

FREE

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On Wisconsin Outdoors

with the Dick Ellis Experts

- **The Walleye Run**
Pick a river; Wisconsin's main veins
Targeting transitional shelves
- **Trout Fishing Wisconsin**
Port Washington browns
Coulee memories of time with Dad
Leaders, tippets, part II
- **OWO Expert Fishing Features**
Kayak advantage, weather watching
Success as simple as hook, line, sinker
- **Trapping with a Newborn**
Where there's a mom's will,
there's a way
- **Targeting the Special Buck of Fall**
Spring signs, shed antlers provide keys
Become a better bowhunter
- **Wisconsin Bear Hunting**
Novice hunter begins 2017 journey,
Are wolves finding prey in cubs,
yearlings?
- **Early Turkey Hunting, Upland Game**
Solutions for uncooperative Toms
Pick of the litter
First pheasant memories
- **From the OWO Gun Cabinet**
LCP pocket pistol,
Patterning for optimum performance
- **Maple Syrup in Badgerland**
Tapping into a sweet drip trip
- **American Media**
Don't trust, and verify

PHOTO BY DICK ELLIS

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JOHN LUTHENS

Wintering In Port

Fly fishing for brown trout in the Port Washington harbor

Twin clouds rise from the power plant and puff over the Lake Michigan harbor like smokestack prison guards. In summer, salmon-minded charter boats fly past the lighthouse in a churning froth. The fish-cleaning stations are drenched in fish guts, and the seagulls pick at them until they become so fat that they can't fly.

It's different in winter. It's quiet. The docks are barren and slick with ice, and only the grizzled, old men are left behind to stand watch on the harbor walls. They may not always be the same guys, but I can't say for certain. They are frozen statues with eternal lines stretched into the harbor. They don't talk to themselves, unlike me. They stand in freezing vigil and watch the water.

Amusement dances in their eyes as I balance my fly rod under my neck and lower myself onto the icy concrete below the bridge. Sauk Creek tumbles into the harbor from the town above, sliding in rocky and shallow before dropping off on either side. I'm just able to reach the drops with a few strips of line and a lucky roll cast. Spawn-sac rigs from walls above are arced out 50 feet farther than I can reach. The wall-tenders think I am wasting my time.

I curl heavy loops into the current again and again, stripping them back, hearing ice form along the rod guides. My arm is falling off, but it's keeping the blood from freezing in my veins. My streamer fly looks like a wounded minnow when it's sliding through the water, but when I pull it out to blow it back to life, it appears to be a Popsicle.

Snow squalls fly in random intervals, shrouding the lighthouse at the harbor's mouth and hitting the water with a hiss. Amidst the stinging snow, brown trout flash from the bottom and begin to feed on both sides of the drop, and the frozen statues on the wall spring to life as they hook fish. They don't move like old men when they reach for their extension nets. They move like a lightning storm on a summer night. I shake snow out of my hood and crack ice off my line, silently hoping that I can grow old and learn to fish like that one day.

A slamming weight tightens my gloved fingers and I'm into my first fish. I have 20 feet of weight-forward fly line tied to 100 feet of braided nylon backing. The backing slides

continued on page 4



Flyrod fishing the frozen waters of the Port Washington Harbor warms John Luthens's heart.

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TOM CARPENTER

Cubs Corner

Trouting on the seam of spring

Did you know Wisconsin didn't always have a winter trout fishing season? Seems hard to believe, but there was actually a time when trout fishing before the traditional May opener was just a dream. That dream became a reality when I was practically a grown-up Badger Cub while attending college in Madison.

The Mad City didn't corrupt me entirely, for autumn weekends and winter breaks were still mostly spent hunting the woods and hills of southwestern Wisconsin. Mendota found me ice fishing. In full spring and summer, open-water fishing of all kinds beckoned. But there was always that problematic "in between" time on the bridge between winter and spring.

I would watch the 10:20 PM weather reports (no Internet back then) to see what an upcoming March weekend might hold. If the forecast promised sun and fairly mild temperatures, I'd give Dad a call midweek and he'd gladly come get me on a Friday afternoon.

We'd get up none too early on Saturday. No use fishing in the frosty-cold dawn. The trouting was better when the sun was up and the water warmed up a little, anyway. Mom would cook breakfast and we'd visit in the sunny kitchen before she would kindly release us, sensing that our thoughts were heading toward some stream gurgling through a pic-

turesque valley.

The creek is done with muddy runoff, running green-clear below a blue March sky. A few patches of snow remain in roadside ditches and on north-facing hillsides. The woods are bare, but the oak leaves are russet on the ground. Corn stubble yellow in the fields. Pasture grass flat and brown.

As is our usual practice, Dad goes downstream and I start up. I always feel guilty not partnering up but he understands, and "alone" is much of the idea anyway—getting away from the city, being free, avoiding books and responsibilities, breathing the clean coulee-country air ... and hunting up trout.

The trout were always wary—many of them natives or at the least holdovers from past fingerling stockings. We released most. But it was hard to resist saving a couple nice, fat browns for the pan when regulations allowed. Mom expected it, for she loved to eat trout and it was part of our easy payback for abandoning her.

Lunch was part of the excursion. You name the town—Argyle, Hollandale, Barneveld, Dodgeville, Muscoda, Boscobel—we knew all the best diners to stop into, warm up in and enjoy the lunch special.

Fortified, we'd head back out to try our luck at another


This beautiful brown trout was caught by fly fishing and was released.



creek. The afternoon sun would be warm on my cheeks and the fish at their most active for the day.

I couldn't recall for you one specific trout I caught on these days. But I could tell you what it was like to see a whitetail, lean from the long winter but alive and strong, nonetheless, bound out of some cattails. Or what it sounded like to hear a pheasant rooster cackling in the willows. Or what the moldering oak leaves smelled like. Or what it felt like to walk in mud after all the concrete of the city.

As the sun sets, we meet back at the car. The cold is coming on, for it is March, after all. And the now-frosty air feels good against my cheeks, which are still hot and red from the bright afternoon sun that is now only an orange memory in the west.

I fall asleep to the blast of the car heater and the crunch of tires on gravel, knowing I'd been trouting on the seam of spring. 

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



"YOUR HONOR, I ASK THAT THE PERGURY CHARGE AGAINST MY CLIENT BE DISMISSED ON THE GROUNDS THAT HE IS A FISHERMAN AND EVERYONE KNOWS THEY NEVER LIE."

LUTHENS, from page 3

better through iced-up guides and doesn't nick itself up on stray ice flows. I ratchet through every inch on the reel before I'm finally able to land the trout.

Although it fought just as hard, it doesn't look at all like the heavy-spotted, golden browns that roll in the rivers of summer. It has a silver-white body and eyes of cold steel. It measures 15 inches and feels like it will go a good 2 pounds.


The feeding window closes as quickly as it opened. I've hooked two more fish and lost them both. They were small compared to the 4- and 5-pounders coming to net along the walls. Tossing rod, pack and fish over the ledge, I pull myself up, kicking my feet against the concrete wall like an excited dog trying to find leverage on a polished floor. Not the most elegant of exits.

A voice hails me from the wall as I'm stomping my way back to the car. "Used to fly fish a bit, myself, back in the day. Had a bamboo cane pole that caught a lot of fish. Don't know what happened to it. Too bad. It'd probably be worth something."

The old man is wrapped in a hooded, camouflage parka with a stained orange

deer stocking cap beneath. He's pulling a red wagon with fishing gear and three nice browns resting in the snowy bottom. He's not smoking a pipe and he doesn't have a wooden leg, but he's still the complete image of a salty, sea boat captain on winter leave.

He offers me two of his fish to go with my single. "I'm here nearly every day, and a guy can only eat so many." He turns with his wagon and heads into the snow before I even ask his name. The Port harbor, in winter, is an open water haven for brown trout and few spoken words. It was a fitting end to the day.

For more information on fishing Port Washington any season, lodging, dining, or local activities for the entire family, contact the Port Washington Tourism Council, PO Box 153, 126 E. Grand Avenue, Port Washington WI, 53074, 800.719.4881 or 262.284.0900. Or connect at www.visitport-washington.com. 

John Luthens is a freelance writer from Grafton, Wisconsin. His first novel, Taconite Creek, is available on Amazon or at cablepublishing.com, or by contacting the author at luthens@hotmail.com.

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JERRY KIESOW

Fly Fishing In Wisconsin

Leaders and tippets, part two

Last time I ended with: "Over the years, fluorocarbon has become the leader/tippet material of choice for most fly fishers, but not me. More about that and tying knots with different leaders next time. The two are connected (pun intended)."

I'll pick up on that statement now.

Briefly put, depending on the manufacturer, fluorocarbon can be made from two extruded resins. One, the inner core, is hard and more abrasive resistant while a second, which forms the outer shell, is softer, giving the line/leader/tippet a better grip when tying knots.

Fluorocarbon has been around for decades. One company lists 1972 as its entry into the fishing line/leader field and tells of the challenges it has overcome and the improvements it has made since. Originally, it was produced for saltwater fishing where the coral edges raised havoc on regular mono.

Over the years, I have tried several brands of fluorocarbon tippets. Some were better than others, just like all brands of leaders and tippets. For me and my not-too-sophisticated-everyday-fly-fishing, I have gone back to the nylon monofilament or "mono" as it is usually referred to. Why? Three basic reasons.

First and foremost because regular mono ties more secure, better-holding knots, and remember, the weakest link between you

and the fish is your knot. If it breaks or loosens, the fish of a lifetime may be gone. Secondly, normal mono costs about one-third of what fluorocarbon does, and I don't need to spend extra money to tie inferior knots. And third, mono stretches more and is softer, therefore, it absorbs shock better. Some say because it is more subtle it allows our flies to move more freely in the water, giving them better action. (To me, better action comes from the knot we tie not the type of tippet material we use.)

So, you ask, "What are the advantages to fluorocarbon, or does it just get good PR?" Well, of course there are some advantages, otherwise, it wouldn't be so popular (but good PR helps).

First, fluorocarbon is denser, so it sinks faster, which is good when fishing nymphs and streamers but is not good for drifting dry flies or any other fly that is fished on the surface, i.e., poppers, terrestrials etc. Second, it is almost invisible when it is under the water. Third, because it is stiffer it is more resistant to abrasion, like a fish's teeth or brush or rocks.

Does this mean we fly fishers should be carrying both kinds of leaders/tippets so we can change them when we decide to change the kind of fly, wet or dry, we will be fishing next? I am sure many do, and because they do, those are probably some of the fisherpersons who use a loop on the end of their



Would fluorocarbon have made catching this bass any easier?

lines instead of a nail knot so that exchange can be done more easily. (Loops are another subject we may take up someday.)

You can read all kinds of opinions on this subject. These are mine. Take them or leave them; it's up to you. Me? I like nylon mono. At least for now.

I had hoped to show you a few knots but not today. Maybe next time.

See you in the river.

Keep a good thought!

We know Jerry enjoys all aspects of the outdoors (not only fly fishing). That was proven in his first book: "Tales of The Peshtigo Putzer." His second book, "Photos, Poems, and a Little Bit of Prose" reinforces that truth. Check it out on his website, jerrykiesowoc.com. These books make great gifts.



Today we have as many choices in fluorocarbon leaders and tippets as there are in mono, but it's up to you to decide which one works best.



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CAPTAIN DAVID DUWE

Simple Presentation Yields Big Results

Hook, line and sinker are all you need to catch fish

When I started guiding years ago, I was an artificial bait fisherman. I preferred jigs, plastic worms, spinner baits, etc. I caught fish, sometimes a lot of them, and my customers had a good time. However, since many of my customers were novices and only fished a few times a year, they sometimes had difficulty with the presentation we were using (finicky biting fish). Keeping it simple was the key to catching the most fish possible. The “go to” presentation is the split shot rig, simple and easy to use.

The split shot rig is very basic and every angler can tie one up in a matter of minutes. The split shot rig consists of a single hook and split shot positioned about 18 - 24 inches above the hook. I like a small #12 Kahle hook and a 3/0 round split shot. I use this rig down to 12 feet of water. Any deeper and the size of the split shot needs to increase. The reason for using the round split shot without the wings is it enables you to pull it through weeds as needed. I have a tendency to use small hooks, which allow you to catch a variety of fish from bluegills to largemouth bass and even the occasional northern pike. When I'm fishing specifically for walleyes, I like slightly larger size 6 hooks in red or char-

treuse color. The painted hooks seem to get more bites on the lakes I fish. Also, the larger hook allows for better hook sets in a bony mouth.


When using the split shot rig, the size of the split shot is also determined by the wind speed. As a rule, the windier the day the heavier the split shot. The goal is a good feel and bottom contact. The three methods I use when fishing the rig are as follows: slowly trolled with my Minn-Kota trolling motor, drifted, or casted toward the weedline. There are two places that the split shot rig is not recommended: heavy wood and big fractured rocks. The split shot tends to get hung up and snagged in these environments.

The two baits that I fish the most are nightcrawlers and fathead minnows. I typically hook the nightcrawlers on the very tip of their head. When a fish bites a nightcrawler, you need to release the line immediately giving the fish time to run, because there is a lot of dangling bait off the end of the hook. For the minnow bite, I set the hook much faster as the fish seem to eat this bait more quickly. I seldom use leeches on the rig because leeches have the tendency of twisting the

line bad—real bad!

My standard guide poles are 6-foot, 6-inch spinning combos spooled with 8-pound test. The lighter action rod helps you move the bait through the weed patches without getting hung up. I always fish with the bail open to ease in the release of line so the fish can take the bait resistance-free.

