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**PHIL SCHWEIK** 

## Hunting Hardwater Walleyes Mobility vital to icefishing success

Inter's grip is firmly upon us and several feet of solid ice is building underfoot. Many anglers who enthusiastically and successfully began the season targeting early ice panfish, pike and walleyes when conditions were good begin to give in to the cold and misery. Winter progresses and foot travel becomes even more difficult, and the catch declines with the lack of mobility. By mid-winter, many ice anglers have surrendered to trudging through the deep snow and are now waiting for the telltale signs of spring.

Don't count me in. Now is the time to catch walleyes. By taking yourself out of the game as we move into the later parts of winter, you often miss a great walleye payoff. Finding that steady action that we all are looking for though, will make the difficulty of getting to those fish seem not so bad at all. Catching fish is just the fix for the no-fish winter blues.

I have had very good success targeting walleyes through the ice all winter long, including the dead of winter. To put more fish on the ice, make a few adjustments and try some unconventional methods.

Too many anglers target the same locations and depths all season long. But as winter progresses, walleye movements and patterns change; we see several different migrations of walleyes on both lakes and rivers. In some lakes the walleyes will move miles in one direction or another. In other cases the fish simply move up and down in the water column due to oxygen levels or concentrations of forage. To consistently find success, be ready and willing to move with them.

Think outside the box. Watch your electronics, believe what they are telling you, and don't be afraid to make adjustments. If you start seeing marks high in the water column, don't be afraid to move your presentation to that depth. If you aren't seeing fish or you're not catching any fish, move. Being mobile is a good thing and sometimes it's a necessity if you want to be successful.





Staying mobile in pursuit of walleyes, including finding fish at different depths in the water column and locating fish on the move over a lake or water system is vital to success. OWO writer and Wisconsin guide Phil Schweik, shown on the early ice of central Wisconsin, is already finding snow and ice conditions and movement in northern Wisconsin extremely difficult. At right is Schweik client Ron Hall with a great catch of walleyes."

Last year on a particular lake in central Wisconsin, we found our walleyes suspended 10 to 14 feet off the bottom over 25 to 35 feet of water. We changed our presentation and Bam! Fish On! On another lake we moved over a mile from our original starting location before we found the fish we wanted. Our willingness to move and our clients trust in us to make that move saved the day. Instead of going home empty handed, our clients went home with happy faces, great photos, and walleyes for dinner.

Phil Schweik, Hooksetters Guide Service, Mosinee, Wisconsin 54455, Web www.hooksetters.biz, Phone: 715-693-5843



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#### **DAVE DUWE**

### **Tips & Tricks to Catch More Fish**

### Gain the most out of your flasher.

The state of the s

The most critical feature for all flashers to have is the "gain knob." The stronger the signal the lower the gain needs to be. You want to have the gain set where you are just marking the jig on the screen. If you increase the gain too high it will add clutter and noise signals to the flashers screen. I will start the gain at zero and go up from there. As a rule, the deeper you're fishing the higher the gain needs to be. The units I have offer a low power feature which when turned on reduces the power for shallow water which will in turn decrease the screen clutter. The low power feature is great for water less than ten feet.

The next most important component of your portable flasher unit is the transducer. They come in a variety of angles, which is a complicated discussion for another day. For now, we want to make sure the transducer is functioning well so make sure it isn't scratched or ice covered. If this happens, you'll know because you will need to set the gain too high to pick up your jig. I protect my transducer by putting it in an old sock when traveling out on the ice. To get the best signal to the flasher the transducer is perpendicular to the bottom. If the signal is poor and you are having a hard time picking up your jig there a several possible causes:

Your hole is on an angle

The hole is slushy or contains ice chunks Your transducer isn't floating properly.

Increasing the gain will help but will add a ton of clutter and interference to the screen. The fixes are as simple as readjusting the float or drilling a new hole.

In my favorite ice fishing holes, the panfish and walleye are seldom right under the ice. With that in mind I keep the transducer cord short. The people who keep it long get less surface clutter, however, it gives the fish a better opportunity to get wrapped around the cord. Though it can create interference the ability to keep mobile and not lose fish is



Dave Duwe with a Delavan Lake Perch

much more important to me.

As most anglers know, the shape and size of the lures you use effect the signal on the flasher. Horizontally positioning lures will be much easier to mark on the screen than vertically fished lures or spoons. To

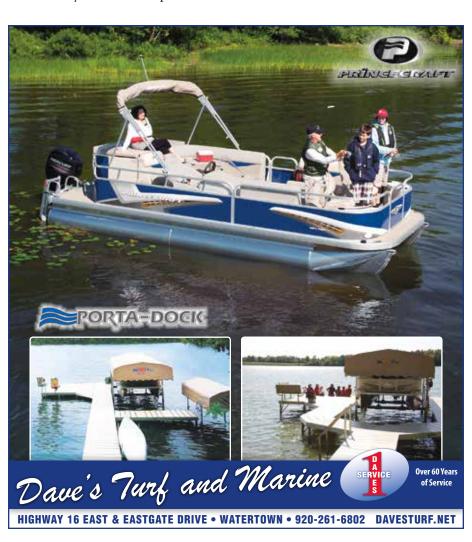
increase the visibility of vertically fished lures, I will place a small transparent piece of plastic above the lure. Gill Shields fit the bill for this application. In some cases, it could be as simple as adding a small split shot a foot above a small jig.

Batteries can create problems with signal identification so make sure yours are fully charged and in good repair.

One more thought on keeping the gain low; by keeping it as low as possible you will create less interference for other anglers fishing spots that are crowded. This helps everyone and hopefully everyone benefits.

In summary, the flasher is an integral part of ice fishing. Make sure you get the most of it and you'll stand out in a crowd by having more success.

Dave Duwe is the owner of Dave Duwe's Guide Service featuring the lakes of Walworth County 262-728-8063





#### TOM LUBA

## **Continuing Education** *Good anglers never quit learning*

ost good fishermen I know learned from onthe-water experience. Even if those nuggets of wisdom didn't reveal themselves until further down the road.

Two of my own enlightenments revolved around the Arbogast Hula Popper, a bass surface bait. This popper has a cupped face that spits water and makes noise when the rod is jerked. We'd pop, then let it sit, then pop it twice more and let it sit again. If we didn't get bit, as it moved away from the cover, we'd reel in and start over.

My Hula Popper was red and white and had a red and white rubber skirt that trailed the body to hide the back two-prong hook.

One evening, way back when, on a summer vacation in the Hayward area, my aunt was rowing the boat and I was casting near logs and stumps. The action was slow, so several times I just let the bait sit, until the ripples faded. The popping surface was red, so it was easy to see. Suddenly, the red front angled up so it was a bit more out of the water than normal. No fuss, no splash. Without the red front visibility, I probably wouldn't have even noticed it.

I told my aunt and asked if I should pull, just in case. She agreed. When I did, I was shocked, hooked fast to a two-pound largemouth. The fish must have been spellbound by

the red and white skirt filaments that were barely moving on the surface, and soundlessly sucked them in. To this day, I have never had another strike quite like that. The experience definitely stuck upstairs. Years later when a new breed of surface poppers hit the market, dressing on the back hook was a must. I settled on mylar. I've caught many bass since, especially during post-spawn, by letting the bait sit after a pop so the shiny mylar strands could create a subtle flash. A lot of fish come up behind it to investigate. I give it the slightest twitch, and bang!

A second time was also years ago with the same Hula Popper. The bass weren't cooperating along a shallow weed edge. When I figured a cast was out of range, I started cranking quickly so I could get it back closer to the weeds faster. On one retrieve, it flew across the surface, the cupped front blowing up water and a flying largemouth obliterated it! My father had oar duty that time and we both had opened mouths. The normal retrieve was ignored, but a completely irrational maneuver got nailed.

Years later, when I first saw a buzzbait throwing water like an Olympic swimmer, I was convinced that Hula Popper was impersonating a buzzer.

These lessons came from remembering past experiences, and putting it together. The mylar tail replaced the rubber



The original Arbogast Hula Popper. Equipment, as well as another person, can be a teacher on the water.

skirt; and now there are a wide variety of buzzbaits available with small, large and multiple blades. Take your pick; they all rearrange the surface.

I'm thankful for what that old red and white Hula Popper revealed. I catch more fish nowadays because of those "lessons." Like me, I'm sure you have had unique experiences on the water. Give yours some thought. Catching more fish is never a bad thing.

Tom Luba is an open water fisherman, preferably for smallmouth and largemouth bass. In a pinch, every other fish that swims is fair game. too.



#### TOM CARPENTER

## **Badger Birds** *Blue Jay*

B lue jays are both rascals and rogues – rascals because they are boisterous, loud and mischievous, rogues because they sometimes like to bully smaller birds and seem to enjoy harassing larger ones.

But what they occasionally lack in neighborliness and citizenship, blue jays make up for in bright and almost breathtaking beauty. Males and females alike are strikingly handsome in their feathered packages of powder blue topcoats with creamy-gray and white undersides, black-and-white barred wings, and a black bridle or necklace running around the nape, face and throat. The head is crested.

These year-round Wisconsin residents hold a special place in most birders' hearts no matter what the season, and blue jays provide good company and great entertainment whether you're hunting, fishing, birdwatching or berry picking.



**Listen** for the blue jay's telltale *jay-jay* cry. There is also a more musical *kwee-d-dle*, *kwee-d-dle* call. Blue jays are great at mimicking other birds, especially hawks.

**Look** for the blue jay's crest to stand erect when she is excited or calling ... two activities which usually go together.

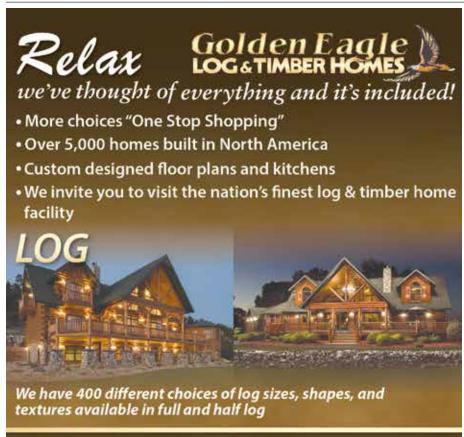
**Find** blue jays on forest edges, and in woodlots, forests, gardens, yards and parks.

**Know** that, in one scientific study, less than 1 percent of blue jay stomachs contained eggs or small bird parts. Jays' reputation as major nest raiders is untrue.

**Feed** blue jays black-oil sunflower seeds and cracked corn on a platform feeder away from your other bird feeders. Jays are large (about 12 inches long), and when

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 9** 











It might not be his Alaska dream, but Wisconsin Great Lakes tributary flyfishing opportunities for salmon to wild steelhead, from southeast Wisconsin to the Brule (below) in the northwest, suit OWO writer Ron Stresing just fine...for now. Above, expert Wisconsin fishing guide Eric Haataja works a southeast stream for winter steelhead (Dick Ellis photo).

### **RON STRESING**

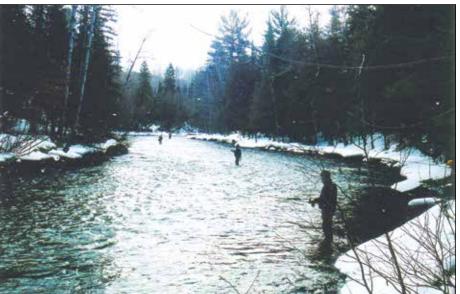
## Alaska...Just Down the Block Salmon flyfishing South Milwaukee

In the mid-1950s, I was about 10 or 12 years old when ABC television began broadcasting a groundbreaking TV show called "The American Sportsman." 1960s TV and movie celebrities were shown hunting and fishing all over the world. I remember actors like Robert Stack hunting lions and plains game in Africa, Fred Bear hunting Alaskan Dall sheep with a bow, Andy Griffith shooting snow geese in South Dakota, and singer Bing Crosby fly fishing for trout and salmon.

