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On Wisconsin Outdoors

with the
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PHIL SCHWEIK

Backwater Muskies

How to find and catch them

Wisconsin Fishing Reports.

OnWisconsinOutdoors.com/WisconsinFishing


After several years of fruitless flailing about on the Wisconsin River system trying to pin down where all the post-spawn muskies go, a method to figure it out came to mind. All I had to do was ask myself, "If I were a fat, lazy, stressed-out musky, where would I go?" I wouldn't want to sit in the main river channel and fight the heavy current, and I sure as heck would not want to be somewhere that I am going to be disturbed. I know that I want to be warm, comfortable and left alone. Where do I go? The only place fitting that description was "The Backwaters."

Shallow backwater areas off the main river system are warm and undisturbed. I am talking about areas that most boaters won't even travel into because of the very shallow depths or hazards like stumps and sand bars. These can be post-spawn musky magnets.

So I decided to do some scouting and checked out a few areas off the main river system. Bingo! There they were! After spending countless hours on the water and searching out several areas, I finally put together the pieces of the puzzle.

Post-spawn muskies travel, and when I say travel, I mean they may travel for miles. I have worked with the DNR doing telemetry studies and radio tracking, and it is amazing to see just how far a musky will move throughout the season. The muskies that I was

catching on the main river system would trek several miles at times to get to very shallow backwater areas, especially in the spring. Most of these were areas with little or no current that they went to in search of safe harbor after spawning.

We found that not only did they move to very shallow areas, there was no

correlation to having any nearby deep water access. In a lot of cases the muskies were a good mile or more back into the shallow backwater areas, far from any deep water or the main river channel itself. The muskies were occasionally holding up in less than a foot of water very close to the shoreline or some sort of structure. If there were downed trees, wood, a rock or maybe an old dock in the water, it was a good possibility that there was a musky in the area.

When I first started scouting these backwaters, it was a lot of hit and miss. I would get into these areas with my trolling motor on high, looking for structure and potential fish holding locations, trying to cover as much ground as possible in a short amount of time. But on my way through, I would see strewn up mud or areas where fish had moved off just ahead of me, and like most of you have seen in the past, I was thinking that they were just carp. I couldn't have been more wrong. Some of them were muskies.

We figured this out several years ago when we were out carp shooting at night. We would move into these backwater areas in stealth-like mode in an attempt to not alarm the carp as we pushed our way into the shallowest of backwater bays. What we weren't expecting to see were all the muskies holding up in the warmest, shallowest water possible, right where they should

be! The only problem was make one sound and they were gone! These were the spookiest fish I had ever seen. One wrong move or one wrong sound and they were off. Right then I knew that I needed to figure out a way to get into these areas to take advantage of the fish that were holding up in these "hotspots" without spooking them.

Now that I found them and knew where they were holding, all I needed to do was get to them without spooking them. Easier said than done. Do you know how hard it is to be absolutely quiet in an 18 1/2 foot boat, casting musky plugs? After years of trial and error, I came up with a solution.

To target these lazy post-spawn muskies I run my trolling motor slow, being careful not to bang into any stumps or allow the trolling motor blades to hit bottom, as this would immediately alarm the nearby muskies. Once I get close to an area that looks



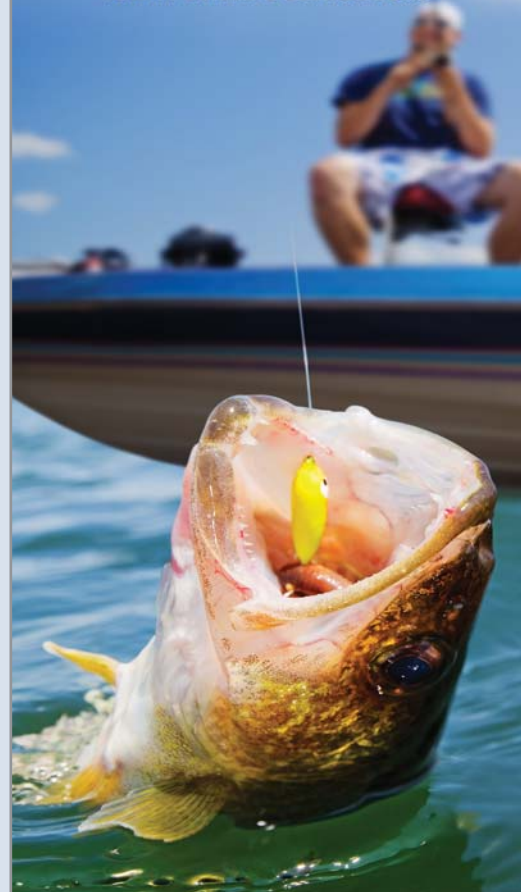
"You would not believe the size of some of the fish that I have seen in less than a foot of water."

like a potential musky holding location, I shut the trolling motor down and let the boat drift into casting range. I work the area thoroughly and meticulously and start up the trolling motor again to

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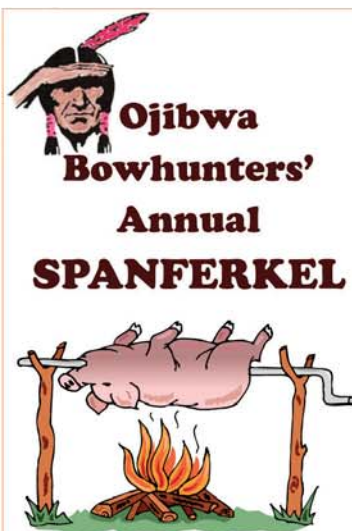
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ON THE COVER: Top Wisconsin professional fishing guide Phil Schweik is photographed just before releasing a 21-inch smallmouth bass on the Wisconsin River near Wausau in 2011 with OWO publisher Dick Ellis. Cold weather turned off a hot spawning crappie bite but left the big smallies snapping. Read that Ellis column, *Weather or Not*, online at OnWisconsinOutdoors.com/InlandFishing.



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BILL SCHULTZ

Kayak Fishing Wisconsin

Choosing the best fishing kayak and paddle

When giving my kayak fishing seminars, I ask the question, "Can you fish out of any kayak that floats?" The answer is yes, but, "Can you have a better time with a kayak geared specifically to fishing?" Here, too, the answer is yes!

Today there are many companies that produce fishing kayaks. Most are sit-on-top models which offer tremendous stability, ease of entry and exit, plenty of room for storage and easy access to gear. I fish out of the Wilderness Systems Tarpon 140 and Commander 140, both 14 feet long. The Tarpon is a traditional sit-on-top. The Commander is a kayak/canoe hybrid that is an open concept, has two seating positions, and, with the pontoon hull, is extremely easy to stand and fish. The Commander is a great kayak for fly fishing enthusiasts. Most kayak anglers have migrated to one of the many sit-on-tops or a hybrid, and some even come with self-propulsion systems. I prefer paddle power, enjoying the added bonus of the exercise. For those of you who still would like a sit-in kayak, consider something like the Wilderness Systems Pungo with its large cockpit, which facilitates easy casting and gear storage.

I also recommend giving the kayaks you're considering a test paddle. There are a number of kayak stores throughout the state where you can test paddle a variety of kayaks. Rutabaga in Madison, Laacke & Joys in Milwaukee, along with Bayshore Outdoor Store in Sister Bay, are a few of which I'm familiar.

Another question I get is, "What's the

best length kayak for me?" I need to know what types of water a person plans to fish. If I hear lakes only, I suggest something in the 12- to 16- foot range. This will give you better speed and tracking. If someone is going to combine lakes and rivers, then I would probably suggest something in the 12-foot range, which is easier to maneuver. For rivers only, I recommend 10-12 feet.


The rudder question also comes up often. I prefer a rudder, but it is not necessary and your kayak will be less expensive without it. On windy days, the rudder, which is operated with foot pedals, is a nice bonus. It lets you continue paddling normally, keeping you on a straight track rather than adding multiple strokes on one side to track straight. Also, by turning your rudder into the wind while fishing, it will slow your drift. If the wind is pushing you along a shoreline, you can steer with the rudder and concentrate on fishing.

Another item that many kayak anglers, and kayakers in general, should give more thought to is the paddle. I recommend buying the lightest paddle you can afford. Added arm fatigue from a heavy paddle can dampen an otherwise great outing.

Paddle length is key consideration. Most paddle companies have formulas that take into consideration your height along with the width of your kayak. Generally, this formula will get you into the correct length, but you may also want to consider whether you are a vertical or horizontal paddler. A vertical



paddler will dig into the water with a more vertical stroke, which might point to a slightly shorter paddle. A vertical paddler will usually be more aggressive and move faster. A horizontal paddler is a kayaker who may be moving slower and more leisurely. This type of paddler has strokes that aren't as deep and are a little farther from the kayak, pointing to a slightly longer paddle. My fishing kayaks are about 30 inches wide, and I've found that a 230- centimeter length works perfect. Paddle companies typically produce paddles from 210 centimeters to 240 centimeters for touring and fishing. Most make paddles with a standard blade and an oversized blade. Many kayak anglers like using the oversized blade to push more water and move faster from one fishing spot to another. Either blade works fine for fishing or touring.

Hopefully, these tips will help you choose the best fishing kayak and paddle to fit your needs. In upcoming columns I will look at kayak accessories, transporting your kayak, great kayak fishing spots in Wisconsin and more. 

Bill Schultz has caught thousands of small-mouth 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

Walleye heaven opens with St. Louis refuge

See Dick Write. See Dick Blog.

 Read the Ellis Blogs at OnWisconsinOutdoors.com

Nirvana, to a Wisconsin walleye fisherman, must mean the St. Louis River upstream from Superior beginning in mid May. In 2011, Heaven's gates opened in Douglas County above Highway 23 on May 19, when refuge restrictions annually set to protect spawning fish were lifted. I was there. You should be there this year, when anglers are unleashed on the St. Louis on May 12. Last year, even the early morning cold and steep wilderness walls rising up from the St. Louis couldn't cast a shadow on the optimism in Guide Pete Brzezinski's boat or take away the warm fuzzy feeling every time another walleye smacked a crankbait. That was, in fact, a repetitive experience. Call it a "10-minute limit" of six fish for this three man craft and add in scores more of walleyes released over another two hours to catch an accurate picture of what happened here in a Canadian-like setting just two miles from the urban center of Superior-Duluth. Call it a gold rush, an adrenalin rush, and file it to memory as a Wisconsin natural high.

A reporter's biggest problem of the early morning, speaking of accurate pictures, was whether to keep the standard camera lens on the Canon to capture the walleye surrendering to the angler 10 yards away or switch to the telephoto zoom to shoot the boat 100 yards upstream netting the five-pounder. No matter, back and forth, one to the other, the lenses would change and the rods would bend near and far. Everywhere. Definitely, walleye



Northwest Wisconsin fishing experts Ted Sellers and Pete Brzezinski show off a 10-minute limit of walleyes on the St. Louis River. Wisconsin anglers who have not experienced this fishing gem near Superior should put it on the future docket. (Ellis)

heaven winds and turns under the name of St. Louis.

