

# On Wisconsin Outdoors

With the Dick Ellis Experts

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## Fall In

### Anglers, hunters meet autumn transition

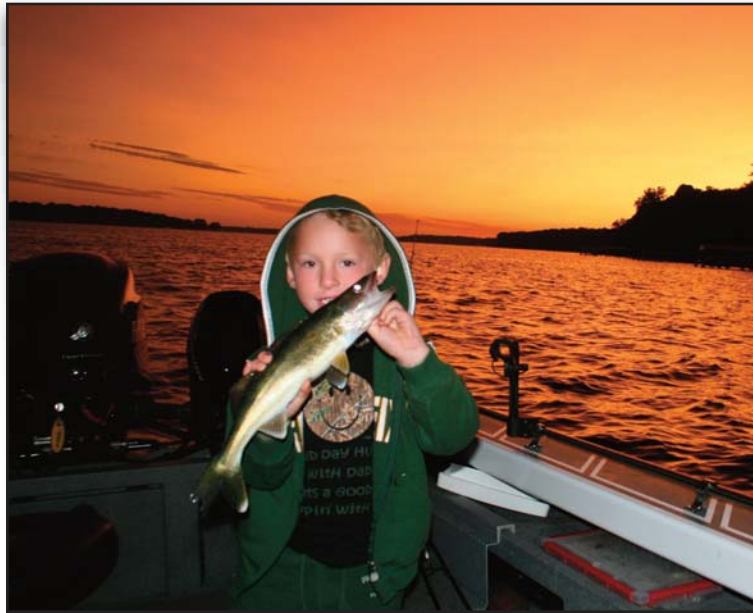
By Dick Ellis

Dave Duwe may be the fishing guide with an average of five days each week on the waters of Wisconsin. But it was pre-kindergarten enrollee Nathan Duwe delivering the early morning lessons Sunday before first light on Delavan Lake. And, as the Statler Brothers might have bellowed, "Oh, Du-we remember these."

Lesson one; it becomes so very obvious so very fast, is that fishing for the sheer love of fishing trumps all other reasons for being out almost daily in the Duwe boat...even in the black of pre-dawn during a cold front. Nathan has benefited from being Daddy's pre-school prize student. He baits his own hooks, pitches the crankbaits with precision, gives a running play-by-play commentary of each battle royal with panfish and gamefish alike, and runs for the net and uses it with authority when Dad is in a tussle of his own.

"The bottom line is that I just love to fish," Dave Duwe said. "That's why I guide. Nathan does too. If we didn't go fishing today I would be in trouble. When he knows I'm going fishing and he can go too, sometimes he sleeps in his clothes because he thinks if he doesn't he might get left behind."

Lesson two is more bluntly delivered in the words of Nathan



*Nathan Duwe shows off the first walleye of a very early Sunday morning on Delavan Lake in Walworth County. Caught by trolling small crankbaits, the fish were released.*

himself.

"Well, I think it's pretty good when we catch those littler fish like bluegills and sunfish," the five-year old said in first answer to his first professional interview. "But if we was fishn' for walleyes and we caught four of em...I'd probably give my Dad \$20.00. If we didn't catch nothing? No way. I would only give him a dollar."

Clearly, if you're going to

take on the gig of a professional guide to pay the bills, one best know what he's doing on the water if he wants to survive. Dave Duwe has survived and thrived for 16 years by catching fish, despite Wisconsin weather and water conditions that aren't always made to order. Fall weather changes and dropping water temperatures will alter the approach of 1.3 million Wisconsin anglers from Ashland

County's Chequamegon Bay to Grant County's Mississippi River. With Labor Day, thousands of those sportsmen and women will also simply hang up the rods for the shotguns. This is a good time to be alive in Wisconsin.

Whether the approximate 2100 acre Walworth County lake held much promise was debatable Sunday as the first hint of orange began to paint the east and we motored west to target walleyes. A cold front that dropped morning air temperatures 15 degrees in 24 hours would test our "pre-game" plan of boating pre-dawn walleyes before transitioning largemouth bass, bluegills and finally suspended crappies.