The two lakes I fish the most are Lake Geneva and Delavan Lake. Lake Geneva has expansive gravel flats and weed beds, which make split shots very effective. Delavan Lake has deeper weedlines with subtle points that make casting the rig a strong method.

Being a fishing guide for over 25 years, I have my share of tackle and equipment. I find that out of all the gear I can have in my boat, the most reliable for catching almost all species of fish is a split shot rig. It's both simple and effective. 

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



Author Dave Duwe with a split shot-rigged largemouth bass.



Client of Dave Duwe's Guide Service with a nice Delavan Lake bluegill.



Tim Lindemann with a huge Delavan Lake largemouth.

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PHIL SCHWEIK

Shelf Life

Finding walleyes' hiding spots

As most of you know, March and April are prime time for spawning walleyes. They begin their ritual "run" up the river systems or into backwater areas as they do every year. This has been going on since the beginning of time. Anglers looking to cash in on these pre-spawn and spawning walleyes tend to target traditional areas like dams, shallow gravel bars and rocky, rip-rap style shorelines as popular areas for walleyes to spawn.

What a lot of anglers don't know is that the walleyes will be in a lot of other places as well. Targeting walleyes can at times be easier and more productive in other areas than traditionally-targeted areas that they have become so accustomed to fishing.

What I like to look for, and an area that I seem to find a lot of walleyes in, is what I call the first or second shelf. These are transition areas that walleyes travel through and hold in when traveling to traditional spawning areas. These are locations that most anglers overlook but areas that the walleyes have to pass through to get to their

destination.

The first or second shelf are areas just outside normal shoreline fishing areas or locations off shallow gravel bars or rock humps. These are spots that you would normally be sitting over in your boat while targeting traditional locations. They are simply the deeper areas just outside where you would normally think that spawning walleyes would tend to hold.


How many times have you brought your lure back to the boat to have it hit boat side? I know that I have countless times. How about shore fishermen that cast out as far as they can to reach new areas instead of working the shoreline right in front of them? Or maybe your thought process tells you that the walleyes are shallow because they are spawning. Well, they have to get there first! And to get there they have to travel through the first or second shelf.

Next time you are on the water and targeting spring walleyes don't be afraid to think outside the box and look for water that may be a little deeper than normal and



Hooksetters guides Adam Rasmussen and Phil Schweik, along with Dave Hansen and some nice spring walleyes.



work areas that are just outside your comfort zone. You may find yourself hooked into the largest walleye of your life. 

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

**TOM LUBA**

Pick A River

Fish these walleye magnets this spring

Ice out means walleye and, generally, rivers. Ice goes out early on rivers and they are usually open for spring fishing while most lakes are still frozen over. So, it's logical to pick a river for early season "walleyeing." Fortunately, Wisconsin's got more than a few that are full of walleye.

To catch river fish, target early to mid-April. For instance, locals say if you're on the Wolf by April 12, you should be catching fish.

The Wolf has miles of open water with no dams. If anglers crowd the bridge at Winneconne, the fish are running. They'll spawn in the upriver marshes. Track the fish upstream, then, when they leave the marshes, they're hungry and bite well on their way back to the downriver lakes and Winnebago.

Fish the slow side of the current early, when the fish are

running upriver. The less current they have to battle the better. After the spawn, switch to the outside bends washed by the current. The fish use it to push them back downriver. Jigs and minnows work best, generally ¼- to ½-ounce size. Color matters less than the minnow.

If you're looking for a trophy, give the Menominee a shot. The bigger fish from the bay of Green Bay are drawn to the two-mile stretch from the bay to the first dam. When fishermen are on the Hattie Street bridge, there are walleye to be caught. Use a jig and minnow in the deeper water. As the fish move upriver, they go shallower and can be caught from public shorelines with Rapala-like lures.

On the Wisconsin, near Wausau, fish are at the dams by mid-April. But you'll also find them spread out up to six miles downstream. The dams at Mosinee, Lake Wausau and DuBay are good choices. Fish 7 - 15 feet deep near the chan-



A jig and minnow is often the best bait for spring river walleye. Color can help but minnows seal the deal.

nel edge and along wood both in the river and backwaters.

Farther south, fish are leaving Lake Wisconsin by late March. Wisconsin River fish can then be taken below the Dells dam and downriver. You can catch them coming and going.

continued on page 10

Weekend Freedom Machines



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You can smell open water coming

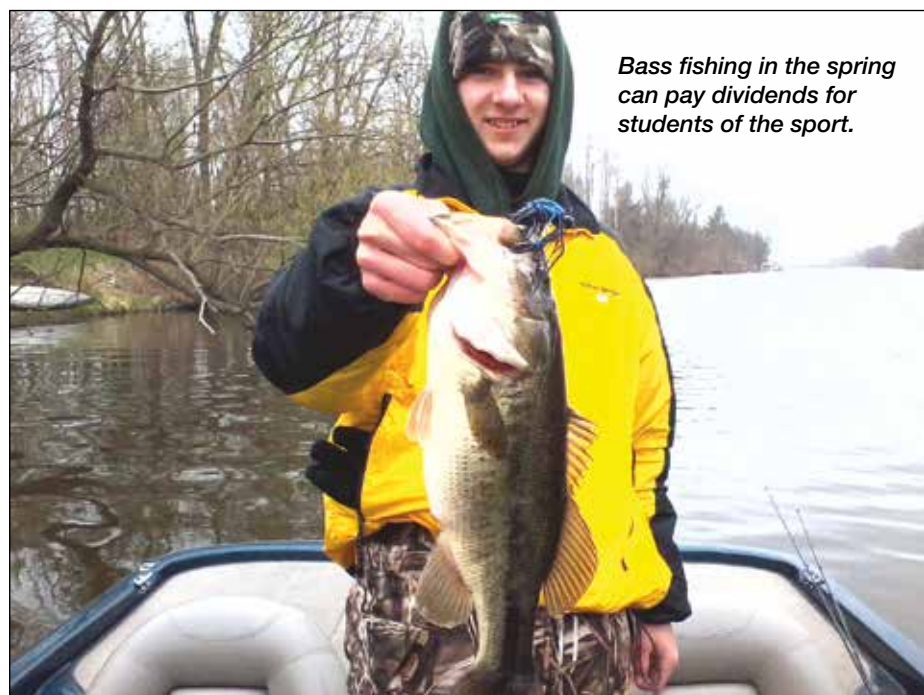
Sure, we see bears rising into their first steps of the year, velvet-horned whitetail deer taking advantage of newly-sprouted plants, and hear robins giving their yearly concert. But do we smell in the spring?

Growing up, I wanted to wake up in the morning and suffocate from the smell of manure driving past Farmer Nelson's fields on the way to school; I wanted to sink into grass and smear fresh mud onto my new pair of Nike's; and I wanted to see the hundreds of piles of dog poop that had been hidden by the snow for the last four or five months. Putrid thoughts for some, but, really, it meant the ice had given up its grip and I was coming very close to the first cast of the year.

While I counted down the days until

Dad, my brother and I commenced our first outing, I prepared like a doctor going into surgery. Every tool, diagram and resource needed to be in the right place and to the right calibration before starting. I wiped down every rod with a towel and some Pledge and cleaned the cork handles with rubbing alcohol. Then, after several trials, errors and YouTube videos, I took apart my reels and dabbed a couple drops of fresh reel oil and grease to the most critical bearings, though sometimes I lost some springs when putting them back together. (Sorry, Dad.) Next, I spent days shopping online and at the local tackle stores to find the newest baits that no one had thrown yet. I saved up as much money as I could to place my yearly order and waited like a child anticipating Santa Claus.

Then, I began off-shore fishing. Off-shore



Bass fishing in the spring can pay dividends for students of the sport.

fishing is typically referred to as going away from the bank to fish, but my off-shore is learning to fish away from the lake: reading any On Wisconsin Outdoors, Bassmaster, FLW, In-Fisherman, Doctor Bass, and Larry the Legend articles I could find and then pick one lake on which I wanted to try out new tips and tactics. I'd ask my dad for a topographical map and encode it like a treasure map, searching for overlooked spots, asking my dad, "What kind of weeds are in this bay? Have you ever caught any smallmouth on this flat? Do you think these docks would be good in summer? When is

the best time of year for this rock hump?"

Of course, I will embrace the cringe-worthy stench of nature's breath again this spring, and, although it will be a different lake and different technique I will attempt to learn, the principle is still the same: prepare while I can so I'm ready for whatever situation is thrown in the mix. *WO*

Kyler Chelminiak is a collegiate angler at Bethel University in McKenzie, Tennessee, but still calls Wisconsin land his home. Aside from his devotion to bass fishing, Kyler embraces any and all activities in the outdoors with faith, family and friends.



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LUBA, from page 8

Walleye on the Mississippi start moving with the first high water and in La Crosse can be caught as far as 10 miles downriver from the dam. Upriver, they'll hit dam #3 in April and spawn there as well as in smaller area creeks and tributaries.

There is always water flow on the Fox to help keep Lake Winnebago lower during the winter. Below the first dam, at DePere, it's crowded due to the larger angler populations in Green Bay and Appleton. Room is limited but vertical jigging can make it easier to deal with the crowds.

In addition to these, there are other options throughout the state. The Peshtigo and the Oconto Rivers also have significant April runs of fish from Green Bay. Again, space here is limited and there are some ar-

eas that are off limits, so keep an eye out.

The Rock also features a run from Lake Koshkonong upriver to the dam at Jefferson. You can catch most with 3/8-ounce jigs tipped with a minnow. In general, the heavier current in the larger rivers like the Mississippi may require heavier weights.

As the sun warms Wisconsin waters and winter shakes off its snow cover like a Labrador just out of the water, there will be more open water day by day. In our state, it seems like rivers and walleye were tailor-made for each other. Don't overlook these early season opportunities in your area. *WO*

Tom Luba is a freelance outdoor writer and bass fishing fan from New London, Wisconsin. Tom fishes as much as he can and never gets tired of setting the hook.

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GARY ENGBERG

Gary Engberg Outdoors

Watch the weather

As I write this, winter has finally settled into Wisconsin and most of the upper Midwest. Fall and early winter were relatively mild, but since the beginning of December winter has returned with snow and below-zero temperatures. The cold weather has been accompanied by days of high pressure and high blue skies. This kind of weather is not that conducive to good ice fishing. Rarely have I had much success in the cold weather that is accompanied by a high-pressure system.

But there have been a few occasions when fishing has been outstanding. Much of this good fishing can be attributed to a falling barometer and an approaching winter storm. Before going fishing, I always check out the weather forecast, and so should you. If you're on the ice early in the morning or just before or after dark, you can usually catch a few fish no matter what the weather. If you have had stable and cold weather for a few days and you hear that the temperatures are going to moderate with a low-pres-


sure system heading your way, make plans to go fishing on your favorite lake, because the fish will be biting.

Almost every time this winter that I've had good fishing and a consistent bite has been under the conditions that I just explained. The same holds true for hunting. Deer and most other birds and animals are much more active and will be out feeding in advance of an approaching storm. Another thing that can translate into decent fishing is watching the birds that you feed in the winter. Birds will begin feeding heavily before a low-pressure system. This can also signal me to get out fishing. Fish (no matter what species) will usually be active and biting all day when the barometer is falling and a low-pressure system is coming.

Check out what the weather was like the last time that you had a productive day of ice fishing. I bet the weather was changing and a winter storm was on the horizon. It's tough enough to catch fish in the winter, so take a tip from me and watch the weath-



Bob Zownir of Madison with a nice crappie.

er and be on the ice for those peak bites. Another good idea is to keep a journal whenever you go fishing to track what the weather was like and any other factors that you feel are important. After doing this for a while, you'll begin to see patterns emerge that can often affect and help your fishing. Give it a try! 



Scott Glorvigen with a walleye before a system comes through.

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



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MIKE YURK

Current Lessons

Overcoming high and fast water on the river

Early spring fishing on Wisconsin's rivers for walleye and sauger begins sometime in March. The walleye season is closed throughout much of Wisconsin except for rivers like the Mississippi, Wisconsin, Wolf and Fox. Early season fishing is legendary in these rivers. Although some people (especially in northern Wisconsin) are still ice fishing, it feels good to finally get out in a boat on open water. Spring is here.

Early spring river fishing, however, has its share of challenges. Foremost among them are high waters and fast currents. These rivers are like the trunk of a tree with the branches being all the other streams, creeks and smaller rivers flowing into the main river. There is run-off from melting winter snows accompanied by more water draining into the rivers from rains and late season snowstorms. By the time all this water gets to the main rivers, there is a large volume of water flushing into them creating not only high waters and sometimes floods but also strong currents.

Overcoming high water and strong cur-

rents is critical to finding and catching early season walleyes and sauger. Normally, the middle of the river is the worst, so I move to the sides of the river close to the banks. Sometimes I am only a boat length or two from the bank. Here, the current is not nearly as strong as the main channel of the river and the water is usually more shallow. I find fish here because lighter current allows for the concentration of bait fish. Where you find bait fish you will find game fish. Additionally, it makes it easier for game fish to hold in that water.

The secret to fishing walleyes and sauger is to get your bait to the bottom and keep it there. If you can't get and keep your bait on the bottom, you simply will not catch fish. Lighter current closer to the bank allows you to maintain your bait on the bottom. This means you will still need heavier baits than normal. I usually use a 1-ounce jig with a minnow. Once I hit the bottom with my jig I lift the rod tip six inches to a foot before allowing the bait to bounce back to the bottom. Even with fishing close to the bank there are times that as soon as I lift the


bait from the bottom the current will sweep it away. When that happens, I need to find a heavier rig.