Ted Sellers put it simplistically best and spoke for anglers in boats spread over the St. Louis beginning to be splashed in sunshine when another 20-inch walleye found Brzezinski's net. "Now that's a glorious sight," he said.

On this trip, though, it was also an expected sight. Fish from 19 to 23 inches, all males, already adorned the live well. Sellers, a fishing addict in northwest Wisconsin and a darn talented one, had introduced me to the fabulous walleye and smallmouth fishing on the St. Louis in 2003 with this question: why would anglers

journey to Canada or Minnesota from Wisconsin and Illinois when their travels north on the Richard Bong bridge splitting Duluth and Superior carried them over one of the best walleye fisheries anywhere? After he introduced me to the great fishing, I returned several times to fish open water on the river and hardwater on the bay where it dumps its load in the Great Lake at Superior.

It had been five years before 2011 called me back to the river. This time, Sellers introduced me to his good friend, Great Lakes Captain and professional guide Pete Brzezinski. Catching walleyes, lots of walleyes, actually allows Brzezinski to burn away the rest of the candle on the offseason before the musky season opens on the St. Louis River with the Wisconsin North Country opener north of Highway 10 on Memorial Day weekend. It's his passion. In 2010, Brzezinski clients caught and released 140 muskies with 11 fish over 50 inches, and a big fish of 54-1/4 inches exceeding 40 pounds.

"We do 90 percent of our musky fishing on the St. Louis River," Brzezinski said. "99 percent of the fish are caught casting or sucker fishing. By mid-July, the topwater bite is tremendous, and one guy caught nine fish in one day sucker fishing in the fall. It's a favorite technique. But I'll also

walleye fish if guys want walleye trips."

The Superior walleyes are here. The walleye opener on the St. Louis, Brzezinski said, begins with the Minnesota walleye opener annually the second Saturday in May. Each year, though, the walleye refuge opener above Highway 23 on the river is dependent on spawning conditions in order to best protect the fishery. We launched upstream from the city of Superior shortly after daybreak and motored slowly up the St. Louis until we crossed under the Highway 23 bridge and entered heaven. Twenty to 30 boats were already scattered over the river, some anchored but most moving as they motor trolled slowly short-lining crankbaits. Other anglers in waders eased into the river to cast. Most offered bright colored lures like white, blue, or fire-tiger in an attempt to match the forage base of spawning shiners that had also entered the river from Lake Superior.

"It's a refuge for the spawning walleyes that enter the river from Lake Superior," Brzezinski said. "Shiners come in to spawn too. Most of these guys will be short-lining crankbaits less than 40 feet from the boat for easier maneuverability."

What had been a refuge to allow the walleyes to spawn just hours before was now an open season frenzy. Female walleyes had spawned first and had migrated downstream again in the endless nomadic search for Mother Superior. Males averaging 19 inches would follow later, but on this morning, those fish pounded crankbaits everywhere on the river and anglers worked bent rods or moved to net a partner's fish. With the new sun, the beauty and rustic personality of this river bathed in light made any angler forget that Superior just a few miles away was raised as an industrial harbor town. The isolation, great tasting walleyes off of the largest Great Lake and steep, tree-lined banks also make recent history on the St. Louis seem the distant past.

"The river was polluted in the 1970s," said Sellers. "No one fished it and the fish were huge in here by the 1980s. Now the water is clean and the

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JOEL DEBOER

Big Bronzedbacks On Top

Early summer smallmouths on topwaters

Call them what you will—bronzebacks, redeyes, or smallies—smallmouth bass are a popular game fish in our region and for many reasons. For starters, there are good numbers of them within many bodies of water in Wisconsin, especially in my “home water” of the Wisconsin River and her flowages. Better yet, plenty of these bronze beauties are true trophy class specimens exceeding 5 pounds.

In addition to being plentiful, smallies are exciting to catch as they put up a powerful battle, often displaying their acrobatic prowess by going airborne multiple times. The months of May and June are an underrated but excellent time to target smallmouth by using one of the most thrilling of tactics to target brutish bronzebacks: fishing with surface lures.

I confess. I am a surface bait junkie. To me, there are few things that make my heart pound harder than a solid strike on top of the water, be it bluegill, bass, or musky. Being a successful surface bait fisherman for smallmouth begins with the proper equipment. Longer rod lengths excel for fishing with topwater lures. It is seldom that I fish with a rod shorter than 7 feet anymore, especially when fishing baits on top. Longer rods not only give an angler better leverage for hook sets and fighting fish, but when using surface lures, it allows the angler to keep as much of the line as possible off the water. This aids in maximizing the action of the lure, makes the presentation as natural as possible, and in ultra-shallow water situations, aids in preventing spooking of fish.

For smallmouth bass, I prefer a 7 to 7 1/2 St. Croix spinning rod with a medium action. I complete the outfit by adding an Abu Garcia

spinning reel spooled with supple Sufix monofilament fishing line in either 8- or 10-pound test.

There are a variety of lures that will score on smallmouth that fall into the category of topwater baits. One of my favorites is the popper-style lure. Popper-style lures, such as the Rapala Skitter Pop and Storm Rattlin' Chug Bug, are surprisingly versatile and will work in conditions ranging from glass calm to a slight chop. Work the lure with a stop-and-go retrieve, varying your cadence and the amount of time the lure sits at rest. There have been days when the smallmouths have dictated that we let the lure sit for close to 30 seconds between pulls in order to provoke strikes. Yes, one-half minute! While usually thought of as only a shallow water presentation, surface lures will produce bronzebacks when worked over deeper grass, wood, or rocks when given the opportunity, especially in clearer water.

Walk-the-dog style baits are mesmerizing lures both to fish and fisherman. This family of lures, including my personal favorite, the Rapala Skitter Walk, typically works better during calmer water conditions and during daylight hours. As with poppers, it's important to work walk-the-dog style lures while varying both your retrieve speed and cadence. There will be days when the fish want longer pauses and an irregular retrieve, just as there will be days that are the opposite—just keep experimenting.

Prop and buzz-style baits are excellent “search” lures and, when used properly, can enable anglers to work large flats or other likely fish-holding areas quickly to find concentrations of fish. Prop baits, like the Rapala Skitter Prop and X-Rap Prop, are typically



A Rapala Skitter Walk was the undoing of this smallmouth displayed by guide Joel DeBoer.

worked by snapping the rod tip down or to the side, causing the lure to burst forward in the water before coming to rest. As with poppers, vary the amount of “rest” time between twitches and let the bass tell you what speed of retrieve they prefer.

Buzzbaits, like the Terminator Tiny T and T-1, on the other hand, are typically retrieved in a straight fashion. To truly make a buzzbait effective, try tipping the hook with a Mister Twister Curly Tail Grub or Sassy Shad. Not only does the plastic trailer make the lure a tad more buoyant, it also adds extra strike appeal to wary bass. As with any surface-style lure for smallmouth bass, try changing up the retrieve speed, which ultimately affects the action and sound of the lure, and let the smallies tell you what they want.

While there are volumes more that

could be written about fishing with surface lures, one rule that needs to be followed at all times is the “reel ‘til you feel” technique. Simply put, this means that no matter what your eyes tell you, hold off on setting the hook until you actually feel the weight of the fish. With all the adrenaline pumping during a topwater strike, it's easy to pull the bait away from a fish before it's had the chance to get the bait in its mouth. Train yourself in this manner and I guarantee you will boat many more of the fish that strike. I'll see you on the water ... *WD*

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

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TOM CARPENTER

Cubs Corner

A million memories

Those who read this column with any regularity know what an important force my father was in shaping me, my life, and how I approach it and the great outdoors. Dad passed away on March 28, 2012, at the ripe old age of 93. We buried Charles E. Carpenter in Calvary Cemetery in Monroe on a bright, warm and sunny April day that felt more like May, with warblers flitting through the trees above.

It was a bittersweet day. Losing your father, even at 93, is not pleasant. On the other hand, being 93 is not easy. I saw that as his health eroded in a nursing home. It of course made me think about how short life is and how each day we have while we are healthy, strong and active is a blessing. It sounds trite, but deeming something trite is only an excuse for ignoring a truth.

He is in a better place, and there's some comfort in that.

When I think about our days together, I remember:

Trouting the streams of southwestern Wisconsin together on long summer evenings. Sometimes we would hopscotch along, trading holes.

Sometimes we would go different directions and meet up later. But the excursion always ended with us sitting on the tailgate of whatever station wagon Dad was driving at the time, talking softly and watching the sunset's afterglow over the ridges to the west, listening to the quiet of night come on.

Learning to hunt squirrels under his tutelage. After an apprenticeship, I was let loose one opening morning in a Green County oak woodlot. Two hours and five shots later, I walked out with five bushytails—three huge fox squirrels and two fat grays, all shot in the head—and Dad was waiting for me. “Oh, that's good,” was all he said with a grin. A boy couldn't have been prouder.

Being with him when he shot his first buck. Dad wasn't much of a deer hunter until we boys got old enough to go. So I had the privilege of watching him shoot his first buck in 1983. It was pouring rain, and we were hunched up in separate fencerows watching the same field. I spotted a buck crossing toward Dad. On one knee he took aim, and I watched the buck fall over and then heard the shot through the downpour. I ran over and we hugged in the rain,

laughing, the sleek 8-pointer at our feet.

Rabbit hunting on sunny winter days.

One of the ways we passed the winters was by rabbit hunting. Dad loved good hound music and was the first among our small family hunting group to suggest that maybe we should let a rabbit run instead of trying to shoot it after kicking it up. Our enjoyment expanded exponentially after that, and I eventually graduated to hunting bunnies with a .22 and not a shotgun, at his suggestion.

Picking asparagus, berries and hickory nuts. Dad loved harvesting the crops of the wild, especially asparagus and black raspberries. Asparagus hunting along the roadsides, fencerows and railroad rights of way was always easy. But berry picking was an ordeal: the sultry heat of summer, hip-deep in the thorny brambles, getting all scratched up. At least the mosquitoes stayed at bay in the heat of the day. But I learned to appreciate the challenge as I got older, valued the time together, and certainly enjoyed the tasty results.

Pheasant hunting. Dad had a special affinity for pheasants. I remember getting to skip school one perfect day



when November's first snowfall had skiffed the land, a warm sun followed, and scenting conditions were perfect for Nikki (our Bassett hound at the time). We came home with four resplendent long-tailed roosters, a rare Wisconsin limit, and a memory that lives with me to this day.

And in the end, that's what you're out there for with those young men and women of yours: the time together, the memories you create. No one can or ever will take them away from you. They make you rich beyond your wildest dreams. If I had a dollar for each of the memories my Dad created for me as we hunted, fished and rambled the great Wisconsin outdoors together, I would be a millionaire.

I guess I am. *WO*

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

DARRELL PENDERGRASS

A Steelhead Trip On The Brule

All about the net

As we were gathering things together on Sunday morning for our steelhead trip to the Brule River, I noticed the old landing net I've used for years had seen better days.

“Use my net,” my son Jack said as we looked around the garage for a replacement. “It's right here on this nail.”

Perfect; I had a new net, and at no cost. This net just needed a little duct tape to fix the doo-hickey that connects it to my fishing vest and it will be fine, I thought. We'll get some tape at Dangerous Dan's house when we pick him up and I'll be set.

