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On Wisconsin *Outdoors*

with the Dick Ellis Experts

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PHIL SCHWEIK

Have an Icefishing Game Plan

Simple steps to winning on the hardwater

As anglers we use a lot of different tactics and techniques to help us be successful while fishing. We try different lines, lures, bait, etc...and at times it can all be beneficial. But as we head out, especially on the ice, do we really have a game plan? Do we really know where we are actually going to be fishing?

Some of us do and some of us don't, and some of the time we just head out and decide on the fly. Any one of the previous techniques can be productive, but how would you like to be able to head out knowing that you are going to be on fish? You can do that!

How many times have you used your electronics in the summer to locate structure, or specific depths, or maybe you used your electronics to return to a particular location? Have you ever tried doing that in the winter? We use our electronics on a daily basis when ice fishing.

I have my Humminbird locator hooked up directly to a power source on my 4-wheeler and it is mounted directly

to the front rack of my machine so I can see it at all times. I have the lake map chips inserted into it and when traveling across a lake it is just as good as when it is mounted on my boat. This works great when I am looking for specific locations, or checking out a new lake.

But what about finding structure? It sure as heck won't work through the ice! Here is where a little homework goes a long way. If I know that I am thinking about ice fishing a particular lake the upcoming winter I will go out on that lake before it freezes up. Once I am on the water I will travel around the lake watching and studying my sonar and side imaging. I cover the entire lake and when I come across anything that looks like it may be a possible ice fishing location I will mark it on my mapping.

Those locations may be humps or points, drop-offs that aren't marked on a map, or specific structure like downed timber or maybe even a crib. Once these locations are marked on my locator I will have them forever.

Now when the lake is frozen over I simply turn on my locator and head directly over to my marked locations and begin fishing. It is as simple as that. No more days of lining up a bridge abutment with a tree on the shoreline, and then triangulating that with another big rock or tree on an opposite shoreline to try to find a spot that you want to fish. You can now eliminate a lot of guesswork, and you can spend a lot less time searching and a lot more time actually fishing.

The days of old are gone and the days of electronics are upon us. Try giving modern technology a try and I guarantee you that it will improve your fishing. 🎣

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

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When Lake Superior freezes along its shores and bays, anglers can take their pick of excellent fishing for walleye, northern pike or panfish. In addition to these, as the ice reaches out the the Apostle Islands, you can catch all varieties of trout. In late January, diehard lake trout "bobbbers" practice vertical jigging in water up to 250 feet deep for fish that regularly exceed 20 pounds.

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CHRIS REHLINGER

Trump Those Winter Perch

Hold these cards for better icefishing

Q ♣ Drill early and drill less.

Drill your holes relatively early in the day and then let the areas quiet down. I believe this includes both shallow water and even into the greater depths. Sometimes fish are located fast immediately after drilling, but it is a good idea to allow the holes to settle. Mark the holes that fish did occupy and maintain contact with a school or the path of nomadic fish. Only drill a series of holes in a line when you are fishing a specific type of location, either an irregular depth, a favorable turn or bend type contour, or a mud and rock confluence. Identify primary holes, allow things to calm down, and then wait for the sun to activate natural forage or stimulate the perch to want to feed. Perch prefer light conditions since they do not have superior low light vision like a walleye. 138

Q ♠ Stay in one spot and fish fast.

If you have located fish or are in a spot that has produced good numbers of perch recently, stay where you are for the duration. Give the fish in this location a chance to see what is available as feed and potentially get comfortable with your offering. Or provide a variety of lures and baits, but still utilize only one rod to maintain focus of the slightest of bites. Perch have a slow deliberate bite, and if not hooked fast, usually move from the area. When the fish become active, you need to be fast. This means either quick hook removals on caught fish and immediate return of the bait/lure to the same position, or multiple rods, with the same standardized bait, to be able to produce multiple bites in the same hole. Fishing fast maintains activity in a group of fish and can promote competition encouraging bites. Competition also gets the attention of better sized perch to dominate a bite. 161

Q ♥ Match local forages or bait preference.

This statement can mean two different things. When certain forage exists, use what is similar and match the hatch by colors of certain lures or exact bait. Bait like wigglers or minnows are the usual



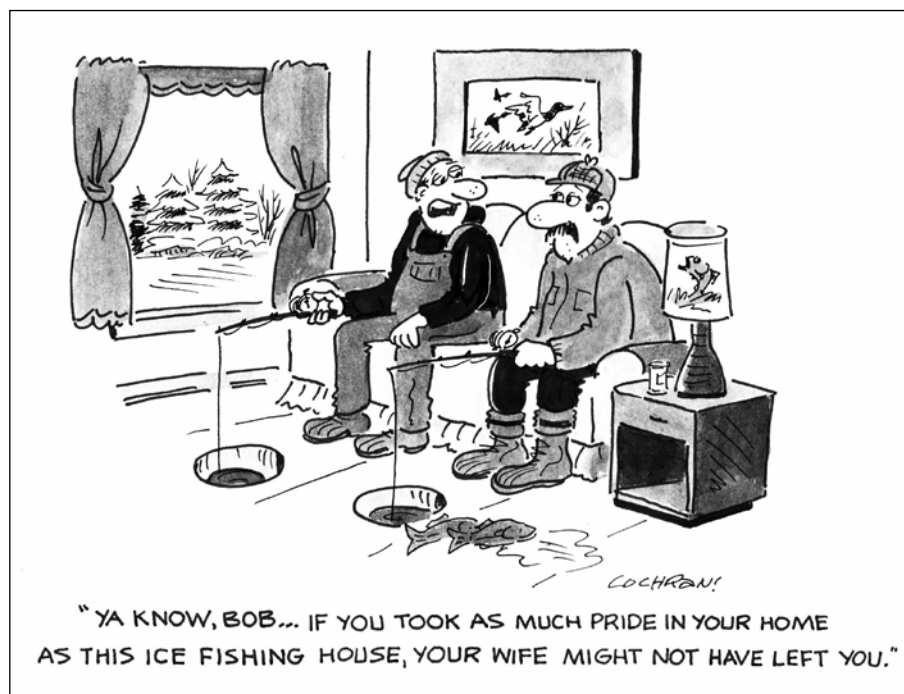
A belly hold on a jumbo!

winter perch bait preference. If the bite is tough, just minnow heads can perform well. For a generic general perch ice bait, basic waxies or spikes can be the ticket. My preference is using spikes simply for the durability and longevity of staying on the hook. Spikes sometimes can be found in various colors, but for perch, red is usually the most attractive color. I have had limited success using solely plastic, but I have tried them in combination with spikes. I truly believe it is my lack of confidence with plastic that leads me to stick with live bait. 134

Q ♦ Leave little evidence of a good perch bite.

I call them moon craters. Holes of hotspots with the frozen rim of slush making a large raised edge that might have blood residue from a nice pile of perch or leftover bait, like bright red euro spikes or dead minnows. This can tell others that it was a good hole and should be fished again. Use the similar environmental philosophy of leaving the outdoors cleaner than you found it and do the moon crater removal so the area can possibly repopulate with catchable fish and potentially be part of your mill run of spots on your next visit. Do not mark spots with soda or beer cans or other trash. I know other anglers have left me a burnt piece of wood or a pile of pistachio nut shells where they had fished successfully. I find these spots faster than using anyone's GPS unit. ♡

Wisconsinite Chris Rehlinger is a native of Neosho but has called Lake Wisconsin home since 1998 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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KATEY SCHRAUTH

Walking on Water

Frozen tundra offers visitor experience of a lifetime

All around Wisconsin during the winter months, frozen lakes are dotted with fishermen and ice shanties. This is the time of year when the landmass grows and waterways diminish, or so it appears. For many who love to fish for the unseen swimming under the water's surface, ice-fishing is an amazing opportunity to set up and hook a northern, walleye, bass, panfish or fish of choice.

Growing up in Wisconsin, driving over frozen Lake Winnebago or dragging a portable pop-up tent into the middle of a smaller lake, seems to some to be second nature. Imagine growing up in a place where the biggest frozen structure you ever saw was a chiseled ice fountain at a wedding on the beach.

We were set up about 120 yards off the shoreline, with our pickup parked on the ice and our ice shanty set up as a wind block for ourselves and our kids. Our dog needed a break from running on the slick ice, so I decided to take her up to shore to catch a break. Once on shore, we caught the attention of Leia. Leia, a native to Hawaii, was visiting Wisconsin for the first time. She had decided to take a nature hike in the Kettle Moraine State Forest when she stumbled across the five of us enjoying ice fishing on a gorgeous day in the outdoors.

Leia didn't know a hike in the woods was going to turn into an experience of a lifetime. She was very interested in what we were doing, because, as it appeared

from shore, we were simply running from one red flag and racing to the next. I explained to her that we were fishing. Her eyes lit up, first out of interest, then to that of questioning.

I invited her on to the ice to see what all the excitement was about. She took one hesitant step after the next, following me to the first hole where we explained what was going on with the tip-up and how it works to catch a fish. Even after showing Leia how thick the ice was, she feared she would fall through, but trusted that a mother wouldn't allow her children to be in harm's way if this was at all unsafe.

We invited her into the shanty to feel the warmth and protection such a simple

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In this photo, the authors two sons, Hoyt and Wyatt, proudly hold up the 15.5" Bass they caught through the ice.



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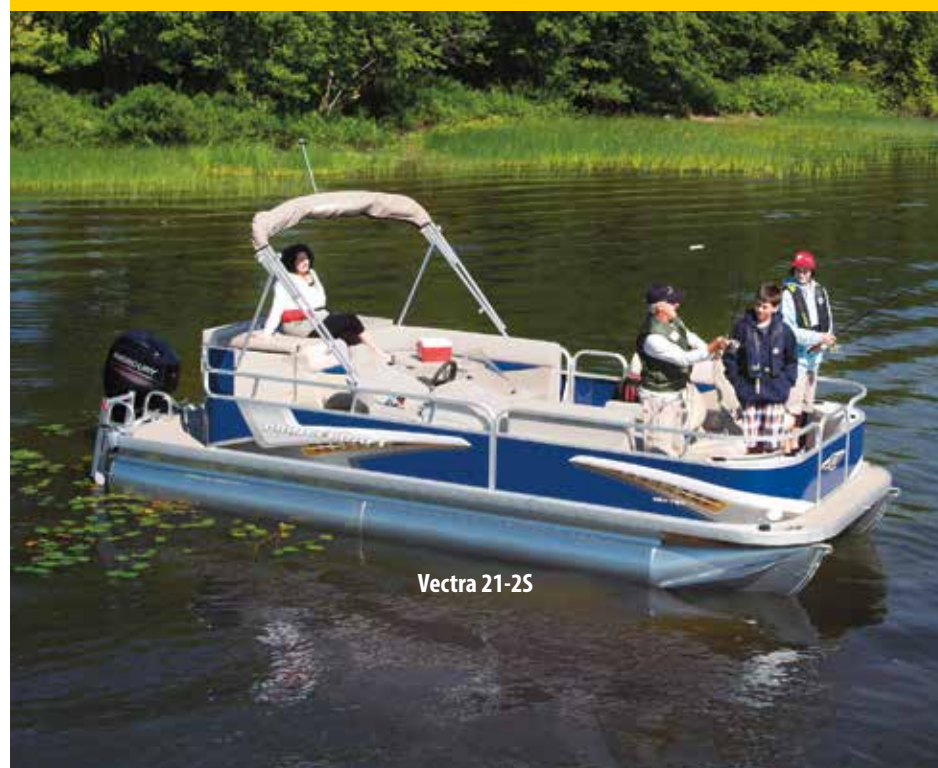
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TYLER FLORCZAK

Where to Find Hardwater Game Fish

Location, location, location

The Badger State is home to more than 15,000 lakes with several bodies of water known to produce monster walleyes and northern pike. Because of that, ice fishing is consistently one of, if not the most popular, recreational activity in the winter months.

Ice fishing anglers targeting trophy walleyes and giant gators from first ice until the season closes the first weekend of March (March 4th this year), will have to adapt to the ice conditions as the calendar turns. As the fish gravitate to different locations, anglers need to be wary of where the fish will be located at any given time. Oxygen levels play a major role in where fish will be during the hardwater fishing season.