Famous fly angler Lee Wulff would guide Bing and other celebrities. They would make perfect casts, double hauling and landing the fly with pinpoint precision, as gently as a puff of windblown milkweed silk. Almost on cue a hungry Alaskan salmon or steelhead would inhale the offering, and the battle was on! Watching it was heady stuff for a kid my age, the stuff dreams are made of. I resolved to someday make a trip to Alaska, and challenge the salmon with a fly rod.

The trouble with making dreams come true is that reality gets in the way. When I landed a job that payed enough to start saving for an Alaskan fishing trip, other

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 23** 



## **Central WI Sports Show**

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OWO Publisher Ellis and family make their cabin home on the Manitowish Chain in Manitowish Waters. Here Luke Ellis waits for another flag over a homemade tip-up.

drilled in the lake ice, teasing perch and crappies that you can see suspended 10 feet down in that clear water to bite on a jig and waxie.

Nor can we forget our trout anglers tiptoeing along the stream banks in order **CONTINUED ON PAGE 9** 

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#### **MIKE YURK**

### Pending...

### New Mississippi River bag limits possible

ew bag limits may be in store for Mississippi River anglers. Current limits have remained essentially unchanged since the 1940s and 50s, according to Jordan Weeks, Mississippi River Team Supervisor for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. "The last change was made in 1990 when a 15-inch minimum size limit for walleyes was implemented," he explained.

Weeks emphasized these changes are still pending legislative approval, but the DNR is hoping to receive it in time for the 2020 fishing season. Jordan suggested they may be in place by the time the new fishing season takes effect April 1 and will be reflected in the new regulation booklet.

#### **WALLEYES AND SAUGER**

Limits on walleyes and sauger may be the most significant since they are perhaps the favorite game fish sought on the Mississippi River. Spring and late fall walleye and sauger fishing on the river draws anglers from throughout the Midwest.

The limit for years has been six fish, a combination of sauger and walleye with a 15-inch minimum size for walleye and no minimum size restriction on sauger. The proposed change comes in two parts: For Pools 3 to 8 the daily bag limit would be four fish, a combination of walleye and sauger, with a 15-inch minimum size limit on walleye with no minimum size for sauger. Additionally only one walleye or sauger over 20 inches may be kept. Pools 9 through 12 would have a six fish combination walleye and sauger limit that includes a 15-inch minimum size limit for walleye with no size restriction on sauger. There will be a slot limit requiring the release of all walleyes between 20 to 27 inches with one fish over 27 inches allowed.

#### **OTHER FISH**

The other changes are a 10-fish limit with no size restriction on white bass and a daily bag limit of 15 fish each for sunfish, crappies and yellow perch. For catfish there will be a combined limit of 10 fish for channel and flathead catfish with only one over 30 inches allowed. Another change is expected for shovelnose sturgeon with a bag limit of three with no size restriction. An expected change is also coming for northern pike bag limits with three fish allowed with only one over 30 inches.

There is no change proposed on limits for bass. There is a five-fish combined limit for both largemouth and smallmouth bass with a 14-inch minimum size limit. Although there were no immediate concerns with any of the fish populations in the Mississippi River, there were some diminishing numbers for a variety of reasons, including climate change and invasive species, according to Jordan. He pointed out the DNR was approached by anglers suggesting a change in limits, which made sense since current limits were set over a half a century ago.

These changes in limits for the Mississippi River have been coordinated with the Minnesota DNR and are also pending legislative approval. The best advice for fishermen who fish the Mississippi River is to check the fishing regulation booklet they receive when they purchase their 2020 fishing license.

Mike Yurk has been writing about Wisconsin outdoors for over 50 years. His stories have appeared in numerous newspapers and magazines. He has published 12 books on the outdoors which are available on Amazon. He is a retired Army officer living in northwestern Wisconsin where he has found some of the best bass fishing in the country. He can be contacted at bassinmajor@yahoo.com.





New walleye and sauger limits could be on the horizon. These sauger are being handled by DNR fisheries biologists (Dick Ellis photos).

### **On The Cover**

American Birkebeiner and Fat Tire Birkie photos provided by 2019 American Birkebeiner Ski Foundation. Wisconsin Guide and OWO writer Lee Haasch loves big fish open water and hardwater fishing on Lake Michigan off Algoma. Photo by Kurt Walbeck.

#### CARPENTER, FROM PAGE 4

feeding they like the stability a platform offers. This plan also separates the rowdy jays from the smaller birds, which could be frightened away.

**Did you know** that blue jays love to carry and bury seeds, especially acorns? Many an oak tree got its start thanks to a blue jay.

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

### SPOTLIGHT MANITOWISH WATERS, FROM PAGE 7

to not spook the brooks or browns. Need tackle, supplies and advice on where to go and what bait to use? Our bait shops can help you with all your fishing needs. Need a guide? Our guides are among the best in the state! In fact, when Wisconsin started requiring guide licenses, our guides were among the first to sign up. Their skills were, and still are, as legendary as our lakes.

Don't forget to share a photo of your fish with us. Use #MW10LakeChain in your next social media post for us to see. Each month we will be doing a drawing for best photo.

For more information visit ManitowishWaters.org or call 715.543.8488.

#### JOHN LUTHENS

## Turning the Pages of Winter Classic books worth hunkering down with

ometimes, in the darkest moments of winter, even the heartiest Wisconsin explorer gets the hankering to curl up like a bookworm. Wind rattles the windowpanes, icicles drop like daggers from the eaves, snow howls into frozen mounds.

Thankfully, with help and input from the writers here at *On Wisconsin Outdoors*, heated adventures don't need to hibernate alongside us till spring. They are alive and blooming beneath the covers of some of the finest outdoor literature ever written.

Here are a few of our favorites to flip you through the pages of winter in style:

### Stories of the Old Duck Hunters, by Gordon MacQuarrie

Sitting atop the reading list of *OWO*'s fly-fishing expert, Jerry Kiesow, this classic book has the feel of a favorite, well-worn rod.

Set strictly in Wisconsin, the *Old Duck Hunter* stories were penned in the mid-1900s while MacQuarrie was a reporter in

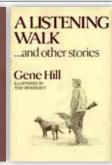


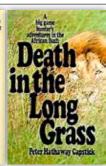
Superior, as well as during his 20-year run as outdoor editor of the *Milwaukee Journal*.

Pondering the pleasures of duck blinds at dawn, exploring companionship and life in the wildest corners of the state, flyfishing for native trout along the majestic corridors of northwestern Wisconsin's Bois Brule River, MacQuarrie writes with a style that Kiesow says, "brings you into his stories like you were right there with him."

### A Listening Walk and Other Stories, by Gene Hill

OWO writer, Denny Murawska, chronicles the simple beauty and laughter





found in nature, ending his stories with the byline reading "his church is in the pine cathedrals surrounding his home," so it's no surprise that his favorite author is cut from exactly that type of outdoor cloth.

As a columnist and associate editor at *Field and Stream*, Gene Hill fished and hunted in the country he loved, writing with a rare brand of humor and expounding on the deeper themes of outdoor pursuit that all sportsmen can identify with. Heralded as one of the premiere outdoor journalists of his time, he was perhaps best loved for his poetic portrayal of the bond between hunter and dog.

A Listening Walk is a compilation of Hill's best work. The book takes the smallest joys and observations of life in the outdoor world and turns them into storytelling magic.

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 12** 



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### **SPOTLIGHT | LANGLADE COUNTY**

# **Explore Wisconsin**

## Deerbrook Bridge Runners Classic Snowmobile Cruise on February 1

Tintage and classic snowmobile owners and admirers are invited to take part February 1, 2020, in the 17th Annual Deerbrook Bridge Runners Classic Cruise in Neva Corners, Wisconsin. Neva Corners is located about five miles north of Antigo in Langlade County.

According to Doug Curler, club member and one of the event's organizers, the state defines a "vintage" snowmobile as one that is at least 35 years old. On the other hand, there is no fixed definition for a "classic" snowmobile, Doug said, except for the fact that they aren't new. "I would say that 50 percent of the sleds at the cruise are vintage or just not new," he said. No matter how old the machine, however, "We welcome the older as well as the newest machines."

The Classic Cruise will begin at approximately noon and finish at about 5 pm at Quinn's Bar, N5298 County Road B, Deerbrook. Quinn's is located at the intersection of County Road A and County Road B, just off Highway 45.

Doug notes that you don't have to be rider to enjoy the event. He said that from about 9 am to noon, members of the public can view the Classic Cruise snowmobiles. Doug expects approximately 150 machines to take part in the event. The machines will be lined up across from Quinn's and along the side of Hwy B, next to Quinn's.

According to Doug, "Langlade County offers almost



500 miles of groomed trails. This cruise gives you the opportunity for five loops from two miles, for the older machines, to 70 miles for the newer. Registration begins at 11 am and the send-off is at noon. Maps of the routes are provided or riders can join a group with a leader. All riders are asked to return by 5 pm for a chance to win \$100. This is part of the benefit of registering." He added that "Antigo has several motels for your convenience, good eating places and some real nice downtown specialty shops."

"After 5 pm, free food and refreshments are available (for those that registered for the event)." Doug said. "There will also be music and numerous raffles to enter. The big raffle will take place at 8 pm. First prize is a 1981, 440 Kawasaki Drifter sled or \$500. Second prize is \$300, third is \$200, and fourth is \$100."

The Deerbrook Bridge Runners are members and supporters of the Association of Wisconsin Snowmobile Clubs (AWSC). AWSC members receive yearly trail pass discounts from the Wisconsin DNR.

For more information regarding the Deerbrook Bridge Runners Classic Snowmobile Cruise, contact Doug Curler at 715-623-2253, dougcurler@gmail.com., and facebook.com/ DeerbrookBridgeRunnersSnowmobileClubClassicCruise











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LUTHENS, FROM PAGE 10

### Death in the Long Grass, by Peter Hathaway Capstick

Capstick's true-life adventure stories are wild as a jungle safari, and they also come in as the majority favorite, recommended by both *OWO* shooting columnist Ron Stressing and our editor and firearms expert, Stuart Wilke.

Born in New Jersey in 1940, Capstick left behind a successful career as a Wall Street broker and stalked his way into becoming one of the premier professional big-game hunters in Africa.

Hard-drinking and rugged, like a mirror image of Ernest Hemingway himself, he doesn't mince words when it comes to his belief of the core values ingrained in sport hunting, or in his tales of surviving charges by elephants, lions and cape buffalo

Wilke best sums up Capstick's stories by saying, "Driving off a band of murderous baboons with a MAC 10 submachine gun is not going to win anyone a Sierra Club award, but I promise it makes for exceptional reading."

John Luthens is a freelance writer, photographer and journalist from Grafton, Wisconsin.

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with extra support and comfort in mind for long hours of standing and working. Outside is high quality leather with D-rings for making them fit perfect as you lace them up. (\$279.99)

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carhartt.com



#### TOM CARPENTER

## **Cubs Corner** *Rediscovering the lessons of rabbit hunting*

By now we all know the statistics on plummeting hunter numbers. In particular, small game hunting for furred game – chiefly rabbits and squirrels – has virtually ceased.

