

FREE

On Wisconsin Outdoors



with the Dick Ellis Experts

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**KWIK
TRIP**

PHOTO BY DICK ELLIS

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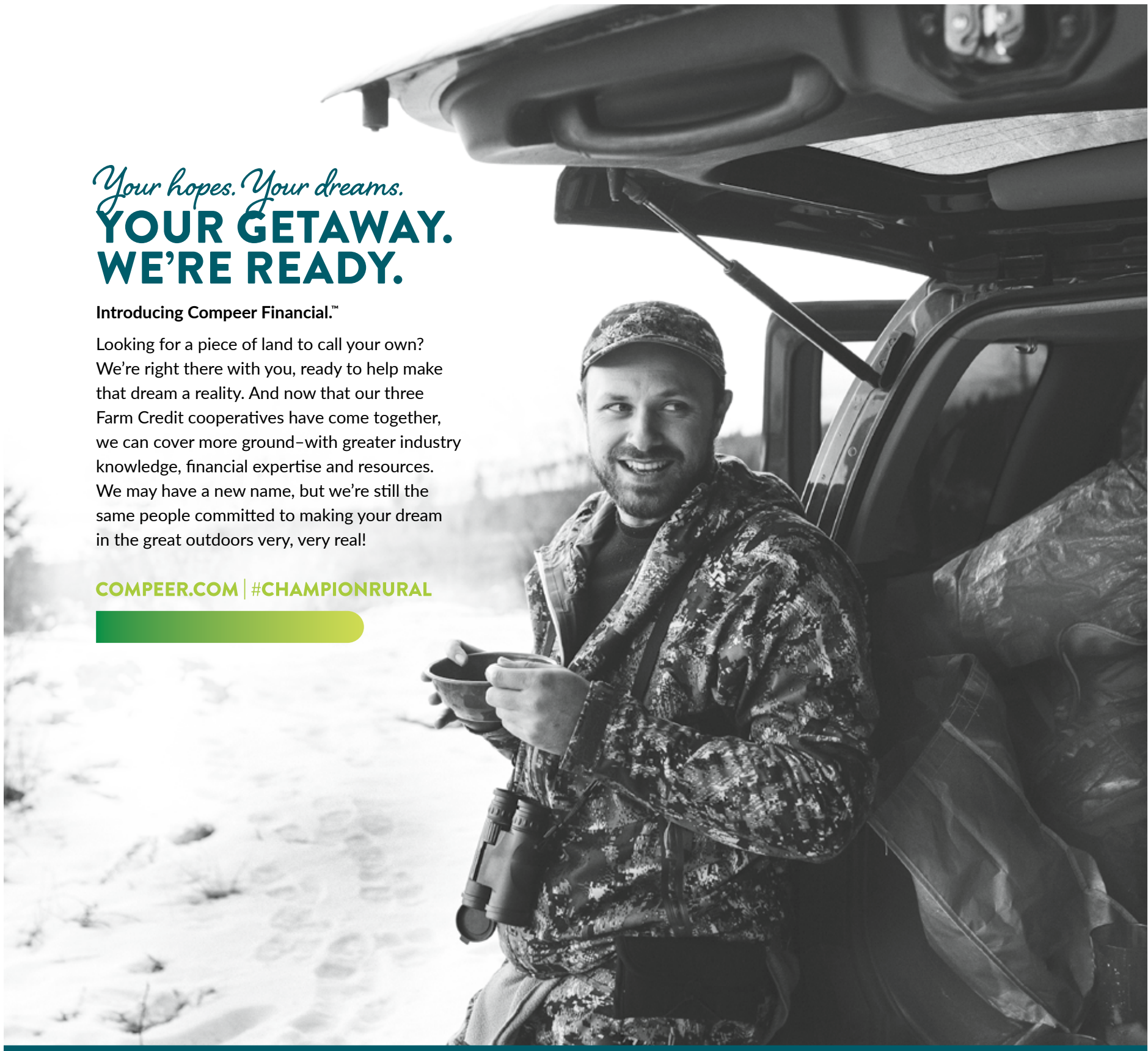


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Spring features the big walleye run on the Wolf, but fish can be caught in the river all year long.

TOM LUBA

No Waiting on the Wolf

Generous river gives walleyes year round

It's March and when you're not an ice fisherman, the pickings are slim. I've been on the ice twice in my life. The first time we drove down a boat launch ramp to hit the lake. Old habits die hard and after we didn't go straight into the depths, I released a breath I didn't know I was holding. We were still on top and that in itself was a revelation. The second time, experience had my back. Eight degree air temperature didn't.

So, I sit by the window wishing for open water and even just a hint of green to be popping up from the light tan blemish that late winter left in place of a yard.

Thankfully, spring means rivers, open-water walleye and a new season. Now is the time to get the boat ready and your rods and reels. New line and jigs bring new hope. I look forward to fishing on rivers during the entire open water season because you can usually find something that will bite.


Walleye are already coming upstream under the ice to spawn. They'll head for the nearest dam on most rivers and up toward the spawning marshes north of New London in the case of the Wolf, which is undammed between Lake Poygan and Shawano.

Dams play key roles for spawning walleyes. The dam on the Fox at DePere is a well-known big fish spot, as walleye from the Bay of Green Bay move up in large numbers. Fish can be caught on everything from crankbaits to Rat-L-Traps to plastics and live minnows.

There are several dams on the Menominee along the Wisconsin/Upper Peninsula border and all end at dams. You'll find similar situations on the Wisconsin, from as far south as Lake Wisconsin and the Dells, up past Wausau. The Oconto and the Peshtigo are also possibilities. The Wolf is unique, with no dams between Shawano and Lake Poygan. It draws fish from the whole Lake Winnebago System to the river in spring.

On the Wolf, the fish come up on the slack water side. On their way back, they ride the current and can be awfully hungry. Your rigs don't have to be ultra fancy. A medium to medium heavy spinning combo with a good mono, like Sufix Elite and a selection of one-quarter, three-eighth and one-half ounce jigs should do. Plain heads, orange or chartruse are good choices. Jigs made with bucktail, craft fur (the frizzy little stuff that serves as hair on the kids' trolls) or marabou can work.

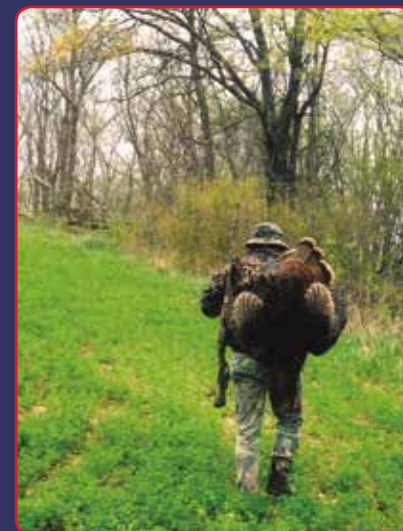
It's been said that if you are on the Wolf on April 12 to 14, you should be catching fish. One thing to realize about Winnebago is that walleye also spawn in the lake. If the ice is out early enough, you might be able to fish them.

By the time the walleye are finishing, you just might find some green poking up in that backyard. And the white bass run should be starting soon. 

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



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On The Cover
Lori and Dick Ellis find fast
crappie action during spring
spawn on the Manitowish
Chain in Vilas County.

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PHIL SCHWEIK

Prespawn Crappies

Exceptional fishing on the deadwater

When anglers think about March and April in Wisconsin, they are typically thinking about walleyes and the traditional walleye run that happens every year on the state's many river systems. Anglers are getting their early season walleye gear ready while visions of 10-pound walleyes dance in their heads.

What a lot of people don't know about is the outstanding pre-spawn crappie fishing that takes place in the Wisconsin River and many other river systems this time of the year. Once the water temperatures reach the upper 30 to lower 40 degree range, you will find that crappies will start to make their move. They will no longer be out suspended over main lake basins, but are now headed towards traditional spawning grounds.

When looking for pre-spawn crappies, you have to think a little differently. Even though it is early in the season, the crappies are probably not where you would expect. They are going to be holding up in what I consider a mid-range depth. This depth can vary depending on your system and with reference to fresh incoming water. I typically look

for water depths in the 14 to 16 foot range that is near any fresh incoming water.


These locations may be incoming feeder streams, openings to backwater locations, or washout holes in the system where two intersecting rivers meet. The interesting phenomenon to look for is stagnant water, what I call "dead water," that is amongst the current. These are locations that crappies will search out and find, and then hold in to catch food and avoid fighting the faster moving current.

Finding dead water locations is not easy and most of the time it is just dumb luck, but if you have an idea of what to look for, it is not that hard. Look for leaves, sticks, and other spring debris that should be floating downstream on current, but instead are stagnant or swirling on the surface, caught in that dead water seam of opposite-moving water.

Once you have found such a location, the catching of the crappies is easy. A simple jig and minnow cast out in the slack water will produce crappies that are holding close to the bottom. I also like to run slip bobbers set at various depths to pick up the crappies that are moving into the

*Prespawn crappies*

dead water areas or moving out.

If you enjoy catching crappies and haven't tried targeting early season pre-spawn crappies, you should really give this method a shot. If you don't, you may be missing the boat on some of the best crappie fishing of the season. 

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.

DICK ELLIS

On Wisconsin Outdoors

To stay in the field

We're really not much different than that old truck that has taken us down countless, pocketed logging roads in search of the perfect treestand or secluded trout hole. Time goes by, the seasons pass; we rust out, get scratched up, and fall apart. Along the way, we need a fender or two refitted or an old engine part replaced.

A few years ago, *On Wisconsin Outdoors* launched our "To Stay in the Field" section to help mostly aging outdoors men and women facing the same health challenges that we face. Our 40s, 50s, and 60s stormed in from nowhere it seems; and orthopedic problems, cardiac care needs, declining hearing and eyesight came in for the ride. You name it, life brings it. It doesn't let up with the 70s, 80s, and counting. The pages will turn, for sure, but aging outdoorsmen aren't pulling the plug on their field time just because a few new circles on the tree truck brought with it a few more aches and pains; or creaks and groans if you prefer.

We're going into the field.

I've had my share of meetings with Mr. Scalpel, and

know personally that there is nothing like leaving both the apprehension of upcoming surgery and the pain behind to climb back into these field games we covet. Trust me; no pain again is the ticket. So this month we met with more healthcare experts to plan future columns to help our readers. A series of unexpected contacts occurred to make me understand we are doing absolutely the correct thing in dedicating some of our *OWO* whitespace each issue to keeping you out there longer. All of it came within days of each other.

Longtime *OWO* writer Dan Moericke's column came in for editorial proof reading, and uh-ohh... Dan is telling Wisconsin about the "widow-maker" heart attack he suffered opening day of the 2017 deer season. Dan ignored some warning signs and he wants to make sure you don't do the same. We deferred that story to the May-June issue so we can interview a cardiologist on those warning signs and run the column right next to Dan. Literally, it's a potential lifesaver. *OWO* bear expert Mike Foss wondered what the foot pain was all about as he worked the fields of Superior and ignored the "discomfort," until he discovered

Mike Foss is down but not out and will return to the field to bait bears and set treestands after surgery for a broken foot bone.



one of his bones is snapped in half. Surgery is scheduled for March, and Mike is relegated to the bench into June.

OWO reader Craig Niermann called after remembering columns I wrote during my 2014 hip replacement journey, recalling that I was totally satisfied with the work of my orthopedic surgeon, and asked for a referral. "My body

CONTINUED ON PAGE 28



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MIKE YURK

The Sauger Earns Respect Where, how to find the "other" fish

Sauger were once relegated to a Rodney Dangerfield style lack of respect. As a member of the perch family, the sauger played a distinct second fiddle to its cousins the walleye and yellow perch.

I grew up in the late 1950 and 60s less than a half mile from Lake Winnebago. My grandfather taught me how to fish on Lake Winnebago and whenever we caught a sauger, he looked at it like he wasn't pleased. "It's just a sand pike," he would say. Sand pike is one of several nicknames sauger have picked up over the years.

He never threw one back, but you could clearly see he was much happier when we caught a walleye. My grandfather's reaction wasn't uncommon. Back then, as today, the sauger and walleye daily limit was a combined count of both fish. In those days many fishermen, especially old timers, were of the opinion they would replace any sand pike in their bucket or fish basket with walleye if they were nearing their limit. Sand pike, or sauger, were certainly a lesser species.

I have never been of that opinion. Sauger are just as good as walleye when it comes to table fare. I fish the Mississippi River in the early spring and late fall and I catch just as many, if not more, sauger as walleye. I have never noted a difference in taste.

Sauger vs Walleye

Sauger look much like walleye and have the same general body shape. They are usually a little smaller than walleye. It is rare to see a sauger over 20 inches long. Instead of having the brown or golden color of walleyes, sauger are usually silver or gray, sometimes with darker, almost black, blotches on their side. On the very bottom of the tail, they may have a slight strip of white, but not the lower white tip found on walleyes. The dorsal fin on sauger has dark spots where walleye have stripes.

Sauger will generally be found in the same waterways as walleyes. Sauger prefer larger lakes with major river systems, such as Lake Winnebago with the Wolf and Fox Rivers running through it. They will also be found in bigger river systems like the

Wisconsin and Mississippi Rivers. Walleyes can be found in smaller lakes, either naturally or through stocking. Sauger do not do well in smaller lakes and they are seldom found in them. The eyes on sauger are more light sensitive than even walleyes, so they often will be in deeper water than walleyes. Because they do so well in murky water, sauger are a natural for rivers, such as the Mississippi, which is noted for its lack of clarity.