At Dan's house the old dogs greeted us with wagging tails and gray smiles as we piled our gear into his truck.

“Quietly we began casting, alone with our individual thoughts and lost together in nature. There is nowhere we'd rather be.”

“Hey, that's my net,” Dan said excitedly, standing in his yard, looking at MY new net. “You found my net. I've been looking everywhere for that net.” He reached for it.

“This isn't your net,” I said, pulling it close to my chest. “Jack won this net at some fishing banquet. It's been in our garage for a year or two.”

“It looks exactly like the net I lost in the swamp last year. Where did you

find it,” Dan said, looking squinty-eyed at the net.

“It's not your net,” I said, making sure Dan didn't get his hands on it. “It's mine.”

At the Brule River there were plenty of trucks and cars at every putting-in spot. Fishermen milled around in their waders, stringing up their expensive rods in the parking lots. The tired anglers who had already

been in the water said the fishing was extremely slow; early ice out and warm temperatures had evidently led to a premature steelhead run.

“We're about three weeks too late,” one dejected angler said, his felt hat drooping sadly atop his head. “We caught two fish early, but they were pretty dark and beat up. I'm sure they wintered over.”

Of course, none of that mattered; we were going fishing. Historically, the three of us don't do very well in chasing steelhead on the Brule during opening weekend. Dan and I go because we love angling. We enjoy the feeling of being out, the smell of the river and the

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TOM CARPENTER

Late, Great Spring Gobblers

Some of spring's best turkey hunting happens in May

Wisconsin's spring turkey hunters clamor for early season tags. True, there are more turkeys in the woods, hunters haven't educated the birds, and the gobblers' breeding urge can be very strong, sometimes making it relatively easy to call in a lonely and lovelorn tom.

But early spring turkey hunting seasons offer plenty of challenges too. Weather can yo-yo from snow to cold to rain to heat to thunderstorms to tornadoes—and that's just in one Wisconsin morning! Hens remain in their winter gangs, and gobblers strut happily behind. More hunters are out, which can screw up hunt plans.

That's why Wisconsin's last two spring turkey hunting periods may be the best times of all to hunt, even with the early, weird spring we're experiencing. Here's why, followed by approaches for successfully hunting late season May gobblers.

Why Late is Great

You probably need more convincing that late season hunting can be spring's best. Keep these factors in mind:

Less Hennaed Up. As May progresses, hens concentrate on laying their final eggs and beginning incubation. You have a better chance of finding that lonely gobbler you need.

Birds in More Places. The birds are fully dispersed from their winter groups and scattered across the landscape, increasing your chances of finding a tom to work.

Second Gobbling Peak. Gobblers are still in breeding mode. In fact, I've seen them gobbling and carrying on into June!

Better Weather. Mid-May ushers in milder and more predictable weather. Easy weather just makes the hunting more enjoyable.

Less Hunting Pressure. I hardly ever see another hunter during a fifth or sixth season.

Just Turkeys. Yes, the birds have been hunted. But May birds are callable and killable.

Hunting Insights

Put these considerations, ideas and strategies to work during a late season Wisconsin turkey hunt.

Use the Leaves. Leafed-out woods offer late season advantages. First, the extra cover lets you approach closer to a roosted turkey in the morning. Get as tight as possible on late season gobblers, making their trip to your calling easy and short. Second, the green and leafy woods afford you better hiding from prying turkey eyes. You can also sneak about from setup to setup easier without being spotted.

Know Where Turkeys Feed. Once the sun is up, a good place to set up is a known hen feeding area. May turkeys feed in plowed and planted cornfields, old corn or other grain stubble if it still remains, pastures, and fallow meadows. Turkeys will hit hayfields too but not until they have dried out later in the

morning and only if the alfalfa isn't too tall.

Run and Gun with Care. Hunt slow. Use the cover to your advantage. Stay inside the woods' edge, hug the fencerow, peek carefully (with facemask up) around corners and into dips and swales before barging on ahead. Move like there could be a turkey anywhere. Stop in safe places to cutt, cackle and yelp to elicit a gobble. Shock a bird into gobbling with a crow, flicker or other call. Sound doesn't carry as far now, so call often.

Afternoon Strut. Start hunting in earnest again by 2:30 or 3:00 in the afternoon. The hens are hungry again now, and the gobblers know it. Plant yourself where the hens feed and the gobblers strut. If the sun is hot, stick to the shade in the woods or a shaded field edge. Black turkeys don't like being in the direct rays anyway. Set out a decoy, and don't be afraid to call.

Calling Extremes

Take your late season calling to one of two extremes.

On one end of the spectrum sits the "cluck em up" school that dictates giving a yelp or two, maybe a couple clucks to follow up ... pretty much just shutting up and playing hard to get.

A better late season calling strategy might be to get real aggressive. Yelp, cutt, cackle and cluck away ... not nonstop, but more often, loudly and aggressively than you might otherwise feel comfortable. Why? Because these turkeys have probably heard Joe Average calling that is neither light nor aggressive. But how can a gobbler ignore aggressive calling forever? He's been jilted. He wants love. Maybe a hot, hot mama is just what his libido needs now.

Be brave. Hit that call!

May Challenge

There are still plenty of gobblers out there in May. And they're still looking for a little love. I like to deliver just that, albeit via a load of number 5 shot at about 25 yards.

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

Gobbler Success Season 6.
OnWisconsinOutdoors.com/UplandGameHunting

PENDERGRASS, from page 7

beauty of the cedars calling to us. Jack goes because we always stop somewhere fun for lunch.

We trudged upstream from where we parked, walking along a lengthy gravel driveway before cutting through the pines and stumbling down to the river. The water was lower than normal for April, but its beauty was filled to the brim. There's nothing like standing on the Brule River in early spring, the coolness of the woods offering a familiar embrace, the calls of the white-throated sparrow welcoming friends home. It's simply inspiring.

Along the river we spaced out along a bend we know well. Because the water wasn't what it usually is, we inched out away from shore more than normal. Quietly we began casting, alone with our individual thoughts and lost together in nature. There is nowhere we'd rather be.

Gingerly, Dangerous Dan lifted his rod, and the telltale bend of a heavy fish on the other end was quickly evident. Dan held the rod high, and the tip began bouncing wildly as a steelhead started boiling through the depths of the hole. Suddenly, the fish leapt with the power and grace God had bestowed upon it, an olive and red angel suspended above the river as if ascending to heaven—once, then twice, and no more.

Dan played the rainbow out, its final dashes spent between the ripples below and the calm waters up above. I landed the fish and smiled at Dan. A 21-inch steelhead is not the biggest of its species; they do get much larger. But this steelhead, any steelhead for that matter, is worthy of rejoicing. Dan seemed nonchalant about it all.

"You landed that fish with my net, you know," he said, again eyeing up MY net.

I made sure all of our gear got put away when we got home that afternoon. And I hid the net somewhere other than back on the nail.

Dan couldn't find his net, and he isn't going to find mine, either. *Wo*

Darrell Pendergrass lives in Grand View, WI.



GARY ENGBERG

Inland Fishing.

OnWisconsinOutdoors.com/InlandFishing

Gary Engberg Outdoors*Spring shore fishing on the Madison Chain of Lakes*

Wally Banfi of Sauk City with some nice crappies.

Some of the year's best shore fishing is at the fingertips of local anglers. Many of these fishermen and women don't have a boat and look forward to shore fishing. Springtime is a great

time to fish from shore because most of the local fish species are in relatively shallow water, less than 10-12 feet deep. Even into May, most fish are within a cast of the shoreline and often in only a few feet of water. The Madison Chain of Lakes has a very distinct weedline which attracts and holds most fish species this time of the season.

Most fish are now in shallow water because they are coming out of the cold water of winter (this winter was much warmer than usual) and are actively seeking the warmer water, which should contain food from early hatches for their growing appetites. The shallow and warmer water gets the food chain in motion with these early bug and insect hatches which attract smaller bait fish that will bring in the larger, predator fish. This is one of the best times of the year to fish for crappies and bluegills from shore in the Chain Lakes and also to fish the Wisconsin River for post-spawn walleyes and saugers. This is also a wonderful time to take the children fishing because the panfish are shallow and usually easy to catch. Remember, children just need to have the fish active to have a good time. The size of the fish or what species they are

is not important to the kids, just regular action.

The areas that I'm fishing regularly and guiding on are the Madison Chain (Lakes Waubesa, Monona, Wabesa, Kegonsa, and Wingra) and the Wisconsin River from Wisconsin Dells to Spring Green. All of these waters have areas where you may fish from shore or public piers and provide consistent action.

Fifty degrees seems to be the magic temperature when panfish become active and invade the shallows, searching for food. Water temperature can vary greatly this time of year, and the shallow water temperature can rise dramatically on a sunny day. Fish actively seek out these warmer areas where the water is calm. Lake water, just a few degrees warmer, is all that is needed to attract crappies and bluegills.

Good location is one of the most important factors in finding these pre-spawn panfish. The areas to concentrate on include spots that are warm, quiet, and calm. These places are away from the main body of the lake. Some examples are: secluded bays, canals, feeder creeks, and backwaters or sloughs. If any of these spots have a mud or dark bottom and some wood and brush, so much the better. These locations warm up quicker and hold warmth longer with their dark bottoms and scattered wood. Think of these areas as solar collectors for the crappies and bluegills, who are actively looking for the lake's warmest locations.

Remember too that crappies love wood! When available, look for crappies, and bluegills, to a lesser extent, around and near trees, stumps, brush, downed timber, wood piers, and boat hoists. The wood warms up faster by absorbing the spring sunshine. The adjacent water warms up quicker and helps get the food chain in motion. The warmer water allows the microscopic plankton to emerge and attract the baitfish which brings in the crappies, bluegills, and other game fish.

Another early tip is to fish the shoreline that gets the most sunlight, because it will be warmer. Having a south wind blowing warmer water back into secluded and quiet bays is an essential element for early season success.

The Madison Lakes have many of the key ingredients that you need to catch fish during the pre-spawn period. Lake Mendota has numerous feeder creeks that run into the lake and regularly hold early season panfish. Some of the better feeder creeks include: Six Mile Creek, Pheasant Branch Creek, and the mouth of the Yahara River. Dingles Bay, University Bay, Spring Harbor, Warner Bay and its lagoons, and Marshall Park are spots where the water is usually quiet and calm with wooden piers and brush for cover. I highly recommend these areas!

Lakes Monona, Waubesa, Wingra, and Kegonsa all contain emerging weeds and rocks that will attract crappies and bluegills who can't find any wood. Slack water and calm areas that have moss-covered rocks will also hold crappies and bluegills, because

the rocks retain warmth and warm the surrounding waters more quickly. Basically, anyplace that there is food and comfort can and will hold early season panfish.