Over the years, I have found using a bait rig with a heavier bell-shaped sinker works well in strong current. I tie a 3-foot long leader with either three chartreuse beads and a hook or a chartreuse Gum-Drop Floater jig by Northland. I attach the leader to a snap swivel and use the snap to attach a bell-shaped sinker. I usually start with a 1 ½-ounce sinker. If that doesn't work, I use a 1 ¾-ounce sinker, and, if necessary, a 2 ½-ounce sinker. If the 2 ½-ounce sinker doesn't keep my bait on the bottom, then I move, looking for slower water because the current is too strong for many fish to hold there.

To fish this rig, I just drop it down until it hits bottom and then lift it a foot off the bottom just as I would if I were jigging. Early spring walleyes and sauger may still be sluggish and fickle in the cold water, so many times all you will feel is extra weight. Anytime you feel anything different, set the hook.



Overcoming high water and fast currents will get you early spring walleyes like the one Mike Yurk is holding.

Although early spring fishing can be challenging, with high water and fast current, you can overcome these obstacles. Fishing the sides of the rivers where the current is not as strong and using heavier sinkers with bait rigs to get your bait to the bottom will put those walleyes and saugers in the live well. 

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

DICK HENSKE

The Kayak Advantage

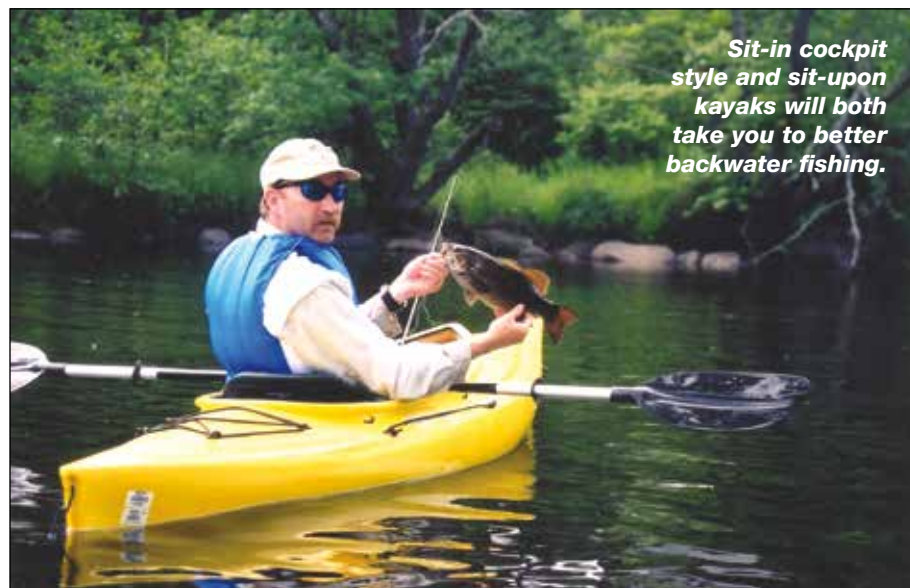
A light, stable answer to more fish

One of the recent trends in water sports is the development of new styles of kayaks. Wherever you go you will find them, saltwater or fresh water. Kayaks have been around forever, but new innovations have improved the market.

I am an old guy and love to fish those small back-in lakes that may be under-fished. (I am after bluegills, crappies and trout. Bass are sometimes the major catch but are fun and easy to release.) In the past I walked in with hip boots where it was firm enough to walk. I tried canoes, but they are difficult for me to handle and get in and out of. Kayaks changed everything.

There are 30 to 40 small, accessible lakes near my home in Vilas County. By talking to people, using a plot book and just checking around, I now have more lakes than I can handle since putting my kayak to use.

About eight years ago, we went to an outfitter in Florida because I wanted to fish the



Sit-in cockpit style and sit-upon kayaks will both take you to better backwater fishing.

Gulf bays. He had us try numerous kayaks, and we ended up with a sit-on type that was 10 feet long and weighed 35 pounds. This was just what I needed, as my old body won't

allow me to get in and out of a "sit-in" cockpit-style kayak. In addition to comfortable seats with adjustable backs, this kayak cannot sink (air chamber), it is tough and you can

drag it anywhere. It handles big waves, and you do not get wet because scupper holes drain the water. This particular kayak fits into an SUV or a pick-up.

Mine is a basic, no-frills unit. I take along a paddle, fishing vest, life preserver, cell phone, fish bag and fishing rod. The disadvantages are lack of room, fishing on windy days and making sure you know how to enter and exit the boat. To get in, I put the kayak in about 10 inches of water and then sit on it and swing my legs up. To get off, go in shallow, swing your legs over and just stand up. I wear water shoes or boots.

Our family is into using kayaks. We even bought a two-seater sit-in type that our English Setter loves to ride in. This year we added a stand-up paddle board for the grandkids. The kayak fits in my little 4-wheel drive truck. I have a small set of wheels, which clamp onto one end of the unit so I can easily

continued on page 37

JOHN CLER

Making Spring Turkey Season Memories

Fletching arrows with your gobbler feathers

I admit it. I am a spring turkey hunting addict! I was hooked with the first gobbler I called in way back in 1984. Every gobbler I hear still brings a broad smile to my face. I sometimes fear that the turkeys will spot that smile through my head net. Each spring finds me bleary-eyed from lack of sleep and a few pounds lighter from chasing gobblers across the hills and valleys of southwest Wisconsin.

If you share this addiction, you probably have a house or apartment full of mounts, tail fans, feathers, wing bones and spurs in addition to the decoys, blinds, calls and camo required for turkey hunting. I mounted that first bird I shot in 1984 and quickly learned that turkey mounts take up lots of space. It makes little difference whether you go with the full body mount, cape or fan mount ... a couple of gobblers go a long way toward filling the trophy room.

Turkeys are such beautiful animals that I have some difficulty with *not* using all the parts I can from a harvested gobbler. This flaw in my personality has lead me to begin using the primary flight feathers to make



Turkey feathers to fletching, top to bottom: feather chopper, feather piece, chopped feather and finished arrow.

fletching for the arrows I build for myself and for others. They add a special touch to each arrow and allow me to combine my two favorite pursuits: turkey hunting and bow hunting for white-tailed deer.

Each gobbler has only six primary flight feathers on each wing. Feather fletching on an arrow must be all right wing or all left wing depending on the fletching jig you use. I use a right wing jig, so I use a wire cutter to remove the six primary feathers from the bird's right wing. Primary feathers are the big feathers attached to the very end of the wing. These feathers are often squared off at the end from wing dragging that occurs during strutting.


I use big 5 ½-inch feathers. The next step is to pick the best 6-inch portion of each feather and cut off the parts I do not wish to use. I usually get only one acceptable piece per feather. Those who use shorter fletching may be able to get two or more from a single feather.

The next step is to put the feather piece in a straight fletching clamp and grind the quill. I start with a bench top belt grinder to remove the feather and quill from the leading edge of the feather. Using a Dremel tool, I remove the excess quill material from the side of the feather.

The ground feather is placed into the feath-

er chopper next. This device cuts the feather to the proper length and shape. Choppers are available in right or left wing and in a wide variety of lengths and shapes. Once the feather is in the chopper, a quick hit with a hammer or mallet cuts the quill and feather resulting in a feather ready to be placed in the fletching jig and glued to the arrow shaft.

I only use my wild turkey feathers as the cock (odd-colored) feather. Your turkey feathers may be dyed using RIT fabric dye or Kool-Aid. I prefer to purchase commercially-dyed bright feathers for the other two feathers on each arrow to help me see the arrow in flight.

I am sure that fellow turkey addicts will agree that wild turkey feathers add beauty and memories to each arrow. 

John Cler is a retired principal and science teacher residing in Richland County. He and his wife, Vickie, have two grown daughters, three grandchildren and a black lab that keep them on the move.

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TOM CARPENTER

Beat The Early Season Turkey Hunting Blues

Solutions for uncooperative gobblers

Ya know I been callin' dat gobbler

The whole dang day long

He ain't payin' no attention to me

Not even gobblin' his song

Well, I might as well be takin' a snooze

And singin' those early season turkey blues

Depending on spring's advance on the landscape and the status of your local turkey flocks, Wisconsin's opening weeks can make for some unexpectedly tough gobbler hunting. It's enough to make even the heartiest hunter sing some turkey blues. Let's look at four early season challenges and explore how to respond.

Challenge: Big Winter Flocks

Problem: Sometimes our first couple hunting periods are not so much springtime as late winter. With birds still in their big winter flocks, hunting the gobblers is tough. All the birds are bunched up in one place, so

many prying turkey eyes and sensitive turkey ears can easily bust you. To top it all, the gobblers have plenty of hens; there is little reason to visit your calling.

Solution: *Pattern them.* Glass the birds' daily behavior for a couple days ahead of time, then hunt them like you would deer, setting up a silent ambush. No decoys or calling—just let the birds come naturally. You can cluck once or twice before you shoot just to say you called.

Challenge: Wintry Weather

Problem: Inclement conditions make for tough hunting. Snow makes you wet and miserable. Cold temperatures keep gobbling down. Bad weather just throws birds off their patterns.

Solution: *Hunt all day.* Don't make your early season turkey hunting a one-hour-and-out affair. Early season turkeys can and

will get active any time of day, with the action really picking up as the sun gets higher, the air warms and conditions become a little more pleasant for birds (and hunters). Plus, you'll be there when the bad weather breaks. Birds take quick advantage of any lull to get out and move, feed and breed.

Challenge: Greedy Hens

Problem: Early spring's most vexing problem is the gobblers are enamored with the local hens and unresponsive to your calls. Hens aren't nesting yet, so they're available to distract gobblers all day long. Even if you can get a gobbler to start coming, greedy hens may intercept him.

Solution: *Aggravate the hens.* Get bossy and sassy with your calling. Appeal to a hen's territoriality and jealousy. Attract her and you'll get the gobbler in tow. Here's another hen scenario: if you're working a



Early season gobblers can be tough. This gobbler crunched through leftover snow patches to come to some aggressive calling that really got him riled up.

continued on page 17

JERRY DAVIS

Inciting Tom

Product name, packaging excite turkey call buyers

Chances are most of us do not need another new turkey-calling device. But that never seems to prohibit call-making companies from coining a new name.

Because we can't rightfully determine if a new call is going to "get 'em close," doing the job in the field and forest, the name, and the accompanying verbiage are usually what sells the call.

We've seen some real doozies, especially when turkey hunting first came back to the Midwest. One that still sticks has "dead silence" as a catchy moniker. I purchased two, because they were made of different metals. The idea, I surmised, was blowing on this call created a sound only turkeys could detect. Still, that imagined sound could stop a turkey in his escape and turn him back to a waiting hunter. Not sure if dead silence ever worked, but at least shotgunners didn't go the next step and put silencers on their guns believing that was how the call was to team up with hunters.

There have been others, and some actually may have worked, but so does waiting up

to seven days along a turkey's normal walking pattern. With all due respect, the jargon around spring turkey hunting is probably richer than anything deer hunters could imagine.

I like the approach taken by Quaker Boy Game Calls, founded by the late Dick Kirby of Orchard Park, NY. This year the company boxed and displayed their TearJerker box call along with three diaphragm calls. Quaker Boy's packaging is a real aisle-stopper. The purple heart wood of the box's lid is large-lettered with the call's name, TearJerker. The "J" in the name is a right leg of a gobbler fitted with an impressive spur that moves into the next letter in the name, "E."

A hunter can only imagine the origin of this name. Picture the call luring a mature gobbler within gun or bow range, only to have it die from his mistake. Or, more far-fetched, a hen nearby witnesses the scenario unfold, but then sees her attractive mate-for-a-moment perish before preforming his spring act.

This packaging performance continues with a teardrop-shaped opening in the lid of



Home-crafted strikers often work best on pot calls.


the box's chamber. Is this teardrop-shaped opening the real source of the name TearJerker? The tear opening has a definite purpose, however: to "allow the sound to escape through the lid so it is no longer trapped inside the call." The maker lists yelps, cuts, cackles, whines and purrs as the call's verses, "escaping with clarity and definition to make it very hard for a Gobbler to resist."

Whatever it might be that attracts one to a new call or its packaging, new and old calls need maintenance before and during the season. One must have confidence in

the call or it will never work, just as a country western singer believes in her or his guitar. Find the call that gives confidence and buy it.

Hunters who use pot calls and strikers need to scuff them regularly. Most times, the strikers sold with slate, aluminum and glass pot calls are not as good as those sold separately, or, better still, those made in a shop in someone's basement, garage or barn. Diaphragm calls wear out, dry out or may have to be trimmed to fit. Newer box calls require less and less maintenance, so watch out sanding and scuffing the lid and box rails.

Questions about call maintenance are ideal queries for a seminar speaker. Most are pro-staffers for call companies and they should be able to answer just about any question.

Best of hunting to all this spring. 

Jerry Davis, a Wisconsin native, retired from university teaching and now lives in Iowa County. He applies arts and sciences to writing and enjoying Wisconsin's outdoors. Contact him at sivadjam@mhtc.net.



LEE GATZKE

NextBuk Outdoors

Let the chase begin

Beginning in late winter, preparations are made to cross paths with a certain mature buck come hunting season.

As winter winds down my boots leave fewer tracks in the dwindling snowpack while encountering more mud each day. Scouring the landscape, I load up on information concerning deer activity in this unfamiliar terrain I plan to hunt this fall. Last season was my first spent hunting this area, so there will be a considerable amount of scouting ahead of me before I feel confident I'll be onto deer, one in particular. Looking at aerial maps on Google Earth gave me a good outline of the lay of the land, but the computer screen doesn't reveal tracks, rubs or beds. It's time to lace up the boots and get out hiking for a closer look.