The same baits and techniques which catch walleye will catch sauger. On the Mississippi River, where I do most of my early and late season walleyes and sauger fishing, you can't go wrong with a jig and minnow for both species.

The State of Sauger

I have noticed a fairly steady population of sauger in the Mississippi. Often we catch far more sauger than walleyes. However, in the Winnebago system, there has been a decline in sauger populations. There doesn't seem to be any explanation as to why this phenomenon has occurred.



Sauger, like the one Mike Yurk is holding, are now getting the respect they deserve.

A few years ago the Department of Natural Resources prohibited taking any sauger on the Winnebago system and now only one sauger can be taken as a part of the daily five walleye/sauger limit.

Limits and size restrictions for walleyes and saugers can be different depending on the location. As mentioned, only one sauger can be taken in the Winnebago system and neither walleye nor sauger have a minimum length requirement. The general state-wide limit for much of Wisconsin is five combined walleye and sauger between 15 and 20 inches with one over 24 inches. The Saint Croix and Mississippi River have a six fish combined limit with no minimum size limit for sauger, but there is a fifteen inch minimum size for walleye.

Unlike the days of my youth, there isn't any prejudice against sauger. Ignored or dismissed years ago by many fishermen as a lesser fish, the sauger has now gained the respect it so richly deserves.

How about those sauger? 🐟

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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CAPTAIN DAVE DUWE

Becoming a Better Angler

Simple steps to catching more fish

I have been guiding for close to 25 years and have had the opportunity to fish with anglers of all different skill levels. During that time, I have found several tricks that can make an average angler better.

The most important characteristic that every pro-angler has is confidence. I don't care if the wind is blowing from the east or if we've just had a 20-degree cold front, it doesn't matter. I realize that there are certain conditions that make the fish bite better, but expecting to catch fish every time is the key to confidence. It may take hours to find the fish, but always fish hard the whole time you are out. When you stop trying or give up, you won't catch anything.

There are three fundamental areas that will improve an angler's chances of success. They are:

- Live Bait
- There is no water not to fish
- Fish for what bites

Not all clients are comfortable with artificial lures, so live bait is the answer; I see no shame in catching fish on what works. My go-to presentations are lindy rigging


or a single hook nightcrawler. For the single hook/split shot, use a small hook. I prefer a #12 Kahle with a round split shot. A round split shot will allow the weight to move through weeds without snagging. The second hint is to only hook the tip of the nightcrawler. This allows the worm to slide through the weeds and eliminates line twists.

The lindy rig method I prefer is fishing vertical along a weedline. I will use a small split shot to establish the length of the leader. If you want a 3' leader, simply slide the split shot up or down the line as needed. Also, by making it with a split shot instead of a swivel, you can maintain the same length of leader without completely re-tying.

There is no water that you shouldn't fish. In early spring water might be as shallow as six inches, or typical on the waters I frequent, as deep as 40 to 45 feet throughout the summer and into fall. You really need to trust your fish locator. When I see marks on my Humminbird Helix 10, I will stop and fish to see what is down there. This is the point where it is imperative that you know how to run your locator. Make sure you read the directions or even attend

a seminar at your favorite sport show.

Lastly, it is very important to fish for what is biting. Some days the crappies are suspended and feeding heavily, another day the northern pike are just off bottom biting on lindy-rigged suckers. I try to always be prepared for whatever is biting. On a normal guide trip, I may have 15-20 fishing rods rigged and ready to go for whatever will work. When I take clients out, I make sure that they are aware of the opportunities available to them. Many times my clients will specify that they'd like to fish for walleyes, but sometimes you have to accept the fact they aren't biting. I'm not a miracle worker, but I do know that honesty is a good policy; it prevents misunderstandings and disappointment.

Of course, if you don't go you will never catch anything. The next time you are out on a fishing trip, give some of these suggestions a try. You may just end up with more fish in your boat. 

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.

JERRY KIESOW

Fly Fishing in Wisconsin

Madsen's skunk

The last time we got together, I mentioned six new flies that worked for me in 2017, but we only had space for five. Here is the sixth – Madsen's Skunk. Never heard of it? Me neither, until I ran across it on the web. This is a fly that I have used to simulate a grasshopper. (The author of this pattern also uses it to represent a cricket, a spider, or stoneflies. He claims it can be used during all seasons.) So far I have only used it as a fake grasshopper. Smallies love it.

Madsen's Skunk is a relatively easy tie, except for the rubber legs. On the other hand, I always have a problem tying rubber legs. You may have a more positive experience.

This particular fly has a grey squirrel tail, a black chenille body, white rubber legs, and a wing that can be made with either natural or white deer hair. Not deer tail, which will not float, but deer body hair – the hollow stuff. There is also an alternative, which I did not tie until this past winter and which I will certainly try come early summer. A different method is to simply use yellow chenille instead of black. I now have both. Please see the accompanying pic-

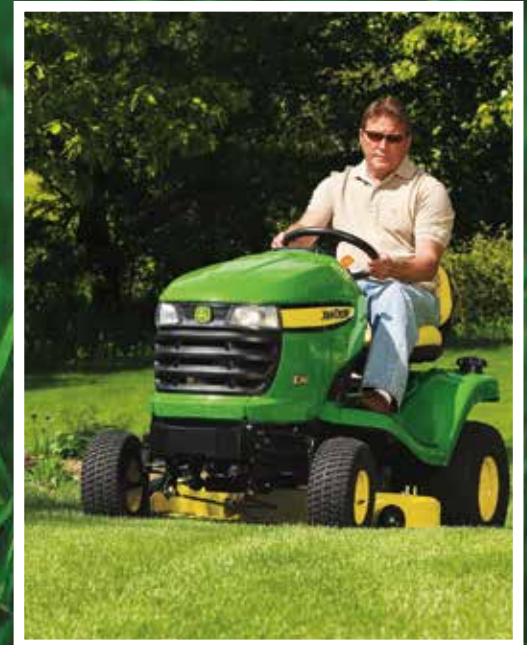
tures. I may tie a few with olive chenille and brown legs as a third alternative.

Tying on the tail is no problem; I make the length as long as the hook shaft, a number six streamer, and tie it reasonably full. Then I tie on the chenille and wrap the thread over the squirrel tail, about three-quarters of the way up the shaft toward the head. Here I attach the legs. I tie them on one at a time, on each side of the hook, centering each leg. See the included image. I advance the thread to the front of the legs, then wrap the chenille body, weaving the chenille between the legs to keep them separated. I then wrap the chenille forward of the legs for a wrap or two and tie off with a couple of half hitches.

If the legs do not look right at this point, I weave the thread back through the chenille and crisscross it between the legs until they are in the correct position and secured, ending up in front of them. I secure the thread with another couple of half hitches. Next, I tie on the wing of deer hair, wrapping it securely and finishing the en-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22

Weekend Freedom Machines



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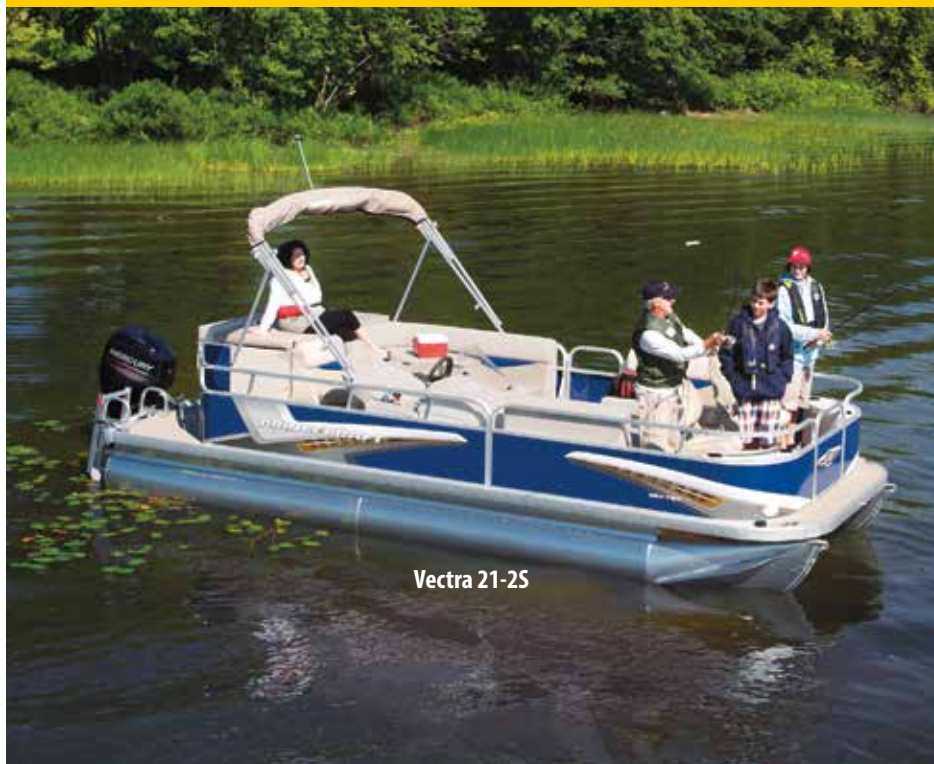
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WAYNE MORGENTHALER

Listen to the Weather Fishing Wisconsin River backwaters, lakes

I love to get out in April and visit the lakes and streams of southwestern Wisconsin. Spring is awakening by evidence of the return of migratory birds and green foliage. Sometimes you are limited as to when you can get out to fish and relax, so it is important to know your weather conditions before setting out on the water.

If it is a cool day with windy conditions, I look to do some trout fishing. This is a catch-and-release time of the year with the use of artificial baits. The action can be fast and furious. I prefer wading in the water and walking up stream. I tend to use small spinner baits and fish with ultra-light rods. Trout at this time of the year will have gorgeous colors.

On days above 60 degrees, I am targeting northern pike on the backwaters of the Wisconsin River. High water is a wonderful time to maneuver around from one

lake to another without portaging. A good shallow running flashing spoon works the best for me. A number two or three Mepps in orange or green has brought me the most fish. The pike are tough to find and usually involve a lot of casting. Generally, when I catch one, there is another pike not too far away. Beaver Houses are a convenient location to target. Start at the end of your small body of water where the wind starts, and slowly drift along using anchors if the wind is too strong.

When water temperatures are rising, crappie action can be fantastic. Lake Redstone has a good crappie population, and you need to target this lake in mid-April. I prefer fishing with minnows and looking for bays or channels. On the backwaters, look for dead trees, stumps, and brush piles close to beaver dens using a pink and white Mini-Mite in 1/32 size. Sometimes I will take off the white plastic and attach a minnow through the lips. You may want

to use a small sinker to take it down faster on windy days.

Those warm days in the 70 - 80 degree range will usually bring in bluegills during the afternoon. I think they like to feel the sun on their fins and will be found in very shallow water. A fly rod with a rubber spider, popper, or fly will catch the most fish. Using an ultra-light with part of a night crawler works excellent on a small bobber, but I prefer just casting out the worm and letting it slowly sink to the bottom. Last year, when the water was very high, I was able to find the fish in corners just out of the current in the backwaters. They will be up in the brush and cruising those dead brown grasses.

When fishing small bodies of water, I like to use a kayak or canoe. Remember to bring at least two anchors for the canoe. This will prevent it from moving around too fast and help to slowly cover areas



Rick Dax with backwater crappie.

where the fish are biting. Once hooked, bluegills tend to pull canoes unless properly anchored. When the bite slows down, try other spots. Come back later to the one that was most successful.

Remember to take a friend fishing and enjoy the outdoors. 🌿

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.

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on beautifully renovated brownstone buildings that now house many quaint businesses, gift shops, grocery stores, restaurants and pubs. In 2005, Ashland was designated the Historic Mural Capital of Wisconsin. Enjoy the area's warm hospitality and conveniences, including cultural attractions, festivals and entertainment, museums, lodging, golf courses, picnic areas, unique shopping and the local area airport.

Smelt Season

The Smelt Run in the Chequamegon Bay usually starts around the third week of April, shortly after the ice goes out of the bay. Visitors and locals love smelt season. Smelt usually run late at night and are brought in with a seine net or dip net. The seine net is used on the shores of the big lake and some smelters use a dip net in the creeks.

