

March/April 2012  
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# On Wisconsin Outdoors

with the  
**Dick Ellis Experts**

■ **Learning From The Miss**

*This spring, Tom comes home*

■ **Kayak Fishing Wisconsin**

*Our expert leads the way*

■ **Gentle On The Mind**

*Memories of dad, son and spawning panfish*

■ **Diaries Of A Wisconsin Bear Guide**

*Wolves, hounds, bait and a bear named Wood Tick*

■ **Targeting The Sauk Prairie Dam**

*Early walleye and sauger tactics*

■ **Flyfishing Wisconsin**

*Steelhead on the horizon*

■ **NextBuk Outdoors**

*Hunting the unfamiliar*

■ **Surplus Firearms**

*Prepare to panic*

■ **When The Road Calls**

*Explore Wisconsin online and right here*

■ **We've Created A Monster**

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TOM CARPENTER

# Preventing Turkey Misses

## This spring, Tom comes home

Missing a turkey is no sin. Failing to learn from the experience is.

My most recent imperfect shot came on a perfect morning. My friend J.J. and I were sitting side by side below a huge old oak tree, enjoying some warm and spectacular April weather. I was yakking on one of J.J.'s new slate calls when he suddenly hissed, "Turkeys!"

Four jakes trotted across the pasture. We quickly decided a pair of jakes would make some fine camp eating.

While I poured it on to coax the jakes into range, we decided which bird we would each shoot on "three." With the young toms bobbing and weaving, I pulled the trigger on my whispered count of one-two-three when my sights weren't quite lined up and my bird's head was moving when it wasn't supposed to be.

The birds scrambled away, poor

J.J. didn't even pull a trigger, and we ate beans for lunch.

### The Reasons We Miss

That miss wasn't a surprise. Pressured by a self-appointed time to shoot, I pulled the trigger when the sights weren't lined up. Simply put, we rushed things. That's just one of the common culprits behind missing turkeys. Here is a more complete list of the problems—the reasons (not excuses!) for sending your shot where the bird's noggin isn't. The solutions are clear.

**Didn't sight-in.** It's amazing how many hunters don't shoot their shotgun before the season to know where things are hitting and make sight adjustments.

### Not ready for a turkey to appear.

Arriving unannounced, within range of an unsuspecting and unready hunter, saves many gobblers their feathered skins each year.

**Panicked and rushed shot.** Fear of

losing that turkey causes misses when we rush shots and pull the trigger before the optimal moment.

### Didn't get butt of stock

**up.** Failing to get the butt of the gun's stock up on your shoulder starts the bad cycle of shooting high (turkey hunting's most common miss).

### Didn't get head down on

**stock.** When you don't nestle your cheek in low and tight onto the stock, your rear sight tends to position itself too low. So you (again) shoot high.

**Peeked.** In our anxious desire to kill the bird, sometimes we lift our heads while pulling the trigger, to see him drop. Except he doesn't.

**Failed to line up sights.** It's simple: Wait until the sights are lined up (and then double check them!) before shooting.

**Jerked trigger.** Jerking the trigger pulls your sights off the bird. Shoot today's mainstream turkey gun more like a rifle (squeeze the trigger) than a shotgun.

**Turkey moved.** Turkeys are nervous. They take steps and bob their melons at inopportune times, such as when a hunter is pulling a trigger.

**Turkey too far away.** Taking a poke at a too-far gobbler is a sure way to miss a bird you won't call in again. Worst of all, you could cripple it.

**Turkey too close.** Tight turkey chokes leave no room for aiming error when things are up close and personal. Turkey fever is intense when the bird is this close.

### Plan for Success

Once you've patterned and sighted-in your gun, you need to hit the woods knowing how you will make your shot. Consider the key elements of this simple process.

**Positive Attitude.** Expect a turkey at all times! If you've been pessimistic and your gun is on your lap or lying at your side, the movements you need to make are sure to spook any approaching bird.



This Green County gobbler, taken just north of Monticello, met up with a carefully placed charge of shot from the author's turkey shotgun. What factors make the difference in scoring a hit on your gobbler this spring? Read on.

**Nestle In, Make Adjustments.** As the turkey approaches, get ready to shoot it. Bring your stock up, pull your head down tight onto it, and nestle your cheek in. Actively make adjustments to keep a good shooting angle on the bird. Shift only slowly, both when and at the speed he moves. Better yet, shift only when his head is out of view: behind a fan, obstructed by a tree trunk, hidden by terrain.

**Know Ranges.** Know your outside range limitation and your ideal distance. Don't shoot beyond the first; strive to bring the turkey into the second. Most of us have a sweet spot at about 25 to 30 yards.

**Confidence and Patience.** Be patient. Don't rush matters. Unless he's getting spooked, that gobbler has nowhere else to go. Wait until the time is right. Enjoy the excitement and the show.

**Double Check Sighting.** This is the single biggest action you can take to make sure you kill that turkey. Really think about your sight picture, and take time to double check your sights' alignment. This is huge. I shoot with two beads, lining the back one up with the front one to make sure I'm not shooting high. If I take an extra couple seconds to really consider those sights' alignment and placement—back one lined up with front one, front one placed on the bird's wattles—it's a dead turkey.

continued on page 15

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BILL SCHULTZ

# Kayak Fishing Wisconsin

## *Our expert leads the way*



Over the past few years kayak fishing has become one of the fastest growing sports in America. Fishing from a kayak may sound crazy to those who have never tried it, but it offers an avid angler so many new opportunities to chase your favorite fish species.

Chad Hoover, author of *Kayak Bass Fishing*, founder of KayakBassFishing.com and Pro Staff Director for Wilderness Systems Kayaks, says, "I firmly believe that the kayak is the most effective and versatile platform for pursuing trophy bass anywhere, offering virtually unlimited flexibility and access."

I love fishing from my powered boat and have spent all or part of 300 days since 1994 wading rivers across Wisconsin for smallmouth bass. Both methods of chasing smallies and largemouth bass are great, but my fishing kayaks add a new dimension to my love of bass fishing or fishing for any species that swims the waters of

our state. I can get on small lakes and ponds throughout Wisconsin that will never have a boat launch or fish that stretch of the Wisconsin River that would chew up the prop on my engine, or try that great smallie river that winds for miles through farm country that I could never get to with waders. Wisconsin is a kayak angler's dream with thousands of lakes and hundreds miles of rivers and streams just waiting for you to wet a line from your kayak.

It's amazing to be on a clear lake in my kayak, drifting over bass that would most likely be swimming for cover had I been wading or even using a trolling motor. Even though kayaks today are being outfitted with trolling motors, and some even come with other propulsion methods, I find that I look forward to the exercise I get paddling from spot to spot. The added bonus to kayak fishing is that even on a slow

day of fishing, you will feel the stress of your busy life wash away, and who knows? You may see an eagle around the next bend in the river or a blue heron looking for its next meal in the quiet bay of that small lake.

In the months to come I will tell you about great places in Wisconsin to test your kayak fishing skills, look at fishing kayaks and equipment, how to transport your kayak, share fishing tips and tap into the knowledge of other top kayak anglers I know.

On Wisconsin Outdoors and I want to be your resources for kayak fishing, whether you've been doing it for years, just want to get started, or add to your knowledge base. *WO*

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

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DICK ELLIS

# On Wisconsin Outdoors

## OnWisconsinOutdoors.com: We've created a monster

Yes, we've created a Monster. Now, can you help us feed him? Technically, <http://www.OnWisconsinOutdoors.com> is the result of six months of website development as we worked to shape the best internet vehicle to complement our 50,000 distribution hunting and fishing newspaper. Really though, this monster is the reflection of more than two decades of work by outdoor writers and Wisconsin guides in the fields and streams of Wisconsin, just doing what we do. It's also the launch of more articles, more photos, more how-to, more news, and more pure outdoors from every back-forty and secret creek in beautiful Wisconsin.

We're going to talk hunting, fishing, travel, trapping, outdoor humor, new products, where-to, how-to, who's-who, and what's new in Wisconsin. We're going to bring you bear hunting, deer hunting, upland game, waterfowl, small game, dog talk, silent sport opportunities, archery, bow hunting, firearms, trout fishing, inland fishing, Great Lakes fishing, and ice fishing. We're going to show you your own outdoor photography and scouting camera shots and video that you send in and a whole bunch of our own too; starting with the shots that we've chosen for the covers of our first five years of publishing including a blurb of where in Wisconsin

the shot was taken, when, and the circumstances behind it. We'll give you wildlife recipes, ATV and snowmobile trail reports county-by-county. We'll show you where Wisconsin people go to hunt and fish in other states and Canada.

On January 1, 2012 I hung up the syndicated outdoor column I had been scribbling for 25 years from the fields for Wisconsin newspapers from Superior to Kenosha to concentrate on publishing On Wisconsin Outdoors and keeping our website current. It's in the field producing 1200 stories with photos that I met these experts who became my friends who are now the writers for On Wisconsin Outdoors. It was also in the field where I earned my own reputation as the only non-expert in the *Ellis Experts* arsenal of journalists and guides that make up On Wisconsin Outdoors. Like I always say, "I may not be no expert but I are a riter."

I'm going to use the *Ellis Blog* on the website to show you what I did over decades as an outdoor reporter so you don't miss it yourself. Often, I will steer you to a posted *Dick's Trips* column that we did from the field so that you can plan your own journey. For example, look at my previous blogs and link to our *Dick's Trips* columns about whitefish angling on Green Bay, deep-water Mendota perch, or walleyes

### It's New. Have You Seen It?

The new website at [OnWisconsinOutdoors.com](http://OnWisconsinOutdoors.com)



More new stuff of everything Wisconsin outdoors is waiting for you now, online, at [www.onwisconsinoutdoors.com](http://www.onwisconsinoutdoors.com).

***"I'm going to use the 'Ellis Blog' on the website to show you what I did over decades as an outdoor reporter so you don't miss it yourself."***

on the St. Louis River in Superior. We have literally more than 1000 of these to post. And don't forget every week to check out the *Outdoor Reports* by our experts under *Explore Wisconsin*. After choosing your trip, our county partners like chambers of commerce and resorts found on the *Explore Wisconsin* page stand ready to help with everything else you will need to know from dining to lodging and night entertainment in the county you're heading for.

This monster has to be fed regularly. If you want to promote your outdoor organization, or show off an especially good outdoor photo you took or game cam shot, or submit a story for consideration, do it. Maybe you're a guide on a hot bite. Submit outdoor reports and photos and we'll promote it. If you want to advertise, we'll make it work for you online and in print. Your advertising means our readers and your consumers receive a high quality outdoor product at no cost.

