

On Wisconsin Outdoors

With the Dick Ellis Experts

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So Much To Do

Time the only problem during a Wisconsin November

By Dick Ellis



Just before setting the hook on a musky that has taken a sucker dressed with a quick-strike rig, Mark Sankey takes a look at the fish as the sun sets on Pewaukee Lake.

If we needed any reminder, last week's weather told us that we live in Wisconsin. An outdoorsman often slides from water to field, to fish or to hunt, as that fall weather dictates. Monday evening, November 3rd, I worked Pewaukee Lake in a light shirt for muskies and watched the sun fall over a 72 degree day. By Saturday, November 8th, the focus had turned to scouting the Kettle Moraine State Forest for whitetail deer near West Bend in cold rain and southern

Wisconsin's first snow.

Musky addict and long-time friend Mark Sankey literally lives on Pewaukee Lake, but one might conclude that he actually resides on the boat that is always on the water. Mark is a good "stick man" and his 30-plus legal muskies caught and

released from the big lake over 2008 include a fall fish at 46 inches. Half of the fish were taken via motor trolling deep water, and half casting.

We launched late in the afternoon Monday with a game plan to first set quick-strike sucker rigs and then cast home-made versions of a double cow-girl bucktail and large spinner baits. If a fish follows but

muskies seem more willing to come right to the surface as it gets darker. The first couple hours after dark has been a good time to musky fish all year long."

As hoped, we did draw two "twilight" fish to the boat that gave us a thrill by hitting a sucker and running with the meal. Many anglers have felt the adrenaline jolt in a November boat triggered by the "click click click" of line abandoning the spool of a sucker reel.



Ellis is silhouetted against the sky while walking an oak ridge while scouting deer in the Kettle Moraine State Forest November 8th.



The problem with deer hunting Wisconsin's public land is competition. Ellis backed off of this area while scouting the Kettle Moraine State Forest northern unit and inadvertently intruding on a bowhunter in his stand November 8th.

doesn't hit a lure, the suckers often trip the "strike" trigger at boat side.

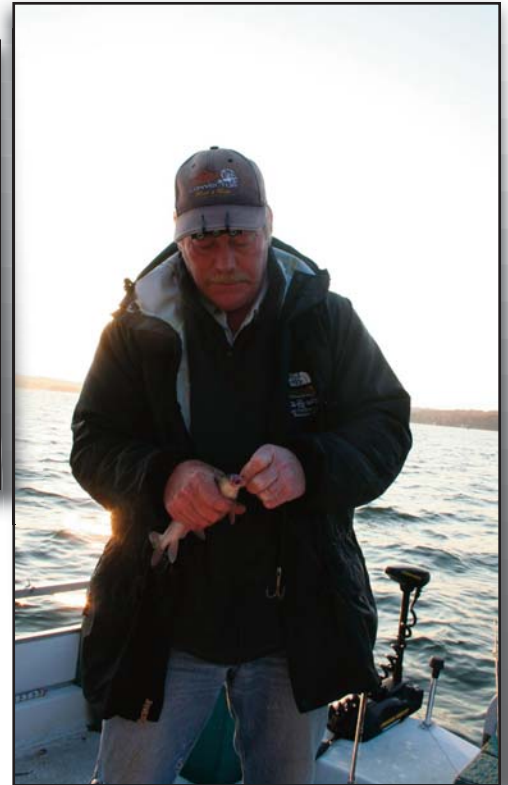
"The fishing gets better as the sun goes down out here because of the clear water," Sankey said. "The



Ellis crosses a creek November 8th while scouting deer in the Kettle Moraine State Forest near West Bend.



The writer checks out a fresh scrape, a whitetail buck's calling card for female companionship, in the northern unit of the Kettle Moraine State Forest November 8th



Musky angler Mark Sankey secures a quick-strike rig to a sucker on Pewaukee Lake in 72 degree temperatures November 3rd.

It's a sound equivalent to crunching leaves or a near-by gobble.

We did not score. Our home-made experimental sucker rigs, designed so that the fish may be immediately hooked and released unharmed, will need to go back to the drawing board. Each legal fish, which we lifted slowly and actually looked at near the boat, was lost immediately upon setting the hooks.

"Well that's embarrassing," my friend of almost four decades said. "Oh I don't know," I responded. "Seems to me an ex-guide with 35 fish in the boat over one season can afford to experiment a little bit. Anyway... we didn't lose a 30 pounder."

Equipment failure also played a vital role of why I scouted during prime hunting time November 8th without carrying a bow. After improving with practice to the level of shooting very good groups of arrows, a major equipment failure Friday night sent the bow to the "doctor" for an overnight stay and me to the field unarmed with the exception of a camera.

Virtually every Wisconsin bowhunter who has not yet filled a tag will be on stand long and often late October through mid-November as rutting bucks move and obey nature's command to pass on the genes. Big bucks become uniquely vulnerable like at no other time of the year. I will take Thursday through Tuesday only to hunt deer with the

bow in Sheboygan County, Winnebago County, and Vilas County in southern, central and northern Wisconsin. Tagging a big buck, shooting photos and writing a column will be the only priorities.

"My" territory in the Kettle Moraine State Forest was absent of trucks Saturday and I felt comfortable in my scouting that I would not be interfering with other hunters on stand. Although big bucks can actually find refuge on public land surrounded by private properties where avid hunters hold vigil from proven treestands, public land also sometimes means the frustration of occasionally "running into" other hunters where you wanted to hunt. It's not fun for those other hunters either.

I was intent on checking for deer sign in and around two swamps where I had learned to deer hunt as a boy and tagged my first deer with a bow. I found both tree rubs, made by bucks removing spring antler velvet and later polishing the headgear, and scrapes, the buck's calling card for companionship during this season of romance.

One deer obviously was watching me from the first swamp as I stood on a bordering oak ridge taking photos for 10 minutes. As I descended to the swamp, two cracking branches and a quiet and efficient escape left me with a vision of a big buck that has learned to survive despite his drives from na-

ture that make him move now even in full daylight. Who knows if that vision was accurate? But it's exactly the kind of imaginary "license" that makes it fun to be a Wisconsin hunter.

Near the second swamp, I did precisely what I didn't want to do; intrude on another bowhunter high in a tree. I saw him at 150 yards or so after crossing a small creek and climbing an oak knoll, and quickly backed off after a quick wave of apology. He returned the wave, and I felt good that he still had two hours of light left to let the woods settle down.

I walked though the woods, skirted the swamps, crossed the creeks, and climbed the oak ridges back to the truck. This is Wisconsin kettle moraine country. It's beautiful. This is also Anywhere, Wisconsin, in November. And that's a beautiful thing too.

Regardless of the weather. *W*