every day into town and back when I'm at my off-the-grid (no electricity)

cabin. However, for long multi-day road trips with a family of five, it takes up a lot of room in the vehicle and has to be stored in back where it's not easily accessed. Now Yeti has the Hopper, a soft-side version of their rugged cooler. Flexible is more accurate, because it's still built like a bullet-proof bomb shelter. It keeps ice long-term like the hard-side, but its flexible sides allow you



to store it closer to where you can access it. It's puncture-resistant, has a wide bottom so it won't tip, and it's leak proof (even the zipper), so water won't seep out as in other soft-side coolers. It has handles for carrying, as well as a shoulder strap. Comes in a 20 (20 pounds of ice or 18-pack of cans plus ice, \$300) and 30 (26 pounds of ice or 25 cans plus ice, \$350) size. Yeti coolers aren't cheap, but these are coolers you can buy when you're 20 and still use when you're 80. They're built that well. OWO tested and approved.

yeti.com



MAGLULA: RANGE BENCHLOADER

For AR15 shooters who put a lot of rounds down range, the Benchloader is about as solid as it gets for loading magazines. Unfortunately, it costs between \$300 - \$400, so it's not that practical for most of us. Now Maglula has released the Range Benchloader at about one-third the price. It's still heavy-duty but made to be more lightweight for transport to the range. At this cost, it's still not that practical if only loading one or two magazines at a time, but if loading 5, 10, 20 or more magazines at one time, this is indispensable. It also loads USGI and polymer magazines, unlike its predecessor. With this, I can load two magazines per minute. But it's not about speed; it's about being pain-free. No more sore thumbs and fingers. (\$165). OWO tested and approved.

maglula.com



TOM CARPENTER

Badger Birds

Black-capped chickadee

Few birds are as familiar across Wisconsin, or as loved, as the black-capped chickadee. A tiny but energetic package of feathered joy, chickadees grace woodlands, yards and gardens year-round across our state. "Understated yet classy" describes the chickadee's feathered finery—black bib and cap framing bright white cheeks, a steely-gray back blending into rusty-colored accents with delicate buff and cream under parts. Chickadee acrobatics are fun to watch as the birds flit, cling, swing, hang and contort to glean insects, larvae and seeds.

Listen for buzzing *chicka-dee-dee-dee* calls as a feeding flock works through the trees and bushes around your treestand. In late winter and spring, listen for the high-low fee-bee call the birds make as they establish nesting territories.

Feed chickadees black-oil sunflower seed. Any type of seed feeder will do! Chickadees love suet and animal fat, too. Place in a suet cage and hang from a tree limb.

Attract nesting chickadees in spring with a small nest box offering a 1 1/8-inch-diameter hole. The birds will furnish bark pieces, plant down, moss, fur and feathers to make a cushiony home inside for eggs and nestlings.

Did you know that to conserve precious energy, a chickadee's heart-beat and metabolism slow almost to a standstill on frigid winter nights?

OWO

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

SUZETTE CURTIS

Recipes By Suzette Sauces and marinades for venison

It's deer hunting season again, and in our house the first cuts of venison to be eaten are the tenderloins (or backstraps). Some of my favorite sauces and marinades for venison are very simple and very easy. Enjoy!

Basic Venison Sauce

- ½ cup butter
- ¼ cup Worcestershire sauce
- Juice of ½ lemon
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- ¼ tsp. onion powder

Combine all ingredients in small saucepan. Heat until boiling; reduce heat to very low or warm setting; stir occasionally. Keep warm until serving.

Leek Sauce

- ¼ cup butter
- 2 leeks, cleaned and thinly sliced
- ¼ cup sweet red wine (marsala or port are good choices)

Melt butter in saucepan over low heat. Add sliced leeks and sauté until leeks are tender. Add wine and simmer until slightly reduced. Serve warm.

Horseradish Sauce

- ½ cup heavy whipping cream
- 1 ½ T. prepared horseradish
- Pinch of salt

Whip cream with electric beaters until thickened. Fold in prepared horseradish and salt. Cover container and refrigerate for at least one hour before serving to allow flavors to blend. Serve cold or at room temperature.

Garlic Marinade

- 1 cup dry vermouth
- 1/3 cup olive oil
- 2 cloves minced garlic

Combine all ingredients; pour over venison. Store in zippered plastic bag or in glass dish covered with plastic wrap. Refrigerate and marinate meat 4 to 6 hours; stirring occasionally. If grilling meat, the marinade can be used for basting; otherwise, discard marinade and cook venison as desired.


