

January/February 2008

Vol. 1. Issue 3

# On Wisconsin Outdoors

With the Dick Ellis Experts

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Photo By Dick Ellis

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# Whitewater And Quietwater

## Bears don't swim and mice don't jump

By Steve Henske

I wish I had a dollar for every time someone asked me about bear problems on our Wisconsin and Canadian canoe trips! It is kind of ironic, actually. Missy and I live on the western outskirts of Stevens Point, almost the geographic center of Wisconsin, and just yesterday I was examining the "destruction" a small bear accomplished only 200 yards behind our house on the edge of our marsh. The bear was intent on reaching the abundant wild grapes that we have growing on our property and the snapped limbs, flattened ferns and grape vines strewn around told the story. If I had not ventured back there and saw where it fed I would have never known the bear was here. The irony is that many of us live in areas with healthy bear populations but fear them to death while on a camping trip. We all know a person or two that refuses to 'rough it in a tent' due to the impending midnight bear attack.

Personally, I have had very few close calls with bears. There have been numerous encounters, but I have never been truly threatened. Probably the most hair-raising experience was on a moose hunt in northern Ontario a few years back. I wanted to hunt a small bulrush flowage lake four miles south of our fly-in camp. This required me to boat to the end of the lake where we camped, and then take a foot portage of 200 meters around a falls and rapids leading to the smaller lake. The trail, a game trail, took the shortest route through a dense boggy black spruce thicket carpeted with knee-deep sphagnum moss, caribou lichen and lots and lots of cranberries and bear berries (and it smelled as good as it sounds). I should have scouted it out better the day before but the anticipation of a great moose spot made me blind to all the bear sign. At 5:30 AM on opening day, in absolute darkness and armed with a mini-mag flashlight and a .308 Ruger rifle (of little use when you cannot see), I broke a cardinal rule and



The paddling crew settles into camp during our Serpent and Berens River Expedition, Northern Ontario, July 2005. The 60-liter blue food barrels are rigged with portage harnesses and have proven to be quite bear resistant. (Photo by Steve Henske)

walked in on a black bear peacefully enjoying his breakfast. A bear's jaw snapping and huffing in the darkness just beyond the next spruce is not the

best way to start a moose hunt. I heeded the warning, backed out and the bear went the other direction. No

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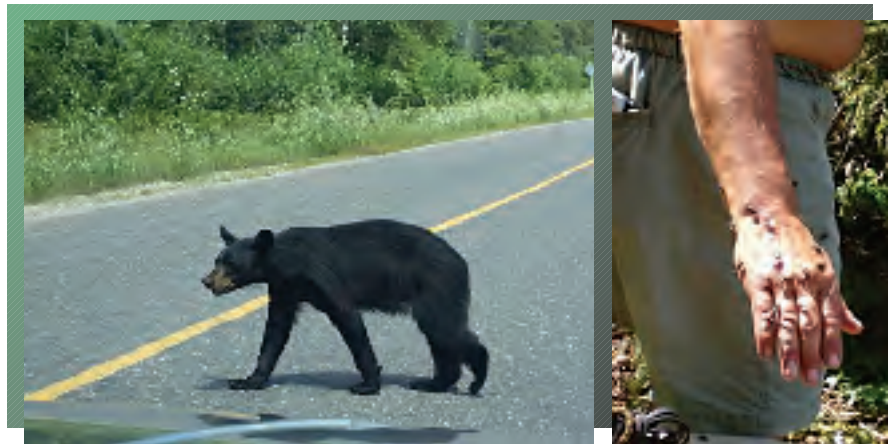


longer do I tiptoe through obvious bear country. It is wise to walk with a heavy foot.

Longtime fellow paddlers Jeff Konopacky of Stevens Point and Dave Sunstedt of Waverly, Iowa, have always claimed that "bears can't swim". This claim was aimed at easing the anxiety of their wives Kosha Konopacky and Kathy Sundstedt when we are paddling in the bush. Well Kosha and Kathy knew better but played along to appease the guys. Kosha enjoyed giving Jeff a dirty look as they watched a beautiful mature black bear swim across Ontario's Brightsand River last summer. The jig was up... black bears really DO swim. Actually, bears love to swim and will seek out a cool dip when the bugs are bad or the heat is on. Keep this in mind when on a wilderness lake and seeking a nice island campsite. We tend to look for smaller islands during the bug season since a windblown island will have a lot less mosquitoes and black flies than a lakeshore site. Also remember that this is no secret to the bears. They will not hesitate to swim a half mile across the lake to get some relief, and an island looks as good to them as it does to us. We inspect every potential campsite for ANY sign of bears (scat, tracks, scratching posts), and if found we move on to the next spot.

Of more concern is choosing an over-used campsite that has seen many campers, and "shore lunch" spots created by fly-in fishermen on Canadian lakes. The reputation of bears raiding sites at public campgrounds is a reflection of poor housekeeping by previous campers and fishermen since bruins are opportunistic feeders. As far as the bears are concerned, there IS such a thing as a free lunch. We avoid these places like the plague. Our paddling destinations tend to be extremely remote. Since they lack previous interaction with humans, true wilderness bears are much more wary and less apt to walk into one's campsites. Knock on wood, but in the many trips I have done over the last thirty years, not once have we lost a thing to marauding bear.

So, if bears are not a problem then what is? My list of frequent camp visitors includes skunks, raccoons, red squirrels, chipmunks, coyotes, deer, moose, weasels, otters, numerous snakes plus a host of unknowns. The chippies and squirrels get honorable mention, but the worst are those #@&\* mice! If the diminutive mouse weighed 50 pounds it could impact the earth worse than global warming. They can get into any pack and cause an unbelievable amount of damage. We have had packs strung out between trees (to




(Left) A black bear on a deserted Canadian highway is a much more welcome sight than a bear visiting your camp. This scrawny youngster was spotted just south of Armstrong, Ontario last July. (Right) Bugs or bears? At least we know what to expect with insects. Gary Klonowski of Madison displays an armful of "friendly flies" while portaging a section of the Lookout River in Ontario. (Photos by Steve Henske)

keep them from the bears) and watched mice crawling out the guy lines or jump three feet to reach the packs. They don't eat much but will chew holes through everything you own. In my experience the most feared camp-raiding critters when paddling the bush are the boreal red-backed vole and the white-footed deer mouse.

#### GENERAL RULES TO AVOID PROBLEMS WITH THE LOCAL FAUNA:

- ✓ Always inspect your campsite before digging in. Fresh bear sign, or a slab of bacon nailed to a tree by the last camping group says you should find a better spot.
- ✓ Hang your designated food pack at least 10 feet off the ground suspended between two trees. We no longer use food packs and instead have gone to 60-liter plastic food barrels with snap-ring lids and strap harnesses. The barrel is fastened to a stout tree with a carabiner away from camp. Generally, this is odor-free and bear-proof.
- ✓ Clean your fish away from camp.
- ✓ Never ever bring food into your tent. Never store food in your other packs.
- ✓ Burn your cans and trash. This eliminates the food odors. Carry the burned cans and foil out with you.
- ✓ Carry "bear spray" (the same product as self-defense "pepper spray") if you feel the need for some type of bear defense.
- ✓ Do not pitch your tent on an obvious game trail. (Don't laugh, I have some stories).

Remote wilderness canoe tripping inserts you into the core habitat of the local wildlife. You hope for a glimpse and that once-in-a-lifetime photograph. That is why we go there. Inviting them into camp is not a good idea and can

lead to a "close encounter of the wrong kind." Following these basic camp rules will help assure your safety and the safety of the animals that live where you camp. It will also lead to peaceful nights of sleep serenaded by the toads and loons, and not the sound of your pots, pans, and tomorrow's breakfast disappearing over the next ridge. 

Steve Henske is a veteran canoeist having paddled thousands of miles on the Canadian Shield, and many more in Wisconsin. He resides in Stevens Point, WI, with his wife and paddling partner Missy, and faithful canoe rocking specialist Cody, a golden retriever.



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## On Wisconsin Outdoors

With the Dick Ellis Experts

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# Earn-A-Buck

## Trophy hunter forgets his doe

By Dick Ellis

Shortly after I murdered the big Dunn County buck, but before I had repented for the crime, I felt certain that the killing was justified. Earn-A-Buck? Oh, I had earned this buck, in my mind anyway. I had earned it by spending hours in sub-zero temperatures on the cusp of a new December. I had earned it by standing strapped to a tree on my Lone Wolf during the first great storm of 07. Maybe more than anything else, I had earned it by eating JJ Reich's venison breakfast, venison lunch, and venison suppers for those three infamous days on his family farm near Colfax when I traveled quickly down the road from Wisconsin Sportsman to common criminal.

I understand... I did not technically Earn-The-Buck. I did not harvest an antlerless deer that would have Earned-The-Buck. I understand that it stated clearly on page 2,756 of the DNR Deer Regulations that I had to Earn-The-Buck by shooting the doe. But allow me to tell my story.

It begins with an empty freezer after the archery and gun seasons in Vilas County. It begins with a hungry wife and daughter, and my responsibility to provide for them. Actually they're a bit fat from being regulars in the drive-thrus but the "hungry" thing adds a bit of drama, you think? It does begin when JJ Reich walks up to the base on my tree during the Wisconsin muzzleloader season wearing a deer-in-the-headlights look.

"I had the smoke pole right on your doe," JJ says. "I couldn't shoot. Every time I moved my finger to the trigger and looked down the barrel little spikes grew up on her head. I'd raise my head, the antlers would retract. Lay my eyes back on the sights, up they'd come. Up. Down. Up. Down. Like a periscope. I'm paranoid. Earn-A-Buck is making me paranoid! I know I'm going to break the law. I KNOW IT."

I came down the tree, slapped JJ in the face and told him to get hold of himself. I learned that on the old "Get Smart" television series in the 60s. I think my dad learned it too, except he used a belt on us four brothers. And he never used words like "Get a hold of yourself". He used words like, "Maybe now you'll behave in church." Anyway, I told JJ to go relax, in fact suggested that he might want to eat the rest of the venison peanut butter...chunky style.

I'd continue the hunt solo and seek out the antlerless critter so we could both stalk some serious antlers. One full hour before sunset on December 1, the white-horned eight-pointer worked his way up an oak-splashed gully wash protected by an ocean of scrub brush.

At least I could practice. I leaned around the birch strapped in tight on the treestand and laid the .50 caliber Knight on the vitals. No way would I shoot him. Then I shot him. We were both happy as larks one second, there was a big plume of smoke, everything cleared and then only one of us was happy. The other one of us was lying there dead with a big hole in the boiler room. I wasn't sure how any of it happened. Then a little voice whispered right in my ear, "Nice shot...you earned it."

JJ came running through the alfalfa a few minutes later. "What the heck....," he says. "Look at the size of that thing.... where's the doe?"

"Is that a mock chicken venison leg in your mouth?" I answered.



Dick Ellis buys a one-way ticket to the slammer with his muzzleloader. (Photo by JJ Reich)

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*"We were both happy as larks one second, there was a big plume of smoke, everything cleared and then only one of us was happy..."*

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"You didn't Earn-The-Buck did you?" JJ says. "I knew it, I knew it. We're going to the Big House."

"Course I earned it," I said, slapping him in the face and accepting his snack of venison malted milk balls. "My upper lip is still stuck to the barrel and I've had to go to the bathroom bad for six hours. I'd say that's some serious dues paid. Relax already, we have options here."

The options came down to the following. Admit the crime and suggest to the wardens to let bygones be bygones. Suggest also that they could keep the body except for the backstraps and all the steaks and I would just keep the head. After we dismissed that idea JJ and I considered getting rid of all the parts that identified this as a male deer. We would then simply act nonchalant and register it in Colfax as a doe. JJ is pretty sharp though and he thought that the registration officials might notice that you could see the brains through the missing skull cap if we took the antlers off.

Finally, we considered registering a road kill we remembered passing out

on County Double B as our antlerless deer. But when we got there we surmised that the road kill was from June. We surmised this by the white skull, the picked clean ribs, the missing legs except for the two sticking straight up and the fact that the 12 inches of fur that was left on the carcass had white fawn spots with the exception of the spray painted orange and the note pinned on it from Bill, the pick-up man dated June 8...2003.

"What do you think?" I asked. "It just might work."

That's about when we abandoned all tentative plans and instead adopted a plan to smuggle the big buck to Vilas County where there is no Earn-A-Buck and in fact there are no bucks at all...or does. Just a fat population of wolves. The buck fit nicely in the front passenger seat of JJ's Subaru Forester (I know it, he should be slapped) dressed smartly in one of JJ's mother-in-law's Sunday dresses and brim hats.

We almost made it. Just three miles west of Minocqua on Highway 70, red lights and sirens told us the jig was up. Out of the car piled our worst nightmare;


seven wardens, the national guard, two Vilas County Sheriffs, Hillary Clinton, Terrill Owens and that nun I referenced in the last column from my fourth grade class at St. Lukes. I knew it was really her this time when she pulled out a ruler and cracked me right on the knuckles.

"I knew you were no good the first time I sent you to Father Mehan's office in 67," she says. "You...you...you...buck killer without an Earn-A-Buck sticker you,"

"Who's in the passenger seat, son?" the head warden asks JJ. "My mother-in-law?" JJ asks back, hoping he's convincing.

That's when the Warden, I think his name was Gordon Borden, took off his mirrored sunglasses and slapped JJ right in the face. "Don't lie to me son," he whispers, finger thumping JJ's chest. "Mother-in-Laws don't have horns...that big anyway."

Today, our sentence continues. No hunting. No firearms ownership. And 10 years in the slammer...or reading the 2007 DNR Deer hunting regulations cover to cover...which ever comes first.

I know....I know. We earned it. 

*EDITOR NOTE: There are some truths to this story. JJ Reich did pass on a doe that he verified as such after passing on the good shot due to a bit of "paranoia" and I did have the brute at 45 yards broadside four hours later December 1. We should have tagged two deer but never pulled the trigger.*

# A Time To Share

## The Old Man, the double barrel, and the youngster

By Jeff Nania

The headlights were barely able to keep up with the darkness as the Old Man's truck bumped, rattled, and jerked down a dirt path through the pre-dawn. They were headed to a little-used boat landing on the bank of the Wisconsin River.

The weather report held great promise: overcast skies, north winds, and periods of light rain turning to snow. Fall in Wisconsin—no better place to be.

As they came to the landing, the Old Man instructed his younger companion. "Get out and grab hold of that long line in front of the boat. When the boat starts to float, hold tight. The current here is plenty fast, and if you let go the boat won't stop 'till it gets to Prairie du Chien."

The Old Man slowly backed the trailer in and soon the swift current lifted the boat free. The truck was pulled off as far as possible in the unlikely event that

someone else wanted to use the landing that day. The Old Man opened the back of the truck and out jumped his lab, smiling from head to toe.

"Ready for a boat ride, Louie?" the Old Man asked the dog.

The lab ran to the boat and jumped in. With everybody aboard, the Youngster lifted the long pole and pushed the boat out into the current. As the boat swept downstream, the Old Man pulled the rope on his old Evinrude and it sputtered to life, settling quickly into an even purr.

The Old Man pulled out his thermos and poured himself a cup of coffee, offering some to his partner.

"You know I don't drink coffee," was the reply.

Yes, he remembered the kid didn't drink coffee. What a shame. The Old Man and his friends over the years had solved many of the world's problems over a good cup of coffee.

The Evinrude smoothly pushed them down river. The dog perched on the flat bow platform, ears trailing in



A young Wisconsin hunter holds vigil over a spread of decoys on Lake Koshkonong during a recent youth duck hunt. (Photo by Dick Ellis)

the breeze, stretching his neck, making sure not to miss anything. As they passed close to shore, a beaver slapped its tail in alarm and nearly sent the dog over the side in hot pursuit.

Soon they came to the lee of a small island, killed the engine, and poled themselves into position next to a dead fall white pine. The boat was tied at the bow, and a pole, driven into the riverbed

their watches. The dog sat between them, his stare fixed on one of the bobbing decoys, daring it to try and swim away.

"Shooting time, load up," the Old Man said as he quietly broke the barrels of his LC Smith double, inserted two Bismuth shells, a No. 5 in the right barrel and a No. 4 in the left.

At the same time a mechanical racket came from the bow of the boat as the Youngster readied a brand new autoloader.

"You are making enough noise to scare off every duck for miles," complained the Old Man. "I don't know why you didn't get yourself a good double barrel instead of that contraption. After all it is in the good Lord's plan that folks were meant to shoot side-by-sides."

"Well this gun is lighter and it doesn't kick as much," the Youngster said. "And just how do you figure the Lord has anything to do with the type of gun you shoot?"