The best technique for catching early season panfish is to downsize your fishing line to 4-pound monofilament. Try Berkley's fluorocarbon, Vanish Transition, which is invisible under water. Most ice fishing jigs tipped with a couple of wax worms work when fished under a slip float. Another technique which catches fish is to fish a small jig, like a Bait Rigs Cobra jig, again tipped with waxies, small pieces of plastic, or small grub tails under a float. For crappies, I'll occasionally use a small jig with a small crappie minnow under a float and slowly work the rig back to shore. The float that I recommend is the "Rocket Bobber," which has allowed me to cast farther than any other float that I've used. I suggest that you use a few different kinds of bait, an assortment of jigs in different colors and sizes, and assorted colors and styles of plastics for



Bluegill Joe Puccio of Madison, Wisconsin.

early panfish success.

The Wisconsin River spring walleye and sauger spawn is basically finished. The spawned-out females should start biting in earnest soon after a slight resting period following their spring spawning ritual. The male walleyes should still be hanging around the spawning grounds for a few weeks more and provide good action with a few keepers.

Try to fish the low light periods either early or late in the day when there is a good chance that the walleyes will be in shallow water feeding. Jigs and minnows, jigs and plastics, and

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PRESENTS

— Fishing Guide —

DENNIS RADLOFF

DENNIS RADLOFF

“Solar Heated” Muskies!

With the “South of Hwy 10” Musky Opener right around the corner, it’s time to start thinking about some early season strategies.

Early season musky fishing can offer some great chances at a BIG musky since it’s likely that “big” females will still be in shallow waters in a post-spawn pattern. While the presence of these big early season muskies is a great advantage for us, it can still be somewhat challenging to get these big girls to bite.


This is when I rely on my favorite early season tactic, the “Solar Heated” musky. While this tactic is somewhat titled in a tongue and cheek manner, it’s a very accurate description.

What makes early season musky fishing challenging are the cold water temperatures. These early season muskies are already sluggish from the rigors of spawning and even nutrient depleted from not feeding during the spawn. This is the time of season you will see these big girls start working on recovering the energy they spent spawning.

Finding “Solar Heated” muskies simply means looking for any shallow water territories adjacent to where these fish just finished spawning. What’s best about these shallow water areas is finding shallow water areas that have either sand, rock, or rubble bottom. When you can find a nice hard bottom in 5 feet of water or less, you will have located the perfect

spot for “Solar Heated” Muskies.

These shallow hard bottom areas are great locations during the peak sun light times of the day, which is generally from 10:00 am until 2:00 pm. This is the time of day the sun will be directly overhead, and as the sun shines onto those shallow hard bottom surfaces, the water temperatures will warm as much as 4 degrees during that time of the day. This is what we’re talking about in regard to “Solar Heated” Muskies. That little window of warmer water temperatures is the difference between inactive and active muskies. This is the time of day you find the post-spawn muskies moving into that little area of warmer water to either feed on some available forage or to at least digest the last meal. Either way you will have active muskies available during the time of the day most people would ordinarily not consider prime time.

Over the last 18 years I have found that “Solar Heated” time of day to be the early season prime time for active muskies! Give this approach a try this season, and I’m sure you’ll put a few more early season muskies in the boat! Good luck, tight lines, and I’ll see you on the water! 

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 or at 262.443.9993.



Mike Vendardi holding a “Solar Heated” musky CPR’d on a shallow sand flat.

SCHWEIK, from page 3


move off to another area. The fish don’t know I’m there. You would not believe the size of some of the fish that I have seen in less than a foot of water.

Now, to catch these shallow water muskies was another lesson. I started running very subtle baits like small spinners or small plastics and even some smaller topwater walk-the-dog style baits. I found that noisy baits or

baits that make a loud splash when hitting the shallow water spook the fish before even getting a chance to have them see it or chase after it. I even started tossing some of my lures right up on shore and would drag them into the water in an attempt to avoid spooking the fish when it would hit the water. This was the ticket.

Here we are several years and

dozens of post-spawn muskies later, and my method has proven itself time after time. It never ceases to amaze me when a 30-pound plus musky blows up in less than a foot of water. They have no deep water to retreat to so they will be airborne almost half the time, and the aerial aerobics and charging runs are second to none. So get ready. Scout out your backwater areas and hang onto

your rod, because if you give this post-spawn tactic a try and you hook into one of these beasts, you will be in for one of the most exciting battles of your life. 

Contact Phil Schweik at Hooksetters Guide Service by e-mailing him at pschweik@dwave.net or through his website at hooksetters.biz.

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Walleyes And The Coontail

A fish's sanctuary

Walleyes and the submergent aquatic plant "coontail" have a special relationship, and that relationship is a key to locating walleyes during this time of the year. Walleyes use various types of aquatic vegetation in which to ambush prey or simply use for



cover to rest and hide, and coontail is one of their favorites. Coontail is also

very common in bodies of water in this region of the country, so finding a coontail bed near you should not be hard. Even slack areas of a river can contain the free-floating aquatic plant. Without roots, it attaches itself to softer substrates like sand, muck, and clay over the harder surfaces of rock and gravel. Ceratophyllum demersum will form turions (specialized overwintering buds) that sink to the

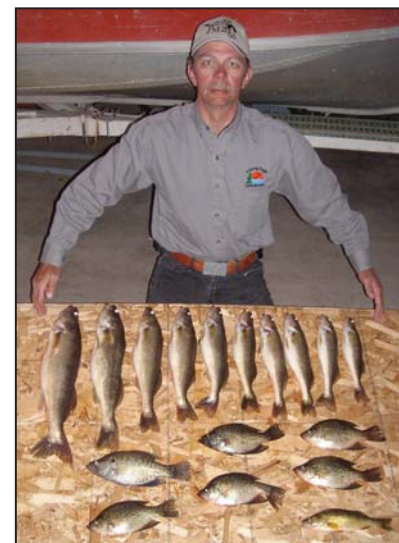
bottom of the water and stay there during the winter, forming new plants in spring. Those new coontail shoots are the key to finding walleyes during the first part of the season.

It is no coincidence that post-spawn walleyes seek coontail beds during this time. The 2 – 6 inch new plants give the walleye perfect cover to nestle in and recuperate from the spawn. The underwater plant is also a favorite of minnows and fish from last season's hatch, providing an easy meal for the walleye. The cooler water temperatures should direct your search of coontail beds that are in 4 to 8 feet of water. Bays off the main body of water are the best since they provide the preferred water temperatures of the post-spawn walleyes and their prey. The finest fishing days seem to be when the wind is blowing into the bay and it is overcast.

There are a few different methods you can use into entice the post-spawn walleyes of the coontail beds to bite.

Walleyes are usually not schooled up at this time of rest and recuperation, so they are scattered about in the short vegetation. One way is to drift around the bed and cast smaller crankbaits that ride just above the tips of the weeds. Slow trolling or drifting crawler harnesses over the weed tops is another way to cover water and present your bait for the taking. A Mack's Lure Wally Pop is a perfect nightcrawler harness in this situation since it employs a float to help keep it above the weeds. Also, the Smile Blade spins better at the slower speeds needed for the cooler water temperatures.

Last but not least is one of my favorite presentations at this time. Slow drifting across the weed beds and long lining light jigs away from the boat can be deadly. A light jig tipped with a minnow, leach, or half of a crawler is a smaller offering that can seduce the lethargic post-spawn walleye into biting. I like to use a 1/16-ounce jig and light line to fall for about 15-20 yards behind



The short vegetation of the newly growing coontail is a favorite of the post-spawn walleye.

the boat. The idea is to let out line until your jig reaches the bottom, then twitch it up and let it fall down. Then when the line slack from the jig motion tightens up as you drift, twitch it back up again before it rests in the weeds. Drifting speed is crucial to having the jig fall and reach the bottom at this distance behind the boat. So if the wind is stronger, throw

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JJ REICH

The Reich Stuff

A Wisconsin Winner: Dave Constantine

Calling All Turkeys.

OnWisconsinOutdoors.com/UplandGame Hunting



In the world of turkey call making, Wisconsin's most famous resident is definitely Dave Constantine, of Durand. For the better part of 40 years, Constantine has been perfecting his talents as a wildlife artist and master call maker.


Constantine's reputation stretches far beyond the reaches of the Chippewa Valley region. In fact, this Wisconsin carver has whittled his way to more than 125 National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf) Grand National Call-Making Championship awards.

This past February, Constantine won NWTf's 2012 Grand National Champion Call Maker of the

Year, and he became a 5-time Earl Mickel Award recipient, during the 2012 NWTf Grand National Custom Call Competition in Nashville, Tennessee. This year's contest results also marks his 8th NWTf Grand National "Best in Show" award! Constantine won this award in 2001, 2005, 2006 and 2007, 2010, 2011 and 2012.

NWTf's Grand National Call Making Contest awards call makers for their achievements, but it's also one of NWTf's best fund raisers. In 2007, Dave entered a presentation call that sold at auction for \$4,750, and in 2009, he entered a carved box call that sold for \$4,850. These sales raise money which ultimately fund NWTf's conservation efforts, and we at OWO applaud him for that!

According to NWTf records, Constantine's contributions (including donations and gifts submitted to NWTf contests, banquets and other fund-raising efforts), have reached the \$120,000 Centurian NWTf Life Membership Level. That's quite an individual accomplishment!

Although majority of Constantine's award-winning calls are crafted as collectable/display pieces only, he is an accomplished hunting-call maker as well. Constantine offers a wide variety of field-grade custom calls. See more at dconstantine.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.



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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. [Click on Waukesha County.](#)

Located in the heart of Wisconsin's "Big Woods", Eagle Point Cabin on Island Lake is the perfect location for a **relaxing vacation.** [Click on Iron County.](#)

Ashland, Lake Superior's Hometown, is the **Historic Mural Capital of Wisconsin.** Check out these events: Chequamegon Bay Birding & Nature Festival, Ashland, May 17-19; House-to-House Garage Sale, Ashland, May 19; Apostle Islands Inline Marathon/ALMT Half Marathon on Madeline Island, June 16; Superior Vistas Bike Tour at Thompson's West End Park, Washburn, June 23. [Click on Ashland County.](#)

Minocqua—find out why *Field & Stream* named us the **#5 fishing town in the U.S.** January 17, 2008 *Field & Stream* ... "Minocqua is the kind of place where you fish all day and sit on the porch at night to watch the sun set over the lake." Yeah, that's life our way. [Click on Oneida County.](#)

School is almost out; summer is around the corner. Walleyes are hitting

on the Bay and Brown & Rainbow Trout are still close to shorelines. Wolf Packs' boats will be hitting hot action off Sheboygan's scenic shores, so **grab the kids and start the summer with a memory.** [Click on Sheboygan County.](#)

Everything you need is at Rice Lake! Connect with hundreds of miles of **ATV & UTV** trails. **Fish, canoe, bike, golf and dine.** When the day is done, relax in one of our 7 excellent hotels. Download our sample travel itinerary. [Click on Barron 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, swimming beach, boat launch, and fishing. Petenwell Park also offers ATV camping with immediate trail access. [Click on Adams County.](#)

Things start heating up in May in Port Washington. **Our charter fleet is already reeling 'em in; the boat launch is humming.** Bicyclists are buzzing along the Interurban Trail. Festivals and farmers markets are right around the corner. Download our free mobile app! [Click on Ozaukee County.](#)