Spiced Brandy Marinade

- ½ cup brandy
- ½ cup dry red wine
- ½ cup canola oil
- ½ tsp. allspice
- ¼ tsp. ground cloves
- 1 bay leaf
- ½ T. freshly ground black pepper

Combine all ingredients; pour over venison. Store in zippered plastic bag or in glass dish covered with plastic wrap. Refrigerate and marinate meat 24 hours, stirring occasionally. If grilling meat, the marinade can be used for basting; otherwise discard marinade and cook venison as desired.

Oil And Vinegar Marinade

- ½ cup red wine vinegar
- 2 T. olive oil
- 1 tsp. oregano
- ½ tsp. onion powder
- ¼ tsp. kosher salt
- 1/8 tsp. black pepper
- 1/8 tsp. cayenne pepper

Combine all ingredients; pour over venison. Store in zippered plastic bag or in glass dish covered with plastic wrap. Refrigerate and marinate meat 24 hours, stirring occasionally. If grilling meat, the marinade can be used for basting; otherwise discard marinade and cook venison as desired. 

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.

Enjoy!

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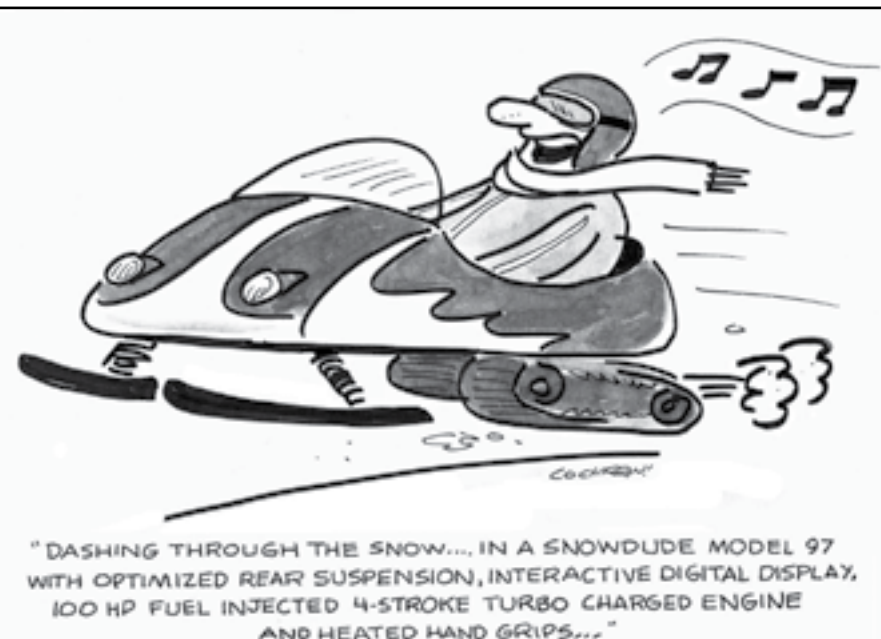
Ice fishing is a Wisconsin tradition, especially in Price County where family and friends often gather to fish the "hard water" lakes. Tournament ice fishing is a way of life in our area with an event occurring almost every weekend in January and February. Find a list of event dates and prize offerings on our website. **Click on Price County.**

Just because the marina closes November 1, don't think that means fishing is done for the year. Thanks to our lake-side parks, there is still great fishing from shore. In fact, you can find fishermen casting a line any day of the year—and successfully! **Click on Ozaukee County.**

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win \$500! November 7: Chick-uamegon Women's 5K/10K Run/Walk and Garland City Women's Expo. November 27: Day after Thanksgiving sales. December: Christmas Cash Raffle. Daily drawing for Chamber Dollars! December 5: Garland City of the North Christmas Parade, 4:30 PM, historic Main Street. **Click on Ashland County.**

Wilderness hunters, anglers and wildlife enthusiasts are drawn to Washburn County because of its unique natural attributes. Washburn County has over 150,000 acres of public land, nearly 1,000 sparkling lakes and incredible trail systems, making the area a great get-a-way to enjoy all that nature has to offer. No matter the season, outdoor enthusiasts will find plenty of outdoor fun. **Click on Washburn County.** 



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STUART WILKERSON

Modern Muzzleloaders At Midwestern Shooters Supply

Daniel Boone wouldn't recognize today's smoke poles

Daniel Boone was a man, a big man, and he was as tough as a mighty oak tree, according to the lyrics of the 1960s television show. Despite all of his legendary attributes, the muzzle-loading rifle he often touted, at least in real life, left something to be desired. Muzzleloaders of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries suffered from rudimentary sights and limited range. Musket balls were propelled by highly corrosive ammunition on a rainbow trajectory. The real Daniel Boone was probably not the marksman that Fess Parker played on television due to the limitations of that era's muzzleloaders.