EARLY ICE

Walleyes, northern pike, occasional bass and the majority of the panfish, tend to be shallower during the first ice period. Vegetation is still present at this time, and stable oxygen is present just about everywhere in any given lake. The vegetation also holds forage for the predatory fish that are looking to pack on the pounds for the long,

cold winter. Game fish will be ultra-aggressive in late-November through December, and this is a time where anglers can expect the most action.

Shallower inlets, bays, mid-depth mud flats, weed lines and areas with flowing water, tend to be the best locations to fish early in the ice fishing season. First ice is a good time to target both walleyes and northern pike in the same spots. Oftentimes a good fishing location will hold both panfish and toothy critters.

MID-WINTER ICE

As ice thickens in late-December and January, the vegetation in shallower waters begins to decompose, which in turn depletes the oxygen in those areas. Game fish and panfish will seek out areas with the most stable oxygen levels as they gravitate to the main lake basin.

This is the time when northern pike and walleyes will relate more to the flats between bays and the main lake. Other good areas to try include main lake points, deep weed edges, channels and shelves. In most lakes in northern Wisconsin, walleyes will

spend the majority of the day in the main lake basin or near weeds and come up out of the depths onto the bars, flats and structure shallower than the main lake to feed in low-light hours—whereas anglers can catch pike from sun up to sun down.

LATE ICE


Over the years, the last few weeks of the ice fishing season have proven to be the best time to tangle with a trophy pike that can stretch anywhere from 40–46 inches and tip the scales at 20–25 pounds.

At some point before the ice fishing season ends, there will likely be a warm period in the forecast with 3–5 days of sunny weather and above average temperatures. If the heat wave is warm enough and long enough, the snow and ice will slowly melt, meaning streams and rivers and even northern facing slopes on lakes will carry running water into lakes. This provides fresh, oxygenated water for the fish, and is a signal to ice anglers that they should return to those early ice spots.

Shallower flats, weedlines and bays near creeks mouths will become hot spots as



Pictured above is Tyler Florczak holding a 27" walleye he caught and released through the ice on the Chetek Chain of Lakes.

the game fishing season wraps up. Anglers will find both walleyes and northern pike slowly gravitating back to known spawning grounds. Staging areas near these spawning grounds can also be exceptional places when late-season ice fishing for walleye and northern pike. 

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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WAYNE MORGENTHALER

That's No Fashion Show

And no angler cares if they're warm on the ice

When ice fishing, I see people wearing a smorgasbord of outfits. I always thought it would be a wonderful idea to have a fashion show of kids, men, and women parading down the runway with just ice fishing outfits on. The hats alone would get hoots and boos from the crowd. Add some nice five-gallon lighted buckets to the run way, and the atmosphere would be just like being on the ice as the sun sets.

As you walk out to your favorite ice fishing spot, are you dressed for the elements? Not everyone has a nice shanty to sit in and some lake locations are hard to get to. Here are some thoughts on what I feel you should be wearing. Starting out with the underwear, I like Under Armour cold weather gear that is compressed. In other words, tight fitting to give you that extra warmth; it also makes your figure look better. To cover the upper half of the Under Armour, I like to wear a heavy wool shirt with a light pull over hood.

Now comes the most important part of your anatomy, which is your feet. If they get cold, get up and walk around to get the circulation going. This is where a good pair of LaCrosse Iceman boots comes in handy. They are good to 30 below. Make sure the boot size is not too tight as you need to be able to wiggle those toes. Feet tend to sweat a lot when you do a lot of walking at this time of the year, and a good dose of foot powder at the end of the day will do wonders.



Ice Armor hat and mittens. Carhartt knit hat
LaCrosse Iceman boots

The hands also need excellent insulation. I like Ice Armor mittens and I put a hand warmer inside them. Mittens give you the freedom to keep your fingers moving when you are outside, but not exposed to the elements. As you get older, the hair gets thinner up top, and I like an Ice Armor hat. This hat does an excellent job of keeping the wind out of the ears and retains the heat. If the weather is going to be warm, say around 32 degrees, I like the knit stocking caps made by Carhartt. For windy days, I like a ski mask to cut down on the wind burn. Also, a good pair of sun glasses should be part of your gear, as the sun glare off the ice and snow is hard on your eyes.

When it comes to coats, I like to wear the same heavy coat I use for deer gun hunting season. The coat needs to be water resistant, have a hood, and hang at least a foot below the hips. You do a lot of bending over ice fishing, and it is important to keep all areas of your body warm. As for the pants, I like the coveralls that are water



Robbie, Ryan, and Kevin modeling their ice fishing outfits

proof and have lots of pockets. Here again deer hunting orange is a good color to go with if you cannot afford another outfit. Make sure the pants have deep pockets to keep your waxworms and redworms warm. If you really want to have that ice fishing attire look, then attach a couple of matching colored depth finders to your outside coat pocket.

Remember, what you wear will determine your ice fishing experience on that wonderful day on the ice. Good luck fishing and always remember to take a friend along.

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

KYLE CICHINOFSKY

Ice Fishing in January

Fishing in the cold pays off for the bold

There is no doubt that early January is the coldest time of the year in northern Wisconsin. At this point in the season many weekend anglers pack up their gear and go back home. But for us die hard ice fishermen, this just decreases the competition.

My friend Tanner and I walked out of the cabin and into the frigid January snow, dragging our ice shanty and gear behind. As we made our way to the lake, the snow got deeper and deeper, but we were determined to catch some fish. As we approached our spot, I plucked the auger out of the sled and started drilling three evenly spaced holes. One for me, one for the vexilar, and one for Tanner.

We quickly set up the shack and turned on the heater; it was time to start fishing. Our lure of choice was a white and orange 1/16 ounce jig head with a wax worm. Our target species was perch or panfish, but on this lake you will never know what you might catch. "Dude, help me tie this knot" Tanner shivered, "Your hands aren't un-thawed yet?" I jokingly said back. "Nope, I think 10 degrees is where I draw the line," Tanner replied. "Toughen up, Bud, there is no one out here." I said. "We are bound to catch something."

Less than 10 minutes later, we both had our lines and four tip-ups in the water. We were marking fish on the vexilar and Tanner

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JERRY KIESOW

Fly-Fishing in Wisconsin

New flies that worked in 2017

Fly fishers can be overwhelmed with ads and stories that introduce new lures and fly patterns. Some look good and others don't. Some are for our part of the country and some are not. Those that combine place and pattern, intrigue us. We tie and try them. Here are six that worked for me in 2017.

The most recent pattern that I caught salmon on was a fly called the Black and White Streamer. It has no tail, but it does have a tag of silver tinsel. The body is black chenille, ribbed with that tinsel, then palmered with black hackle. The pattern adds additional flash by using a few strands of Pearl Krystal Flash in the wing. The wing is formed by palmering a few turns of black and white guinea feathers. (You will see in the photo that I also tied one using orange thread and Root Beer Krystal Flash. Both caught salmon.)

Another streamer that caught a fish or two is one that I created from scraps. I have no name for it. It has a tail made from the barbs of a red hackle. There is a short tag, above the tail, of gold tinsel. The body is dubbed with fluorescent yellow dubbing, ribbed with that same gold tinsel.

There is a short "neck" of black dubbing, and the wing is a combination of yellow, olive and black marabou.

One fly that is simple to tie and works for trout and/or panfish is the Orange and Partridge soft hackle. I tied it using orange thread for the body – thin in the back and heavy toward the front – giving it some profile. Then I tied a few turns of partridge, ruffed grouse and hackle. I finished the head with the orange thread. Fish it slow and deep in many sizes for trout.

A fly which may work for trout, but I have only used on bluegills, I call Bob's Beadhead Bluegill Fly because I got the recipe from my friend Bob. This fly can be tied in any variety of colors you think will work. It has a marabou tail, a chenille body and a dark, iridescent bead for a head. Simple. The one pictured here has a yellow tail and olive body. It is tied on a #8 short wet fly hook.

Then there is the Madsen's Skunk, a fly that caused me to fall out of a canoe, and is pictured with other flies featured in this article. Space constraints don't allow me to describe this incident and how to tie this fly, but I will in a future



Six flies that have worked for me in 2017: From left to right and top to bottom: Black and White Streamer, Orange and Partridge, Madsen's Skunk, Bob's Beadhead Bluegill Fly and the No-Name Streamer.

edition of *On Wisconsin Outdoors*. I found the pattern for Madsen's Skunk on line at *Flyanglers Online*.

See you in the river.

Keep a good thought! 🍷

Editor's note: 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: www.jerrykiesowoc.com. They make great gifts.

TOM LUBA

Points to Ponder

Created by man or nature, secondary points hold fish

I've pondered over more than my share of lake maps. One of the first things I always identify are points, areas that jut out from shore toward deeper water. A lot of the time they might be the first place bass, as one example, migrate to when they move in to spawn. And, there is a good chance, based on cover, they'll hold fish all year.

Main lake points are usually easily located. But others can be less obvious. Yet they can be highly productive because a lot of anglers may completely overlook them.

Smaller or secondary points may be close to a main lake point, but be overshadowed by the size of the main point.

Lakes are easier to search, while rivers are tougher. You can find many locations during low water. Watch for areas like rip rap banks that swing in toward shore and back out again. This forms a mini fish-holding point that can be completely overlooked at normal depth. Fish can push baitfish up against the rock to feed. I once caught a limit of 3lb smallies from such an area in 15 minutes.

Others can occur at the head of an eddy where the current meets slack water, where gravel has been washed into deeper water from a rip rap bank, and where bars are cre-

ated as the current deposits sand on river bends.

Manmade structures are also in the picture. Retaining walls, especially where they have corners in them that turn in or out are supported by rock dropped in during its creation. These situations give smallmouth ideal holding areas from which to hunt. Rock or sandbags that were used to frame the main wall can help create mini current-breaking hot spots.

Islands, sunken humps and weeds also create points. Islands close to deeper water can be magnets, especially when the wind blows. The wind stirs up the water on the island end. Minnows move up to feed on algae. Game fish then feed on baitfish. These kinds of structures can be major hot spots.

Weed points are also key locations. These can occur shallow or deep and they give fish like walleye, largemouth and northern pike ambush areas. The more nooks and crannies in the weed point, the better they can be.

The bigger the point, the more likely it is to have a "sweet spot" on it, like an isolated stump, log or other piece of cover that stands out. It pays to work over a large main lake point from different vantage points. For instance, running a surface bait over it early can get fish

Eddie Remian with an October river smallmouth taken off a small river point that most anglers overlook.



moving up from the sweet spot. Crankbaits can help you find pieces of structure on the point. Jigs and worms or tubes (especially if you are bass fishing) can be worked down the sides and on the edges.

Target your baits to the fish you are seeking. A rock point may be home to walleye or smallmouth, while weed growth on a point may be more inviting to largemouth. You may be able to fish the edges of rock with open hooks, but with weeds present you may need to drop a weedless bait directly into them to get bit.

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DAVE DUWE

Big Fish in Small Waters

Ponds have an un-tapped bounty

Fishing is a sport that young and old can participate in equally. Not every angler has the opportunity to fish from a boat. Shore fishing, especially fishing in a pond, is the best solution. Growing up in southern Wisconsin, most of the ponds around my house allowed public fishing and I took advantage of the opportunity. With a young son of my own, I again find myself fishing ponds. Over the past couple of years, my family has taken a trip to River Strand in Bradenton, Florida. The condo has a beautiful one acre pond. We have tried every year, but never managed to catch a fish - until this year. The right bait equaled big success.

What constitutes a good fishing pond? One with good fishing, of course. I find the best waters to fish have water movement, meaning that the pond has an inlet and an outlet. The recirculating of the water seems to make fishing better. The pond in Florida has an inlet to the saltwater Manatee River and is considered brackish. This means that the water has less salinity

than seawater but more than freshwater. Both saltwater and freshwater fish can live there if the salinity isn't too high. The fish species must be able to withstand a wide variety of salinity levels. In the case of the River Strand pond tarpon, snook, mullet and largemouth bass, all inhabit the waters of the pond. Weed growth and depth tends to keep the fish happy and growing. Size doesn't seem to matter when it comes to ponds. I have caught 5lb largemouth bass and 30" snook in waters as small as 1/2 of an acre.