"If the good Lord wanted you to shoot a single-barrel gun, he would have given you one eye. If he wanted you to shoot an over and under, you'd have been born with one eye on top of the other. But you weren't, were you?"

with a trapper's axe, anchored the stern. The Youngster, dragging the decoy bag, waded cautiously out into the cold water and began to set out their spread as the Old Man coached from the boat.

"Make sure you run a line of those blocks all the way past the point, so the birds can see them coming and going," he said. "No, bring them a little closer. Don't put those goose decoys so far up on the sand bar."

Soon everything was ready; the pair sat quietly watching the sky and

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# Great Late Icing Great Lakes browns

By Jason Gaurkee

It is no secret. For Great Lakes browns, the spring and fall calendar periods have seen a spike in angler participation and catch rates as well. In fact, some of the biggest brown trout ever taken by anglers were during these periods. We are being told that record numbers of fisherman are partaking in this phenomenal fishery. However, once the fall run has peaked and passed, the lunatic fringe follows suit.

Taking browns during the frozen water period, on the other hand, up to now had been a closely guarded secret, usually reserved by local anglers in the "know". Guides like Eric Haataja, Dave Sura and Brian Settele, pioneers of the hard water brown pattern, have shown us the way and once the frozen water brown trout bug bites an angler, ice fishing will never be the same again.

## LOCATION

Call it global warming. Call it a weather pattern. What ever it is has prevented the Great Lakes from having had a solid freeze in quite a while. Because of this, brown trout ice fishing locations are isolated to areas with protected water. Marinas are backwater areas protected from wind, waves, and ocean liner traffic, which can keep ice from forming safely on the main lake. Marina areas offer the best, and often times the only ice fishing available. When choosing the best marinas, look for those adjacent to river and/or warm water sources. These areas draw baitfish and ultimately browns.

Since browns are always on the move, finding a "hot spot" within a marina can be an exercise in futility. Instead, we focus on finding "hot areas." The difference being, due to the brown's nomadic nature and that of their prey, fish seldom hold to an isolated piece of structure or particular spot. Rock piles, weed lines or other such structure will not hold fish for any length of time. Instead, browns will utilize areas, often times vast in size, cruising around in search of their food source and rarely stopping for anything.

It is best to find what I refer to as fish highways. In a nutshell, a fish highway is a highly traveled area influenced by baitfish movements and current. These areas can be located just about anywhere in a given marina. Components of a fish highway are breakwater walls, navigation channels, break lines, depressions in a marina's

bottom and the mouth of a marina, which actually bottlenecks predator and baitfish movements. Spending time scouting a marina during the open water period will help you locate these key structural elements. Time on the water will help determine these areas.

## TACTICS

As a rule, bait out produces artificial presentations. Skein, spawn sacks, golden shiners and gizzard shad under a tip up or on a slip float rod will take more fish in a given day than all other techniques combined when fish are in a negative or neutral mood.

My typical set up consists of two tip ups rigged with skein (fresh if possible) and golden shiners. With skein, I generally tie on a number four or number six Mustad triple grip treble hook weighted with enough shot to just keep your line vertical. Treble hooks do a better job of holding the skein on the hook. They also up hooking percentages. I start by placing my presentation on or just off the bottom.

With live bait, such as golden shiners, I change up the procedure a little. Instead of working on or near bottom, I will suspend approximately half way down from the ice's surface. The strike ratio seems to be much higher when live bait is suspended opposed to laying it on the bottom.

On my tip ups I stay away from heavy braids or dacron type lines. Instead, I spool my trout tip ups with eight pound monofilament. I do this for a couple reasons. One, you can get more mono on a tip up. Browns and the occasional steelhead can spool you in a jiffy if you are not paying attention to



Jason Gaurkee holds an open-water brown taken near a Lake Michigan power plant.



The Milwaukee Harbor is one of many great locations to target winter browns.

your tip ups. Having more line can save you from the frustration of losing lots of line, not to mention a fish. Reason number two is water can be quite clear in the Great Lakes after freeze up. Using a clear monofilament is a much more stealthful approach.

Whenever browns are actively feeding, or in a positive mood, swimming and jigging lures are the single best presentation choice. I will always work a jig stick with spoons like a Moonshine, Cleo, Swedish Pimple or Kastmaster. Other good options are swim lures like jigging Rapalas, Nils Masters or Chubby Darters. I have also had some success with vertically ripping Rattle Traps. With jigging and swimming lures the key is to always keep them on the move.

For jigging rods, I tend to use a medium heavy or heavy action St Croix ice rod paired with a larger than average spinning reel spooled with at least eighty yards of six to eight pound test. These browns are superior fighters often times making long runs under the ice. Finesse equipment has no place in your brown trout arsenal.

## TIMELY HOT SPOTS

Good ice fishing exists from Racine to as far north as Door County. The Racine Harbor and even the Root River provide fantastic action all winter long. It is both a quality and quantity fishery. Look for action to begin in early January if Mother Nature cooperates with subzero temperatures.

Milwaukee has several locations, which are worth a shot. The Summerfest lagoon is a small man made bay or lagoon located just off shore of the Summerfest Grounds. It has a soft bottom and adequate depth for holding winter browns. This is normally the first area to ice over in Milwaukee. Action here can begin as early as December. Again, weather cooperating.

Located in Milwaukee as well,


McKinley Marina and South Shore Yacht Club are similar in size and make up. Both produce fish all winter. One key but often-overlooked area is the "gap" areas in the breakwater barriers, that surround the marinas. These areas funnel fish in and out of the marina and are hot once the ice becomes safe.

Although growing in popularity, Kewaunee is perhaps the most overlooked port on our side of the lake, especially for icing browns. This area has a reputation for producing BIG browns. There are three key areas to pay attention to here.

The marina just east of the Kewaunee River launch offers adequate depth combined with some current. Just east of this area is a deep channel (nine to twenty feet deep), which leads to another marina. Focus on this area both early and late in the season. The eastern most marina area is adjacent to the deepest water available. This is perhaps the best of the three key spots in Kewaunee.

Other good possibilities are Port Washington, Sheboygan, Two Rivers and Algoma holder of the current State record brown trout. All four of these ports have nearby marina areas and offer a quality and quantity fishery.

## ICE SAFETY

Thin ice often times equals trouble. Due to the size of the Great Lakes, freeze up is usually weeks after first ice inland. Check with local bait shops, guides or other anglers or web sites like Lake Link before venturing out there. For safety, carry a spud and thoroughly check the area. Always fish with a partner and carry a cell phone. Be safe. No fish is worth dying for. We'll see you on the ice. 

Jason Gaurkee has been guiding, writing and filming television shows on the waters of Wisconsin and beyond for over ten years. He can be contacted at [jmgaurkee@yahoo.com](mailto:jmgaurkee@yahoo.com) or (920) 851-6655.

# Get Jiggy With It

## Hardwater walleyes

By Paul Mueller

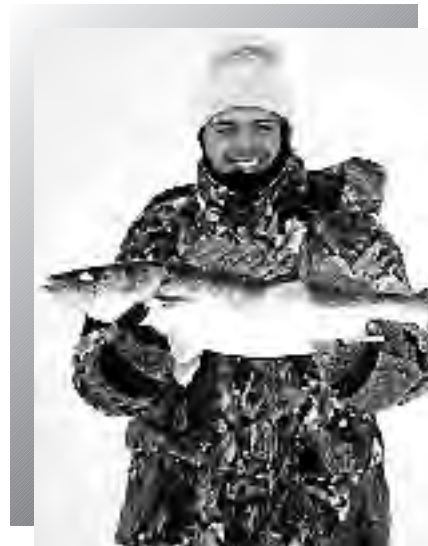
When the ice is thick enough to dance on, it's time to "get jiggy" for walleyes. To be consistently successful ice fishing for walleyes, two of the main ingredients are technology and technique.

The technology available to assist the anglers today is nothing short of amazing. Those ice anglers that aren't taking advantage of it are wasting hours that they could be catching fish. Two of the main technological resources are flashers and underwater cameras. Both provide similar assistance. By using each you can get significant help in identifying depth, bottom content or structure, and have the ability to mark or see fish. After using these tools for several years, fishing without them feels like fighting with one arm tied behind your back.

Of particular help is marking or seeing your presentation, and seeing the fish's response to it. Walleyes are

like people eating at a restaurant—they don't prefer the same thing the same way every day. This technology allows you to change and refine your jigging technique every day. I usually tie on a jigging Rapala; Nilsmaster or a Moonshine Lures jigging spoon when I get on the ice. I will start jigging by dropping my bait to the bottom and reeling up a foot or two. I will watch my bait closely on the camera or flasher.

I have three basic jigging motions. One is very aggressive—I will hold my bait at the desired depth and pull the rod tip up a foot and a half very quickly. I repeat the motion three or four times and hold the bait still for a count of ten. Nearby fish will often come in for a look to check out what the commotion is about. I hold my bait still to see if the fish will strike it. If they don't, I repeat the original steps until the fish bites or swims away. If this technique isn't producing bites, I move on to number two. After I have the bait at the desired depth, I slowly raise the




Ben Eggum of Pine River with a walleye caught jigging by the author. (Photo by Paul Mueller)

rod tip up and down (about 16 inches), almost like you rock in a rocking chair. This slow motion imitates a dying bait-fish and entices finicky biters.

Keep a close eye on your camera

or flasher to evaluate the fish's response to your presentation. If this presentation doesn't produce bites; it's time to move on to number three. I will hold the bait a foot or two off the bottom and then rapidly drop my rod tip. This will slam the bait into the bottom. I repeat this two to three times and then hold the bait a foot or two off the bottom for a count of ten. I repeat these steps until it triggers a bite or the fish swim away.

Clear patterns will develop. One day one motion will trigger all the fish, and on days when the fish are aggressive, all three may work. As you study the fish response to your presentation, begin to modify the three techniques into multiple combinations. The key to consistent success is modifying based on how fish react to what you are doing on each particular day. 

To book a trip with Master Captain Paul Mueller contact him at (262) 490-7621 or [walleyefish@sbcglobal.net](mailto:walleyefish@sbcglobal.net).

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# When The Jig Is Up

## Targeting suspended fish

By Phil Schweik

Too often we head onto the ice intent on bringing home a nice day's catch and instead end up with nothing. It happens to all of us, even when conditions tell us the fish should be jumping out of the water. No matter what we do though, the fish just don't cooperate.

Targeting suspended fish is a "trick" that has saved me on numerous occasions from going home with only the dreaded skunk in the basket. Until many of us allow ourselves to think differently and take icefishing to different heights...or at least depths... we won't catch fish when fishing is tough. Most of us were brought up fishing right on the bottom for walleyes, pike and panfish. I know I was. Keep the bait near the structure and you will catch the fish right? Well sometimes right.

Without knowing any better many years ago I was fishing a large impoundment of the Wisconsin River, working a deep channel along the shoreline and catching a few nice panfish and an occasional pike. Adjacent to the deep channel was a



Tracy Ryerson and son Mitchell, of Wausau, with suspended walleyes taken 17 feet down in 35 feet of water on the Big Eau Pleine. (Photo by Phil Schweik)

shallow weedbed with the weeds extending up to about one foot below the ice in three to five feet of water. Every time I hooked a pike it would head for the vegetation. The pike were holding in the weeds, would venture out looking for food and would retreat again to the cover when successful.

After targeting those fish over open pockets in the weeds proved virtually impossible, I set my tip-ups running bait just six inches below the ice. It was almost as if I had found the mother-lode of pike. That winter alone a few friends and I caught well over 250 pike from that area. Although many of them were taken several times, all of them were caught by running our baits right over the weeds and just under the ice.

Other anglers would see all of the action and would set up around us, looking for those open weed pockets or trying to set up near the bottom. The result was little or no action or tangled lines and bait. By running our baits suspended as we did, we were able to capitalize on targeting the fish right in their own living room. I have adapted this method to many other bodies of water over the years and it has worked very well on all of them.

One general rule of thumb: you can catch fish that are working the bottom by following contour lines and holding on structure. But if you really want to catch fish consistently, try working deep water suspended fish.

Fish that are holding high in the water column are aggressive fish that are looking for food. These fish will not hesitate to take your offerings. When fish are located up and off of the bottom anywhere from four feet to 20 feet these are fish searching for food. Unlike their bottom feeding instincts that will cause them to be more cautious and picky,



The author's daughter, Cassie Schweik, with a nice suspended pike taken and released on the Wisconsin River system near Mosinee. (Photo by Phil Schweik)

suspended fish will strike out after your bait with a lot more aggression.

Finding suspended fish has become very easy with the introduction of electronics. Years ago anglers simply worked their bait from top to bottom hoping to move in on a school of fish or to pick up an occasional traveler. Today, flasher units like Vexilar and Marcum tell the fisherman exactly what depth the fish are holding at. Flasher units also allow the angler to see the bait working in the water column. You know exactly where your bait is in relation to the fish and what the fish is doing in relation to your jigging actions. Whether it's aggressive jigging or subtle action that turns fish on, you literally see exactly what triggers the strike and repeat the action to increase the hit consistency.

On a recent trip to a local reservoir I was set up over 35 feet of water with fish holding 17 feet down. Simply dropping my jig down to that depth and gradually jigging it upward was more than the

fish could resist. They struck it with such aggression I actually had to loosen the drag on my reel so that my line would not break on the strike. But if I lowered my bait below the level of the fish, they would have nothing to do with it. The bait had to be at eye level and then slowly jigged upward to initiate a strike.

This takes us back to another rule of thumb: fish are always looking up and will strike out or move up for bait placed before them or set above them. If your bait is placed below them, though, it will seldom if ever be hit.

Next time you are out on the water and the fishing is slow, start targeting the deeper water roamers. Once you start targeting suspended fish there is no limit to what you can do, except that coveted Wisconsin limit that you carry out in your basket.

Contact Phil Schweik and Hooksetters Fishing Services at [www.hooksetters.biz](http://www.hooksetters.biz).

### A Time To Share... (Continued from page 6)

Nope, you were born with your eyes side-by-side, just like the barrels on any self-respecting shotgun."

Just then the dog looked to the sky and tracked a flight of mallards. The Old Man got on the call and began to coax them in with sweet mallard music. "Get on that call, kid, make a little noise," he said.

The Youngster picked up the call and tried, but the notes that came out did not compare.

"Get ready, here they come."

The mallards set their wings and started into the decoys. They both leaped up. The Youngster fired quickly, cleanly missing. The Old Man, with a swing like oiled ball bearings, fired once and fired twice. The dog was sent and soon two birds were brought to hand.

"Pretty fair shooting, if I do say so myself," the Old Man said, chuckling. "Double with a double."

The morning grew older, ducks came and some went. Before noon they had all the birds they wanted, picked

up, and headed in. Back at the landing, they loaded the boat and the truck, and once again drove off down the rutted road. As they bounced along, the Youngster's frustration finally burst.

"Why do you even take me hunting?" the young disciple asked. "I don't know how to set up decoys, or blow a call. I don't have the right kind of gun and can't shoot worth a darn. I don't even like coffee. I'm sure a bad choice for a hunting partner."

The Old Man looked over and

smiled. "Why did you come today?" he asked.

"I don't know," the Youngster replied. "I just like going hunting, being out here, watching the dog, and, ah, you know, I just like to be with you."

The Old Man looked down thoughtfully.

"Becky, that makes you the very best kind of hunting partner."

Jeff Nania is executive director of the Wisconsin Waterfowl Association.

# 10 New Year's Resolutions

## For the musky fisherman

By John Kubiak

**M**uskies are the most difficult freshwater fish to catch. At times it seems impossible to even get one to follow, let alone catch one. When the big number hits, you want to be ready. Below are 10 things that every musky fisherman should resolve to do for 2008.

1. I promise to study more. If I had a dollar for every lake map I had, I'd be rich. Actually I would probably be rich if I didn't have so many lake maps. I love breaking out a book of lake maps and searching for my next hot spot. This is a great activity during the winter when your favorite lake is frozen.
2. I promise I will use the proper tackle and equipment. Don't get caught with gear that is undersized. Your next cast could be a strike from a 50" musky. Do you really want to fight a 50" fish on your 6' medium action rod that has the 20 lb mono and nylon leader? Before you use anything, say to yourself, "Could this tackle handle a big fish?"
3. I promise I will get out on the water more often. You don't have to fish all day every time you go out. Even if you only have a few hours to spare, get out there. I concentrated on getting out either before sunrise or after sunset most of the season. By only fishing during peak times, my hours-per-fish average was the best it's ever been.
4. I promise to sweat the small stuff. Constantly check your line and leaders for any cuts, nicks, or abra-

sions, and sharpen your hooks often. Terminal tackle can be a weak link. Paying attention to the small details can be the difference between a fish in the boat, and a lost fish.