A lot has changed in the world of muzzleloaders since Fess Parker's portrayal of Daniel Boone in the 1960s and Davey Crockett in the 1950s. In fact, muzzle-loading rifles didn't change much from the inception of the flintlock rifle nearly 300 years ago to the advent of the inline muzzleloader in the 1980s. Once they showed up on the scene, they revolutionized muzzle-loader shooting for a number of reasons. They don't

have complicated and exposed flintlock or percussion firing systems that often won't ignite in the rain. They don't incorporate primitive sights that limit target opportunities, nor shoot ammunition launched by rust-inducing corrosive black powder. In short, inline muzzleloaders are far more efficient and likely to hit what they're aimed at.

Muzzle-loading rifles look much more like center-fires than traditional versions. The primer cap, or nipple, and ignition system is directly behind the powder charge, hence the term "inline." The primer cap and ignition system of traditional muzzleloaders is exposed to the elements and susceptible to misfires due to dampness or rain. Inline ignition systems are located in what is, in effect, a breech, safe from the elements. Ammunition is different. Many inline muzzleloaders shoot sabots, which are bullets with a plastic sleeve that allow them to fit tighter in the barrel and shoot more accurately.



Vice President Randy Boelkow and Midwestern Shooters Supply in Lomira offer a wide variety of muzzleloaders.

According to Randy Boelkow, vice president of Midwestern Shooters Supply in Lomira, inline muzzleloaders have numerous advantages over traditional muzzleloaders. "They are easier to clean and breakdown and they are a lot more accurate," Randy said. "If you can't get groups of less than two inches with a good quality muzzleloader, something's wrong. BDC (bullet drop compensator) scopes are available, so you can shoot accurately at 100, 150 and 200 yards. Inline muzzleloaders can be accurate up to 250 yards. With a traditional

continued on page 36



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STUART WILKERSON

Midwest Industries Universal Handguard

Optics and accessory versatility abound

Standard Kalashnikov iron sights and middle-aged eyes are not especially compatible. AK-type rifles are, rightfully, famed for their reliability and durability, but none of that is of any importance if you cannot see the sights. Most younger shooters and others with good eyesight will find the AK's simple u-notch rear and front post sighting system adequate and rugged. Whether youthful and eagle-eyed or old and myopic, however, all AK owners will benefit from the use of an optic, which greatly enhances the functionality and performance of a Kalashnikov.

If your Kalashnikov has a rail on the left receiver wall, a number of companies, including Midwest Industries (MI), sell side mounts to attach optics. Some are better than others, and MI's are among the best. If your Kalashnikov does not have a rail, all is not lost. MI makes a variety of handguards that not only allow the use of an optic but serves as a platform for other accessories such as lights, lasers, sling attachments and

a bipod. With an MI handguard, the AK approaches AR-15 levels of accessory options and versatility.

Made from high strength 6061 aluminum, the MI Universal AK-47/AK-74 Handguard, the firm's most popular model, fits both milled and stamped receivers. The Universal Handguard weighs only 10 ounces and literally installs in minutes with the included mounting hardware and tools. The system is extremely simple yet highly effective. MI replaces the factory upper handguard with a topcover, and the lower handguard replaces the factory original. Optics fit on the top cover and accessories mount to the lower handguard.

All MI AK handguards attach to the rifle in the same manner. The top cover bolts directly to the lower handguard, which, in turn, is bolted to the barrel, providing a secure platform for optics and accessories. MI handguard mounts do not require any permanent modifications. Rifles can easily be returned to their original factory configuration, which is always important for

collectability and resale purposes.

The Universal Handguard's topcover and lower handguard feature T-marked MIL STD 1913 slotted rails for accessories. The lower handguard of the slightly more expensive AK-SS models feature modular side rail sections and quick detachable sockets for push button sling swivels. MI manufactures extended lower handguards for added accessory versatility. There are also rifle-specific handguards for some of the less common AK variants such as the VEPR, Mini Draco, and Yugoslavian M92.

Optic-specific versions of the MI AK handguard are available. Most of these allow red dot optics such as the Aimpoint T-1 and Burris Fast Fire II to co-witness, that is, line-up with the original factory sites. A co-witness can make for more pre-

The MI Universal Handguard greatly increases the versatility of the Kalashnikov platform.



cise aiming, and in the event of an optic failure iron sights can be readily accessed. Instead of a red dot, a telescopic sight with long eye relief, such as a handgun scope, can be attached to the topcover for more accuracy.

No matter how good—or bad—your eyesight, an optic greatly enhances the performance of any Kalashnikov. Note that an optic is only as good as its mounting system, and few are as stable as the Handguard mounts of Midwest Industries. The mounts are easily attached, reasonably priced and built to last. Money expended on a quality optic and an MI optic mount is money well spent. *W*

Stuart Wilkerson is an OWO gun expert and award winning columnist specializing in historical firearms and collecting.