You can pick up the On Wisconsin Outdoors newspaper at 700 locations in Wisconsin. We print 50,000 papers bi-monthly. You've been snapping it up since we first published in 2007. If you prefer to read online, click on any of nearly 30 issues scrolling across the homepage, including the current issue. Each of those papers will clearly convey the message that working the fields of Wisconsin has never been a job for us. Like you, hunting and fishing Wisconsin is a way of life for us, and it always has been.

Thanks for visiting [OnWisconsinOutdoors.com](http://OnWisconsinOutdoors.com) and for reading our paper. You're welcome here. Come again soon. Submit website material for consideration to [contact@onwisconsinoutdoors.com](mailto:contact@onwisconsinoutdoors.com). For more information on advertising contact [ads@onwisconsinoutdoors.com](mailto:ads@onwisconsinoutdoors.com).

*Dick Ellis is publisher of On Wisconsin Outdoors. Read Dick's blog on the website at [OnWisconsinOutdoors.com](http://OnWisconsinOutdoors.com).*



**[www.OnWisconsinOutdoors.com](http://www.OnWisconsinOutdoors.com)**

TOM CARPENTER

# Cubs Corner

## Spring sunfish memories

Sometimes late at night, when the challenges of one's world keep sleep at bay, a sportsman's mind wanders to good memories of special times in the outdoors. Here's one recollection that plays more and more as I get older and every new spring approaches.

When April's leaves started popping out, Dad always said it was time to start fishing for bluegills. While the full-on panfish spawn was far off, the sunfish would start staging in the shallows now, feeding on the abundant minnows and aquatic life in the warming water.

Dad's depot agent job on the railroad let him escape the office by late afternoon. I would run the mile-and-a-half home from junior high after the 3:10 bell, store all the gear in the boat, grab a sack dinner mom had made for us and have us ready to go. Soon Dad would arrive, put on old blue jeans, a flannel shirt and a straw hat, and we'd hitch up the boat and take off.

Fleetwood Mac on the radio. Windows open to April's magnificence. The smell of freshly-plowed ground. The sight of emerald pastures and red barns. The sound of meadowlarks singing from fenceposts as we wheeled

past.

After that half hour drive through Wisconsin's prettiest hills, we would arrive at Yellowstone Lake in Lafayette County. This water has known many incarnations over the years, and the mid-1970s must have been a high-ebb time, because the fishing was superb.

We'd launch the boat, our 14-foot Larson that was now updated with a 15-horsepower Eska Motor, and chug across to the north shoreline. (A few years before we had graduated from the original 5-horse Hiawatha motor. Oh, what I would give to have that relic now!) I always thought it cool that we could leave home, make the drive, launch the boat and have a line in the water in under an hour.

Our rigs were simple: a light spinning or spincasting outfit, a small red and white bobber, one tiny split shot, and a gold, long-shank size 6 hook. That's it. Our bait: nightcrawlers (pinched in halves or thirds) that I had gathered by flashlight from our lawn and the schoolyard on rainy nights.

It never took long to find the fish, one reason being we had the luxury of picking and choosing our days: sunny, warm, calm. We'd anchor up when we found a pod of sunnies, then work the



*"And the memories do just that for me now—happy thoughts of a simpler time and place, a father and his boy; ..."*

area for a while. In April, the catch was usually dominated by orange-breasted bull sunfish, with the occasional silvery crappie thrown in. I can still look back to my fishing logs and see the entries from these excursions. Here's one:

*April 24. Yellowstone. 33 bluegills, 3 crappies. Fished across from boat landing, worked up toward no motor zone. Nice and warm. Saw 2 deer on the way home.*

That's it. But there was so much more. Sitting in the quiet, the big and little challenges of our day fading away in the early evening sunshine. Pungent oak woods, coming alive with springtime. Bird song serenades. These forays cemented my lifelong love of birds: Warblers of every description passed by on the nearby shoreline's overhanging trees. Cedar waxwings swooped over the water, chasing insects. Incredible orange orioles flitted about and sang their hoo-li whistles in the treetops. The drumbeat of grouse wings reached us from the secluded hollows. Wood ducks buzzed past.

At some point we'd break out

sandwiches and eat as we tried to fish, or rather, fish while we tried to eat. Either way, it was welcome change from the "ordinary" of every day and a recognition of a very special and beautiful time of year—a window of opportunity not to be lost.

When the sun set behind the ridges to the west, we'd motor back to the landing, load up in the gathering evening and head out in the dusk, retracing our route through the now-dark countryside. At home we'd back the boat in, then clean fish until they were done.

I'd collapse in bed after a hot shower, as happy as a kid could be and never realizing it would ever end. Sleep always came easy. And the memories do just that for me now—happy thoughts of a simpler time and place, a father and his boy; quiet times on the warming water surrounded by the simple richness of April and of life itself. *WO*

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

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MIKE FOSS

# Diaries Of A Wisconsin Bear Guide

## And the cycle continues

**We've Got Bears.**  
OnWisconsinOutdoors.com/BearHunting

It is a late February day in Bayfield County, and memories fall over me as I walk the woods. I have my first shed antler of the new year, an old four-point half rack from a 2010 buck that would score 130 or better. I also have the memories of something too rare in recent years: a very nice buck taken during the last week of bowhunting in January. And I recall something that on the back of hard work and sweat has become commonplace: another extraordinarily successful bear season.

Over the last 10 years, our bear camps average 25 hunters who have earned a 95 percent success rate with almost 100 percent shot opportunity. We have big bears here in the wilderness. A 639-pound boar was killed several years ago, and once again bears in the 400-pound-plus class were among the harvest in 2011. The legendary Snaggletooth was killed by hound hunters before our bait hunters took to the field, but another 600-pound boar was almost immediately captured on game camera at the bait.

By now all Wisconsin bear hunters should have been notified if they received that coveted 2012 bear tag earned, on average, by eight or nine years of applying and waiting. The 2012 harvest permits are up slightly in Zone C only, but the harvest goal is down to 4,600 compared to 5,235 in 2011.

What does this mean? The DNR is playing it safe. Until more research data is evaluated, the State wants to maintain the bear population and not over-hunt it.

Only personal data and observations gathered as a professional bear guide for more than a decade dictate my opinions. Preparation for the success we have earned requires diligent scouting and baiting for months over 35 square miles of wild Superior country with extensive use of game cameras. I know that the black bear population in the big woods of Bayfield County is higher than the State realizes. But I also respect the DNR's management decision.

Some concerns among hunters waiting so long for a harvest tag are common. The question I hear

***"The 2012 harvest permits are up slightly in Zone C only, but the harvest goal is down to 4,600 compared to 5,235 in 2011."***

most often is whether or not the hunter should hunt during a year when hound hunters have first opportunity. It is a great question initiated by bait hunters unsure if hound hunting will affect their own long-awaited opportunity to fill a bear tag.

From personal observation and extensive experience, concerned first with providing a quality hunt for my clients, I support the hound hunters fully. Every year hound hunters have a two-month training period lasting almost until the season starts, regardless of who will hunt first. Those bears know what the hounds are all about. Over the years of our clients hunting both private and public terrain, there have only been three instances when my client hunting on public land could hear, and eventually see, the pack of hounds. In those three instances, two of my bear hunters shot bears within 30 minutes of the experience.

Bears adapt to repetitive situations very well, and hounds should not play a large factor in your own decision of when to hunt. It is disappointing, as it would be for a deer hunter, when unexpected noise and disruption temporarily shatter the quiet that has fallen over the area since the walk in. You may think your hunt is ruined. I do not. And it is public land; other sportsmen have the right to enjoy their sport.

There is a much more valid concern for bait bear hunters hoping for a hunt without any unwelcome surprise. Unlike hounds, they are the silent danger, feared most by bears, rarely seen but still out there 24/7 with nature's drive to survive and tenacious skill as hunters to make sure they stay alive. Wisconsin wolf packs can ruin your hunt and are a confirmed nightmare for the northern bear and deer hunter. Believe me, wolves are here.


I continue my winter walk and remember more. On a beautiful fall day following the bear season, I began the long, tedious annual task of taking down stands. Before I remove the ladder and tree stands, I climb and sit in each bear stand, contemplating how I might improve that bait site for the next hunter in 2012. Staring at the empty holes in the ground with logs scattered about, I can see myself weaving through the tangled mess, carrying the bucket full of bait, sweating and swatting at swarms of bugs and



Wood Tick, a black bear estimated at more than 600 pounds, showed up on Mike Foss' trail cameras shortly after the fall of the legendary Snaggletooth to hound hunters in 2011. The Foss camp takes 400 plus bears annually with a boar at 638 pounds, the granddaddy, three years ago.

wiping the spider webs that I just walked into from my face and eyes. All of it, across the seasons, is part of the cycle.

The 2011 bear season will go down as one of the best for Northern Wisconsin Outfitters. How do I top it? The work does not end, and in that is found the answer. Dues are paid out here in the field and success is earned. I will continue to do what I do best. When baiting begins in April and throughout the summer, I periodically will send trail camera photos of feeding bears on bait stations and e-mail updates to hunters already booked. Our 2012 camp, as always, was virtually filled within two weeks of tags being drawn. Any of our hunters wishing to experience our baiting routine is welcome to venture north and lend me a hand before the season starts. But a word of caution ... rest assured that you will work.

My walk at the end of a February day is over. We're in the winter lull of this cycle. My body isn't as sore anymore from hauling bait, climbing trees, leading hunters in and carrying all the equipment out at season's end. Most of the cuts and bruises from thorns and thickets are healed. And some add to the scars already earned in Bayfield County. I look in the truck mirror. Just like the face of a battle worn bear. 

Mike Foss was born and raised in Washburn, Wisconsin. As a guide and owner of Northern Wisconsin Outfitters, he has harvested bear and many deer, including several record book bucks. Off season, Mike spends time with his family and is constantly scouting for new hunting areas and adventures. Northern Wisconsin Outfitters is now booking for the upcoming season. Go to [www.northernwisconsinoutfitters.com](http://www.northernwisconsinoutfitters.com) or call them at 715.373.0344.



Wolves at the bait in Bayfield County, according to guide Mike Foss, pose a much greater threat to stand hunters hoping for an interrupted hunt than do the running hounds of the dog hunters.

JOHN LUTHENS

# Small Ice

*The surprise world down under*

A limitless bounty awaits beneath the big ice: perch dancing below the pressure cracks of Winnebago, lake trout hitting a deep reaching Lake Geneva jig, or the spotted flash of a deep bellied brown under the heaved tundra of Lake Michigan's harbors. It's all far reaching water, big ice, and big fun.

But there's something about the small ice. There's something about frozen water tucked behind the tree line, with the late winter wind pushing the surface into hard packed drifts. Below the drifts, below the ice, you could find anything.

It might be nothing more than a pothole deep enough to over-winter a pan fish. It's likely a place off the beaten path, where a 4-inch hand auger overrules a power drill and a bucket

stop and see what might be there.