5. I promise to execute a proper Figure 8 after every cast. Many times when fishing is slow, we become lazy with our Figure 8s. Being lazy cost me a nice fish in the low 40" range this fall. I wasn't paying attention and did a lazy Figure 8. As I was pulling the bait out of the water I noticed the fish making an aggressive move at the bait. It actually had the bait in its mouth, but I pulled it right out. A good deep Figure 8 probably would have gotten me another fish to add to my total for the year.
6. I promise to fight the fish properly and not try to horse it in. This is a lesson I learned the hard way on my first trip to Canada. I lost several big fish by trying to horse them in. Let the fish dictate how much pressure you put on. If the fish wants line, give it a little. This is especially true of a boat side strike. Learn to use your free spool, and give the fish some line. Just make sure you maintain proper tension so the fish does not get any slack.
7. I promise to give a released fish every opportunity to live. Have a plan in place for unhooking and releasing fish. The goal is to make sure the fish is only out of the water for a few seconds. Always keep the net in the water. I keep bungee cords in the boat when I'm fishing by myself so I can bungee the net in




*This 45-inch musky was unhooked, photographed and released with minimal stress to the fish due to proper planning. (Photo by Scott Rice)*

place with the fish in the water while I'm getting my tools ready. I have a long nose pliers, jaw spreader, and hook cutters within reach. Sometimes it's easier to just cut the hooks to free a fish. The last thing to do is ask yourself, "Do I really need another photo of a 34" musky?" If the answer is no, unhook it at boat side and let it swim free. Avoid any unnecessary handling of the fish.

8. I promise to take better pictures. Make sure the camera is ready before you take the fish out of the net for photos. Take one or two quick shots and get the fish back in the water. Be aware of the position of the sun before you take the fish

out of the net. Shooting directly into the sun can make for bad photos. If you are fishing by yourself, again, have a plan in place. I have a tripod and my camera has a timer. I always put the tripod in the same place, and I know exactly where I need to stand to get the entire fish in the photo. Practice beforehand. There is nothing worse than a photo of a big fish that is either out of focus, or with the tail cut off. Been there, done that.

9. I promise to keep better records of fishing data. The best way to repeat a hot pattern is to record all the data surrounding the catch. I record date, time, water temperature, wind, moon period, baits used, etc. When you encounter similar conditions, many times the same techniques will pay off year after year.
10. I promise to show common courtesy to other anglers. If you see that someone is fishing a spot and working it a certain direction, don't zoom up ahead and cut them off. There are plenty of spots for everyone to fish. Also, don't buzz past people at high speeds. Slow down as you go past people that are fishing. People will appreciate it and return the favor.

These 10 resolutions are things I have learned over the last 11 seasons of musky fishing. Some of them I have learned the hard way. Hopefully this will help you to put more fish in the boat, and ensure that the fish swim away strong. 

*John Kubiak is an avid musky fisherman who fishes when he can. He has 85 fish up to 48 inches caught and released.*

# Inland Alternative

## Target trout for the fight, the table

By Chris Powell

**I**ce fishing in Wisconsin is in full swing. Ice anglers have been busy catching panfish, walleyes and northern pike like they do every winter. I love to do that as well. But after a while I am in the mood for something a little different. That is

when I set up to target inland trout through the ice, a type of ice fishing most anglers overlook. It is easy, a lot of fun, and makes for a great winter meal. It is also a great opportunity to catch large rainbows, browns, and brookies.

I am not going to give away any secret spots in this article, but I will help to point you in the right direction.

The first thing you need to do is pick up a copy of the 2007-2008 Wisconsin Trout Regulations. This is a must have, as most waters in the state fall under different regulations. You can browse trout destinations in the booklet by county. Remember, most trout destinations are only open until September 30th, so for ice fishing, look for lakes or ponds that are open until March 2nd



*Chris Powell with a couple nice trout taken through the ice in northwest Wisconsin.*

# Midnight Madness

## Geneva anglers outlast snow, cold for trophy walleye

By Dick Ellis

Under the quiet hum of the kicker-motor, the 19 foot Ranger turtle-crawled down yet another shore of Lake Geneva and the nocturnal hunt for trophy walleye dragged on through the cold January night. Black lights mounted port and starboard near the rear of the boat illuminated four lines disappearing into the dark to lead perch and cisco-imitation crank baits wobbling on in search of just one precious strike.

The hunt had begun at 9:00 pm and midnight madness had come and gone almost three hours before. A more general insanity had since taken John Trossen, Kevin Seymour, and a cargo-full of skill and perseverance closer to another sunrise. But seemingly no closer to the glowing-eyed prize like the walleye better than 13 pounds they had taken here on a cold December night. Or the 30-some fish between nine and 11 pounds they expect to catch and release over a season here of playing in the dark.

"We'll call it quits when we hit this point," Trossen said. "If we don't get a walleye by 2:00 am we usually head in. We're way past that now."

Temperatures hovered in the low teens, and new ice forming quickly on any protected water promised to soon make just a memory Geneva's claim as Wisconsin's sole inland lake still open. Already one-third of the 5,400 acres was frozen over. And the most recent round of snow had brought with it only a guess of where the moon just past the full phase had been hanging minutes before.

But a certain warmth was also beginning to fall over the Ranger,

ignited by new activity on the electronic fish locator. The tension and excitement grew on board as below, swarms of baitfish began to lift from the bottom and then to break up as the black marks meaning walleye or northern lifted too. To seasoned Geneva veterans, the signs of another impending feeding cycle were clear.

"The most important thing is to listen to your locator," said Seymour, of Milwaukee, who had hired Trossen as a guide to learn the secrets of Geneva night walleye fishing, initiating a friendship and bond as fishermen. "Read your electronics and believe your electronics. Let the fish dictate where you should be, shallow or deep."

The rod bent and Trossen moved quickly to lift it from the holder. Soon, with disappointment in his voice, he announced, "I think that's another northern."

Despite the pike's reputation as a daylight predator, six northerns had already been boated and released. This team will average six to eight pike while targeting walleyes on a slow night and about 20 northerns during fast action between 26 and 36 inches. Their big pike is 40 inches. And Trossen has seen two northerns in the 50-inch class, "with fins as big as crappies" before losing the fish.

At midnight on this trip, the same activity on the fish locator showing clouds of active forage fish and numerous active gamefish rising had initiated the same sense of anticipation on the Ranger. Within minutes, two pike at 36 inches were boated and released. But few northerns will appease the walleye hunters.

Since the mid-1990s, Trossen, already an extremely successful angler



John Trossen shows the walleye better than 10 pounds taken in open water at 2:30 a.m. January 8th after almost six hours on Lake Geneva. Six northerns, including two fish in the 36 inch class, were also taken around midnight. (Photo by Dick Ellis)

on other species of game and panfish here and owner of the Pier Bait and Tackle and Guide Service, had made the effort to learn how to successfully target the giant walleyes of Lake Geneva. The effort evolved exclusively to nocturnal assaults based on his knowledge of the fish and this awesome water with a maximum depth of 146 feet. Ninety percent of the lake is 70 feet or deeper.

"The walleye is a nocturnal feeder because they're a lazy predator, and they take the advantage that their keen sense of eyesight gives them over the baitfish in this ultra-clear environment," Trossen said. "The shiners are plentiful, and the walleyes don't have to use energy to fill up. That's why they're so big and fat here."


Targeting walleyes in late season

from October through freeze-up, Trossen and Seymour will average one to three walleyes between six and ten pounds during trips that normally begin at 8:00 pm and conclude in the wee hours. Summer hunts mean more walleyes but slightly smaller fish averaging about six to seven pounds. Because of the tremendous growth potential, Trossen and Seymour advocate catch and release.

"We're hoping to see a state record, Trossen said. "Geneva has that potential."

The last fish of the night heads to the bottom. With its behavior, Trossen voices cautious optimism that it just may be a walleye. The fight reaches several minutes before the beam of Seymour's spotlight slices snow and black to dance off the long-awaited glowing eyes beneath the surface. The big walleye is in no hurry to meet the crew, but Trossen eventually finesses the ten pound-plus fish to the net. The fish is released, and two Geneva walleye experts plod for home.

"This isn't a numbers game," Seymour said. "There are better walleye lakes around. Geneva's draw is the size of the fish."

"We cover miles of water looking for what we like on the locator," Trossen said. "Sometimes the fish are shallow and sometimes they're deep. Last week in 40 to 50 feet of water we caught 13 northerns and a seven pound walleye. If I come out here one night and don't get any walleyes, I'll still be out here the next night doing the exact same thing. You have to be dedicated. And you have to believe." 

For more information, contact John Trossen at the Pier at 262-348-9400 or [www.fishinglakegeneva.com](http://www.fishinglakegeneva.com).

(when most inland species close for the season). Here is a tip, look for a lake or pond fed by a stream. The numbers of native trout will be greater. Remember to use extra caution on bodies of water with a current!


Trout are just like any other fish. They gotta eat no matter what the season is. Remember in winter food is more scarce, so these fish will be on the prowl. Jigging for trout is just like jigging for panfish. Small moon jigs tipped with waxies work great for rainbows and brookies. Small jigging Rapalas work wonders as well. I prefer using an ultra light rod for a big fight. But I always carry a medium action rod which is what I

would advise using if you are just getting started. When jigging for trout, make sure you work all depths; they can be anywhere under the ice. Often, if you are jigging high, trout will speed up to your bait from the bottom. If you use electronics while ice fishing, you will see them move up quickly to your bait. But be aware of how difficult it can be to land a trout through the hole, when your transducer is in the water. Trout have a tough mouth, and pressure needs to be kept on the mouth to ensure a successful landing. If the hole you are on happens to be an active one, you may just want to turn the Vexilar off for a bit. These fish can be just plain



A nice brown and two brookies taken through the ice are ready for a warm-up in the frying pan.

hot when they are on.

Finally, don't overlook setting up a tip-up or tip down with a crappie minnow or fathead to target one of the big brutes that may be hanging around. These big boys are a real rush to catch, and believe me, there are some trophy worthy pigs swimming around waiting for you to catch them. If you want to try something new this winter, go give it a try. But remember, ice fishing opportunities for inland trout are limited. When you find a spot, keep a tight lip! 

Chris Powell, Fat Guy's Guide Service, Phone: 715-577-9771, [www.fat-guy.org](http://www.fat-guy.org).

# Hit & Run

## Big crappies lead the chase

By Dick Ellis

The battle here on the Sawyer County hardwater was as much with the January elements as with this roving band of big crappies being picked off one by one in an angler's game of hit and run. Sitting still over an augured hole or two would work. The fish will come by again eventually. But the stationary ambush is not the main chapter in the Bill and Jim Whiteside book on advanced crappie fishing.

These studies feature the chase and the calculated rendezvous. The fish are moving and so too must you. A frozen landscape painted with miniature, auger-sculpted mountains of chipped ice had already been made as this pursuit continued. Leave a hole unattended too long, though, or a fish on the ice, and it would soon be gone with the winds—frozen or buried under 40 miles per hour gales, periodic squalls of horizontal snows, and numbing cold.

The front came on from the north, stirring up the snow, stirring up the fish to move, move, move, and shutting down significantly what had been a fabulous bite the day before. So even with their Vexilar on the ice, enough love for the sport to spit at the storm, and a lion's share of Ice Man's know-how in their souls, today's game was a true challenge of cold-blooded perseverance.

Conditions had kept all but the heartiest anglers away. Teenagers Derick Kensmoe and Dan Sorenson are here from Strum in Trempealeau County huddled in a portable shanty with a half-dozen nice perch. Uncle Tom Kensmoe is here too, taking on the weather outside to take the occasional crappie.

"You just don't find many lakes with this nice of crappies," said Jim Whiteside, ten fish from 10-1/2 to 14 inches piled on the ice. "The challenge today is getting the big ones up to the hole that's freezing over and then they're often too big to get out of the hole. You have to get your hand down into the hole to help the fish out of the water; otherwise you break your line. Small crappies you can reef out. But not these fish."

To date, it had been a difficult winter of icefishing in the northwest for the Whitesides of Eau Claire. Fishing five lakes near home and five in closer proximity to Spooner and Hayward, crappies had been elusive. Sissabagma, Sand, Big Chetak, Long, and Lac Courte Oreilles all within a 25 miles setting in Washburn and Sawyer counties, had each proven stingy. On one of those lakes, which will remain your guess out of respect for the locals and the lake, the worm finally turned last week.

"All of these lakes have good potential panfish, including big crappies," Bill Whiteside said. "Periodically, each of the lakes will turn on. There's no reason to highlight one lake because we fish them all and will continue to."

Regardless of lake, the Whiteside tactic of hide and seek remains the same. That means drilling enough

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*"There's no reason to highlight one lake because we fish them all and will continue to..."*

---

holes where the crappies, most often a schooling fish, can be located on the



Jim Whiteside of Eau Claire runs and guns for big crappies in the great northwest. (Photo by Dick Ellis)

Vexilar and then followed as the fish move. But there are no guarantees.

"You might see three, four, five fish

at a time on the screen and pretty soon they're gone," Bill said. "So you leave that hole and go to another. Sometimes you go to where they were, sometime you can guess by their movement that they're going to a new area and you go drill new holes. But I've already drilled 100 holes and not found the fish. If you found them every time out, there wouldn't be any left anyway."

When the fish are found, suspended in 20 to 22 feet of water this day, the Whiteside arsenal includes two-pound test line, #8 moonglows dressed in three silver wigglers (spikes) and open-faced reels on short jigging rods. And the all-important Vexilar.

"I drop the bait after I spot them on the Vexilar and leave it just above the fish," Bill said. "After a few seconds I try to take it away from them, not too fast but fast enough to make the fish pull the trigger. They like to come up for it."

"That's part of the secret," Jim said. "You've got to have the right touch even if you've got to tease them. The jigging motion makes a world of difference."

The chase continued on this winter





Crappies like this call ice anglers across Wisconsin to arms. (Photo by Dick Ellis)


land cuckoo's nest. The storm chases the fish. The anglers do too. And a reporter with a camera chases the storm, the anglers and the fish to catch the sun slicing a squall, or another slob coming through the ice.

The day before, the Whitesides had each caught their limit of 25 fish, their first good action of the season, searching once a week. On this day, after a lot more moving and drilling, and a lot more time, they would take a collective 30 fish.

"When the wind switched and the front moved in, the fish started moving more and more and it was harder to stay with them," Bill said. "They're here. Then they're gone. It's a lot tougher. But if you catch 10 or 15 that's plenty for a family meal or two."

The movement, the work, the ultimate challenge in finding the fish is what

brings Jim Whiteside back to the ice. Sometimes hitting pay dirt means hours of searching. And sometimes pay dirt remains a "well, maybe next time" idea.

"More than anything I don't like to watch a tip-up," he said. "I like the challenge of trying to get your fish. You have to keep up with them. Keep looking. Hole to hole. If you get one fish out of one hole, you're doing good. Sometimes you can fill up in a couple hours. And sometimes you don't fill up at all. It all depends on if you find them." 

*Dick Ellis publishes "On Wisconsin Outdoors." He writes a syndicated outdoor column from the field carried weekly in 55 Wisconsin and Illinois newspapers. Check out [www.onwisconsinoutdoors.com](http://www.onwisconsinoutdoors.com).*



Bill Whiteside doesn't let high winds or horizontal snows keep him from the crappie chase. (Photo by Dick Ellis)

## PANFISH POPULATION VULNERABLE

Even with state-of-the-art fish-locator technology in the hands of very good anglers, there's no guarantee of a limit of panfish on the ice at day's end. But there is no doubt, according to a Hayward based fisheries biologist, that the combination of expertise and engineering can decimate a vulnerable fishery when compounded by numerous participants. Self-restraint by the angler in what he elects to take home, Senior Fisheries Biologist Frank Pratt said, is one key to maintaining a quality fishery.

"Even in big lakes, a quality panfish population can easily be exploited," Pratt said "People know what they're doing to find panfish. They probably have for 30 years with bluegills. But because of the nature of the beast, not until recently have they been able to find crappies with the exception of pre-spawn, spawn and in the fall when people knew where they were schooling up."

Today, he said, the educated angler armed with tools like Vexilars can often locate the deep-water fish throughout the seasons, and time the bite. Magnifying the potential problem, unlike other panfish, crappies will often experience a boom spawning year, and then see virtually no reproduction for three or four years.

"They've eliminated a lot of the guesswork," Pratt said of the modern angler. "Based on habitat selection of suspending in deep water, those really big bluegills are also now in jeopardy. I've caught those fish while fishing for rainbow trout."

"Our message as fish managers is that if you don't voluntarily practice selective harvest, both bluegills and crappies can be severely fished down. I've seen that problem in a lot of waters that are already fished down. And I've seen the predicted increases in the size of fish just a couple years after enforcement of a reduced bag."