Spring arrived early in Price County! Pack up the family and visit now to have a FUN time fishing, paddling or ATV/UTV riding. Area lakes are full of **hungry Walleye, the Flambeau River water levels are perfect for canoeing & kayaking** and motorized recreational trails open in April and May. Visit now to beat the summer crowds. [Click on Price County.](#)

Dust off your gear and get outside! In Richland County you can **hike, bike, canoe, hunt, fish,** watch Motorsports Mayhem, visit a winery, participate in the Civil War Reenactment, listen to music at Star Spangled Celebration, bike GRABAAWR and more. [Click on Richland County.](#)

Vintage snowmobile and antique car enthusiasts will want to visit Markesan on May 13 for the **Sno-Drifters' annual show** in Soldiers and Sailors Park along Little Green Lake. Then join the fun and satisfy your cravings at June Dairy Days June 8-10 at Hein Park. [Click on Green Lake County.](#)

Washburn County is home to 30+ miles of horse trails, 50+ miles of **hiking trails, 100+ miles of ATV trails, three**

scenic rivers, and over 950 lakes, making it the perfect destination for your Northwood's getaway. July 5-7th this year, be sure to check out the 59th Annual Spooner Rodeo, a professional rodeo right here in Northwest Wisconsin. [Click on Washburn County.](#)

Do you dream of **owning** your own slice of rural Wisconsin? **Badgerland Financial** provides **country living loans** to make those dreams possible. Contact Badgerland Financial at 800.356.2197. [Click on Iowa County.](#)

Memorial Weekend, May 24 - 28 for the **Annual Memorial Weekend ATV Rally** in Iron County. Poker Run fun and 200 miles of the best trails in Wisconsin. Events all weekend long for your family and friends with the ATV Parade, food/drink specials & the famous Mud Pit. [Click on Iron County.](#)

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A quick and early Spring arrival should put fishing in Polk County into high gear! Panfish can be found in the new green, shallow weeds. The bass can be found along those same weed edges. Bicycle season is here and we're ready with two Wisconsin State Bicycle Trails! Come ride the Gandy Dancer Trail or the Stower 7-Lakes Trail. **Click on Polk County.**

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one of the two "floats" below lock & dam 8 or 9. The Grandview Motel is at the center of it all, plus we have a view overlooking the river that is second to none! **Click on Crawford County.**

Make Hurley your ATV & UTV Hub. **Enjoy riding deep into the vast wilderness surrounding our area.** Challenging trails offer you access to parts of the county nobody else ever sees. Discover yourself at an overlook, Waterfall, historic sites and much more. **Click on Iron County.**

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Explore the **Waterfall Capital of Wisconsin in Marinette County.** With 14 waterfalls, mainly located within our county parks system, you can easily spend two or three days exploring the natural, scenic beauty that Mother Nature has provided. **Click on Marinette County.**

The Sparta Area Chamber is hosting a day of celebration on May 1 for the **opening of the bike trails.** Join us for a ride from Norwalk to the Sparta Depot. A shuttle service will pick up riders at 111 Milwaukee St. at 9:00 a.m. A ribbon cutting will be followed by refreshments. **Click on Monroe County.**

Fun time in Ferryville on the Mississippi River. Use the **Ferryville Boat Launch (Pool 9) to access the best fishing on the river.** Trout fishing on Rush Creek, Sugar Creek, Copper Creek is fantastic. Remember Ferryville when you are in the Bass Fishing Contest in La Crosse. **Click on Crawford County.**

The months of May and June offer some of the finest fishing in Walworth County. **Both smallmouth bass and largemouth bass** are spawning and are readily available to be caught. Delavan Lake has a good walleye bite throughout the month of June off the weed line. **For some of the best fishing of the year,** please call Dave Duwe of Dave Duwe's Guide Service at 608.883.2050. **Click on Walworth County.**

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

- Richland County

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
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BLACK RIVER FALLS, HATFIELD, NEILLSVILLE S O U T H W E S T W I S C O N S I N



Two acre wooded lots on dead end road, unzoned, with driveway in place. Properties are on ATV route and one half mile to county land. Starting at \$16,000.



Power company selling land on and around the Black River & Lake Arbutus. Prices for 2.5+/- acres start at \$27,600. Pictured is 20.79 acres off Hwy 95 listed at \$31,200.



7.95 acre wooded parcel on the end of a private road that borders county land. Property has a small clearing and driveway already put in for immediate use. Woods consists mainly of mature oak, maple and aspen with a small funnel of pine and lowland in the middle. Located on authorized atv/snowmobile route with direct access to the trail systems. Only \$39,500.



Be neighbors with deer, turkey, & pheasants in this cozy cabin on 40 acres. Property is split between woods and field. Cabin has loft, living room, kitchen, full bath, deck, well, septic & wood burning fireplace for year round enjoyment. Property is close to ATV trails and public land. \$159,900.



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JOEL KUNZ

On Wisconsin's Rivers

Wisconsin's World Class Wonder

Online Fly Fishing Q&A with *Jerry Kiesow*
Check it out at OnWisconsinOutdoors.com/FlyFishing

The Winnebago system is surely one of Wisconsin's World Class fisheries. From Fond du Lac to De Pere, Oshkosh to Shawano, there exists a plethora of fishing opportunities akin to every style of fishing, and this is a great time of year to be there. First and foremost, it's white bass time, but there is so much more than the "silver onslaught."

Do you like the solitude of a canoe or kayak? Then the upper reaches of the lower Wolf provide plenty of that along with good fishing for smallmouth bass, catfish and walleye. The Embarrass River provides another paddling opportunity with some very good fishing and the back to nature feel you may be looking for. There is an outfitter in Shiocton that provides rentals along with drop in and take out service for you and your group. You can position your vehicles at your end point or leave them in Shiocton or anywhere in the area and use the service for drop off and pick up. Maps are available of both the Embarrass and Wolf rivers from New London north to Highway 156 and include a mileage log and all available access points.

A spinner bait or a jig tipped with a leech or plastic of some type will catch fish. Crankbaits work also, but the area is very snaggy, which is why I prefer a jig rigged weedless style.

If something with a motor is more your style, the Wolf provides plenty of small boat fishing with World Class

potential. From Leeman through Shiocton and Stephenville to New London, the Wolf has plenty. If you have a small jon boat or V-hull with a 15 HP motor or less, you're in good shape. In some places, smaller is better.

Walleye can be caught year round as can smallmouth bass, catfish, northern pike and even muskie. That's right.

There are muskie in the Winnebago system.

The lower lakes of the Wolf River system, Poygan, Winneconne and Butte des Morts, have produced some 50-plus-inch monsters in the last few years. Those were fish reintroduced to the system numerous years ago and are now protected by a one fish over 50-inch bag limit. Some of those fish have chosen to use the river, inhabiting the backwaters, sloughs and tributaries that feed the system. This is due to the constant availability of food with lesser competition from other big fish in the lower lakes. Others have even ventured to the wooded upper river for the same reason, having moved from areas with bigger concentrations to find their own home area. There is plenty of deep water, transitions and fish holding structure to ply. Once again, a jig and a leech is what I go to this time of year when searching for walleye, my favorite target. The leeches are more durable than a night crawler, and anything that is hungry in the water column will eat it.


Once to New London, the river

opens up to a higher horsepower potential. Although a cabin cruiser or houseboat is rare due to the shallow areas above Partridge Crop Lake, bass boats, pontoon boats and fishing boats of all sizes are common. White bass usually make it to the New London pool in good numbers and stay until water temperatures reach the middle 60s, which signals their post-spawn return to the lower lakes. Walleye fishing is good in the area year round due to the influx of water from the Embarrass and Little Wolf Rivers, plus the availability of deep water. There are also numerous spring beds that provide additional fresh water to the system and weedy and wooded areas that offer habitat for the forage base needed to keep the game fish we seek in the river.

Our little part of the world is also considered one of the best river fisheries for smallmouth bass in the United States. This is according to my lifeonthewolf.com partner, outdoor writer John Faucher, a lifelong Wolf River angler and communicator. Not mandated but strongly recommended as a catch-and-release fishery, the area has all sorts of habitat that river smallies love, including rip-rap, sand, gravel and weeds. Add the fact that there is plenty of food and room to roam that includes the upper reaches of the lower Wolf, Embarrass, Little Wolf and Waupaca Rivers.

Channel catfish are another great target this time of year. Not only do

they provide a great fight and are plentiful in the system but carefully filleted to remove any "mud line" and socked overnight in fresh, clean water, they are a wonderful and tasty meal. Various old-time recipes call for the overnight soaking in buttermilk or water with salt or baking soda in it. No matter your choice, they are great eating. Northern pike fishing is also quite good in the area with World Class potential as fish over 40 inches are not uncommon. Although you might find one in the deep water areas of the river, they are more likely to be found in the many backwaters and sloughs or in Partridge Lake. Lake Poygan also has a good population of northern pike and can be targeted by casting visible weed beds or by trolling large baits on planer boards. This is typically a walleye fishing method that can be upsized to fishing for northern pike. Trollers out on Lake Poygan this time of year will also be catching white bass, crappie and even a few catfish along with the ever-present sheephead (freshwater drum).

All in all, from Winneconne north through New London and above, the Wolf River is a great place to be ... RIGHT NOW! 

For more information about the Wolf River system from Joel "Doc" Kunz, visit his website at www.docswaters.com or his video magazine at www.lifeonthewolf.com. You can also find both of those pages and his personal page on Facebook.

TOM CARPENTER

Badger Birds: Meadowlark



A flash of sunny yellow and a melodious, flute-like song ... must be a meadowlark! These cheerful birds brighten up open grasslands across Wisconsin. Lightly grazed pastures, CRP fields, hayfields, croplands, golf courses, open parks—and of course meadows—make prime meadowlark habitat. There's nothing quite like driving through the countryside with open windows on a fresh early summer day, filling the car with bubbly meadowlark song.

Listen for the fluty, whistling song


of a meadowlark. Eastern meadowlarks, such as we have in Wisconsin, offer a mellow see-you see-here song. Western meadowlarks, which occasionally make it into the state, sing a longer whee-chir-weedle-ee-ee-chee tune.

Look for meadowlarks perched atop fence posts, stiff stalks of grass, or barbed wire or other fences. Meadowlarks love to sing from elevated spots, where their song is better heard.

Appreciate meadowlarks for their pest control services. They hunt and eat grasshoppers, crickets, insect larvae and

grubs.

Distinguish between western and eastern meadowlarks as follows: Western meadowlarks have more yellow up through the cheeks and are lighter colored because of the more arid environment. Both subspecies sport a black V-shaped bib on the chest.

Did you know that meadowlarks are not true larks? Rather, meadowlarks belong to the blackbird family. 

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

MIKE YURK

Bassology

Early season bassin'

Early Fishin'. Late Fishin'.
More fishing at OnWisconsinOutdoors.com/FishingWisconsin

There is no other way to put it: Early season bass fishing is a crap shoot on any given day. The weather is as unpredictable as a roll of the dice, and luck at fishing can be just as uncertain.

For most of May and at least the early days of June, the weather is volatile. You can expect anything from snow to bright, warm weather. The weather is usually colder and nastier the farther north you live. The only thing that you can predict at the start of the season is that the weather will be unpredictable.