But how many of us reading this story started out with a .410, 20 gauge or .22 in our hands, a few shells or cartridges in our pocket, and winter cottontails on the agenda? The quarry fit our developing hunting abilities, creating the perfect training ground for bigger (but not necessarily better) things to come.

How did we lose the focus on small game? Yes, social media, challenging academics and intense youth athletics keep our kids beyond occupied. But somehow we find some time to take them hunting ... usually, though, it's in pursuit of what we think is exciting or worthy – deer and turkeys chiefly, both of which are inherently difficult for beginners to hunt.

Why not set up the young hunter for success instead? Put your own agenda aside for a day and take a kid – maybe yours, maybe someone else's – out for some good old-fashioned rabbit hunting fun. Bunny hunting gets better and better as more snow falls and the air gets colder. It's also a great way to get out in the field when most other hunting is just a memory.

Equipping the young hunter is simple. Any old shotgun will do, but my favorite for young hunters is the 20 gauge, ideally in pump action for safe and quick follow-up shots. A .410 is good also. A modified choke is about right, but improved cylinder works well too; load up with low-brass 6s or high-brass 7-1/2s.

Canvas-fronted brush pants are important to help fend off thorns. Wear light gloves. Otherwise all you need is a pair of comfortable boots for walking, a light jacket or comfortable hooded sweatshirt, hat, and a vest to carry items like shells, something to drink, a snack and any bunnies you shoot.

Getting permission to hunt rabbits on private land is easy, especially with a kid in tow. Much public land offers good rabbit hunting too.

Here's where to look for rabbits. Think thickets and low-to-the-ground cover. Hunt in the thick brush along the edge of a woodlot. Work a cutover with young saplings, brush, brambles and berry canes. Explore a logged-out woodlot that is teeming with downed treetops, brush piles and vines. Wander an idle pasture, a fallow meadow or grassy field. Try an old abandoned farmstead, or overgrown gully full of retired farm implements and other junk.

If a place is thorny, thick and seemingly forgotten, rabbits



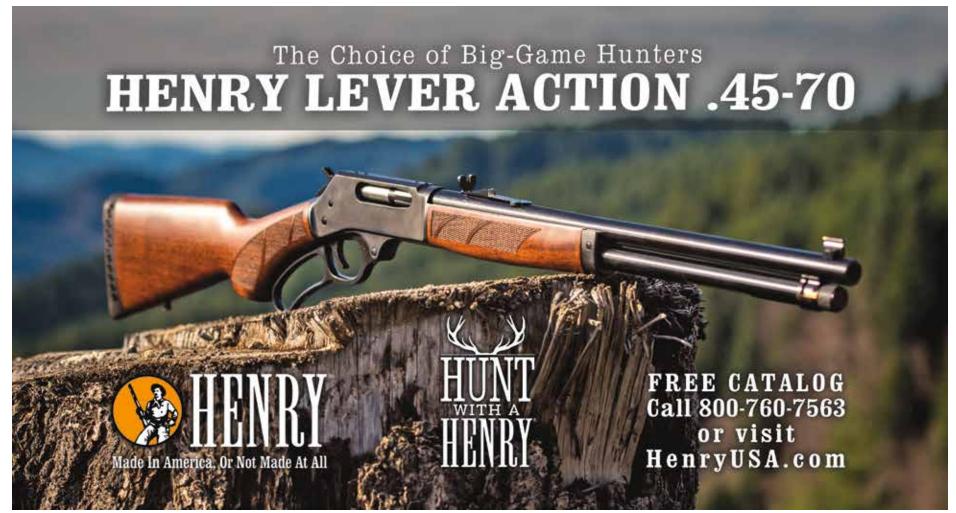
will love it. Make sure food is nearby. In farmland areas, look for hayfields, cut cornfields, harvested soybean or wheat fields and other agricultural residue. Where field and pasture is scarce, rabbits feed on young woody growth, soft bark, juicy buds and supple twigs of young, sprouting brush.

Here's how to hunt. Basically, it's a stroll. Mosey along. Zig, zag and use random patterns of starts, stops and pauses to make rabbits nervous and more likely to flush. Kick brush piles and other cover. Keep the young hunter with shotgun at port arms, ready to shoot at all times.

A rabbit hound isn't necessary for this kind of hunting. Half the fun is the exercise and being your own dog.

Winter rabbits are about fun – pure and simple. Reading sign (tracks and droppings tell many stories), finding the right habitat, working hard, shooting straight ... it's all good training for bigger things to come. And, truth be told, it's hard to tell the difference in grins between a young hunter posing with a deer or hoisting their first rabbit to the bracing-blue winter sky.

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



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Our nearby state park and a nature center offer trails for cross-country skiing, winter hiking, birding and breathtaking views everywhere you turn. Bring the binoculars and your camera. The lakeshore melds with winter's touch to provide dramatic photo opportunities and breathtaking views.

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 28** 



Our surfing is on a Great Lake. Dress appropriately.

### **Bear Baiting 101**

### What to know before you go

hether it's their first bear tag or not, every hunter can agree that preparation is a key component to a safe and successful harvest. A site, constructing a stand, setting up a trail camera and frequently replenishing with a variety of fresh and appealing selections can be challenging yet rewarding in so many ways.

Bears are intelligent creatures of habit. Consistency is essential to condition them to become comfortable and return to the same site. Feeding is not a "one and done" sort of thing. It takes persistence and a large amount of bait to keep bears coming back for more. It's good to keep in mind

that nutritional value and variety can maintain the bears' interest as well.

Just as well kept as Grandma's secret recipes, every hunter, outfitter and guide has their own formula for successful baiting. When stocking a site, consider what's naturally occurring and in season. It is common sense to mimic nature when setting out bait. One of the best ways to lure bears back to the baiting station is to keep the site freshly stocked with crunchy nuts and cookies, sweet toppings, and berries.

Purchasing bait in large quantities can be a cost effective way to keep up with the demands of maintaining a wellstocked bait pile. Storing pre-mixed bait in in convenient carry-in containers makes the job even easier. When it comes to baiting, a little time spent becoming familiar with best practices can result in fantastic trail photos, and, even better, a trophy hunt. Since they vary, always be sure to follow state and local regulations before baiting and feeding.

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### **DAN MOERICKE**

### **An 'Up Nort' Report**

### Northwoods deer camp review— the good, the bad, and the ugly

I'm pleased to report that the Pine River Boys deer camp tradition is alive and well. Another deer gun season is in the books and I'd have to summarize the reviews as mixed. Thankfully, there was lots of good, minimal bad, and very little ugly.

First of all, let's focus on the good. The Pine River Boys deer camp this year consisted of four avid/aging hunters on opening day. In addition to the Krueger brothers who go by the nicknames of Mooner and Lard, joining us this year was the recently retired and relocated Minnesota shop teacher Dale 'Puck' Johnson.

Definitely weighing in on the good side of the equation was the camp vittles. Venison stroganoff and creamed pheasant over wild rice filled our bellies. And, once Deano Radke showed up, there was pumpkin pie and triple-berry cheesecake for dessert. Deer camp is no weight loss clinic.

Additional good news is that, after three or four years of very few antlerless tags being issued, there definitely are more deer in the Northwoods. Of course, the bar was set pretty low to start, so take that for what it's worth. Personally, I hunted the first four days of the season and saw at least one deer every day. That hasn't happened in years. To top it off, early Tuesday morning I was fortunate enough to shoot a nice forked buck. Just getting a shot at a buck in the Nicolet hasn't happened for me in years either.

Also in the 'good' column were the hunting conditions the first four days. Mild temperatures, a dusting of snow, and moderate winds made being in the woods a downright pleasant experience.

Probably as much as the hunting itself, we enjoyed socializing with hunters in other deer camps. On Friday night we visited the Yadro camp on the shores of Anvil Lake and the Dirty Shame deer camp owned by the Ridderbusch brothers, Gary and Al. Spirits were high in both camps as libations were consumed (purely to ward off dehydration) and lies were exchanged.



For the first time in years, OWO columnist Dan Moericke took a shot in the Nicolet, with this forked buck and a freezer full of venison the result.

During the week, we also visited the Zingler camp on the banks of the Brule Creek, where Pat Zingler again hosted his annual deer hunters' pre-Thanksgiving feast. As I said, it's no weight loss clinic.

Under the 'bad' column, while at the Zingler feast I polled the 21 hunters in attendance and found that after three days in the deer woods, under excellent conditions, not one buck had been shot. I even had one of the hunters there tell me that I could add 20 to that number since not one of the twenty guys in his camp had fired a shot either. Let the farm country hunters try to fathom those numbers.

Also under the bad column were the ATV tracks I encountered in the Nicolet on Sunday afternoon. (ATV trails are closed for the season and they are prohibited year round in the Nicolet National Forest.)

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 31** 



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#### LEE GATZKE

## **Disease in the Deer Woods** *Another grave whitetail threat hits Wisconsin*

lack of gunfire confirmed locals suspicions that an EHD outbreak would wreak havoc on deer season.

Life is tough if you're a deer. Considering all the predators, automobiles, hunters, and diseases out there waiting to do them in, it's a hazardous existence for our favorite big game animal. The latest hazard our Wisconsin deer herd has had to endure is a viral disease that kills quickly, Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease (EHD). This disease has affected nearby states to our south for a long time, but has only been detected in Wisconsin for about a decade or so.

EHD is a disease spread by a bite from an infected midge. Humans are not affected by it. Some deer do survive the disease but most die within a few weeks of being bitten by the midge carrier. Often, EHD stricken deer seek out ponds, creeks, rivers or any water source where they can immerse themselves to cool down from the fever associated with it. Lack of appetite, excessive salivation, rapid pulse and respiration rates are some of the other symptoms.

The water sources deer seek out for relief from fever often are the places where they die, too weak to move on. Since EHD is transmitted by a bite from a midge (a gnat-like bug), it only occurs until the first heavy frost that wipes out the carriers for that year. Those same midges lay their eggs in mud, over-wintering there to hatch the following year if conditions permit.

Favorable conditions for a successful hatch require the mud where they laid in to be moist and exposed, not underwater. Drought years exposing more shoreline to mud and years of fluctuating water levels from heavy rains offer the right conditions. In drought years, a deer's need to go to limited water sources expose them more to the midges hatching

grounds and puts them at a higher risk to come in contact with a midge carrying the EHD virus.

Thus far, only southern Wisconsin has been affected by EHD, but the disease is creeping northward. My hunting grounds in southern Wisconsin have been affected by the disease on a couple of occasions. This past year we experienced a bad outbreak where we seemed to be at the core of it. Deer that I had been monitoring all summer seemed to disappear at an alarming rate come mid-August to mid-September. These same deer began showing up dead from EHD at local water sources in alarming numbers. We also found them in crop fields once bow season began. Farmers discovered dead deer while harvesting as well.

EHD seems to be a hit and miss geographically. One side of a county can be hit hard while the other side escapes unscathed. EHD in my area had a definite impact on hunter success. Neighbors sharing information and a lack of gunfire during the rifle season confirmed what we, as a local hunting community, feared heading into the 2019 gun season. Deer numbers were way down from the previous year. Our gun party of seven hunters took a total of one shot for the entire season. We weren't alone, as others in the area experienced similar results.

An EHD outbreak is like having a pack of wolves move into your hunting ground. The next township over may not notice the impact, but you surely will. Deer numbers should recover if EHD doesn't reappear again soon. It's another example of how tough it is to be a deer.