A trail tunneled through dense cedar thickets on the edge of the lot. I'd brought snowshoes to work the edge off the cabin fever, and soon I was stepping over the easygoing crust that comes about in early spring when the warmer days mix with the still-frozen hand of night.

It was a good trail through wild-looking country. I was a half hour out of Milwaukee, walking through white cedar and tamarack, in a place that would be at home in a Canadian adventures advertisement. Cross country ski tracks told me I wasn't the only wanderer using the trail as a late winter avenue.

Cattails and marsh grass popped up with the overhung trees along the trail. A wooden boardwalk spanned

***"There's something about frozen water tucked behind the tree line, with the late winter wind pushing the surface into hard packed drifts."***

for sitting will do just fine in place of a portable tent.

The Cedarburg Bog, in Ozaukee County, has a place like this.

I stumbled onto the small ice late one winter when cabin fever and the taunting of spring finally chased me out of the house. I'd driven by the small parking lot off of Highway 33, between Saukville and West Bend. I'd seen the wooden sign saying Cedarburg Bog State Natural Area. I live in Grafton, and the bog area was practically in my backyard, yet I'd never taken the time to

some dark icy pools. Then I stood on the edge of a forest-rimmed marsh lake. It was small ice, but it was nothing short of stunning. Birch and cedars surrounded the lake. Black capped chickadees were alive in the cattails, and the sun sparkled off the ice. And sitting on a bucket in the middle of the marsh pond was Tom.

Tom didn't seem interested in the scenery. He was busy sitting on his bucket with a jig pole, a hand auger splayed sled next to his hole, hauling in bluegill after bluegill. He piled a



Boy Scouts from Grafton Troop 840, fishing Watts Lake.

few nice ones by his bucket, letting the small ones go. Tom's small ones would qualify as "keepers" in my playbook.

I tromped out in my snowshoes to have a chat, as all well-met explorers in an outdoor setting will do. He was gracious and friendly. I've seen Tom out there on the small ice quite a few times since then. I've never learned his last name, but I've learned about the small ice lake there in Cedarburg Bog.

It's called Watts Lake, a remnant of glacial times, slowly filling in with bog peat from the surrounding marsh. The bottom drops to almost 20 feet in the center, sloping up to a foot at the edges like a kettle. Maybe in a thousand years it will be gone. But for now bluegill, crappie, and perch call it home.

The fishing is sometimes hit or miss, like fishing usually is. But it always seems to get better later in the winter, up to the time the Cedarburg Bog sucks the ice down for another cycle. With 2,200 acres of State Natural Area to explore, branching in all directions from the lake, there's plenty of side venturing to do.

I've even taken my son's Boy Scout troop ice fishing there. Maybe they thought I was a great explorer, to have found a wilderness lake so close to home. I played it up too, and I'm glad Tom wasn't there to tell them he found it first.

The small ice made for great fun, sliding and skating when the fishing dropped off. And the boys came in handy, drilling all those holes with the hand-auger. Fish locaters, underwater cameras, and the pop-up shanty got left behind. They'll have plenty of years ahead to use all that stuff on the big ice. I just hope they'll still want to fish on the small ice too. *W*

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

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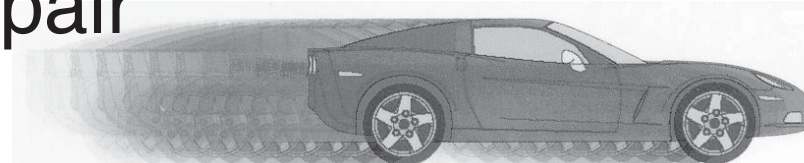
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GARY ENGBERG

# Gary Engberg Outdoors

## Early walleye and sauger below the Sauk Prairie Dam

This has been an unusual winter for most of the Upper Midwest, to say the least. We've experienced winter weather that is above average in temperature, and the amount of snow thus far is way below normal. Weather can change anytime, but the days of winter are winding down, and anglers are thinking about and already fishing on rivers below dams in Wisconsin and most bordering states.

Many fishermen are now contemplating open water fishing instead of ice fishing as we get into February and towards March. Anglers are usually fishing the Wisconsin River by the end of this month, but it looks like it may be much earlier this year. As a matter of fact, anglers are already fishing the waters below the Prairie Du Sac Dam on the Wisconsin River and other rivers that stay open from winter's ice like the Mississippi River. If you're ready for some early open water fishing, now's the time. The boat landing at the VFW in Sauk Prairie is kept open and ice free, so get your boat ready or check your waders for leaks and come to the Sauk Prairie area for some early walleye angling!

Before I start writing about the "hot spot," I'll suggest what you need in equipment, share a few techniques, and give you a few tactics.

### Big River Benefits

Walleyes and saugers can be caught regularly in the waters below the Prairie Dam. This dam is the last dam on the Lower Wisconsin River before it runs into the Mississippi River some 90 miles downriver. What this means to the river angler is that migrating walleyes and saugers can move up the river from many miles away. Tagged walleyes have been caught that had traveled well over a hundred miles before being caught in the Sauk area.

Migrating fish start their river migration in the fall and continue till spring. Many fish (walleyes, saugers) will winter in the deep water below the dam to feed on the abundant population of gizzard shad. The most common misconception is that on the first nice spring day all the walleyes decide to move up-river. Most fish have already migrated well before that nice spring day. The Sauk-Prairie Dam stops



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: A client of Guide Ron Barefield's with an early spring walleye; Denny Meng of Sauk City, WI, with some nice river walleyes; Jigs and plastic for walleyes; Guide Barefield and client with spring walleyes.

the fish from going any farther upriver, so they look for suitable spawning areas within a few miles of the dam. Fish will find staging and holding areas miles below the dam but still close to suitable spawning spots. The area that I'm going to concentrate on is the first mile or so of river directly below the dam. This is the main location where most anglers fish, even though there still are fish farther downriver.

### Best Launch

The best boating landing to use is the private launch at the VFW Park about a half a mile below the dam. The cost is cheap and there's plenty of parking and even campsites, if you plan to spend a few days. The landing is good and there is sand to spread in case the ramp is slippery. There are a few shallow spots to avoid when

heading up to the dam. My advice, till you get to know the area, is to motor very slowly upriver, staying in the main river channel. Watch a couple of boats and then try to follow their course to the dam.

### Techniques and Tactics and Where to Try Them

Once you get to the pool and tailrace area below the dam, you have a few options. One is to anchor your boat in different depths around the pool and cast and slowly retrieve jigs and minnows or vertical jig. Wisconsin allows anglers to use three rods, so always make sure that you have a baited rod and jig or rig resting in a rod holder as a "dead" rod. Spots to try are anywhere below the dam's gates in water from five feet to over 25 feet. Either start shallow and work to deeper

water, or vice versa till you contact active fish. Walleyes move shallower to feed early and late in the day. Shallow water can be 10 feet to under five feet and sometimes even shallower!

There's a deep scour hole caused by spring's high water that's located in the middle of the pool. Fishing around the edges of the hole can be productive for saugers that seem to like water a little deeper than walleyes. The water directly below the dam is shallow and then drops off quickly, so try areas close to the dam. The east shoreline is rocky with a back-eddy that actually has the water moving back upriver. This whole eastern shoreline from the dam to Lester's Point is good with fish coming in water 10 to 20 feet deep during the day and shallower toward dark and after dark.

The "hump" located between the dam's gates and the fast water is good to anchor on and cast, making sure to slowly retrieve your jigs. Slipping the current (face your bow into the current and work your trolling motor (try Minn Kota)) just enough to keep your jig as vertical as possible. It's like you're chasing your jig downriver.

Another good technique is to work off your bow or transom mount trolling motor and slowly move around the pool directly below the dam's gates. There are areas where you can drag your jig or rig, but most spots are rock-strewn, making anything but vertical jigging extremely difficult. You are going to lose jigs, so be sure to have a good supply. For the wader, both the west and east sides of the river near the dam are productive.

Downriver from the dam pool the rip-rap shoreline bordering the VFW Park is worth slipping and casting the rock shore. The culvert by the park is a fish magnet during high water and times of winter run-off because this water is warmer and can raise the adjoining water a degree or two, which is all that is needed to attract fish. There's an old wing dam down from the dam on the east shoreline behind the brushy shallow island that has some depth (20 feet plus) and can hold fish. There's another old wing dam just to the right of the VFW launch that creates

*continued on page 20*



1

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DENNIS RADLOFF

2011 Musky Season Done. Now What? *Part 2 of 2*

In the last issue of OWO I talked about using the “off season” to compile all my data from the season so I can use it to identify trends and patterns.

In “part 2” you will find I have given a glimpse of a three-day window from October of the 2011 season. It’s a condensed record of the details starting with DATE, TIME (I like to use military time so you don’t have to log a.m. and p.m.), SIZE (for simplicity I will only log the length, and when I’m trolling, I will log any “rips” or lost fish, and when casting I’ll log “follows” so that I have the Waypoint and location of the fish). For LURE, I have logged Slammer as SLMR. H2O is water temperature. AIR is air temperature. WIND is wind speed and direction. SKY denotes clear, cloudy, sunny or rain. BARO is barometric pressure. For MOON, I record rise, set, major, minor, or between. WPT is the number of the waypoint created as soon as the fish was hooked, logging exact location of the fish. SPEED—if we’re trolling, I log the actual ground speed from my GPS.

Take a look at the three- day log listed and you will notice there are many consistencies in the conditions.

One of the first things that you may have noticed is that none of these fish was caught during any of the key moon phase. The first main factor that is hard to show here is how close the waypoints are to each other. All these fish were hanging out in a small region of a large area. When you look at all the environmental factors, you can see the conditions were very stable over this three-day period—something I believe

to be more important than moon phase every time. You just can’t beat consistent conditions when it comes down to good fishing.

Another key factor that resulted in the biggest fish in my boat for 2011 is keeping track of waypoints. I log a waypoint as soon as we get a strike, follow, and hook-up. Even if we don’t catch it, I like knowing exactly where that fish is so we can return and try again later.

You can see on the log here that on October 5th at 1002 I logged a “RIP” with waypoint #318. This “rip” was a solid strike while we were trolling but did not hook up. When I zoomed out on my GPS, screen #318 was right in the mix of 23 other waypoints in a very small area. We continued to troll along that break line until we were out of all the waypoints from past days and then turned around to head back through. On the return pass through all those waypoints we hooked-up at 1032 right as the boat was passing over waypoint #318 from only 30 minutes earlier!