A good fishing pond will have a good balance of predator to baitfish. This ratio is important to keep the baitfish plentiful and the predators big. With too many fish, a body of water can become "stunted." Stunted is the term used when fish are predominately very small and over-populated in a given body of water.

I like to keep the presentation simple. Live bait always seems to work. Pond fishing doesn't need to be expensive. I like



Karen Abel with a 30" pond caught Snook

Fenwick spinning rods with Penn spinning reels. I will spool the reels with 20lb Fire-line with a 2' fluorocarbon leader and a 1/0 hook. It took me three years of trying before I realized that there was great fishing in the condo pond. I didn't follow my one rule of keeping it simple. All it took was a shiner and a bobber for success. Shore fishing on the edge of the pond also gives a child the opportunity to practice his or her angling skills without hooking someone else. If live bait isn't your thing, good artificial baits include lures with vibrations, such as Rat-L-Traps, Mepps #3 inline spinner or a white Booyah 1/4 oz spinnerbaits.

I will usually start in the deepest water available with structure and go from there. Fish tend to hold on to any piece of structure they have access to. Weed growth is the most common, but logs, lily pads or even subtle shoreline changes can hold



Nathan Duwe with a 28" pond caught Snook

fish.

I make most of my living fishing. When I am in my boat, I am constantly working to find and catch fish for my customers. Pond fishing allows me to spend time with my son and relax and make fishing memories he'll remember for the rest of his life. It isn't always about the size of the fish, but the time you spend with someone doing what you both love to do. And even if the fish are small, there is always hope that he will remember big! 🍷

Captain Dave Duwe is owner of Dave Duwe's Guide Service and guides the lakes of southeastern Wisconsin, specializing in Delevan Lake and Lake Geneva. Find him at fishlakegeneva.com or fishdelavanlake.com or contact him at 262-728-8063.

TOM CARPENTER

Cub's Corner

Winter Rabbit Hunting Memories

Once life tries to get rolling along again after the Holidays are over and New Year's Eve has passed, it's easy to get a little lost. Winter cold sets in. There's snow on the Wisconsin ground. Cabin fever is a reality. Springtime is but distant hope. What's there to look forward to?

Growing up, it was rabbit hunting. My family always kept a Bassett Hound for just such a purpose. Winter weekends were filled with brushpiles, thickets, fresh air, good exercise, and the bawling and baying of a long-eared "hush puppy" lumbering along and pushing a hopping rabbit ahead.

The typical hunt went like this: On a Sunday, after 7 AM Mass, we'd come home and cook breakfast. Mom would clean up while we kids got the massive old Chevy Impala ready - shotguns, shells, retired Huber beer box full of lunch and thermos-

es, a Rhinelander beer box with all our rabbit cleaning gear, and a Bassett Hound on a blanket in the back seat. Nikki was our best dog.

We'd don brown insulated coveralls, put on our cheap pac boots (for that's all we had) and drive a few miles out of town to one of the many coverts on our circuit - places with names like "Y" (for the county road it adjoined); "Sandplant" (for the abandoned factory at the site); Hiawatha (for the one-room school across the road), and S***slinger's (that name could be the subject for another Cubs Corner memory someday).

We boys would walk the cover and try to jump rabbits. It didn't take us long to pass out of that "harvest" sportsman's stage and graduate to the "method" stage by letting the flushed cottontails go without shooting at them and instead putting a dog on the

trail for a merry chase.

A slow-moving Bassett just keeps a bunny hopping ahead, and the rabbit will make a circle and come back to its home hideout - a brushpile, tangle of black raspberry canes, plum thicket, fenceline or fallow meadow.

We boys would take off - not on the trail with the dog, but at likely crossings where we might intercept the rabbit and get to shoot it before our brethren did. Somebody always stayed where the chase started, usually Dad. He got as many rabbits as anybody.

Ultimately, I put away the shotgun and only used a .22 to add to the challenge, and only shooting sitting bunnies paused in their casual escape from the dog.

The best days were those winter gifts where the sky was stunning blue, the sun



Growing up rabbit hunting meant brushpiles, thickets, fresh air, good exercise, and the bawling and baying of a long-eared "hush puppy" lumbering along and pushing a hopping rabbit ahead.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 25

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LEE GATZKE

Planning Your 2018 Out-of-State Hunt

Targeting deer, elk this fall begins now

Many folks begin the New Year with a list of resolutions they plan to uphold in the coming 12 months. Same here, but my list of resolutions mostly consists of a list of states I'd like to deer hunt in the coming fall. Heading out of state to hunt deer involves getting prepared well in advance. The first of January is a good time to start. Decisions need to be made early in the new year to enable you to meet possible license application deadlines and line up connections to make the hunt happen.

Whether you decide to go on an outfitted hunt or a do-it-yourself (DIY) hunt, the place you'll be hunting needs to be determined in the first couple of months of the New Year. This is especially true if you've never hunted out of state before. For anyone hunting a new area out of state, lining up a reputable outfitter or finding the right contacts to provide information for a DIY hunt takes some homework. For the hunter looking to book an outfitted hunt, the sooner you book, the better your chances of hunting the dates you want. Many of the good outfitters book years in advance, especially for rut hunts, so booking early gives you a better chance to hunt



A 3x3 bull elk taken with bow by the author in September of 2014 in the mountains of Idaho on a DIY (Do-It-Yourself) planned hunt.

when you choose, rather than settling for the dates the outfitter has available.

For those who favor a DIY hunt, as I do, you may need to reserve a spot at a motel

or campground. If there is a high demand during the time you plan to hunt, booking with them early assures your best chance at reserving a room or campsite. I've spent too many cold nights sleeping in the bed of

my truck wishing I had made plans early enough to ensure more comfortable accommodations.

For those states that require you to apply for a deer license, application dates often expire in April or May. Part of the application process involves identifying the region or zone within that state you intend to hunt, and if you draw a tag, you will be confined to hunting there. Attending the various deer shows, such as the Wisconsin Deer and Turkey Show, or its equivalent in the state you plan to hunt, is an excellent way to find a good place to hunt out of state. Local information sources, such as state wildlife officials, taxidermists, or other hunters are good places to help whittle down places to consider.

Once you've pinpointed where you'll hunt, take a trip there in early spring before the landscape turns green. Scout the various public hunting grounds and private locations you have permission to hunt. Be sure to patronize the local restaurants and sport shops to rub elbows with locals who may be willing to identify private land where you may gain hunting permission.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 25

DENNY MURAWSKA

To Feed or Not to Feed?

If you do, understanding deer physiology a must

It is the dead of winter. The frozen, blue-white, landscape appears almost devoid of life. The cold seems unbearable. Many folks, including myself, take pity on the deer and other creatures that give us such pleasure in the hunt, as well as just watching. We want to reach out in these harshest of times and give deer a helping hand. Unless you understand deer and their physiology, don't do it.

Deer have been around much longer than corn and soybean fields. Their normal winter browse is small twigs and buds. When the pressure is on, you will see these eaten into a "zone" of nothingness as high as they can reach. The solution? Cut some real browse. Maple and birch can be

pretty high in what deer need. We do get syrup from maples, as we all know. While the high fiber would not suit a human digestive tract, an abrupt change to corn piles can cause the gut bacteria of deer to create a condition known as "acidosis," which is a killer. Think of it as "grain overload." Now if the deer in your area have access to bait piles, or cornfields all winter, some supplement will not be as harmful as a sudden switch. Here are some tips from experts as to how to keep deer fed in a sensible manner.

In winter, deer seek out areas of high cover, a water source and available woody browse. If you do feed, do not entice them to spend valuable energy moving from these

areas so you can see them ten feet out the bedroom window, where they can be easily scared by Fido or any other factors.

Food should not be all in one large pile. Rather, many small piles are the rule. Again, small woody twigs, particularly with buds, are savored. Cut some smaller trees down, or prune your orchard, and provide the deer with the good stuff. Hay is not good at all. Elk can eat it. Deer do not do well on it at all.

Plain of corn is not a good idea, unless they have access to it all season long. An ideal mix might contain some

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DAN MOERICKE

An 'Up Nort' Report *Northwoods Deer camp re-cap*

Thank God that there's a lot more to deer camp than just shooting deer. If the success of a season was measured solely by the size of the deer taken or the number of shots fired, those of us who continue to hunt the Northwoods would have to question our collective sanity.

The Pine River Boys deer camp was down to a slim, but very well-seasoned, group of three hunters on opening weekend. I was fortunate enough to again join the Krueger brothers, who go by the nicknames of Mooner and Lard, for another hunt in what we affectionately refer to as "the deer desert." Two full days in the Nicolet National Forest resulted in the three of us seeing a grand total of zero deer. Red squirrels, turkeys, ravens, yes. Deer? No. Zip. Zilch. Nada.

The good news is that, after three years of mild winters and very few antlerless tags being issued, there definitely are more deer in Vilas County. This fall we saw dozens of deer by the roadsides feasting on the greenery in the ditches. Seeing any in the woods has been challenging, to say the least. Baiting is not allowed in Oneida,

Vilas or Forest counties, so sitting trails and calling are the tactics we use. There are no agricultural fields or 'food plots' anywhere near us.

Nor are there a bunch of other hunters. On opening day I probably walked 3 miles. Never saw another hunter or even a human track. Solitude exists in abundance. The anticipation that a big buck might be bedded just over the next ridge keeps you going, even when you know the odds of that are slim.

As I stated at the outset, thank God there's more to deer camp than just shooting deer. In the Pine River Boys camp, the table fare alone is worth the trip. On Friday night we feasted on a huge crock pot of venison stew that any restaurant would have been proud to serve. Saturday night featured creamed pheasant over wild rice and even a fresh apple pie, courtesy of Deano Radke, who joined us after hunting farm country for the opener.

Socializing with hunters in other deer camps is probably the glue that holds the whole hunt together. On Friday night we visited the Dirty Shame deer camp owned

by the Ridderbusch brothers, Gary and Al. This year, they celebrated the 25th year of the camp. It's a true deer camp in every sense - a one room log cabin with gas lighting (lots of other gas, too), cozy sleeping accommodations, outhouse, plenty of libations and exaggerated stories.

During the week, we also visited the Zingler camp on the banks of the Brule Creek, where Pat Zingler hosted his annual deer hunters' Thanksgiving Feast. This year, I counted 27 hunters present and after three days of hunting, there were four bucks down. That's three more deer harvested than when I polled the group the year prior. Yes, the Nicolet deer herd is actually on the upswing!

After no deer sightings on the weekend, we shifted locations on Monday and the heavens opened up when Lard called in a fork horn Monday afternoon. It was not a monarch, nor did it put any undue strain on the buck pole, but it was cause for celebration.

Next year will hopefully find me back in the Nicolet, probably seeing nothing, but happy just the same. There's more to deer



Any buck is just a bonus when hunting the Northwoods.

camp than just shooting a deer. Just sayin.' 🍷

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

JOHN CLER

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD)

What can you do to help our deer herd and protect your family?

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) was first detected in the Wisconsin deer herd in 2002. It now affects 44 of the state's 72 counties. Its spread has been steady and relentless, resulting in infection rates beyond 40% in adult bucks, in some areas. Infected deer slowly waste away in their final 12 to 18 months as the disease runs its course. The disease is always fatal, unless the animal dies from other causes first.

CWD is caused by a prion, a protein that is not shaped properly. The prions eventually build up in the diseased animal's brain, producing holes in the brain that eventually lead to the animals long, lingering death. There is no vaccine or cure for CWD or any other diseases caused by prions. Scientists think that contact between deer is

responsible for the spread of the disease. Prions may be transmitted to deer from soil containing the CWD prions. Prions do not degrade rapidly in the environment.

There has never been a documented case of CWD being passed to humans through the consumption of venison. A recent study in Canada found that it could be passed to monkeys fed infected venison. This means that the chance of transmission to humans is not zero.