Opening Day can bring snow, a lot of rain or even a bit of sunshine. Depending on the year there have been times, especially in the northern counties of our state, when the ice has come off the lakes just a few days before the season opens on the first weekend in May. More often than not, both air and water temperatures are low. This generally means that fish will be sluggish.

The winds of May and early June will be strong. A lot of weather, mostly bad, will be blowing in and conditions can change rapidly during a day of fishing. Consequently, it will be tough to control a boat on the water while battling those winds.

All of these problems impact fishing. It can be tough to catch fish with these conditions, but it has been a long winter, and regardless of the weather conditions, you need to get out. The season has started.

But it isn't all bad. There are some great days of fishing in the early season, and I have had some great catches that time of the year regardless of the weather. I have picked up some very nice sized fish during some of the worst early season conditions. For three years I picked up what turned out to be the biggest bass of the entire year in the first week of the season. One of them was a 5 ½-pound bass that I took on a cold, rainy and windy day. Northern pike are also on



Becky Yurk caught this fish with a crankbait on the first weekend of Wisconsin's bass fishing season.

the prowl in the early season. One year while bass fishing, I surprisingly caught three northern pike that ranged from 10 to 14 pounds in the first few days of the new season.

Where do you find these fish in the early season?

I look for two spots. First, I look for shallow water bays. The shallow water will generally be warmer than deeper water. The bays are generally out of the wind so the water doesn't move as much and has been warmed by the sun.

If shallow water doesn't work, I look for deeper water, but I will be looking for that

water close to rocky banks. Again, the water close to the banks will be warmer since the rocks will hold the heat from the sun longer than other parts of the shoreline.

Warmer water is the key in the early season when the ice may have only been off the lakes for a couple of weeks by the time the season starts. A rule of thumb here is that fish will generally be found tighter to the bank in deeper water and farther off the bank in shallow water.

There are a number of different baits that work well in the early season. One of my favorites is crankbaits. I generally have two rods rigged with hard baits. One is set up with a shallow running bait such as the Shallow Shad Rap or the Original Floating Rapala. Storm also produces two other types of good early season shallow running baits. They are the Thin Fin and the Kickin' Minnow. What makes them unique is that there is nothing else like them on the market and they work well.

For deeper water in the early season, Shad Raps and Jointed Shad Raps by Rapala are very effective. I like to use a little larger sized bait since the fish will still be a bit sluggish in the early days of the season and are more likely to go for a big bait than expending the energy on smaller forage fish. I tend to go for natural colors, such as silver and gold and blue, as they mimic the forage minnows better.

When it comes to crankbaits, the speed of the retrieve can make a difference, especially in the early season. If you are not getting strikes, slow down the speed of your retrieve. Fish can be sluggish in the cold early season waters so they will hit better on slower baits rather than faster baits.

By their very nature, plastics are slow-moving baits. Two of my favorites for the early season are sinking worms and tube jigs. They are worked slower and therefore remain in the target area longer. They can be pitched right up against the bank where many early season bass will be holding tightly to the shoreline. As with crankbaits, my choice of colors for plastics generally runs to the natural side with browns, greens, smoke and black being my best producers.

Although the weather and water conditions can be stacked against you in the first weeks of the new fishing season, it is a good time to be out. Regardless if you get a lot of fish or not, some fish is better than no fish, and getting out fishing is a great relief after being cooped up all winter long. So get out on the water and make sure to bring along the rain gear. *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.



JOHN LUTHENS

Lazarus Lives

A special place for fishing

I sat in church on a bright May Sunday morning, piously paying attention to the sermon. Outside the church window a robin dived for worms in the growing springtime grass. The feathered harbinger of spring strutted about outside on the window ledge, consuming his breakfast with merry abandon, as I perched on the pew inside, feigning indifference to the bird's obvious attempt at distracting my soul from salvation.

I'm a trout fisherman by nature. I need to go to church more often and pay stricter attention than other types of fishermen. I also fancy myself a fly fisherman, but there I was being distracted by a simple robin and his worms. Flies are a holy grail of angling, but worms remind me of trout fishing. I don't blame the bird. I blame myself—for failing to kick the habit of dunking a worm when the fish won't hit my flies. It's also my fault for sitting next to the window in church while the May sun is shining and trout season looms.

The sermon centered on Lazarus, who, according to the Bible, was raised from the dead by God's Grace. I happened to know a trout place like that. It always comes back to life. Figuring that God had enough to worry about without being distracted by the comings and goings of a simple trout stream, and already being distracted myself, I shouldered the burden and spent the rest of the church service pondering it.

I'll call it the Lazarus River, in deference to that morning's sermon as well as from selfish concerns. For that is not the river's name. It is likely more a stream than a river anyway—the difference between the two being in the eye of the beholder. If it's known and fished by the masses, then it's a river. If few know it and you are one of the few crazy enough to fight through swamp and stinging nettle for a chance at a fish or two, then it's a stream. It's a spot you've made your own. That can be as satisfying as catching a brace of trout.

If you are a trout fisherman, you understand I simply can't outright name the spot. I will go as far as saying that it's a place of sweeping round bale hayfields in Bayfield County, where mist rises above marsh grass in the

morning and the stream waters are cooled nightly by the frigid expanse of Lake Superior's south shore, into which the Lazarus eventually flows.

I happened on the stream during one of my endless quests for hidden trout waters. I was poking along a dirt road, enjoying the sights and sounds of a south shore summer afternoon that was too hot and lazy for serious trout chasing. It was mid-summer and white clouds rolled off of Lake Superior, playing cat-and-mouse with the sunshine. The sun angled just right from beneath a cloud and parted a stand of cedar trees at the end of an ambling, overgrown track through the roadside weeds. The rough wooden walls of a tumbling old building were highlighted inside the grove.

There were no tell-tale signs giving warning to trespassers. There wasn't even a fire number sign. I parked along the roadside and stumbled through chest-high marsh grass to have a look at the ruins.

Beneath the cooler air of the cedar shade was a one-room abandoned shack. It perched over the bank of a dark flowing stream, and it sat so close to the water that it seemed a good summer rainstorm might wash the whole thing away down to Lake Superior. It was my first introduction to the lost fisherman's shack of the Lazarus River.

I've since started and ended many fishing journeys from the shack, contemplating who lived there so long ago and why they left, because the setting is stunningly beautiful. The floor of the place is heaved with time. There is no furniture, but heaped on the floor are stories of days gone by. Garbage, some would say. An archeologist might say different.

The shack stands without any sign of habitation for over a half-century; dead for all practical purposes. DNR regulations would never allow a place nowadays to be built this close to a trout stream—for a trout stream the Lazarus most certainly is.

I've never seen another fisherman there, although there are signs from time to time: a faded boot track or a forked stick fashioned from a willow and stuck in the mud beside a deep run. Maybe it is a place for night fishermen.



The lost fisherman's shack of the Lazarus.

Imagination sometimes leads me to believe there are ghosts of ancient fishermen rising from the shack, just like Lazarus, haunting life back over the cedar banks in an eternal search for steelhead trout spawning up the river in the spring. Trash, such as empty worm containers or discarded cans, is never left behind. Ghosts or night fishermen, they are wise in the conservation of such wild places.

Downstream from the shack grow the high ferns of summer, bending over and brushing your face with green. The ferns hang over undercut banks that the water cuts on its path to Lake Superior. Spider webs of the thickest order hold court across the ferns, and brown trout hide beneath. They can be caught on even the brightest of days beneath the covering shade.

Upstream the water becomes faster, narrower, and more challenging. I notched a victory one June day, netting a 20-inch brown from beneath a fallen log.

Such tight fishing also has its downfalls.

I was defeated one spring by a steelhead, feisty and fresh from the lake, there in the logs and brush of the Lazarus. I had no chance of landing the fish on the light tackle I was using. It might have gone close to 5 pounds. It's the biggest steelhead I've ever hooked. I considered myself lucky not to have broken my fly rod, which nearly doubled in half before the fish snapped the leader and thrashed to freedom.

The stream forks far above the shack and both branches flow small and fast, becoming native brook trout water. No road crosses either branch for as far

as the eye can follow the twisting blue contour lines of the forks on a map. Dark spotted native beauties have come out of that water, and it is best fished early in the morning, before the sun has crept above the high peaks of the copper range hills that spawn the river.

I've seen countless deer dancing on the gravel beds of the Lazarus. One morning I stood witness to a black bear crashing through the brush and plopping mid-stream ten yards from where I was fishing. I don't know who was more nervous, me or the bear. I whistled a warning to say I was intruding on his private fishing hole. The bear crashed back into the woods with an abandon that told me he was plenty nervous too.

Places like that are what trout fishing is meant to be. If you find one, you can keep it hidden, or share it if you like. It will always come back to life whenever you need it. Even in church.

I've yet to penetrate the source of my stream. The lost shack keeps pulling my attention, like a bird outside a church window. And while the shack still stood guard over the Lazarus last year, it will be gone one day. But its spirit will forever be resurrected. Maybe then I'll finally find my way to the headwaters. *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.

S. WILKERSON

Surplus Firearms

Infamous: the Tec-9 legacy

Few firearms ever obtain infamous status. Iconic? Yes. Infamy? No. The Colt Single Action Army and M1 Garand are iconic because of their roles in American history. The Colt will always be known for its role in the Winning of the West, while the Garand is associated with the liberation of Europe. Conversely, the Luger is infamous as a symbol of German military might and Nazi atrocities much like the AK 47 is now viewed as a tool of terrorism in the eyes of many.

All of the above-mentioned firearms had or have a real role in history. It is rare for a firearm to become famous, or infamous, based on appearances alone. One such firearm is the Intratec TEC-9 "assault pistol." Now generally forgotten, the TEC-9 was once a poster child of the anti-gun crowd. Constructed of inexpensive polymer plastic and sheet metal, the TEC-9 was a cheap, sinister-looking pistol that fired "high powered" 9 mm bullets from a high capacity magazine. Made from about 1980 to

1994, early versions of the gun were designed to fire from an open bolt and were, supposedly, easy to convert to fully automatic machine pistols. These guns are worth two to three times more than their closed bolt successors.

Whether a new or old model, all TEC-9s shared the same appearance, attributes, and, perhaps, faults. No doubt, the TEC-9 is a sinister-looking gun, which undeniably gained it attention among the anti-gunners. The availability of magazines that held as many as 70 rounds didn't make it many friends among the anti-gunners, never mind the fact that, when so-equipped, it became so heavy and cumbersome as to relegate it practically unshootable. The barrel shroud and accessory front pistol grip were enough to give an anti-gunner a conniption fit.