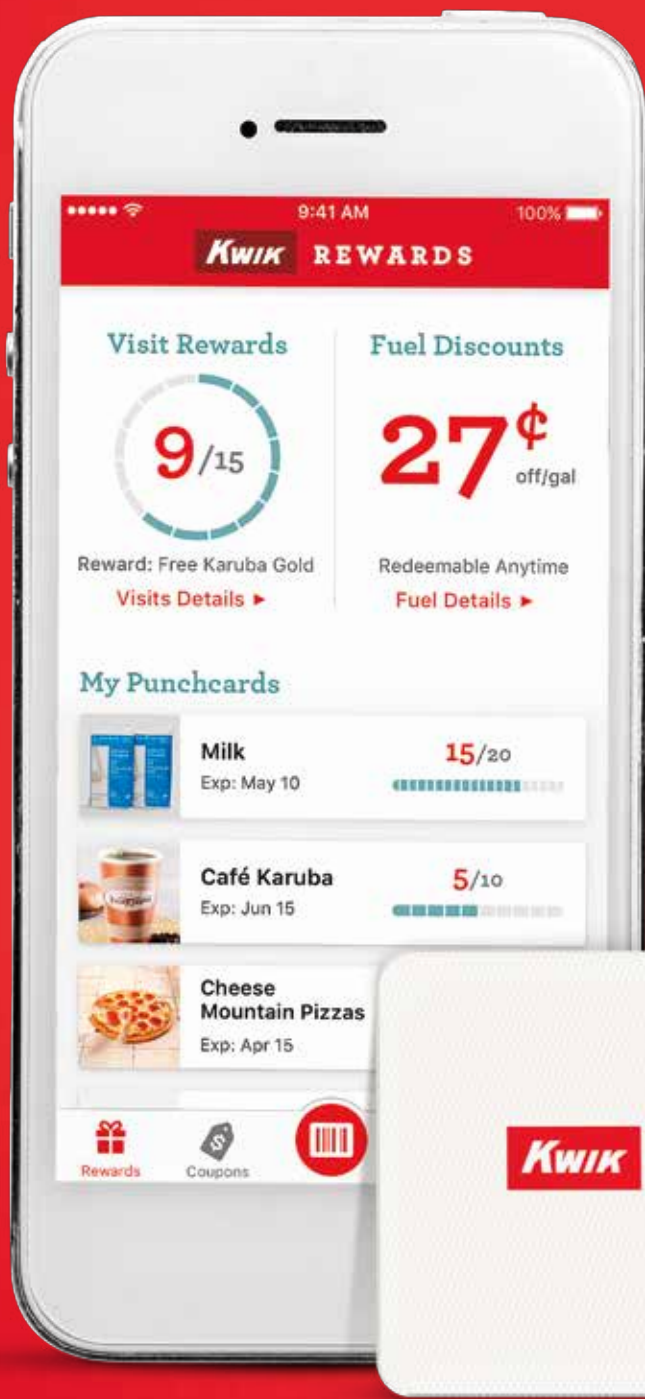
Smelting is always a fun time with the smell of the clean air of Chequamegon Bay and the awesome site of the many campfires along the shoreline. Smelters light

CONTINUED ON PAGE 34

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TOM CARPENTER

The Last Match

Father, son cabin memory will burn forever

They told me the spring crappies were really biting at the lake, and they were right.

We leave home at 2:30 pm on a Friday, get there at 4 pm, grab an old cabin at the resort (still \$15 per bunk back then), slip the boat in and are on the bullrushes by 5 pm for an evening of dunking minnows below bobbers and hauling in April silversides.

We're catching a few crappies within 10 minutes. It's the perfect kind of fishing for little Ethan, as well as for a tired Dad, anchored up and no backtrolling work.

The fishing is steady until about 8 pm or so, when it should get even better. But the fish have had it. Us, too. We have a small basket of crappies to fillet. Who needs any more fish than enough for a fry-up tonight for dinner and tomorrow at lunch anyway?

Gliding back in, as the stars start to glimmer above the mirror-smooth glass of the lake below, Ethan hollers above the



outboard's hum: "Can we have a campfire?" Man, it's been a long week. I just want to clean some fish, eat and go to sleep. We don't have the right stuff for a campfire. But how often does the kid get a campfire?

I nod yes. Surely we can pull it together. But we have no matches, lighter, newspaper, kindling or firewood. Boat secured, fish filleted and bellies filled, we go back to work at 10 pm on a dark, moonless night.

Matches come easy: half a relatively dry book rummaged from my tacklebox. Paper and firewood present some challenge, but nothing a two-mile drive can't solve. The convenience store down the road, like so many similar establishments in the Northwoods, sells firewood. Armed with a bundle, a couple copies of soon-to-be-yesterday's newspaper (along with graham crackers, marshmallows and a chocolate bar), we drive back.

I clip a visor light to each of our caps and we wander the woods on a scavenger hunt for dry deadfall twigs of progressive size.

Ethan holds the flashlight. I light the newspaper. The kindling doesn't take, even after a few tries. The breeze, which is picking up, snuffs out a few matches, on which we are now dangerously low. Why didn't I grab any extras at the store?

"I don't know, Ethan," I lament after a couple more failed attempts.

"You can do it," he says, both confident-

ly and expectantly. I'm down to the last match. The very last match.

Hunkered over against the breeze so as not to get too much or too little of it, I somehow light a corner of paper. Flames spread to the rest of the loose wad. Kindling somehow ignites. We blow just a little. Crackling. Flames! Finally a couple larger pieces of wood and success.

An hour later, stuffed with S'mores, we're sitting back, gazing at the last of the now-dwindling fire and listening to its final snaps and pops. We smell like smoke. Our eyes are closing. Oak leaves rattle above.

"Listen to that west wind. I don't think we'll be able to fish our good spot tomorrow," I announce.

"That's okay," comes the delayed reply. "This is the part I'll remember anyway."



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

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DICK ELLIS

April Foolish

Mother Nature calls the shots

Mother Nature calls the shots. She says if you will have walleyes tonight or if you head home at 3:00 am running on “almost empty.” When she’s angry, it matters little what river experts might be standing next to you in waders on the Fox at the midnight hour, how much knowledge they carry, what lures are in the arsenals or how many walleyes in the 10 pound class may be in the current just a pitch away.

Tonight, I don’t like Mother Nature.

For 20 years, OWO columnist Phil Schweik has traveled from guiding on his home waters of the Wisconsin River near Wausau to work the Fox River at Depere during the same two day April window. Wisconsin anglers will travel long distances to find excellent walleye fishing on the Fox, the Wisconsin, the Rock, the Wolf or the Mississippi, the human migrations becoming heavier to those waters with reputations for holding big fish.

Some anglers follow the spring runs dictated by water temperature south to north on the same rivers, or jump rivers to find as much heavy action as possible. To the Wisconsin walleye addict, the fact that water temperatures reach the magic 42 degree mark at different times in different places is a very good thing indeed.

“I was fishing the Wisconsin River Friday and the walleyes were in 25 feet of water in 34.7 degree water temperature,” Schweik said. “Downriver 12 miles the fish were eight to 10 feet shallower in 38 degree water temperature.”

For decades, Schweik penciled in “superb” fishing as a sure bet on the Fox April 1st and 2nd with 50, 60, or 70 walleyes per angler the expectation. The average fish...the majority of fish...stretch the tape between 22 and 27 inches. The occasional 28 and 29 and 30-inch fish is a daily occurrence. And, the obese fish even 34 inches in length and pushing an unbelievable 15 pounds is taken here at Depere every March or April.

Almost light-headed with that knowledge, I pointed the truck to Depere intent on shore fishing all night with Schweik, a multi-species guide with Hooksetters Guide Service. On this April 1st nocturnal walleye hunt though, Mother Nature was waiting patiently in the wings with an April Fools joke...just for us.

Two days prior to our trip, Schweik’s friend had visited the Fox and scored a 50 fish night. Two days after our trip, the catch of other angling acquaintances would include three walleyes over 28 inches and a 31-1/2 inch pig. Comfortable air temperatures around 40 degrees

and normal current speed and water clarity in the two to four foot depths marked each “bookend” trip.

“Every fisherman I talked with said this was the absolute worst day that we could have come here,” Schweik said later. “We had run off from heavy snow plus a major cold front that sent consistent 40 degree air temperatures to 15 degrees. They opened the dam gates and we walked into high, fast water as muddy as chocolate milk that had been low, clear and slow. It dramatically pushed the walleyes out of their pattern.”

That pattern annually sees thousands of spawning walleyes including an extremely high number of trophy fish move off of Green Bay to travel up the Fox to the dam. Hundreds of boats greet them. Typically, as night falls the fish will move even shallower where anglers in waders throwing crankbaits also find fishing fast. Typically, fast current will not bother the schools, but the conditions had sent our walleyes deep. Electronic reports from nearby boats had revealed stacks of walleyes in deep, protected pools with no appetite for a midnight snack.

From an island just off the dam and spawning current, we were intent on fishing all night with the aid of headlamps. The plan called for wading the river and



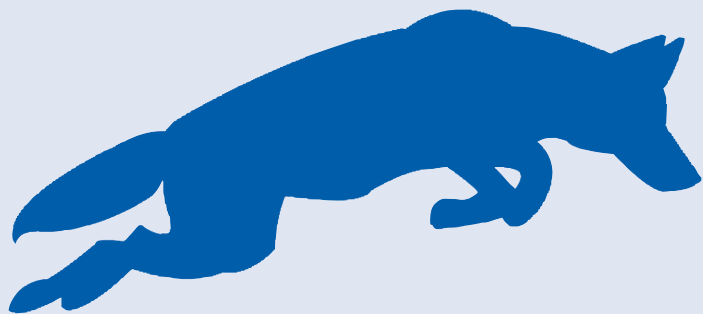
Phil Schweik admires a Fox River walleye taken during the wee hours at Depere in April with warming temperatures and slower, clearer current.

working the two to four foot current, eddies and protected pools with #5 and #7 shad raps, thundersticks, or any relatively small floating crankbait.

Catching and releasing three walleyes at 26, 25 and 20 inches wouldn’t be considered bad on most Wisconsin waters. But this was the Fox River, on April 1st, and I was fishing with an expert. We headed home shortly after midnight.

“It doesn’t matter who you are or what you know sometimes,” Schweik said. “Because when she wants to, Mother Nature shows us just who’s in control.”

Connect with Schweik at hooksetters.biz or 715-693-5843.

**FEBRUARY 2018**

TERRY RUSS COYOTE TIPS

1. When calling coyotes this time of year, use mostly howls mixed in with a few distress calls, like a pup in distress or a fox.
2. Try locating coyotes before you call by howling at night to find out where they are hanging out. Return later and try calling them in day or night.
3. Try using decoys to give coyotes something to see to make them more at ease.



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LEE GATZKE

Where to Look for Him

Locating and hunting bedded deer

When scouting deer terrain during the late winter/early spring prior to “green up,” ask yourself this question: “Where do deer feel secure during the daytime in these parts?” It’s been my experience that areas that offer security attract deer to bed there. I’ve also noticed that these places continue to attract deer to bed there in daylight hours year after year.

In the big woods of the North Country, large predators play an important role in determining where deer feel safe. In many areas of the north, deer find they can avoid predators by sticking close to human settlements. Predators tend to shy away from areas where they encounter people. Deer have learned this and have moved into those backyards, finding it easier to avoid humans in our backyards than predators in the outback. They survive longer using this tactic.

In agricultural areas, large predators are less of a problem. Here adequate cover plays an important role

determining where deer can survive. Finding hiding places where deer can avoid humans is a key ingredient to locating where deer spend their daylight hours. In urban environments, spots that are close to areas closed to hunting (parks, golf courses and residential areas) can be the ticket to finding security for deer.

Deer will effectively use terrain features to aid in security while bedding to help avoid danger. Terrain features can provide cover, ability to funnel scent, improved ability to hear, and visual advantages that offer a deer residing there to detect an intrusion into their daytime hiding spot from afar. As long as a deer can detect an intruder before it gets too close to flee from, it can slip out the back door and escape unnoticed. The deer’s other option is to stay put and let the terrain keep it hidden while the intruder passes through. In either case, the deer survives to live another day and grows more confident that its “secure spot” kept it alive and it can avoid detection there.

This past hunting season, my family set aside a “refuge” on our farm, a place where we did not enter during the hunting season. The thirty-acre spot attracted most of the deer on our farm and they stayed there during the daytime, mainly leaving to feed at night. The security of not having any human intruders kept the deer there.

Were it not for the refuge, these same deer would have a number of different places they would choose to bed in to avoid predators and hunters during daylight. The bedding areas could be spread out over distances of a half mile or more. Depending on wind direction to scent, or the ability to see or hear approaching danger, these places give advantage to a bedded deer to detect approaching danger. A westerly prevailing wind in one bedding area may allow deer to detect intruders approaching from afar, where a southerly wind would not.

Deer choose bedding areas based on weather conditions and the security it affords; when conditions

CONTINUED ON PAGE 15



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GATZKE, FROM PAGE 14

change, so may the bedding location. When you locate a bedding area, kneel down on it and look around to see how a deer uses it to their advantage. Are they bedding there to be able to see, smell or hear approaching danger? What wind direction allows them to hear or smell approaching predators and hunters from a distance? How can you be in position to hunt them without being detected when they enter or leave those spots?

Knowing what bedding areas are used according to wind direction allows you to be able to effectively “play the wind” and hunt them by concentrating your efforts nearby. 🦌

In grade school, 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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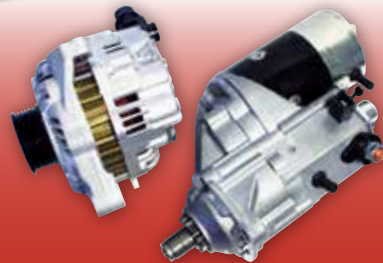
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DENNY MURAWSKA

Deer Antler Artwork

Winter burr pendant projects

While there is no shortage of outdoor activities to partake of during March and April in Wisconsin, I just never pursued them. Some folks hunt for shed antlers as the snow melts and really seem to enjoy it. Although I do not specifically roam the hilly backwoods during these slippery times, there can be great satisfaction from utilizing the products of some fortuitous finds. Sometimes it is only the dwarf antlers of deer I harvested in years past. Still, winter is a time for me to kick back and create.

There are many items that one can craft from antler material. Knife handles, coat hangers, bottle openers, there's no end. This year, I have chosen to do some very simple carving on deer antler burrs. You do not have to be a Michelangelo to create some worthy talismans. A simple Dremel tool with a flex shaft is great for carving these. The material is relatively soft and easy to carve, sand and polish. If you don't have many of these to work with, don't

despair. You can buy bags full on Ebay for a very small investment.