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PHIL SCHWEIK

Early Ice

Just try it

As countless numbers of hunters take to the woods for the upcoming gun deer season in anticipation of bagging that big buck, many of them drive right by one of the most overlooked opportunities fishing has to offer: early ice.

Early ice means some of the best ice fishing opportunities of the year. With November temperatures at or below freezing, that much anticipated “first ice” is forming on some of Wisconsin’s smaller lakes. And with first ice comes some of the best fishing you will see during the entire ice fishing season.

Getting out on first ice can be a little difficult but well worth the effort when the

angler approaches the day with safety as the first priority. Even though you prepare your approach carefully and plan to fish without incident or danger, carry a spud to check ice thickness as you travel out and wear a life jacket with two screw drivers or spikes in an easily accessible pocket in the event you find yourself in the water. Have at least one partner and walk to the fishing area separated from each other, carry a rope as part of your equipment, and keep phones sealed in a plastic bag.

As a reward, you will find untapped water and areas that other anglers have not yet set foot on. The fish have not been disturbed or picked through at this point, and more often than not they are ready



Stephanie Borelli with a couple of ‘eyes.

and willing to eat just about anything you offer them.

Walleyes are considered the prime rib of ice fishermen. Anytime you can get in on a few of these you can quickly become the hero. Early ice offers many opportunities at catching these prized fish, and targeting them this time of the year is pretty simple. Look for shallow weed-filled bays and run tip-ups baited with golden shiners or wall-eye-sized sucker minnows in open pockets in the weeds.

Panfish are the bread and butter of ice fishermen and they are usually very aggressive early. As the season progresses panfish can become harder to find and at times harder to catch. When getting out on early ice in search of panfish, you should look for either deep water mud flats or target shallow water weed beds. In both instances run tiny teardrop jigs



Andy Hoppa with a walleye.

tipped with waxies or spikes, or any type of horizontal style jig tipped with tiny one-to two-inch plastic tails. Work the entire water column in search of active fish and concentrate on the areas that are producing.

Early ice often offers fabulous fishing that cannot be reproduced later in the season. If you’re not one of those guys hugging a tree, try this narrow window of opportunity during the November gun deer season. You may find yourself on some of the best ice fishing of the year. *W*

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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Andy Teller holding a crappie.

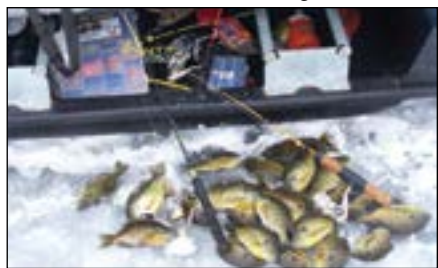
WAYNE MORGENTHALER

Fishing First Ice

Take a peek down the hole for hints

I like to get out early on that first ice, but I mean that first safe ice, around 4 inches thick. Generally, this time period in southwestern Wisconsin along the backwaters of the Wisconsin River is at the end of November.

My equipment of choice is an ice chisel with a rope handle, cleats, ice grippers, 5-gallon bucket, floatation device, ice skimmer, 6-inch ice auger, rope, ice fishing poles, and wax worms. I really prefer conditions where there is very little snow on the ice since I enjoy lying flat on the ice and looking down the hole. If the sun is bright, I pull my hood over my head to eliminate some of the sun light. Then I



A day's catch by the scouts.

lower my jig slowly until it sits just a few inches off the bottom.

Most of the lakes I fish are shallow with excellent weed lines. Always make sure the hole is free of a lot of weeds. Sometimes I have to drill in a few different locations until I find a clearing within those weed beds. The best way to find weed lines is to fish those same lakes in the summer and take notes on how far the weeds extend along the shoreline.

I drop different colored jigs tipped with a wax worm and see if the fish are attracted. I also notice what direction the bluegills come from and how close they are to the bottom. It's exciting to see fish approaching the bait and what their attitude is. They will have an approaching pattern, and I prefer to drill my remaining holes in that direction. If you are willing to take the time just scouting, your patience will pay off. I have noticed over the years that the fish will keep this same swimming pattern but the feeding times will change. Last year, I augured ten holes that I thought would be good for the next

group I took fishing. While I was looking down the hole on this opening trip, a big northern came up to my jig. I quickly pulled the bait out.

The next day I was taking out a group of Boy Scouts, and I told them to bring along a tip-up with minnows. We were out on the ice early in the morning, the only ones on the lake. I had the scouts put the tip-up in line with the direction the pike came from and about 20 yards from our bluegill holes. I put some distance between the tip-up and where we were fishing, because I knew we would be making too much noise on the ice.