Practical or not, TEC-9s with super high capacity magazines and a front pistol grip did look cool in the movies and on TV, especially when "fired" in

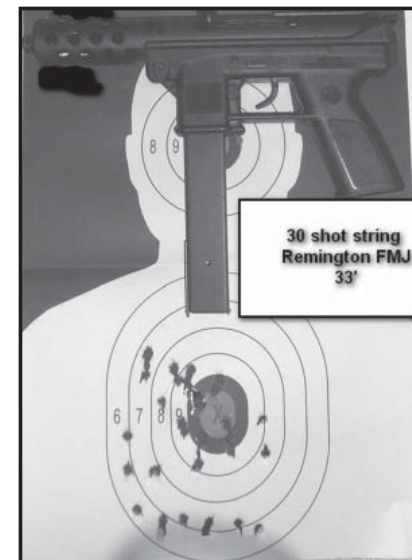
full-auto mode. Production of the gun coincided with the Florida cocaine wars of the 1980s and early 90s. Fully automatic TEC-9s, which were virtually impossible for anyone not connected with the entertainment industry to buy, were a staple of TV shows, such as "Miami Vice," and a slew of bad movies that tried to replicate the success of "Scarface."

Unfortunately for the makers of the TEC-9, much of the viewing audience, with the aid of the news media, was under the impression that fully-automatic TEC-9s were commonly available to the general public. When anti-assault weapon legislation was being crafted in the 1980s, it was not unheard of for unscrupulous broadcast news reporters to show guns they thought should be banned firing in full auto. Of course, what they didn't tell their audience was that such guns were extremely rare and required a special license to own.

Never letting the facts get in the way of a good story was also the impetus of the Bush 1 and Clinton assault weapon bans. Somehow, enough federal legislators decided that flash suppressors, bayonets, high capacity magazines and pistol grips were the cause of murder and mayhem. In other words, if it looked like a machine gun, it should be banned. The TEC-9 looked so much like a machine gun and was so often portrayed as one in the movies and on TV that it was singled out for special mention on the list of guns featured on the 1994 Assault Weapon Ban.

This no doubt added to the gun's panache, but the fact is, among many gun enthusiasts, the TEC-9 didn't enjoy a very good reputation. The gun was no paragon of Old World craftsmanship, national match accuracy, or practicality. Constructed of polymer plastic and sheet metal, the TEC-9 had crude sights and didn't exactly ooze quality. Incredibly, some could not grasp the inherent and obvious coolness of a pistol with a barrel shroud and a 30-round magazine.

Worse, the TEC-9 had a reputation for jamming, which, in large part, may have been because many owners didn't read the manual. As the manual makes abundantly clear, TEC-9s must be properly lubricated and fed only full



TEC-9 works flawlessly with the correct ammunition. Photo by Toothpick Jim.

**"No doubt, the
TEC-9 is a
sinister-looking gun,
which undeniably
gained it attention
among the
anti-gunners."**

metal jacket bullets to function correctly. In fact, the manual was very specific as to what brand of ammunition worked and what didn't. Load it with hollowpoints or let it run dry and it will fail to load, eject and/or extract. In addition, many of the aftermarket, super high capacity magazines didn't work.

Fellow gun nut Toothpick Jim recently purchased a TEC-9 on a whim. Flush with cash from some eBay sales, TJ did what any right-thinking person would do under similar circumstances. He looked for interesting guns to buy for fun and profit. When he came across a TEC-9 for sale at a reasonable price, memories of watching "Miami Vice" during his long-ago youth overcame any doubts and he plowed ahead with the purchase and hoped for the best.

He was richly awarded. Despite all appearances and hefty 50 ounce weight (unloaded!), the gun handled and balanced well. The trigger was smooth

continued on page 24



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LEE GATZKE

NextBuk Outdoors

Regenerative food plotting

Springtime beckons us to get outside and soak up the outdoor experience. After being cooped up inside for months, avoiding Old Man Winter, it's time to get some fresh air and feel the warm sun breathe enthusiasm back into our core.

Part of my springtime outdoor ritual involves getting prepared to plant food plots to attract and hold deer on the private ground I'm able to hunt. The popularity of planting food plots among the hunting community is at an all time high, and growing.

For years I've been planting annuals in my food plots that have proven effective at attracting deer. My plan involves offering a different type of crop than the surrounding neighbors and farmers are growing. Having a unique crop that provides nutritional food that the deer aren't getting nearby keeps them on my hunting property or visiting it frequently.

In the Midwest, corn, soybeans, and hay are staples that farmers plant in abundance, making those crops widely available to the deer I hunt. If I am to be successful attracting and holding deer, I'm not going to plant a couple acres of corn in my food plot when the neighboring farms are planting hundreds of acres. There is no way I can compete on that scale, so I plant other varieties than the "big three (corn, soybeans, hay)" to interest the deer.

In the Midwest, agriculture provides deer with abundant sources of corn, soybeans, and hay.

This year I plan to experiment with a different type of food than I've ever tried. I'm always open to testing diverse varieties of plants in my food plots in an attempt to learn what the deer prefer. The desirability of one type of plant over another varies locally, depending on what nutrients derived from those plants the deer need to give them a well-rounded diet. Deer may be deficient in calcium in one location due to a lack of plants containing the mineral, where a half mile away deer have all the calcium they need from plants that are available from that specific spot. Providing a plant rich in calcium, in a location where it is lacking in the local plant varieties, will draw deer to your food plot.

Finding out what the deer in your specific location are lacking from the local plants is a matter of experimenting. For example, chickory may be ignored by deer on my property when it is ravaged by other deer on another property just two miles away. I can't go by what I know works for someone two miles away; I need to find out what deer on my property require. Offer a variety of plants in your food plots and let the deer choose what they want. Having a variety of plants available also shows you what deer

prefer seasonally, as plants in different stages of their growth cycle will come in and out of favor with them. To provide the deer with a smorgasbord of options, my plan is to plant a wide variety of native plants, something along the line of what existed before the prairies were plowed under by the first settlers. Deer thrived on native plants from the beginning.


Native plants offer both variety and seasonal choices to deer, along with being very drought resistant and eco-friendly. Planting a wide variety of natives in my food plot will continue to draw deer to this plot all through the growing season. Once established, this plot of native plants will regenerate itself year after year, making it an economical alternative to the more conventional food plots containing non-native plants that require replanting each year.

Local county extension offices have information on what natives grow best in your region and can offer advice on the best practices for planting and maintaining them. Native plants also act to build and retain soil, creating a better base for future plant growth. Natives are drought resistant and do not require herbicides or pesticides to thrive, unlike the non-native varieties so common in most food plots today. Semi-annual burns are likely the only maintenance necessary once your native plants have been established, and the



Newborn fawn in native grasses.

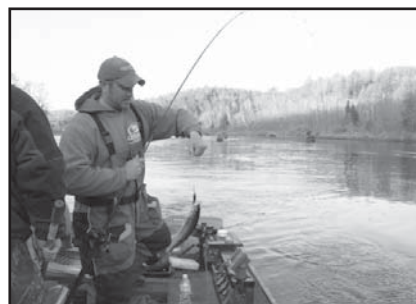
plots should re-establish themselves and be productive for many years. Deer also tend to use established native plantings to give birth to their fawns.

I believe the time for establishing food plots with native plants is now, so I'll be experimenting with it this spring. 

Lee Gatzke is a member of NextBuk Outdoors, creators of tactical deer hunting videos. Gatzke can be reached at www.nextbukoutdoors.com.

ELLIS, from page 5

fish are great-eating. This great walleye fishing will last through June, but the walleye fishing will remain good with resident fish, and the smallmouth and musky fishing is excellent. You can continue to catch big walleyes trolling on Lake Superior like you do on Green Bay. They fish the flats on the south shore of Lake Superior. If you're good



at catching walleyes on Green Bay, you'll be good at catching them here."


For most of the three hours we fished the river, we had experienced almost unending walleye action, had the 10-minute limit tucked away, and our sights focused on breakfast and Douglas County inland lake smallmouth bass fishing. We would take with us memories of the St. Louis both as a fishery and as a beautiful place to relax and fish. But, Sellers said, inland lakes provide fishing for giant smallmouth and muskies. In 2009, Sellers caught and released a 30-pound hybrid fishing with Brzezinski and Seller's sister, Lynn, caught a 30-pound hybrid fishing from Seller's boat inland.

"The smallmouth bass, walleye

and northern pike fishing all summer long is great," Brzezinski said. "On the St. Louis, right now we need weeds to start growing downstream. The shiners will use the warm water weeds and the gamefish follow. This is a migration of walleyes and shiners. The fish are so nomadic; they're used to being on the big lake."

"You can catch these walleyes any way you want right now," he said. "Shore fishing, boat fishing, trolling, jigging, casting. There's a two-fish limit with a 15-inch minimum. We wish they'd put a slot restriction on to protect the fishery even more. They're going to catch fish out here and a lot bigger on average than in other places."

"It's common to catch fish from 24

inches to 26 inches, and you can have 50-fish days. It's in the top three walleye fisheries in Wisconsin for trophy fish, but if you want to look at catching number of fish and big walleyes, hands down it's second to none." 

This Ellis column first appeared June 13, 2011.

Contact Pete Brzezinski and Northland Muskie Adventures Guide Service at 715.574.1813 or through northlandmuskieadventures.com. For inland multi-species fishing, contact Ted Sellers and Ted's Northwoods Guide Service at 218.590.1104.

Dick Ellis is publisher of On Wisconsin Outdoors. Read Dick's blog on the website at OnWisconsinOutdoors.com.

SUZETTE CURTIS

Recipes By Suzette

Fresh Fish Of All Kinds

What a wonderful time of year! We are so blessed to have access to all of the waterways in our beautiful state of Wisconsin, and there is nothing as delicious as fresh fish of all kinds. With the health experts suggesting that we add more fish to our diets, it shouldn't be a problem to comply, especially when the recipes are so appetizing! *WO*

Pecan Crusted Walleye

- 2 lbs Walleye fillets
- 1 egg
- 2 T. milk
- ½ cup finely chopped pecans
- ¼ cup flour
- salt and pepper to taste

Rinse fish and pat dry; set aside. Mix egg and milk in shallow bowl and combine pecans, flour, salt and pepper in separate shallow bowl. Spray large pan with cooking spray and heat to medium high.

Dredge fish first in egg mixture and then in pecan mixture to coat completely. Place directly into hot pan. Heat 5 to 7 minutes on each side. May serve with a side of melted butter for dipping.

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



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Salmon with Asian Sauce

- 1 (1 ½ - 2 lb) Salmon fillet with skin
- 4 T. butter
- 2 T. brown sugar
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 T. lemon juice
- 4 tsp. soy sauce
- 1 tsp. black pepper

Prepare grill for salmon. Rinse salmon, pat dry, and set aside.

Mix remaining ingredients in medium saucepan. Cook over low heat, stirring occasionally, until sugar is dissolved.

Grill salmon, flesh side down first; turn and baste with sauce. Cook until desired doneness. Serve with remaining sauce.

Whitefish with Vinaigrette

- 4 Whitefish fillets
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 tsp. sea salt
- ¼ cup lemon juice
- ½ tsp. Dijon mustard
- 1 shallot, minced
- 2 T. chopped fresh parsley
- 2 T. chopped fresh basil
- ½ cup olive oil

Rinse fish and pat dry; place on baking sheet prepared with cooking spray. Broil fish over high heat until opaque. Meanwhile, mash garlic with sea salt in bottom of small bowl. Add remaining ingredients except olive oil; mix well. Gradually whisk olive oil into the vinaigrette mixture.