Keeping track of this type of information can make for great results from season to season and even day to day. Take some time to download your waypoints, look at the times of day on them, and then do some backtracking on what your conditions were. I’m sure you’ll find some trends and patterns of your own. *OWO*

*Captain Dennis Radloff operates Sterling Guide Service. He guides on the waters of Green Bay and Southeastern Wisconsin seven days a week April through November. Contact Dennis through his website [sterling-musky.com](http://sterling-musky.com) or at 262.443.9993.*



| DATE | TIME | SIZE | LURE | H2O  | AIR | WIND  | SKY | BARO | MOON | WPT | SPEED |
|------|------|------|------|------|-----|-------|-----|------|------|-----|-------|
| 10/5 | 0930 | 47"  | SLMR | 62.3 | 73  | CALM  | CLR | 30.2 | BTWN | 317 | 3.25  |
| 10/5 | 1002 | RIP  | SLMR | 62.3 | 73  | CALM  | CLR | 30.2 | BTWN | 318 | 3.25  |
| 10/5 | 1032 | 52"  | SLMR | 62.3 | 74  | CALM  | CLR | 30.2 | BTWN | 318 | 3.25  |
| 10/5 | 1543 | 42"  | SLMR | 62.5 | 79  | SE 5  | CLR | 30.2 | BTWN | 319 | 3.25  |
| 10/6 | 1321 | 43"  | SLMR | 62.1 | 71  | SE 7  | CLR | 30.2 | BTWN | 320 | 3.25  |
| 10/6 | 1348 | 42"  | SLMR | 62.1 | 71  | SE 10 | CLR | 30.2 | BTWN | 321 | 3.25  |
| 10/7 | 1536 | 40"  | SLMR | 62.3 | 77  | SW 13 | CLR | 30.2 | BTWN | 322 | 3.25  |



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JOEL KUNZ

## On Wisconsin's Rivers

### What does it take to be "river ready?"

From my seat here in New London, I have been quite thankful for the mild winter except for the lack of snow. Why, you ask? It is because that snow pack provides a slow, steady melt-off, that, along with the spring rains, fills the river and spawning marshes of the Wolf River system. Without it, levels rise and fall quicker as runoff from the rainfall enters the system. Not that we are in dire need of another good year class of walleye in the Wolf River system, but they are always welcome.

After all, more and more anglers are visiting

.....

***"First it starts with your equipment. New line is a must."***

.....

the Wolf River and Winnebago system in pursuit of walleyes than ever before. You can tell this from the activity at the boat ramps, bait shops and marine dealers in the area who cater to these anglers. Most of those anglers are "day trippers," that is, those driving from up to a few hours away to fish for the day and return home. Some have cabins or campers in the area, and a few plan vacations around the spring

walleye bonanza like I did prior to moving to the area. The rest of the activity is from the large core of local anglers who ply the river each year. Add it all together and you've got a flurry of activity spread out over 65 miles of river and at Winneconne. And for good reason: it's walleye time in Wisconsin!

So what does it take to be "river ready" this spring? First it starts with your equipment. New line is a must. I have three jigging rods. Two are set up with 6-pound test monofilament, and one is set up with a "Superline." My favorite jig stick is a 5'9" medium fast rod that is very stiff, lightweight, sensitive and strong. The "fast" tip provides feel and delivers the strength of the rod quickly on hook sets. I also have a 6-foot rod of the same general design but a different model. The difference comes into play when fishing deeper or with heavier jigs. My third rod is a 6'3" model that is a bit "softer" than the other two. This is the one I use the "Superline" on. This works best if you have to let the fish take it a bit before setting the hook. Another fishing rod preparation tip is to make sure all the eyelets are smooth and in good shape. Then your rods are set to go.

Your reel could also use a little love this spring. New grease and a general cleaning are good for reels. Check the drag and make sure everything is working properly. Go through your jig box and take



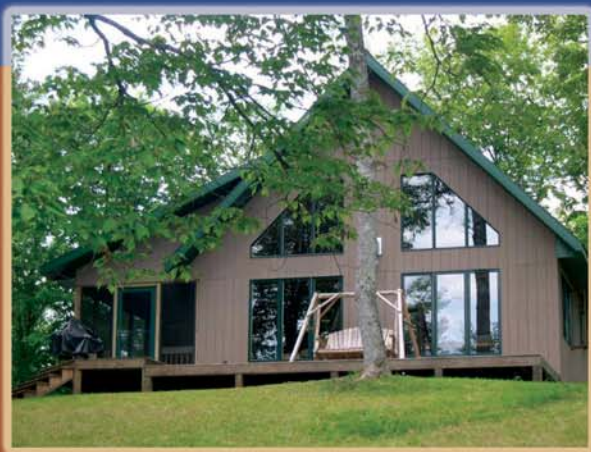
*The author with a large pre-spawn walleye from one of the many older year classes of fish in the Winnebago system.*

some time to sharpen your hooks. If you are like me and have a thousand jigs, just grab a few of each color and weight you plan to use, sharpen them and put them in a smaller "go to" box. If you lose a few, sharpen some from your main supply and replace

*continued on page 15*

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JJ REICH

## The Reich Stuff

### An Ontario Tom



## Calling All Turkeys.

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For many Wisconsinites, Canada is a dream destination for great hunting. Go to Canada just once and you'll constantly daydream about going back. But my Ontario hunting dreams always involved turkey hunting! Southern Ontario is prime range for the Eastern wild turkeys, and the province's southern region has become a turkey-hunting paradise.

In late May of 2011, I got the chance to hunt with Josh Grossenbacher and CJ White of Zink Calls ([www.zinkcalls.com](http://www.zinkcalls.com)) as they filmed the hunt for their newest DVD, Turkey Time IV.


On the first day, we found ourselves staring out of truck windows and scanning the fields for lonesome toms. It wasn't long before we spotted a strutter with a hen way out in a distant field. After a hike through the thick woods, we peeked out into the field. There he was, strutting for his hen, only 125 yards away.

"GARR-BOB-BOB-BABBLE," suddenly shocked us. We froze in our tracks. A second gobbler, previously unseen, was only 50 yards away! We quickly settled in. Then Grossenbacher made a few soft and sexy hen yelps. "GARR-BOB-BOB-BABBLE," instantly responded. The big bird was only 35 yards away, so Grossenbacher cranked it up



with some nasty, loud, and excited yelps. That did the trick. The gobbler circled around and headed over to the opening—exactly where my gun barrel was pointing.

As soon the trophy Tom stepped clear into my view, a fist full of Federal Heavyweight #6s smacked the side of his head. My Ontario gobbler was down for the count.

Our hunt was purchased through Grey Bruce Outfitters. The place is great: massive fields and woods, good guides who know the land, and easy access to thousands of private acres from some of the friendliest people on Earth. All that and plenty of wild turkeys! Learn more at: [www.greybruceoutfitters.com](http://www.greybruceoutfitters.com). 

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



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## ICE BREAKER 7

### ICE BREAKER 7

March 17-18  
Winneconne, WI

The Wolf River and Winnebago system are probably at or near their highest points as far as walleye fishing. Spawning marshes have been improved, large numbers of adult fish exist from numerous big year classes, and the forage base continues to be strong. That all adds up to great walleye fishing.

If you would like to learn more about how to capitalize on the great year-round walleye fishing on the system, ICE BREAKER 7 is a must attend show. The list of speakers includes top ranked walleye pros along with well known and respected local anglers who know the system. There will be boats on display from a number of local marine dealers and a large variety of tackle and fishing equipment. Yours truly, Joel "Doc" Kunz, will once again be the host, and walleye fishing information will be pouring out all over. After being a vagabond of a show since its beginning, the show will now be a yearly event at Critters Wolf River Sports in Winneconne. Critters' reputation in both the fishing and local business communities will only help grow the show into the yearly showcase of the Wolf River walleye fishing that it should be. Be there March 17 & 18, 2012, and get your fill of walleye fishing information., we talk Muskies, white bass and system smallmouth too. Visit [www.wolfriverwalleyeclub.com](http://www.wolfriverwalleyeclub.com) for information.

- Joel "Doc" Kunz

#### KUNZ, from page 12

them in your pocket size game time box. Also check your clippers, Eye-Buster, needle-nose pliers and your supply of stinger hooks before hitting the water for the first time. Make sure your bait bucket and aerator are working properly, that your minnow net doesn't have holes in it, and check the batteries in your flashlight too. Anglers should also make sure to check all components of their boat and trailer prior to hitting the water. Wheel bearings, trailer lights, tires, tie downs and the hitch mechanism should all be checked and serviced if need be. Clean the light plug ends and cover them with a little bit of Lithium Grease to help keep hem

from corroding. Also, make sure your ground wire connection is solid on both the trailer and tow vehicle. Check your hitch and give the trailer ball a brushing.

Cover these simple things, remember to put the plug in, and you should have a successful time out no matter how many you catch. *OW*

Joel "Doc" Kunz is a 2005 "Readers Choice" Award winner and member of the Association of Great Lakes Outdoor Writers (AGLOW). Visit his website at [www.docswaters.com](http://www.docswaters.com) or his new project, [www.lifeonthewolf.com](http://www.lifeonthewolf.com) for information on fishing in the lower Wolf River area of Wisconsin.

#### CARPENTER, from page 3

**Squeeze Trigger.** Slamming the trigger can mean missing the bird, especially when he's close. There's little "give" in a full turkey choke, and even less in today's special ultra-tight shot-squeezers.

#### Conclusion

We all miss turkeys. But you can minimize bad shots and increase your

success rate. The key is understanding the reasons we miss, then putting together a simple and personalized process for thinking positively and acting confidently to make shots. Make your plan before you hit the field!