My family hunts in western Richland County. While the southeastern portion of the county has had many deer test positive for CWD, there have been none in our area. Last year, two deer tested positive to the north and west of our property. This caused us to re-think our usual way of dealing with the deer we harvested. We would

normally butcher our deer and dispose of the skeleton in a ditch, so the coyotes, crows and other scavengers could clean up what little was left. We now butcher the animal, submit the head for CWD testing, dispose of the carcass in our municipal garbage that goes to a landfill, and store the meat in a freezer until we get the CWD test results. While this is a bit more difficult, we feel it is better for the deer and our family.

We used a self-service CWD Sampling kiosk set up by the DNR. The kiosk has all you need to get your deer tested, free of charge. There is a saw on a long cable used to remove the deer's head. There is plenty of cable to reach your truck or trailer. You will also find a plastic bag con-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16

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GARY GREENE

Memories from an Old Hunter

The magic of Horicon Marsh

As a young boy, I envisioned Horicon Marsh as a magical place far, far away. It was so far, that my dad slept overnight when hunting there. I had never seen it, and I only heard my dad relay his Horicon hunting adventures. When he returned from the hunt on Sunday night, I would run out to the car to see what waterfowl he had shot. That was my first exposure to the different species.

At the time, freeways didn't lead north to Horicon Marsh. It took a while to get there and distances seemed far greater than they really were. Several times a season, while wearing his military Jeep cap, my dad would pack up his Plymouth Fury with his Browning shotgun, a dozen wood decoys and his WWII army duffle bag.

As they would head up to the marsh, our Chesapeake, King, would curl up on the passenger's side floor. Friday and Saturday nights, King and my dad would sleep in the Fury's backseat. He would get in a full day of hunting on Saturday and a half day on Sunday before packing up. In preparation for these hunts, my dad had spent months customizing his own duck boat with homemade floating devices, camouflage partitions, and a special lighting system.

I wish I knew what happened to those wood decoys. Over the years, they lost most of their color and were a drab gray. I can still see them hanging from nails in the back of the garage. They disappeared sometime during my college years when I

had too many other interests.

One Sunday night, I had just got out of the bathtub and heard my mom screaming. As I ran to my mother, I witnessed a Canada goose running around our kitchen. My dad thought it was funny. This small boy was impressed - and a little scared - and my mom was not particularly happy. My dad explained that he thought the goose was dead and, during the ride home, it came to. I know that transporting a live bird is not legal, but, supposedly, my father was ignorant of the living status of the goose. As I look back, I am not so sure; it might have been intentional.

Returning from one Horicon Marsh weekend, in the front seat next to him, was an English Springer Spaniel puppy. As

Greene's four-month-old lab, Schmiddy, after he retrieved his first duck. (2014)



the story goes, at the marsh, a hunter was selling the pup out of the trunk of his car. The purchase price was \$2.00 and the dog had papers. That dog (Barney) became my companion for the next 12 years. I recall my mom stating, "Just what we need, another dog!"

CONTINUED ON PAGE 13

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TOM MUELLER

Training the Retriever Pup . . . Continued

Conditioning the hold

Basically, there are four parts to every retrieve when working with a pup. The first part is running out to get the object. Most puppies and young dogs do so quite readily and enthusiastically. Next is picking the object up, which sometimes requires some extra verbal encouragement. The third part, returning with the object in its mouth, often requires a lot more effort from you like running away, or using a light lead and giving it a little tug to get it headed back towards you, then walking or running away. The fourth part is making sure the pup holds on to the object and delivers it to you without dropping.

This last part is the most problematic. Retrievers retrieve for themselves, especially in the early puppy stages. Left to their own devices, they will run out and pick up the object thrown, then go somewhere to lay down and chew on it. Everyone who has any experience with training a retriever puppy has experienced that. They are very possessive of what they've retrieved. The object in its mouth is its reward, and the pup is very proud of that reward and thinks it owns it.

A trainer's job is to take advantage of that possessiveness and encourage it so the pup continues to hold the object until it is taken away. That is best accomplished by allowing the puppy to keep its reward while you praise and pet it for retrieving

it and bringing it to you. The more you do this, the stronger the dog's desire will be to hold onto the object, whether it be a favorite toy, a puppy dummy, or even a bird, if your pup is big enough to handle one. Doing this goes a long way in eliminating the problem of dropping the dummy or bird a few feet away from you when returning after a retrieve. Letting the puppy keep its reward while you praise it also makes force training or hold conditioning go quicker and smoother when you get to that point in your training.

Another important factor in encouraging your pup or young dog to hold onto any object it retrieves is the object itself. In working with those that have joined the Fox Valley Retriever Club to get help with training their newly acquired retrievers, I've seen pups and young dogs turn up their noses at an object that was thrown for them to retrieve. They would go out like gang busters, but when they got there, they just sniffed it and sniffed around it. When they were given some verbal encouragement to pick it up and return, they came running back without it.

I would then go to my van and pull out a few other "retrieving toys" and try one or any of them. Things I've had success with are a sausage-shaped tennis ball with a squeaker, a paint roller skin, pheasant wings, a canvas puppy dummy with and without pheasant wings attached, a puppy

size Dokken duck, and a Lambchop. The Lambchop is a small soft, plush dog toy with a squeaker that was modeled after a puppet character invented by Shari Lewis for her 1950s children's TV show. The key is to find one or two things that your pup will get excited about picking up and holding onto. Once you have that, you throw short retrieves, allowing the pup to hold onto it once it returns to you. Be patient; it doesn't happen overnight. Mostly it might take some weeks of daily training for the pup to get the concept of holding.

Next issue . . . introducing obedience into the retrieving training. 🐾

Tom Mueller 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.rtrvrs@hotmail.com.



My brother Jerry's Lab pup Black Jack starting its retrieving and "hold" training at nine weeks.



My arsenal of retrieving and "hold" conditioning tools.



Fox Valley Retriever Club member Tim Ziegler conditioning "hold" with his five-month-old Yellow Lab Mea. Mea earned her Junior Hunter title at eight months.

GREENE, FROM PAGE 12

Years went by, and I never thought much of Horicon Marsh. When our sons were young, we would take a few fall trips to the marsh to view the migrating geese. My hunting buddies and I hunted geese in the Horicon Zone, but always miles from the marsh. Years later, after my son Nate came home from the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, he became engrossed in waterfowl hunting. Three years ago, we thought we would give Horicon Marsh a try. At Burnett Ditch on the west side of the Horicon Marsh, we launched my square back canoe propelled by my trolling motor. That day, Nate shot three Gadwalls and Schmiddy, my four-month-old lab puppy, retrieved all three. It was a great day. Sixty years have passed and our family came back full circle to the magic of Horicon Marsh. 🐾

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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DICK ELLIS

Sounds of Silence

QuietKat offers new approach to bear hunt, other OWO adventures

Mike Foss was hunkered over a hole in the ice on Chequamegon Bay when I met him, coaxing lake trout 250 feet below to hammer a dancing spoon. On that unusually warm late winter morning in 2004 near the Apostle Islands off of Ashland, it became apparent exchanging soft banter in a soft breeze on 5-gallon pails that all of this jiggling activity was just another outdoor distraction. Everything outside to Foss, after another Wisconsin bear season ends and before the spring baiting season leading to another Wisconsin bear season begins, is just another outdoor distraction.

Or even an irritation. Not chasing bears, clearly, is nearly unbearable.

Fourteen years after that Lake Superior introduction, I've followed Foss annually as a reporter baiting bears, waited on bear stands with a camera, and helped drag bears as large as 638 lbs out of Bayfield County Forests. Clearly, Foss and Northern Wisconsin Outfitters guide Robert Haas pay the dues necessary beginning with spring melt-off in Bayfield County to put hunters on September bears. They locate bears annually that will weigh over 400 pounds to an astounding and hair-raising 700 pounds. They are passionate in their search; bear experts who seek out any edge to help hunters find success.

Foss approached OWO for assistance in gaining sponsorship from QuietKat to help him reach even more remote Wisconsin backcountry in baiting and stand placement. The Colorado-based company, according to CEO Jake Roach is "explicitly an advanced Low-Speed Electric Vehicle (LSEV) Company which manufacturers



QuietKat will help Mike Foss and OWO writers get in and out of backcountry adventures in 2018.

electric hunting mountain bikes." After discussions with QuietKat in December, the bike will arrive in February, and our writers will also use it in ice fishing and other off-road field adventures. QuietKat is proud of QuietKat products. They want our Wisconsin audience to see it.

The company, Roach said, is dedicated to the growing trends of the outdoor recreational industry, with a target focus toward hunting and fishing. "The company was built to make the great outdoors more accessible," he said. "The company's line of heavy-duty products permits better access to the great outdoors, and are geared to-

wards those who want non-obtrusive, low impact and green experiences for both the backcountry and back-forty."

Foss is beyond excited to have this newest adventure pursuing his greatest passion set in concrete. Or should we say, set in mud and ice and anywhere else the QuietKat will take him in virtual silence?

"I'm always looking for an advantage when baiting bear and setting stands for hunters," he said. "The QuietKat will let me get far back into no-man's land where you can't use motorized vehicles."

The biggest advantage though, correlates directly with his pursuit of the monster

bears who have grown to be old through intelligence, survival of close encounters with hunters, and a special wariness gained from avoiding the tag. "This will make me accessible to areas that I could never access walking," Foss said. "Our furthest walk in to a stand is three-quarters of a mile. If I was on a solo hunt or helping just one other hunter, that walk would be well worth it. But it's not realistic when I'm helping 10 hunters bait. Walking is so time-consuming."

Starting with a plea for help from a Douglas County landowner to Robert

CONTINUED ON PAGE 15

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ELLIS, FROM PAGE 14

Haas, Foss already has a 2018 monster bear on his radar. He will be utilizing the bike and his skills with the goal of putting a Haas-guided hunter on the bear in September. From photos provided by the landowner and comparisons with Bayfield County mammoths tagged or photographed over the years, the bear could be the largest ever pursued by Northern Wisconsin Outfitters.

"He's certainly bigger than the bear we nick-named Tank (600 pounds) and no smaller than Bus-15 (700 pounds) if not bigger," Foss said. "The landowner is a deer hunter with food plots and he wants him out of there. I'm certain even the biggest bears like this are going to be more comfortable with the QuietKat and I will actually be approaching them silently when they're still on the bait. These bears aren't going to even know I'm coming."

"I'm so excited for this new adventure. I can't wait to get out there. I wish it was spring." 🍃



Meeting big bears like this 639 pound boar taken by Craig Cichinofsky is the goal of OWO bear expert Mike Foss and Northern Wisconsin Outfitters owner Robert Haas.



Bear Hunting Success

Bob's Bear Bait, LLC

Now that you have finally received your long-awaited bear harvest permit, here are a few tips to attract the black bear to your selected hunting area. Locate a stand or site near the bear's natural feeding area. Natural feeding areas include various berry groves, oak ridges located near creeks, and lowland areas. Spring is a great time to plan your sites and strategies for not only a successful hunt, but a fun, educational, and enjoyable baiting season.

When establishing your bait sites, remember these few pointers to snag the bear's attention faster.

- Be consistent and early (April or May) with your baiting.
- Consistently use quality bait and scent attractants/call lures.
- Establish a consistent routine when baiting.
- Become aware of fellow hunters' bait sites in the vicinity and avoid conflict. There's room out there!

Bob's Bear Bait, LLC will continue to provide quality scent/call lures and baits. Please see Bob's Bear Bait, LLC's Facebook page for "early bird" bait auctions, various new items and sale promotions. Visit BobsBearBait.com for products, locations and shop hours.

We wish everyone a safe and successful hunt! 🍃







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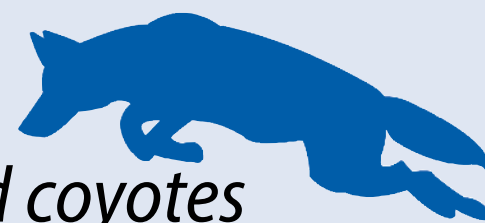
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TOM CARPENTER

Hunting Farmland Coyotes

Wisconsin has plenty of agricultural land and coyotes



Here's how to call and shoot a farm 'dog'.