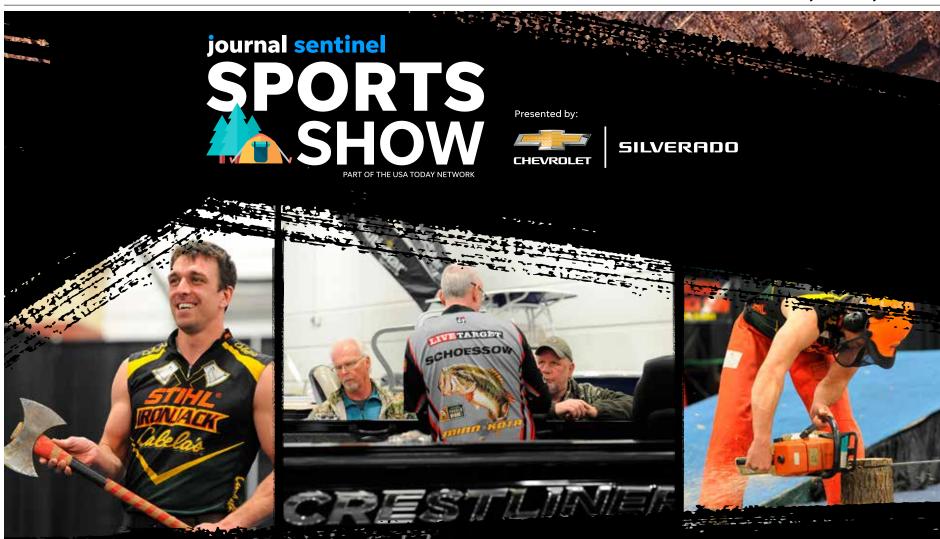
Lee Gatzke is co-owner of NextBuk Outdoors, producers of tactical hunting videos. In between hunting seasons he is usually scouting for his next buck.



Bones are all that remain of a buck that succumbed to EHD a month earlier.







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### **Fox Valley Retriever Club**

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**TOM MUELLER** 

## **Sit Means Sit** *Re-working obedience training*

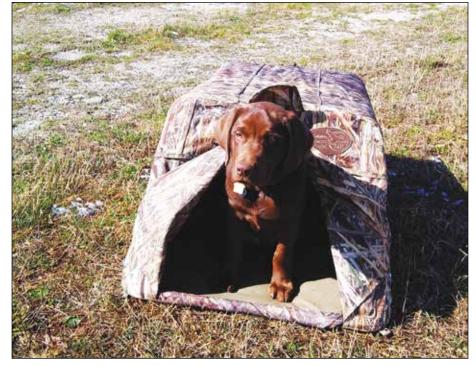
e all know that ducks and geese flying over hunters in a blind can easily spot the slightest movement. It really doesn't help when your already antsy retriever starts fidgeting at the sound of your call and makes a move to get ready for a possible retrieve. Obedience drilling in the off- season most likely will fix this issue.

What I see from time to time at the Fox Valley Retriever Club training sessions is that a dog is told to sit. While its owner is chatting with me or another member, at some point the dog gets up and starts wandering around sniffing the grass. The owner calls it back and tells it to sit again. The scenario is repeated a few more times and eventually the dog is given a correction to make it comply.

The same scenario happens when hunting, only things might be a little more intense in this hunting mode because the dog is charged up. The issue is that the dog has not been thoroughly conditioned to remain sitting. In order for retriever training to be effective, it must be done consistently. Repeating the obedience lessons over and over again for an extended period of time is the answer.

"Sit" is typically the first command a retriever pup is taught and it's usually taught using food as an incentive. A retriever pup learns quickly that the command "sit" means food. Eventually, once it's been determined that the pup understands the command, the treats come less frequently and eventually are given very infrequently or not at all. That is what is supposed to happen, but the reality is that the process of giving the dog a reward often times is not done for a long enough period of time. It becomes problematic for the owner to always make sure they have treats with them to reward the dog for a correct response.

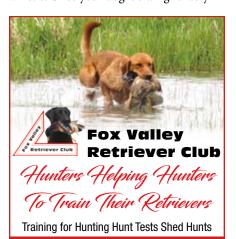
To remedy this, to start rewarding



Moose at eight months of age very comfortably working out of a dog blind on a slow duck hunting day.

the dog with a retrieve. Retrievers love retrieving as much as they love food. Once the dog has learned to sit on command using a food reward, switch to giving it a very short retrieve of a few feet. With the dog on a leash or a longer lead, have it sit and then show it the dummy. Then give the dog a very short retrieve and repeat the process over and over again. Soon the dog will sit automatically in anticipation of an expected retrieve.

Over time you can increase the length of time that you have the dog sit. Eventually follow the verbal sit command with a single whistle blast to teach it to sit on the whistle. Once your dog is sitting reliably



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for an extended period of time, blow on your duck call to rev up its excitement level. If your dog remains sitting, reward it with a retrieve. You can easily add a command to tell the dog to be motionless. Commands like "freeze" or "still" when added to its training will condition the dog to be motionless when ducks are looking your blind over.

Some waterfowl hunters have started using dog blinds to keep their dogs hidden. Conditioning your retriever to hunt from a dog blind can be accomplished following the same process. Use food rewards and a command such as "kennel" or "place" to condition it to enter and then stay in the blind. Once it has learned to stay in the blind, give it a short retrieve to reward it. When your dog associates going into and staying in the blind with getting a retrieve, it should quite eagerly enter the blind on command and be very comfortable staying in it for longer periods of time.

Tom has been avidly training retrievers since the early 1980s. His passion has evolved into helping others train their retrievers through the Fox Valley Retriever Club so they can achieve the satisfaction that he has had. For questions or information regarding retriever training or the Fox Valley Retriever Club contact Tom at winddancer.rtrvrs@hotmail.com



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#### **DICK ELLIS**

### **Simple Gifts**

### Micah's journey brings new appreciation to life

would have never thought that my old dog wagging his tail in greeting would become such a gift. But that early present arrived just before Christmas. We'll get to that...

Since September Micah, our 9-year old Golden Retriever, has been fighting Oral Fibrosarcoma and an invasive cancerous tumor destroying his mouth. Three consecutive days of radiation treatment in mid-October were complete. We could turn again to squeezing life for all it will give us until the inoperable cancer ultimately wins.

If there was any silver lining, treatment had landed on the calendar so that Micah and I could join hunting partners and their dogs wild pheasant hunting North Dakota, a trip planned before the cancer had reared its ugly head. After-effects of the radiation would most likely not appear for a week or two post-treatment, offering a window that would allow us to join the hunt.

Any day in the field, or any time anywhere in fact, would now be a precious

gift to be burned into the mind and remembered. Perspectives change. The thought never entered my head before the cancer, but Micah has slept on the floor next to our bed for 3,240 nights...give or take...in those 9 years. Lori and I have put down 7000 meals...give or take... as he sat patiently waiting with that head cocked and his tail slowly wagging in anticipation. Little wonder dogs are called family when they're here and rip a hole in your heart when they leave.

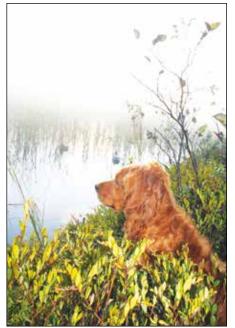
That tomorrow can wait. Good things come from bad, including appreciating what you have while you have it. I'm squeezing today for all it will give us.

So, we slipped into the window posttreatment and we traveled to North Dakota. Micah was on his game. He hunted the vast rolling grasslands with his experience from years in the field and his instincts running the show for the guns around him. I took in every turn-on with new scent of bird, every flush, every retrieve, every moment with a new perspective and appreciation.

We returned to Wisconsin and the effects of radiation hit Micah with an unexpected and devastating tenacity. The expectation from initial treatment was a week or two of oral discomfort. We understand that the goal of Stereotactic Radiation Treatment (SRS/SRT) is not a cure, but to damage the membranes and internal structure of cancer cells, shut off their blood supply, and extend Micah's quality of life for as long as possible.

Micah though, slipped into a lethargic, stroke-like stupor. He could barely walk, slept the large majority of each day, and his apparent loss of sight added to the ongoing internal debate of whether treatment was a good decision at all. Micah's eyes were vacant and lifeless and what my decision was doing to him ripped at me. His quality of life, after-all, pain free and without discomfort for as long as possible, had been my only motivator.

I turned from the facility which had delivered the SRS/SRT radiation (one of



Although it's not always easy to see what's ahead, the Ellis family hopes for more time with Micah in the New Year. This photo taken in October, 2019.

only two providers doing so in Wisconsin) and to an oncologist at Wisconsin Veterinary Referral Center (WVRC) in Waukesha who had offered direction when Micah was first diagnosed. At an appointment November 27, the oncologist diagnosed a forebrain lesion, or damage

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 35** 

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#### **SUZIE BOWER**

### **End of the Leash** The story of our passion

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n December of 1998 I left my veterinarian's office with the worst possible news. I found out that Emma, my seven-year-old Gordon Setter, had cancer.

The diagnosis was lung cancer; the prognosis was four months tops. When I asked the doctor what the treatment options were, his response was just to make her comfortable. "NOT ACCEPTABLE" was my only response.

I had adopted Emma when she was three and my twoyear-old Flat Coat Retriever, Bradley, had been with me since he was six months old. They were my "kids"—my

This was the start of a journey, one that would teach me that there are always options. Our pet's diet plays a huge role in his or her health. Pills and shots may be part of the solution, but not the only solution. Emma's quality of life became my passion! My research was endless. Diet, acupuncture, chiropractic, herbs, surgery—I used them all and provided Emma with the best life possible until she left me in May of 2000.

It is true that all of our pets are teachers on top of being the best companions we could ever know! Emma had taught me a very valuable lesson—that our pets' diets

directly affect their health and by giving them the proper food and care we can greatly extend their lives. So in those last 19 months (not four months!) of her life, Emma inspired an idea...a store for pets and their people stocked with all-natural foods, healthy treats, homeopathics, flower essences, supplements, unique collars, fun toys and lots of things for the pet lover.

On December 2, 2005 I opened End of the Leash—a store dedicated to Emma and all of the pets lucky enough to have a family that cares enough to give them the best quality of life imaginable!

I am so proud that Bradley was right by my side when I opened End of the Leash. He loved being at the store greeting customers and sampling treats with my five-yearold Gordon Setter, Maddie. Bradley passed away on April 1, 2006. He blessed me with his love and companionship for over 16 years!

After Bradley died there was never a doubt if I would add another dog—just how soon. So along came Sam, a rescue from Louisiana, and he is truly the clown of our operation! He can always make you smile; that and his "under the radar" hound dog intelligence are really a trip. He has really helped to remind me that it is possible to offer the best life possible to another pet just as deserving, even after the painful loss of a long-time pet of the family. All of those reasons we are afraid of are really the reasons why we should give a home to another deserving animal! Through all this, I am amazed that love without condition can come in so many different packages.

Emma had given me the knowledge and Bradley gave me the proof. He had proven that good food and holistic care do work, and while my heart is heavy he is the reason my passion continues to grow.

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Our PASSION is to help owners become aware of what is in pet food and help them choose foods that are all natural and nutritionally complete, and to encourage them to be proactive about their pet's health.