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

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# County Teasers

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**Wern Valley Sportsman's Club winter sporting clays is open to the public** Saturdays from 10-3 p.m.. Join the January 28 NSCA registered 100-bird sporting clays and 50-bird 5-stand tournament. Or hunt our wily pheasants through April 15 and keep the upland experience going strong right into spring. [Click on Waukesha County.](#)

Come try out some **amazing fishing on the Bay of Green Bay** this ice fishing season. **Whitefish, perch and northern pike** did very well in the 2010 ice fishing season. Limit is ten per person on whitefish and limits were the norm! Call Zach at 920.559.7473 for a great time. [Click on Kewaunee County.](#)

During the cold weather, come out and try our sheltered **5-stand and trap fields! Stay warm and dry all winter.** We are the only club we know of in the area with these amenities. [Click on Waukesha County.](#)

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Find your Pot of Gold. It will not be at the end of the rainbow, but rather in the tributary streams leading into Lake Michigan. It is the Steelhead. **Rainbow Trout** run ice is going or gone and this magnificent fishery is again putting us on the map. For your Pot of Gold, [click on Sheboygan County.](#)

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What beckons you to come explore our Northwoods slice of Wisconsin? Miles of **well-groomed trails for snowmobiling, cross country skiing and snowshoeing, acres of frozen water for ice-fishing**, a crackling fireplace perfect for that romantic getaway. Pure white and fresh, we're perfectly nestled in the northwestern corner of Vilas County. [Click on Vilas County.](#)

Feeling antsy? Got Spring Fever? **Catch the Douglas County Fish & Game League Sports Show March 23-25.** Attention fishermen: beginning early April through mid-May, anxious anglers take to the shores of the Bois Brule (Lake Superior's best known Steelhead stream) in search of the glistening liquid chrome of the Steelhead. [Click on Douglas County.](#)

Fun time in **Ferryville on the Mississippi River.** Use the Ferryville Boat Launch (Pool 9) to access the best fishing on the river. Open all year and the docks go in as soon as spring river stage allows. Remember Ferryville when you are in the Bass Fishing Contest in La Crosse in June. [Click on Crawford County.](#)

Come visit Treeland Resorts, family owned and operated since 1928 on the **beautiful Chippewa Flowage!** New reservations, book in the springtime, Monday through Thursday, **and receive free use of a Lund 30HP fishing rig.** Also enjoy discounted spring rates! Must mention “OnWisconsinOutdoors.” [Click on Sawyer County.](#)

Wisconsin's “**Largest Weekly Outdoor Flea Market**” opens April 21 in Princeton, offering everything **from antiques to tools, plants, produce, cheese, sausage and more.** Shop Saturdays through October 13 in the tree-shaded City Park on Highway 23 starting at 6:00 a.m. Parking and admission are free. [Click on Green Lake County.](#)

Join us for the **27th Annual Memorial ATV Rally this May 24-28, 2012.** We offer the **largest trail system in Wisconsin**, and we invite you to experience some of the best spring ATV riding and participate in fun, family friendly ATV Events. To register today, [click on Iron County.](#)

Scenic Rivers, hundreds of miles of trails and nearly 1,000 lakes make Washburn County a great place to visit every season! **Camping, ATVing, fishing or whatever you call relaxation**, you'll find it in Washburn County. Order your free Visitor Guide & Trail Map today. [Click on Washburn County.](#)

Explore Price County. We've saved a place for you! You'll find **low fishing pressure on area lakes and rivers, light traffic on our motorized and non-motorized land and water trails**, fun family events, along with affordable lodging and services all in our quiet neck of the Northwoods. Call 800.269.4505 to request a Price County Travel Companion. Start planning today and [click on Price County.](#)

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



## Explore Wisconsin online!

Explore at [OnWisconsinOutdoors.com/ExploreWI](http://OnWisconsinOutdoors.com/ExploreWI)



## EXPLORE WISCONSIN at [OnWisconsinOutdoors.com](http://OnWisconsinOutdoors.com)

**Do you dream of owning your own slice of rural Wisconsin?** Whether you're looking to build that perfect country home or you want to enjoy the outdoors on your own private recreational land, **Badgerland Financial** provides country living loans to make those dreams possible. Contact Badgerland Financial at 800.356.2197. [Click on Fond du lac County.](#)

The fishing has been great and there's still **plenty of good ice fishing in March**. Our specialty is panfish ... crappies, bluegills and perch! Yum! Take time for a few fun events: March 30-31 and April 1st ... **Spring Gun Show** at Trollhaugen; March 30-31 and April 1st ... **Amery Glenna Farms**

**Maple Syrup Fest;** April 14 ... **Turtle Lake American Legion Smelt Fry;** April 21 ... **Balsam Lake Rod & Gun Club Smelt Fry.** [Click on Polk County.](#)

Spring is time for outdoor adventure! Challenge yourself on **Class IV or V Whitewater Rapids**, unleash your inner daredevil with a **zip-line tour through the forest canopy** or paddle your way down the Peshtigo River Trail. No matter what your pleasure, we have what you crave in the real north! [Click on Marinette County.](#)

Adams County Petenwell and Castle Rock Parks, on the 2nd and 4th largest lakes in Wisconsin, are **open year round for camping with heated**

**shower/restroom facilities, game room, concessions, firewood, swimming beach, boat launch, fishing.** Petenwell Park also offers ATV camping with immediate trail access. [Click on Adams County.](#)

**Eagle Point Cabin** is the perfect location for a relaxing vacation. Within steps of the front door is Island lake which offers **excellent fishing, boating, and skiing**. Out the other door is thousands upon thousands of public land for your enjoyment, not to mention hundreds of miles of Iron County's best snowmobile and ATV trails! [Click on Iron County.](#)

### IOWA COUNTY

- Badgerland Financial

### IRON COUNTY

- Hurley Area Chamber
- Iron County Development
- Eagle Point Cabin
- Mercer Area Chamber

### JACKSON COUNTY

- Badgerland Financial

### JUNEAU COUNTY

- Juneau County

### KENOSHA COUNTY

- Wildlife Visions

### KEWAUNEE COUNTY

- Why Knot Charters & Guide Svc

### LACROSSE COUNTY

- LaCrosse Area Visitors Bureau

### LANGLADE COUNTY

- Antigo/Langlade Chamber

### MARATHON COUNTY

- Hooksetters Fishing Guide
- Lakeview Log Cabin Resort

### MARINETTE COUNTY

- Marinette County Tourism
- A River Guide (Jason Guarke)

### MILWAUKEE COUNTY

- Fish Chaser Guide Service

### MONROE COUNTY

- Sparta Area Chamber

### ONEIDA COUNTY

- Minocqua Area Chamber

### OZAUKEE COUNTY

- Port Washington Tourism

### POLK COUNTY

- Polk County Information Center

### PORTAGE COUNTY

- Stevens Point Area CVB

### PRICE COUNTY

- Park Falls Area Chamber
- Price County Tourism
- Wounded Warriors in Action

### RICHLAND COUNTY

- Hybrid Redneck Events

### RUSK COUNTY

- Rusk County

### SAWYER COUNTY

- Hayward Lakes Visitors Bureau
- Treeland Resort

### SHEBOYGAN COUNTY

- Sheboygan County Tourism
- Wolf Pack Adventures

### VILAS COUNTY

- Manitowish Waters Chamber

### WALWORTH COUNTY

- Dave Duwe's Guide Service

### WASHBURN COUNTY

- Washburn County Tourism

### WAUKESHA COUNTY

- Waukesha Gun Club
- Wern Valley Sportsman's Club

### WAUPACA COUNTY

- Fremont Area Chamber
- Manotak Lodge , Ontario
- Wolf River Outfitters Resort

### WAUSHARA COUNTY

- First Weber Real Estate



JERRY KIESOW

# Fly Fishing In Wisconsin

## Time to think steelhead

**Online Fly Fishing Q&A** with *Jerry Kiesow*  
Check it out at [OnWisconsinOutdoors.com/FlyFishing](http://OnWisconsinOutdoors.com/FlyFishing)

If there is an official opening to the fly fishing season, it has to be the first Saturday in March, because that is when the early catch-and-release, artificial lures only trout season opens in our state. Oh, we who offer feathered frauds to fish have had some limited opportunities prior to that date, but now we have an abundance of opportunities to feel the tug and see the leap of fish at the end of our tippet.

Another opportunity that could be available by the time you read this is searching for steelhead. Depending on how the weather goes—this is written in January—we could already be finding these Lake Michigan rainbow trout in the tributary rivers, on their mission to spawn. If they are not there yet, they will be during April and into May.

### What Is A Steelhead?

For those who are unfamiliar with the term “steelhead,” they are rainbow trout—the same rainbow trout we find in our inland waters, *Oncorhynchus mykiss*.

A rainbow trout becomes a steelhead when it becomes *potamodromous*. Meaning, if a rainbow, or any fish, begins its life in a stream or river, then moves into one of the Great Lakes and lives the majority of its life in that lake but returns to its original “home” to spawn each year, it is *potamodromous*. The fish which live full-time in streams and rivers are just called “rainbow trout,” or just “bows,” when caught on “the Big Pond.” We in Wisconsin have three varieties of steelhead in the Lake Michigan watershed: *Skamania*, *Chambers Creek*, and *Ganaraska*.

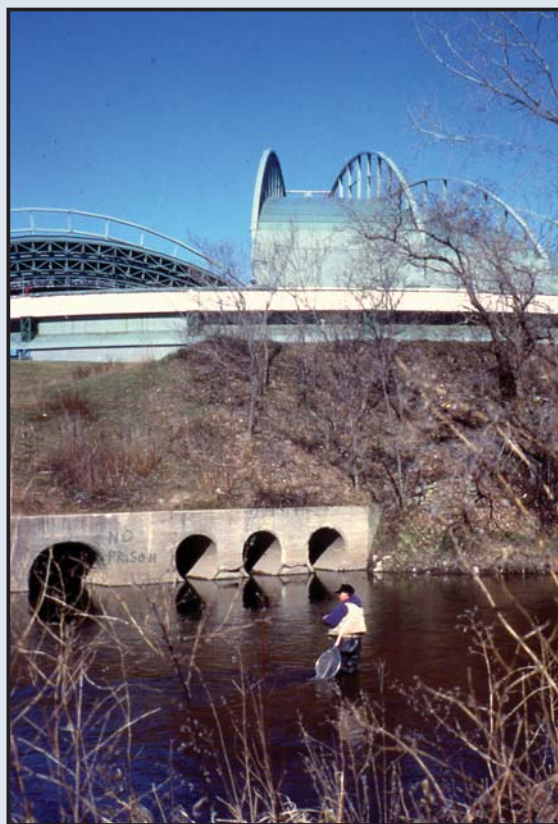
The *Skamania* enter the streams/ivers in fall but do not spawn until January or February, which means they are most likely the species you encounter when fishing for salmon. Later, November through March, *Chambers Creek* move in. These two strains are the ones that fisherfolk seek during the winter months when weather permits, as it did this past December/January until winter finally came to the southeastern part of our state.

Interestingly, I have learned that the state has not stocked *Skamania* since 2008. Still, they show up in the rivers each fall. This poses the following questions: Are they reproducing naturally? Are they lost and wandering from other states? Or does another strain, *Chambers Creek*, perhaps, come into the rivers earlier than it did formerly? If none of the above is possible, then how long will we be having an early fall run? I don't know.

*Ganaraska* move into the streams in April. There usually are some CC holdovers, and therefore, it is possible to catch some of each.

### Where Will We Find Them?

Early in the runs you may see fish coming into the rivers, but until the water temperatures become warm enough for spawning, 42–55 degrees, the fish



The Menominee River, in the middle of Milwaukee, at Miller Park, has some great early season steelhead fishing. Just don't plan on going there if the Brewers are in town.

will move in, then hang in the deep water.

Once the fish begin to spawn, the fun really begins. That doesn't mean the fishing gets easy. Steelhead fishing is never easy, but when the fish move onto the redds, your *modus operandi* becomes sight fishing.

### How Do You Fish Them?

Now you can drift your fraud directly to the fish. Once in awhile, you can approach close enough, with a very slow and careful upstream stalk, to actually make a drift with no line touching the water. Swing your line out while reaching as far as possible with your rod. Allow the fly to drop into the water. Then follow it as it drifts to the fish. If the fish does not take, allow the drift to go beyond the fish before lifting for another pass. I call this a direct drift. You are in direct contact with the fly, so when the fish hits, inhales, you will know—immediately.