Wisconsin's rich agricultural landscape has experienced an explosion of coyotes. There's plenty of prey, lots of cover, and ample wide-open spaces in which a coyote can live a reclusive life. But farmland song dogs aren't easy to hunt. On the contrary: Coyotes were designed to survive. They are suspicious, wary and elusive all rolled into one. But they have one weak spot: They can't resist an easy meal.

Another challenge: Wisconsin's agricultural coyote habitat varies widely, from rolling dairy farm country with a mix of woodlots to row-crop country punctuated with sloughs and grasslands, and everything in between. No single hunting setup approach fits all. As a hunter, you have to be as adaptable as the coyotes you are chasing.

Coyote Concepts

Agricultural landscapes feature two common factors: limited cover and ample open areas across which to draw curious coyotes. The trick is getting in unseen with the wind blowing from likely coyote hideouts to you, setting up secretly, calling with a purpose, and staying patient with these suspicious and reluctant canines.

Don't overestimate the amount of cover a coyote needs. Where I hunt coyotes in southern Wisconsin, frozen cat-tail sloughs serve as the hideout of choice. In the western Wisconsin dairy farm country, brushy abandoned pastures harbor higher densities of coyotes than do traditional woodlots.

Never underestimate the craftiness of farmland coyotes. They may be used to vehicles driving around, but not yours; sneak in on foot instead. Farmland parcels can be small, with only a limited area or two for setups. If the wind is wrong, hold off and hunt the area another day



Designed to survive, coyotes are suspicious, wary and elusive all rolled into one.

rather than educate the coyotes even more.

Set up across fields, pastures or meadows and call into cover: grasslands, wetlands, fencelines, brushy thickets, forgotten orchards, fallow meadows, ditches and other spots where prey (rabbits, pheasants, squirrels, mice ... but mostly rabbits) would hide out and coyotes would be

prowling. Keep the wind blowing from the cover to you, or flowing cross-lots, and draw the coyotes out.


Calling Strategies

When using prey-in-distress calls to attract coyotes, think about the process in two stages. First is calling – loud and squawky to get attention and get a dog moving toward you. Then be ready with a mouse squeaker to softly coax that slinking varmint the rest of the way, or into the open, for a shot.

Fat farmland coyotes need big sound to get their attention and then some finessing to get them to commit. You can do both jobs with one call. Primos's Raspy Coaxer creates long-range prey screams to get things started. Then, by covering one port with your finger, you can make little whines and whimpers to finish the job (www.primos.com).

Step one of the classic coyote calling strategy is to hop on a rabbit-in-distress call. The secret to success is giving it all you've got, with real personality that involves screams of fear, last-ditch whining and sorrowful squeals that combine to make you sound like a crying, helpless bunny being eaten alive by a hateful enemy coyote intruding in the neighborhood and taking away your meal. Get the idea?

Double Up


A coyote investigating your calls might lurk out there at a hundred yards or more or come barging in to under a hundred feet. Carry a rifle and a shotgun to cover both scenarios. Better yet, hunt with a partner. One carries the rifle, one the shotgun. As a team you're then ready for shots at any range. 

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

CLER, FROM PAGE 11

taining paperwork and two metal tags with identical numbers. One tag gets attached to the deer head. The other is for you to take home so you may check the DNR website for test results. The paper work requires your name, tag number and DNR customer number. You will also be asked to identify where the deer was killed. There is a large plat map within the kiosk for this purpose.


The paperwork goes into a Ziploc bag when completed and is placed in a large black plastic bag with the tagged head. This bag is placed into a container under the kiosk. You are also asked to send a text message to the DNR indicating you left a sample to be picked up. Test results are available on the DNR website within two or three weeks. It is recommended that venison from deer testing positive for CWD be disposed of in a landfill.

The presence of CWD has changed deer hunting in Wisconsin. Deer hunters can be a big help in minimizing its impact into the future. 

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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BY TOM CARPENTER

Badger Birds Red-Breasted Nuthatch

Although not as common as their white-breasted cousins, red-breasted nuthatches present an appeal and excitement all their own. The appeal: These lovely and energetic little birds readily come to Wisconsin yards and gardens (especially in fall and winter) if you know what to offer them. The excitement: Nomadic red-breasts might be here today and gone tomorrow. Enjoy their striking beauty every moment you can.

Red-breasted nuthatches often travel, flit about and feed in mixed winter flocks with black-capped chickadees, white-breasted nuthatches, downy woodpeckers, brown creepers and kinglets.

Look for a small nuthatch with a black cap, black stripe through the eye, blue-gray back, and handsome rusty-red breast. The beak is exceptionally long (for probing pine cones and bark crevices) and the tail short.

Listen for a high-pitched *ank-ank-ank* call as the birds flit and feed through forest, yard or garden.


Plant pines and conifers. Red-breasts use



the trees as cover and eat seeds from the cones. Spruce, fir, hemlock, larch and cedar are top trees for red-breasted nuthatches.

Feed acrobatic red-breasted nuthatches peanuts or black-oil sunflower seeds from a tube feeder. Trays work too.

Offer suet in a basket. Or place a bone (with meat and fat on it – a back leg from a deer you butchered is perfect) in a mesh potato bag and hang from a tree. Red-breasts need the protein.

Did you know that red-breasts are known to smear pine pitch around their nest cavity's entrance? The goal is to improve their grip as they enter and exit, and discourage predators from reaching in. 


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

SCHRAUTH, FROM PAGE 4

structure can provide when out in the middle of a frozen lake. We raced from flag to flag, Leia slipping her way along due to the fact she did not have creepers on her boots. We caught a few small fish and finally the boys hooked a keeper and were able to pull a 15 1/2" largemouth bass to the icy surface before Leia decided to head back to solid ground.

At the end of the day, as if giving Leia its own final goodbye, the frozen lake gave off a mighty crack, the sound that those of us who frequent them have come to know as the lake "making ice." Nothing compares to a lake booming like a thunderstorm

and a web of cracks flashing through the ice under your feet. It may be common, but it always causes your heart to explode through your chest, and can make even a seasoned ice-fishing enthusiast scream and run for shore.

This amazing act of nature, and the chase of the elusive, but attainable fish, is what makes ice-fishing a hobby for many, and a great way to enjoy winter in Wisconsin. 

Katey Schrauth, an avid outdoorswoman of 20-plus years, enjoys exploring all that Wisconsin has to offer including hiking, hunting, fishing, gardening, foraging, and camping.



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JERRY DAVIS

More Natural Surroundings to Attract More Winter Birds

Start with shrub piles and water, then commercial seeds

There may be a reason attracting birds to feeders early this winter is more difficult than most years, at least in some areas. The past spring, summer and autumn's growing seasons were, for the most part, ideal. More small fruits; small nuts and weedy seeds overflowed; heavy vegetation for bird cover was everywhere; and good rainfall led to puddles and ponds full to the shores.

Don't blame yourself if the only thing that's out a window is that plastic tube feeder, still full to the top. Simply accept that feeder birds really do not need us as much as we need them. On a snowy, windy winter day, a feeder filled with black oil sunflowers can be appealing to many wild birds. Conversely, on a calm, sunny afternoon and early evening, they don't care if they are eating what comes in a plastic tube or a sunflower head as long as there is a seed inside that dried fruit.

The remaining bluebirds are at the small fruit trees, such as crabapples. Rob-

ins are also attracted to them. They've gone from eating worms to eating fruits. "Frugivorous" is what we call these late season fruit eaters.

This fall, while pheasant or grouse hunting, the good habitat was loaded when dog and man approached. Maybe not with pheasants and surely not grouse, but a plethora of birds, small and tiny ones, flushed everywhere. The wild birds found feeding just fine on what had grown and the cover it provided.

When competing with nature to attract birds, be more like nature. Build a few brush piles and add some branches from a crabapple tree or a vine or two of grapes or bittersweet. Stack on some evergreen boughs. When the birds begin to find them, stick up a feeder or two. Offer the two standbys, black oil sunflowers and thistle seed.

Once the local birds are hooked, hold them with water or put the water in before the feeders; either way the birds have



Large birds, like this red-tailed hawk, and small birds can be attracted by giving them a feeling of nature first.

food, nature's pickings, cover and protection. Eventually the natural vegetation will be less necessary, but add to it if you must or believe it would help even more.

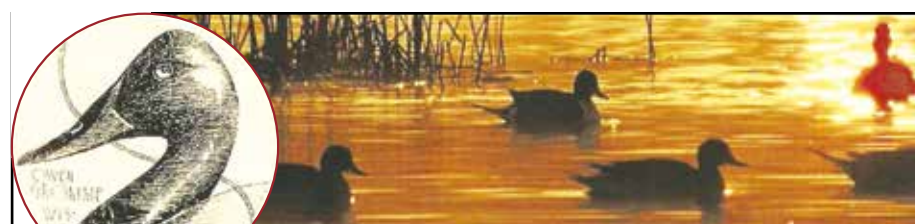
Now is a good time to work on the larger birds, such as hawks and crows and, if you're rural, bald eagles. Again, start natural. Hawks and eagles need a location to land and survey the surroundings for maybe an hour or more. A tall tree is best. A partial deer carcass or scraps of suet from that carcass will bring them. Lots of woodpeckers and blue jays also take raw suet. If you're too residential for a partial carcass, skip that part and concentrate on the small birds.

Hawks and eagles can see through glass and can see residents walking inside. Avoid going to a window, unless the

house lights are off. If necessary, grab an old turkey hunting face mask and also gloves. No skin should be showing. Pull a blind and peek around or through it. Use the facemask and light trick with ordinary birds until they get more accustomed to someone looking through a window at them.

While you're at it, notice you've just created a perfect photographic situation. A bird on a feeder just doesn't cut it on a card, letterhead or wall picture. Make it natural, as a cardinal sitting on a pine bough. 📸

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



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MURAWSKA, FROM PAGE 10

corn, soybeans, alfalfa, oats, molasses and minerals. Some commercial mixes try to mimic this. Now I get to throw in my own two cents: It is a well-known fact that deer will eat pumpkin. Peanuts? Lots of calories in those. Birds that winter here do so on seeds. So can deer. If you have ever had your bird feeder raided, you know the tune. Sunflower seeds are relished. Greens? An unheard of winter treat! I have had deer nibbling my kale, radishes, mustard greens and chard forever. They only groom a bit here and there. It is an easy matter to

get greens from grocers that are ready to be tossed.

