



# On Wisconsin Outdoors

With the Dick Ellis Experts

## Buried Treasure Revealed

*Uncovering the secrets of the Stevens Point Flowage*

By Dick Ellis



*Guide Kenny Wallock knows the hiding places of gamefish and panfish much better on the Stevens Point Flowage after a nine-foot drawdown of the river in 2008 enabled him to record hundreds of pieces of structure on GPS not seen for 100 years. (Ellis)*

A prime Wisconsin fishery cuts through the heart of Wisconsin on a lazy journey north and south near Stevens Point. From dam to dam, the river system here meanders 12 miles, is shrouded with the beauty and isolated cover of the north country and painted with the sand bars and sloughs that surrender the gamut of game fish that Wisconsin is known for. Under scrutiny of wading herons and waterfowl, the savvy angler can take it all on these 4500 acres; from musky to walleye, from cats to panfish. Guide Kenny Wallock and local fisherman Bob Jakusz frequently do, often, like on this summer morning, from

Wallock's pontoon boat.

From the perspective of a fisherman, treasure lies beneath the water on this Stevens Point Flowage hidden from man since completion of the dam in the early 20th century; rock, wood, and man-made structure from the industrial work here not seen since the river was last lowered 90 years ago. Oh, to know exactly where that clutter lies, to see it not with electronics but with the naked eye for just a day or two, and to imagine where that jig and minnow could drop. These treasures hold fish.

Wallock and Jakusz didn't have to imagine. When the New Page Mill announced a river drawdown in 2008 to repair a deteriorating sea wall, the treasure would be revealed. Unlike the masses that received the news and looked forward to a rare opportunity to simply enjoy the historic unveiling fleetingly, Wallock and Jakusz schemed to lock the knowledge away forever. Capturing the secrets would take maps, cameras, GPS, a lion's share of planning and ingenuity, and ultimately ... a helicopter. But the results would give the lifelong anglers and professional guides Wallock and partner Dave Kinney a unique advantage on the water when the river became the river again.

"We could go back and locate structure," Wallock said.



*Umbrella stumps hidden on the Wisconsin River since the turn of the last century are exposed in 2008 with the drawdown of the Stevens Point Flowage for repairs on a sea wall. More than 400 pieces of structure were recorded on GPS by anglers Kenny Wallock and Bob Jakusz during the short window opportunity to improve fishing when the river became the river again. (Kenny Wallock Guide Service)*



*171 logging cribs hidden on the Wisconsin River since the turn of the last century are exposed in 2008 with the drawdown of the Stevens Point Flowage for repairs on a sea wall. (Kenny Wallock Guide Service)*

“Ninety percent of the fish in the river never see a lure. Everyone has six or eight spots they fish and ride right over the structure they never knew was there. You know what they say, when you’re fishing from shore, you try to throw it out in the lake as far as you can. When you’re fishing from a boat, you try to hit the shore.”

When the water was drawn down in August of 2008 the river fell from 16 feet to approximately seven, exposing 40 to 50 yards of river bottom not seen in decades. Although the water depth could still easily sustain boat travel, boat landings would not be open to the public. Inquisitive visitors made plans to walk the exposed bottom to explore, or readied their canoes and kayaks. Bob Jakusz made other plans.

The night prior to the draw-down August 14, Jakusz anchored his boat in the middle of the Wisconsin River in front of his business establishment, Club 10. With a rope in tow, he swam to shore, tied the rope to his dock, and with the water lowered nine feet over two days pulled the boat to the now much-wider shore. Where the masses were limited to foot travel on the exposed river bed or paddle power, Wallock and Jakusz, and his brother Kent Jakusz would use outboard motor to cruise the flowage. Armed with video camera, digital camera, and a hand-held GPS, they set out to record history.

“It felt like I was in heaven,” Jakusz said. “I had to see what was here since long before my own childhood. You had to see it to believe it. There’s not a guide in the state who’s had the opportunity like Kenny to see their own body of water without the water. Electronics are awesome, but it’s nothing like the naked eye.”