Ideally, your slice of shed will have a nice, flaring ring of antler burr jutting out from a light-colored core. The core should be solid, not spongy. It is always nice when the surface you are going to inscribe is flat and parallel to the burr. The piece pictured in this article has a tiny "kicker" on the top, which seems like a good place to drill a hole for attachment to a leather thong which will be worn around the neck.

I first use a fine grit sander to smooth the face of the burr. I normally begin with an electric device. Disc sanders are great, but hand-held vibrating sanders work as well. For final smoothing, a sheet of fine sandpaper on a flat surface and a bit of elbow grease get things ready for the next step.

My simple pattern will be that of a deer hoof print. I find a pattern I like and then begin to transfer it to the surface of my pendant. Using a soft pencil, it is centered to my lik-

A pair of antler burr projects.



ing. Next, I choose a small circular Dremel bit. These are diamond bits, although any abrasive will work. I like to affix my projects to a piece of clay to hold them steady while the carving takes place. First comes the outline, then hollowing out the center or the print. You do not have to go too deep. A finer bit is then used to smooth out the interior of the hoof print.

Once the pattern is inscribed, it needs to be highlighted. For this, a small brush was used with some dark brown acrylic paint. An interesting medium one can use is quick set epoxy. This can be mixed with metallic powders to give a look like engraved silver or gold. The finishing touch is a clear coat. Spray-on acrylics work well. The featured proj-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 32

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DAN MOERICKE

An UpNort Report

Investment is for the birds...and my wife

My wife loves birds. If it's got feathers, she'll feed it. I was figuring the other day that, between our home and our cabin, we easily go through over half a ton of sunflower seeds each winter. That doesn't include the suet, safflower seeds, corn and assorted other stuff put out to sate the seemingly endless avian appetites.

I started to calculate the cost of all that benevolence, but then stopped when I started thinking about how much money I spend on my hobbies. Hunting and fishing aren't cheap. It takes a lot of equipment to catch (or not catch) a walleye, shoot a turkey, and pursue a whitetail. Golf isn't free either. Better to just keep buying the seeds and not think about it too hard.

Come spring, there will be oranges and grape jelly for the orioles and the hummingbird feeders filled with sugar water. And the birds aren't the only beneficiaries of my wife's soft hearted mission. We have squirrels and chipmunks by the dozen, deer, raccoons, and black bears. When the bears start showing up, the feeders get taken down.

A couple of years ago, I rigged up a pulley system in our back yard to get the feeders away from the trees and out of the reach of roaming bears. To date, it's been pretty successful in keeping the squirrels, raccoons, and bears at bay...or, at least, on the ground. At our cabin, we just get into the habit of taking the feeders down each night to avoid losing them to the critters.

We're accustomed to seeing a pretty wide variety of birds at our feeders: chickadees, finches, downy woodpeckers, blue jays, nuthatches, blue birds, orioles, buntings, juncos, mourning doves, grouse, grosbeaks, pileated woodpeckers, flickers, turkeys, starlings, grackles, cardinals, crows have all been regular guests.

The chickadees are my wife's favorite. They're plentiful, bold, and will often fly onto the feeders even while my wife is filling them. This past winter, we dusted off our cross county skis and took a trip out to the Anvil Lake ski trail east of Eagle River. There's a shelter about a mile in from the parking lot on Military Road where the chickadees and the occasional nuthatch will readily come and eat out of your hand. A pocketful of sunflower seeds makes for a cheap date.

The birds definitely have a friend and ally in my wife. As much as she hates the cold, she'll stomp out to the back yard during a blizzard if she sees an empty feeder. Sometimes I think she's crazy, but then, I think about some of the stuff I've done and the weather I've endured while pursuing my hobbies. When it comes down to it, I guess having a heated bird bath really isn't that excessive. 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.



Kay Moericke has the chickadees eating out of her hand at the Anvil Lake ski trail.



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GARY GREENE

Memories from an Old Hunter

Never forgotten hunting trips

As an adult hunter, I have taken trips to seven different states to hunt pheasants or waterfowl. As I think back, it is possible that the trips I made as a boy were just as exciting and successful as my trips later in life that cost me significant amounts of money and hundreds of driving hours.

My first hunting trip that I recall was with my parents, Tom and Lorraine Greene, pheasant hunting in Muskego. I was probably five or six and we left our house in Franklin by foot. We walked through a few neighbors' yards with my dad carrying his Browning shotgun in full view with King, his Chesapeake Retriever, at heel. My mom was carrying a brown bag of food and a cast iron frying pan. Me? I brought myself. We said "hello" to a few neighbors and no one asked where we were going or what we were doing. After about ten minutes, we entered Muskego where we could start our hunt. My dad beat the heavy cover with King, and my mom and I took the worn path that was used by many before us.

After my dad had shot a pheasant and King made a good retrieve in the tall canes, my mom declared it lunch time. I think she sensed I was tiring and somewhat bored. I sat in the shade under a tree as my parents gathered some wood and started a small fire. My mom placed the frying pan on the fire and added ground beef and onions to the pan. That was the best non-shore-shore-lunch I ever had.


Several years later, my friend Mike and I planned a day hunting trip. We hunted squirrels early and then moved on to pheasants. We broke for lunch, ate our jelly bread sandwiches and drank water from our army canteen. Later in the day, we stopped at a small local convenience store and purchased ten cent beef sticks and Hostess apple and cherry pies. Now we were really eating and we both spent 50 cents. We didn't shoot anything that day, but we were happy as if we bagged our limit of squirrels and pheasants.

A few years later, I reenacted my mom's non-shore-shore-lunch as I hunted squirrels on a friend's farm in Waterford. It wasn't as elaborate as my mom's, but I roasted hot dogs on a stick on a similar small fire of branches. After my lunch, I stretched out and watched the clouds pass me by and the shadows of the trees moving with the wind. I can still feel the mild breeze as it hit my face. I dozed off thinking of my mom over the open fire with that skillet in her hand. I believe I shot a few squirrels that day, but all I remember is my non-shore-shore-lunch.

Today, my wife and I live on a wetland in Walworth County. My youngest son Nate and I manage to get out once a week for ducks. We hunt about 100 yards from our home, so for me it is not much of an effort. The concept of the trip is still there, but it couldn't be easier and I still bring the food. This trip is successful if we shoot ducks or not as we get to spend time together in the blind, and dis-



The author's son, Nate Greene, with Nyjer, after a successful morning hunt.

cuss life, and eat our hard boiled eggs. Now that's another perfect trip and my shore lunch is simply eggs and the trip is just 100 yards from home. 

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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GARY ENGBERG

Hunting into Spring

Pheasant opportunities help outlast winter

The state of Wisconsin has a hunting season for almost everything, including waterfowl, upland game birds, turkey, and deer. Hunting pheasants is my favorite season. The season opens the middle of October and closes December 31.

I've hunted pheasants for decades when there was a huntable population in Wisconsin. I used to hit all the prime states for pheasants - Iowa, South Dakota, North Dakota, Nebraska, and Kansas. Unfortunately, the loss of habitat (which included undisturbed grasslands for nesting), lack of fencerows, dearth of water ways, and changing farm practices have all contributed to the demise of the native pheasants. Weather can also affect pheasant populations in the short term with drought and heavy spring rains when pheasant hens are nesting.

The number of farm acres enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) has declined dramatically in the last 15 years across the Midwest and Plains states. The Federal CRP program pays farmers to take sensitive lands out of production and restore them with vegetation that provides wildlife habitat. Since the 2007 peak, Minnesota has lost almost 700,000 acres of CRP land, land that helps all songbirds, wildlife, and pollinators. Minnesota had its highest pheasant harvest in decades in 2007, when 655,000 roosters were harvested. In 2016, Minnesota had 243,000 harvested cock pheasants. The same is also true in the other pheasant states with the loss of CRP lands. South Dakota had a 45 % decline in pheasant numbers in 2016. Wisconsin numbers were not yet available, but

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Fox Valley Retriever Club

Training You To Train Your Retriever

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TOM MUELLER

Training the Retriever Pup

Not rocket science, but a science to it

Training a retriever is not “rocket science,” but there is a science to it. Over the years many books have been written and many DVDs and videos have been produced that center on training obedience. Anyone who has ever owned a retriever with the intent to train it for hunting, hunt tests, or even field trials knows, all too well, that obedience is the key to having success in any of those pursuits.

The dog that blows off its handler at a hunt test or a field trial doesn't go very far when playing those games. Similar to that is the hunting retriever. If your dog is bouncing all over the duck blind or boat because it's over-excited or ripping through a field out of control while pheasant hunting, you're probably not going to have an enjoyable day. An obedient retriever is one that's under control. A hunter or handler whose dog is under control has an obedient retriever. The two go hand-in-hand.


When a new member joins the Fox Valley Retriever Club with a new pup or young dog to participate in the puppy, obedience, and specialty training sessions, the three concepts I start them working on are conditioning it to hold on to a dummy and deliver it without dropping, focusing on the trainer, and obedience. A pup or young dog that runs out to grab a dummy and then runs off with it, or drops the dummy, is not obedient, is a bit out of control, and is not paying attention to its owner/trainer.

Because it is a pup and is just getting started with learning these concepts, one has to expect that. In the course of its training though, when done persistently and consistently over a period of time, this pup or young dog can become a superstar retriever that any owner would be proud of.

Teaching a retriever pup the basic obedience concepts of sit, come here, and heel is relatively easy, especially when done in a positive manner. Puppies thrive on three things: food, chasing something that's thrown for a retrieve, and having fun. Combining any or all three of these in a short training session makes for a positive lesson where the pup learns, wants to learn, and learns to keep its focus on you.

Puppies and young dogs have very aggressive appetites. I'm not adverse to using treat or food rewards to teach a pup or even an older dog obedience. Doing that gets the dog to focus on you, and when

your dog is focused on you, you can teach it and it can learn. Making a game of the lesson also gets and keeps your puppy in the learning mode and keeps it focused on the concept you're teaching.

Starting each lesson with a few short retrieves where you teach and encourage your pup to hold onto the dummy and deliver it to you is a good way to begin and gets your pup focusing on you and what you're doing. Follow that with an obedience lesson teaching “sit” using food rewards. Once it learns to sit when told, you can then add “here” and eventually teach it to heel. It's important to do a lesson every day and keep the lessons short and sweet. If you're able to do more than one each day, keep the sessions far apart. Adding an exciting tone of voice to your training makes you the “go to” guy that makes your dog a willing worker that wants more and more. 



Fox Valley Retriever Club member James Larson and his 5 ½ month old Golden Retriever, Robin, working on off-lead heeling during a puppy and obedience training session.

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.

BILL CUNNEA

Baby Steps for Mick

From kitchen training to the field

Wisconsin finally had a day that approached 70 degrees! Long-time residents would not be surprised if it snowed next week, but the temps were welcome and the sun shone beneficently on all the creatures.

One of the creatures was Mick, the new, used, dog. We've been working on the command for him to stop in his tracks and await permission to continue on, even if he is in full gallop. The idea is to stop the flushing dog (that's Mick) from racing ahead and flushing the birds far out of shotgun range. The theory is the dog waits, the hunter catches up, the dog is released from the command, the bird gets flushed, and the skilled marksman drops the bird from the sky, looking all handsome and stuff.

I do a lot of “kitchen training” on most commands. This involves sitting on the floor and tossing toys, or pheasant or pigeon wings, commanding “hup!” (don't ask me, that's the command they use) and stopping the dog firmly but gently, making it wait, then releasing it to fetch. This progresses to playing in the house with fetch toys, his collar, the occasional sock, and almost any other thing I can arbitrarily decide he should fetch.

I still have serious doubts that a verbal command is going to stop a bird dog in full pursuit of a pheasant, but then I've been conditioned by YB/GWP (YB= Young Bert, the not-right dog/GWP= German Wirehaired Pointer, a dog of legendary enthusiasm, if not astute judgment) for the last nine years. Apparently there are people who can train dogs to do things like this.

Upon occasion over the last three months, I have taken Mick and a single shot 20 gauge shotgun up to the top of the hill, where my neighbor has some (more) sheds, one of which was a horse barn in a previous incarnation and is now used for calves, before they graduate to heifers. (Farmers, like Eskimos, have many names for the things with which they occupy themselves on a daily basis.)

In the calf shed, nine or ten pigeons hang out. It is open at both ends, and has one side of open windows, and a steel roof. Our little session involves me loading the shotgun, bringing Mick to heel, picking up a rock, throwing it onto the steel roof to startle the pigeons, then shooting at one of them as they fly out. Mick is

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TOM CARPENTER

Farm Gobblers

Opportunity and challenge on agriculture terrain

Wild turkeys love agricultural landscapes. Wisconsin has no shortage of those or turkeys. Open country, limited cover and farming activities provide both opportunity and challenge for a hunter. The following approaches and strategies will help you tag a big farm country gobbler this spring.

Understand Farmland Turkeys

After coming down from their roost, open fields or pastures are turkeys' initial destination. This is where the food is, and turkeys feel safe here because they can see a long way.

By late morning, birds work back into woodlots, forested river bottoms or other available "loafing" cover. Around mid- to late-afternoon, turkeys go on the prowl for food again, back out to open country. At evening, they work toward traditional roost sites for fly-up at dusk. That's a typical spring day's events, and the pattern is similar across farmland turkey country.

There are variations that are essential to understand for the area you are hunting. On one western Wisconsin farm I know, the birds spread out over wide-open hilltop pastures all day long. On a southern Wisconsin grain farm I hunt, the turkeys hustle out to fields to feed as quickly as possible in the morning, then spend their day hunkered in marsh grass and cattails. They live like pheasants!