When not direct drifting, many fly fishers use an indicator: the fly rod bobber. It is small and light enough to cast without causing too much trouble. When used, that is what you watch instead of your line. When it dips, you strike, just like you do when bobber fishing for gills.

If the fish are still deep, drift nymphs through seams, pockets, and holes where steelhead are likely

to be settled in. Don't be in a hurry. Some of the most successful fishers of early steelhead will work a known section of river for an hour before moving on. Persistence pays off. A steelheading fly fisher must have patience.

Leaders can be short. Five or six feet are sufficient, because the waters are usually tainted. I usually use 2X or 3X in the 5- to 7-foot range, depending on how I am presenting the fly. I also use sinking tip lines. This eliminates the use of split shot. Cast up and across, drifting the pockets, runs, and holes. I use an eight weight rod. My friend uses a seven. Nines are not too heavy.

### What Flies Do I Use?

I will carry nymphs: pheasant tails, princes, hot-butt stones, and Al's nymph—all weighted. I have a variety of egg patterns, including micros, in a variety of colors. Also with me are some streamers—Mickey Finn, Green-butt Skunk, and Hair-wing Royal Coachman—and, of course, the old reliable Woolly Bugger in several colors. The nymphs will be #10s/12s; eggs #6s, #8s, and some #10s for micro eggs. Streamers will be on #6s, as will the Woollies. These are my standbys.

### Where To Fish?

The major rivers in the south include the Root, Menominee, Milwaukee, and Sheboygan. The farther south you go, the better chance you have of finding active fish early. Lengthen your season by moving north as each river becomes active. Check out the Manitowoc, Twin, Oconto, and Peshtigo.

### Finally

About the only thing I can add is get out there and enjoy. See you in the river. Keep a good thought!

*Jerry enjoys all aspects of the outdoors. He will be conducting a "Tying For Steelhead" class at Riveredge Nature Center in Newburg on April 15. To keep track of what he is doing and where, to see his photos and read some of his other writings, including his book, "Tales of The Peshtigo Putzer," check out his website at [www.jerrykiesowoc.com](http://www.jerrykiesowoc.com).*



Author's "basics." Are these all he carries? Of course not. His vest has many pockets. Why leave them empty?



DAVE DUWE

## Fishing Guides: Teach A Man To Fish



Client of Dave Duwe with a split-shot rigged Largemouth Bass.

**C**atch a man a fish and he eats for a day. Teach a man to fish and he eats for a lifetime.

Being a fishing guide, I take every opportunity to teach people the sport I love and at which I make my living. The most important thing about taking someone new fishing is managing their expectations. When someone books a trip, I ask questions to understand what they want to accomplish. Is it just to relax? Or is it to land their first Northern Pike? You never want to fish for a species that isn't biting, that can

*"The great thing about fishing is that everyone can do it."*

make for a long day on the water and disappointment at the end.

Keeping it simple is often the key to the whole trip. It doesn't make sense to hand over a bait caster to a 5 year-old, nor does it make sense to fish for walleye when the bite is finicky and the action is slow.

Nightcrawlers are the best plan when fishing with a novice fisherman. The most effective method for fishing nightcrawlers is a simple round split shot and a single hook. The round split shot will allow the rig to move through the weeds without getting tangled in them. Those little wings on the removable sinkers tend to get caught on the weeds. I like light action spinning gear spooled with 6-8-pound Silver Thread line. My favorite guide rigs are the Berkeley Lightning rods with Mitchell reels. For beginners, this combo is very affordable while offering good quality. I can teach anyone to use a spinning combo, so I seldom will use a close faced reel.

The best method for presenting the split shot rig is drift fishing. I position the boat perpendicular to the wind direction and slowly drift with the

wind. I want to control my depth and speed by using my transom mounted trolling motor. My favorite live bait drifting lake is Lake Geneva in southern Wisconsin. Lake Geneva has large flats that hold fish most of the year, making boat control a lot easier. Drift fishing eliminates the need for a beginner to cast.

For those guided trips where the main expectation is a fresh caught dinner, I teach my customers the sportsmanship side of fishing. I will emphasize the importance of letting the big fish go and keeping only panfish for their fish fries. Most people understand the idea behind catch and release, conserving the spawning fish for future generations. You have to get people excited to throw back the big ones so they grow even bigger.

Experienced anglers have expectations for each trip as well, and often it is learning a new technique like drop shotting for bass or lindy rigging for Northern Pike. Most advanced anglers' biggest key to the trip is trying to understand the patterns or locations of the fish during a particular time of year. When I take an advanced



Rainy weather can't stop the fun of fishing!

angler out on a trip, I always have communications with them so I know what they expect to ensure there is no disappointment at the end.

The great thing about fishing is that everyone can do it. You don't need the best equipment or a \$50,000 boat. There are urban ponds and creeks that are loaded with fish.

The greatest gift to give another angler is more skills and techniques to catch more fish. I feel very fortunate that I can experience the teaching aspect of my favorite sport every time I go out. *WO*

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

TOM CARPENTER

## Badger Birds Canada goose

**I**n some ways, it's unfortunate that these regal birds have adapted so well to human environments. Canada geese are occasionally considered pests for leaving their droppings on golf courses, parks, trails and lawns. But look at it this way: free fertilizer! These big waterfowl are handsome, wary and fiercely protective of their young. Who can't admire those traits? And the plaintive honking of Canada geese as they migrate northward and arrive back in Wisconsin in earliest spring—maybe to stop at a pond or marsh near you—is both a haunting and welcome sound indeed.

Look for a big, proud, gray bird with black legs, a black neck and head, and a bright white "saddle" on the cheeks and chin.

Listen for all the fascinating and different sounds that geese make—honks of course, but also clucks, moans, groans, cackles and all the other chitter-chatter of the goose "language."

Stay away from goslings, or be ready for mother and father geese's hissing approach.

Attract geese with grains such as corn, wheat or rice spread on the ground.

Did you know that several Canada goose subspecies exist, from the 3- to 4-pound Richardson's variety, to 12- to 15-pound giant Canada geese? *WO*



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



MIKE YURK

# Bassology

## Keeping bass for better fishing

**B**ass fishing is steeped in the catch-and-release ethic. It seems as much a part of bass fishing as the plastic worm. However, strict adherence to catch-and-release could be detrimental to the overall health of bass fishing in many of our lakes. Occasionally, keeping and eating a few largemouth bass could actually be good for bass fishing.

Now, I know that there are some bass fishermen that are clutching their chests right now and yelling, "How can this be?" Especially in Wisconsin, where we have become used to the 14-inch minimum size limit on bass, the idea of keeping and eating largemouth bass from time to time seems counterproductive to managing a good and healthy population of the fish. But it actually could be the best thing for bass fishing.

Over the years there have been studies that have shown that the average size of our largemouth bass is becoming smaller. In many lakes where there is an overabundance of bass, there is too

much competition for the available forage, and many of the fish are becoming stunted.

"When the density of bass has become so high it reduces their growth rate," stated David Neuswanger, who is the Department of Natural Resources Fishery Team Leader for the Upper Chippewa Basin in Hayward, Wisconsin, "more often than not, bass lakes will become overpopulated."

He went on to point out that in many cases largemouth bass are dying of old age before they exceed Wisconsin's 14-inch minimum size limit.

A Wisconsin Department News Release published May 2, 2011, revealed a 2009 survey of the Chippewa Flowage that showed largemouth grew to an average length of only 11.3 inches in five years. This prompted the DNR to completely eliminate the 14-inch size limit for the next three years on the Chippewa Flowage.

In the same news release, the DNR stated, "Removal of the size limit on

largemouth bass will enable anglers to harvest slower growing fish less than the 14 inches long. With decreased competition for food, growth rate of survivors should increase, resulting in fewer, but bigger, largemouth."

The 14-inch minimum size limit has been in effect for Wisconsin bass for over the last 12 years. Throughout the state, size limits on bass are starting to change on some lakes and some counties. Next year, according to Neuswanger, the minimum size limit will be eliminated for largemouth bass in Burnett and Washburn Counties.

In other areas specialized lake regulations are being established. For instance, in Big Round Lake in Polk County you are allowed to take one fish under 14 inches. Three other lakes in Polk County, Half Moon, Pipe, and Big Butternut, have no minimum size limits on bass.

In these cases, states Neuswanger, "it wouldn't hurt to eat some of these fish." He went on to point out that eating the 10- to 12-inch fish would be

**Putting Bass On The Table.**  
Read it online at [OnWisconsinOutdoors.com/WildGameRecipes](http://OnWisconsinOutdoors.com/WildGameRecipes)



## Big Round Lake

BASS DAILY BAG LIMIT

**5**

ONE BASS LESS THAN 14"  
IS ALLOWED

*Changes in regulations like found at this lake will make for better bass fishing.*

better because they are younger and would not have as much mercury as older fish. "This would be important for women in child bearing ages and children," he said.

We are likely to see more specialized lake by lake or county by county regulations for bass fishing as the years go on. Neuswanger is a proponent of slot limits, and in the future we could see slot limits, for

*continued on page 21*

**ENGBERG**, from page 9

a slack water area to the Highway 60 bridge which holds many big fish in the spring. This area is good for wading or fishing from a boat. If boat fishing, be sure to cast and jig around the bridge abutments. The slack water area from the landing to the bridge has a dark, mud bottom which warms quicker and has early hatches that attract early forage fish. The river channel edges, out and down from the landing, also yield walleyes, saugers, and pike early in the year.

I've given you plenty of locations to catch fish now and later this spring, but the immediate dam area can get crowded on weekends. You don't have to fish around the pack of boats that will be near the dam to catch fish. Fish this area till you get familiar with it, and then start exploring locations downriver. Remember, not all fish go as far as the dam. You can find quality fish miles downriver now and throughout the year.

### Equipment Choices

The equipment you need for this fishing is a good jigging rod (try G. Loomis or Fenwick) six feet long or less with a medium or medium-light action and a fast tip. The Loomis SJR 720 and SJR 721 are great rods for this early jig and rig fishing. The sensitivity is super and you have the strength to handle a big walleye.

My reel of choice is an ultra-light reel (I suggest Daiwa or Shimano) spooled with Berkley XT in green

***"Remember, not all fish go as far as the dam. You can find quality fish miles downriver now and throughout the year."***

or Stren Magnathin in either 6- or 8- pound test. These are quality monofilaments that I've used for years and highly recommend. Some anglers like to use a colored line in the spring and early season dingy water so that they can watch their line for that walleye "tick." Berkley makes a solar line and Stren a gold line suited for line-watching anglers. My personal pick is a Daiwa SS 700 reel with Berkley XT line in green and 8-pound test. This has been my pick for years and it hasn't changed!