"I've fished Nelson Lake in Sawyer County for 29 years which historically

has a reputation of producing big panfish, but I finally just caught two, 10-inch bluegills two years after a ten-fish limit was enforced. It's too early to tell, but it shows that the tendency is going in the right direction."

According to Pratt, the difference in sizes of panfish on lakes heavily pressured with public access and with limited access is astounding. Fishing limited access water in Rhode Island with the same characteristics of northern Wisconsin lakes, he said, and comparing the catch with panfish across the street on identical type water but with public access was telling.

Of 40 bluegills personally caught on private water, the average was eight to 8-1/2 inches, with ten of the fish at ten inches. Pumpkinseed were similar sizes, and perch averaged 12 to 14 inches. Crappies have a comparable reputation, but Pratt caught none. The water was also "filthy" with predator fish, including medium size largemouth bass. The public-access lake nearby did not produce close to those sizes, for any species.

"The difference in sizes of fish with and without heavy pressure is like night and day, panfish even more than the predator fish population," he said. "Maybe you can't fish a lake out. But you can fish a lake down to the point where it's not worth fishing because of the size of the fish."

"As biologists, we're trying to educate the public to see the potential of what lakes can produce. And to bite the bullet of bitter medicine that comes with voluntary selective harvest. I'm not an advocate of limiting recreational fishing. I'm in the business of optimizing that. But I am concerned with the sum total of a lot of anglers taking a lot of fish."

"We have to exercise restraint. When we see heavy fishing pressure, and the fish go home with the angler, pretty soon we don't have the quality in the fishery."

## TWO MINUTES OF TIPS FROM A WISCONSIN ICE MAN

From one winter to the next, schools of crappies may not be found in the same area of a lake, said Bill Whiteside of Eau Claire. Unlike the bottom-hugging perch, crappie will also be suspended, most often two to five feet off the bottom.

At times, drilling numerous holes to initially locate crappies will be necessary, particularly when the fish are not moving aggressively. When they are moving, crappie will often come to the angler with just a few holes drilled and be seen on the Vexilar. More holes, of course, will then be necessary to keep on those roaming schools.

"When you find them they still may not be easy to catch," Whiteside said. "You still have to get them to hit. You need confidence in your bait of choice and confidence in how you jig or move that bait, regardless of conditions."

He recommends a #8 moonglow tipped with three silver wigglers, or spikes and stresses that even a subtle change in jigging motion or movement can make a significant difference in success or failure in triggering strikes. The movement preferred by the fish can be determined by carefully watching the Vexilar so sensitive that the angler can visually follow the tiny jig dropping on the screen.

"Learn from watching a Vexilar, and try to be smooth, not hard or jerky in your motion," he said. "Especially in mid-winter don't give up, and don't be afraid to change your bait or the color of bait." It's because of the modern-day electronics and improved potential of catching fish that Whiteside supports the statewide reduction in daily panfish limit several years ago from 50 fish to 25 fish per angler. "I didn't like it when it first went through," he said. "But it was needed."

# Out There

## *I see the moon, the moon sees me*

By Darrell Pendergrass

For whatever reason, this winter my four-year-old son has gotten it into his head that we should be ice fishing more.

I'm not sure if he saw people looking down through hard-water holes on a fishing show, or in a book from the school library, but he stubbornly insisted that we go. Never mind that I don't have an ice shack, or a power auger, or a heater, or much in the way of ice-fishing gear. Forget for a second that Jack has never gone. Forget that I do have a sled and a hand auger. What I had and didn't have didn't seem to matter to the boy; Jack wanted to go.

Early one evening I took Jack down to the Grand View Food Mart and purchased a \$6 ice-fishing jig pole, a wooden fishing rig that comes complete with a pre-tied hook, line and a bobber. It's strictly for hooking fish, necessitating a hand-over-hand

retrieval once a bite is secured on the other end. I figured Jack could set the hook, then I would pull in the line and that way we'd keep from having a big snarl of line wrapped around out on the ice.

I handed my boy the pole, it was his idea to go fishing after all, he could

a few ice fishing jigs, and a bookend set of peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and headed down the road to our designated ice fishing spot. Once there, I bundled Jack up, placed him in the sled and silently pulled him out across the ice, over to a little shack that a friend said we could use. Jack sang a

his catch, jelly on his cheeks. "The girls would like that. We should do that."

Sandwiches dispensed, we got down to business again. I had to put the worms on and get the fish off, but Jack worked Mr. Lucky to perfection. In his small hands the jig pole moved around the shack like a conductor's baton, guiding an orchestra in the ways of hard-water angling.

Before long we had 23 bluegills sitting on the ice around us. And one crappie. Jack has an affinity for crappie, so that fish in particular was welcomed into our catch with a great deal of hoopla.

Among our bluegills were two nine-inch beauties, both of which were nearly as wide as they were long. In fact, I have one in over at the taxidermists in Ashland to be mounted, a memory for my boy of when he was young and his dad took him ice fishing for the first time.

That night Jack was king of the dining room. He'd supplied the fish for the meal, and my daughter, my wife and I gushed about his good fortune. He couldn't stop smiling.

"Do you like it?" he kept asking. "Do you like it?"

The combination of fresh air, excitement and good food made for an early night for the boy. His eyes were tired as he put on his pajamas.

And as he drifted off to sleep in his room later, Mr. Lucky an arm's length away on the dresser, the light of the moon danced around Jack's bed.

And shined on the one I love. *WP*

---

*"That night Jack was king of the dining room. He'd supplied the fish for the meal, and my daughter, my wife and I gushed about his good fortune. He couldn't stop smiling..."*

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have it. Holding the pole and with a big smile on his face he dubbed it Mr. Lucky. That's right, he named his jig pole. Right on the spot. Why? Maybe it was a premonition.

Late the following morning we took Mr. Lucky, two-dozen wax worms,

simple tiny song he'd learned from his grandpa as he settled in for the ride.

"I see the moon, and the moon sees me – Down through the leaves of the old oak tree – Please let the light that shines on me – Shine on the one I love."

Inside the shack, holes drilled, we set to the task of catching bluegills. Bluegills are not very flashy fish in ice fishing circles. These small inland beauties don't draw the same response from fisherman that lake trout and salmon do on Lake Superior. Bluegills are more like the Ford Tauruses of the ice fishing world, while walleye and trout are the Cadillacs.

But bluegills are good eating. Dipped in flour, and then egg, before getting rolled in Italian bread crumbs, nothing fries up better in the pan. And even a bad fillet knife like mine can get out all the bones.

Also, when you're on the ice and into the bluegills, it can be two to three hours of non-stop action. Perfect for little hands learning the work of becoming an experienced angler.

Once we'd set up we put Mr. Lucky to work immediately, sending down a wax worm with a chartreuse lure. In short order the bobber that floated in the hole between us rattled out a bluegill below.

Jack set the hook, lifted Mr. Lucky high in the air and I grabbed the line. In seconds, a sizable bluegill lay on the ice. It didn't take long for us to synchronize our attack on the fish – set, lift, grab, and pull. Set, lift, grab, and pull.

We had a few keepers in the shack when we took our sandwich break.

"Maybe we can have a fish fry tonight, Dad," Jack said, looking down at



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# Dog Talk

## Winter training makes dogs work

By Kevin Michalowski

There are a lot of clichés out there about fighting like you train and playing like you practice, but when it comes to working a dog in cover there's no quick fix. If you want your dog to work well in heavy cover, you've got to train your dog in heavy cover.

But there have always been a couple of drawbacks. In the summer months the heat down in the deep grass can be downright dangerous for a dog. And the green grass of summer is filled with chlorophyll, which works amazingly well to mask scent. If you wait until the grass dries up, well that's hunting season and most of us would like to spend our free time actually hunting instead of coaxing a dog to work through cover. After the hunting season, well, we need to pick and choose our dates and locations but snow, or not, winter training works.

A winter without snow is tops for dog handlers working a new pup or hoping to help a started dog brush up on the brush-busting skills. This time of year can be perfect for some easily repeatable training in the grass, weeds and brush.

We all want our pheasant dogs to do two things in the deep cover: Quarter nicely to find birds and "hunt dead" when we have something down. You can teach both these skills with a few training dummies, a bottle of bird scent and a couple acres of deep grass.

The first thing you need to do is soak your dummies with scent. Apply it liberally and put on a glove to rub it in if you want to. The goal is to create a powerful scent trail that helps the dog succeed. You want to encourage the dog to keep working the scent until he finds the dummy and the best way to do that is to make sure nothing else out there competes for the dog's attention.

With young dogs that haven't done a lot of quartering yet, you'll be starting the training by having the dog hunt dead. The key is to make the dog succeed, so throw a dummy or two into the grass. Don't throw them far. Let the dog see them fall and send him on a couple marked retrieves. This gives him the idea that he's in the grass looking for something. Keep adding to the number of dummies you're throwing until you stump the dog. Most young dogs will get confused with about five or six dummies tossed in five different directions. Throw out



Getting him to bring it back is really no trouble at all. Make sure you provide lots of praise and plenty of chances for the dog to succeed. (Photos by Jackie Michalowski)

five, let the dog watch them fall, then start sending him in to make retrieves. You'll have a ton of scent in the grass, but that's fine. You want the dog to follow his nose to where the scent is strongest and bring back the dummies.

By now your dog should be good and excited and he should be starting to understand that if he keeps crashing through the brush and grass, he'll find what he's looking for. Now's the time to take a short break and give the dog a drink. After about five minutes rest and plenty of fresh water grab three dummies and head into the grass. It's time to start the quartering.

This is when you'd really like to have some orange dummies, just in case both of you forget where you dropped the things and the dog just can't seem to find it. If you don't have orange, use what you have but try to drop them near a minor landmark, odd-looking weed or small tree. It makes things easier if the early training doesn't work just as planned.

Put the wind at your back and start walking through the field with the wind. Just let the dog go for now. As you walk, drop the three dummies in a rough zigzag pattern about 10 to 15 paces apart. Walk 15 paces past the last dummy and call the dog. Have him sit at your side for a minute, and then point in the direction of the closest dummy and say, "Hunt'em up." As the dog gets near the first dummy he will get a nose full of scent. Keep encouraging him. When he finds the "bird" command him to fetch it, then praise him like he's the best dog in the world. Lavish it on. After a minute or two


you'll be ready to move toward the next "bird." Keep up the encouragement and really get the dog excited about finding something in the grass. After the dog finds all three dummies. Head downwind a few yards and start over. Two or three times should be enough to give the dog the idea, but also not too much to allow him to get bored. Keep the session short and fun.

It's important during this type of training that you don't get frustrated with the dog and lose your cool. If the dog is not finding the bird, that means he just doesn't understand what you want him to do. So show him. Move closer to the dummy and point directly at it and say, "Find the bird, get'em up." When he gets anywhere near it, praise him. When he picks it up, you should sound as if you're overjoyed. If

you get mad and yell at the dog, he won't have fun looking for birds and he won't want to do it.

### THE NEXT STEP

Once you've got the basics down and your dog understands there are good things in the grass, you can switch to live birds, but start with a very controlled situation. Find a hunting club that will allow you to train instead of hunt. You'll need an assistant for this. Plant one bird at a time and keep the dog on a 30-foot check cord as you work the animal into the scent. Keep hold of the cord as the dog approaches the bird. When he flushes it, command "Sit" and hold the cord to keep the dog from chasing the bird. Be calm, but make the dog sit. If your partner is a good shot you'll be able to send the dog for a marked retrieve. If not, go get another bird and try again. The goal here is to steady the bird to the flush and the shot. This can take a bit of work, but it's worth it to get a good solid dog.

It's important to take advantage of deep grass training especially when conditions are good. The routine allows your dog to learn about scent and cover very quickly in a controlled environment. Even if you don't move up to live-bird training, just having the dog search deep cover for a dummy will give the animal the general idea that birds hide in deep cover and it takes a good nose to find them. 

Kevin Michalowski is author of *15 Minutes to a Great Dog* (Krause Publications, \$12.95) and has been training dogs for 10 years.



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# LOST

## Are you prepared?

By Dick Henske

The huge bull moose that I jumped kept moving ahead of me over never-ending ridges and valleys. His tracks were huge and easy to follow. I had a glimpse of him two more times before he crossed a deep river. It was over, and time to head back. Then it hit me. Where in the heck is "back?"

I have a topographical map, but in the growing darkness I cannot orient myself or the land features around me to the map. I'm going to have to stay the night. It is probably five miles to the spike camp where Dale Lapham, my guide, is wondering where this old guy is. I'm 30 miles from any road and seven miles from the railroad tracks.

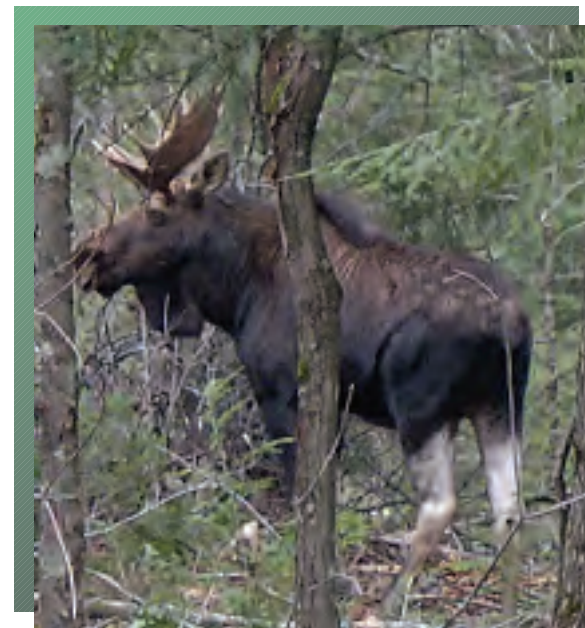
How does a Wisconsin boy get into a Canadian mess like this? I had booked a moose hunt in eastern Ontario, taking Highway 2 through Michigan to Sault St. Marie, Ontario, Canada, then north on Highway 17 through Wawa to Hawk Junction. There, Dale and I loaded our gear and four-wheeler into a boxcar on the Algoma Central Railroad and headed south to the Sand River area. Just a handful of people were on the train, one of them hired to blow the beaver dams that blocked the rails ahead of us. Interesting trip.

When we reached a specific mile marker the train

stopped so we could unload all of our gear onto a trailer and pull it with our four-wheeler to the spike camp to begin our hunt. This is the same train tourists take during the year to fish, hunt, and sight-see. It runs between Sault St. Marie and Hearst. Lots of lakes and rivers with brook trout and lodges to stay in. Snowmobilers and cross-country skiers use it in the winter months. Use the internet to discover this wonderful wilderness.

On the second day of the hunt Dale scouted ahead while I followed a valley. We were to meet up at the Sand River. But, I jumped a huge bull moose and went after him. The result of that big mistake is that I'm now going to have to stay overnight in the bush. I find a flat spot near the river with lots of driftwood and blow-downs for fire wood. I have never been in this spot, but I have hunted for 60 years. I'm not unprepared and I know I won't panic or lose my cool. In fact, if I had to go... what a way to go.

I build a fire with a back drop and cut pine bows to sleep on. I make a shelter the best way I can. The temperature drops to 18 degrees. I keep turning to warm one side and then the other. I move the larger logs into the fire as they burn down. Because I'm dressed lightly for walking, it is a very long night. At first light, with the topo map in hand, I orient myself, realizing which river I'm on and



This Wisconsin moose was photographed by Steve Ellis and Eric Pacey while bow hunting Iron County in November. (see Dick Ellis column at [www.onwisconsinoutdoors.com](http://www.onwisconsinoutdoors.com))

Continued on page 19



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# Hearing Is Believing

## A Wisconsin archer takes on the big bulls of Utah

By John Volkman

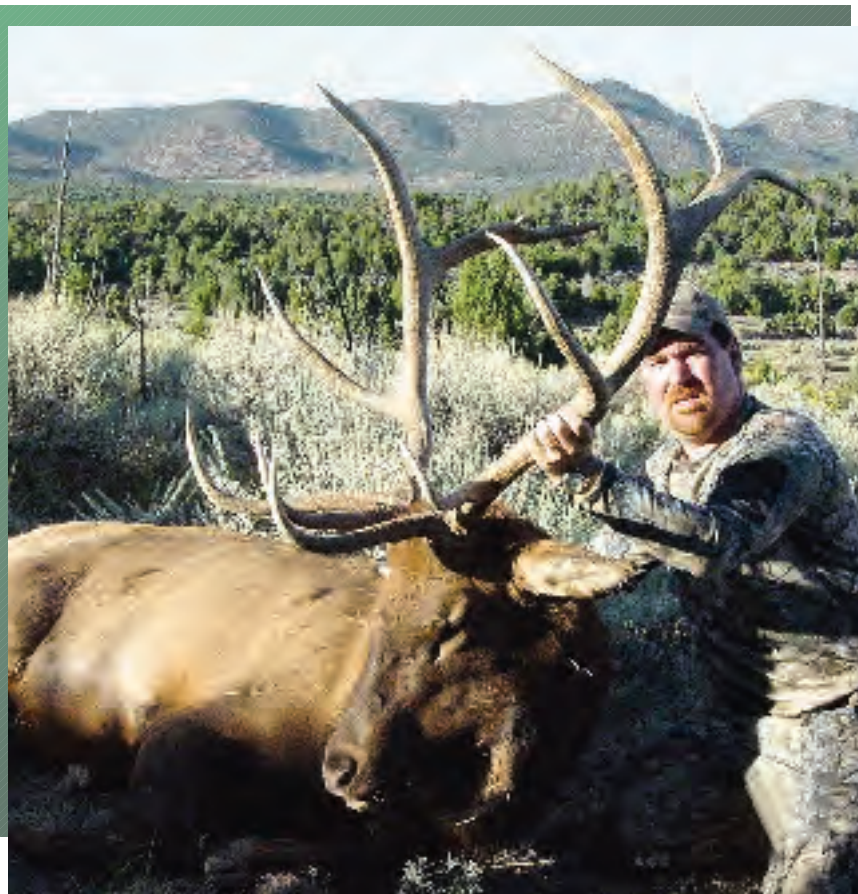
**H**earing is believing when a Wisconsin bow hunter, seven days into a 10 day hunt in Utah elk country, never even has to see the big bull to realize what was once just a dream was actually about to happen. A hair-raising bugle hammered the message home. It was the first in a series of screams from the same bull that would continue for over 30 minutes.