The trail cameras I placed last fall caught a particular buck, a mature 8-pointer, frequenting a farm I hunted. Most of the pictures of him were taken at night, but during the rut he was caught there during daylight. I never saw him while hunting. I'm confident he is still alive, since I got a nighttime trail cam picture of him the second weekend of gun season. In talking to others who hunt the area, nobody shot him or heard of him being taken.

The thought of getting a shot at the mature 8-point this coming season helps drive me


onward as my legs begin to complain after a daylong scouting trip. Enough of these March and April scouting trips have led to exciting hunts come fall that ignoring the fatigue of the next uphill climb becomes habit. Scouting at this time reveals movement and bedding patterns that are critical for making wise decisions during hunting season. The bedding area or rub lines you never knew about before are clearly visible now but will be difficult to find after the landscape greens up in spring. This information will help you locate stands in productive spots.

In a fresh snow, I cut a couple of different sets of buck tracks. Either one could have been made by the buck I'm after. I backtrack each set to where they enter the property I'll be hunting, then turn around and follow them to where they leave it. In between, a snapshot of how each buck uses this part of its territory is revealed. They don't necessarily always travel into the prevailing wind. Thermals and cover are a factor in determining how they travel in this hilly terrain, so I keep that in mind and get a clearer picture of the way they use them to get where they want to go.

I find a bed one of them made and places where they stopped to browse. One set of tracks paralleled last year's rub line. The thing that stood out most clearly was that neither

The author's late winter scouting venture reveals information that he expects will lead to his next buck.



my thoughts. The knowledge I glean now will play an important role in how I choose my stands come fall, to go after him when it counts. 

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

CARPENTER, from page 16

tom and a hen comes a-calling, she's trouble. Get up and shoo her away ... if you can do it without spooking the gobbler.

Challenge: Lukewarm Gobblers

Problem: Sometimes gobblers just aren't ready to come to the call. Breeding activity may not be in full swing yet or gobbling is light because receptive hens are everywhere. How do you heat up some excitement in a gobbler that's on an even keel?

Solution: Get aggressive. Now is the time to create action with cutts, cackles, bossy yelping, excited clucks and general carrying on. Get that bird worked up! And if the bird won't come to you, you may need to go to

him. If the situation is safe, why not stalk a bird? It's still turkey hunting.

Conclusion

Put these solutions to work when the gobblers aren't cooperating and you'll be singing a different tune this spring:


Oh, ya know that huntin' was tough

Early don't mean easy after all

But I had a bag o' tricks to spring on that gobbler

And now he's ridin' out on my shoulder, y'all

Now I'm gonna take me a good old snooze

And forget those early turkey season blues 

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

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TYLER FLORCZAK

Search For Seasonal Souvenirs

Shed hunting enhances deer knowledge

Mild winter temperatures and less snow accumulation than usual have already kick-started one of sportsmen's favorite pastimes of the year: shed antler hunting. It's become a popular late winter/early spring activity for outdoorsmen, considering almost every hunter aspires to see, locate, or, especially, shoot the biggest buck.

Nowadays, many landowners use quality deer management and take greater interest in managing their land for the deer herd in order to grow and harvest mature bucks. This has increased the interest in the shed hunting movement.

Between December and April each year, whitetail bucks shed their antlers through a process where abscission cells loosen the

antler from the buck's skull plate and the antlers eventually fall off. Sometime in the month of April, bucks will begin growing a new and generally larger set of horns. Bucks carry unique characteristics in their horn structure, and the antlers each buck grows and sheds annually gives the deer an identity. It can get almost addicting to follow specific bucks over the years, giving them names and targeting them once they become mature.

Shed hunting can be much more than just walking in the woods and is an activity the entire family can enjoy. Oftentimes, shed hunters can obtain vital scouting information they can use the following hunting season. Travel routes deer used to outsmart hunters in previous seasons, along with

rub, scrapes and bedding areas can be identified and become extra clues that will help you tag a trophy whitetail in the future. Knowing where to begin looking and becoming familiar with strategies for shed antler hunting can turn an average hike into a memorable field experience.

Note: Shed hunting with a dog trained to find antlers will almost always increase the number of sheds a hunter returns home with.

Shed Hunting Tips

- Search land you're familiar with. Look in places that you know the deer are or have been between December and April;
- Walk slowly. Good shed hunters can separate themselves from others who just stumble through the woods. Keep your eyes on the ground in order to spot an



Molly, a five-year-old yellow lab, loves to go shed hunting with her owner, Mark Crotteau, of Cameron. The faithful companion has a history of finding several shed antlers from trophy whitetails in northwestern Wisconsin.

antler that looks similar to a stick, leaf or cornstalk.

- Food sources. Deer often concentrate in one or two agricultural fields during the

continued on page 19



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FRED SCHAFFHAUSER

Becoming A Bowhunter Today Is Easier Than Ever

Modern media can teach you everything you need to know

When I started bowhunting in the 1970s, all of my equipment, instruction, advice and places to hunt came from my family. It wasn't until I was 13 that I arrowed my first deer, a yearling doe, of which I couldn't have been more proud. With that first foot into the woods, I began my lifelong quest to understand whitetail deer and to hunt them more effectively. I would not trade the path I've taken to become the hunter I am today for anything. But I am in awe at how quickly a new hunter can get to the level it took me decades to achieve.

In our shop, we see many youth, as well as adults, take up hunting having not grown up in a hunting family. Many have the desire to hunt because of friends, but more often I see the desire coming from something deeper; hunting is in their nature. No matter the reason, a new hunter today need only look to the Internet, cable TV and a good archery pro-shop to jump-start their new passion.

Equipment today, when set up by a quality pro-shop, can get a new archer proficient enough to hunt in a matter of days. The key



With proper equipment and the Internet, a new archer can go a long way toward becoming a successful bowhunter. The Wisconsin DNR website shown above can help you find places to bowhunt across the state.

to becoming a successful bowhunter starts with equipment that fits you properly and is shot with proper form and quality practice. The most advanced equipment will serve you no better than inexpensive used equipment and worse if it is not set up properly. This is not a time to "do it yourself." Enlist the services of a reputable pro-shop to help you set up your first bowhunting rig. You won't be disappointed and will save time and money in the long run.

If you don't have access to hunt private property, finding a place to hunt in Wisconsin has never been easier. The Wisconsin DNR website has a wealth of information on public hunting land both state and privately owned. Each county publishes plat books with information on what land can be used for hunting. Most counties also have plat and land use information online.

Bowhunting is different than most other types of hunting in that it is a very up-close and personal experience. Gun hunters who add bowhunting to their fall activities often tell me how different bowhunting is because of the need to get so close to the game. No matter how proficient we become as archers, most deer killed in Wisconsin with a bow will be under 20 yards. To be that close to a big game animal in its last moments is electrifying and a different experience than pulling the trigger on a long-distance kill. It demands very specific skills to get that close to an animal with senses and instincts that are far superior to ours. This is where modern media like the Internet, cable TV,

YouTube and bowhunting shows can really help a new hunter become successful quickly. Stand and blind placement, camouflage, scent control, using calls or identifying bedding and feeding areas and travel routes between them can take a new hunter a lifetime to perfect. With the digital era, educating us on the when, how and why, we can avoid many of the mistakes we had to learn the hard way in the past.

Handing down hunting knowledge from generation to generation is a great way to get started. I believe the best experience is the kind we earn ourselves, but, in the end, it doesn't matter how we acquire the knowledge to pursue the great sport of bowhunting. It's how we use that knowledge to create successful bowhunting adventures in the wild. *WO*

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

FLORCZAK, from page 18

winter, while others will remain untouched. Don't overlook food sources the deer are browsing for in the hardwoods during late winter and spring months;

- Staging areas. In the winter, bucks return to bachelor groups, so locating travel routes coming to and from food sources is essential;
- Check beds. Deer spend the majority of their time in their beds conserving energy when it's cold. Places such as coniferous forests are hot spots because they not only block the wind but travel is easier with less snow on the ground;
- Check southern exposure areas. Deer and other wildlife choose southern exposure areas/hillsides to rest while absorbing heat where the most direct sunlight hits (similar to a cat in a windowsill);
- Look where deer jump. Fence lines, creek bottoms and ditches are good places to look because the sudden movements caused from jumping can knock an antler loose;
- Proper timing and competition. Trail cam-



eras allow humans to monitor deer year 'round, so watch for bucks shedding their antlers. Squirrels, porcupines and mice eat shed antlers for the calcium, so be sure to beat the critters to the prize.

With warmer temperatures on the way, get out and uncover headgear from some up-and-coming bucks, along with this year's potential trophies.

Tyler Florczak is a sports and outdoors editor for The Chetek Alert newspaper in Chetek. He has been working as a writer, photographer and videographer for more than five years. His 182-inch whitetail buck harvested in 2015 was accepted into the Boone & Crockett Club and was featured in Field & Stream, Deer and Deer Hunting and North American Whitetail.

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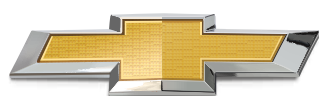
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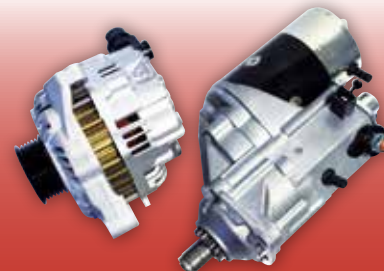
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BOB SPIERINGS

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We wish you a safe and successful 2017 Wisconsin bear hunting season!

CHRIS REHLINGER

Novice Bear Hunt Prep Learning to size a legal bear

Finally, it is going to happen. Thirteen years of buying bear license points in Wisconsin has finally provided me my very first tag and an opportunity to attempt harvesting a black bear. I have never been a trophy hunter but more of a hunter of many different experiences. This is a big-time adventure and I am doing it myself.

Now I must read the regulations and figure out what is legally needed to know to hunt this big game, how to bait the black bear, what I can use as bait and other basic hunting rules in pursuit of a bear.

After I am done reading all of the regulations, I have one initial concern: how do I know if what I am seeing and/or shooting at is a legal bear 42 inches in length? Where does this particular fear originate from? Deer hunting! I remember a lone doe or two walking within rifle range that I thought were deer of good size. Good size ... until you walk up on the harvested animal and say, “But it looked so much bigger...”

Wood silhouettes of bears cut from plywood in front of a home I drive by each day on my way to work helped me over-

come this fear. An after-work visit to ask the homeowner if I could borrow his bear for 24 hours to take home and trace onto a large piece of cardboard brought the hoped-for response. The owners felt honored that I was using their template for this purpose.

My yard display model measured in at 38 inches. I would add the needed four inches to the bear’s back and stomach when I traced the profile. A search for a large refrigerator-type box was found in the local recycling dumpster with little trouble and delivered the necessary piece of cardboard. A left-over pallet found at a local manufacturing company would work perfectly as a backstop.

It’s all coming together now. I trace the bear adding the appropriate back and belly dimensions, cut out the bear shape to create a stencil with the remaining piece of cardboard, and find a leftover can of flat black paint in the garage to bring my bear to life.

Now my target created from scratch and replicating a legal-sized black bear is ready for action. Lastly, I place the target at a friend’s property in the woods within a 30-yard distance of a nice straight tree where I



The 42-inch black bear target.

will lean my portable tree stand. It is time to practice shooting every other week from the stand with my father’s open-sighted 12- gauge shotgun with sabot slugs. This practice will both help me to site in the shotgun and condition my senses to recognize the legal size of a shooter bear from my stand during the hunt.

Is this an exercise in frugality? Yes. Practice, though, makes better and inexpensive practice is better yet.

My next adventure will be locating and constructing bait stations and identifying stand locations at three different spots. The enjoyment of preparation, I hope, will equal the actual hunting of a legal bear.

Wisconsinite Chris Rehlinger is a native of Neosho but has called Lake Wisconsin home for the last 18 years with his wife, Lori, and sons Maxwell and Lucas. He works in the engineering/construction management field but always has something regarding fishing or hunting on his mind.



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MIKE FOSS

Bear Guides Question Evidence At Wolf Kill Sites

Are declining deer numbers, increasing wolf population making young bears prey to northern Wisconsin packs?

The site of the kill that I came across while shed hunting in northern Bayfield County was obviously the work of wolves and might best be described as complete and gruesome carnage: scattered paws and torn pieces of hide still provided clear evidence in the melting spring snow of what I guessed was a mid-winter attack. But this wasn't a deer that had provided the Wisconsin wolf pack with another meal. This was a very young black bear.

In 2017, sportsmen who hunt Wisconsin's northern counties are well educated about the wolf and its impact on our once-great deer herd. The State of Wisconsin understands that proper population management of the wolf is imperative to a balanced predator and prey ratio. But despite recommendations by Wisconsin- and Midwest-based wildlife experts that the wolf be delisted as an endangered species and carefully managed with hunting and trapping, federal judicial protection of the wolf remains.

Right now, in this far northern country near Lake Superior, not only is our deer population having a difficult time rebounding from dismal numbers caused in part by predation over the past decade, but some bear guides, including me, believe our great bear population is literally under attack, specifically cubs and younger, immature bears.

For decades as a bear guide and assistant in bear camps, I have watched the Wisconsin bear population increase and with it the demand for harvest tags from hunters who want to be a part of the hunt. Up until four years ago, I personally witnessed a growing very large and stable bear population on private and public lands. More recently, in particular on the huge tracts of public land such as the Chequamegon National Forest, bear numbers seem only stable with the larger, more mature animals.