Most of the early spring and late winter fishing is done using jigs and live bait rigs. There are so many jigs these days that an angler can be overwhelmed by the choices. Jigs now come in all shapes, sizes, and colors. Instead of the round head jig, try some of the flatter style jigs that cut the water better and allow you to use a lighter jig than if you used a round head jig. The Bait Rigs Slo-Poke works well in rivers



*Happy anglers guided by Phil Schweik on the Wisconsin River.*

with its slow fall and wide hook gap. The Slo-Poke can be worked slowly in and around rocks and cover without getting snagged. You want to use as light a jig as possible to maintain vertical contact with the bottom. The walleyes and saugers are going to be on the bottom or a foot above. Many early fish are also caught using various kinds of plastic like twister, shad, and grub tails attached to your jig. Experiment using plastics with a minnow and without a minnow on

*continued on 24*



**YURK**, from page 20

example, protecting bass from 12 to 14 inches, allowing those smaller fish to be harvested.

This brings us to the point of keeping bass to eat. Although it is contrary to the way many bass fishermen feel, where it is legal, there is nothing wrong with keeping and eating bass on an occasional basis.

In the long run it actually will help bass fishing. Eliminating some of the smaller bass will reduce the numbers of fish competing for a limited amount of forage.

In my experience, over the last fifteen years that I have been fishing western Wisconsin, I have noted that the average size bass I have been catching has become smaller. In the mid 1990s, when I returned to Wisconsin, I would regularly catch 10 to a dozen 4- to 6-pound largemouth bass. Now, in most years I will catch usually only two or three. To me it just makes sense to eliminate some of the smaller fish to make more room for the bigger ones.

I have also noticed that our neighboring state of Minnesota has no minimum size limit on bass, which presumably means that more bass are being kept and eaten. I have found there that although I will catch fewer bass, the ones I do catch are larger.

With newer regulations and changes in restrictions, keeping and eating bass is going to be good for bass fishing. It is going to make the overall population healthier and promote larger fish, which is ultimately what we bass fishermen want. So the future of our sport belongs to us and includes occasionally keeping and eating bass.

There are those who claim that bass do not taste good. I have found that not to be true. I ate them often when I lived down south in the land of grits and hush puppies, and they tasted just fine. As well, over the last couple of years I have been keeping an occasional handful of largemouth bass and subjecting some of my fish buddies to snacks as well as complete meals of them. They have never complained. *WO*

*Mike Yurk began writing about the outdoors for newspapers in central Wisconsin in the late 1960s. During the past 40 years he has published more than 600 articles in national and regional outdoor publications. He has published five books, both fiction and nonfiction, on outdoor subjects. He is a retired Army officer and lives in Hudson, Wisconsin, near to some of the best bass fishing in the country. Contact Mike at bassinmajor@yahoo.com.*

LEE GATZKE

## NextBuk Outdoors

### Hunting the unfamiliar

**C**rawling on my belly for 150 yards, I eventually ran out of cover. The 4 X 4 mule deer buck was bedded in a draw on the windy, treeless, Dakota prairie. Any further advance on my part would expose my stalk. I would have to wait for the buck to make the next move to have any chance to arrow him.

Hunting unfamiliar places has always intrigued me. Whether it be in my home state or another state altogether, unfamiliar surroundings beckon me. Late winter is typically the time I begin to plan for the upcoming hunting seasons, what I'll hunt and where I'll hunt it. Hunting publications, TV, deer hunting trade shows, the internet, and my network of hunting buddies all play a role in weeding out worthwhile places to journey to.

The last three winters my do-it-yourself hunting efforts have centered on the Dakotas for mule deer with the bow. Last October the Dakotas were on fire as I drove to my destination. Severe drought combined with 95-degree heat during harvest time produced the many fires I witnessed as I drove by on the interstate and back roads bisecting the prairies. Fortunately, most of my hunting areas were spared from fire, and I would begin my hunt the next day.

Day one was spent spot checking for mulies on the various public grounds that I'd be targeting. With temperatures in the mid 80s and a cool front forecast for the following day, familiarizing myself with this vast expanse of prairie from my air conditioned truck seemed the sensible thing to do. Day two started out cooler but windy as I hiked to some high ground in the pre-dawn darkness to be in position to glass the countryside as the sun rose. Daylight exposed the wide open prairie and all the objects pretending to be deer in the low light conditions of pre-dawn. Magically, some of the suspicious shapes I'd glassed were mule deer bucks. Plans for a stalk quickly developed.

My first stalk got me within range of a bedded buck, but another unseen bedded buck busted me as I positioned myself for a shot, taking my prize with him as they both sprang from their



*After three years of failed stalks and near misses, the author puts his archery tag on a 4x4 mule deer.*

beds and ran off. I've been there before. Time to find another mulie.

A howling sustained west wind convinced me to look in places that were protected from the blast. The surrounding prairie contained many draws that provided shelter from the wind, so I sneaked along and glassed down into each one I came to, looking for a piece of antler or an ear sticking out above the grass and brush.

Towards midday I dropped down into a valley that was fed by three draws coming together at the head of the valley. The fierce wind buffeting the prairie was almost nonexistent in these draws, so it came as no surprise to discover that a buck had figured this out and was bedded 200 yards distant in one of the draws. By traveling up one draw and then crawling uphill to the ridge overlooking the draw the buck was bedded in, it appeared as though I could get into range for a shot. An hour later I had crawled to the crest of the ridge and was looking down on the buck, bedded in a thicket 60 yards away. At this point I had run out of cover and had no clear shot to the buck's vitals. I decided to wait and let the buck make the next move.

## The Hunt Is On.

[OnWisconsinOutdoors.com/DeerHunting](http://OnWisconsinOutdoors.com/DeerHunting)

As I laid prone on the ridge top, I got out my rangefinder and took readings on landmarks surrounding the buck. No matter what direction the buck would travel upon leaving his bed, I had the landmarks' distances memorized. I was glad now that I'd spent so much time practicing shooting long ranges from the sitting and kneeling positions. If I were to get a shot at this buck, I would be confident under these conditions.

At 3:30 p.m. he rose from his bed and walked out of the thicket. Clearly, he was about to relocate, and now was my chance. As he stood broadside I recognized one of the landmarks I'd ranged earlier, adjusted my sight pin on his vitals, and released the arrow. Time went into slow motion as my arrow arced into his chest. His death run had him doing a 100-yard loop as he piled up a short distance from me. That memory fuels the desire to discover new hunting opportunities, whether they be close to home or a time zone away. *WO*

*Lee Gatzke is a member of NextBuk Outdoors, creators of tactical deer hunting videos. Gatzke can be reached at [www.nextbukoutdoors.com](http://www.nextbukoutdoors.com).*



S. WILKERSON

# Surplus Firearms

## Prepare to panic – a cautionary tale

Sometimes even a near-sighted squirrel finds a walnut. Call me Rocky. Some of my most brilliant firearm purchases were impulse buys. Some of my most misguided occurred after months of research, deliberation, mopping of the brow, and hand-wringing.

More often than not, the purchases were a mixture of happiness and sorrow. Case in point, my FAL, which was bought at the height of the Great Gun-Buying Panic of 2009. Upon the election of President Barack Obama and the appointment of Eric Holder as attorney general, gun enthusiasts prepared to panic; and they didn't have long to wait before having good reason to do so. While on the campaign trail, candidate Obama, unlike Al Gore in 2000, was shrewd enough to make little mention of his desire to reinstate the Assault Weapon Ban (AWB) that had sunset in September of 2004.

Holder demonstrated no such

restraint. Scant weeks into the Obama presidency, Holder, in response to a reporter's question, publicly reiterated the administration's desire to make the AWB permanent. Right on cue, firearm enthusiasts got up in arms. Practically minutes after Holder's ill-advised comments, the Democratic leadership of the House and Senate made it publicly known to Obama that they would not be entering into a nationwide gun control debate. Within a month, all talk of gun control emitting from the White House had stopped. Democrats did not want to make gun control a campaign issue in 2010, as they did, to their detriment, in 2000.

By March of 2009 (and since), scarcely a peep emitted from the Obama administration about reinstating the AWB or initiating any new gun control legislation. That didn't stop millions of people like me, at the height of the greatest economic downturn since the Great Depression,

## Firearms, Hunting Safety, Hunting Guns.

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from scarfing up so-called assault weapons, ammunition, and high capacity magazines by the gazillions. Too many greedy and opportunistic gun dealers (or clever capitalists, depending on your viewpoint) took advantage of the situation and hiked the prices of these items into the stratosphere.

In 2009, the anti-gun apocalypse seemed to be upon us. Logic went out the window as I got caught up in the madness. I was convinced that this was my last chance to buy yet another assault weapon. But buy what? I figured

dated from the mid-1950s to late 1980s. During its reign, it was known as "the right arm of freedom" because so many democracies had adopted it for use in their armed forces. It was the antithesis of the AK, which could be accurately described as "the left arm of tyranny and oppression."

I was kind of disappointed to learn that my FAL was not what I thought. Then I shot it. Right out of the box, with its gas pressure setting tuned to the lowest level, the rifle popped off surplus Portuguese 7.62 x 51 rounds without a bobble. The gun appeared unfired when

*"Some of my most brilliant firearm purchases were impulse buys. Some of my most misguided occurred after months of research, deliberation, mopping of the brow, and hand-wringing."*

I would know it when I saw it, and it wasn't long before I did at a gun show: the most beautiful FAL I had ever seen and the coolest version, too, an Israeli variant. I had to have it, and being impetuous, I traded some guns, at a loss to buy it. Buy high and sell low, that's my motto.

Having done zero research before buying the FAL at an inflated price (although I got it for \$200 less than the sticker price), I was convinced that it was an authentic Israeli rifle. It sure looked like one, and a cursory Internet search revealed that it had the correct wood stock, front sight, and barrel. A more detailed search later revealed that, other than the wood, early Argentinean guns had the same features. In fact, that is what I had: an Argentine FAL kit-build that was made to look like an Israeli FAL.

I don't think anyone was trying to pawn this gun off as anything other than what it was. Wishful thinking on my part got in the way of common sense. Good thing, too, because if I had known better, I never would have bought the FAL, which is one of the best guns I own.

The FAL was adopted by over 90 countries during its heyday, which

I took it to the range, and whoever put it together really knew what he (she?) was doing. Like many FALs, it had a black painted finish, which was superbly done, and all of its most important markings were highlighted in red or white. The Israeli wood furniture was new and un-issued, as, apparently, was everything else.

The trigger was a little spongy but broke at about five pounds. The sights, while rather rudimentary and nowhere near match grade, worked well with my aging eyes. In fact, with the same ammunition, the FAL shoots as well as my M14 clone does with its target sights and other accuracy-related features. In other words, three-shot groups in about two-and-half inches at 100 yards on a not so rigid rest.