Thank you for stopping at End of the Leash! We welcome any questions or suggestions you may have! Share your stories and pictures of your pets—we learn from each

Susie, Joe, Molly, Sam and the Staff at End of the Leash



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#### PATTI MURACZEWSKI

### More than Just a Walk Popular new sports challenge dogs

Is your dog bored? Maybe becoming a bit destructive? Is your dog putting on some extra winter weight? According to current statistics, there are nearly 90 million dogs in the United States as pets. If you look at the top 10 breeds in popularity, according to the American Kennel Club, you will see the majority are sporting, herding or hound breeds.

Hmm. What is the point? Well, most pet owners are guilty of under exercising and mentally under stimulating their family dog. Well, it is just a dog, and shouldn't it be just happy to lay in front of a fire and chill? Most dogs have far more potential then limitations, but if that potential isn't tapped, the dog's abilities may never be known. Considering the number of service, emotional support and therapy dogs around us, I think we should recognize how important dogs are, whether we are dependent on a dog for a service, a hunting partner or just being our loyal companion.

Dog sports in the twenty first century have literally exploded. There is dock diving, scent-work, treibball, parkour and barn hunt, to name a few of the new activities. Don't we owe it to our dogs to challenge them in better ways than just a walk?

Let's look at the sport of barn hunt. It is said that if a dog would have invented a sport, it would have been barn hunt.

In this sport, the dog goes into a fenced area with bales of hay and the dog needs to find a tube with a rat. This might sound easy, but there are three tubes in the ring. One tube is empty, one is full of rat litter and one has a rat inside.

The owner will not know which tube has the rat and must rely on the dog to identify the right tube. Every level has a time limit in which the rat or rats, at the higher levels, need to be found. It is known that dogs have been rodent hunters for thousands of years, but now we can do it in a way the dog will have a chance to use its natural ability to hunt without the quarry being killed or injured. However, this is probably not the ending most dogs wish for.

Basically, there are two types of dogs when it comes to barn hunt: the one that has the natural desire and instinct to hunt and the other type that is trained to detect an odor and might find a rat disgusting. An instinctual-motivated dog may give a wonderful alert to its owner, which is how the owner knows to call "rat" to the judge. A dog that is truly hunting will scratch, dig, bite, pounce or bark at the tube. A dog trained to react to a certain odor will often be more subtle when it comes upon a rat, which makes it harder to read the dog's behavior. In addition, the dog must climb on a bale of hay and go through a tunnel.

At the highest level the dog and handler team get one

Barn Hunt is a sport for even small dogs



to five rats in the ring, but the handler doesn't know how many. If it is less than five rats, the owner must rely on the dog to indicate there are no more rats to be found before they time out.

All in all, barn hunt is a great deal of fun for all breeds! See our adjoining For Pet's Sake ad for more information or to connect directly with professional dog trainer Patti Muraczewski.

Patti Muraczewski, B.S., CPDT-KA, CABC. Patti has been training dogs for over 40 years. She has written for the national publication "Front and Finish Magazine" and the local magazine "Fetch." She trains her dogs in flyball, obedience, rally, treibball, scent work, lure coursing, parkour, agility and barn hunt. Patti also works with the service dog organization Dogs in Vest which trains service dogs for children with autism. She is a licensed presenter for Dogs in Storks and presents to new employees bi-weekly for the United State Postal Department on dog bite prevention.

## WE ARE HAVING A BALL AT For Pet's Sake Dog Training School

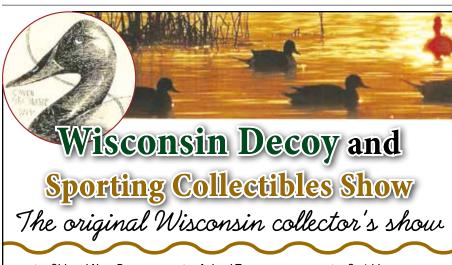


For pet dog skills, obedience, agility, flyball, rally, tricks, shy and reactive dog training, nose work, treibball, parkour, freestyle, carting, barn hunt and lure coursing. Multiple locations and inhome training.





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Roger Ludwig 920.233.0349 Cell Phone 920-428-3765 rogfuzz@charter.net

#### STRESING, FROM PAGE 6

expenses like getting married, a home, and raising and educating two sons got in the way. Dreams of fly fishing Alaska were put on hold.

Lucky for me, something else also happened in the 1960s. In 1966, Wisconsin began stocking Coho or Silver salmon to combat the alewife invasion of Lake Michigan. A few years later, they added another strain of Pacific salmon, the Chinook or King salmon. The stocking of Pacific salmon in Lake Michigan is one of the greatest success stories in the history of the Wisconsin DNR.

Fall salmon were making an annual spawning run in a stream about a half mile from my home in South Milwaukee. I picked up a 7 wt. Shakespeare fly rod for \$5 at a rummage sale and with the help of a few VHS tapes, I taught myself how to (sort of) fly cast. I added some yarn flies and polarized glasses from the local K-Mart, and used my small game hunting vest. Yarn eggs cast upstream to spawning fish worked. I actually ended up catching some salmon.

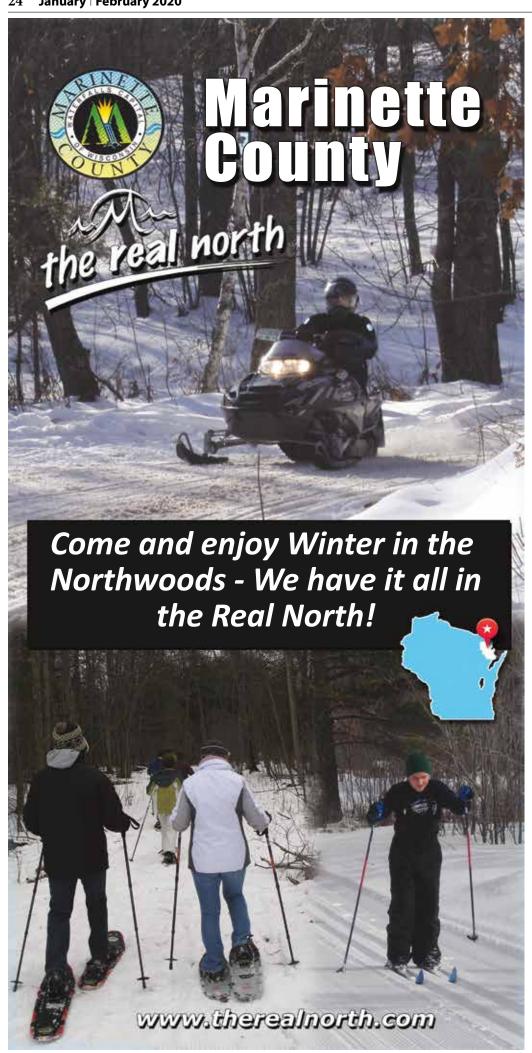
Yes, my South Milwaukee stream lacks some of the aesthetics of an Alaskan stream. Instead of soaring majestic bald eagles, we get filthy-looking seagulls and mallard ducks. I have to get to the gravel I want to fish about 30 minutes before first light to get my spot. Unlike the brown bears Alaskan anglers have to contend with, we have "anglers" who tend to land a treble hook in a salmon's side, drag it on shore, and extract the eggs with a linoleum knife. Some of them look like they could slap an average brown bear silly.

So have I given up on ever fishing Alaska? Nope. The last supervisor I worked for before retiring is moving to Alaska next year. He and his wife have already purchased a home on a river. Tom says once he gets established, he'll invite me up. The dream continues. W

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









### **Come Experience The Real North**

re you fond of the cold weather? Does snow make you look forward to getting outside? Do you enjoy the fun of snowmobile trails or the peace of swooshing through a quiet forest on skis or snowshoes? If you answered yes to any of these questions . . . consider Marinette County as your winter destination!

Snowmobile enthusiasts will find over 600 miles of wide, scenic, well-groomed and clearly marked snowmobile trails in Marinette County. The area snowmobile clubs work tirelessly to maintain the vast interconnected network of trails. You can travel on the County trail system from Oconto County to the UP of Michigan and northwest into Florence County – all the while enjoying miles of winding, tree-lined areas with rolling hills and open fields. Enjoy the breathtaking scenery and wildlife while experiencing snowmobiling in Marinette County.

Cross-country skiing and snowshoeing opportunities abound in Marinette County. Enthusiasts can blaze their own trails on over 235,000 acres of County Forest lands containing some of the most beautiful waterfalls and white water rapids in the state. There are groomed cross-country ski trails along the Peshtigo River at the Woods Road Ski Trail, the Peshtigo River State Forest and Gov. Thompson State Park just to name a few. Once you ski these trails nothing else will compare with the peaceful and beautiful experience Marinette County has to offer.

Visit Marinette County to enjoy great food, lodging and the warm hospitality that makes Marinette County a top winter destination. Come experience The Real North!



Marinette County Goodman Park – Strong Falls

### **Explore Wisconsin**

### SPOTLIGHT | ASHLAND

### Winter Magic on the Ice, Trails and City

inter in Ashland County had an early start with snow accumulation up to 25 inches in December. Snowmobile season is already in full swing throughout the county. With over 220 miles of groomed trails, snowmobiling the great outdoors here guarantees a fabulous ride with beautiful views. Many area hotels and motels offer easy access to the trail system, with some even allowing visitors to snowmobile right from their door onto major trails. The Tri-County Corridor is open from Superior to Ashland. For a current snowmobile report and licensing information, check out visitashland.com or call 715-682-2500.

From Madeline Island to Glidden; Ashland County winter fun rolls on in January and February! Book Across the Bay is a 10K cross country ski race and snow shoe trek on February 15 guided by luminary candle-lights. The event begins at Maslowski Beach in Ashland at 6 pm and ends at Thompson's West End Park with a heated tent, bon-fire, chili feed and great music in Washburn. Skiing or snowshoeing across Chequamegon Bay in the depth of winter? Now that's amazing! Check out batb.org.

The Wisconsin State Free Fishing Weekend, including no licenses required, will be held on January 18-19. Ice Fishing contests are scheduled for January 18 in Glidden at Clam Lake Elk Country ATV Club (Southern Ashland County); February 23 for the Annual Ice Fishing Contest on Lake Galilee in Mellon; and March 7 - 8 brings the Annual Ice-o-Rama on Lake Superior.

Ice fishing is a popular winter sport on Lake Superior/Chequamegon Bay for anglers looking to catch walleye, browns, splake, and coho. Always call ahead to the local bait shops before venturing out and be certain of ice thickness and take all safety precautions before any move. Inland lake panfishing is great this time of year too! If you aren't able to get out on the ice to catch fish, keep in mind our local restaurants are famous for landing a limit of delicious whitefish, herring, walleye, and trout . . . right from their menus to your plate. No bait required.

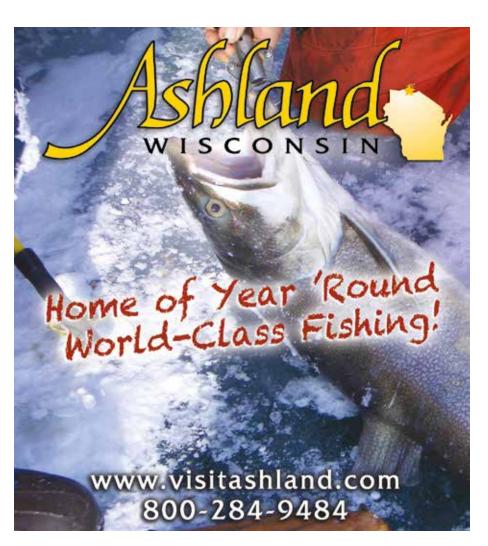
Ice fishing, snow shoeing, cross country/downhill skiing and snowmobiling continue to be part of the winter fun. For fair weather friends that like to stay inside, we offer the Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center, or simply drive around Ashland County and enjoy our murals!