Last year in a conversation with another bear guide, I mentioned that I thought the State was properly managing bear numbers from a population that had been too high. Instead of an average of six bears and as many as 12 different bears recorded over a decade on each one of our 30 bear baits, the average had dropped to three bears per bait over the last two years. On my strategically-placed trail cameras on these bait stations I have not captured many sows with cubs or even yearlings. My guide associate then mentioned that he had found blood and clear evidence of wolves at three bear dens last spring, which reminded me of coming upon the wolf-bear kill site mentioned above.

Is there now such a predator-prey imbalance—not helped by federal judicial protection of the wolf—that deer num-



Some bear guides believe low deer numbers on vast public acres in northern Wisconsin is turning wolves to smaller bears and cubs as a food source.




Showing no fear of humans, young wolves scour a bear bait site in Bayfield County. Bears will not return to bait stations visited by wolves.

bers can't recover and other prey, including the black bear, is providing an alternative food source? I believe that is probable. Consider other factors, like low fur prices meaning lesser participation in those sports by coyote or bobcat trappers leading to even more predators. Especially on the vast tracts of public land in the north where wolves freely roam with minimal human contact, the deer have been decimated.

Recently, in my journeys to numerous deer stands to retrieve cameras, I didn't see a deer track. I saw so many wolf tracks and at one point wolf tracks so big and fresh that I actually broke off a large stick to carry with me. Is the deer population so low that the wolves are now targeting an even easier prey and pulling cubs and young bears from their hidden dens and secluded hideaways in the winter months?

Drive 30 miles south of our Bayfield County camp and you will find large agricultural tracts of private property. Here, the hunter on private land often uses more constraint on the deer he harvests and we see a higher deer population. Here, with more deer available as a wolf food source, we still capture on trail camera an abundance of bear cubs and yearlings.

Why is that, and why is that not being seen on huge tracts of public land? Wolves are still present in the agriculture lands, but they have much more human contact and a better deer population to sustain them over the winter months—leaving the slumbering bears alone to awaken to another spring.

The wolf knows only that eating means survival. Without the proper balance of predator and prey, we are in trouble. Keep radical federal judges out of the equation. 

Mike Foss was born and raised in Washburn, Wisconsin (Bayfield County) and spent years as a professional bear and deer guide. He now assists Robert Haas Northern and Northern Wisconsin Outfitters. Connect with NWO at 715.373.0127 or northwiout@att.net.


TERRY RUSS

Terry's Coyote Tips

It's mating season, so use more howls. Coyotes are more protective of territories now.

A big mistake is calling where coyotes are not present. Scout areas you plan to hunt. Look for signs of coyotes like tracks, scat and howls.

Make sure you chamber a round before leaving your vehicle. A few weeks ago, I had a coyote in my sites for an easy 150-yard shot. The gun went "click." I chamber another round; the gun goes "click" again. I rechambered five times and heard five clicks. The worst feeling is having a coyote in your sites and all you can do is watch him walk away.

Make sure you have the right ammo for your gun. Use 223, not 204. 

GARY GREENE

Memories From An Old Hunter

You never forget your first pheasant

In 1963, when we brought home the first-ever pheasant I shot, our family's birthday party for my grandmother had already begun. We were running late, as hunters sometimes do, so my dad randomly hung my rooster outside on a hook on a wash pole just off the patio. Until it got dark, I went to the kitchen window numerous times to look at my pheasant. Several times throughout that evening I would go outside, flashlight in hand, to study the distinguishing markings of my rooster. I viewed that first bird just as I viewed my first little league trophy.

A few more pheasant hunting memories I will not forget:

During a snowy 2008 South Dakota hunt, the land owner, Randy, and I were pushing a deep ditch and pheasants were popping out in all directions. Randy shot a bird to the left and my dog, Hershey, went on the retrieve. I shot two pheasants off my right side. Both birds landed in the same general location. As my dog was retrieving Randy's

bird, I went searching for my downed birds. From a distance, I saw one of my roosters on top of the almost two feet of snow. The other bird was nowhere in sight. While searching the location, I picked up my bird only to find, buried under it, my second rooster. Two birds in one snow cave-in.

With a retrieved pheasant in hand, I quickly appraise the situation. Is the bird dead or is it still alive? If alive, I attempt to eliminate any suffering as quickly as possible. On two occasions, I appraised the situation incorrectly. About an hour after one bird was shot, we stopped for a break and were engaged in our usual meaningless conversation. Without any prior warning or movement, as we watched in disbelief, the pheasant burst out of the back of my vest's game bag and flew to freedom. In a similar situation, I had put a bird in the back of my truck, changed dogs and headed back out into the fields. Upon returning hours later, I opened the back of my truck. I immediately dropped to the ground as the presumed-dead pheasant flew right at my head


and on his way back to the field where he was shot at the first time.

In the fall of 1973, I was hunting a wild pheasant population at Fred's farm near Waterford with Barney, my aging English Springer Spaniel. Barney and I could hear a rooster cackling in the adjacent alfalfa field just a few feet from the wood line. I let Barney go on the attack and the bird immediately flushed, whereupon I dropped it.

Now that story alone isn't much different than any other, except with wild birds, my dad had taught me to always check what they were eating. Inspecting the bird's crop gave me an idea of where the birds were located as they attempted to feed. As I dissected that rooster, I found the crop to be filled with numerous seeds, some corn and a white marble. To aid in their digestion pheasants are often found roadside eating stones, but a marble ... that was unique. I still have that marble in a South Dakota shot glass on my desk. I told my son, Nate, I will give it to him some day. He knows the



Greene's aging chocolate lab, Hershey, after the retrieve.

entire story behind the marble, but he still doesn't seem particularly excited to inherit that heirloom. 

Gary Greene is a lifelong bird hunter and for years has been a pheasant hunting guide. He also writes a weekly column for the OWO website. Gary, his veterinarian wife, Chris, and their five labs live in East Troy. You can contact Gary at ganggreene2002@yahoo.com.

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TOM MUELLER

Pick Of The Litter

Picking the right pup for you

At the end of my last article I promised that I would share some insight from my experiences with choosing a puppy. As mentioned previously, I've owned and trained nine Golden Retrievers over the years. The first two were hunting retrievers. After that, I dabbled in sanctioned field trials, then trained for and ran my dogs in hunt tests. Out of these nine dogs I've only picked three from a litter. The rest were all chosen for me.

My first dog, Nugget, was the last pup left out of a litter of 14. No choosing this one. We were the last to call and were told there were two left. When we arrived at the breeder, there was one left. Although Nugget came from no hunting background or lineage, through training and working with her she became an excellent hunting dog, especially when it came to pheasants. She really excelled at that game and would literally crawl on her belly to get into a brush pile if she could smell a bird there.

Our next dog, Sassy, came about because my wife thought two would be better than one. Again, this puppy did not have any hunting background, but I thought what I can do with one I can do as well with another. Was I mistaken. The breeder told me this female was fast and loved to run and swim. That meant nothing to me back then. I was just look-


ing for another dog that I could use for hunting. Remember what I wrote regarding asking about personality traits? The breeder told me that his dog loved to run and swim. Guess what? This puppy that I picked loved to run and swim and that's all she was good for. Many a time hunting pheasants at a game farm, she would come across some scent and be totally oblivious to it. The scent meant nothing to her and did nothing for her. Birds and hunting did not excite her, but she was a great family pet, a good companion to Nugget, and even had a role in the play "Annie" at the local junior high school as Annie's dog, Sandy.

Our third Golden was a big step up for me, but again, I did not have a choice. Just prior to getting her I became exposed to sanctioned field trials and wanted to play that game. Hunt tests were coming into their own. I was referred to a breeder in northern Illinois who sent me a pedigree for a litter she had. It was packed full of FCs and AFCs. When the time came to get this pup, we drove to the breeder's place in Illinois. After introductions, she went to get our pup. She came back holding a chunky puppy by the scruff of the neck as a mother dog would do and said, "Here's your dog!" Mona was the last of that litter, but with her I found an excellent breeder and occasional mentor. Mona was trained for hunt tests and also ran in an occasional sanc-



Which one will you be taking?

tioned trial. She was a quick study and a very determined retriever. Not your typical Golden Retriever personality, though. Rather stoic. Anything she was lacking was due to my lack of experience and knowledge as a trainer. She carried me, though, and helped me get her qualified at the Senior level. What I learned from working with and training her was invaluable.

To be continued... 

Tom has been avidly training retrievers since the early 1980s. His passion has evolved into helping others achieve the satisfaction that he has had. For questions regarding retriever training contact Tom at winddancer.rtrvs@hotmail.com. For information about the Fox Valley Retriever Club go to foxvalleyretrieverclub.com.



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SKYE GOODE

Trapping With A Newborn

Where there's a will, there's a way

Trapping is a very time-consuming hobby. One of the only things more time consuming than trapping is caring for a newborn baby. I'm always up for a challenge, so I decided why not try to do both at the same time. This year I was blessed to give birth to my second son just two weeks before the Wisconsin trapping season opened. On one hand, it was fairly difficult to run an effective coyote trapline with a new baby on board, but on the other hand, I had three months of maternity leave from work to play around in the woods with the baby, so it wasn't all that bad.


Of course, there are certain things that I couldn't do while having a new baby along with me, for example, wading across the river or scouting out a swamp. I had to limit myself to only setting traps that I could check from the truck or wherever I could drive up to. Typically, I would take Sundays to leave baby home with Dad, then go set all my traps for the week alone. Then, each morning, the baby and I would load up and go check our sets. I knew that I had about a two-hour timeframe before the baby would need changing and feeding once again, which is almost exactly how long it took me to check my traps each morning. There were a few times that I found myself changing a diaper or nursing while out on the trapline. I also had instances when I caught something that required me to take longer than the usual time to either remake the set, such as a skunk, or to release, such as a bear or a bobcat. When this occurred, I would usually do whatever necessary to take care of the animal, then come back at night by myself to remake the trap, which isn't necessarily effective on gas and time, but it's what needed to be done.

I also had to adjust the way that I handle certain situations while trapping. One example is live-caught animals. Before I had the baby, I wouldn't think twice about relocating certain nuisance animals such



Skye's son, Rene, with their first beaver.

as fox or raccoon when I would get calls from people needing them removed alive. I would throw the animals on the seat next to me in the truck. But after having a baby in the vehicle, I realized I couldn't risk any spread of disease or injury, so I had to prepare in advance for having the baby be with a sitter while I went on nuisance calls.

Overall, I loved the challenge and experience of having my newborn along with me in the great outdoors, and though he is still too young to have any recollection of the experience, I know that the outdoors will be rooted in his foundation for years to come. Such is the case with my six-year-old, who absolutely loves to hunt and trap with his mom even at such a young age. I look forward to the years when both my boys will be running their own traplines and can look back on pictures and see how they spent their childhoods running traps with their mom as babies. 

Skye Goode lives and works in Neillsville and has two young sons who she takes hunting. She enjoys hunting and trapping and is a member of Whitetails Unlimited, Wisconsin Trappers Association, Wisconsin Bear Hunters Association, and Wisconsin Turkey Dog Federation. When she's not in the woods, Skye enjoys hand sewing fur hats from the animals she's harvested.

Hunters of all ages.

OnWisconsinOutdoors.com/huntingWisconsin

SUZETTE CURTIS

Recipes By Suzette Sauce Queen

My husband calls me the "Sauce Queen" because I love to cook in sauces, smother cooked meat and fish with sauces, and just serve sauces on the side to be used liberally over any part of the meal. I can say, "This sauce is for the fish," but that doesn't mean it won't be poured on top of the potatoes or even the salad! Here are a few of my favorites.

Spiced Ketchup

Perfect on venison burgers and for dipping steak fries

- ¼ cup ketchup
- 1 tsp. ground allspice
- ½ tsp. ground cloves
- ¼ tsp. garlic powder

Blend all ingredients well. This sauce can be left at room temperature for quite awhile, so it makes for good picnic fare.

Garlic Steak Sauce

Great addition to grilled venison chops

- ½ cup butter
- Juice from one lemon (about 3 T)
- 3 T Worcestershire sauce
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- ¼ tsp. onion powder

Melt butter in small saucepan over low heat. Stir in remaining ingredients; turn up heat and bring to boil. Boil for 1 minute; remove from heat and cool slightly before serving.

Parsley Pesto Sauce

A variation of traditional pesto to serve with white fish

- ½ cup parsley leaves
- ¼ cup walnuts
- 1 clove garlic
- ¾ cup extra virgin olive oil
- ¼ cup Pecorino Romano cheese
- Salt and pepper to taste

Place parsley, walnuts and garlic in food processor; process on high while slowly adding olive oil from the top. Once mixture is creamy, remove to serving bowl and fold in cheese. Add salt and pepper as needed. Serve immediately.

Herbed Mayonnaise

Delicious slathered on baked pheasant breasts

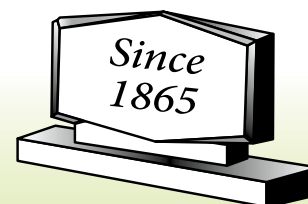
- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 1/3 cup dry red wine
- 1 T Herbes de Provence

Blend all ingredients until smooth. Refrigerate any leftovers in a glass jar with tight-fitting lid. *OW*

Suzette Curtis, of Oshkosh, cooks for a family of hunters and fishermen and 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.