The scouts had a great time looking down hole and seeing the fish. It was like peering into an aquarium with a world of underwater action. They were having fun and getting hooked on winter fishing. Then the flag went up and a quick dash by all to the tip-up. Of course, the boys were slipping and sliding all the way, shouting, "Fish on!" One of the scouts set the hook and the fight became an exciting adventure. The northern pike was a



A nice northern pike taken on early ice with tip-up.

fat one and just fit through our 6-inch hole. The fish was 30 inches and legal to keep.

A little scouting ahead of time paid off for a very successful trip. Everyone caught a bluegill, and for some it was their first fish retrieved below the ice. When we returned to town, lesson two was given on how to filet a pike.

Early ice can bring some good action, but always take precautions as you go out on the ice. *WM*

Wayne Morgenthaler has fished southwestern Wisconsin for the past 45 years. He has written outdoor articles for MidWest News' website under the name Little Bobber. A retired high school teacher and coach, Wayne is married with three children.

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DAVE DUWE

Delavan Lake: First Ice Hot Spots

Successful methods for early ice

Delavan Lake is one of the finest fisheries in southeastern Wisconsin. The lake is an hour from Milwaukee and one and a half hours from Chicago. Delavan Lake is roughly 2200 acres with a maximum depth of 52 feet. The lake has many different fishing opportunities, whether it's deep water yellow perch or weedline walleyes. Northern pike and bluegill are also available in the shallow bays.

In early December, northern pike action will be on the weed flats or on the first break of the weedline. The best depth is six to twelve feet of water. Key locations are by the outlet by North Shore Drive, the west end near the island, or in front of Lake Lawn Lodge Resort, provided there are still green weeds present.

Use a basic, simple tip-up presentation. With the clear water and the availability of different fish species, I always use a monofilament leader in 17- or 20-pound diameter. I have a two-foot leader attached to the Dacron line with

a snap swivel. Use a number 6 or 8 treble hook with enough sinker to place, and keep your bait one foot above the weed growth. The size restrictions on the lake are very large at 32 inches and one fish daily.

Bluegills in December are almost exclusively a shallow water, weed flat bite. The west end in the Highland, Viewcrest Bays or the channel by North Shore are always a sure bet. You will be fishing in three to five feet of water, perfectly suited for long pole fishing and hole hopping. Wax worms and spikes are the baits of choice. The key to fishing the shallow weeds is finding areas with pockets in the weeds. Once I have figured out the most productive holes, I fish a hole for only three or four minutes and then move on to the next.

For perch fishermen, there is an ample supply of them if you're willing to search. The main lake basin is the best spot to start the hunt. Begin in 20 feet of water and start moving deeper until you find a feeding school. A Vexilar is a

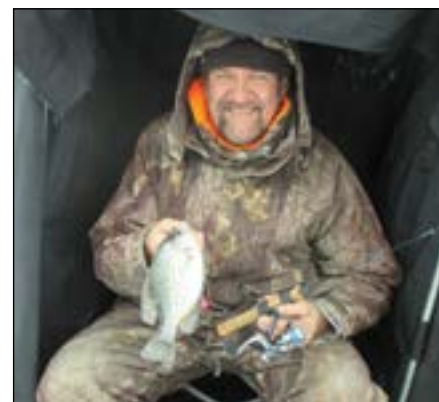
must in locating the deep water perch. When fishing in deep water, you need to use a pencil weight or the Tommy Harris agitator to get the bait in the feeding zone of the constantly moving schools. My bait of choice is spikes. The skin on them seems to make them stay hooked. Remember, if fishing a school, always fish the upper fish first so you don't spook the fish lower in the water column. Good spots are the southwest part of the lake, by Belvidere Park and off of Willow Point.

Walleyes on Delavan Lake can be difficult to catch. My best success has come off the weedline by Assembly Park or by the Village Supper Club. The pattern I use is a jigging Rapala in black/chrome or blue/chrome. Work the weedline in 15 to 20 feet of water. I like a stiff rod and 6-pound Silver Thread monofila-

continued on page 35



Lauren Clement with a nice Delavan Lake bluegill.



Larry Twist with a Delavan Lake crappie.

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GARY ENGBERG

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Walleyes, saugers to be had on Lake Wisconsin

PRAIRIE DU SAC - For anglers trying to get in a few more weeks of open-water fishing before the freeze, now is prime time to fish sprawling Lake Wisconsin for fat walleyes and saugers that are filling their stomachs for winter.