"I guide on Lake Geneva and Delavan," Dave Duwe said. "We target whatever is biting. We target Geneva lake trout that can easily be 20 pounds. Delavan offers great walleye fishing in particular after Labor Day when the pleasure boaters go away. I've had some of the very best walleye fishing here at midday during those cold October days when the temperature drops to 20 degrees. There's no commotion and the fish are fattening up for winter."

Duwe also targets big northern pike in the fall. Geneva, he said, offers the bigger pike but



Guide Dave Duwe takes back a small crankbait and prepares to release a walleye back into Delavan Lake.

Delavan with its 32-inch minimum size limit has head-turning size too, and numbers. Duwe pulls the pike off the weeds with crankbaits to hit the 10 to 12 inch-suckers he has suspended under the boat with quick-strike rigs. His largest fish is 41-inches.

“But the best day was catching a dozen pike over 32 inches on a dozen suckers in just a couple hours,” he said. “The biggest was 38-inches. I ran out of suckers.”

Sunday was more an opportunity to show a reporter multi-species options available as the season transitions into September, and tactics to catch those fish. Duwe said that trolling small, purple or pearl deep-diving crankbaits on a 17-foot weedline would offer the best chance for picking up a bigger walleyes, with his personal best this summer on this 18-inch minimum water at 26 inches. Just a few minutes into our run, we had several hits and one nice but not nice-enough fish in the boat that fell to a crankbaits.

We turned to using Duwe’s transit mount Motorguide to backtroll over rock with a weed point the guide felt certain would be holding largemouth bass transi-



Bluegills like this big fish swinging on board for Guide Dave Duwe remain a bread and butter target in late August and great table fare for anglers throughout Wisconsin.

tioning back toward shallow water, and big bluegills. The bass schools break up and will be back very shallow when water surface temps are at 60-degrees. Sunday surface temperatures read 74 degrees. In spring the big bass are found in less than five feet of water before moving to deeper weed points in the summer months.

Duwe positioned the boat in 20 to 22 feet of water to work the weed points in 15 to 17 feet of water. His crawler offering was on a #12 hook with a round split-shot chosen over a removable split-shot that can pick up too many weeds. Plastics including green pumpkin lizards and four-inch finesse worms are dressed the same, except that a two-aught wide-gap hook is preferred. The results in short order included all the big gills we could have wanted and a largemouth of several pounds.

“The largemouth bass fishing has been very good,” he said. “75 percent of the time either me or a client will catch at least one fish over five pounds.”

We ended the morning following the plan that would have us targeting deep-water crappies in 20 to 30 feet of water suspended in 10 to 12 feet. The offering was a 1/32nd ounce jig with a small split-shot one-foot above. Before even beginning, Duwe called the chances of finding the suspended fish as good as money in the bank.

“It’s a slow retrieve with a lot of pauses,” Duwe said. “It’s more of a drag than a retrieve after you count down to find the fish. Once you know what they want you duplicate it, and find a lot of fish.”

“There’s money,” he said, bringing in



Dave Duwe predicted that crappies in numbers would be found suspended in deep water this late August morning and that is exactly what the reporter’s group found.



Sunfish and bluegills kept Nathan Duwe busy Sunday morning fishing with his dad, Wisconsin guide Dave Duwe. Kindergarten starting next week is one of the few things that could get Nathan out of his Dad’s boat for another day of fishing

the first crappie almost immediately, to be followed by as many as we would have wanted.

Nathan Duwe has his own ideas of what money in the bank looks like. One of those messages was shouting from his shirt as he worked a Wisconsin lake one more time with his personal professor.

“A bad day hunt’n with Dad,” it read, “Beats a good day shopp’n with Mom.”

Connect with Dave Duwe’s Guide Service at 1-608-883-2050 or [www.fishdelavanlake.com](http://www.fishdelavanlake.com). Nathan Duwe will be unavailable for interviews until he graduates from Kindergarten. *W*