Let's not forget the side benefits. Squirrels, turkey, grouse and a never-ending attack of jays is always a plus. They all benefit. Most of all, you will enjoy doing this. A bit of wisdom now: Do not hurt deer in winter. Help them in any appropriate manner, which is not a load of corn. (Get it? Load of corn?) 🌿

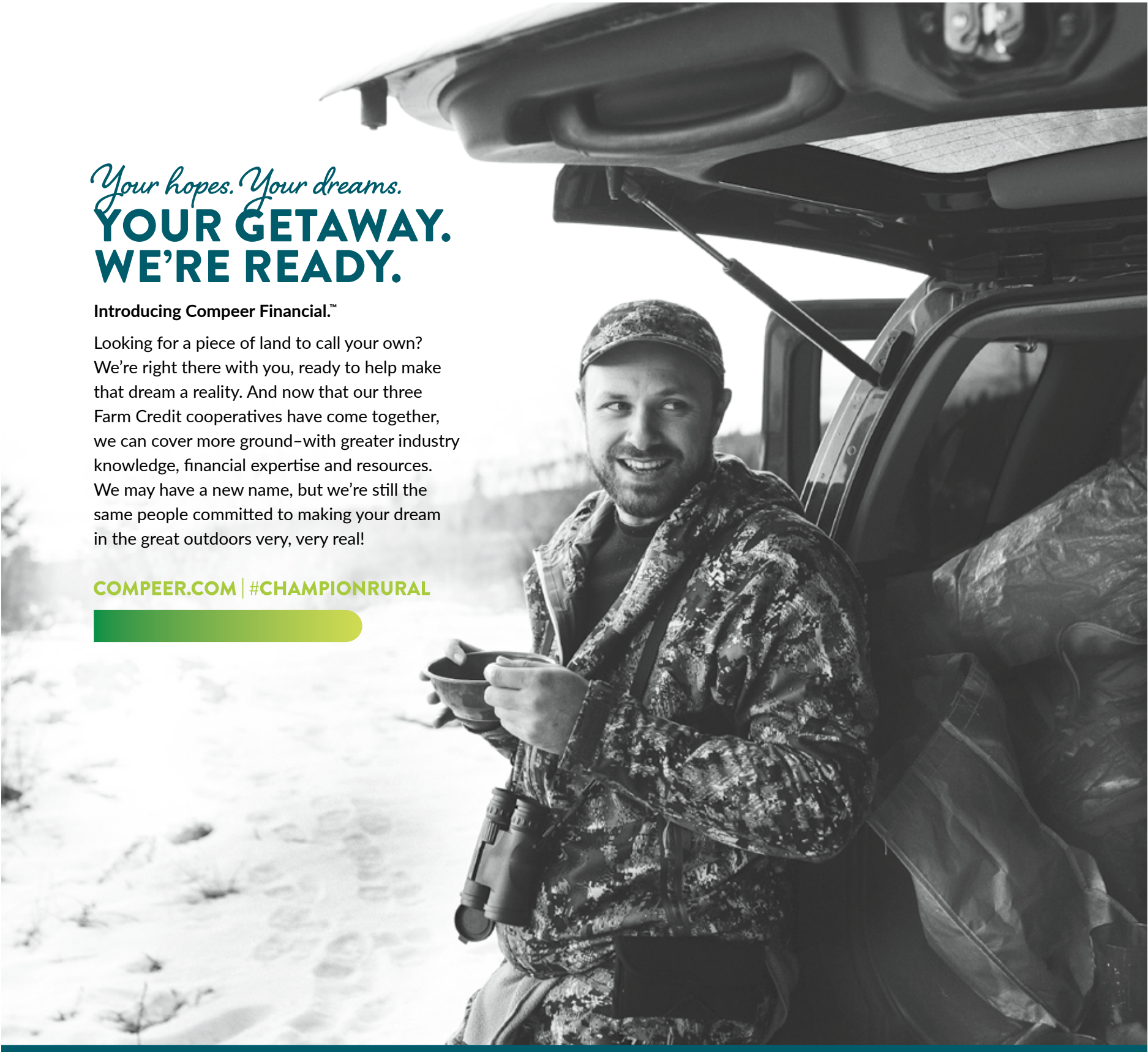
Denny Murawska has been a contributor to the wacky *UP Magazine*, *Wishigan*, *Verse Wisconsin*, and *The Pulse*. His church is the pine cathedral that surrounds him at his home near Black River Falls.

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Tips for cooking on the ice!

Whether you are cooking burgers, warming chili or having a fish fry, the most important thing you can do is plan ahead.

1. Think the setup, cooking, serving and cleanup process through your head and visualize each part of the process to determine what you will need. Have a pen and paper ready and write down all the items in the form of a checklist. Once you are on the ice, it is too late to run to the store or back to camp for something you forgot.

2. Knowing how unpredictable the weather can be, always prepare for the worst. Nothing spoils a good cookout more than the wind. Be prepared to shield your cooking devices with a non-flammable sturdy barrier so you can maintain a hearty and steady heat source, especially when deep frying. Setup and serve what you need in bins or containers. You don't want to spend your time chasing anything down in the wind. If it gets too nasty, be ready to cancel, safety first.

3. Of course, always remember to leave the ice like you found it. ♡



SUZETTE CURTIS

Recipes By Suzette

Warm up

My husband's pheasant soup recipe is legendary in our family: Toss a pheasant (literally – a pheasant minus the head, feet, feathers and guts) into a soup pot full of water, boil the bird until meat falls off the bones, add a bag of mixed vegetables and boil for an additional twenty minutes, and that's it! It's actually delicious, and if you don't mind bones and the occasional piece of shot in your soup bowl, it makes for a hearty meal when served alongside a loaf of hot crusty bread. I admit that I prefer "boneless" soups myself, so I am sharing a few of my favorite soup recipes. Enjoy!

Creamy Pheasant and Wild Rice Soup

6 T butter, divided	4 cups chicken stock
1 small onion, diced	½ cup carrots, diced
3 stalks celery, diced (include tops)	2 cups Pheasant breast, cubed
½ red bell pepper, diced	1 tsp thyme
2 cloves garlic, finely diced	½ cup cooked wild rice
¼ cup flour	¼ to ½ cup heavy cream
	**Sherry

In large soup pot, melt 2 T butter over medium heat. Add onion, celery and bell pepper; sauté until just wilted. Remove vegetables with slotted spoon and set aside. Add garlic to pot and sauté briefly, between 30 seconds and 1 minute.

Melt remaining 4 T butter in pot; add flour and combine to form a paste. Slowly add chicken stock, stirring constantly to incorporate flour paste. Return vegetables to pot, add pheasant and carrots, and bring all to a boil. Reduce heat, cover and simmer for about 30 minutes stirring occasionally.

Once pheasant and carrots are tender, add thyme, cooked rice, heavy cream and any salt & pepper to taste. Let simmer an additional 5 minutes before serving.

**If desired, a tablespoon or two of Sherry added in the last five minutes of cooking time lends a nice flavor.

Venison Soup

2 lbs venison, cubed	3 stalks celery, diced (include tops)
½ lb ham, cubed	½ tsp mace
1 small onion, finely diced	3 T butter, sliced
1 tsp black pepper	3 T flour
8 cups water	1 cup Port wine

Place venison, ham, onion, and pepper in large soup pot. Add water, cover pot, and cook over low heat for about an hour. Remove from heat.

Skim soup, add celery and mace, cover and return to low heat for another 2 to 2 ½ hours stirring occasionally. Add additional water if needed during cooking.

Place flour in small bowl and fold in butter slices until well coated. Add the flour/butter to soup along with the Port. Cover and gently simmer for another 20 to 30 minutes until desired consistency.

Fish Chowder

4 medium potatoes, finely diced	1 - 28oz can crushed tomatoes
1 medium onion, chopped	1 cup half & half cream
1 T salt	½ cup butter, cut into slices
4 cups water	1 tsp white pepper
2 lbs firm fish fillets, skinned, boned and cut into bite-sized pieces	1 tsp thyme

Add potatoes, onion, salt and water to soup pot. Cover and heat to boiling; boil until potatoes are tender (10 to 15 minutes).

Turn heat down to medium-high and add fish along with additional water if needed. Cook, uncovered and stirring occasionally, until fish are no longer translucent and start to flake.

Turn heat down to low; blend in remaining ingredients and heat through another 2 to 3 minutes before serving. ♡

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.

BILL CUNNEA

Shotgun Talk

The perpetual motion argument

I was an eaves-dropper on a discussion/argument the other day. They were working over the preferred style of shotgun (yeah, I know, yet again) for upland game and ducks. My preferences are probably the result of 1950s FIELD AND STREAM magazines, laying on a linoleum-topped table in the neighborhood barber shop. They were filled with Old Mossback lunger bass stories; impossible hunts for moose in deep snow in Canada; and great hunts over hardly-mentioned dogs in the Dakotas. I wasn't 10 years old yet, but I inhaled those stories and drawings - all given to some artistic license - of the sharp-chinned hunter sighting down his side-by-side 12 gauge at a magnificent pheasant (usually losing some feathers in his flight to escape.)

I WANTED desperately to be one of those men, as I sat, waiting for the clip and shaver haircut from Al, the barber, who'd never hunted in his life. Sometimes, we create definitions of a future from completely inaccurate research data gathered as a kid. No one in my family hunted, rarely fished, and vacations were spent at Northern Wisconsin resorts for a week of splashing in a cold lake, or later, swimming out to an oil barrel float raft from the mostly mud shores. I remember leeches, not as bait, but as things to be covered with salt to make them stop feeding on me. (Still creepy.)

But the imprint was there, although my first shotgun was (and still is) a 1933 manufactured 1897 Winchester pump, 30-inch, 12 gauge knuckle-buster acquired at age 17. I wanted a double-barreled gun, as the guy (all of a 20-year-old mentor) who first took me hunting was using his grandfather's field grade, side-by-side, 20 gauge, L.C. Smith. It seemed weightless when compared to the long and barrel-heavy '97. He also was a regular shooter and so much more accurate than I that it was laughable. I equated his skill shooting with the equipment he used. I've since learned that's not entirely how it works.

So with that historical preamble, here are my impressions of side-by-sides shotgun I had a year ago.

An AYA 20 gauge, 26 inch barrel, single trigger, vent rib, improved cylinder and modified gun. It is a model Matarador II, the love of my life and the only shotgun mentioned in my will.

A Stevens 5100 12 gauge, mod and full barreled, field grade gun, which is so much more than it was intended to be. Really a great tool for longer shots, and those hunts on which I will not be walking a lot (hey, I'm old!). Passing shots on waterfowl are a particular strength, as are wild bird far flushes. It is a really well-made field grade gun.

An AYA 12 gauge, 28inch barrel, dual trigger gun made



Examples of side-by-side shotguns owned by Bill Cunnea.

for Sears in 1970. It had the barrels honed out to improved cylinder and modified. (I sold it this year.) This was a nice gun, and responsible for one of the few doubles I have shot in recent years.

As the years pass and the hunt limit is two a day, with six in possession, I've often leaned towards single shots. My currently inventory is two Montgomery Wards Hercules singles, a 12 and a 20, both full; a New England Firearms 20, modified; finally, a Winchester Model 370 which I had cut down to 26 inches and threaded for changeable chokes. They are lighter and a lucky double pheasant flush doesn't end the day's hunt.

I did not participate in the discussion, by the way, because I knew it was going to be repeated endlessly, as long as there are hunters. 🐔

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

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JIM SERVI

Thoughts from a Bee Keeper

The time is now to prepare for this delicious hobby

“Bees are disappearing!” Numerous reports, studies, and newspaper headlines have been declaring in recent years to the shock and dismay of many. It doesn’t take an expert to know what catastrophic effects that could have on our agricultural industries and the native plants and flowers that bees pollinate. Luckily, the number of hobby bee keepers is on the rise and it’s relatively easy to get started.

“I really enjoy bee keeping,” explained second-year bee keeper Kevin Staus. “I am a curious person and I’m always looking for new, challenging hobbies. Some form of farming always intrigued me and currently this is the only farming that fits my budget and time schedule.”

To get started, the first thing is to learn as much as you can. Numerous books and articles can point you in the correct direction, as can joining a local bee-keeping association, but nothing beats tagging along with a bee keeper. Chances are there is someone in your county more than willing to share their expertise. Spring is the best time to start your operation, allowing your bees plenty of time to build a durable hive, which means the best time to start planning is now. Location is an important consideration.

Fortunately, with abundant agriculture here in Wisconsin and most farmers more than willing to let you locate a hive on their property, a couple calls or knocks



Full hive in the fall with bear protection.

is all it should take. There are also numerous urban beekeeping programs for those living in cities. “The most surprising thing I learned is how docile the bees can be if you handle them slowly and gently,” Staus said, explaining how getting stung is rare. “The only time I have been stung or when they have tried to sting me is when I rushed things and basically deserved it.”

“If you decide that this is really what you want to do, find a local reputable bee supplier,” Staus recommended. “This will ensure that the bees you get are from a quality source.” One hive and bees, generally a queen with a swarm of worker bees, will cost approximately \$200 - \$400 to get started. Your local supplier can also help you with any local ordinances and state reporting requirements, along with the essential equipment. A bee suit, gloves, smoker, and smoker fuel are the minimum tools required and costs roughly \$160, although you may need fencing with an electric fencer if you are in bear country.

Once your hive is established, it’s im-

portant to keep your bees healthy. Initially, bees require feed syrup in the spring and fall when there are no natural food supplies available. Monitoring occurs throughout the summer. Although rare, you may need to treat for mites, other parasites, or diseases.