WILKERSON, from page 22

and the pull not too heavy. The 32-round factory-supplied magazine worked perfectly and some judicious filing got the aftermarket 20-rounders to function. Better yet, stuffed with inexpensive, bottom shelf full metal jacket bullets, the gun flawlessly fired 100 rounds in rapid succession fairly accurately (see accompanying pictures). Maybe not a torture test but much better results than I have experienced with some far more expensive guns.

At one time, TEC-9s were very cheap and not especially popular. Prices are creeping up, and, based on what TJ has learned on some gun forums, its reputation for unreliability is undeserved, provided the gun is maintained and loaded with the ammunition it was made to shoot.

Even if you never fired a round through it, owning a gun that made it on to a government's most hated list is reason enough to buy one. *WO*

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

ENGBERG, from page 9

hair jigs work well in the river in the spring. The river's current gives added life to these baits without working your baits too aggressively. It also adds action to your bait. The water will still be cold, so work your jigs, rigs, and crankbaits very slowly because fish won't chase bait very far this time of the year. Casting, twitching, and slowly retrieving crankbaits, like the Rapala Husky Jerkbait or Mann's Minus 1 crankbait in black/white, blue/white, and chartreuse, work well in water less than 10 feet deep in the spring. Cast parallel to shore instead of straight out. Try fishing locations that are a mile or two below the dams at Wisconsin Dells and Prairie Du Sac, since the walleyes will be dropping back downriver for the summer.

All of the lakes in the Madison Chain are good choices for early season panfish. Fish the locations that I've recommended and don't be afraid to contact me for suggestions and tips in this early fishing season. Have fun, be safe, and take your kids with you for this early season bonanza. If you don't have kids, then borrow your neighbor's or take a senior fishing! *WO*

Gary Engberg can be reached at www.garyengbergoutdoors.com.

DAVE DUWE

The Jig Worm

Not just for finesse fishing

Over the last few years jig worm fishing has become quite popular. Very versatile, a jig worm can be used in deep weedlines, skipped under docks, and, of course, finesse fished around shallow cover. A jig worm is simply a lead head jig with a piece of plastic on it. With the increased popularity of the jig worm, manufacturers have created a jig with a larger hook, usually a 1/0 or 2/0 hook. This larger hook aids in better hook ups. The real beauty of the jig worm is that it effective when fish are spooky in shallow waters or during cold front conditions when nothing else seems to work.

For fishing a jig worm, my favorite setup is a spinning combo. I like a 6'6" or 7' medium action rod with a matched spinning reel, which can handle 200 yards or so of 8 – 10-pound test monofilament. Limp mono seems to be the least problematic, such



Mighty jig with a Yum Houdini worm.

as Berkley XL or Silver Thread. Jig worm fishing is a good application for fluorocarbon, but I'm old school and still use monofilament. In clear water conditions I use clear line. When there's a little color in the water, I use colored line. The longer rod allows you better control of a battling bass.

The jigs I prefer are the All-Terrain Mighty worm jig, Arkie's U-Bolt jig or a plain round lead head jig. The two basic colors I use are black or brown, in sizes 3/32, 1/16 or 1/8 ounce. The smaller size jig with a 4-inch worm gives the rig a more natural appearance. When the jig is



Clients of Dave Duwe with a largemouth bass caught on a jig worm.

on bottom with the worm upright, it resembles a small bait fish. My tackle box has only two kinds of worms: the YUM 4-inch Houdini worm and a Berkley finesse worm. Both of these worms are thin and straight. Color choices are black, purple or green pumpkin. When rigging the worm or the jig head, the only rule is to keep the hook straight into the worm. If the hook isn't straight, the rig will spin, creating some line twist.

Now that we have the basics down for getting the rig onto our pole, we need to decide when to use it. The answer is simple: anytime.

Usually the first time of the year I fish them is when the largemouth are post spawn. Fish are cruising in the shallows around structure and the inside weedline. These fish are here to feed. Long casts are necessary when fishing shallow fish in clear water as they can spook easily, so keeping your distance is important. Make sure you keep your line tight and retrieve with short hops and shakes mixed with some dragging. Remember to hold on as the strike can be aggressive. Do some experimenting with the retrieve to see what the fish are in the mood for since it can change from day to day.

As spring winds into summer, largemouth bass move to the deep weedlines on the outside edges. When fishing the deep weedline, the key locations are the points and inside turns. Scattered rocks underneath coon tail or cabbage weeds seem to be the easiest and the best to fish.

Eurasian milfoil is too soft to effectively fish the jig. Soft weeds will stick to your jig head and are not easily snapped off. When fishing deep weeds, it's more of a swimming action than bouncing off the bottom. Using light jigs allows you to fish the lure up in the water column slightly. When the rig gets hooked up on a weed, you want to lightly shake it free. Normally, this is when the strike will occur. I try using the lightest jig I can get away with. It is almost always a 1/16-ounce or 1/8-ounce jig. If windy, it might go up to a ¼ ounce. It is a sensory thing with the weeds and the fall. Use the size you need to feel the fall of the jig without much line bow.

The last method of jig worm fishing I enjoy is around the docks since you can easily skip under them. When you get bit, you need to horse the fish out, clearing the structure. When fishing docks, I always have the best success when it is sunny. Bass are hiding in the shade to ambush their prey. One tip I recommend is if the worm is slipping down the jig head, apply a little Super Glue to adhere the worm to the jig head.

The jig worm is one of the most versatile fishing methods for bass. Though small in stature, it can catch bass, large or small. Try one soon and see your success. *WD*

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



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OWO STAFF

Product 6-Pack

Great gear for the woods, fields and waterways

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

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bowtecharchery.com

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to the next level, Spot Hogg is an excellent choice. Additional add-ons include a light, magnification lens and an innovative range-finding bracket!" —J.J.R.

spot-hogg.com

BERKLEY NANOFIL UNI-FILAMENT

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"Berkley's NanoFil is designed to have a lightweight, thin, smooth texture which allows you to effortlessly cast farther with

better precision, yet it also allows you to feel even the softest bites. Well, there's only one fun way to find out if this new line is worth it...so I suggest you pick some up and see for yourself." —D.E.

berkley-fishing.com

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"These new, shallower-running lures produce a great swilling action and come in classic Wally Diver colors like White/Red Head, Chrome/Blue, Fluorescent Red/Black, and Gold/Black as well as new colors such as Banana Pepper, Hot Head, Purple Passion and Birthday Suit." —D.E.

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flextonegamecalls.com



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.



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Just a short note to tell you that bar none, the Lake WeedRazer works absolutely phenomenal. I have used every conceivable gimmick on the market for cutting weeds and this one works the best as advertised. -J. Murphy

LEMKE, from page 12

out a drift sock or a five gallon pail with a rope to slow you down to the preferred speed. Sometimes the fish will be on when you start the jig motion and you will feel the weight. Immediately set the hook. You also need to watch the slack line during the fall of the jig. Sometimes the fish will hit on the fall and take up the slack faster than the drifting of the boat. When that happens, reel in any slack line and set the hook. Drift over all



Dave's catch when fishing the weed pockets.


areas of the beds to present this method to the scattered fish.

When the waters of these bays start to heat up and drive the walleyes to deeper water, again the coontail plant comes into focus. The next depth of water to have the preferred temperature range is usually in the 8 - 15 foot range. By this time the coontail beds that inhabit this depth range have gotten taller and thicker, which will change the methods you use to catch the walleyes that now inhabit them. Coontail is an excellent oxygen-producing plant and forms small bubbles of air that hang onto the thread like leaf segments. Walleyes, like most fish, like to be in water that has good oxygen content, another reason for the coontail correlation. I have seen walleyes swim through a thick coontail bed and shake off those air bubbles. The bubbles come to the top of the water, and a trail of pop fizz on the surface shows you the exact path they took through the weeds. It is rare to see this taking place, but when I did, I took full advantage of it. I just casted my jig and leach a few feet ahead of where the fizz on the surface stopped, let it fall down, and by the time of my third jig motion, I was rewarded with a nice 4-pound walleye.

Methods to use now should involve

using the outside edges more since bait presentation down near the bottom is tough in the thick vegetation. The walleyes are more edge oriented also. They use the thick cover to ambush prey that has fallen out of protection that the thick coontail provides. The old standby areas of points and inside turns are the first places to start your search. Trolling along these edges with crankbaits and crawler harnesses is a way to cover a lot of area in pursuit of active fish. Slowly back-trolling a Lindy Rig along these same edges of coontail has also been successful for me. If trolling isn't an option, then anchor and throw out some slip bobbers baited with leeches on the business end in these same spots. At the same time, cast out a jig and work it along the edge. One more method using the jig is to probe about the pockets in the weeds with a vertical jigging presentation. Use your electric trolling motor for a quiet approach and move about the bed, giving each pocket a few vertical jigs, and then move on to the next one.

The warmth of summer will take over, and the walleyes will eventually move to even deeper water to escape the heat. But don't count out the coontail beds just yet. Even though the walleyes may reside in the cooler water of the deep, they will visit these weed beds to feed. The low light periods of sunset and sunrise are the best times to intercept the feeding walleyes. During fall, when the water temperatures drop, you can bet the walleye will be back to visit the coontail beds again. They will be there right through the formation of ice above until the grip of winter finally takes over and the coontail gives up its life. The death of the underwater plant starts depleting the water of vital oxygen, and the walleyes will move on until spring when the cycle will start all over again.

Walleyes are a bunch of vagabonds. They move to where there is feed and water temperatures are to their liking. This can mean all sorts of areas: submerged rock bars, rocky points, and the mud flats when insects are hatching. But the coontail connection is a strong one and should always be considered when starting your search for walleyes. The walleye weed should be your first place to look after the spawn and thereafter as well. 

David Lemke operates Soaring Eagle Guide Service on his home waters of the Wolf River System and in Langlade, Forest, Oneida, and Vilas counties. Contact Dave at 920.585.5527 or visit his website at www.1soaringeagle.com.

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Stretch Nylon Jersey

100% Waterproof

- Outside rubber pull strap for tighter fit
- Adjustable nylon wader strap

PRO LINE

100% Waterproof

100% Waterproof

100% Waterproof

71101 Twin River

- Extremely lightweight rubber construction with 300D nylon lamination but with durability and strength to protect
- Cleated outsole for sure traction
- Removable insole for all day wearing comfort
- Adjustable side strap for perfect fit

NW9301 Marsh Creek

- Neoprene Chest Waders
- 3.5MM neoprene lightweight, insulated, snug fit
- Each wader is air and water tested to assure waterproof
- All seams are butt cemented, stitched and sealed
- Quick release buckles
- Large outside pocket
- 200 grams of Thinsulate™ Insulation
- Double knee patches Rubber Boot Foot
- All vulcanized rubber construction
- The rubber outsole style features a deep cleated design for traction

Thinsulate
INSULATION
200 gram insulation

22103KHK Stream

- Vulcanized construction - factory tested 100% waterproof
- Insulated boot with sponge rubber padding
- Deep cleated outsole for sure traction
- Layered toe cap for longer wear
- Aggressive padded knee for protection and comfort
- Large inside utility pocket
- Draw string for better fit
- Reinforced belt loops

Pro Line Manufacturing Co.

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Thinsulate is a trademark of 3M