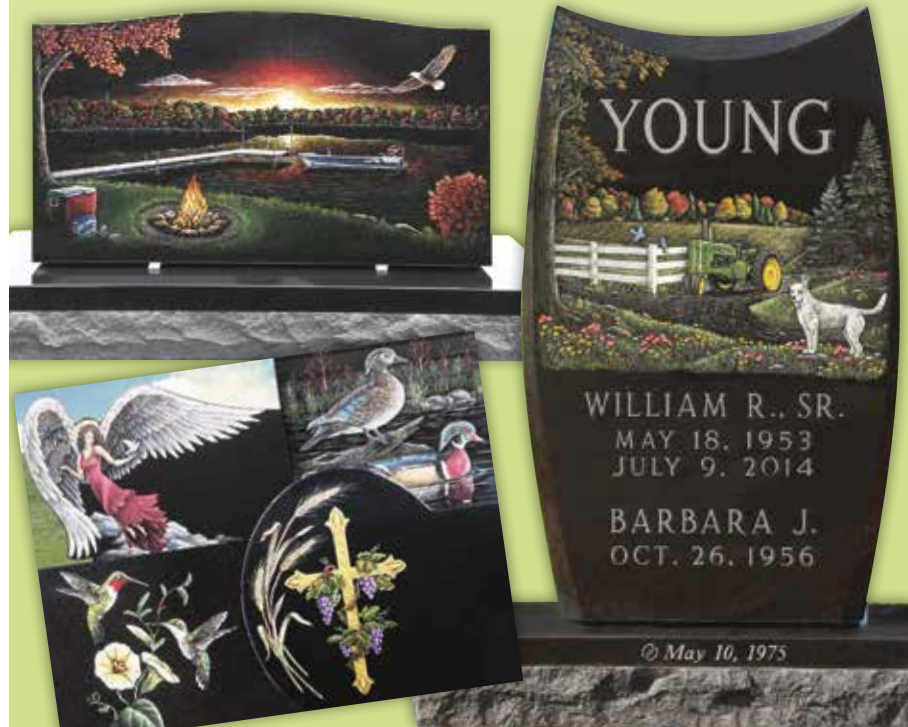
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PITTSBURGH
6 PIECE
SCREWDRIVER
ITEM 62728
62583/47770/62570 shown

\$7.97
VALUE

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COVERPRO SUPER COUPON



10 FT. x 20 FT.
PORTABLE CAR CANOPY
ITEM 63054/60728
69034/62858 shown

SAVE
\$106
Customer Rating
★★★★
\$999
SUPER COUPON
\$149.99
comp of \$205.99

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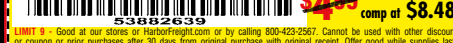
SUPER COUPON



7 FT. 4" x 9 FT. 6"
ALL PURPOSE WEATHER
RESISTANT TARP
ITEM 69249/69115/69137
69129/69121/877 shown

SAVE
64%
Customer Rating
★★★★
\$2.99
SUPER COUPON
\$4.88
comp of \$8.48

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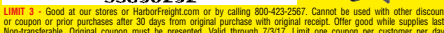
PITTSBURGH SUPER COUPON



RAPID PUMP® 3 TON
LOW PROFILE
HEAVY DUTY STEEL
FLOOR JACK
ITEM 61282 shown
61253/62326

SAVE
\$190
Customer Rating
★★★★
\$799
SUPER COUPON
\$199
comp of \$269.99

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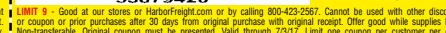
VOYAGER SUPER COUPON



12" TOOL BAG
ITEM 61467 shown
62163/62349

SAVE
66%
Customer Rating
★★★★
\$4.99
SUPER COUPON
\$1.49
comp of \$14.99

Limit 9 - Good at our stores or HarborFreight.com or by calling 800-423-2567. Cannot be used with other discount or coupon or prior purchases after 30 days from original purchase with original receipt. Offer good while supplies last. Non-transferable. Original coupon must be presented. Valid through 7/31/17. Limit one coupon per customer per day.



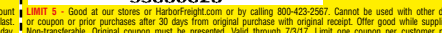
US GENERAL PRO SUPER COUPON



56", 11 DRAWER INDUSTRIAL
QUALITY ROLLER CABINET
ITEM 69395
67681 shown

Customer Rating
★★★★
SAVE
\$1077
SUPER COUPON
\$649.99
comp of \$1726.99

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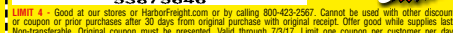
CENTRAL PNEUMATIC SUPER COUPON



3 GALLON, 100 PSI
OILLESS
AIR COMPRESSORS
ITEM 69269/97080 shown
ITEM 95275 shown
60637/61615

Customer Rating
★★★★
SAVE
59%
SUPER COUPON
\$399
comp of \$98.62

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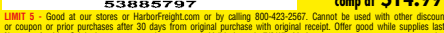
SUPER COUPON



10" PNEUMATIC TIRE
ITEM 69385/62388
62409/62698
30900 shown

SAVE
73%
Customer Rating
★★★★
\$3.99
SUPER COUPON
\$5.99
comp of \$14.99

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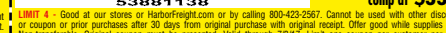
CHICAGO ELECTRIC POWER TOOLS SUPER COUPON



12" SLIDING COMPOUND
DOUBLE-BEVEL MITER SAW
WITH LASER GUIDE
ITEM 61969/61970/69684 shown

Customer Rating
★★★★
SAVE
\$204
SUPER COUPON
\$134.99
comp of \$339

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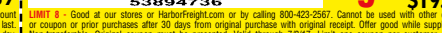
HaulMaster SUPER COUPON



MOVER'S DOLLY
ITEM 60497/93688 shown
61899/62399/63095/63096
63098/63097

Customer Rating
★★★★
SAVE
\$99
SUPER COUPON
\$19.97
comp of \$119.97

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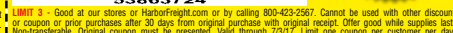
PREDATOR SUPER COUPON



13 HP (420 CC) GAS GENERATORS
ITEM 68530/63086/69671/63085 shown
ITEM 68525/69677/63087/63088
CALIFORNIA ONLY

Customer Rating
★★★★
SAVE
\$489
SUPER COUPON
\$529.99
comp of \$999

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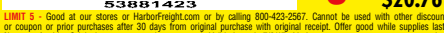
PITTSBURGH SUPER COUPON



12" RATCHET
BAR CLAMP/SPREADER
ITEM 46807/68975
69221/62123/63017
69222 shown

SAVE
85%
Customer Rating
★★★★
\$2.99
SUPER COUPON
\$3.99
comp of \$20.76

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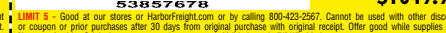
PITTSBURGH MOTORCYCLE SUPER COUPON



1000 LB. CAPACITY
MOTORCYCLE LIFT
ITEM 69904
68892 shown

Customer Rating
★★★★
SAVE
\$750
SUPER COUPON
\$299.99
comp of \$1049.99

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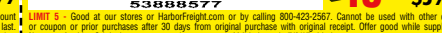
WARRIOR SUPER COUPON



29 PIECE TITANIUM NITRIDE
COATED HIGH SPEED
STEEL DRILL BIT SET
ITEM 62281
61637 shown

Customer Rating
★★★★
SAVE
\$83%
SUPER COUPON
\$9.99
comp of \$59.98

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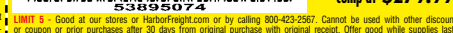
PITTSBURGH AUTOMOTIVE SUPER COUPON



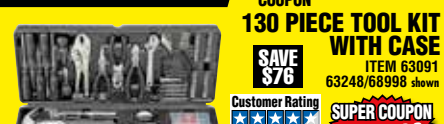
VEHICLE POSITIONING
WHEEL DOLLY
ITEM 62234
67287
61917 shown

Customer Rating
★★★★
SAVE
\$210
SUPER COUPON
\$69.99
comp of \$279.99

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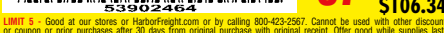
PITTSBURGH SUPER COUPON



130 PIECE TOOL KIT
WITH CASE
ITEM 63091
63248/68998 shown

SAVE
\$76
Customer Rating
★★★★
\$299
SUPER COUPON
\$27.99
comp of \$106.34

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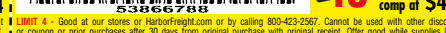
drillmaster SUPER COUPON



18 VOLT CORDLESS
3/8" DRILL/DRIVER WITH
KEYLESS CHUCK
ITEM 69651/62868/62873
68239 shown

Customer Rating
★★★★
SAVE
65%
SUPER COUPON
\$16.99
comp of \$49

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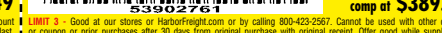
PREDATOR SUPER COUPON



6.5 HP (212 CC) OHV
HORIZONTAL SHAFT
GAS ENGINES
ITEM 60363/69730
ITEM 68121/69727 shown
CALIFORNIA ONLY

Customer Rating
★★★★
SAVE
\$290
SUPER COUPON
\$99.99
comp of \$389.99

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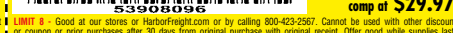
SUPER COUPON



SOLAR
ROPE LIGHT
ITEM 62533
68353 shown

Customer Rating
★★★★
SAVE
66%
SUPER COUPON
\$9.99
comp of \$29.97

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DENNY MURAWSKA

Cedar Waxwing


The case of an auspicious avian

Let me set the scene: a busy road coming out of a mall at the end of the work day. Cars whiz by. Suddenly, there is a bird in the road. A songbird. It was obviously struggling and was soon to become a pancake. Drivers passed by without a second thought. One turned around and stopped in front of the unfortunate bird. Traffic had to stop as the bird was picked up and taken into her vehicle for examination. It was clearly stunned but not bleeding or otherwise injured. It was a beautiful cedar waxwing. If you have seen one, you know. As the story goes, it was coddled and shaded on that hot morning. After a while, it regained its sensibilities and proved it was able to fly. What a moment!

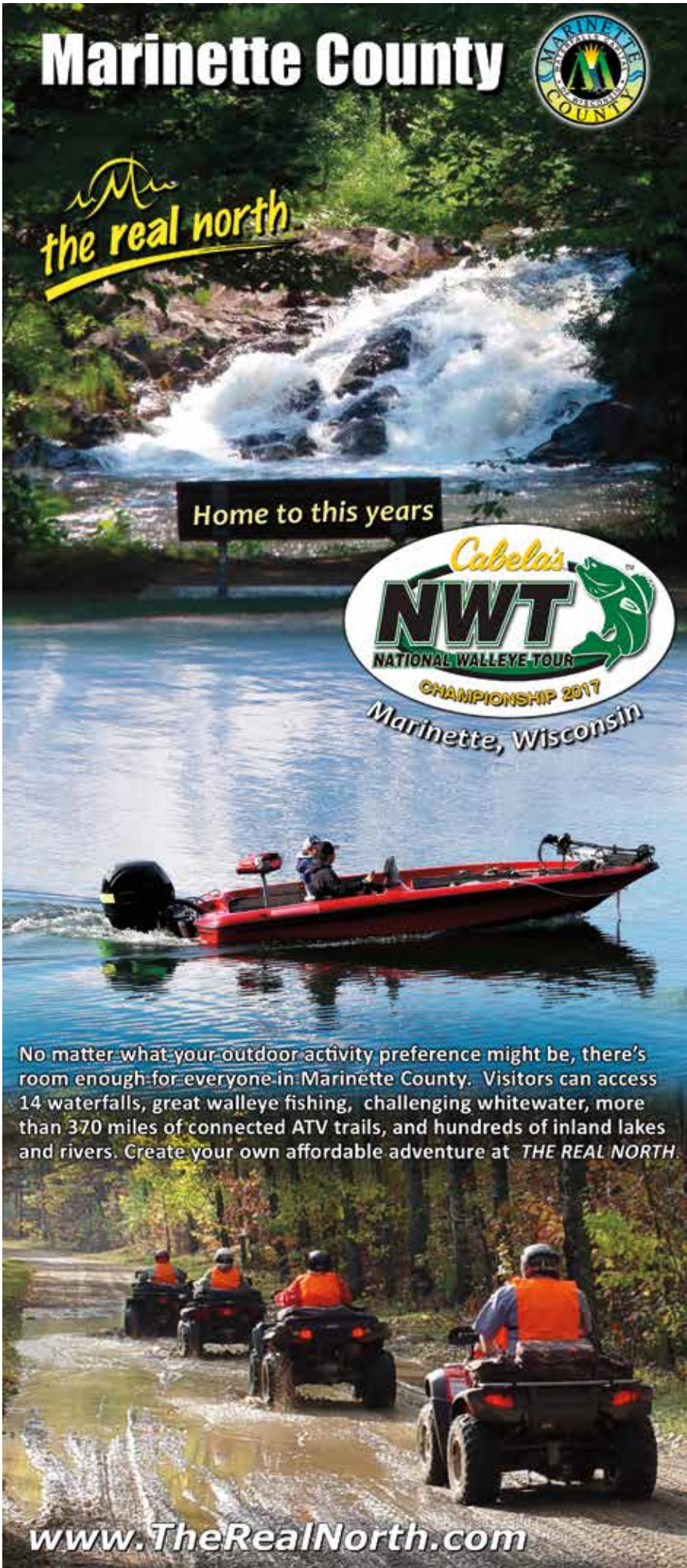
What is not mentioned here is that a law was broken. It is illegal to pick up or even touch songbirds and migratory birds. In some cases, it is a federal offense. Fines for intentional violations can run from \$2000 to \$5000 with perhaps nine months in the slammer. I know this because I am a fish taxidermist and have to abide by the letter of the "law." So, let us just say I may not be relaying a personal experience but that of a very close friend.