The community also took advantage of the short window to clean the river and improve the fishery. Glass and junk were removed while the few stranded gamefish were helped to water and stranded

carp targeted for mass removal. “It was a real neat cooperative thing,” Wallock said. “A big thanks to all the people that helped with the fish rescue, boat landing improvements, garbage pick-up and all the local fishing clubs and members that were out there for the 10-day drawdown. The community cares about this wonderful river and it showed. Some people were angry with the mill for doing this. Draining water would kill some sport fish. But the fish had an uncanny ability to swim upstream as the water lowered.”

“There were dumpsters set for carp removal,” Jakusz said. “But they were the smartest. They swim on the bottom and moved with the flow.”

Hundreds of pieces of structure previously unknown were numbered and recorded via GPS for later recall when the water was again let in over 10 days and it was time to fish. 252 pieces of structure and 172 man-made logging cribs were entered dating to the logging industry before the turn of the last century, including underwater fences, natural rock, and rusted metal or steel debris discarded over the years.

Old structure took on new numerical labeling and were assigned nick-names like Bahama Humps, 10-Pound Point, Rock Road, Alaska Cut, and Double Trouble. The comparative handful of favorite hotspots even for these lifelong “Pointers” who embrace central Wisconsin as the best hunting and fishing in Wisconsin, became more than 400 spots literally overnight. To further take advantage of their rare opportunity and capture the historical event for future generations, Jakusz hired helicopter pilot Mitch Bushman and Video Man Kent Jakusz to video record the drawdown as part of a movie, “Nine Feet Under.”

“Now if we’re finding fish on sharp drop-offs we can find another spot just like it,” Wallock said. “We go there and the fish will be there too. We took our best spots and



Local river rat and Club 10 owner Bob Jakusz, who led friend Ron Kutella to a world record flyline record musky on the Stevens Point Flowage at almost 24 pounds, works the river for walleyes. Jakusz helped record the 2008 drawdown of the flowage from a helicopter and produced the DVD, ‘Nine Feet Under’, available for sale.

multiplied them by hundreds.”

Wallock and Kinney target all species of gamefish and panfish with an emphasis on walleyes. They work from two pontoon boats comfortably accommodating groups to 12 and lead fishing trips or scenic cruises. The river has a 45 inch minimum for muskies, and the real potential to give up trophy smallies and walleyes. River Rat Bob Jakusz, who rents canoes and kayaks from Club 10, also led angler Ron Kutella to a 47-1/2 inch, 23 pound 13-ounce musky officially recognized by the National Fresh Water Hall of Fame as a world record for fly tackle.

On this summer morning fishing from a pontoon boat, Wallock and Jakusz show a reporter fine fishing, the scenic Stevens Point Flowage, and a very real piece of history that despite the GPS recordings, can only be imagined. “The local saw it drawn down, but with the water raised again they still go back and fish the few spots they always fished,” Wallock said.

You might say Kenny Wallock and Bob Jakusz know the river well, sharing the secrets known for decades only to the ghosts of workers in flat caps and overalls. “We could never fish all the spots we know now in one day,” Wallock said.

“We take it piece by piece. We took our best spots and multiplied them by hundreds.”



Contact Kenny Wallock’s Professional Guiding at 715-341-5821 or 715-321-0038. Connect at [kwallock@charter.net](mailto:kwallock@charter.net) or [www.kennywallocksguiding.com](http://www.kennywallocksguiding.com). Connect with Dave Kinney at [www.riversplusguiding.com](http://www.riversplusguiding.com). To purchase a DVD of the drawdown of the Stevens Point Flowage, “Nine Feet Under” or for canoe and kayak rental information contact Bob Jakusz at Club 10 at 715-344-7128 or connect at [www.club10barstevenspoint.com](http://www.club10barstevenspoint.com).

A recreationalist playground, the Stevens Point area offers more than great fishing. Navigate the backwaters and sloughs, trout streams and smaller lakes by canoe or kayak for breathtaking views of the fall colors. On land, leisurely bike or hike along the Green Circle Trail, a 30.5-mile trail that winds along the Wisconsin River, Little Plover River and other tributaries, or, journey down the 18-mile Tomorrow River State Trail. There is more to discover here. Call 800.236.4636 or visit the Stevens Point Area Convention & Visitors Bureau online, [www.stevenspointarea.com](http://www.stevenspointarea.com), for free area information and maps, to start planning your trip today.

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