Late summer and early fall are a bee keeper’s favorite time of year. This is when they can reap their reward and harvest the honey. However, there is a note of caution on harvesting honey the first year. “My bee supplier always told me not to count on any honey from a brand-new hive as the bees need to make all the wax comb which takes a great amount of energy. The bees will reuse the comb year after year so once it is made, they can spend their energy on honey production,” Staus said. “This actually was true for me. My first year I did not get any honey for my consumption, but I was able to collect in the second year.”

The last thing any bee keeper wants to do is harm their hive, plus waiting an extra year for honey only makes the taste buds grow fonder. Finally, after honey



Looking into an open hive and the bees at work.



Packaged bees when they arrive in the spring.

harvest, it’s important to winterize the hive properly to help the bees survive the unpredictable Wisconsin winters. With your bees tucked in for the winter, you can then call yourself a bee keeper. 🐝

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.



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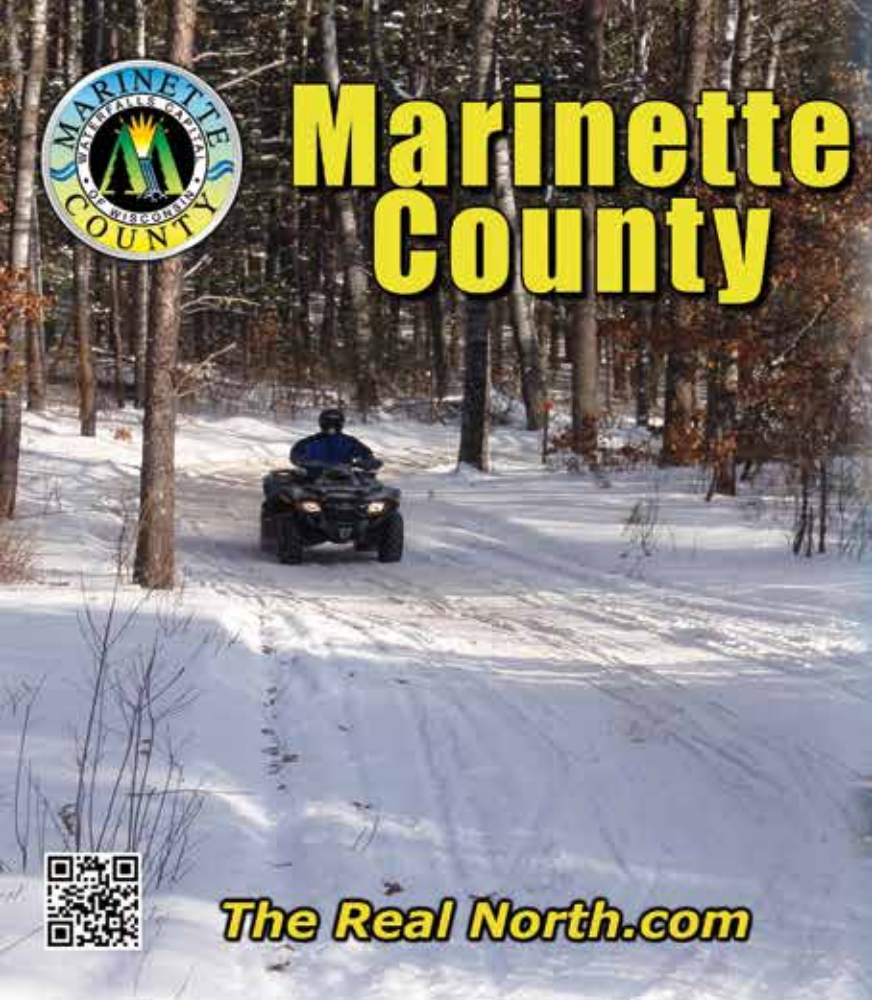
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On The Cover

Jason Gaurkee works the Fox River lock area near Kaukauna for crappie, perch and whitebass

LUBA, FROM PAGE 8

When it comes to holding fish, points can be potent. Always fish the obvious ones, but be sure to check anything that qualifies as a secondary point or one created by man or nature. You just might find yourself pleasantly surprised this season. 


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.

CARPENTER, FROM PAGE 9

bright, the snow ankle-deep or so, and the rabbits were out sunning themselves. Oh, the days we had. Looking back at my hunting journals, I can find many outings when we shot a limit of cottontails – 12 rabbits for four of us.

Access was easy. I don't think any landowner ever said "no" to a hunting request because we'd always walk up to the farmhouse door, milkhouse or workshop with a brown-eyed Basset in tow.


After a morning hunting session and field lunch, we'd rest up the dog for an hour as we drove the backroads and debated where to finish the day. By midafternoon, the sun was raking low across the landscape again. Winter days are short.

Many a sunset found us way back in the hinterlands, finishing a chase. My favorite nights were the moonless ones, where we'd walk out across the rolling, snow-cloaked and lonely countryside by starlight alone. 

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

GATZKE, FROM PAGE 10

Knock on doors, as well. Landowners are not being deluged in the spring with hunters asking permission to hunt and will have more time to talk to you. Asking them in person early in the year can work wonders in gaining permission to hunt. Try placing an ad in a local paper or area Craigslist site searching for permission. Offering to trade a hunt for an opportunity for them to hunt with you here at home opens doors also.

All of the above steps should be done early in the calendar year to assure everything is in place to allow for a memorable out-of-state hunt in fall. 

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.

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CICHANOFSKY, FROM PAGE 7


was getting bites, "This is gonna be the one!" he exclaimed; I rolled my eyes. He had missed the last three bites in a row. He yanked the rod up, and to my surprise, the rod stayed bent. "Here we go, here we go!" Tanner shouted. "I told you this was gonna be the one." He quickly yanked the fish out of the hole. I burst out laughing, "It's a rock bass." I chuckled. "Still more fish than you've caught today!" Tanner mocked. He threw the fish back in and continued fishing. It had been several minutes now since we've gotten any bites or even marked a fish. Tanner got discouraged and went on a walk to check the tip ups, while I decided to stay in the shack and fish.

Half way through Tanner's tip up check, a quick mark went off on the vexilar and I felt a sudden tug on my rod. I yanked it upwards and set the hook. My drag screamed and the tension almost snapped my line. I quickly loosened the drag and held on tight. My line zipped around the hole in sudden and sharp movements. I yelled for Tanner to help me and he ran over and grabbed the gaff.

I slowly started reeling, hoping that the fish was tired out, and thankfully it



Kyle and his 35 inch Northern Pike

was. Tanner gaffed the fish, just in case, and yanked it out of the hole. We danced around the fish in excitement. I quickly held up the fish for a photo before running to the cabin to show Tanner's dad. As I was running I knew that staying out in the cold truly paid off for the bold. 

Kyle (Chicky) Cichanofsky is an Freshman at Bay Port High School and has a fishing group with his friends called WiscoFishCo. Visit Chicky's YouTube channel, Instagram page, or Facebook page at WiscoFishCo.

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JOHN LUTHENS

Camping Wisconsin

Never too early to make plans for summer adventure

Winter in Wisconsin is a season of endless camping possibilities, but mind you, I'm not talking about pitching a tent in a snow drift and struggling into frozen boots in the morning. For me, winter is a season of maps spread in the flickering shadows of a fireplace while I plot the camping adventures of upcoming summer.

Whether it's a remote backpacking expedition, a weekend in one of our state parks, or a canoe expedition across an island-strewn lake to set up an extended base camp – planning early is more than a cozy way to pass those long winter nights – it's the key to unlocking the door of the unlimited camping experiences in Wisconsin. Here are a few ideas to break the ice.

Wisconsin's State Parks:

State parks are some of the most enjoyable and easily accessible spots to set up camp, and with 4,900 campsites spread across Wisconsin's park units, there are a wide variety of camping opportunities.



A remote campsite along the North Country Trail in upper Wisconsin.

Picking a destination or making a reservation is as easy as going online to the Department of Natural Resource's website and keying in the word "camping."

Devils Lake State Park, in Sauk County,

is one of my favorites, and it's arguably the closest thing to mountain terrain camping in Wisconsin. Twenty-two miles of rugged trails ring the mirrored surface of the lake, offering plunging vistas, pristine beau-

ty, and loads of photographic opportunities. Sporting glacial water and a sandy swimming beach, Devil's Lake, itself, is ideal for swimming, and the shelter of the surrounding ridges make the lake surface ideal for paddle sports.

Turtle Flambeau Flowage:

For those inclined to be adventurous when it comes to paddle-bound camping, the Turtle Flambeau Flowage in Iron County is as close as you can get to a Boundary Waters experience in Wisconsin. With 14,000 acres of water, dotted with a maze of 195 islands ranging from tiny birch and pine outcroppings to mammoth stretches of forest, a map and compass are a must on the flowage. There are 66 remote island campsites where purification methods need to be used, unless you trek your own water in with the rest of your camp gear.

Smallmouth bass pulled from lily pads and logs, fresh bluegill for breakfast after

CONTINUED ON PAGE 28



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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.

LUTHENS, FROM PAGE 27

morning forages into the endless, weed-lined bays; a canoe camping expedition in the Turtle-Flambeau might take a bit more planning than a weekend getaway, but the wave-bound memories of self-reliance are well worth the effort.

North Country Trail:

If the ultimate test of your outdoor self-reliance can be stuffed in a backpack, then plunging into the hardwoods, white-pine valleys and sand-barren wilds of the North Country Trail in Douglas, Bayfield, Ashland and Iron Counties may be your ultimate course for back-country camping in Wisconsin.

Not for the faint of heart, the North Country Trail is a cross-country slice of America that begins in the Adirondack Mountains of New York and works west through the upper Great Lakes before sweeping out onto the grassy plains of North Dakota.

The Wisconsin section burrows for 200 miles along the paths of the first fur traders and explorers, and areas of the northern trail are nearly as wild today as they were over 400 years ago. The green undergrowth is flush with bubbling trout streams and wild berries in season, and the silent rustling along the backbone of the wilderness setting is equally likely to yield sightings of grouse, deer, wolves or black bear.

Remote wanderers are able to access primitive campsites along the trail, and it's not uncommon to go hours at a time without seeing any sign of civilization, not to mention another hiker.

Wisconsin may indeed hibernate in winter, but dreams of camping adventures to come certainly don't need to hibernate with it. Study those maps and make your plans. I'll see you on the trails of summer. 📸

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

MIKE YURK

Cartridge Competition

.30-06 vs .308 performance

Once upon a time, the .30-06 was the ultimate all-around American big game rifle cartridge. The .308 may now have taken the spot that the .30-06 held for much of the Twentieth Century.

The 30-06 began as a military cartridge and was adopted by the U. S. Army in 1906 and remained the Army's standard rifle and machine gun cartridge for the next fifty years. Soldiers coming back from the trenches of the First World War brought with them their enthusiasm for bolt action rifles in general and the .30-06 in particular.

The .30-06 was made for bolt action rifles and it soon became the most popular cartridge for American big game. During my youth in the 1950s and 60s, hunters said that if you only had one rifle for most big game in North America, make it a .30-06. The round became so popular that it could be found even in the most remote locales.

The Beginning of the .308

In the early 1950s, the .308 was developed as a military cartridge. In military arms, the .308 is known as the 7.62mm and it became the standard NATO rifle and machine gun round. US forces were issued the M-14 rifle and the M60 machine gun in 7.62mm to be compatible with our NATO partners. The M14 remained the standard infantry weapon until it was replaced by the 5.56 mm, M16 during the Vietnam War. The M14 saw continued use as a sniper weapon for many years after the introduction of the M16. The M-60 would remain with the U.S. military well into the 20th Century.

It didn't take long for the .308 to find its way into the arsenals of shooters and big game hunters. Like the 30-06, it could be found in bolt action, pump and semi-automatic rifles. Although the popularity of the .308 started slowly, shooters and hunters noticed some significant advantages to the

.308. It had a flatter trajectory than the .30-06 with lighter recoil. Additionally, when NATO compared the 7.62mm to the original .30-06, they found very little difference in ballistic performance.

Once introduced to outdoorsmen, the .308 steadily gained popularity and it seems to have surpassed the .30-06. This took me by surprise because all my life I was under the impression that the .30-06 was the ultimate big game caliber.