With each bugle my blood pressure raised another level. When the bull did finally come into view, he was walking with his head high, the sun perfectly centered between his antlers as if they were keeping it from going down. That image alone would be enough to put any bow hunter's adrenal gland into overdrive. Mine was already there, the previous week of hunting best defined as a self imposed stress test.

When I saw the word "successful" behind my name on the Utah website, I could not believe it. After calling multiple times to make sure I wasn't hallucinating, I accepted the fact that I was going elk hunting with a bow to a state well-known for high quality bulls. Once the tag was in hand, my daily routine consisted of workouts and bow shooting coupled with absorbing any and all elk information I could get my hands on. September 1st could not arrive soon enough.

This particular hunt would be a team effort from the beginning. Longtime friend Dave Klotzbuecher made the trek all the way from Delaware to help with calling, spotting and hopefully packing out elk steaks. More importantly, we had help from our friend Travis Gates and his brothers Chad, Brandon and nephew Trek who had hunted the unit in prior years before. Without all of their help this "self-guided" hunt would have been a crap shoot at best.

Anytime one can incorporate calling into a hunt it makes it more exciting and oftentimes more effective. Whether you're a water fowler, turkey hunter or even a whitetail hunter with rattling horns in hand, using a call to lure your quarry in for the moment of truth adds another dimension to the excitement that draws all of us to the field. To me, anytime I can use a call to lure an animal in range it makes the hunt memorable. Thus the idea of



*The bull answered Volkman's cow calls numerous times before coming in and turning for a perfectly placed 40 yard shot.*

*"Lots of frustration and failure mixed with just enough hope to keep you chasing them day after day..."*

hunting bugling bulls was high on my list. Like many Midwestern bow hunters, the only time I have heard a bull elk bugle was on TV.

When we arrived in Utah on Sept 1st the temperature had climbed above 90 degrees, which is fairly normal for that area. Elk movement occurred mainly during the first and last hours of the day. The terrain was a mixture of open meadows and cedar-covered mountains. Even though the rut was still in its early stages, five minutes into the first morning we had already seen a very good 5x5 from our lookout point. That evening while Dave and I sat overlooking an area we had seen bulls using that morning, I heard my first bugle. Even though I knew immediately what it was, I still looked at Dave with a "did you hear that!" look. With a nod he confirmed it. Finally, I was in Elk country, more appropriately we were in an elk hunters' dream

world, virtually every area we glassed held one or more bulls and nearly all of them sported headgear that would look good on any wall, especially mine!

For the next day and a half we would chase bugles from mountain to mountain only to have the wind switch or the elk disappear when we finally got to where they were supposed to be. On Monday evening I had worked my way within 100 yards of four bulls feeding together, but they were out in a meadow and feeding away from my position. Chad had told me which one he thought was the best of the four, although they all looked good to me.

With nothing to lose, I let out a couple of cow calls. To my surprise the biggest bull of the bunch let out a bugle and headed my way. A minute later the same bull was raking a tree not 60 yards in front of me and let out a snot blowing bugle directly at me. If the bull continued, the trail he was on would bring him within 40 yards of my position for a perfect broadside shot. When he hit 42 yards I felt the wind on the back of my neck and instantly saw the bull flinch when he caught my scent. Seconds later it was over as he headed back down the hill to rejoin his bachelor group. Hours later I was still wound up, and wondering why I waited this long to elk hunt!

The next four days were filled with frustration and doubt as we continually spotted bulls from afar and either the ever-changing wind or



*John Volkman of Neenah glasses for the big bulls of Utah.*

cows would keep our quarry well out of reach. Although we saw bulls every day, we were never able to close the distance within 150 yards. By day six I was wondering if I would ever get another chance.

I have heard the comparison made several times that bow hunting elk during the rut is much like hunting and calling turkeys back home in Wisconsin—lots of frustration and failure mixed with just enough hope to keep you chasing them day after day. Add enough excitement and anxiety at the moment of truth to double your blood pressure in a matter of seconds and that analogy is right on the money. Much like a turkey gobble, a distance bugle brings new hope and the belief that the he could be the "one".

On the afternoon of day seven I was reliving the week's trials and tribulations when I heard a distance bugle. I let out a cow call and was immediately answered by the same bull. Each bugle was closer than the one before. Minutes later, he came into view with the sun setting between his antlers and let out one last bugle while staring right through me. He turned broadside and stared in my direction one more time. When his head turned away I watched my arrow bury perfectly behind the shoulder and he

exploded in to a full run. I hit the cow call one more time and when he stopped to look back at me I noticed that his back legs wobble, and seconds later he was down for good. As Dave and I stood over my bull, I had a hard time comprehending that a lifelong dream had finally come true. As if on cue, another bull not 100 yards below us let out a bugle. "Can you believe this?" said Dave.

Yes, I finally could after seven days in the field. Hearing is believing, and a hair-raising bugle will verify the fact that a bow hunter has indeed arrived in paradise. Then again, there's nothing like wrapping one's fingers around the antlers of a bull elk to let a Wisconsin hunter know that a bow hunt in the promised land had become everything he had hoped for.

W

*John Volkman of Neenah, Wisconsin is an outdoor/hunting product manufacturers sales rep for Mike Wieck Sales, covering Wisconsin. He is a three-time Wisconsin goose calling champion, avid waterfowler, fisherman and big game hunter. Contact him at [jvolkman1@new.rr.com](mailto:jvolkman1@new.rr.com).*

**Lost...** (Continued from page 17)

head downriver to the main stream. There I reach the crossing that will lead me back to camp. I meet the guide on the trail, and within a few hours I am back in camp to catch a nap and a meal. He never left me alone after that. We never saw another bull moose, but it was a great hunt.

Was I prepared? Yes and no! I had a fanny pack containing two zippo lighters, compass, knife, flashlight and extra batteries, paper toweling, two candy bars, gloves and a plastic bag. What was missing? Twenty feet of cord, 9x9 foot plastic tarp and a plastic poncho. I knew I wasn't going to die and didn't panic. The worse case scenario meant that the trout streams running to Lake Superior would lead me out in one or two days.

Two steps to safety if you do find yourself lost in the bush?

**ONE:**

Find the best temporary shelter available and set up a safe fire with a back reflector, if possible. Cut spruce bows if available for a mattress

**TWO:**

Have a 20 foot piece of rope to make a tent from the plastic tarp, and a plastic poncho in case it rains. If you have shelter and a fire the battle is half over. I'd

add hooks, sinkers and some line, and a strip of aluminum foil next time.

With today's GPS electronics and gadgets it is difficult to become lost. I personally prefer not to carry those things in the field. In the far north you are so isolated in remote country; just a wrong turn or an inconsiderate moose and you may find yourself in a survival situation even with a GPS.

If you do want a great hunt or fishing experience, check out the east and north shores of Lake Superior. Better yet, take the circle tour of Lake Superior around Labor Day. It is beautiful, and you can check out all the outfitters on the way. That is how I found my hunting guide at Lakeside Resort in Hawk Junction.

I have shot moose with the gun and bow. The experience is wonderful. But no matter where or what you hunt, plan ahead and be prepared. And if you need a partner with a built in sense of direction, give me a call...okay, just get out there and do it.

W

*Retired principal Dick Henske of Manitowish Waters hunts and fishes Wisconsin, Canada and the western states. Rarely does he miss a day in the field.*

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# A Superior Tactic

## Bobbing for deep water lake trout evolves on Great Lake

By Dick Ellis

With the setting sun splashing his growing shadow on the Lake Superior ice, Chris Beeksma abandons the portable shanty to feel an almost balmy February breeze, and sends the heavy beetle jig through the augured hole to seduce another lake trout. The journey down is a long one. Line screams off the reel for more than 90 seconds before the anticipated thud and slack announces a meeting of bottom and bait 250 feet below.

Beeksma assumes the position. Each angler adopts his own jigging motion, and the Ashland area fishing guide has on this morning already seen his own tactic mislead two lakera. He seeks a third, staring intently at his tiny hardwater porthole, his arm playing the rod like a maestro might play the baton.

In the distance, the Wisconsin mainland near Red Cliff north of Bayfield and several of the Apostle Islands (Hermit, Basswood, Madeline) add to the stunning natural masterpiece of endless blue skies and textured ice painted by the Superior winds. To the west, Craig Putschat, proprietor of Outdoor Allure in Washburn and Gitcheegumme Guide Service, and Northern Wisconsin Outfitters bear and deer guide Mike Foss play their own conductor's music on the short jigging rods.

Use of rods and reels, according to Beeksma, represents a relatively recent evolution from the traditional deep water "bobbing" tactic utilized for decades to target Superior lake trout. Beeksma's grandfather utilized bobbing, with an oval or straight stick to hold line and a hand-over-hand retrieval method, off of Cornucopia in the 1950s.

Catgut line initially used in bobbing evolved to nylon, to a non-stretch coated wire that continually improved the ability to entice and fight deep water trout. The instrument for holding line also evolved about 20 years ago from an oval stick to a 12-inch plastic hoop that was discarded with the strike as the angler began the hand over hand retrieval process, and evolved again recently to the short rods and reels most often used today.

"Long ago, with bobbing, the fisherman would set the hook and take off running away from the hole to bring the fish up," Beeksma said. "Hopefully, someone would be waiting at the hole to grab the fish for you. A big innovation

was the 60-pound test, coated wire. Very recently thin diameter braided line with only two to six percent stretch gave us the ability to use rods and reels. Now you can fight the fish like you normally would fishing anywhere. You have a drag...and all those other good things."

Among those other good things is the locally developed Beetle Jig that, Putschat said, flies out in a horizontal plane with the jigging motion to cover significantly more water than just that area directly below the angler. The beetle

forage base.

"Lake trout are large predators at the top of the food chain, like muskies," Putschat says. "They don't eat every day. You can see them on the bottom but maybe they won't bite. The next day they will. They continually move and we have to stay mobile too. It's not like walleye fishing. We don't set up on the same reef at the same time of day."

Depending on ice conditions, anglers may travel up to 20 miles, seeking deeper water and bigger fish.



Local fishing guides Chris Beeksma and Craig Putschat (left and right) rest a minute with bear and deer guide Mike Foss far out on Lake Superior. Foss caught the lake trout vertical jigging near the Apostle Islands in 250 feet of water. (Photo by Dick Ellis)

*"You go to other places and they laugh at you for using these, but they kill the lake trout anywhere..."*

is a flat pancake of lead with a large salt-water hook molded in the top-side and with safety pins protruding from each side of the hook eye. Cut herring or shiners are placed on each pin.

"They're made here," Beeksma said. "This is their home. You go to other places and they laugh at you for using these, but they kill the lake trout anywhere."

The hunt on this late February morning begins in Red Cliff. Running snowmobiles. Acutely in tune to ice conditions that can change quickly, the local experts will hit and run among the Apostle Islands until they find active lakera hitting and running with their

Although some lake trout are stocked here, the fish is a successful spawner and known as a native species.

"We fish for lake trout in 110 to 250 of water," Beeksma said. "It seems that the deeper you go, the less charted the water, the bigger the fish. But we look for rock piles or other structure too. A 20 pound fish is absolutely a possibility for anyone out here."

Wednesday, the anglers play hide and seek with the roving schools of lakera far out among the Apostle Islands. Pulling portable shanties, they ride the snowmobiles to desirable depths and structure and set up

angling camp. Unsatisfied with action, three times they relocate, always over deeper water. In depths even too great for Vexilar readings, they find consistent action on bigger fish over two consecutive days.

In the warm breezes and dying sunlight of afternoon one, the maestros continue to work their special music, hopefully to the full attention of an orchestra of lake trout far below. Eventually, Foss' rod bends over the weight of a good fish. The struggle begins that will bring the fish up more than one-eighth mile from the dark Superior depths.

The fight is slow, and several times during the journey up the fish "burps", the adjustment in the air bladder told by the bubbles rising to the surface. It is an adjustment that will enable the fish to be released safely, despite the great transition in depth. Eventually, the 10-pound laker surrenders and is pulled from the hole.

From this seemingly bottomless honey hole, many lake trout will be taken over the next day—including a 22-pound fish probably more than three decades old that will discharge an 18-inch herring from its belly when iced.

"I'm pretty new to this," says Foss. "It's pretty exciting. If you've never experienced this country, the lake, the islands and the beauty of the sandstone cliffs as you're traveling past on the sleds, it's enough in itself to make the whole trip."

"But not many people fish out here. Knowing that you're going after big lake trout and that you'll be fishing in more than 200 feet of water is just incredible."

W

### CONTACT INFORMATION

Safe ice off of Red Cliff near the Apostle Islands, and the ability to safely fish for lake trout is highly dependent on weather. Do not attempt this trip without consulting local experts for ice conditions, or to hire a guide. If you do not wish to hire a guide, consider fishing just off the plowed Ice Road that runs from Red Cliff to Madeline Island.

For further information or licensed guide service contact Chris Beeksma and "Get Bit Guide Service" at 1-715-372-8622. To contact Outdoor Allure for bait and tackle or information or licensed guide Craig Putschat and Gitcheegumme Guide Service call 1-715-373-0551 or contact [www.outdoorallure.com](http://www.outdoorallure.com).



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# The Forgotten Warrior

## M1 Carbine's role in World War II overshadowed by the M1 Garand

By S. Wilkerson

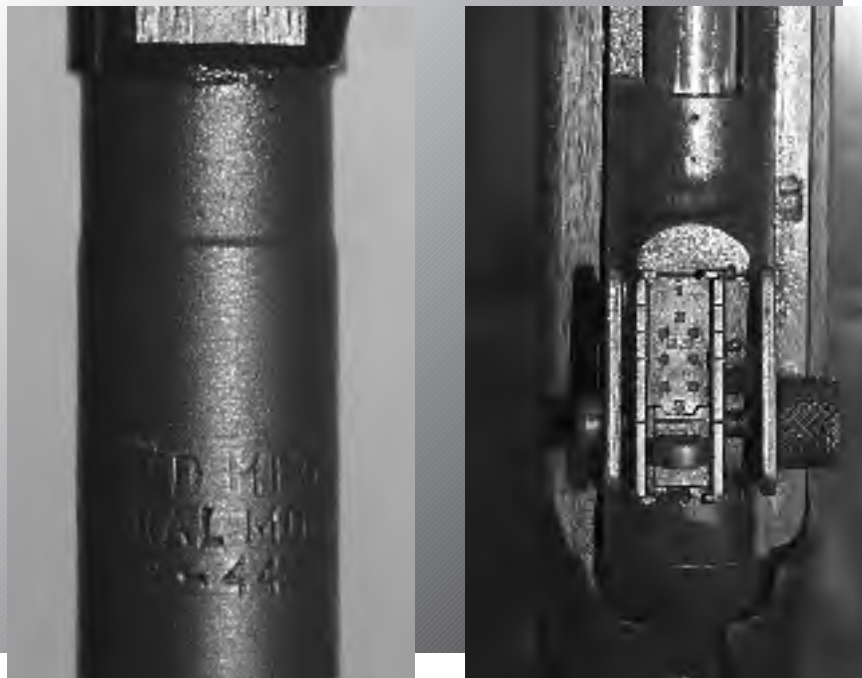
Armchair experts and gun shop ninjas will tell you that the Carbine, Cal. 30, M1, is a feeble excuse for a firearm that no self-respecting warrior would carry into battle. Keep in mind that such Olympian pronouncements are often made by people with less combat training than the average Congolese boy soldier. Unlike Congolese boy soldiers, most of these guys, like me, have never even been in the field of battle or, for that matter, spent any time in the armed services. I did, however, spend several grueling years in the Cub Scouts.