This same close friend has told me about countless songbirds that slam into windows of her home. Sadly, some simply die; however, many are just stunned and need a bit of time in the cool shade away from marauding cats and dogs. Seeing them fly away is a true joy to behold, as I am told. Worthy of at least a few tears.

Statute 29.604 is quite laborious to read. The list of threatened and endangered plants and animals is nothing one is going to memorize. Would you recognize a Pecatonica River Mayfly? How about a Slender Madtom fish? If you wish to have a turtle for a pet, make sure is not a Blanding's turtle. This law's intent is admirable, but as with any law its enforcement is open to the discretion of those who enforce it. If I am feeding birds in my yard, as many folks do, and a deer comes along to eat a few sunflower seeds, I could be in violation of game feeding and baiting rules.

As for me, if a bird hits my window, I will take care of it. If I see any creature in need of help, I will provide for it. If I have to trespass to recover a wounded deer, that could well happen, too. We can kill many species with impunity but cannot touch others even when morality dictates it. We can feed some but only those deemed worthy. Common sense and the heart must rule at times. 


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



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TOM CARPENTER

Badger Birds

American robin

If robins weren't so common on most of Wisconsin's landscape, we'd get more excited when we see one. But in spring, when winter's last gray snowbanks are holding on but the ground has thawed most everywhere else, the first American robin of spring doing her shuffle-stop hunt in the brown grass is a mighty wonderful sight indeed.

Robins are worthy of our admiration and respect in many ways, so step back and take note of our state songbird in every season.

Look for the familiar red breast, which is actually its own unique and warm shade of orange. A yellow bill, dark head and a dusky-gray back round out the plumage.


Watch for big and burly "country robins" when you're in the field hiking, camping, fishing or hunting. Town birds always seem slenderer.

Listen for this thrush's beautiful and melodious song, a pleasant *cheerily-cheerily-cheerily-cheerily*. Robins also make a loud *CHUT-chut-chut* call when alarmed or to keep track of each other when feeding. A bird will flick its tail while making this call.

Realize that a robin with its head cocked sideways is not "listening" for earthworms. Rather, with eyes on the side of its head, this is the only way the bird can see an earthworm in the grass or burrowing just below the surface.

Plant berry bushes and fruit trees to attract robins. They love crabapples, plums, mulberries, wild grapes, cherries ... every kind of berry and small fruit. These are staple foods in late summer and fall.

Understand that robins can raise up to three broods in one spring-and-summer season. That's why you might spot mottle-breasted young birds all the way into September. According to the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, only 40 percent of nests produce young, and of the young actually hatched only 25 percent survive to November.

Did you know that more and more robins are wintering in Wisconsin each year? This happens in wooded areas where naturally freeze-dried fruit remains on shrubs and trees as a steady food source and also in towns and suburbs where ornamental plantings (such as crabapple trees) offer abundant fruit. 

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

JIM SERVI

Maple Syrup Is A Delicious Springtime Hobby

Celebrate the end of winter with a tasty treat

As the days get longer and the temperature begins to push above freezing, an amazing (and delicious!) process is taking place throughout the maple forests of Wisconsin. This time of change means maple syrup season has arrived. More and more people are starting maple syrup operations right in their own backyard as a great springtime hobby.

It's relatively easy to get started, but timing is everything. Although the first tapping of the year varies a little, it generally happens around the middle of March. Maple trees run the best when the nights drop below freezing and the days are above freezing. This causes the tree to become pressurized, and the sap begins moving from the roots up the tree. As the temperature drops, the reverse happens and suction is created. When you tap the tree with a small hole and insert a spout, you are taking advantage of this natural process. The sap will begin to drip. You can then use buckets, bags or plastic tubing to capture the maple sap.


After you collect your maple sap, you filter it and begin cooking. Amazingly, it takes approximately 40 gallons of sap to make a gallon of maple syrup, depending on the sugar content. A good old-fashioned cooking pan is the easiest way to get started. These pans can be found at any maple syrup specialty store or by shopping craigslist for a used option in maple syrup country. Many operations have evolved and use reverse osmosis systems, evaporators and other modern technology, but all that is truly needed for delicious maple syrup is an open flame.

Your maple syrup is ready when it reaches 219 degrees, although, you should take it off a little bit earlier. Evaporation will continue at a fast pace as you filter in one more time. Hydrometers, which measure the percent of sugar by density, also work well and are among the special tools you can buy to test when the syrup is ready. Once it's filtered and cooled just a bit, you're ready for the best part: tasting! Try it warm

from the pan over cold vanilla ice cream for a delicious treat. Sealed properly in a glass jar, maple syrup will last for years.

If you're not ready to start your own operation, you're in luck, because there are locations throughout the state to learn more about, and taste, this unique process. After visiting many maple syrup operations over the years, I've learned that you can stop by nearly any sugar shack in the spring. Most are more than willing to show their setup and are always happy to have the company. Just drive down a country road until you see steam pouring out of a side building or a pan set up in the yard, and you've found your place. Of course, you always have an open-ended invitation to visit our maple syrup operation as well.

For those who don't like stopping by random strangers, there is a better option. MacKenzie Center, near Poynette, offers a fun-filled day of maple syrup festivities on April 1, 2017, from 8:00 AM to 2:00 PM. First, they discuss the progression of making maple syrup from the Native Americans to modern day. They have a horse-drawn wagon ride and other activities as well. Best of all, you get to try fresh maple syrup during their pancake breakfast. Our little red country school house, Maple Grove Elementary School, has its annual First Tapping pancake breakfast at the end of March.

Many other communities have something similar. From the Sugarin' Off Pancake Breakfast every Sunday in March at the River Bend Nature Center in Racine to the Maple Sugarin' Open House in Newburg and the Taylor County Lions Maple Fest in Medford, there are opportunities to see, learn and taste for yourself in every corner of Wisconsin. But be careful ... it gets in your blood. Taste too much maple syrup and before long you'll have a new springtime hobby. 

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


County Teasers

Explore Wisconsin
County-by-County at
onwisconsinoutdoors.com

Oneida County. The Minocqua area truly is Nature's Original Water Park(TM), with thousands of lakes, rivers and streams, plus hundreds of miles of trails. See for yourself why we were named "one of the 25 best bass lakes in the central U.S." by BassMaster.com.

Monroe County. Sparta, the "Bicycling Capital of America," is gearing up for May's trail opening but has so much more to offer in addition to bicycling. Come explore over 6,000 acres of public land and sample the hunting, fishing, hiking, and other activities the area has to offer.

Vilas County. Cure your cabin fever with a trip to Manitowish Waters in Wisconsin's Northwoods. Enjoy the best hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation! Enjoy the remainder of winter and the transition to spring as it's a great time to explore and relax ... and plan a return trip to Manitowish Waters!

Ozaukee County. Is this the year you upgrade that old fishing gear? We've got a new shop in town: Fat Boys Bait & Tackle. They'll set you up and you can be dropping a line from shore the same day! Or check out the marina and its easy access to the downtown for your next charter adventure. 

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JIM SERVI

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rothsugarbush.com



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Great for outdoor adventures, fishing, boating and safely exploring that late season ice. This life jacket is designed to automatically inflate when immersed in water but can be manually inflated as well. Designed for mobility and comfort with wide neckline and lightweight design. Chest size of 30 - 52 inches. Buoyancy of 25.5 pounds is higher than most life jackets. Reviews say it is lightweight, comfortable, easily adjustable, durable, and has good ventilation. (\$109.99)

westmarine.com



TZ TP14 TURKEY PACK WITH CHAIR

Getting ready for your big turkey hunt but can't find room for all your gear? Sick of carrying a chair only to have it bang against trees and brush? Or worse yet, sick of sitting on the ground? This turkey pack will solve all your problems with an abundance of well-placed pockets perfect for all your gear. Two of the pockets are designed to warm your hands as you patiently wait. Best of all, this pack has spring-loaded legs that transform into a padded hunting chair. With this pack, you'll be turkey hunting in style. (\$319.99)

tenzingoutdoors.com



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Gobbling on the edge of your range is the biggest gobbler you've ever seen, but you can't move. He's watching your every movement, and your call is an arm's length away. You're stuck. That's where this call comes in handy. It's made with magnets, so the push button style call sits safely against the non-action side of your shotgun. With a simple reach of your thumb, it creates realistic yelps, clucks and purrs to bring that gobbler in the last few steps. (\$39.99)

knightandhale.com



LAKE X LURES CANNONBALL JR

Every musky fisherman I talk to says these lures are extremely difficult to find, but they are worth the search. Since Lake X Lures is working on a new website, I went to blueribbonbait.com and found this message, "Due to an extremely limited supply, there is a 2-lure max per customer on all Lake X Lures." This topwater lure makes a unique, deep popping sound that catches the attention of big fish. Available in 14 varieties. Take advantage when you find them. (\$41.99)

lakexlures.com



FIRE-BALL JIG

This short-shank gumball jig has been boasted as the "#1 all-time money winning jig on the PWT & FLW Pro Walleye Tours." With that alone, it might be worth adding to your tackle box as you chase spring walleyes. If you look closely, it also has a place to attach a stringer hook to catch those short strike fish. Comes in weights from 1/16- to 1/2-ounce jig head and 12 different color varieties. (\$3.29)

northlandtackle.com

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

Check out more product reviews at www.onwisconsinoutdoors.com!



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DAN MOERICKE

An 'Up Nort' Report

New tricks for old dogs

There have been a few occasions during my long march toward becoming a grumpy old man on which I may have made a disparaging remark about snowmobiles. They're loud, they smell, the people that drive them are idiots. I don't remember exactly what my words may have been, but you get the drift. Watching these overpowered motorized dog sleds blast past me as I dragged my sled slowly across a frozen lake, I was filled with disdain ... and maybe just a little envy.

Over time, as the decades piled up, my sled seemed to get heavier and the good fishing spots somehow had gotten farther away. Grudgingly, I had to admit that maybe, just maybe, it would be okay to own a snowmobile but *only* to be used for ice fishing. The thought of getting on one of those things and riding for hours just for the sake of riding still put a sour taste in the back of my mouth.

As a kid, I remember pleading with my dad to buy a snowmobile. It would be great for our ice fishing trips up to Pelican Lake, I reasoned, and the trail riding I could do around home would just be a bonus. Amazingly, my dad broke down and bought an old Ski-doo. What little I remember about that old sled revolved around the hit-or-miss Armstrong starting process, the un-

comfortable ride and frequently getting stuck. Our brush with snowmobile ownership lasted all of one winter.

Flip the calendar ahead about 45 years. Last year my good friend Dick Leinenkugel announced that he was going to be upgrading his sleds and that he'd be getting rid of his old Ski-doo Touring machine. "Perfect" I thought. So, after a four-decade sabbatical from snowmobile ownership, I got back on the sled. I've got to say, snowmobiles have come a long way—electric start, heated handlebars, reverse gear, adjustable shocks. This was *not* what I remembered as a kid.

And so it began. I had my sled to make ice fishing less of a chore and those distant hotspots more accessible. Ice fishing was once again more fun than work. Then something weird happened. A couple friends asked me to go out trail riding with them. Much to my surprise, it was actually kind of fun! The trails through the Nicolet were virtually void of other riders, and I enjoyed seeing how the landscape that I enjoyed so much during the fall hunting season had transformed. Like a reversible hunting jacket, the whole forest had gone from "Realtree" to "Snow Camo."

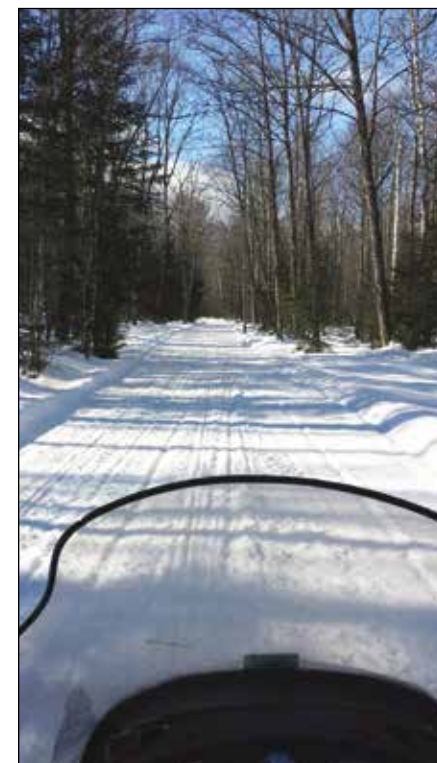
Stopping at the various establishments (i.e., taverns) along the trails, the talk



This is what I had in mind when I got my sled.

among the fellow snowmobilers all seemed to center on how many miles they had ridden and how fast they were able to do it. Most riders seemed to be all about "fast and furious." That isn't me. If you run across me out on the trails, I'll be the slow and curious. I'm using my trail rides to scout new territory for next bow season.

Make no mistake, my snowmobile's primary use is to get me to the spots I want to ice fish. A little trail riding in between



Even an old dog can appreciate this kind of scenery.

fishing trips is just a nice diversion. So, I guess this old dog can still learn a new trick or two. Just don't get me started on ATVs. They're loud, they're dirty, and the people that drive them are idiots. That's what I think. For now, at least. Just sayin'. *WO*

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

Most riders seemed to be all about "fast and furious." That isn't me.

If you run across me out on the trails, I'll be the slow and curious.



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George Stephanopoulos worked as the White House Director of Communications for President Bill Clinton, from January 20, 1993 to June 7, 1993.

He then worked as his Senior Advisor, from June 7, 1993 to December 10, 1996.