Scout to Success

Hunting farmland birds is best done like you would pursue deer, that is to say, set up along a travel route or a destination the birds like. It's surprising how "easy" calling can be when you're waiting along the birds' preferred path, or hiding where they want to be.

Most farm country offers prime opportunity to scout in your vehicle from back roads or field roads, using binoculars and spotting scope. Or hike to a vantage point and *stay put* to glass for bird movements. Either plan minimizes disruption of the turkeys.

Scouting goals are simple. Identify preferred roost sites. Figure out routes turkeys

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22



The author displays a Green County farmland gobbler taken through a combination of low-impact scouting and long waiting at a proven turkey crossing.

SUZETTE CURTIS

Recipes By Suzette

Wild turkey

Wild Turkey is a special treat for my husband and me, and I am always looking for new ways to prepare the whole bird, new ways to prepare the different parts separately, and then what to do with the leftovers. I am grateful to my husband's friend, Butch Koch, for sharing his family's favorite Turkey Chili recipe, which I tweaked just a bit to fit our family's tastes. Enjoy!

White Turkey Chili

1 Tablespoon olive oil	2 cans cannellini beans, undrained
½ cup onion, finely chopped	1 ½ teaspoon oregano
½ cup celery, finely chopped	1 4 ounce can chopped green chilies
1 ½ cups cooked wild turkey meat	¾ cup cheese, (mozzarella, pepper jack, or Monterey jack work well)
½ cup chicken broth	

Heat oil over medium heat in soup pot; sauté onions and celery until translucent. Stir in remaining ingredients and reduce heat to low. Cover and simmer for 15 to 20 minutes until heated through.

Serve with side choices of cheese, sour cream, jalapeno peppers, salsa and tortilla chips.

Spicy Turkey Wings

6 wild turkey wings (about 2.5 to 3 pounds)	
¼ teaspoon salt	¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper
¼ teaspoon garlic powder	¼ teaspoon cinnamon
¼ teaspoon allspice	¼ teaspoon nutmeg

Place turkey wings and salt into large pot and cover with water. Cover and cook over medium heat until tender, about 40 minutes. Remove wings from pot and set aside, reserving broth.

Preheat oven to 350°. Mix garlic powder, allspice, cayenne, cinnamon and nutmeg in small bowl. When wings have cooled enough to handle, rub well with spice mixture and place on rack in roasting pan. Bake for about 30 minutes until golden and slightly crispy, basting regularly with reserved broth.

Grilled Turkey Legs

2 wild turkey drumsticks & 2 wild turkey thighs	
Marinade:	
½ cup white wine	2 teaspoons dried thyme
2 Tablespoons fresh lemon juice	1 teaspoon salt
¼ cup extra virgin olive oil	½ teaspoon dried sage
1 Tablespoon dried rosemary	½ teaspoon onion powder
1 Tablespoon dried basil	1/8 teaspoon cayenne
2 teaspoons garlic powder	1 bay leaf, crushed
2 teaspoons dried marjoram	

Whisk together all marinade ingredients in covered bowl; add drumsticks and thighs. Marinate, covered in refrigerator, at least 12 hours. Grill turkey leg pieces over indirect heat on charcoal grill, turning and basting regularly with reserved marinade for about 40 to 45 minutes until cooked through. Discard any leftover marinade when done. 🍴

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

SKYE GOODE

Winter Weasels

Simple trapping introduction for beginners

Wisconsin has some of the most abundant furbearer populations in the entire United States. The smallest furbearer that is legal to trap in the state is the weasel, also known as the ermine when their coats turn white. We have good populations of both long- and short-tail weasels.

Weasels are energetic critters that are always on the move in search of food. They need to eat every few hours in order to feed their hyperactive metabolism. Weasels primarily feed on rodents and rabbits. They are also known to make their homes inside the ribcage of a freshly killed deer and live and eat inside its carcass all winter.

Weasels had been the most difficult animal for me to consistently trap. This year, I made some changes to my technique. These changes are meeting with success. My use of "weasel boxes" and a focus on culverts and marshes in areas with multiple fresh tracks are paying off.

I got the idea for weasel boxes from a fellow trapper in Wisconsin whose young daughter suggested it. Her idea sounded so good that I "stole" it, made some modifications, and have successfully incorporated them on to my trapline.

Please refer to the current trapping regulations for the specific guidelines when setting traps. Weasels are an un-

protected species in Wisconsin; there are no season limits, no bag limits, and no size or possession limits. A trapping license is still required for use outside of landowner provisions.

There are some very specific Wisconsin trapping restrictions in place to help ensure that no incidental critters get caught. By following these restrictions, the only animals that you will catch will be the targeted weasel, shrews, and mice.

Materials Needed:

- Plastic bin w/ Lid
- Zip ties or wire
- Bait: venison, beef liver, mice/moles all work great
- Rat trap or #0-#1 long spring trap
- Hot glue or super glue
- Cutting device (knife or rotary tool)
- Trap tag w/ proper identification

Affix your trap tag to the rat trap or long spring trap securely, per Wisconsin law. Cut a hole that is 1 3/8 inch in diameter, no bigger per Wisconsin law. Using your rotary tool, drill five to 10 holes in the back of the box, on the opposite end of the opening, so that you can secure the bait and the smell will be able to escape to lure weasels in.



The author with a long-tailed weasel caught in a frozen marsh.

If using a rat trap, hot glue it to the bottom of the box so it doesn't move around. Make sure that the pan of the trap is closest to the entrance hole. If using a long-spring, you may want to place something in the bottom to keep it from sliding, such as felt, carpet, or grass. Using a zip tie, securely attach your bait to the back of the box. Weasels are fast, so you don't want them to slip in, steal the bait, and leave.

You have the option to use a weasel lure, but it is not necessary if you are setting your trap in a high traffic area. If you are checking your weasel box every single day, then you do not need to anchor the trap to anything. However, if you choose to follow the four-day trap checking rule, you will need to securely anchor your trap to an immovable object.

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CUNNEA, FROM PAGE 19

then expected to watch the birds and go retrieve the fallen pigeon.

Late in the afternoon, on a whim, I grabbed a shotgun and took him off the yard leash up the hill to be mildly annoyed by the pigeons. We marched into our appointed positions, I sought and found suitable rocks to pitch up on the (rock-laden) roof, Mick came to heel (pretty much), and I put one of the shells I'd grabbed into the little H&R.

The rock went up and hit the roof. The pigeons swooped out the end of the shed I was watching. One peeled off to the left, the rest zoomed out and down the hill to the right. I swung and shot at the left bird. It artfully canted and powered out of sight down the hill towards my house. I reloaded the shotgun, poised for the delayed release of the sleepy pigeon in the shed.

There was no sleepy pigeon in the shed.

So, Mick and I stood there for approximately 10 minutes as the specks of pigeons viewed us from high in the sky. I know pigeons are dumb. Pigeons know they are not THAT dumb. Finally, I released Mick from "heel," and told him we were going home. Back down the hill we went.

Mick had been ranging around and had come back, sort of in my peripheral vision. I headed to the house. Stopped.

About three feet from Mick was the pigeon I'd shot. Apparently what I viewed as wheeling out of range was actually being hit and falling down into the



hillside pasture. Mick had followed command and hung with me as I came down the hill, pattered around the sheds and machines, and he had caught scent and gone out and retrieved the pigeon.

This is not much in the way of the world. It is of little significance to all other humans, very probably to every other creature on earth, with the possible exception of the pigeon. But in my small world, it was a step of some importance to the development of a hunting sense and partnership between Mick, the new, used, dog and an achy, cranky human who adopted the wrong breed of dog from a rescue group who brought the dog up from another state, and with remarkable coincidence, made a match.

Baby steps, but really neat ones. 🌿

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.



The fly on the left is the original Madsen's Skunk; the variation is on the right.

The most difficult part of this tie, for me, is the legs. I tie them one at a time on opposite sides of the hook shank.



KIESOW, FROM PAGE 8

tire fly with a whip-finish knot. Then I trim the head so I can get the tippet through the eye of the hook and call it done.

I owe this fly something, but I am not sure what, because this is the fly that caused me to fall out of my canoe this past August. I have been canoeing for decades and never dumped before. It happened because I was trying to release this fly from a log, but I don't know if that is enough reason to blame the fly or not. How this all happened, I will tell you about next time.

Stay tuned.

See you in the river.

Keep a good thought! 🌿

Editor's note: Jerry enjoys all aspects of the outdoors and shares them in many ways through his photos, words, and workshops. He has written two books, "Tales of The Peshtigo Putzer," and "Photos, Poems, and a Little Bit of Prose." Both make great additions to your outdoor library, and great gifts. They are available for purchase at his website: www.jerrykiesowoc.com. Check it out often to follow his endeavors.

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"WHEN WE GET THERE, KID, LET ME DO THE GOBLING."

CARPENTER, FROM PAGE 20

take from roost sites to morning staging and feeding areas. Know where the birds loaf, hang out and spend their day. Are they coming back to the same open areas in the afternoon that they used in the morning? If you hunt evenings, know which travel corridors the birds use to get back to their roost.

Go Low Impact

It's amazing how little hunting pressure it takes to put turkeys on a jumpy edge. They won't abandon their home range, but why take a chance? Take a low-impact approach to your hunting: don't run and gun. Play waiting games instead. That's what scouting is about.

Tuck in tight to a good roost area or wait along a travel corridor between roost and feed. If those plans don't work out, edge yourself toward open fields and pastures. At midday, sequester yourself at a good strutting zone (loafing area). Hunt tucked-away fields and meadows in the afternoon. Post along routes to roost areas as the sun

drops. Save walk-and-call probes for secondary spots.

When moving between setups, always use cover and terrain. Stay behind that fenceline, sneak along behind the hill, skulk below a ridge. Glass open areas before crossing. Never skyline yourself. Don't just barge up and over a hill; instead, peek over as you go. In short, *sneak with stealth* from setup to setup.

Conclusion

Though abundant on the land, farmland turkeys are anything but pushovers. In fact, open country, limited cover, ample food sources and lots of birds are all factors that conspire to make hunting in Wisconsin's agricultural landscape a challenge.

Understanding turkeys' daily rhythms, scouting their movements intelligently, and hunting with a light footprint in the right places, can help you get your gobbler. 🌿

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

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Letter to the Editor:

What Has Changed?

Another senseless shooting. Predictably, once again, political opportunists started the drumbeat for gun control before the carnage was cleared. In 1970, my brother returned from Vietnam with a North Vietnamese rifle he recovered during the invasion of Cambodia. Our 15 year old brother took the rifle on the school bus to New Berlin High School to show his classmates. No one was concerned. Today, the school would be in lockdown and my brother arrested. What's changed?

Our society has been devolving for decades. A clear moral compass, personal accountability, hard work, self-sufficiency and contribution are being replaced by immorality, victimization, villainization, entitlement, dependence, coveting and taking.

We are immersed in immorality and violence masquerading as entertainment.

Corruption is rampant and exposed in our politicians, our media, our corporations.

Society cannot compensate when the fundamental work of the family unit - teaching our children how to live - goes undone. One can only imagine what was missing in the upbringing of a shooter capable of inflicting such devastation.

Truth is easy to find. You have to look for it and be willing to see it.

Our right to bear arms is a critical safeguard against our government becoming tyrannical. A threat that is as real today as it was in the 1700's.

Guns have always been lethal weapons in the hands of killers. That hasn't changed. People have.

*Joan Ellis Beglinger
Cross Plains, WI 53528*

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

DICK ELLIS

A Call to Arms

Wisconsin Supreme Court ballot for Michael Screnock protects Constitution

Had you lived in April of 1775, and been awakened by Paul Revere's call to arms, "The British are coming" would you have reached for the musket? Isn't it humbling then, to understand that based on the sacrifice of generations of Americans before us there is no need to reach for anything more than the ballot? Their gift though, may be even more important today in protecting our country.

In our editorial prior to the November, 2016 elections entitled "Enemies Within-Corrupt Government, Corrupt Media Threaten America", *On Wisconsin Outdoors* endorsed Donald J. Trump for president. Make no mistake. If you are watching as closely as we are, you know that government is poisoned with individuals who believe they deserve more than the people. And the media either withholds the news or flat out lies to you every day. Corruption runs wild.

Our endorsement was driven foremost by a list Trump had released of individuals he would consider for lifetime appointments to the United States Supreme Court and, his philosophy toward hundreds of looming appointments to lower federal courts of appeal and US District Courts that also hung on the November election.

"The freedoms we cherish and the constitutional values and principles our country was founded on are in jeopardy," Trump said. "The responsibility is greater than ever to protect and uphold these freedoms and I will appoint justices who will protect our liberty with the highest regard for the Constitution."

Trump upheld that promise by appointing from the list Neil Gorsuch to the United States Supreme Court. Carry the same standards to your own ballot box.

Approaching the Wisconsin State Supreme

CONTINUED ON PAGE 25

Are You Teaching The People Correctly?

To all of the leaders of The Church;

Jesus said, "If you love me, keep my commandments."

Do the people who come before you each week know God's commandments?

If you were to ask them, would they be able to tell you what they are?

Have they been taught that learning and living God's commandments is not possible?

Are you teaching the people correctly?

TOM CARPENTER

Badger Birds: *Barn swallow*

March is a little early for insect-eating barn swallows to return to Wisconsin, but by April you'll start to see these graceful birds skimming along open water as they hunt.

Barn swallows love to build their mud-cup nests on man-made structures – under the eaves of barns, houses or outbuildings; on girders and rafters; and under, on and around bridges. All these spots make perfect, protected nesting nooks – far better than the caves, cliffs and stream banks barn swallows had to use before Wisconsin was settled.