Located 30 miles northwest of Madison, the 9,500-acre lake is so good this time of year because its main forage base is gizzard shad, which are concentrated just off the main river channel and will be beginning their annual fall die-off. Walleyes and saugers gorge on these schools of baitfish, which can become so thick that modern electronics can't penetrate them. It's not unusual for an angler to mark the schools on their locators, believing them to be in 15 feet of water, when, in fact, they are 25 feet deep.

The best locations to fish the lake for walleyes and saugers are near the ferry and bridge crossing at both the Merrimac side to the north and the Lodi side to the south. Anglers should look for the baitfish or forage schools just off the old river channel in water 15 to 20 feet deep.

Once you locate the forage (the walleyes will be close by), vertical jig those areas with a ¼- to 1/8 -ounce jig tipped with a large fathead or chub about 4 inches long and plastic, if desired. Use a heavy enough jig so that you can keep tapping the bottom with your jig/minnow combo. It is of utmost importance to be within a foot of the bottom for walleye and sauger action.

Jig color doesn't seem to be that important, but chartreuse, orange, glow and black are always good colors for this lake. Hair jigs work well in the current because the flow gives the hair a pulsating action which walleyes find hard to resist.

Vertical jigging a blade bait (Sonar's or Zips) is another proven technique for the coming coldwater season. Lower the blade



A walleye caught on a jig and plastic in the fall.

bait to the bottom and then rip them upward a foot or two, allowing the bait to fall naturally. This action triggers strikes which usually come on the lure's fall. Tipping blade baits with a minnow or piece of a minnow is worth trying when action is slow.

Work the areas where you marked fish with your bow-mount trolling motor while keeping your line as vertical as possible. Being vertical and just off the bottom are the keys to catching these late-season fish. Action will continue until the water freezes sometime in December.

Be sure to dress in layers, bring some hand warmers, and have minnows of different sizes, since some days the size of the minnow or plastic ringworm can make all the difference.

Weekdays are best to fish because boat numbers are limited and you can have the lake to yourself. The best boat launches are at Sunset Bay and Okee where the piers are still in the water.

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

DUWE, from page 33

ment. Work the jigging Rapala from three inches to one foot hops, then a three- to four-second pause. A Vexilar is important here, too, to determine where the fish are in the water column. Walleye bite best at first light or dusk. Make sure you keep mobile to find the active fish.

As always, be careful. "First ice" fish-

ing can be dangerous, so always use caution when venturing out in the early season. *GW*

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.

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TOM LUBA

Catch More River Smallmouth Every Season

Slippin' rivers for smallmouth success

Sometimes things can just pop up and remind you why you catch fish utilizing a certain approach. But because it's become so automatic you don't always realize you're doing it until after it happens. It happened that way for me on the Wolf River.

We were working a stretch of river for smallmouth, moving upstream with our trolling motor, when I glanced up and saw a bass boat with three anglers drifting downriver toward us. All three were pitching baits perpendicular to the stretch of rip-rap we were starting on.

Being polite, trying to let people fish the way they are most comfortable, I moved out from the rocky rip-rap shore. As they drifted by, we had about 25 seconds to swap "How ya doin'?" stories.

We had caught several smallmouth. The anglers' response was, "We got a few." They then disappeared as the current pushed them around a bend.

We moved back into place and started fishing the area they just drifted through.

During the next half hour, we caught nine smallmouth from a spot where the Boat of Three didn't claim a bite.

I'm not an exceptional fisherman, nor am I a tournament angler, so why the difference in success? It was because I did something that I have been doing for years when river bass fishing: "slippin'" rivers like the Wolf and the Fox. I believe this tactic can put more smallies in any angler's boat.


Slippin' uses both your trolling motor and the river current to allow you to change angles, change depths, and go over an area of water numerous times to get your bait hopping, jumping and dragging over a wide variety of the bottom beneath you.

Would we have caught nine fish out of a fairly small area if we just used the trolling motor to overpower the current and steam upriver in a straight line to the next promising area? My experience on that area of the river tells me no. But by moving up, then cutting the trolling motor power and allowing the current to slide us back downriver a few times, we were able to get bait in a lot of

different nooks and crannies that just happened to hold bass.

Slippin' is a tactic you can employ regardless of the type of bait you use. It works with crankbaits; it works with tubes and hair jigs cast toward cover; it works later in the season with flukes and plastic stickbaits when the water has cooled and the fish are not necessarily chasing. In that case, you are dragging your bait right to them: slow, but still special delivery.

This is why I am always in favor of getting the strongest trolling motor you can afford. Being under-powered can make river slipping somewhere between difficult and impossible, especially when facing current and a stiff wind coming from the same direction.