In 2002 he became the host of ABC's This Week with George Stephanopoulos; a Sunday morning news program.

In 2005 he became ABC's Chief Washington Correspondent.

In 2012, 2013, and 2014, while working for ABC, he made contributions totaling \$75,000 to The Clinton Foundation that he did not disclose to his viewers.

In the last Presidential election, 94% of the contributions from professional journalists went to the Hillary Clinton Campaign.

Freedom of the Press is intended to protect us, as American citizens, by ensuring we are provided with truthful information.

Do you believe that George Stephanopoulos, and journalists like him, can be trusted to provide us with that information?

DICK ELLIS

American Media

Don't trust ... and verify

This editorial is solely the opinion of the *OWO* publisher and in no way reflects the opinions of advertisers, writers or other private contractors working with *On Wisconsin Outdoors*.

"The fake news media (failing New York Times, NBC News, ABC, CBS, CNN) is not my enemy. It is the enemy of the American People."

— President Donald Trump Tweet, February 17, 2017

"If you want to preserve democracy as we know it, you have to have a free and sometimes adversarial press. Without it, I'm afraid that we would lose so much of our individual liberties. That's how dictators get started. They get started by suppressing the free press. I'm not saying President Trump is trying to be a dictator. I'm just saying that we need to learn the lessons of history."

— Senator John McCain, R-Arizona, during a February 19, 2017, interview with NBC "Meet the Press" Host Chuck Todd.

McCain is correct only if a free press by their daily performance as professional journalists has earned the expectation from their audience that they will deliver information with integrity and credibility to the best of their ability. A more important lesson of history is that print or electronic vehicles of mass communication can be a dangerous tool of persuasion, with the lie often utilized by corrupt leadership with great effectiveness across time to mislead millions.

The most important lesson of recent history is that the American media has earned our strict attention. They need to be watched closely and with intense skepticism. The responsibility of watching the watchdog begins with you.

As a voter who cast his ballot for Trump first and foremost to protect the Constitution following the candidate's publicly-disclosed list of 21 constitutionalists from which he would nominate (Judge Neil M. Gorsuch was nominated from the list) to seats vacated on the Supreme Court, November 8 had marked the end of an extended death watch. The national media with pounding, relentless rhetoric and weekly polling over 18 months had delivered one theme: Trump could not be elected. Some Wisconsin print and

electronic media had followed suit, with Wisconsin radio talk show hosts, the ultimate conservative pretenders and self-described "Never Trumpers" promising the Trump defeat.

There had been an ongoing "selective blindness" by the national and some Wisconsin-based media throughout the campaign as dangerous as the blatant lie. Contrasting Trump's public disclosure of judicial candidates, finding credible reporting on possible Supreme Court nominees by Clinton and the consequences of those appointments was virtually non-existent. Why? Because the lifetime appointments of radical justices certain to come would decimate the Constitution. If light shined on that truth, the American electorate would reject it.

There is nothing more important than protecting American freedoms as guaranteed by the Constitution for your children and grandchildren. The ballot allows us to do that, non-violently. I don't know if it was by the grace of God that we retained that gift election night; that would imply that we deserve such a reprieve. I do know that America was somehow delivered from the fate the media had guaranteed: a certain Trump loss. For a voter on that death watch who witnessed Trump's rise from the dead with the final ballot returns late night November 8, I remain grateful every day that the voters' message was a total rejection of the media.

Today, one month after Trump's inauguration, the national media with pounding, relentless rhetoric and weekly polling, again promises us that the people have turned against the President. I don't believe them.

A free press founded on integrity delivering consistent, credible information is imperative to our democracy. But bringing credible facts to the people remains a threat to many. McCain, who publically worries about the rise of dictators in America, remains fully entrenched after three decades as an establishment senator. Perhaps he, like thousands of others, is worried too about Trump's promise to "drain the swamp."

President Reagan described his approach of negotiating

with the Russians in the 1980s with three words: trust but verify.

Alter that slightly when asked to believe the American media today.

Don't trust ... and verify.

They earned it.

"I think the dangerous edges here are that he (President Trump) is trying to undermine the media and trying to make up his own facts. And it could be that while unemployment and the economy worsens, he could have undermined the messaging so much that he can actually control exactly what people think. And that ... that is our job."

— Mika Brzezinski, MSNBC Anchor, Morning Joe, February 22, 2017

"I would say John McCain has been wrong on just about everything over the last four decades. I don't agree with his analysis and applying that to the President. I haven't seen any legislation coming forward that wants to limit the press. Everything that he says about the President is colored by his own personal dispute he has got running with President Trump. And it should be taken with a grain of salt, because John McCain is the guy who has advocated for war everywhere. He would bankrupt the nation. And actually, we're very lucky John McCain is not in charge, because I think we would be in perpetual war."

— Senator Rand Paul, R-Kentucky, during a February 19, 2017, interview with ABC News This Week.

"The marriage of a corrupt government with a corrupt media means the most dangerous enemy the American people has ever faced is at the door."

— Dick Ellis, Publisher, *On Wisconsin Outdoors*, October 20, 2016 as published in the November-December 2016 issue

HENSKE, from page 14


pull the kayak for long hauls.

Check out a sit-on type kayak that is short and light. Make sure it has an adjustable seat with back support. The sit-ons may be heavier than the sit-ins because they feature two layers of plastic between the bottom of the boat and the deck. There are scupper holes in case waves wash over the boat. It really can't sink, and I never heard of one tipping over. Remember, length means more weight. The new sit-in fishing kayaks can be 12 feet and weigh almost 80 pounds—too much for me to handle.

I have a Wilderness Tarpon that cost \$600 with a used paddle. If anything goes wrong with a name brand, you can order parts and seats online. Plus, you don't need to worry about an out-

board motor, trailer, insurance, storage fees or gas.

While kayaking, I have noticed on bog lakes that the shore lines are full of mosquitos, but once away from shore it is usually bug-free during the day.

I am over 80 and have new hips and bad football knees. I do not get stiff or sore when in the kayak because my legs are out straight and I can shift around. Paddling is not a problem if you take your time. Have fun fishing those under-fished lakes. 

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





Presents Firearms Info from Ron Stresing

RON STRESING

The Proper Choke

Finding the pattern for optimum performance

The flock of Canada geese did just what we wanted them to and came our way. I called just once more and swung my shotgun up. A load of BBB steel folded the goose, and it fell into a hayfield where my cousin's dog made a classic retrieve. I later dropped another nice goose, taking my two-bird limit with a total of four shells. Both birds were dead on arrival, hit with five pellets each. That's what happens when you find the right mix of choke constriction and ammunition.

Adding some constriction to a shotgun barrel started right around the dawn of the 20th century. English gun makers began adding "points of choke" to the end of shotgun barrels to get a tighter pattern of pellets and, therefore, more range. We use a system with cylinder, improved cylinder, modified and full as the base line.

Generally speaking, cylinder bore (no choke) is most used for buckshot, slugs and close-in hunting like quail or woodcock. Improved cylinder has about five- thousandths



Author's two geese taken with four shells

or so more constriction and is favored for close range hunting and games like skeet or sporting clays. Modified is probably the most useful and will work for most wing shooting within 40 yards, as well as provide full choke patterns with steel shot. Fact is, with modern shotgun ammunition, modified choke will probably work in 90% of applications for both lead and steel shot. Full gets most of its use with trap shooting and long range upland bird hunting, predator

and turkey hunting. I *do not* recommend running steel shot through a barrel choked tighter than modified. Extra full turkey chokes provide the most constriction and are labeled "lead shot only," as they could cause a potential barrel burst if used with steel. Other in-between chokes like light modified split the difference and allow for fine tuning of your shotgun pattern.

We all know the rule about steel patterning one choke tighter than lead and that's a good place to start. Steel pellets of BB or larger seem to need a little more room to flow through a shotgun barrel and pattern nicely. I tried modified, light modified, and improved cylinder with my goose loads of 1 ¼ ounces of steel BB and BBB. I found vertical stringing and uneven patterns increased as the amount of choke used increased. After my testing, I was clean killing Canada geese at 45 yards using improved cylinder with five or six hits per bird.

continued on page 39



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STUART WILKERSON

Concealed Carry

Ruger's new LCP pocket pistol is a definite improvement over the original

With more than 1.5 million sold since 2008, Ruger's LCP is one of the most popular compact pistols ever manufactured. The .380 ACP caliber, six-round, nylon frame, double action pistol is light, accurate and reliable. Despite its many attributes, Ruger recognized that there was room for improvement.

A long, heavy (10-pound) gritty trigger pull has been the primary complaint among owners, followed by the too-small sights. Many owners noted that the inside of the pistol's trigger guard painfully collided with their trigger finger under recoil. First generation LCP slides do not stay open after the last round is fired, and the slide itself is difficult to grasp and pull back. Ruger addressed some of these complaints with the LCP Custom and has now gone even further with the recent introduction of the LCP II.


Similar in appearance to its older siblings, the LCP II is slightly heavier—by an ounce—and basically the same size and shape. In terms of shoot-ability, the LCP II is a significant improvement. The new single action trigger boasts a smoother, lighter (about 6 pounds) and shorter trigger pull. The trigger guard has been enlarged, eliminating the painful index finger crash that some users experienced when shooting the pistol. As an added safety measure, the II has a loaded chamber port in the breech that exposes the rim of a chambered cartridge. The pistol has a blade safety in the trigger that is based on Ruger's own LC9 pistol.

Sights on the LCP II are fixed and integral to the slide and are more visible than its predecessors. Functionally, the new sights are certainly up to the task. Compact pistols, like the LCPs, are made for self-defense distances of about 7 to 10 yards. At those ranges, it's doubtful that sights will even come into play. At a distance of seven yards, the LCP II will

print groups of less than two inches.

The II's low profile sights, combined with the pistol's smoother and rounded edges, make for a more snag-free carry gun. The slide is now easier to retract and stays back on the last shot; it's always a good thing to know when your magazine is out of ammunition. A textured grip frame provides a more secure and comfortable grip, and the larger frame surface does a better job of distributing recoil. Shooters with larger hands will be pleased to learn that a grip extension is provided that attaches to the magazine base and makes for a more stable hold.

One can argue the merits of the .380 ACP as a self-defense round, but recoil is certainly manageable and allows for quick follow-up shots. Certainly, there are more powerful compact pistol alternatives than the .380 ACP. Those alternatives are also heavier and feature much more felt recoil, which, it could be argued, negates the additional power. At self-defense ranges, a .380 ACP travelling at 850 feet per second and delivering 150 foot pounds of energy is, at least, sufficient and has proven to be an effective round for over a century.

Production of the original LCP has not ceased with the debut of the LCP II. The original is still a fine gun and, at a suggested retail price of only \$249, a true bargain. For a mere \$100 more, the LCP II can be bought and, frankly, the extra C-note is worth it. Good as the original is, Ruger's improvements as seen on the LCP II make for a much more functional firearm. 

Stuart Wilkerson is a longtime OWO contributor, award-winning Wisconsin journalist, and firearms expert specializing in historical firearms and collecting



The new and improved Ruger—lightweight, compact pistol—the LCP II.

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TYPE: Semi-auto, single action

MAGAZINE CAPACITY: 6 rounds

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TWIST: 1:16-inch

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OVERALL WIDTH: 0.91 inch

WEIGHT: 10.6 ounces

SIGHTS: Integral, iron sights

GRIP: Black, glass-filled nylon

ACCESSORIES: Magazine, holster, extended magazine floor plate, lock, instruction manual

PRICE: \$349



- Ruger LCP II Available at Shorty's
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STRESING, from page 38

Results from your combinations of choke tube and ammunition may vary, so try shooting a few test patterns on paper to find the right combination. Testing had me switch from modified to a light modified choke for ducks. Not only were more ducks bagged, but the birds were in better shape to eat. Any more than three to five pellet strikes per bird is overkill.

Predator hunters may also want to do some testing of choke constrictions with their favorite ammunition. Try improved or light modified for heavy predator loads or

buckshot. When bobcat, fox or coyote calling, try improved with steel BB or BBB or size 2 Hevi-Shot.

Make sure to follow the manufacturer's recommendations and keep the threads of your choke tubes lubricated. Don't over-tighten and try some pattern testing or a trip to the clays range, or go hunting. You will be very glad you did! 

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

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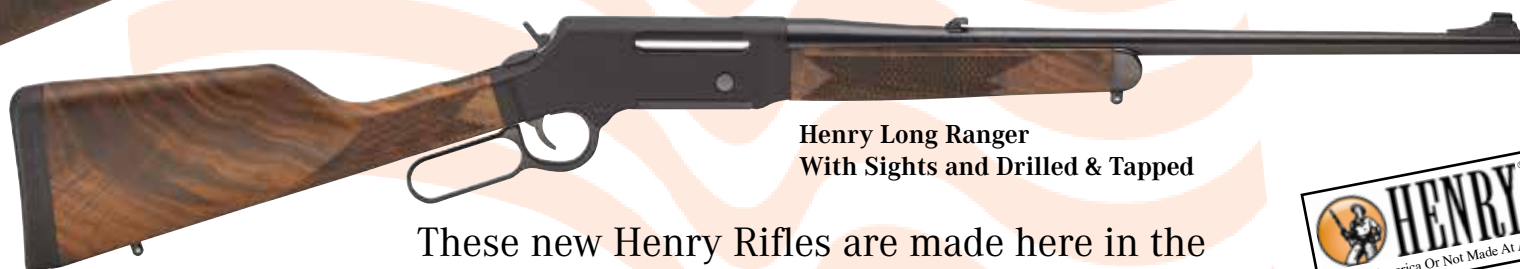
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