Lots of guys who really were in combat zones loved the M1 carbine and carried it through several real wars and police actions. Not just US troops but also French, British, Korean, Australian, South Vietnamese, and Salvadoran soldiers, to name only few. They liked the carbine because it was compact, reliable, and held a bunch of bullets.

The M1 carbine was born at the beginning of the Second World War. Prior to its implementation, American non-infantry type soldiers were issued, if anything, a pistol of some sort. This was all fine and dandy up to the point where they actually had to shoot at something.

Handguns are short range weapons that require intense amounts of training if the shooter can be expected to hit anything. That also goes for the vaunted 1911.45 caliber. During the run up to World War II, a few Ordnance Department bureaucrats recognized the need for a weapon that support troops might reasonably be expected to use to good effect without a lot of instruction. In 1940, invitations were let out for a lightweight rifle designed around the .32 caliber Winchester self-loading cartridge. Many of the submissions were bizarre in appearance or cobbled together from existing designs. Ultimately, Winchester selected the design by David Marshall Williams, convicted murderer.

Remember, these were more innocent times. Today, it's highly unlikely that a convicted felon, upon release from prison, could find gainful employment with a major firearms manufacturer. He might become the principal of a Milwaukee voucher school funded with taxpayer dollars, the mayor of Washington, D.C., or have a major motion picture made documenting his fall and triumphant return to Hollywood, but he wouldn't get near a broom in a gun factory.



(Left) The Inland Division of General Motors produced more M1 carbines than any other manufacturer. (Right) Note the position of the rear sight aperture. The windage on many M1 carbines must be adjusted far to the left to get them on target because barrels were installed improperly. (Photos by Dick Ellis)

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*"After WWII, carbines saw a lot of action in Korea and Vietnam..."*

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Williams' design was a marvel. Looking sort of like the younger, skinnier and better-looking brother of the Garand, the carbine was lightweight, short, and fed ammo from a high capacity (15-shot), detachable magazine. It weighed in a smidgen under six pounds with an 18-inch barrel and an overall length of 36 inches. Handy, indeed. Production began at Winchester in late 1941 and continued throughout the war. Manufacturers included companies that produced cars, typewriters, hardware, and jukeboxes during peacetime. After WWII, carbines saw a lot of action in Korea and Vietnam.

At the risk of boring readers with a description of its operating system that most are going to gloss over anyway, I will note that the carbine is gas operated. Spent cases are ejected when gas from the bullet travels into a small port in the barrel and then into a chamber containing a piston. The force of the gas drives the piston backwards, pushing the operating rod rearward. The operating rod is connected to the bolt which also travels backward bringing the spent shell with it and ejecting it. Before

the bolt slams completely forward, a new round is brought up from the magazine and driven into the chamber by the bolt. For a more detailed explanation of the trigger mechanism's role in all of this and an adequate field stripping guide, get a copy of the Ordnance Field Service Technical Bulletin No. 23-7-1. Since I don't get paid by the column inch, I'm now leaving the intricacies of the carbine's function and moving on to other matters.

The carbine did function well in its intended role and then some. Never, however, was it intended to be used as a main battle rifle capable of making shots out to 1,000 yards with some oomph. Its actual intended role was something like that of a submachine gun. In fact, fully automatic versions were fielded beginning in 1944, some with folding stocks, which didn't lock and could unexpectedly fold. Like most folding stocks, they are uncomfortable and not conducive to accuracy. They do really look neat, which, in my view, is reason enough to own one and, besides, you shouldn't be buying an M1 Carbine to go deer hunting.


At one time, though, lots of people did. Back in the sixties, before people knew better, a friend of my father put 15 shots from a carbine into a deer before it went down. I don't know how well those shots were placed or from what range, but with ballistics similar to a .38 caliber pistol round, you had better be able to place your bullets accurately and at close range if you want to humanely harvest a deer.

Today, M1 carbines, even those rebuilt many times in US armories, command a high price. Figure \$500 to \$600 for garden-variety service grades from the CMP. Some common replacement parts are getting both hard to find and expensive. Ammunition is not cheap and not exactly commonly available. You can probably count on one hand the number of guns designed to shoot the .30 caliber M1 Carbine round.

M1 Carbines do have their attributes. They barely recoil. Accuracy is okay; mine shoots two-to-three inch groups at 50 yards. Trigger pull is smooth and between four to six pounds.

Some have major deficiencies. Many carbines shoot far to the right unless the windage is cranked way to the left, too often all the way to the left, in order to put rounds on a target. Sometimes there isn't enough windage to ever center them. This is because the barrels weren't indexed properly. So much for old-time craftsmanship.

M1 Carbines are now available from the CMP and that's where mine came from - twice. As documented on these pages last month, my first one was a dog and was sent back for a replacement. The replacement, I'm sorry to report, fails to eject about 20 percent of the time.

I could delve into it and replace springs and plungers, but I'm not going to anytime soon. I have other firearms that I know will work every time I pull the trigger and are far more accurate. The M1 Carbine is a collector firearm. It doesn't make sense to own one as an only firearm. If that's what you want and you don't want to spend a lot of money, get a shotgun, Chinese SKS, Chinese MAK 90 or any Mosin-Nagant variant. If you want a representative sample of a weapon that helped win World War II, by all means, buy an M1 carbine. But be prepared to do some fiddlin' and parts huntin' to make it work. 

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*S. Wilkerson is an award-winning Wisconsin journalist, firearms expert and student of the second amendment.*

# Dog Gone?

## Then roust those bunnies yourself

By Jeff Schilling

As I stepped onto the brush pile, a cottontail squirted out from below my feet and zigzagged its way out of sight before I could react. Shortly afterward, I heard the familiar report from my friend's .410. I had just played the role of a beagle working its way through the dense brush for its master. My friend benefited from my "doggin' it" and harvested the first rabbit of the day.

Many people think that rabbit hunting is something to do with the kids. Though it may be a very rewarding experience for the beginning hunter, it also can be great fun for the experienced hunter as well. I have been hunting rabbits with family and friends for nearly 30 years. Even now, I still feel the excitement that I experienced as a kid when hunting cottontails.

In that time, I learned some tricks to improve my luck with cottontails. I, nor anyone that I know, has ever hunted rabbits with dogs. However, if one picks the right habitat and conditions, successful hunts for rabbits can be a routine occurrence, even without dogs. Some of the most productive habitats that I have discovered are brushy hedgerows or wooded lots adjacent to croplands such as cornfields. In these areas, the rabbits often can be found in brush piles and overgrown

thickets. In addition to these areas, ditches and creeks with plenty of bushy growths and downed timber are very good places to find rabbits. Usually the presence of droppings and tracks are good indicators of resident cottontails in the immediate area.

The best way to hunt these areas without a dog is with a partner or group of hunters. In areas that are very thick with brush, one or two hunters walk through the area in an attempt to push the rabbits out to others who have taken position along their escape route. In especially thick areas, it pays to back track and push through the areas more than once. Just last year, while hunting with my cousin and friend, we harvested three rabbits on the first pass and another two on the second pass. For reaching those promising looking areas that are located on a steep ditch or creek embankment, my friend and his



Many Wisconsin rabbit hunters without beagles see no need to sit the game out. (Photo by Dick Ellis)

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*"By this time, snow has fallen. I find that rabbit hunting is best after a fresh snow..."*

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brothers take turns throwing rocks and sticks into the desired brush piles while the other waits for the rabbit to run from the cover. Several rabbits were taken

using this method. When hunting alone it is oftentimes more productive to hunt sparser cover and to move slowly, stopping periodically. This way, when a

rabbit is pushed from the cover, one can shoot at the rabbit. A clean shot may not be possible in the very thick terrain.

My favorite time to hunt for cottontails is after the deer seasons have ended. By this time, snow has fallen. I find that rabbit hunting is best after a fresh snow. The presence of two or three inches of snow not only makes the rabbits easier to see, but also creates temporary shelters from otherwise poor hiding areas. Such "mini" shelters are great places to focus hunting efforts. Some of the best rabbit hunting that I have experienced took place in the afternoon, so early mornings are not required as in hunting other quarry.

Safety is paramount to having a successful hunt. My hunting buddies and I always wear blaze orange vests and hats. I always remember my grandfather's story about a rabbit hunting accident that happened to him in his youth. He jumped a rabbit from a brush pile; after running a few feet, it doubled back toward him. One of the hunters mistook my grandfather's boot for a rabbit and shot him. He recovered just fine, but carried a few pieces of shot in his leg for the remainder of his life. Such a souvenir and memory is one to avoid.

So the next time that you are sitting at home after the deer and waterfowl seasons have ended, call up a buddy and head out to "beat the brush" for bunnies. They are fun to hunt and are good to eat!

Jeff Schilling is an avid Wisconsin hunter.





# Cubs' Corner

## Tackle these essential winter projects together

By Tom Carpenter

I could try to convince you that among Wisconsin's theatre of seasons, I love winter as much as any other time of year. But I'd be lying.

To be honest, I rather loathe the depths of winter. Oh, we'll get out and hit the ice early and late in the season when the weather is relatively mild, the sunfish are active and the kids can last an hour or two. A little sledding passes the time and gets everybody some much-needed fresh air on a snowy afternoon or a moonlit night. A winter hike on a bright and sunny morning can do wonders for light-deprived souls. Skating, snowshoeing and cross country skiing have their fans too.

But as much as I love everything about hunting, fishing, nature and just being outside, those frigid, gray, blustery and blizzardy kinds of days that dominate a winter don't make outdoor activities of any kind very much fun ... especially when you have kids along.

Long, dark evenings present a challenge too.

So here are eight winter project ideas to pursue -- indoors -- with young outdoorsmen and women. Even if you like winter, sometimes conditions just aren't suitable for being outside. You might as well use that time to your advantage -- getting organized and prepared for milder weather's higher levels of activity and increased opportunities for outdoor pursuits.

### CLEAN GUNS

Now that fall's hunting is done, a winter afternoon or evening is the

perfect time to get out all the guns and give them a thorough cleaning. Revisit firearms safety techniques as you disassemble each firearm with your young shooter. Teach him or her how to properly and thoroughly clean a rifle or shotgun. Don't rush. Take your time and let them do the work. This project also creates a great opportunity to reminisce about all the fall's hunts.

### REVIEW TACKLE BOXES

If you don't go through your fishing tackle boxes now, it won't get done at all. Spring creeps up on a person, turkey hunting involves a big time and energy investment ... and suddenly it's time to take the kids fishing because the crappies are running, the bluegills are in or the bass opener is around the corner. So open up the tackle boxes now. Lay out the contents and throw away the junk. Get everything organized and put back. Have your young angler help, and also keep a list of what you need. It will be a blessing to be all stocked and set to go when open-water fishing opportunities arise.

### SERVICE FISHING TACKLE

Go beyond your tackle boxes. Replace decrepit reels, and get decent ones repaired. Toss untrustworthy rods. Buy new gear where needed: Never cripple kids with second-quality or cheap rods and reels. Strip line off all the reels and spool up with fresh. I take spinning and baitcasting reels to the sporting goods store, and let them wind on new line (usually in conjunction with the shopping trip mentioned next). On spin-casting gear, we load up our own line.

### SHOP FOR GEAR

Set aside an afternoon and go shopping for the fishing gear on the lists created above. Most sporting goods stores are stocked up and thinking spring by now. This a much better time to be doing your buying, rather than wasting valuable time doing it when the leaves are popping and the fish are waiting. Also use this trip to stock up on hunting gear you might need for next fall -- and that might be at bargain basement prices now. Headwear, handwear, footwear, and disposable handwarmers are always on my hunting list.

### CREATE AN OUTDOOR ADVENTURES ALBUM

I've kept albums devoted solely to outdoor pursuits since I was old enough to hold a cane pole or tag along in the woods. Every young outdoors person should have such a keepsake. But now that we're in the digital age, none of us make old-fashioned prints as much. So get your computer whizzes organizing photos, printing out the best ones at home or at a photo shop, and creating photo albums or scrapbooks. Document and celebrate the year's activities -- camping, fishing, hunting, hiking, watersports, bike trips ... anything outdoors. It's nice to have something to put on the shelf, pick up, sit back and relax with.

### ATTEND A SPORTS SHOW

A morning or afternoon at a sports show is a great way to just be together, learn, generate excitement, reminisce,


and make some plans for upcoming adventures whether they are of the fishing, hunting, camping, nature or travel variety. General sports shows are great, but so are the specialized shows on deer and turkeys, and travel.

### PLAN A TRIP

Utilize some frigid afternoons or shut-in evenings to plan one of next year's outdoor trips. Assure that a tradition continues. For instance, every year we plan our June walleye trip in mid winter -- from researching lakes and choosing one, to deciding on accommodations. Or instigate a new adventure. A house boat trip is on our agenda for next summer. When a young outdoors person gets involved in the planning and has some say in the matter, they get excited.

### COOK IT UP

Have your young hunter or angler help create a game or fish feast. Most kids love being in the kitchen, and it sure brings hunting and fishing full circle when they help cook -- and then consume -- the bounty they harvested.

There's a theme here: Be efficient and do things that need to be done, but make everything fun by reminiscing -- and planning for the future -- as you work. Talk about the benefits of being organized and prepared for upcoming fishing and hunting seasons, and any other outdoor pursuits you both enjoy. Most of all, spend the time together and enjoy it, for the window of years we have with young and eager outdoors people in the fold is truly short. 

# Badger Birds

## Common Redpoll

By Tom Carpenter

Winter means redpolls! When arctic birch and willow seed crops fail, these sprightly northern finches erupt (make a mass, temporary migration) southward into gardens, yards and countryside. About one Wisconsin winter in three will see an irruption of redpolls -- maybe this will be our lucky year. You'll find redpolls anywhere there are seeds:

old fields, grassy roadsides, forest thickets or your backyard. Redpolls arrive in a swarm of happy energy, each bird handsome with red cap, black chin, gray striping and a beautiful rosy-pink wash on the breast. They are lovely to behold and delightful to observe.

Listen for redpolls' hoarse swee-ee calls. They sound like goldfinches, and are in fact closely related.


Look for redpolls when the weather is bitter cold. The birds will

irrupt as far southward as the southern United States. You can find redpolls anywhere in Wisconsin in winter.

Try to spot a hoary redpoll -- larger, paler colored, unstreaked rump -- amidst a flock of common redpolls.

Feed redpolls thistle seed from a hanging tube feeders and thistle bags. Flocks are big, so spread thistle seed, sunflower chips and crushed peanut hearts on the ground to accommodate birds that can't get a spot on the feeders.

Did you know that redpolls are held in reverence by the Cree, Inuit and other native tribes of the far north?

Some redpolls always stay at home in the arctic, the only songbird to do so, and that brightens a long winter for native people. 

*Native son Tom Carpenter watches birds across the country, and writes about the avian world for many publications.*

# Living The Dream

## Badger native owns, operates Canadian Lodge

By Terry Bitz

Greg Bolinski is probably one of the few people who make the jump from the known into the unknown in order to live their dream. A trip to a Canadian fishing camp in the late 1990's left such a lasting impression on him that he decided he would like to pursue owning and operating his own lodge up in Canada.

Even though he was a successful lease manager for Sprint, the Milwaukee native—who was living in Kenosha at the time—decided that the “normal” corporate life was not necessarily the be all and end all when it came to his career. Apparently a lot of people share the dream of owning their own Canadian lodge, but few actually go on to pursue it.

“99 percent of guys who go up there talk about buying a place. Only about .099 percent actually goes

starting of the generator that supplies electricity to the camp and ends his day by turning off the generator at midnight. He spends much of his time in between taking care of his customers and performing various lodge work that includes cleaning cabins, mowing the lawn, taking garbage to the dump and performing maintenance on whatever needs repair. That repair work includes fixing anything from roofs and docks to boat motors.

“I was never that good of a mechanic, but I got a lot better at it,” Bolinski said. “If it's broke, either I fix it or it doesn't get fixed.”

He said the two myths of owning a lodge are that you make a lot of money and you get to spend all day fishing. While he doesn't spend as much time fishing as people think, he does get out to fish more than most people, and he certainly loves it.

He grew up with a love of fishing and others in his family share that love

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*“Customers are as much interested in the scenery and tranquility as they are in the actual fishing...”*

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through with it,” said Bolinski.