Ashland Wisconsin, The Heart of Chequamegon Bay; Where you'll Find Yourself Next to the Water. For a new snowmobile map, visitor guide or Chequamegon Bay Fishing Brochure check out visitashland.com.





A lumberjack mural is part of the fascinating eight-block mural walk calling appreciative visitors.



**SPOTLIGHT | HAYWARD** 

### The ABCs of Winter Activities for Sawyer County Outdoor Enthusiasts

MERICAN BIRKEBEINER SKI RACE- More than 9,000 skiers and 15,000 spectators come to Hayward and Cable to experience the American Birkebeiner cross-country ski race February 20-23. The greatest show on snow is a four-day ski festival with events for every age and ability. The challenging 51K American Birkebeiner starts in Cable and ends on Main Street in Hayward. The American Birkebeiner International Bridge is an iconic centerpiece of the American Birkebeiner.

For a non-competitive race try the Birkie Tour on January 19, 2020. It is pure fun, plain and simple. It's a great way to experience the wonderful Birkie Trail system with family and friends. Birkie Tour skiers choose their own distance and pace, as well as park, start, and finish at the American Birkebeiner Trailhead. You can choose to ski 15, 26, or 46 kilometers,

all with the support of Worldloppet country themed aid stations along the trail. You'll be welcomed to Sweden, Norway and Italy with Blueberry Soup, Kringle, Biscotti and hot beverages served at aid stations along the way. Your entry includes a stainless steel carabiner mug to use throughout your ski. Plus, skiers will celebrate with an après ski celebration in the Great Hall with hot food, cold beverages, camaraderie, and guaranteed fun! The Birkie Tour is a perfect training day for Birkie, Korte, and Prince Haakon.

#### **BARKIE BIRKIE**

It's doggone fun. The Barkie Birkie is skijoring fun. Its roots are in Norway, where the word means "ski driving." It was originally a way to carry military dispatches. On February 20, 2020, eager dogs will pull skiers straight through Hayward's Historic Main Street.

### **CYCLE FUN**

Historically, once the snow began to fly, bicycles were put away in storage until spring. Fat biking is changing all that. These funny-looking bikes with oversized, wide-rimmed, balloon-like tires have transformed winter bike riding in Northern Wisconsin and are gaining traction nationwide. On March 7, 2020, one thousand fat bikers from all points north, south, east and west, will descend

upon Hayward and take to the Birkie Trail to test their expertise and skill. While normally groomed exclusively for cross-country skiers, the Birkie Trail is open to fat bikers.

**Explore Wisconsin** 

In winter, whether riding groomed single-track trails, skijoring or gliding across frozen lakes or fresh powder, winter fun in Hayward provides a whole new twist for winter adventurers.



Hayward and Sawyer County offer sports of all kinds for those who like to participate, like fat tire winter biking or snowmobiling, or simply watch and cheer, like the great American Birkebeiner Ski Race.



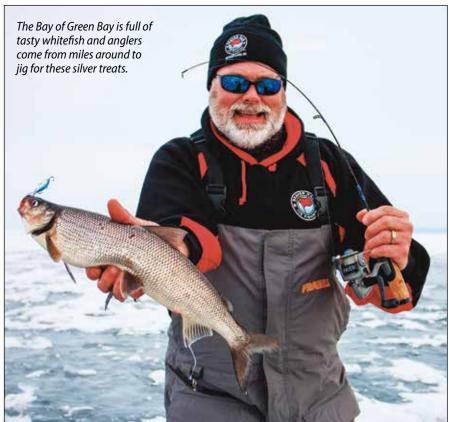


### SPOTLIGHT | ALGOMA

### **Winter Wonderland Awakens**

agic seems to happen on the lakeshore when Mother Nature blows from the North with the chilling winds and snow showers, leaving a whisking, fog-like pattern covering the roadways. Ah, yes, winter at its finest. Snow drifts, iced-over lakes and barren, leafless trees leave the countryside with a special kind of clean-looking beauty. To the outdoors enthusiast, this is what we wait for: snow covered trails for cross country skiing, snowshoeing and snowmobiling and frozen lakes and ponds for ice fishing.

The Algoma area has all of that and then some. The Ahnapee Trail connects Algoma to Casco, Kewaunee and Sturgeon Bay and offers over 50 miles of perfectly groomed snowmobile trails that also connect to hundreds of additional miles of trails that wind through Kewaunee and Southern Door Counties. Cross country skiers also enjoy the groomed snowmobile trails as well as the many local county and city parks available to them.



Looking to Explore Wisconsin?
Check out ONWISCONSINOUTOORS.COM

There is something special about the quiet time spent ice fishing; sitting over an eight-inch-hole, precision cut through two feet of solid ice and waiting patiently for a hungry fish to take your bait on the end of a three-foot ice rod and reel. It is a magical moment when that trout or walleye pokes its head into the hole and comes to the surface to present itself to the angler tugging at the other end of the line. Whether bucket sitting outside in the elements or in a wood fire stoked ice shack, ice fishing in the Algoma area is more than a past-time, and more like an obsession for most avid anglers.



**Explore Wisconsin** 

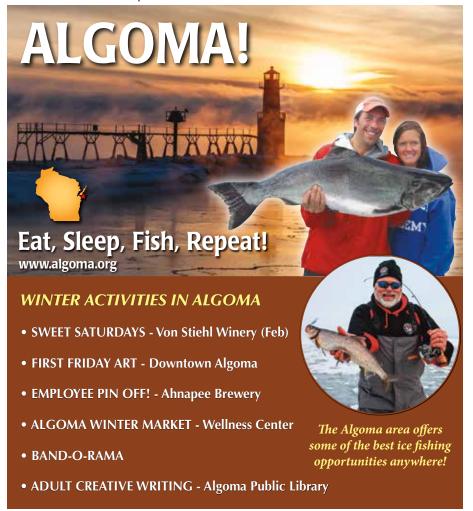
Miles and miles of groomed snow-covered trails for snowmobilers and cross country skiers to enjoy.

Experience for yourself the great fishery

Lake Michigan has to offer. And if you want BIG fish, check out Algoma! For charter information or fishing reports, visit my website at: www.FishAlgoma.com or call 1-888-966-3474.

From Capt. Lee and the crew aboard the Grand Illusion 2, good luck and good fishing!

Capt. Lee Haasch is a charter captain out of Algoma. Capt. Lee has over 40 years of Great Lakes angling experience and has been instructing anglers for over 30 years with education seminars and timely freelance articles in outdoor publications.



#### SPOTLIGHT PORT WASHINGTON, FROM PAGE 14

Back in the heart of town, you can park your car and simply walk and enjoy. Visit our specialty shops, galleries, and fun boutiques. Looking for specialty foods? Check out an old-fashioned butcher shop and a smoked fish market, a gourmet popcorn store, our decadent chocolate and ice cream shop, a winery, tea room, or an artisan bakery.

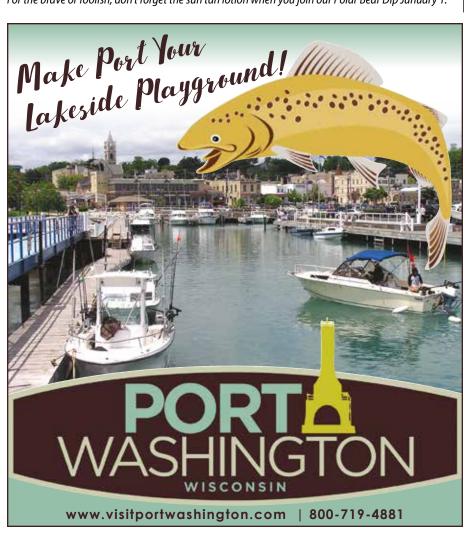
Then stop in and warm up at any of our great restaurants, coffee shops, or pubs, including our new brewpub. Make sure you don't miss the Port Exploreum; a highly interactive museum that will appeal to the whole family. Learn about Lake Michigan, fishing, our local history – all delivered in an atmosphere of pure fun.

Our lodging establishments will provide you with that perfectly cozy place and accommodating place to spend the night after your outdoor activities. Spend winter how you like it! We're close enough to be convenient – but what a great getaway!

Contact the Port Washington Tourism at 1-800-719-4881, log on to visitportwashington.com, or find us on Facebook, for more information.



For the brave or foolish, don't forget the sun tan lotion when you join our Polar Bear Dip January 1.



### **Explore Wisconsin**

### SPOTLIGHT | LACROSSE

### **Upper Mississippi Fishing**

pools which harbor more species of fish than any other temperate-climate river in the world. Walleye is king in these waters, but you can catch just about anything here: Sauger, Northern Pike, Shovelhead Sturgeon, Large and Smallmouth Bass, Perch, Sunfish, Bluegill, Crappie, Gar, Channel and Blue Catfish, to name a few. The Mississippi opens into the 8,000+ acre Lake Onalaska, which is chock-full of Panfish, Northern, and Bass. Another popular panfish destination is Lake Neshonoc, a relatively shallow spot located in West Salem, WI. The area also offers a myriad of cold-water streams abundant with Brown, Rainbow, and Brook Trout.



Springtime anglers turn their eyes to Walleye. As waters warm, Panfish action starts picking up, particularly in the flats and backwaters of the Black

River, Mississippi River, and Lake Onalaska, which tend to warm faster than the moving waters near the river's channel.



Bass are the best catch during late spring and early summer. Both Largemouth and Smallmouth can be found in the river systems. Look for Smallmouth in the main river channels and Largemouth Bass in the shallow backwaters. Fishing for Catfish during the warmest months of the year can be an exciting affair, with both Channel Cats and Flatheads providing action.

#### Winter

Walleye begin to move again and, while the fall Walleye run tends to be less lively than in the spring, they tend to be more predictable and can provide steady fishing. The first areas to catch the attention of ice anglers are the backwaters. Then, as ice creeps out from the shores of Lake Onalaska, so do ice anglers looking for some of the best panfishing of the

### **2020 FISHING EVENTS**

The Upper Mississippi River is known as one of the best bass fisheries in the country, annually hosting major tournaments and showing off big bags!

Atomic Ice Fishing Derby	January 25
Brice Prairie Ice Fishing Derby	February 1
North American Ice Fishing Circuit	February 22-23
FLW Bass Fishing League	April 25
FLW College Open	May 30
FLW HS Open	May 31
TBF HS Fishing World Championships	June 24-27
Hobie B.O.S.	July 11
FLW Bass Fishing League	July 18
WISCO BASS Series	July 19
BASS Nation Kayak Series	Aug 15
FLW Bass Fishing League	September 19-20
FLW BFL Regional Championship	October 15-17







Discover the individual styles expressed at 13 of the area's best breweries, wineries and distilleries.

Set out on your adventure by visiting each of the locations, stamping the map at each to enter into a drawing for a spectacular Beer, Wine and Cheese Festival vacation!