While certainly a heavy pig, weighing in at over ten pounds loaded, the FAL has some other redeeming features. All that weight and its gas system make for a light recoil. It handles well and enjoys a reputation for reliability similar to that of the Kalashnikov family of weapons.

Like the AK, the FAL is easy to disassemble and maintain and is a far simpler rifle to keep running than

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*continued on page 23*



KEVIN MICHALOWSKI

# Dog Talk

## Nothing is easy in winter

# We're Talking Dogs Online, Too!

read more at [OnWisconsinOutdoors.com/HuntingDogs](http://OnWisconsinOutdoors.com/HuntingDogs)

**B**y way of weather, this winter has been pretty easy on the dogs. Yes, they are just fine living outside with plastic 55-gallon drums for doghouses and hay for bedding. But for whatever reason, this winter has been hell on the training/exercise regimen. So I've got myself a couple of "energetic" Labradors who really want nothing more than to run around, play, romp and generally have fun in the snow. My schedule means that that is about all we get to do right now.

Still, I'm getting the proper responses to my simple commands. I make the dogs sit still while I feed them and clean the kennel. And I make them wait inside their doghouses while I bring out the water. So even though I'm not working on blind retrieves and hand signals, I like to think that my basic training has held and the stuff I'm doing now reminds them that I'm still the boss.

Maybe I'm just fooling myself or trying to justify my inability to do the training I want to do over the winter months. But we need to be honest. When it is cold and dark after work; no one really wants to be setting up retriever drills.

So the reality of wintering dogs is that some of the training slips, while all of the care is that much more important. Let's focus on the care for a minute. Dogs that live outside need plenty of fresh water at all times. The water helps them digest and process their dog food. You don't really need to add more food during the winter months unless you notice your dogs starting to get thin. If that is the case, add an additional 25 percent and see



*Winter weather fun can often get in the way of all but the most dedicated training schedules.*

***"So I've got myself a couple of 'energetic' Labradors who really want nothing more than to run around, play, romp and generally have fun in the snow."***

what happens.

Shelter from the winter winds is also key in keeping dogs healthy when temperatures drop. My 55-gallon drums work great to keep wind, rain, snow and sleet at bay. I tried to go with plastic dog doors, but my beasts decided the doors would make better chew toys than their chew toys. So they get a nice layer of dry hay once a week, and they have to

make do.


To keep from feeling too guilty about the lack of training time in the winter, I've taken to preparing my training gear for the upcoming season. I've sorted and cleaned all the retrieval dummies, organized the leashes and made sure my electronic collars are up and running. I've also been talking with some of my local trainers concerning

raising some pheasants for the upcoming summer training season.

I have one dog that isn't quite as wild about birds as I would like him to be, so I have vowed to get him a nose full of live bird scent as often as possible in the coming year. Apparently, now is the time to be ordering pheasant chicks for the coming season, but more importantly, it is the time to reestablish those connections that will help you with your spring and summer training. That includes birds and locations.

Do your early spring training in places where the cover is low and the dog has a better chance of success. Then move on to deeper cover and tougher tests. Keep building on your successes until the dog just assumes that time in the field means birds and he doesn't get to play with the birds unless he listens to your commands.

Yeah, the groundhog said we would have an early spring, which will mean more mud, more dirt and more excuses to put off training. This is a tough time of year for dogs and dog trainers. Most of the time, I just batten down the hatches and try to muddle through until spring. I know that is not the best advice, but I'm trying to be realistic. This time of the year puts limitations on us, but we need to work within them, focus on what is good and do the best we can with what we've got.

Spring will be here soon, and we can start getting our dogs in shape for the fall season. Until then, hang in there. We're all in this together. 

*Kevin Michalowski is author of "15 Minutes to a Great Dog" and has been training dogs for 10 years.*

**WILKERSON**, from page 22

disassemble and maintain and is a far simpler rifle to keep running than an M14. Like the AK, the FAL has a gas-operated action that is driven by a short-stroke piston located above the barrel. The gas system can be adjusted to account for different types of ammunition and environmental conditions.


Since I bought the FAL in 2009, prices have decreased dramatically for most models as interest in the guns

has evaporated. Without a doubt, it is a dated design and the availability of surplus ammunition has virtually dried up. AR15 and Kalashnikov-type rifles are far more abundant, cheaper to shoot, and can be accessorized like Barbie Dolls.

Which is not to say that the FAL is not without merit. I enjoy shooting it much more than my AKs and M4. If the ammunition weren't so expensive, I would shoot it a lot more. The gun

does have a cult following, and there are quite a few people who purchase demilled kits and put together FALs with new aftermarket receivers. In fact, I would lose hundreds of dollars if I sold my FAL now, if I could find someone to buy it. On the other hand, was I to take it apart and sell it piece by piece, I could easily recoup my costs.

If you can afford the ammunition, which, if surplus, will run about 50 cents a round, I highly recommend the

purchase of a decent FAL. On the other hand, if you need to make some money, it also makes sense to purchase a decent FAL in this depressed market and part it out. This is sad, because the sum of those parts is a great gun that served the cause of democracy for many years. 

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



SUZETTE CURTIS

## Recipes By Suzette Wild Rabbit Recipes

I have not shared any rabbit recipes with you in the past. It's certainly not because we don't enjoy rabbit in our home, but perhaps it's just that I never thought of doing so. Anyway, a student at Berlin High School shared his recipe with me recently, and I felt it worthy to pass on, along with a couple of recipes I already had. <sup>WO</sup>

### Wild Rabbit in Beer

By Douglas Wheaton

- 2 T. butter
- 1 tsp. black pepper
- 1 onion, sliced into thin rings
- 2 tsp. celery salt
- 2 ½ - 3 lb. rabbit, cut into pieces
- 2 tsp. garlic salt
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 2 T. horseradish
- 1 cup beer\*
- 2 tsp. basil

Melt butter in large skillet over medium heat. Add onions and garlic; sauté until onions are translucent. Turn up heat and place rabbit pieces in pan, cooking until browned on all sides. Add remaining ingredients and bring to boil. Reduce heat, cover, and simmer for 45 minutes to 1 hour until rabbit is tender.

Serve over egg noodles or rice.

\*NOTE: I used a pale ale when I tried this recipe, but I think a dark beer would add a nice, deep flavor to this dish. Also, the beauty of using just 1 cup in the recipe means you can drink the rest of the bottle or can while you're cooking!

### Crock Pot Rabbit

- 1 bag sauerkraut
- 1 tsp. salt
- 2 T. caraway seeds
- ½ tsp. pepper
- 1 rabbit, skinned & cleaned
- 2 onions, thinly sliced
- 2 tsp. sage

Drain sauerkraut and pour into bottom of slow cooker. Sprinkle caraway seeds over top. Season rabbit with salt and pepper and place atop sauerkraut. Mound onions on top of rabbit and sprinkle sage over all. Cook on low for 8 to 10 hours until meat begins to fall apart.



#### CROCKPOT TIP

When cooking at the low temperature setting, don't be tempted to lift the crockpot cover to stir or check the progress of the cooking. Each time the cover is lifted enough heat escapes to extend your cooking time by 20-30 minutes.

### Rabbit in Creamy Wine Sauce

- 2 onions, thinly sliced
- ½ cup dry red wine
- 1 rabbit, cut into pieces
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup \*
- salt & pepper
- 1 cup sour cream
- paprika

Cover bottom of slow cooker with sliced onions. Sprinkle rabbit pieces with salt, pepper, and paprika to taste. Arrange rabbit atop onions in slow cooker.

In medium sized bowl, combine remaining ingredients until sauce is well mixed and creamy. Spoon sauce over rabbit in slow cooker.

Cook on low for 8 to 10 hours until meat is tender. Serve over noodles or rice.

\*\*NOTE: I like to use low sodium soup because salt is already used on the meat.

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



ENGBERG, from page 20

one on your rods while trying to see what the fish happen to prefer that day. Remember that you will have action from the river's current even when letting your rod just sit in a rod holder. Jig and plastic colors can vary from day to day, so be sure to have a wide assortment. The Wisconsin River is off-colored, so hot colors work well with orange, chartreuse, pink, glow, green, and gold being favorites. Black, electric blue, motor oil and white are all good plastic colors for the river, so have these colors too! The profile that walleyes prefer changes regularly, so this is why you should have a wide and varied assortment.

The other rig that I use is as simple as it gets. I put a colored bead (chartreuse, glow, or red) on my line and then tie on a good VMC or Mustad hook. Colored hooks are also worth trying, though I'm not sure if they make a difference. Attach a split shot a foot or two above the hook and then bait the hook with a lively fathead minnow. Try to have at least two sizes of minnows, because fish can want different sizes on different days. This live bait rig is usually used as the dead rod and put in your boat's rod holder.

Try to remember that these are river fish who try to use any structure in the river as a current break to keep them out of the river's flow and conserve their energy. Any obstruction can be used by fish to hide behind while waiting for food to float by them as they wait to ambush the forage. You'll catch many small male walleyes, but the fish of a lifetime can be caught too, especially when it's a female full of eggs. When releasing all fish, do it gently because it's easy to kill any fish this time of year. Don't worry about when the season opens, because the Wisconsin River is open year-round for walleyes and saugers. The minimum size is 18 inches for walleyes and 15 inches for saugers and saugeyes. The daily bag limit is three fish: either walleyes, saugers, or saugeyes, or a combination of the three.

You now have everything that you need to catch walleyes below the dam at Sauk Prairie. <sup>WO</sup>

For more information: Wilderness Fish and Game 608.643.2433; Guides Wally Banfi at 608.644.9823; Tony Puccio at 608.845.5410.

Gary Engberg can be reached at [www.garyengbergoutdoors.com](http://www.garyengbergoutdoors.com).



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OWO STAFF

## Product 6-Pack

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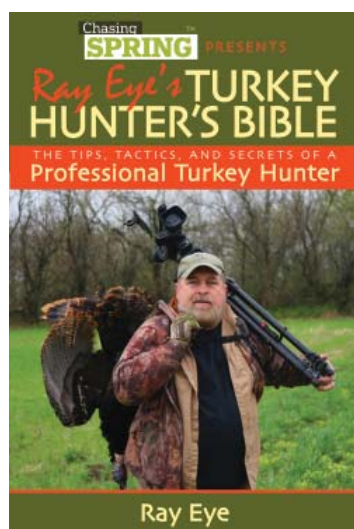
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Product 6-Pack contributors include Dick Ellis (D.E.) and JJ Reich (J.J.R.). If you have recommendations for good gear that works for you, tell us about it: email: [ellis@onwisconsinoutdoors.com](mailto:ellis@onwisconsinoutdoors.com).



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