Workforce reductions at Sprint in 2002 pushed him out of corporate America. However, he became one of the .099 percent who have fulfilled their dream of lodge ownership when he purchased Agate Bay Lodge on Pagwachuan Lake in 2003. Located in the province of Ontario, this lodge was found after searching for a suitable and affordable location over the previous four years.

Bolinski, who runs the camp by himself, begins his day at 6: a.m. with the

for the outdoors. This is certainly evidenced in that his son currently attends UW-Stevens Point with the goal of becoming a fisheries biologist.

For Bolinski though, the best part of owning a lodge is not for the chance of extra fishing time for himself; it is the interaction with people who are having their best week of the year. He has a number of repeat customers and has developed a friendship with many of them.

He believes that communication with current and potential customers is



Greg and Mike Bolinski with a nice pike taken near their Canadian lodge on Pagwachuan Lake in Ontario.

important. He suggests that if you are attempting to contact a lodge operator and they don't get back to you promptly, that you should think twice about booking with that lodge.

“If you send an operator an email and they don't get back to you promptly, then don't expect them to be better in person,” said Bolinski.


Most of his customers come from the United States and they generally are there to fish for walleye, although many are happy just as long as they are catching anything. He finds his customers are as much interested in the scenery and tranquility as they are in the actual fishing.

Pagwachuan Lake and surrounding waters do provide the typical Canadian fishing experience with better opportunities for catching walleye, lake trout, northern pike, brook trout, whitefish, perch and burbot, than one generally finds in the United States. Small game

and waterfowl hunts are also available.

From May through September, he lives at and runs the lodge which is located about 12 hours from Kenosha. The rest of the year, he generally lives somewhere in Southeastern Wisconsin most often working various positions in the telecom industry. This year he put his accounting degree to work by doing taxes, though he admits that accounting work is at the bottom of things he actually likes to do.

Thankfully for Bolinski, accounting is only a small part of owning and running his lodge.

For more information on Agate Bay Lodge contact Greg Bolinski at (262) 770-0202 or [www.agatebaylodge.com](http://www.agatebaylodge.com). 

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*Terry Bitz is a freelance writer who resides in Pleasant Prairie, WI. He can be contacted at [tbitz@wi.rr.com](mailto:tbitz@wi.rr.com). His website is [www.outdoorconvergence.com](http://www.outdoorconvergence.com).*

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# Another Blessing

## Day in woods more than filling tags

By Bill Thornley

Nothing, in my opinion, is as dark, as completely can't see-your-hand- in-front-of-your-face DARK as the pre-dawn deer woods on opening day. I hated using a light to find my way to my tree stand, but one misstep in the wrong direction would send me into some of the thickest, nastiest slashings on the face of the earth. I had no real desire to get myself lost on opening day of the Wisconsin deer hunting season.

There is, likewise, no quiet as lonely and complete as the woods before sunrise. It engulfs you. And until the earliest winds begin to stir around sunrise one can hear a mouse scamper across the forest floor. As your heart beats a little faster from the walk in, you can swear that every creature for a miles around can hear it in the murky, black stillness that exists.

For an hour or so, depending on how early you walk in, all is dark, quiet and cold. Then ever so slowly that first sliver of daylight breaks the far horizon, forming an orange glow behind the skeleton of leafless trees. Black transforms to grey as morning begins to awaken, and as the woods lighten up the first morning birds begin their day, flitting here and there.

A ruffed grouse flew up to a branch next to my head to eat berries and nearly giving me a heart attack in the process. But not long after a great horned owl flew over the swamp I was watching, almost close enough to touch yet making not a sound, a silent hunter searching for his own prey.

In the distance I could hear the lonely rat-a-tat-tat of a woodpecker as it searches for a meal. Nut hatches scampered, up and down the sides of trees, and chickadees flit here and there, their familiar "chick-a-dee-dee-dee" call leaving no mystery as to where they got their name. I learned long ago that the mix of chickadees and a pocket full of shell corn can provide an entire day worth of entertainment in the deer stand. They'll land on your platform, your rifle barrel, your hat, everywhere. Those tiny balls of puff are wonderful company.

If you are lucky the first deer come early, moving through the woods like shadows...nope, no antlers on those three. Oops, make that four...another little guy trailing behind, a deer I named "Baby Buck," a tiny buck fawn sporting no antlers yet, but a patch of almost red hair on his head. I watched



Although deer on the game pole is the hope, it is only one of many reasons Wisconsin hunters take to the November woods. (Photo by John Ellis)

him all season, delighting in the knowledge that nobody shot him.

I hoped that the timber wolves that had moved into the area would likewise leave him alone. Not two weeks earlier a pack of seven of the predators had killed a nice buck not 200 yards from my stand, and later a big doe -- so much for the idea that they only kill the sick and weak. Nothing clears the deer out of an area like a pack of hungry wolves, and the ones that did remain seemed very nervous. I later found out that many hunters had encountered wolves during the season and none of them were happy about it.

Hours drag on, and a sip of hot coffee from the thermos is a welcome break. A cold peanut and jelly sandwich produced from my backpack tastes like a meal fit for a king. Then another splash of coffee ... people that don't experience this just can't understand the attraction, I guess.

A fisher scampers below the stand—a welcome sighting of something, anything—alive in the woods.

The deer are few and far between. The sounds of Canada geese, snow geese and swans flying overhead unseen in the murky clouds breaks up the morning and afternoon. Every now and then the exciting crunch, crunch, crunch of a deer approaching the stand is heard. A buck? A magnificent trophy? A real wall hanger? No, throughout my opener it was only a collection of does and fawns, but still the sight of each and every deer is a blessing. I never get tired of it. Few shots are heard, nothing close anyway. Sounds like everybody is having a slow opener.

Suddenly, something close! One shot ... I knew exactly who fired it, a hunting buddy just down the road sitting in a stand not far from his house. About 20 minutes later, a second shot, probably the killing shot on the deer that must have run a short distance. I could figure out just what was happening by the sounds. Half an hour later the hunter's dog could be heard excitedly barking, no doubt as the hunter dragged his deer into the yard.

Not long after, I could hear him start his truck and drive up the road, obviously to the registration station. And a little after that, the sound of his little boy, no longer having to be quiet as Dad hunted, practicing his trumpet outside, the musical notes— not always in tune—drifting from hill to hill.

What is that? I squinted as the dark shape approached from the west. A turkey! Then two, three, nine birds in all. Nice to know, and information I'll have to store away for next spring. The woods begin to darken again as 4:00 p.m. arrives. All day the bitter wind has been blowing, but it starts to settle down, making the woods quiet again.

Again, that same lonesome, almost depressing feeling as the darkness closes in. The lonely call of an owl in the swamp below is answered by another owl not far away -- it sounds cold and I shiver as I hear it. The day is ending. No deer yet. Maybe tomorrow will be better.

But any day in the deer woods is a blessing, and most hunters will tell you that pulling the trigger is seldom the best part of the hunt. It is the entire experience, from sunrise to sunset that is recalled in treasured memories, the little episodes that make up the day that will be talked about next to the fire at deer camp throughout the week. What did you see? Was it a big buck? Did you get a shot? I imagined how many such questions would be asked all across the area later that night as chilled hunters gathered at pickup trucks pulled over on dark backroads, at registration stations, around deer camp dinner tables and at local diners.

That is an exciting part of the hunt, sharing the stories of the day. It has been going on ever since our great, great grandfathers first stepped into the November forests, and it will likely continue long after we put away our blaze orange for the final time. I felt proud to be a deer hunter, honored to be part of a tradition that is such a huge part of our families and lifestyles in this area.

I began walking out of the dark forest, my head lamp on once again. I was in no hurry to get turned around in the evening darkness either. But I was, despite a lack of shooting opportunities, eager to do it all over again the next day.

Bill Thornley is an outdoor writer from Spooner.

# On Thin Ice

## Great fishing never worth a life

By Jeff Peters

Fellow outdoors enthusiasts, let me tell you a simple truth: There is not a fish anywhere in the world worth the predicament I found myself in last evening when I fell through the ice pursuing walleye on a lake in north Wisconsin.

Seasoned enough to know the essentials of early-season ice fishing, I was indeed armed with life jackets, a 12 foot Jon boat, and a rope. But being in a hurry, I somehow forgot the pike pole and ice picks I always carry—the two tools I absolutely needed the most after my plunge into the frigid waters... followed by a spring-loaded bobber-like leap back into the boat.

And to be totally truthful to each and everyone in heaven and on earth, I am slightly, NO, make that extremely embarrassed to even tell this true tale to readers of On Wisconsin Outdoors.

I thought I knew better, and I did, but I still made a series of errors that could have ended with a much different and tragic result.

If this story saves just one life, I will gladly accept the red glow that still

radiates over my face as I tap out these words on my PC with fingers that are even hours later slightly numb from last night's ordeal...

Be safe, be safe, be safe...when in doubt, don't go out...skating on thin ice may just put you on ice, forever, and that, my friends, is indeed a very long time to give up those outdoors activities we live for here in this part of Wisconsin.

So in my relatively short time on Planet Earth, here is what I recommend for early season ice fishers eager to tap into some of the best fishing of the season.

- ✘ First and foremost, check with local authorities; the Wisconsin DNR wardens, local guides, and even lake-side residents, for the ice conditions on the particular lake you intend to fish.
- ✘ Each lake is different, some with under currents, and some like my favorite lake with freshwater spring holes that can catch you off guard in the blink of an eye.
- ✘ Pull a boat loaded with a life vest for each person, plenty of sturdy rope, a whistle, flashlight or lamp, and cell phone if at all possible. Also have a



John Warren of Mellen practices safe early ice techniques by wearing a life vest and carrying a set of ice picks when fishing in northern Wisconsin. (Photo by Jeff Peters)

long pike pole to push off the bottom in relatively shallow water, and absolutely carry a pair of ice picks to pull you out of the water back on solid ice, or in my case, to the boat.

- ✘ Keep a water-proof duffel bag with dry clothes in the boat. The dry clothes, which should include winter clothing, can save you from hypothermia if you become wet.
- ✘ Tell a friend or family member exactly where you are fishing, even

if it means giving up your "secret" fishing spot. You are priceless; a fish costs a bit of money at the local supermarket. A fish can be replaced, you can never be replaced.

- ✘ Test the thickness and quality of the ice continuously with an ice chisel, something I did until I hit the spring hole. I was walking on two inches of good ice until I dropped through the thin and deteriorated ice caused by the underwater spring.
- ✘ Think twice, act once: make absolutely sure you have the necessary equipment before you ever take that first step on the ice. "I'm making a list and checking it twice, because I am staying safe while I'm fishing on ice."

Hey, turn this into a holiday carol if you want, I don't care, just be safe. Speaking from experience, which is the very best teacher, water that has a layer of ice on top is C-O-L-D. Really cold... unbelievably cold!

It can, and will, kill you if given just a slight chance. So please, repeat

*Continued on page 29*

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Photo courtesy of the Mellen Historical Society

# Saturday, February 14...

## A sturgeon spearer's diary

By Dick Ellis

**4:30 a.m.:** Opening morning. Heading north on Highway 45 toward Winnebago with just the stars as my companions. Mentally sharp. Ready. Enthusiastic. I haven't seen a sturgeon in eight years of sturgeon spearing. Today's the day.

**6:30 a.m.:** Met my guide, Bill Jenkins in Pipe, Wisconsin on the east side of Winnebago. Every year I give Bill \$50.00. He lets me stare down into a hole. Show me a better bargain.

**6:45 a.m.:** Jim Sullivan of Jefferson gives me a ride out to my one-man shack far out on the ice of Winnebago. Jim's been spearing for a decade, with hundreds of hours staring into the water. He thinks he saw one nine years ago. I'm in the presence of greatness.

**7:00 a.m.:** All settled in now, in my six foot by eight foot shack. The trap door in the floor has been lifted back and I can sit on this folding chair and stare down at a refrigerator sized hole. Above the hole hanging down from a nail is a heavy, iron, five-pronged spear, with a rope attached poised to drop when the monster appears. The gas heater has been lit by my guide. It will soon be toasty warm in here.

**7:15 a.m.:** Fire's out. It's freezing.

**7:20 a.m.:** It's quiet now, and black. I can see about 12 feet down into the swirling green hues of Winnebago and if I tilt this notebook just right, I can scribble by that hue almost legibly. At about eight feet my guide has

suspended my decoy, a two-foot long white piece of plastic pipe. What a stupid fish to rise to a piece of PCV pipe I think as I stare down at a piece of PCV pipe. Unexplained, brief flashback to my beautiful wife, Lori, in a warm bed that I left on a Saturday morning so I could drive up here alone and sit in a cold shack and stare at this pipe. Yep...that's a stupid fish all right.

**8:30 a.m.:** Well, at least it's warm now. It's been 90 minutes and Mr. Big no doubt is just a minute or two from arriving underneath the ice. I'm still mentally sharp.

**8:32 a.m.:** A bubble just came all the way up. I watched it.

**8:33 a.m.:** Nuther one.

**8:35 a.m.:** John Jenkins, Bill's son and veteran spearer, just showed up. He has many sturgeon under his belt. He wants



this reporter to get one too. I don't know why but year after year after year after year John wears the same look of pity around me. He gives me his secret weapon decoy. It's a...and please keep this quiet so everyone's not utilizing it...a plastic pail. I thank John profusely as the pail is lowered to hang next to the white pipe. John tells me that Paul Wargowski is on his first sturgeon hunt, his shack just 100 yards from mine. Old Paul (who's actually only about 30) flipped back the lid this morning and there was a 58-inch sturgeon. Just three minutes into his first season, and his tag is filled. I tell John to congratulate good old Paul Wargowski of Whitewater for me. Although I don't know him.

**8:36 a.m.:** John just left. I don't like Paul Wargowski of Whitewater.

**8:37 a.m.:** I'm humble, a little emotional as John leaves the shack. I mean, how many guys give you a pail? I make a note to give John a can, or maybe even a bottle some day.

**8:46 a.m.:** Well no wonder it's a secret weapon. I stare down and the pail is going round and round, twirly, twirly, twiirrrly in the green hues. The pipe just sits there like a lazy pipe. "Pull your weight, man," I yell. No reaction.

**9:45 a.m.:** Twiirrrly, twiirrrlyyyy, twiirrrrrrrly. Still mentally sharp. But I think there may be someone in here.

**9:48 a.m.:** He's here all right. Somewhere in the dark. Lurking. I'll act unalarmed.

**10:30 a.m.:** If I stand on my tip-toes, I can just barely squash my hair on the ceiling.

**11 a.m.:** Discussing things with myself

for an hour now. Made unsettling self-discovery. I'm pretty boring. Not good. This shatters my whole self-image. Little wonder I never had a date in high school.


**11:30 a.m.:** Tried playing 100 questions about my life. Only missed seven. Self-esteem rising again.

**11:37 a.m.:** Just checked my notes. 27 pages of "all work and no play makes Dick a dull boy." What the heck does that mean? That guy in the shack is messing with me.

**11:45 a.m.:** It is indeed toasty warm in here. Should have worn Lori's skirt. That short, black leather number.

**11:55 a.m.:** I'm down to my T-shirt, sweating. There's a fly climbing up the wall. Yea, right. In February. In Wisconsin. Like that's not a "plant." Now I know someone is in here, watching, watching, watching me. Watching me to see if I kill the fly. To see if I'm sane. I saw "Psycho". Norman Bates. Dressed in his Mother's clothes (you wouldn't have caught me in that outfit). He wouldn't kill the fly either. He knew "they" were watching, too. I'll wait this thing out. I will not touch that fly.

**NOON:** Just smashed the fly with the spear. I knew they were watching. A siren just went off.

**12:30 p.m.:** Bill Jenkins is here. Spearing's over for the day. Bill wants to know why I look so flushed. He pries my fingers off the spear handle. "Dick...Dick...Are you all right?" I hear his distant voice. "Am I all right?" I hear my answer. "Am I all right? I will be just as soon as you sign me up for next year." 

### On Thin Ice... (Continued from page 28)

after me, "I, (your name), promise to be safe this ice fishing season and will not go out without the proper safety gear and equipment and will tell friends and family where I am fishing.

"I will check the ice conditions with the DNR and local guides before fishing, because I am worth it, because I matter to my family and my friends, and because I cannot enjoy a walleye dinner if I am frozen in a block of ice."

Finally, how did I get out of this predicament? My daughter, Jill Anne, who was warm, dry, and sitting in the boat, used her cell phone to call our long-time friends Mark and Vicky Ellias, whose home we could see on the lake shore. They in turn made the right decision and called the Mellen Fire and Rescue Department, who did indeed live up to their name and come to the rescue.