Fishing smallmouth in rivers is fun no matter what the season. Put learning how to slip your favorite river stretches in your plans for next season and you'll cover a larger area of water more thoroughly. It will make your outing that much more enjoyable. 



Don Gerz with a 5-pound river smallmouth taken in fall by slippin' an area of river that had a combination of rock and wood on bottom.

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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WILKERSON, from page 28


muzzleloader, you're limited to about 100 yards."

A good quality muzzleloader costs as little as \$250, Randy said. A good quality scope will add about an additional \$250. By far, .50 caliber is the most popular muzzleloader round for deer hunting. Some hunters shoot .45 caliber and others .54 caliber. Randy considers the .45 round too small for deer and .54 as over load. For small game, like rabbit and squirrel, there is the .36 caliber.

"Many people are drawn to muzzleloaders for the challenge," Randy noted. Muzzleloaders are single-shot firearms, so more often than not the first shot is the only shot. The challenge of muzzle loading hunting is reason enough to purchase one, but there are practical reasons. The deer hunting muzzle loading season in Wisconsin comes after the regular deer season. Hunters who didn't get a deer during the centerfire rifle and shotgun season have another chance. "And there's not 620,000 other hunters in the field to compete with during muzzle loading season," Randy added. "But it often is colder during muzzle loading season."

In some states, like Iowa, muzzle loading season comes before the centerfire season, meaning that there are more larger-sized animals available to hunt and fewer other hunters to vie with. The chances of getting a trophy buck are better under these circumstances.

If inline muzzleloaders have a downside, it's the fact that you only need one good one. They aren't like centerfire rifles or shotguns that come in a great variety of action-types and calibers. Unlike centerfire rifles, it's hard to justify owning more than one, no matter how hard you try, which, if you're frugal and practical, is a good thing. If you're a gun enthusiast who enjoys variety, well, there isn't much point to collecting inline muzzle loaders; they're basically all the same.

But, if you are a centerfire shooter looking for a challenge and more time deer hunting, a muzzleloader is a wise purchase. And a darn good reason to buy another gun. 

Stuart Wilkerson is an OWO gun expert and award winning columnist specializing in historical firearms and collecting.

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JOHN LINDEMAN

October Rain ... November Gain

Stained water sparks daylight walleyes

We rolled into town with the swagger of Josey Wales atop his trusty steed. We knew November fishing on Little Bay de Noc was good, fishing reports were bad, and gale-force winds turned the bay ugly.

Like all fishermen, our first stop was the fish cleaning station at our resort. We disguised our intentions and when nobody was looking, off came the lid to the trash barrel. Behold, fish guts!

A few hours later we were trolling at twilight and our first planer board shot back to yield a 26-inch walleye. After a quick photo and release, I sent the text: "Let the trophy hunt begin."

A few hours later, we were still waiting

for a second fish. No text needed. Bewildered, we checked the fish barrel the next day. Another batch of somebody else's fish fillets were under the lid. Dang!

That evening history repeated itself. We boated a couple fish at twilight, then lockjaw. Don't even ask about the fish barrel. I did and it was O.K. Luckily, a charter captain came to our rescue. Actually, he caught me looking in the barrel and took pity.

The captain took 15 minutes to explain why the normally dependable night bite had switched to days. We learned that above average October rainfall stained the waters of Little Bay de Noc enough to shift the bite to daylight hours.

Captain Rainfall was running two and three colors of lead core in front of dark-colored stick baits over deep basin areas. He was concentrating on the bottom half of the water column. We didn't have lead core line, but we did have a pattern. Game on!

My fishing partner, Jon Markley, was happy to receive the information but very upset he left \$100 worth of lead core on the kitchen table back home in Appleton. Undaunted, I quickly reminded him of the KFin trolling weights we've been using, with success, the past six years.

We mapped a trolling pass along an extended stretch of 25 feet of water that meandered outside of points, past a few humps and over a bottom that alternated between mud and gravel. Of course, we attached 1 1/2-ounce weights to two rods to cover the bottom half of the water column, just like Captain Rainfall instructed. On the remaining four rods we ran 3/4-, 5/8- and 1/2-ounce weights in front of Reef



John Lindeman managed to coax a few Little Bay de Noc walleyes into the net at dusk after learning a pattern.