Find the map at explorelacrosse.com



### BREWERIES

#### 608 Brewing Co.

83 Copeland Ave, La Crosse, WI

### **Turtle Stack Brewery**

125 2nd St S, La Crosse, WI

### **Pearl Street Brewery**

1401 St Andrew St, La Crosse, WI

### **Skeleton Crew Brew**

570 Theater Rd, Onalaska, WI

### WINERIES

### **Garvin Heights Vineyard**

2255 Garvin Heights Rd, Winona, MN

#### **Elmaro Vineyard**

N14756 Delaney Rd, Trempealeau, WI

### **Tenba Ridge Winery**

N27587 Joe Coulee Rd, Blair, WI

### **Brambleberry Winery**

N3684 Claire Rd, Taylor, WI

#### **Riverview Vineyard & Winery**

32882 Cty Hwy 1, La Crescent, MN

#### **DnA Vintners**

1223 Caledonia St, La Crosse, WI

#### **Branches Winery**

E6796 Old Line Rd., Westby, WI

### **Lost Island Wine**

570 Theater Rd, Onalaska, WI

### DISTILLERY

La Crosse Distilling Co. 129 Vine St, La Crosse, WI

LA CROSSE



### Presents Firearms Info from Ron Stresing

### **RON STRESING**

## **.410 Bore Shotguns** *Better than ever*

Brief history: The .410 shotgun shells we know today started out as a 2-inch pinfire cartridge back in 1857. It was one of several "garden gun" sub-calibers of shotgun in England used to control pests and take small game at close range. It gained in popularity, and by 1874, .410 bore ammunition was commercially available in center fire-primed shells in 2 inch and 2 ½ inch. It was not only a hit in England, but was soon popular all over Continental Europe. Belgium produced and exported thousands of inexpensive single and double barrel folding .410 shotguns that were commonly called "poacher's guns."

Although popular in Europe, there were no American made .410 shotguns until 1915. H&R was the first to chamber its iconic single-shots in .410. Winchester introduced a 3-inch shell in 1933, giving the sub-caliber gun a larger shot charge and more range. A .410 bore shotgun is the perfect training tool for introducing a young shooter to the world of shotgunning. I learned hunting and wing shooting on a .410 given to me at age 12, and started my son

Adam out with the same gun. It's also a light, fast handling tool for a skilled hunter to harvest small game at close range, including quail, wood cock, grouse, doves, rabbits and squirrels. The .410's only drawback is the cost and limited choices of available .410 ammunition. Winchester does produce a steel non-toxic .410 load and Bismuth shells are available.

Today's .410 shotguns are available with features many of the older models never had, like choke tubes and nicer wood, fit, and finish. Most older .410s seemed to be all fixed full choked economy model guns. Today's .410s are available in both target shooting skeet or clays versions and hunting guns. For example, SKB Shotguns makes the Model 250 and 200 Field and Target side-by-side shotguns that weigh six pounds or less. Both feature choke tubes, and a choice of 26- or 28-inch barrels. SKB's 690 field over/ under is available as a .410 and as an accessory set of .410 bore barrels for a larger gauge gun.





These SKB Shotgun over-under and side-by-side models are also available in .410.





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\*Coupon code cannot be combined with any other offers. Valid for retail customers only. Not valid on previous orders.

#### STRESING, FROM PAGE 30

Hunting with a .410: I took my first squirrel, rabbit and grouse all with a .410 shotgun. Later, wood cock, pheasants and even a few ducks fell to the little gun. It's hard to imagine a shotgun better suited to the task of quail or wood cock hunted over pointing dogs than a lightweight .410 side by side. It's also a great choice for squirrel hunters who sit near oak trees or rabbit hunters who kick brush piles. The lightweight shot charge allows the clean harvest of small game with minimal meat damage and no felt recoil. In the past when I hunted with mine, all I used were 3-inch shells loaded with 5 or 6 shot. Just remember to keep the range under 30 yards or so. That said, my son Adam dropped a passing barn pigeon with mine using 5 shot at an honest 40 yards. If I were shooting doves or barn pigeons over decoys, I'd switch to 3-inch loads of 7 1/2 shot. 🎾

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.

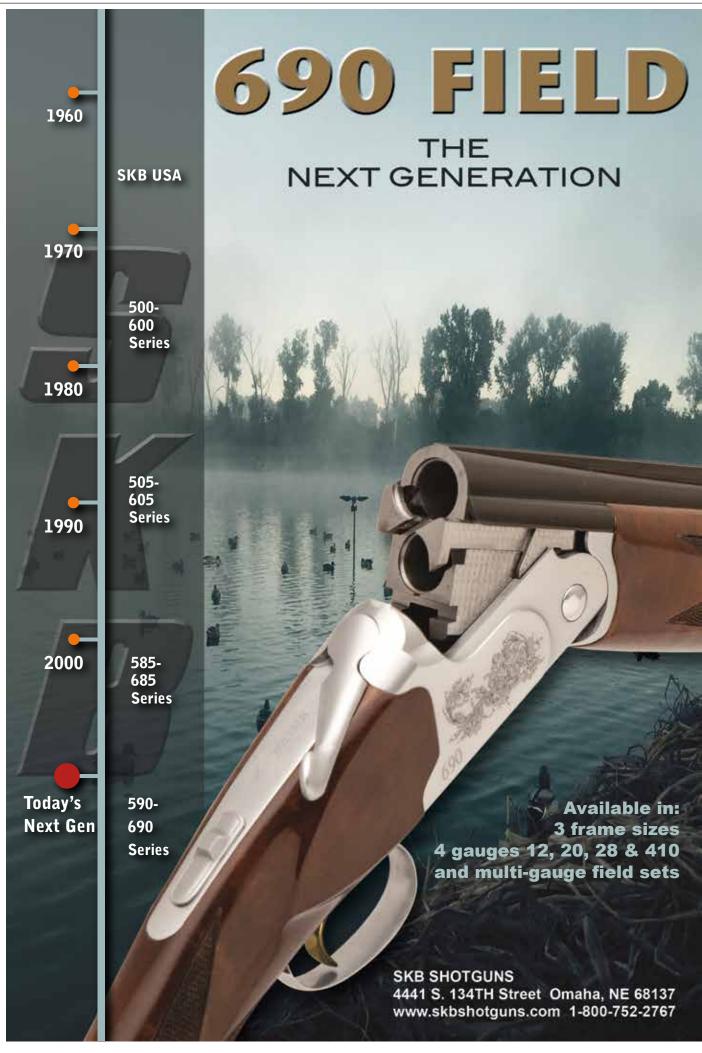
#### MOERICKE, FROM PAGE 15

As far as the ugly column goes, the only thing I could think of is the 13+ inches of heavy, wet snow that fell on our section of the Northwoods on Wednesday morning. Just getting to the woods suddenly became almost impossible and power outages took days to repair.

So there you have it. After over fifty years in the deer woods, it's all still mostly positive and the passion for the hunt still burns brightly. This winter I'll be enjoying my Nicolet venison and, with any luck, we'll do it all over again next year. Just sayin'.

Dan Moericke lives, fishes, and hunts in the Northwoods, occasionally actually catching a fish and tagging a buck. He is fortunate to have an understanding wife and a great group of buddies to share his days afield. On most days, he is able to remember where he parked his vehicle.

Looking for SOMETHING TO DO? Check out ONWISCONSINOUTOORS.COM!





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414.545.3323 | www.shortysshootingsports.com

### **STUART WILKE**

## **Surplus Firearms at Shorty's** *Wide selection available at reasonable prices*

horty's Shooting Sports in West Allis has one of the most extensive selections of military surplus collectible firearms for sale in southeast Wisconsin. Representative long rifles and handguns from many of the world's armed conflicts spanning over 150 years are available at fair prices. Examples include a World War I Smith and Wesson .45 caliber Model 17 revolver, a Yugoslavian M48 (quite possibly) from the Bosnian Civil War, World War II-vintage Model 91/30 Mosin-Nagants and U.S. M1 Carbines, to name just a few.

Despite their diversity, all share one common trait: none are in less than good condition. Some may display finish wear, but none of the samples I examined had shot-out bores, missing or broken parts, or major stock repairs.

Mike "Shorty" Govas, owner of Shorty's Shooting Sports, lays no claim to being a military surplus firearms' expert. "But I know someone who is and he's a regular here," he noted. That someone is consultant John "Mr. Mauser" Lathrop. As his nickname implies, he is especially enthusiastic about Mauser rifles.

John, a full-time firefighter, has collected military arms for decades. He is a Civilian Marksmanship (CMP) master instructor and successfully

competes in CMP rifle matches across the country. John and teammate Keith Weller recently placed seventh out of nearly 250 competitors in the twoman vintage sniper competition at the prestigious Camp Perry Matches. John and Keith used a Swedish Mauser Model 41 scoped sniper rifle in the event. Other credentials include membership in three rifle clubs, including Schultz's, Daniel Boone and Racine. John hosts military rifle seminars and events at these clubs, including military surplus rifle shooting competitions.

There are a number of good reasons to own military surpluse firearms. First and foremost, perhaps, is that they are a tangible, generally affordable, link to some of the most important epochs in history. A 1940 dated Mauser 98K rebuilt in a Soviet armory after the Second Word War may very well have seen action in the Battle of Stalingrad. A Yugoslavian Model 48 with a carved-up stock may not look particularly attractive, but the person who did the carving may have used it in the Bosnian Civil War, the bloodiest European armed conflict since World War II.

In addition to their link to history, military surplus rifles possess other worthy attributes. "Where else can you invest your money into a hobby, safely double your investment in 20 years and enjoy it while it adds to your portfolio? Or just appreciate it for what it is and pass it down as an heirloom," John said.

Interest in collecting and investing in military surplus arms shows no sign of slowing down. John noted that younger people, particularly "Call of Duty" and similar digital game enthusiasts, are swelling the ranks of military surplus shooters. "They play the games and start thinking what it would be like to shoot the real thing," John said. "Next thing you know, they're shopping for an M1 Garand and studying World War II history."

Asked to read the tea leaves and predict what military surplus rifles will continue to appeal to collectors and investors, John didn't hesitate to respond. "American military rifles are the best investment. Trapdoor Springfields, Krags, Garands, 03A3s and others will continue to increase in value. And you can shoot them. Ammunition is still available, and if it isn't, you can load your own cartridges."

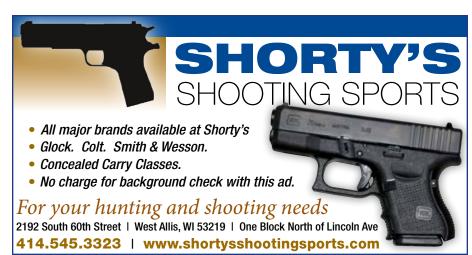
Interested in military surplus firearms? Visit Shorty's and take a look at his inventory. If you're looking for expert advice on them, Shorty asks that you call first regarding John's availability. Unlike some dealers, Shorty is interested in purchasing unmolested, original surplus firearms. "If you're interested in selling, you need to call first and make an appointment with John so he can look at it and make an honest assessment," Shorty said.

Contact Shorty's Shooting Sports at (414) 545-3323.

Stuart Wilke is a long-time contributor to On Wisconsin Outdoors. Contact him at mail.onwisconsinoutdoors.com. He would especially like to hear your ideas for future articles.







### **ELIJAH JAHNS**

### **MJ Gunsmithing**

### After hunting firearms care

ith hunting season wrapping up in Wisconsin, it's time to prepare your rifle or shotgun for storage till next year. A lot of things can happen to your firearm in the field. Dirt and water can cause a lot of damage if left in your firearm. Also, the possibility of dropping your firearm can cause damage to your rifle and your scope.