Arriving on the scene in just minutes, they quickly assessed the situation and sent a trained member dressed in a "cold water immersion suit" with a safety line to our boat, which was locked in the broken ice about 100 yards from shore. Fire department captain Ron Brendalen crawled on the ice to within feet of the boat until he too plunged into the water. Swimming to the boat, Ron then attached a rope to the boat's front handle.


The fire department crew, along with the Ellias family, then quickly pulled the boat to shore over the ice. They also made sure Ron returned safely to shore. First making sure my daughter was entirely safe, the ambulance crew whisked me into the heated ambulance, stripped off my wet clothing, wrapped me in warm blankets and checked my vitals for any signs of hypothermia. I was lucky. Though I was

shivering uncontrollably, and my heart rate and blood pressure were elevated from the ordeal, I was basically OK. After further monitoring by the ambulance crew, my wife, Mary Jane, was able to drive me home about 30 minutes later.

This fact has to be mentioned: the professionalism and timely response by the Mellen Fire and Rescue Department was simply amazing. Until you are caught in this type of situation, you cannot fully realize just how well these people do their jobs. These people, my neighbors and friends, who practice on a regular basis for this exact type of situation, show the right stuff time and time again, and don't ask for a reward or even a pat on the back.

They came to this particular scene ready for the unexpected, and most certainly were 100 percent prepared for whatever scenario awaited their

expertise. They are real American heroes and I can never thank them enough. But I will try: "From the very depths of the heart of my family - thank you! And to Mark, Vicky and your wonderful children - another thank you!"

I can only end this story by saying: "I would, and will, do the same for all of you if I am ever needed." 

Jeff Peters of Mellen, Wisconsin, is publisher of "The Echo", a Wisconsin historical newspaper. Peters urges historians and residents of Wisconsin to send their stories and old photos (quality reproductions or scans at 300 dpi on CD preferred) to: Attention: Jeff Peters, The Echo, 31374 Long Lake Road, Mellen, WI 54546. Or email them to [peters@ceas.coop](mailto:peters@ceas.coop) Subscriptions for the newspaper are \$20 for the year and can be sent to the same address.

# Kuehl Kids Photo Contest

## And the winner is...



Dan Andrews of Bristol submitted this photo of his son, Nolan, 5. This is Nolan's first largemouth.

Nolan Andrews will receive the original artwork of this hand-drawn caricature of his photo by artist Johnathan Kuehl.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** "On Wisconsin Outdoors" didn't realize how difficult it would be to select the "winner", so we had to pick a winner randomly because they were all so good. Thank you to all who entered.

## Additional Submissions



Jordyn Lewin learns how to catch fish with Daddy, Chris Lewin



Wyatt Kidney and his first perch



Nicole Englebert, 4, caught bass on her Barbie pole on Red Lake in Vilas County. Submitted by Grandma Marilyn Zimmerman.



Payton Hintz, age 12, shot her first deer, a 7-point buck, her first time hunting on opening gun morning. Submitted by Lynn Hintz.

**On Wisconsin**  
*Outdoors*  
 With the Dick Hills Experts

  
sample photo

  
sample caricature of photo

# Kuehl Kids PHOTOS

**Submit your photo of a kid in the outdoors! If we select your photo, we'll print the caricature in an edition of *On Wisconsin Outdoors*, and send YOU the original artwork as our gift!**

Photos scans or digital files must be provided at high resolution 300 dpi and emailed to [submit@onwisconsinoutdoors.com](mailto:submit@onwisconsinoutdoors.com).  
 If we select your photo, the original caricature drawing will be mailed to you at no charge.

Interested in purchasing a caricature drawing made from your photo?  
 Contact artist Johnathan Kuehl directly at [kuehlarts@gmail.com](mailto:kuehlarts@gmail.com) or call (612) 812-9600.

Submit your entries for the next issue: Photo scans or digital files must be provided at high resolution 300 dpi and emailed to [submit@onwisconsinoutdoors.com](mailto:submit@onwisconsinoutdoors.com). If we select your photo, the original caricature drawing will be mailed to you at no charge. Interested in purchasing a caricature drawing made from your photo? Contact artist Johnathan Kuehl directly at [kuehlarts@gmail.com](mailto:kuehlarts@gmail.com) or call (612) 812-9600.

# On Wisconsin Outdoors Board of Directors

**Deer Hunter Daily,**  
This year, I forgot to pack the earn-a-buck sticker that I earned last year. Before I could start hunting, I had to cut a day of hunting short to drive back three hours home and find my sticker. How can the DNR expect guys to remember something they got 12 months ago?

*Frustrated in Dunn County*

Dear Frustrated,  
Simple. This year the Earn-A-Buck regulations were on page 2,756 of the DNR Deer Hunting Pamphlet. Put it right in there in the off-season and ensure a two-for-one bargain. You're guaranteed to find your sticker. And you're guaranteed to be totally confused.



*Hunter Daily*



*Conibear Smith*

**Dear Conibear Smith,**  
As a beginner trapper, how can I best learn to care for my pelts after harvest?

*Johnny Wunder, Wisconsin Rapids*

Dear Johnny,  
Sometimes we over think the situation. In the old days we let nature take its course. For example, you harvest a coon and you want a coon skin cap? Skin it, then tie it tight around your head. In about three weeks you'll have a perfectly fitting David Crockett special. Now, your wife might say something in the middle of the night on about day three, like "What smells?" You'll be ready for her. Say, "I don't know! Did you get a permanent?" But, if she happens to actually look at you sometime in those three weeks and notices that you're wearing an animal, you might have to expand on this.

**Dear Rex Rodsalotta,**  
Is ice fishing a sign of mental illness?

*Mad in Madison*

Dear Mad Man,  
Anyone who fishes, open water or hard-water, might be considered a little...how can I say this gently...nuts. Especially when nothing is hitting. And I guess ice fishing might be a more severe case. But it's all relative. For example, some people think that riding a bike in multi-color tights with a banana helmet hogging the road is sane. To put it in perspective, imagine opening a Christmas present and saying "It's just what I wanted!" when looking down at multi-colored tights and a banana helmet. Now that's mental.



*Rex Rodsalotta*

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### VEHICLES

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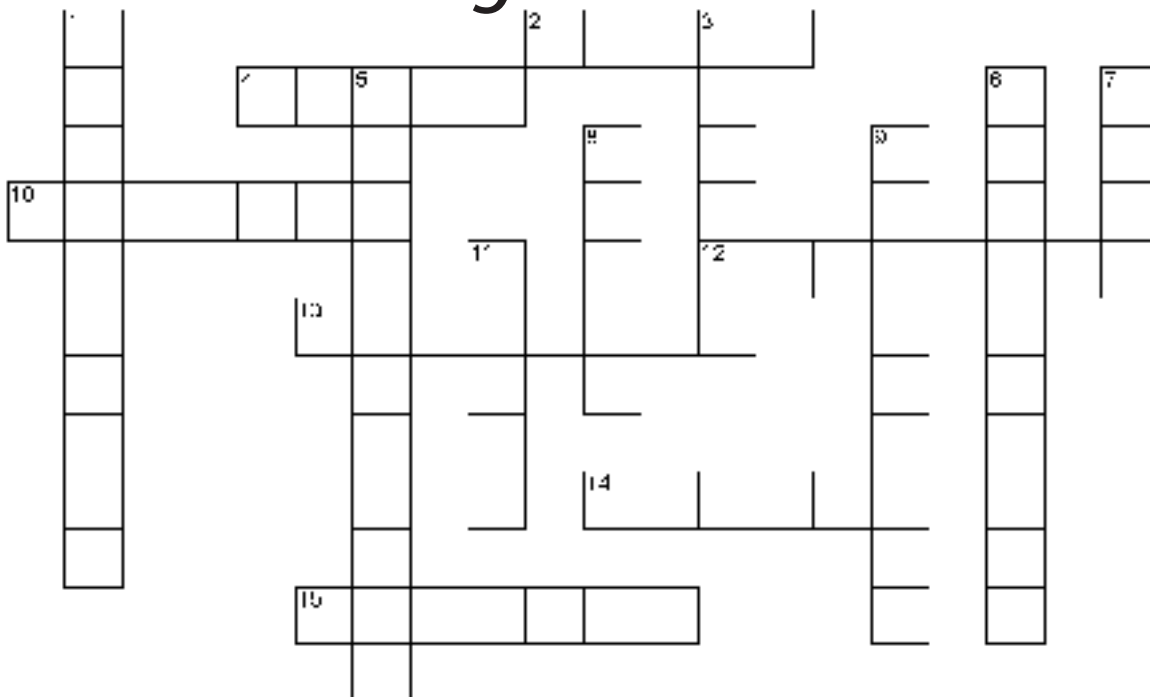


Eric Simkins of Brokaw shares his 8-point kill.

Send us your hunting and fishing photos or your organization's news to: [submit@onwisconsinoutdoors.com](mailto:submit@onwisconsinoutdoors.com)

We will do our best to post it in the *On Wisconsin Outdoors* publication or on our web site at [www.onwisconsinoutdoors.com](http://www.onwisconsinoutdoors.com)

## Outdoor Criss Cross - Hunting Puzzle #15



### ACROSS

- 2 A wild turkey's bec.
- 4 "Safety \_\_\_\_\_."
- 10 Big game meat.
- 12 A bear hunter's sought-after color
- 13 Bill Jordan's camo company.
- 14 A turkey hunter's cutting time.
- 15 A popular scope manufacturer.

### DOWN

- 1 The "F" n NWTF.
- 3 Type of grouse. \_\_\_\_\_.
- 5 Estimates distance.
- 6 Ask a landowner and your wife for this.
- 7 Type of open sites
- 8 Wild turkey's crest hair.
- 9 Choice in gun stocks: wood or \_\_\_\_\_.
- 11 Plan a spring \_\_\_\_\_ bear hunt.

Answers on page 16



# Sacred Ground, Part III

## How much do we really care?

By Terrill Knaack

There is nothing more enlivening and motivating than a pilgrimage to the Upper Mississippi National Wildlife Refuge. Whether it be in the spring, summer, fall, or winter, we can see before us a river teeming with diverse life. It is deeply moving to see and hear over ten thousand tundra swans stretch over large expanses of open water. Canvasbacks in rafts of tens of thousands create an image of a vast sea of flashing white backs. Thousands can be seen in flight at once as they search over water rich in aquatic life.

Mature bald eagles seem impassive looking on in groups. Immatures play in the wind along bluff slopes. Here one can count twenty species of waterfowl from one viewpoint. The sheer diversity of life supported by a truly living river system is a marvel. This is perhaps a vision of hope for those of us, who love and are concerned for, the shallow lakes and riverine wetland systems, that are found throughout Wisconsin.

People are here as well, boat landings and parking lots are packed solid on weekends. Roadsides are crowded with observers that come from all over the world to view this phenomenon. Many millions visit each year. The restoration of the Mississippi River is a work in progress. These restoration efforts, without question, did not come about easily. The struggles, conflicts and dedication that made this happen can never be underestimated.

There are few shallow lakes in Wisconsin that have not had a history of conflict. There are those who would say that this conflict is the result of people "caring" about the lake. However, we need to ask the question, do we really care about the life that the lake could support or are we really caring about our own self-interests?

As people, who are identified by governmental agencies such as the DNR as "stakeholders", gather in meeting after meeting to verbally "slug it out" over lake issues, what do they really care about? In the interest of clarity of thought, we need to ask "What does it mean to care?"

Is "caring" pressuring the DNR to plant more fish in a lake that has lost its



"November Snow" by Terrill Knaack

natural reproduction and has low planting survival rates so we can promote lake use?

Is it demanding that there is enough water depth to accommodate

way from where this series started, looking down on these shallow lakes consecrated by the labors of the ancient mound builders. My wife and I stood next to bluff top mounds again days

situation by redefining what caring means and understanding that the real meaning of these lakes is to support a diversity of life.

By supporting life we open up a whole new realm of creative possibilities. When we really care, educating ourselves comes naturally, and the passion is there to protect and preserve our lakes as they were meant to be. We may on some distant day find ourselves blessed to have these shallow lakes and wetlands, restore them, and be truly at home.

*"Is 'caring' pressuring the DNR to plant more fish in a lake that has lost its natural reproduction and has low planting survival rates so we can promote lake use?"*

the draft of our bass boat and horse power of its motor?

Is it making an effort to drive off the white pelicans that have tried to make a home on a lake because we suspect they are ruining the fishing?

This is a brief sample of the types of concerns expressed at these meetings. If any readers have been involved in these issues they can come up with scores more like these.

A closer look reveals that perhaps with a few exceptions we have not even begun to care. We have ventured a long

ago watching young eagles play in the wind below us, beyond was a river of life. Lake Koshkonong, Puckaway, and so many others are also potentially rivers of life.

As human beings we are instinctively drawn to living near water. However, shallow lakes sometimes do not correspond to the false images we have in our minds as to what a lake should be. Nor will they ever, unless we see their meaning in a totally different way. We are still strangers in a strange land. We can only change this

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** *These three essays were meant to be an overview of shallow lake issues in Wisconsin. They are not by any means a listing of all the biological issues affecting our lakes. This effort will have been worthwhile if it stimulates fruitful discussion and a passion for preservation and restoration.*

*Terrill Knaack has been painting Wisconsin landscapes and wildlife for 30 years. He is also a photographer and a perpetual observer of Wisconsin's natural history. To learn more about his work, see [www.terrillknaack.com](http://www.terrillknaack.com)*

# Product 6-Pack

## Great gear for the woods, fields and waterways

By JJ Reich, Copyright © 2008

Here's the rundown on four hunting and fishing products that you may find useful in the woods, fields and waterways. We did.

### NATURE VISION'S PAK SHACK 3

For \$170, the lightweight and collapsible Pak Shack 3 consists of a three-person, oversized fishing chair with a built-in, flip-over shelter. The comfortable fishing chair also has dual beverage/gear holders and carry bag for easy transport.



There are three things I like about the Pak Shack 3. First, it has plenty of interior space for fishing and elec-

tronics. Second, it easily fits into the trunk of a small car. Lastly, it's an affordable way to stay on the ice!

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consists of two pre-set carbide cutting heads for quick edge sharpening; multi-use ceramic rods to sharpen hooks, straight blades and serrated edges; and a fine 750-grit diamond stone.

I like the fact that this is a 3-in-1 system that can sharpen just about any knife or tool, including serrated blades. The protective lid and its ability to break down into its compact case, makes the sharpener even better.

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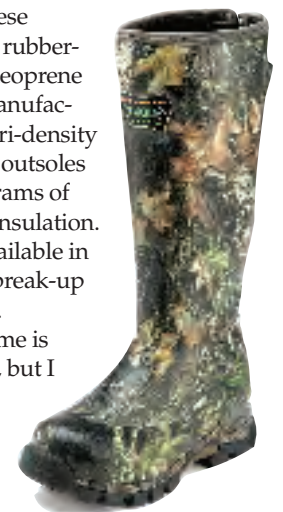
I have a red-dot scope on my turkey gun and this little gadget was a great help when mounting the scope and patterning the load. Plus, I use it for quickly re-checking the alignment of my scope before heading to the turkey woods.

[www.sightmark.com](http://www.sightmark.com)  
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### ROCKY'S DEERSTALKER XTREME BOOTS

For \$150, these waterproof, rubber-laminated neoprene boots are manufactured with tri-density lightweight outsoles and 1,400 grams of Thinsulate insulation. They are available in mossy oak break-up camouflage.

The name is DeerStalker, but I love these boots for turkey hunting in the wet months of spring. The boots provide excellent traction, feel light on your feet and very comfortable.



[www.rockyboots.com](http://www.rockyboots.com)  
(740) 753-1951

JJ Reich is an outdoor writer who contributes product-related articles to several national magazines and web sites. He is also the author of *Kampp Tales Outdoor Adventures hunting books for kids*. Learn more at: [www.kampptales.com](http://www.kampptales.com).

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Family (2 adults, 2 children)	\$35.00	Corporate	\$100.00

\*All tickets include access to all exhibits and seminars.

HOURS

Friday	7:00 - 9:00 pm
Saturday	9:00 am - 5:00 pm
Sunday	9:00 am - 5:00 pm

HOTELS

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- NEW! Locked & Loaded Display
- 174th Trail Cam Photo Contest
- World's Largest Lampier Treatment
- Optics To Cut & Infr Center
- Food Plot Soil Test Display
- Food Plot Crop Demo Falls
- Food Plot Seminars & Info Center
- Wisconsin Archery & Shooting Center
- Wisconsin Archery & Shooting Center
- Trophy Deer & Bear Contest - Finals
- Live Auction - 1000+ lbs. of Deer & Turkey Meat
- New Products Special Display
- Hands On Blending Range
- Dabbling Duck Contest
- Live Game Animals

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• Seminar Schedule • Contest Details • Directions & Map or call 1-800-324-3337





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