Barn swallows may seem commonplace, but it's worth taking a few minutes to appreciate them for their graceful flight, handsome good looks, and insect-eating capabilities.

Look for a streamlined bird that is steely blue-purple above, buff-cinnamon below, with a rusty throat and forehead patch. Barn swallows feature long, slender wings and a long, forked tail in flight.

Watch for barn swallows around lakes, rivers, ponds and open marsh waters, where the birds skim the surface as they dip, swerve and swoop while hunting flying insects. Parks, golf courses, large lawns, pastures, hayfields and playfields all attract swallows as well.



Listen to barn swallows chatter and twitter constantly, even as they fly. These sounds are very soft. The call is a persistent *kvit-kvit-kvit*. When danger is near, barn swallows make sharp *chep* and *churee* warning calls.

Attract barn swallows by watering up a nice mudhole every day. The birds will come to gather mud for nest-building. Enjoy the birds' antics if you're lucky enough to get nesters on your property.

Identify a barn swallow in flight by its deeply forked tail. Other swallows' tails are not forked.

Did you know that some barn swallows have been tracked flying over 500 miles per day while hunting insects for their hungry nestlings? 🐦

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

ELLIS, FROM PAGE 24

Court election April 3, and future judicial elections, accept nothing less than a promise from candidates to uphold the Constitution. Liberal judges embrace the bench as an opportunity to change law and radically change America instead of interpret and uphold law as written, as their duty demands. Required oaths to uphold the Constitution are ignored.

Wisconsin State Supreme Court candidate Michael Screnock's comprehensive judicial philosophy mirrors that of other constitutionalists. "The role of a judge or justice is to interpret and apply the law, not rewrite the law," he said.

His opponent on the ballot backed overwhelmingly by liberals, Rebecca Dallet initiated her Wisconsin Supreme Court campaign with footage of President Trump and the audio, "He's attacked our civil rights and our values-she'll protect them."

Thoroughly research each candidate




before you vote, and ask yourself, "whose values?" Know too that the massive left is quietly waiting and hoping that you will be staying home in April, and staying home in November. They won't be.

If you do stay home...hide the musket. And say goodbye to the liberties that have been earned on the graves of American patriots.


If Paul Revere was riding through again this April, his voice carrying through the Wisconsin night to your window would be as urgent as it was 240 years ago.



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JERRY DAVIS

Traditions in Turkey Hunting

Will the 1983 gobbler rush continue?

When a first-year turkey hunter killed a gobbler in 1983, it was front page news. During that inaugural season, some hunters killed birds and used bands and tags they carried as part of original releases a few years before. If one of those hunters were to walk into a registration station today, we may not recognize the person as a turkey hunter. But at home in their basement, man-cave, or closet, there may be a memorabilia collection from past hunts that includes ancient camouflage, calls, shotshells, guns, carcass tags and even a backtag.

In 1983, the first modern-day spring turkey hunting season was held. Permits were issued to 1,200 hunters and 182 birds would be registered. Many of those 1,200 hunters had little idea of what they were doing, at least by today's standards. Still, many were successful.

Long before 1983, attempts were made to establish turkeys in Wisconsin. In 1887, for instance, four birds were released near Lake Koshkonong. Many times after that, a mixture of pure and domestic strains were set free in various parts of the state, but all and their progeny perished. Pen-raised birds usually fizzled, as well.

Then, beginning in 1976, a wild eastern subspecies from Missouri was released in Vernon County, starting with 45 birds, and a new hunting opportunity began to unfold.



The original Grand Old Master (top) has been re-introduced (bottom) for the spring turkey season.

Many questions and concerns were raised. Will that turkey rush continue? What can hunters do to assure a future of enthusiasm? Is it already too late?

One way to increase enthusiasm for this big bird's appeal is to grab hold of traditions, save some history, hunt ethically, and use this occasion as a hunter primer for a 12-year-old who has passed hunter education. Some ideas to accomplish this are better than others. Making the turkey Wisconsin's state game bird, as has been suggested, is not a good idea. Turkeys are not a game bird, according to state regulations. Let the ruffed grouse have the honor of being the state game bird.

Sadly, a great many hunting traditions have already

disappeared. But now and then a quill pen re-writes an ancient episode. If nothing else, these embers spark an old desire. A few years after the 1983 spring turkey hunt, a person attending a learning camp to hunt turkeys sponsored by the La Crosse Tribune Outdoors Department displayed a back tag/permit issued in 1967. No one there had ever seen one or heard of one. Luckily there were attendees that collected turkey hunting memorabilia, including licenses, turkey stamps, calls, clinic notices, camouflage and decoy items, many of which are now antiques. Each of these, like a complete turkey stamp collection, has a way of rekindling the interest in gobbling gobblers.

This spring, Quaker Boy, a game call company in Orchard Park, New York, has re-introduced Dick Kirby's original first box call, the Grand Old Master. It's nearly identical to one Kirby signed for me in 1994 in Genoa, Wisconsin. Chris Kirby, one of Dick and Bev Kirby's sons, hit the target in talking turkey hunting traditions. "Sometimes things done the first time are best," he said. "It (the Grand Old Master) has stood the test of time."

I encourage you to start your own hunting traditions. You can begin by chronicling your experiences and collecting items associated with your hunting adventures. Carry

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MIKE FOSS

Bear Hunt is So Close, So Far

Physical, mental preparation a must

Mother Nature is not yet ready to give up her icy grip on winter, much to the disappointment of bear hunters and guides preparing for the spring hunt. She recently tightened her grip by sending 16.5 inches of snow to Bayfield County.

So now time ticks on ever so slowly as baiting rituals wait for better weather. I'm looking forward to getting back into the big woods off of Lake Superior and daydreaming of just how these baiting rituals will transpire. I'm especially eager to put *On Wisconsin Outdoors'* newly acquired QuietKat electric fat tire bike to good use when baiting bears, taking turkey hunters into back for-ties, trout anglers to ponds scattered along aging logging roads, and who know where else.

Wisconsin is big, beautiful, and constantly calling for attention. The QuietKat will help me pay even more attention to our great state by taking me to some of the most difficult of areas to access.

But I can't just sit and wait for bear hunt rituals to begin. It's time to prepare physically and mentally for the spring hunt, so I spend much of my time in the local fitness center and on exercise bikes in preparation. The QuietKat will be used with pedal power more than in electric mode, and I want to be ready and in shape.

The Wisconsin 2018 bear harvest draw is complete and those of you who drew a precious bear tag should also begin to prepare yourself for your upcoming September hunt. Although physical preparation is extremely important, mental preparation for potential situations in the field may be even more imperative to ultimately filling your tag.

Don't just pick up that firearm or bow once or twice and think you're good to go. Shooting should begin now, and continue through the hunt until you really know your gun or bow and your own shooting limitations. You owe it to your-



Northern Wisconsin's deep snow won't keep Mike Foss and QuietKat down for long.

self, everyone else involved and especially to that animal you are pursuing that a clean kill is a high probability when you do elect to take the shot.

Mental preparation is a must. Can you deal with possible long sits, fatigue on stand, and the mind games that come along with bear hunting? What if you return to camp after day and the number of tagged bears in camp continues to increase, but you are not among the successful hunters? Will you have patience? How will you cope with not even seeing a bear over several days when other hunters are reporting great activity on their bait stations? If you are mentally prepared, you will be in a much better place for success.

Too often, anxious hunters allow the pressure to succeed to affect their judgment. This is particularly true when a hunter draws only one bear tag every eight years. Many see the success of others and it begins to interfere with their own hunt. Mistakes start to happen. Treat each hunting day as if it was the first. Clear your mind and leave your mental baggage at your truck. Most importantly, trust in your guide.

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

BOB'S BEAR BAIT, LLC

Consider transferring your harvest permit to a young or disabled hunter

Just like many of you, we here at Bob's Bear Bait (BBB) have been waiting impatiently for the release of bear permits. The wait is over! While many hunters have been waiting several years to get a chance at a Wisconsin black bear, permits in Zone C are now being given away with only one to two points. Hunters who thought their dream bear hunt was several years away now have the opportunity to harvest a bear almost every year.

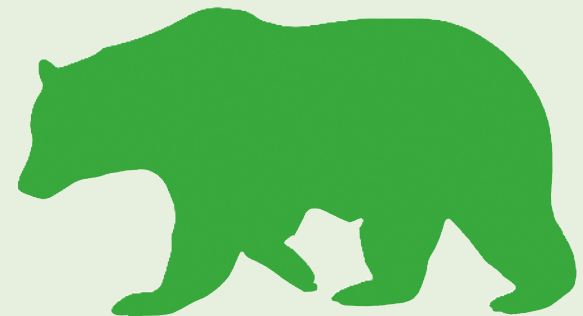
Keeping in mind the increased availability of Zone C permits, we encourage you to consider giving a youth or disabled hunter a chance at a dream bear hunt a little sooner by transferring your permit to them. Doing so is not only a great gift, but it can help continue our hunting heritage. We at Bob's Bear Bait praise those whom graciously provide their bear permit to those who may otherwise have waited years to receive one.

In an effort to enhance their bear hunting experience, BBB will make special offers available to youth and disabled hunters with tags transferred to them. These specials will be available throughout the summer. Products are subject to change based on availability. Starting this summer, we also plan on holding a day-long, bear-baiting program to teach young people about hunting and baiting bears. Stay tuned on Facebook and our website for the date and other information.

With a new year comes a new website leading to new products and new prices along with new scents. Check out bait lists, hours and specials at bobsbearbait.com. Stay up to date on BBB news by following us on Facebook, Bob's Bear Bait LLC, where we will also be auctioning off bait at discounted prices.

Our Mosinee shop will not be open this year, but we are currently seeking a new location in central Wisconsin. Our shops in Appleton and Phelps Wisconsin, and Ishpeming, Michigan, are open to meet your bear hunting needs.

Congratulations to those drawn for a bear permit. Don't forget to stock up early for the best goodies here at Bob's Bear Bait, your one stop shop for all your baiting needs. 🐻



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lunkerhunt.com

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

DAVIS, FROM PAGE 26

on those traditions by bringing a youngster, too young to hunt, along to learn the outdoors. Let excitement flourish and then hand him or her a shotgun. Gift an old box call.

Sometimes tradition is impossible to beat. Sometimes tradition is better than change. 🐾

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

ELLIS, FROM PAGE 4

is kind of falling apart,” Craig said. He already has a preliminary appointment set for an evaluation with Aurora Orthopedic Surgeon Dr. Nick Webber at St. Luke's Hospital in Milwaukee. Longtime friend Ron Dries let me know at a wedding Saturday night that he hopes his knees hold out another season or two of bowhunting before he must turn to the replacement alternative. Finally, my brother Jim Ellis' hip replacement surgery in early February unleashed him to hunt Colorado mulies

with his brothers in 2018 after pain kept him from our 2016 trip. Each of these outdoorsmen is in their 50s to early 60s.

So, you're out there and the pain is “hurting” your field time so to speak. We get it. Look for more from us to help you back. And send OWO healthcare issues of your own that you think just may be keeping other outdoorsmen and women from that coveted hunting and fishing time.

We'll be on it. See you out there. 🐾



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KATHY SCHRAUTH

The Giving Tree

Wisconsin's sugaring season

As the sap in maple trees across Wisconsin begins flowing with the early spring warmup, the woods are flooded with maple syrup producers and hobbyists carrying drills, spiles and buckets to collect the sugary substance for boiling down into sweet, pure maple syrup.

Wisconsin ranks fourth in the nation in production of maple syrup. Extreme weather patterns play a critical role in the state's maple syrup success. Sap collection is only possible during a brief window of opportunity. This is why so many syrup enthusiasts rush out to the woods during the spring surge. Ideal temperatures to start sap flowing are nights below freezing and days in the mid-40s. The temperature change causes shifts in pressure that sends sap flowing throughout the tree. Cold winters often make for sweeter sap and, due to the extended low temperatures we endured this season, maple syrup lovers can anticipate an extra delicious, sweet treat.

Making pure maple syrup is very labor intensive, but well worth the effort. Smaller operations collect sap in buckets that must be carried from the woods on a daily basis. Larger operations use tube and vacuum systems. Typically, 40 gallons of sap is needed to make just one gallon of syrup from Wisconsin's state tree, the Sugar

Maple. Sap must be kept cold or boiled down soon after collection. If the sap gets above 40° it will spoil.

Early settlers of the north-east learned how to make maple sugar from Native Americans and, while technology has dramatically changed the way syrup is reduced and collected, the process has not changed much over the centuries. Sap must be collected and evaporated down with heat to the sugary confection we know and love. Once the sap is boiled down and the syrup is concentrated to the correct density, it is then filtered and "hot pack" bottled.

Syrup is a great natural food and contains no preservatives, artificial colors or other additives. During the course of an entire season, sap yield can range from five to 20 gallons per taphole. Production varies significantly due to weather conditions, type of collection system, and, most importantly, the tree's size, health and variety.

While many Wisconsinites anxiously await spring, those of us who enjoy the flow of sap hope for a few



Making pure maple syrup is very labor intensive, but well worth the effort.

more weeks of cold. Maple syrup season is officially over with the continued spring warmth and the budding of the trees. When the season is over, the tap, or spile, is removed and the tree wound heals over. Every year a new hole is drilled in a different spot, which can take place for generations. This is why syrup makers consider Wisconsin's Sugar Maple the tree that keeps giving. 🍁

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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Presents Firearms Info from Ron Stresing

RON STRESING

Practice Makes Perfect

Join a summer trap, skeet or sporting clays league

The flock of wood ducks were so close when they circled behind us, we could hear the wind in their wings. As they settled into the landing zone, I called the shot. They were about two feet off the deck when I swung on a nice drake and pulled the trigger. I took another bird as it clawed for altitude, collecting two ducks with two shells. As I retrieved my birds, I couldn't help but think that all the pairs of clay targets shot on the sporties range at Boxhorn Gun Club was paying off.