Here are a few things to look for and to do before you store your rifle for next year:

With all the rain we had this year, it is a good possibility that water got somewhere in or on your firearm. Removing your action from the stock and cleaning it can prevent rust. Cleaning your bore thoroughly can also keep rust from ever forming. One thing that I see a lot is rust under scope bases. Moisture can get trapped under your bases and cause bad pitting. At MJ Gunsmithing we offer a DCOA (disassemble, clean, oil, assemble) for \$60. We completely disassemble your firearm and clean it. We can remove dirt from places that you are unable to. After we clean it, we can wipe it down with **Rusteprufe**. This is a great product that leaves a thin layer of oil on the firearm and prevents rust from forming.

Depending on where and how you hunt, dirt and debris can get inside of your firearm. We had a rifle come in recently that had parts of the swamp inside of it. Small sticks, reed bits and grass can get inside and cause jams which can seize your trigger up. Getting a good cleaning can fix these problems and often fix cycling issues.

If you dropped or bumped your scope, it can cause some problems. No one wants to miss or wound a deer. Taking care of your optics is crucial. You should make sure your scope bases and mounts are tight and torqued to spec. Make sure your crosshairs are level and not damaged. If you did drop your gun, you should make sure your scope still tracks correctly. At MJ Gunsmithing we mount and boresight scope for \$30. We can check your rings and bases and put a bore sight on your rifle to make sure your scope still tracks correctly

Doing these things can make your rifle last longer and prevent future problems. It can also save you some stress of dealing with it right before hunting next year.

Elijah Jahns is Head Gunsmith at MJ Gunsmithing,

**SPOTLIGHT | WASHBURN COUNTY** 



### **Sledding Scenic Wisconsin**

ashburn County boasts some of the most scenic snowmobiling in the state. Over 240 miles of groomed trails wind through public forests and across private land covering literally hundreds of thousands of acres. Washburn County is unmatched for wilderness sledding that is close to lodging and amenities.

Our local trails link to the largest network of snowmobile trails in the Midwest. Hardworking local snowmobile clubs have developed a top-notch trail system that crosses public and private lands, lakes, streams and bridges. The varied terrain includes hardwood and evergreen forests, wetlands and farm fields. You'll see towering pines, rolling hills and deep valleys.

With the early season snow, it's shaping up to be a great season so don't wait to plan your trip to Washburn County. For trail conditions or to order your free trail map, visit WashburnCounty.org or call (800) 367-3306.



More than 240 miles of groomed trails wait for you in Washburn County.



### **SUZETTE CURTIS**

### Recipes with Suzette Venison for breakfast



Breakfast is a favorite meal at our house. Every Sunday morning we have buckwheat pancakes with sausage or bacon, and my husband never tires of the routine. If we are lucky enough to share breakfast any other day of the week, we usually have eggs with "something." These are a few breakfast (or anytime) recipes in which venison is part of the "something." Enjoy!

#### **Venison Hash**

- 2 T olive oil
- 2 cups cooked venison meat (leftover roast works well)
- 1 medium onion, finely diced
- 1 cup red potato, finely diced
- Salt & Pepper to taste

Eggs

#### **Hot Sauce**

Heat oil in cast iron skillet over medium heat. Add venison meat and fry until browned and slightly crisp. Remove meat from pan with a slotted spoon and set aside.

Place onion and potato in skillet; sprinkle with salt and pepper and add more oil if needed. Cook, stirring occasionally until potatoes are crisp and tender.

Fold meat into vegetable mixture. Crack eggs over top and place skillet in an oven at 400 degrees until eggs are done to your like. Serve with hot sauce on the side.

#### **Ground Venison Breakfast Burritos**

1 ½ pounds ground venison

1 small onion, finely chopped

2 - 3 teaspoons chili powder (as desired)

½ teaspoon cumin

2 T roasted red peppers (jarred work perfectly), chopped

4 eggs

2 T milk

1 teaspoon cilantro

1/4 teaspoon salt

½ cup shredded cheddar

cheese

4 flour tortillas

Salsa

Avocado, sliced

Brown ground venison and onions in small amount of canola oil in a skillet over medium heat. Sprinkle with chili powder and cumin while cooking. Once onions are translucent, add the roasted red peppers and cook for one minute. Remove meat mixture from pan and set aside; keep warm.

In small bowl, whisk together eggs, milk, cilantro and salt. Add to hot skillet and scramble egg mixture. Once eggs are set, blend in meat mixture and cheese. Cook for 1 to 2 minutes until cheese starts to melt.

Spoon burrito filling across the middle of each tortilla. Fold in each end and then roll the sides. Serve with salsa and sliced avocado.

#### **Venison Egg Muffins**

3 English muffins, split

Butter

Cooked venison steak, sliced thinly (Great for leftovers from the night before)

6 eggs

½ cup shredded cheese (I prefer Swiss, but any cheese of choice will do)

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Liberally spray a six count jumbo muffin pan with cooking spray.

Spread butter on each half of English muffins. Squish one half English muffin down into each of the muffin openings. Top with sliced venison steak. Crack an egg into each muffin slot (being careful not to break the yoke) and sprinkle with cheese.

Bake 15 to 20 minutes until eggs are set to your liking.

Remove from pan and serve immediately. V

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. Contact her at recipesbysuzette@onwisconsinoutdoors.com.



One of many activities the author recommends to help get the kids outside, shed hunting starts in winter.

### **JERRY DAVIS**

## The Gifts of Winter New season opens new world

The first several months of 2020 can be dull compared to the past autumn's hunting, fishing and hiking. Weather is sometimes unpleasant. Fishing and hunting are not the best because game are in winter mode.

Instead of wasting several months waiting for spring, try spicing up what may now seem to be mundane activities by adding something new, different, exciting, and even educational to fishing, hunting, wildlife viewing, and roadside observations.

Take winter in smaller bites; activities don't have to be all-day affairs.

Winter panfishing often means ice, snow and a slow fish bite. Most of the fish are still there, but maybe not as active, hungry and fighting mad when caught.

Ever hear of goldenrod galls flies? A tiny insect, goldenrod gall fly over-winters as larvae in a swollen section of goldenrod stems. They stay there until a bird finds them or an angler snaps off the stem and buckets them for future use as panfish bait. If neither of these happens, they pupate inside the gall and then emerge as an adult fly. Try some brisk walks through prairies and other grassland areas; learn to recognize the winter goldenrod and look for the galls. They're easy to spot. Harvest several hundred, put them in a pail, store them in an unheated garage and grab a handful next trip out onto the ice. Open a gall as needed, take out the larva and hook a couple on a panfish jig.

Bird feeding and photography are fun and interesting winter pastimes. Most feeders are only made to attract small birds, but if you live in a rural environment, a road side carcass will attract much larger birds, including bald eagles. Whether you're taking pictures through a window in the comfort of your own home, or out in the wild, for best results, stay out of sight and keep your movements to a minimum. Birds such as eagles and hawks have phenomenal eyesight and spook easily.

Hunting for deer or elk shed antlers will help keep you physically and mentally in shape and they are far more worthwhile endeavors than staying indoors and surfing the internet. Calling turkeys and coyotes in preparation for hunting season or simply for the sake of calling them to where you can see them is a much better use of time, than, say, "Watching Family Feud" reruns.

Take an ordinary activity, like hiking and photography, and add a winter-twist to it. Chances are, you will learn something and enjoy it while you do.

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

#### ELLIS, FROM PAGE 20

to the brain tissues. When radiation therapy to the brain occurs, she wrote, swelling of the brain can occur due to edema (fluid) accumulation. "Micah was dull, confused, disoriented, propulsive hyperactive and wandered aimlessly. He frequently got stuck behind furniture and would press his head into a corner. He was unable to see out of his right eye."

She prescribed supportive care and medications including prednisone, a steroid to pull the fluid out of the brain along with antibiotics and pain medication. A return appointment with the oncologist December 9 to reassess potential progress of his neurological signs since prescribing the supportive medications offered hope again, and verified progress Lori and I were seeing at home.

"Thankfully upon physical examination Micah's vitals were normal and his neurological status is much improved," she wrote in summary. "He can also see out of his right eye."

Despite the significant improvement, I continued to look for the characteristics that make Micah our dog; most heart-wrenching had been no tail wagging or low whining in greeting us even after short separations. When Micah and I were left alone, I confessed to Lori later, I would gently wag his tail back and forth as I softly told him he was the greatest dog God had ever given a man...or some other nonsense like it. Could manipulating muscle memory help? Who knew? But I knew I would try. I also knew I hoped none of my tough buddies walked in caught me wagging Micah's tail. Actually, they love Mike too, especially the hunters, and if they did walk in, would no



Lori Ellis bonds with Micah early in life. The ties that bind continue nine years later.

doubt have asked for a shift on the tail-wagging wagon.

The gift came a few days before Christmas. Lori came through the door after another day of teaching her first graders, and was greeted by Micah, complete with his tail wagging and low whine. Later, like all Christmases, he would burrow under the tree and emerge with his presents wrapped by Lori, with small slices in the plastic corners snipped to allow the aroma of the treats inside to entice her dog.

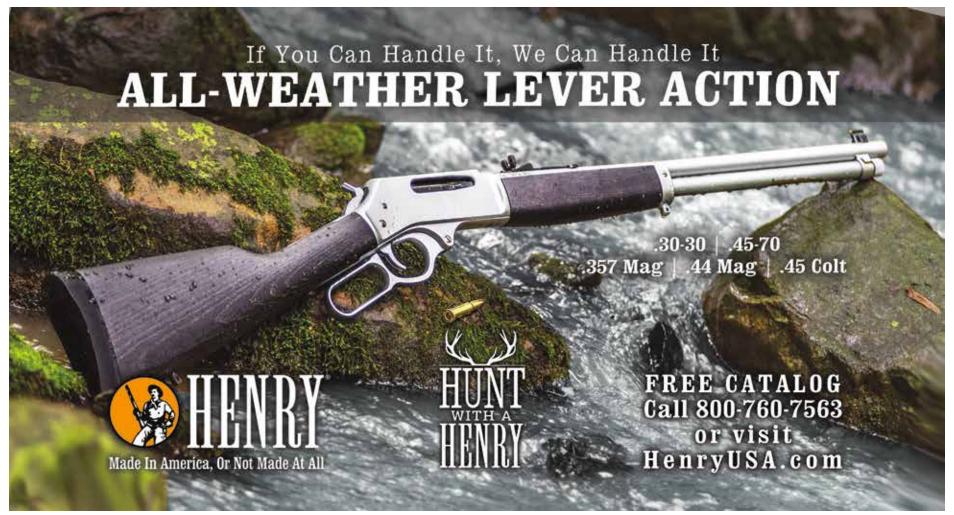
Still later, Micah would turn in the breeze and face me, asking from his ready and oh-so-familiar and frozen posture, with one front foot tucked up and under and head held low, for a retrieve of the "dummy" I held in my hand. Like old times, Micah locked on the "bird" as it tumbled over the peak of the roof to the woods, waiting intently for the crashing sound of distant branches before moving to the retrieve.

I moved too like a kid again, to the backyard to watch his birdie behavior and claiming of the prize for the first time in too long. And finally yesterday, Micah tracked, flushed and retrieved two roosters at Wern Valley in Waukesha.

Life's simple gifts are among the best.

Christmas has come and gone. We hope Micah is with us again next year. We know he may not be. But here is my wish. May your new year, for your family and for other people and things that you love, be filled with blessings large and small. Most of all, may you find true appreciation for what you have, or have had.

Healthy New Year. Thank you for reading On Wisconsin Outdoors.



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