What others have to say

I recently read an article about the 11 best rifle cartridges for whitetail deer and another on essential cartridges for American shooters. To my surprise, the .30-06 was never mentioned, but the .308 was. In the first story, the author called the .308 "one of the best whitetail rounds ever." In another article, the author wrote that "because it is shorter, kicks less and fits in more compact and lighter rifles, the .308 is the new .30-06."



The 30.06, long regarded as the ultimate big game rifle, is now getting stiff competition from the .308.

My own personal research with people who sell guns and ammo in three major Wisconsin sporting goods stores provided anecdotal evidence that supports that conclusion. Although the .30-06 is far from becoming forgotten, it is hard to ignore the surge in popularity of the .308 in the last twenty years. It seems the .308 is taking its place over the 30-06 in the hearts and minds of hunters and shooters. 🐾

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

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Presents Firearms Info from Ron Stresing

RON STRESING

The Evolution of Modern Shotgun Shells

Can they even get better?

The first self-contained shotgun shells were all brass and contained the same components as used in muzzle loading shotguns. They consisted of a pistol primer, a charge of powder, an over-powder card, filler wad, shot charge and an over-shot wad. The top of the shell was sealed with cardboard or heavy paper. Later on, better and hotter primers made specifically for shot shells were used. One can only imagine the tedium of loading dozens of brass shells by hand. Wadding used at the time included cork, heavy paper, pressed fiber, cardboard or even leather discs.

In 1877, ready-made, paper cased shotgun shells hit the market. Being able to buy a case of 500 ready-made shot shells for little more than the cost of reloading components contributed to market hunting's toll on Passenger Pigeons and other game. The paper hulls sported a brass base - a lower base on shells with less black powder and a higher base on shells loaded with more. The base was meant to protect the paper hull from burning through from the explosive black powder charge. The charge of black powder was weighed out in drams. Even today, we still see the term "dram equivalent" marked on shot shell boxes. The advent of double-based smokeless powders at the turn of the century allowed for better



Brass, paper and plastic hulls

shells. Smokeless powder is a "propellant" not an "explosive" like black powder. The slower and more even burning smokeless powder allowed for better patterns, less recoil and heavier shot charges. Slug ammunition advanced from round "pumpkin balls" to the 1930s hollow base, Foster-style rifled slugs we still use today.

Shot shells would see relatively little change until the post WWII era. The folded crimp used on the shotgun shells we see today became more popular than the roll crimp sealed with a paper disc. In the 1950s, primers would change from corrosive priming to non-corrosive priming. Remington Arms marketed their non-corrosive



Shot shell box from the 1950s and one from 2015



Brass, paper and plastic hulls

primed shells under the trademark "Kleanbore." No longer did you have to break your shotgun down and scrub the corrosive residue out of the bore.

Shotgun wadding was little changed from the 1880s, as a treated paper disc still worked as a gas seal and the wads were still compressed fiber. Shot pellets contacted the barrel after firing, meaning up to 10 percent of the pellets were badly deformed by the time they left the gun. In the late 1950s, manufacturers tried out a plastic "collar" that wrapped around the shot charge. This thin piece of plastic gave some protection to the pellets, but not much.

The late 1950s and early 1960s saw the advent of plastic hulls and plastic wads. Plastic hulls didn't swell in wet weather and reloaded better. Plastic "power piston" wads gave a better gas seal, absorbed shock and protected the pellets from deforming on "setback" and on their



CONTINUED ON PAGE 31

STRESING, *FROM PAGE 30*

trip down the barrel. The mid-1960s saw the advent of color coded hulls. Federal introduced red for 12 gauge, purple for 16 gauge and yellow for 20 gauge. Higher antimony “hard shot” replaced softer drop shot in some hunting loads. Heavier shot charges and the 3 inch, 12 gauge and 20 gauge magnums were introduced. Sabot slugs that ride down rifled barrels and give rifle-like accuracy to shotguns came along in the late 1970s. The mandated use of steel shot in the late 1970s presented a whole new challenge. Back then the average velocity of most steel shot was around 1300 fps. Compare that to the variety and velocity of steel loads marketed today. Today’s steel shells are waterproof, have velocities of up to 1650 fps, offer more shot sizes and pattern much better.

So what does the future hold? I’m betting on lower-recoil loads and biodegradable wads and hulls. I also predict better, cheaper replacements for lead shot target loads. 🏹

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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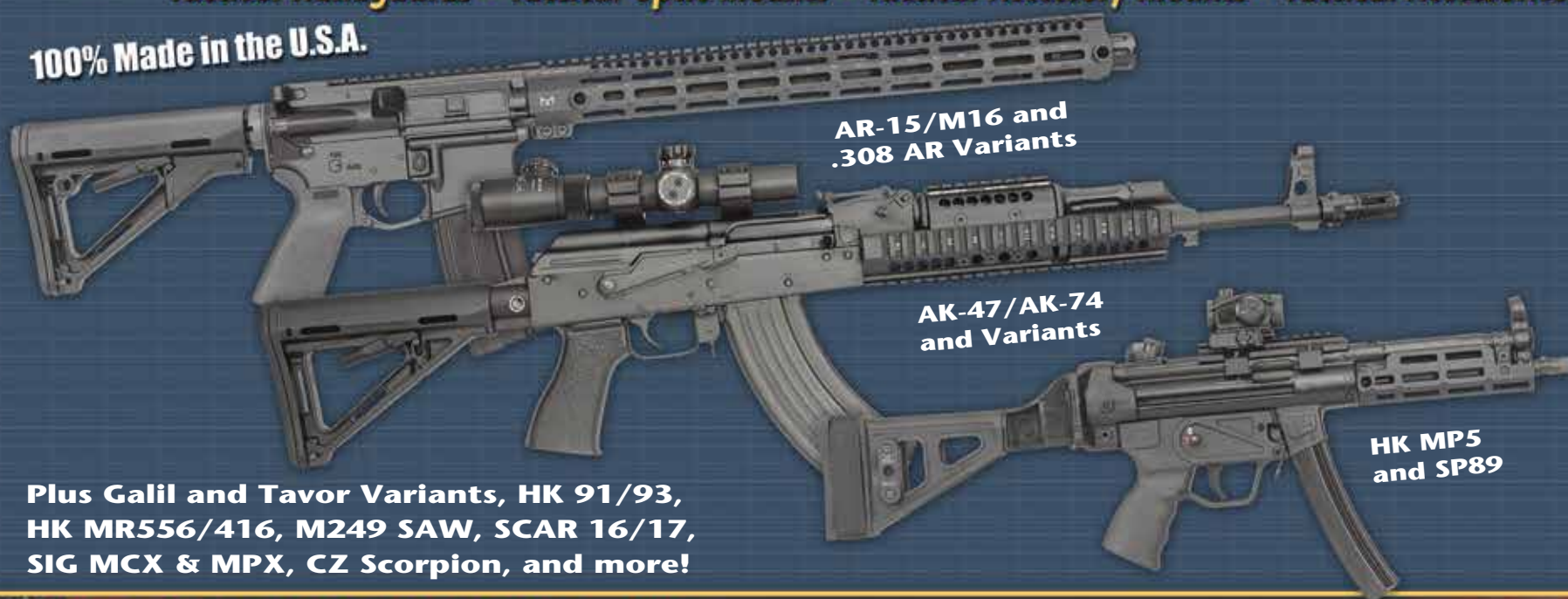


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STUART WILKERSON

Concealed Carry

Pepper spray is a credible self-defense tool

A concealed carry handgun is not for everyone. Pistols and revolvers that you can stake your life on are not especially inexpensive and should be accompanied by professional training. In order to legally carry a handgun, a Concealed Carry Permit is necessary in Wisconsin. Along with carrying a lethal weapon comes great responsibility.

One of the most popular, cost effective and practical non-lethal means for self-defense is personal pepper spray (PPS). “Some people are uncomfortable around firearms – and there is nothing wrong with that – so they choose pepper spray,” according to Mike “Shorty” Govas, owner of Shorty’s Shooting Sports in West Allis. “We sell a load of pepper spray, probably around 500 a year and much of it is bought by women,” he noted. Shorty said that PPS has many attributes: it is inexpensive (figure \$10 - \$20 compared to hundreds of dollars for a reliable handgun); it is unobtrusive (not much bigger than a tube of lip stick); it doesn’t require a concealed carry permit or extensive training to be used correctly; and it’s portable and easy to use.

PPS is primarily made from the extract of capicum plants, from which there are many. The most common for PPS use is derived from oleoresin capicum (OC), the same ingredient that gives chili peppers their bite. No matter how big the aggressor, PPS is virtually guaranteed to immediately stop him or her. Pepper spray’s impact is not deterred by the size of the potential assailant; it is just as ef-

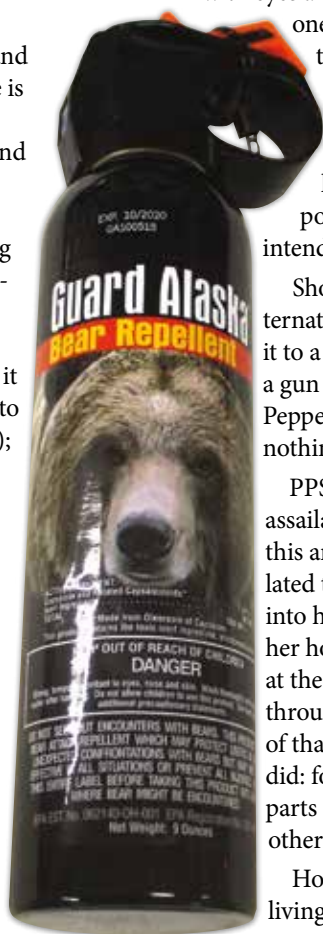
fective on 300lb professional wrestler as it would be on a 90lb ballerina.

Among the effects of PPS are temporary blindness, burning pain, difficult breathing, swollen eyelids, and excessive tears. “Pepper spray will screw up anything with eyes and breathes,” according to Shorty. “Ask anyone who had a face full of pepper spray: They’re totally incapacitated and, worse for them, they do all the wrong things to get it off, like wiping their eyes. That only makes things a lot worse.” Pepper spray’s effect is also long-lasting, up to 20 minutes, depending on potency, which should be ample time for the intended victim to make a hasty exit and call 911.

Shorty said that “Pepper spray is a credible alternative to a handgun, but I wouldn’t bring it to a gunfight. If someone is going to pull a gun on you, you’re better off with a gun. Pepper spray is a whole lot better than nothing.”

PPS can be used against more than one assailant. While interviewing Shorty for this article, a customer came in and related to him how a group of men broke into her residence. Shorty explained to her how PPS could have stopped them at the stairwell before they even got through the door. “I need to buy some of that,” the customer replied, and she did: four of them to place in various parts of the house in the event of another attempted break-in.

Homo sapiens are not the only living things that PPS can stop in its



From bling to bears, Shorty’s has pepper spray to meet a variety of personal protection needs

tracks. Shorty said that pepper spray is equally effective on bears (!), dogs, wolves and coyotes, all animals that hikers, anglers, pedestrians, joggers and others might cross paths. “If I had a cabin up north and didn’t want to shoot a bear that got inside, I’d buy 10 cans of pepper spray and keep it around the cabin and on me when I was outside,” Shorty said.

PPS has a range of about 20 feet and comes in a variety of sizes and propellant types. The size of the container will generally determine how many “shots” it will “hold.” Most PPS comes in a cylindrical-shaped container, although there are others, such as those that mimic the appearance of a handgun. PPS users need to remember that its active ingredients do not last a life-time. Most PPS devices have an expiration date printed on them and some don’t; for safety sake, replace your PPS device annually.

“For home protection, there isn’t a cheaper, more effective alternative to a \$400 handgun than pepper spray,” Shorty said. 🐾

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



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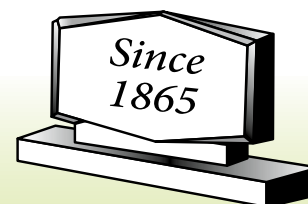


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