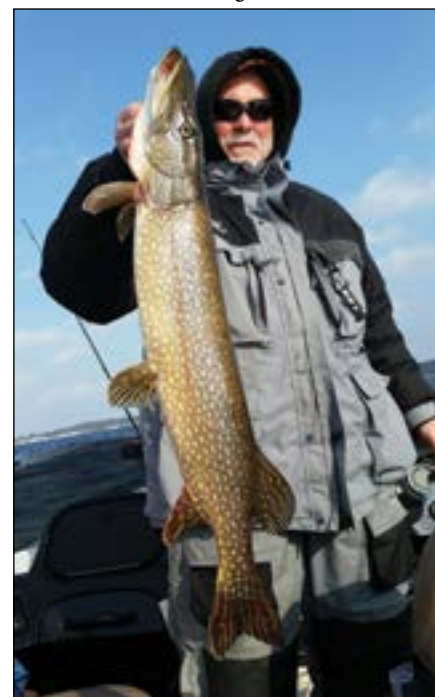
Runners, Rouges and Rapalas.

It didn't take long before our first planer board was fading back amongst the 3-foot rollers in the middle of the afternoon; however, this first fish came from the top half of the water column. Specifically, the set up was a 5/8-ounce KFin weight attached 40/40 in front of a 700 Series Reef Runner. After the third fish found its way into the net on poles set higher in the water column, I dared to ask the question: "Should we switch the heavy weights simulating lead core out for something lighter?"

A mixed bag of northern pike and walleyes were eager to keep us entertained on each trolling pass. The "Rainfall Runoff Pattern" was working, without lead core. Unfortunately for me, the 3-foot rollers took hold of my stomach on pass number six. As quickly as the fun had started, it was over.

We had a few more days and a pattern. That was the good. Motion sickness hits fast. That was the bad. The wind settled down overnight and we woke to three inches of new ice stretching 40 yards out from shore. Now THAT was ugly! ☹️

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.



Runoff from above average October rainfall stained Little Bay de Noc's water enough to create a solid November day bite, providing Jon Markley with several northern pike.

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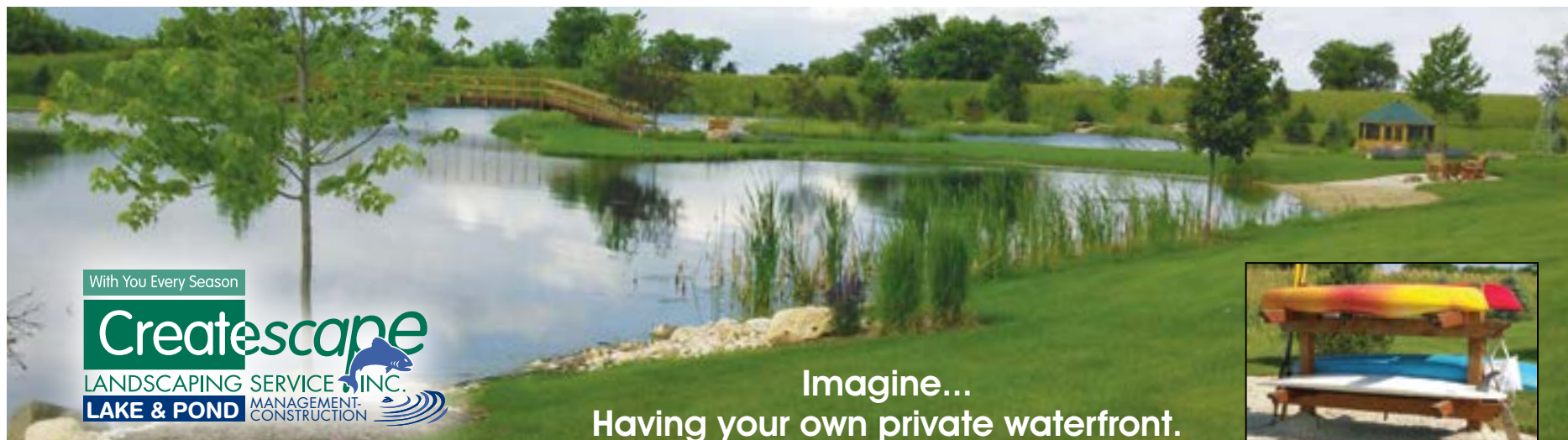


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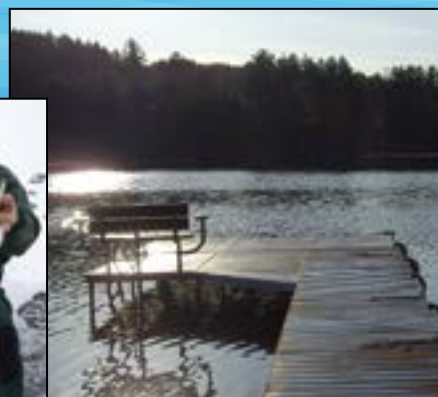


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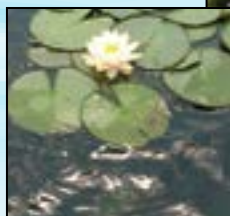
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