Spring is the start of summer league trap, skeet and sporting clays shooting. Most leagues run 20 weeks, from mid-April to late-August. A single round of trap or skeet consists of 25 targets. Sporties starts a little later, and a round consists of 50 targets. Trap is far and away the most popular, and has been shot in the US since 1831. Sporting clays was introduced in the 1980s and has boomed in popularity. Skeet was used during WWII to teach aerial gunnery and its heyday was in the 1950s and 60s. Since then, skeet has fallen to a distant third.

Guns and loads: Back when I started shooting trap league in the 1970s, I used the same shotgun I hunted with. Seeing as it had a 30" full-choked barrel and vent rib, it made a fair trap gun. Open choked double or semi-auto

guns used for grouse, quail and woodcock can also make fair skeet or sporties guns. To be honest, a dedicated shotgun designed for the clay target discipline of your choice will boost your scores. Monte Carlo and adjustable stocks on trap guns help with hitting rising targets and gun fit. Guns made specifically for clay target shooting are built with a heavier duty action and ejectors to stand up to the tens of thousands of rounds shot in practice and competition. I found this out the hard way, when I ended up replacing the ejector on my hunting gun on a regular basis. When I went to a dedicated over/under trap gun, my scores soared as well. I now own a dedicated over/under sporting clays gun that also works well on doves.

The Amateur Trapshooting Association sets standards for the ammunition used for formal American trap shooting. Individual gun clubs may also have regulations governing the ammunition you can use. Generally, shells with 1 to 1 1/8th ounce of size 7 1/2 or 8 lead shot will cover trap, skeet or sporting clays. Most shooters nowadays buy their clay target ammo, and to be honest, that's not a bad thing. With the current price of lead shot and powder, the cost advantage of reloading is gone. I myself used hand loads of 1 ounce of 8 shot at 1200 fps back when I competed. I

suggest pattern testing your choke and load of choice if you get serious about your scores.

Getting started: Informal practice at a place like the McMiller Sports Center in Eagle is a great way to start. Target throwing machines and clays are available, and you can shoot at your own pace. Most gun clubs will also accommodate a beginning shooter. I suggest letting the folks at the counter know if it's your first time on a regulation trap, skeet or sporties range. Of course, bring eye and ear protection.

I'd be willing to bet summer shooting leagues are available at gun clubs within 30 miles or so of where most of us live. If you live in the same corner of Wisconsin that I do, try the trap range or sporting clays courses at McMiller, Wern Valley, Milford Hills or Boxhorn Gun Club. You will encounter most of the same shots you will when hunting upland game or waterfowl. Skills honed in friendly competition during the summer will pay off in more harvested birds in the fall. 🦃

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.



A shooter takes aim at a report pair of clays.



Practice paid off, Opening Day wood ducks!

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Smelt Season on

Chequamegon Bay The 10-12 day “smelt run” typically starts around the third week in April, after the ice goes out of the bay. Check the Smelt Hotline during the month of April. 800-284-9484.


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Washburn County As the snow melts away you can find beautiful greens and blooming flowers anywhere throughout the Northwoods. But where can you visit that is home to both the Walleye and Bluegill Capitals of the state? That’s right – Washburn County! Nearly 1,000 lakes set the ideal backdrop in any fisherman’s dream. 

MURAWSKA, FROM PAGE 16

ect was coated with Rustoleum 2x clear. Clear epoxy is even more durable, but can take a while to dry.

Making things from the spoils of the hunt is always satisfying. If you find you enjoy this, there is no end to the creativity and complexity of items you can create. Check them out online or even those for sale on Ebay. 

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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STUART WILKERSON

Concealed Carry

Let's go crazy

“Sometimes you feel like a nut, sometimes you don’t.” So goes the old candy bar commercial jingle that those of a certain age will remember from the 1970s. According to Mike “Shorty” Gorez, owner of Shorty’s Shooting Sports in West Allis, there is a self-defense situation where you should consider acting like you’re a “nut.” That situation is if you feel yourself in danger and you are carrying a stun gun.

Important note: While it is legal to keep a stun gun in your home for self-protection, it is a Class H felony to carry a stun gun in Wisconsin outside your place of residence, unless you have a Concealed Carry Permit.

Shorty says that stun guns are a popular concealed carry option. “If you don’t want to carry a gun, but want self-protection, it’s an alternative,” he exclaimed. Stun guns come in a variety of shapes and sizes and often mimic in appearance such common items as cellphones, lipstick, pens and flashlights.

A stun gun is an electric shock device that can immobilize an attacker without causing serious or permanent injury. Stun guns deliver a very high voltage, low amperage shock into the central nervous system leaving the potential assailant “in a world of hurt,” according to Shorty.

Stun guns are short distance self-defense weapons with the effective range of an arm’s length. The device must be in direct contact with an attacker to function, preferably in an area of high nerve concentration, like hips, stomach or neck.

By way of comparison, pepper spray must hit an assailant in the eyes or mouth in order to have an impact, but the effect is more long-lasting than that of a stun gun, minutes compared to seconds. The range of most pepper spray dispensers is about 20 feet. A bullet from a firearm may need to hit a vital organ to stop an attacker. The stun gun’s cousin, the Taser, fires two prongs up to a distance of 20 feet, that, upon contact, have an effect similar to a stun gun. They may be costly, but some will operate like a stun gun in case of a miss.



A flashlight that doubles as a stun gun. Stun gun owners must have a concealed carry permit if they are taken outside of the home.

The effect of a stun gun is not unlike walking into an electric fence. “Pain compliance” and muscle contractions will continue as long as the prongs of the stun gun are applied to a malcontent. Generally speaking, a one-half second application of a stun gun will get the attacker’s attention by causing some pain and muscle contraction. One to two seconds will result in muscle spasms and a disoriented mental state. More than three seconds can cause loss of balance and muscle control, disorientation and a lot more pain.

Every person is different and will react uniquely to a stun gun hit. Size, weight, emotional state, and drug use can influence the effect of a stun gun. A three second zap that will stop one attacker might take five seconds to put down another.

Anyone who has heard and seen the sound and fury of an activated stun gun will think twice about exposing themselves to its business end. Visibly displaying a

stun gun is something that Shorty highly recommends if you feel threatened.

“Talk loud and crazy,” he said. “Turn the stun gun off and on repeatedly. The sound of electricity zapping and the sight of high voltage sparks while talking crazy should be enough to encourage anyone you don’t trust to cross the street or walk the other way. Who wants to deal with someone who’s crazy? You might feel a little embarrassed, but it works a lot better than being a victim and pleading for mercy. How well do you think asking a gangbanger to ‘Please don’t hurt me’ is going to work? Not very.” A stun gun is a better means of self-protection than having nothing at all, Shorty said, and could provide an advantage in the event of an attack from an aggressor. 🗡️

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

GOODE, FROM PAGE 21

The most important rule in trapping is, “Set on Sign.” You can’t catch what is not there, so be sure that you have identified fresh weasel tracks before you place your boxes in random locations.

Due to the simplicity of weasel trapping, it is a perfect sport for any beginner trapper and/or youth. It’s a great opportunity to get kids interested in wildlife. While setting weasel boxes, you can explore other animal tracks and spend some quality time in the great outdoors. 🗡️

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



A long-tailed weasel caught in the author’s weasel box setup.

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ENGBERG, FROM PAGE 18

they will be down. Hopefully, the 2018 Farm Bill will have a higher cap for CRP lands.

Wisconsin has scattered areas where there are native pheasants, but they are usually on private lands. Wisconsin stocks 75,000 to 80,000 pheasants at its numerous public hunting grounds, which is what most Wisconsinites hunt. Those that can hunt during the week get a majority of the pen-raised birds from the state's Pheasant Farm at Poynette. Weekends are crowded early in the pheasant hunting season, but taper off later as the weather turns colder. Late-season hunters have to work hard and walk miles for a few shots.

I've raised Labradors for over 30 years and these dogs and other hunting breeds live to hunt. I've had a replacement shoulder and was in the hospital six weeks this fall so my Lab, Katie, was ready to hunt.

A good friend, Tom Sanderson of Spring Green, is a hunter and has a yellow Labrador, King, who is a good hunter and works well with my Katie. Tom asked me if I'd like to go with him to a hunting preserve in Spring Green. I've been to a few hunting preserves in my life and some of them are poor. We went to Cedar Valley Preserve outside of Spring Green, Wisconsin. This facility is one of the nicest hunting preserves I have been to. The preserve is tucked away in the hills and valleys of Iowa County and planted with corn, sorghum, and switch grass, which make great habitat for the hunter and dog. The birds are great flyers and there are also some quail as a bonus.



Author with King and Katie and pheasants shot recently at Cedar Creek Preserve.

Cedar Valley has great facilities for corporate meetings, banquets, and weddings, all in the Wisconsin countryside. Your birds are also cleaned and wrapped for you. Cedar Valley is only an email or phone call away. Please change to: There are memberships and the Preserve is also open to the public for hunting from September to March 31, giving the hunter and dog more months of hunting. 🐾

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

SMELTING, FROM PAGE 10

campfires and enjoy the outdoors as they wait for the run to come in heavy. Traditionalists bite the head off the first smelt they bring in. Smelt may start running at 9 pm or they may be running at midnight or later. They are unpredictable little fish (approximately 4 to 5 inches in length) that only answer to Mother Nature.

Smelt were planted in the lake many decades ago and are not native to Lake Superior. Smelt season usually lasts 12 to 14 days. We will have a smelt hot line set up during the month of April. 🐟

For more information on fishing in the Chequamegon Bay, the Ashland Marina, or Smelt Season in Ashland, including regulations and licensing for smelting, contact the Ashland Area Chamber of Commerce at 800-284-9484.



The Ashland area is renowned for smelt.



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Eau Claire Dells

JIM SERVI

Ice Age Trail Adventure Becoming a 1000 miler

From Interstate State Park in Polk County to Potawatomi State Park in Door County, the Ice Age Trail lies entirely in Wisconsin. It is one of only 11 National Scenic Trails in the United States. Luckily for Wisconsinites, the trail travels through 31 of our 72 counties, providing easy access to everyone. A dedicated network of volunteers keeps the trail cleared and yellow blazes are marked for easy navigation. It's hard to believe, but more than one million people use some portion of the Ice Age Trail every year for a variety of reasons. Hiking is the most common, but others love to snowshoe or cross-country ski during the winter.

With several locations near popular parks, a journey on the trail often becomes an extension of a camping trip. Still others use it to access their favorite hunting and fishing spots or explore prominent natural areas in Wisconsin. Whatever the reason, it makes a great adventure.

My adventure began two years ago at Eau Claire Dells with my friend, Kevin. Actually, that's not really true, if I stop to think about it. Like many, I've travelled

different sections throughout my life, not really understanding the magnitude or importance of the trail in my youth. With a greater understanding and respect now, I set my sights on joining the Thousand Miler Club, exclusively for those that have hiked the entire Ice Age Trail. With life as busy as it is, I'm not able to drop everything and spend months hiking. Instead, I plan to do it in smaller sections, an afternoon or weekend here and there, as time permits. It may take 20 years, but that's okay, even better maybe, because it makes the adventure last.


The day was crisp, clear and extremely cold. Starting through the woods, we followed the trail downstream. As we stood on the impressive bluff, we could see the frozen river below. Upstream was the breathtaking dells. Our return would take us there. Our first destination was to head downstream where the river was ice-free and swiftly flowing. It wasn't long before we came to a bridge spanning the river, connecting to the south side. After crossing, we disappeared into the woods with the river still on our right.

Continuing downstream, we came to a fork in the river where the water circled an island on both sides. The secluded island was enticing. Perhaps an adventure for a different day? At last we came to a sign that we were entering private property. One of the many great things about the trail is the amazing generosity of landowners to open their property for it. Without them, the path would be a patchy mess.

It was here we turned around, now heading upstream, towards the dells. We weren't disappointed. Finding an overlook, we sat in silence, soaking in the beauty. Large rocks comprised the dells with water spraying in every direction as it tumbled over the boulders. The temperature caused the water to freeze in an assortment of artistic ice creations and the continuous flow created a magnificent layering effect. Closing my eyes, I could hear the power of the water rushing through. I didn't want to keep my eyes closed long. I wanted to see the beauty one more time before we continued upstream. For a moment, I imagined retreating glaciers over 12,000 years ago as they shaped the landscape we now see and created the unique countryside



Map of the Ice Age Trail

that the trail traverses. Across the highway is an old dam. A small lake is formed above where summertime campers no doubt have their picnics and swim before taking their own journey along the trail. Today the otters are the only one's swimming with their trademark slide through the snow before disappearing into the icy water below. Finally, we head back to the truck, our journey complete. Soon, we will return to our adventure once more along one of Wisconsin's many unique outdoor treasures, the Ice Age Trail. 

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.

TYLER FLORCZAK

Wildlife Photography Tips

Know your gear, and get creative

When reflecting on my love for Wisconsin, my mind and heart are instantly drawn to the outdoors. Like many others, hunting and fishing sit atop my list of favorite hobbies, although wildlife photography has grown into a new outdoor passion for me in recent years.

Sure beautiful sunrises and sunsets offer picturesque moments, while bluffs, lakes and rivers provide photographers with breathtaking snapshots. But to me, the array of Northwoods creatures, their behavior and lifestyles, is much more captivating. Whether you're a professional wildlife photographer or just a beginner, sometimes it is good to get back to the basics. Here are some tips, reminders and advice that can help ensure high-quality photos in the field.

Be Familiar with Your Gear

Wildlife photography happens in a flash—literally. Exceptional wildlife instances occur between five and twenty seconds (give or take), therefore photographers need to be familiar with their camera settings, as well as the abilities of their lens. Telephoto lenses are a must for wildlife photography - how long of a lens depends on how close you can get and on the size of the intended subject.

Wildlife photographers should:

- Know what the minimum/maximum shutter speed is to where you can still obtain sharp images with your camera/lens combination
- Know how to quickly change focus points or focus modes
- Know the added margins that the in-camera or in-lens stabilization gives you
- Know how high you can push the camera's ISO setting, while achieving quality results
- Patience, Persistence and Knowing the subject.

The only way to get to know wildlife better is to invest time in the wild. Sit, watch, listen and learn. Studying the behaviors and understanding the patterns and behavior of each animal or species

allows photographers to gain an advantage when attempting to capture a great photo.

Once you've become knowledgeable with the subject or target species, you can know what to expect and focus more on lighting, angles, background, etc. Occasionally though, photographers find themselves in the right spot at the right time, allowing for high-quality photos with very little effort.

Think Creatively

Each photographer should try to add their own creativity to their work, and a lot of that comes with experience, along with excessive amounts of trial and error. Oftentimes wildlife photographers will attempt to get eye contact from their subjects to enhance images and bring life to the photos. Head shots or zoomed-in photos are also very detailed, but do not forget about your wide angles lenses to show the habitat that the animals call home or the sun setting in the distance.

Lighting

The best piece of advice that resonates with me from other successful wildlife photographers is to stick to the "golden hours" or "golden light." This is when lighting is at its best, meaning wildlife photographers must rise early to be in the field before first light and be willing to stick out the final hours of the day. Cloudy, overcast days are also optimal to shoot wildlife images because it filters out light evenly. Experiment to learn how to use the light to your best advantage, but don't be afraid to attempt tricky photos, like shooting directly into the light, for example.

Wildlife photography is an exciting, entertaining and humbling experience. Try taking on a new hobby this year and spend more time outdoors. 🌿

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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Wildlife photography, like hunting, fishing and trapping, requires being in the right place at the right time. Pictured above is a pair of male ring-necked pheasants engaged in an entertaining display along the roadside as they fought with one another during mating season.



Pictured above is a mature fisher, slowly ascending a dead tree to get a vantage point to overlook its den last spring.

Try taking on a new hobby this year and spend more time outdoors.

SUMMER VACATION CHECKLIST:

1.



Lakeside cabin on a pristine lake
(We have dozens to choose from)

2.



Sandy beach for the kids to spend an afternoon swimming
(Head to Shell Lake Beach)

3.



Family friendly ATV trails
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4.



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5.

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(Check out the Namekagon River: Wisconsin's Moving National Park)



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JOHN LUTHENS

Land of Sturgeon and Ice

Lake Winnebago, the heart of the Wisconsin sturgeon-spearfishing season

We were exchanging stories and debating the merits of unique, outdoor opportunities when State Park Ranger, Jeff Nieling, waved me up the late-winter trails of High Cliff State Park near Sherwood, Wisconsin, with a knowing smile. “If you want a real taste of Wisconsin adventure, climb the observation tower and take a look. A frozen city is rising to life on the lake.”

I’d traveled to High Cliff on the far northeastern shore of Lake Winnebago with visions of winter camping and snowshoeing through the park’s 1200 acres and wriggling up the cracks of its namesake, towering bluffs. But trudging up the 40 foot overlook tower as directed, I quickly found myself speared in an entirely different direction.

Augers and ice saws echoed across 215 square miles of drifted white on Winnebago. Shanties were sparking their woodstoves to life in time-honored tradition as the annual Wisconsin sturgeon-spearfishing season was getting underway. Ranger Nieling understated the view. It looked more like an entire landscape rising to life. I double hauled snowshoes back to camp and made plans to plow through a country of sturgeon and ice.

Opening morning sparkled along a plowed ice freeway and found me hitching a ride with a group of ice fishermen who’d opted to chase young walleyed pike instead of

ancient, bottom-dwelling lake sturgeon which can mature to over 100 pounds and live as long as a century. We slid onto the lake 10 miles south of High Cliff in Stockbridge, Wisconsin, billing itself, fittingly enough, as the sturgeon capital of the world.


Remnant Christmas trees marked the miles of the ice road like withered exit signs, vehicles clustered in shoreline communities with their occupants already tucked patiently inside over carved windows in the ice. My own ride, meanwhile, bounced me into the drifted, back country of the lake, bridging an ice crack and disappearing into a sweeping desert of white.

Further out, sturgeon shacks became fewer, looking more like forgotten homestead settlements. Lone tire tracks rolled in the snow towards curious specks on the horizon. I bid my ice fishermen “good luck” eight miles out from our starting point and headed alone into the sturgeon countryside.

It became a sensory challenge. Clouds drifted above, snow crunched below, and slides of dark ice were pocketed with air bubbles that seemed to stretch down to the lake bottom. A plane passed low in the white sky above. It was hard to tell if I was walking on the lake, flying in the clouds, or swimming below with the sturgeon.

Orienteering towards a radio tower on the eastern shore, it seemed no closer after an hour of packing through the drifts. I carried a compass in case the winds picked up, as it would have been impossible to navigate by eye in white-out conditions. As I traversed the outlying settlements of shacks and began to hike back along the ice road, my outer jacket and gloves were shed into my pack and my face was starting to sunburn.

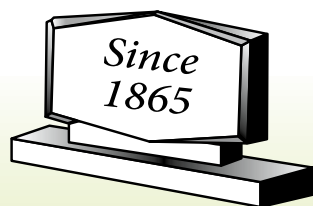
Trucks began bouncing off the ice as opening day drew to an end. Many sturgeon faithful stopped to chat and share stories of dark, watery conquest, and I must have been offered a ride by several dozen. It felt warming to know that the spirit of goodwill that is so often missing in the outside world is still alive and well on the ice of Winnebago.

As evening shadows lengthened I came full circle. I stood again on the rocky shores of High Cliff State Park and watched the sun set golden over the shack tops of the shanty cities. Wisconsin is indeed a place of big adventure. A sweeping landscape of sturgeon and ice fits right in. 

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



Lake Winnebago's sturgeon opener from the observation tower in High Cliff State Park.



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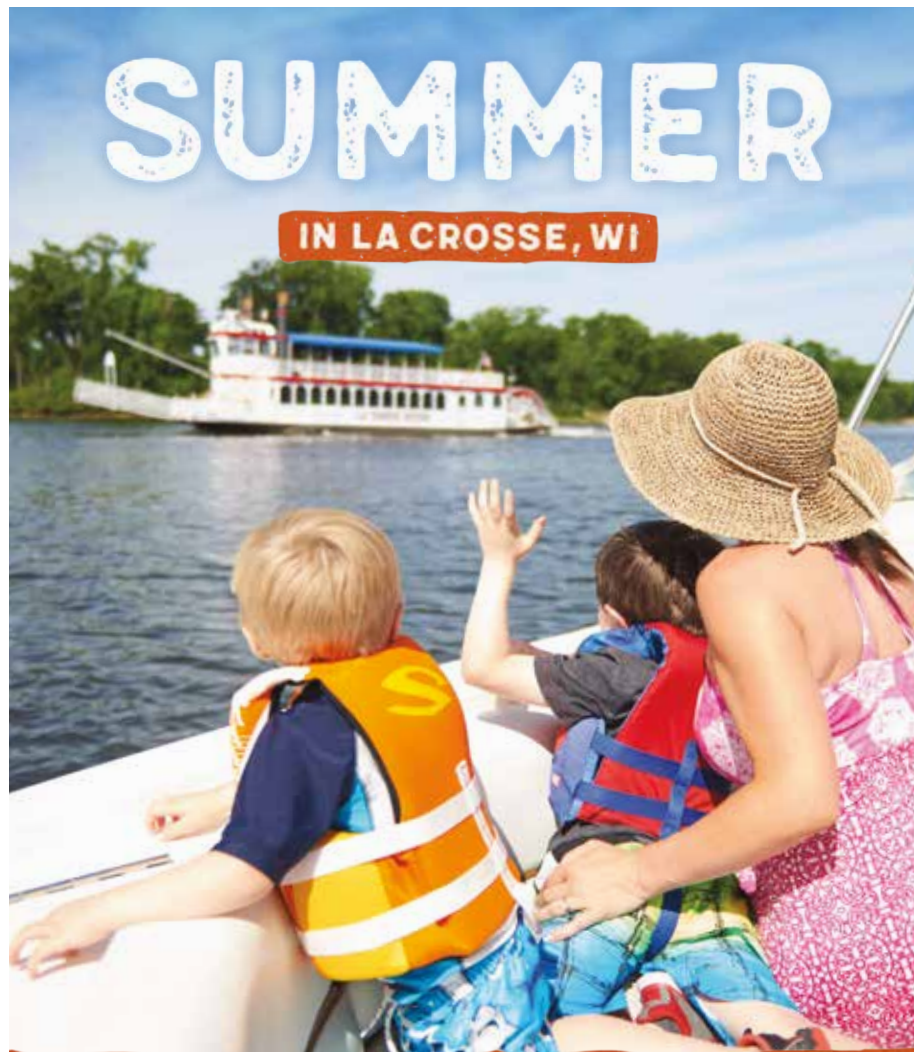
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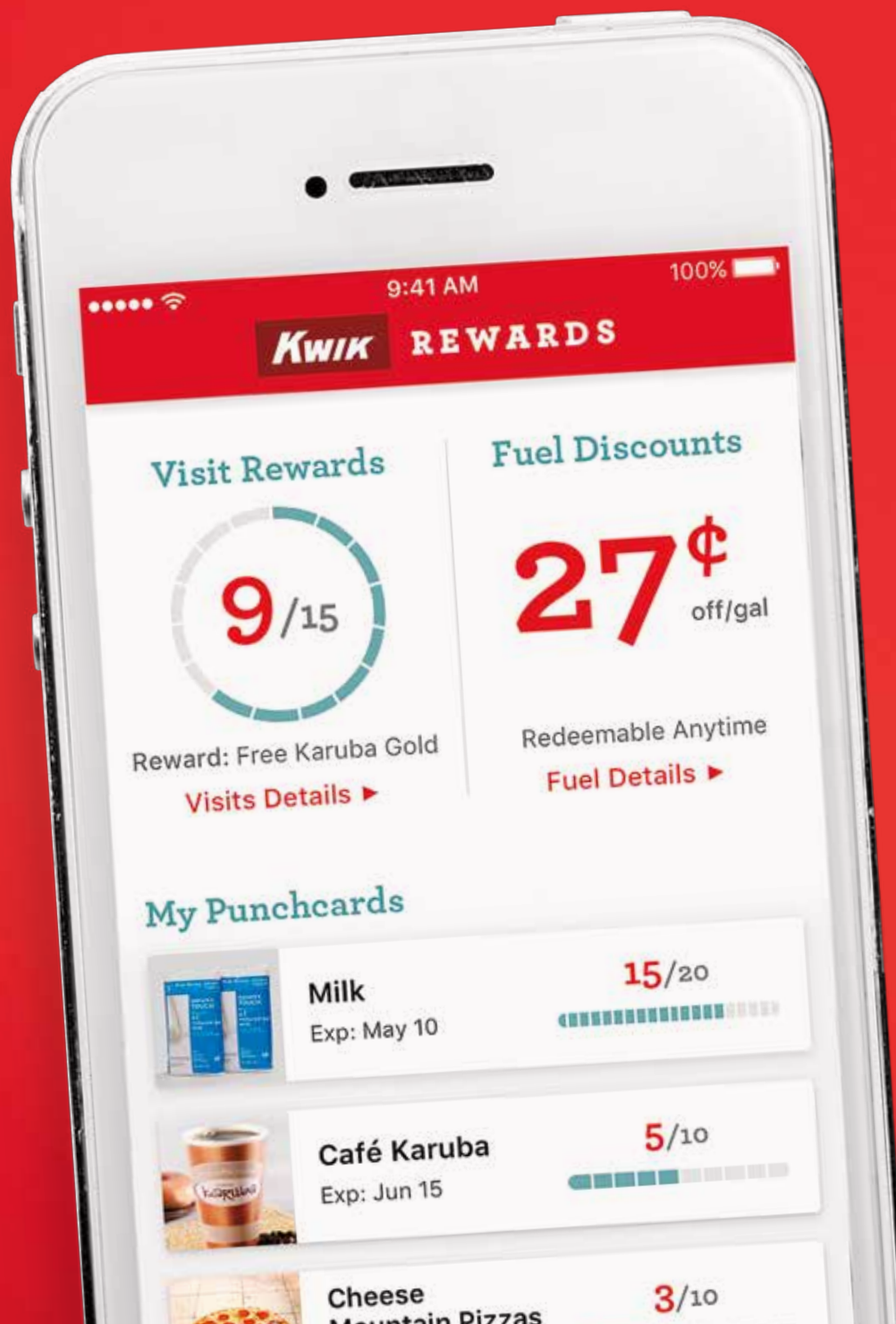
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