

For the Love of It

Waterfowl conference for hunters, by hunters

By Dick Ellis



Wisconsin hunters from jump shooters to filed hunters to those that prefer the open water layout tactic will attend the Eighth Annual Wisconsin Waterfowlers Conference in Stevens Point March 5-6. (Ellis)

“This waterfowl conference offers the chance for hunters from across Wisconsin who are really interested in their sport to help preserve it 10 or 20 years from now, for future generations,” said Jon Bergquist, retired DNR wildlife manager and state migratory

game bird specialist. “What can hunters do for the sport their passionate about? The Wisconsin Waterfowl Hunter’s Conference allows them to actively participate.”

Wisconsin waterfowl hunters from across the state, Bergquist said in an interview Sunday are invited to attend the Eighth Annual Wisconsin Waterfowl Hunters’ Conference on March 5 & 6, 2010 at the Ramada Inn in Stevens Point. The Conference is designed, developed and managed by a committee of independent waterfowl hunters and is supported by individuals, conservation organizations, private businesses and government agencies.

“Our focus since the inception of this conference has been preserving and enhancing our waterfowl hunting heritage and improving waterfowl hunting in Wisconsin,” said Bergquist, who sits on the Steering Committee for the Conference. “Hunters have a hand in determining the future needs for waterfowl management, research and hunting opportunities.”

According to Bergquist, prior to the current format, the DNR hosted a waterfowl conference before his retirement attempting to address the concerns and interests of hunters. About 60 hunters participated, but Bergquist’s position was not filled when he left the state management position and the conference would “have died” if not for extreme interest of a few avid Wisconsin hunters to carry on the effort. Approaching its eighth years, the conference has grown to include several hundred hunters and continues to grow annually.

The conference is open to anyone interested in waterfowl hunting, he said, and



Hunters like these pursuing canvasback on the Mississippi River in western Wisconsin to those that prefer big water shooting for divers on Winnebago or Lake Michigan will be among those attending the Eighth Annual Wisconsin Waterfowlers Conference. (Ellis)



allows waterfowlers from around the state the opportunity to meet fellow hunters, management biologists, wardens and many others with the same interests. Attendees share questions, concerns, experiences and information that affect our waterfowl hunting heritage and future hunting opportunities.

“Wisconsin hunters may want to modify the existing zone line or help make changes to the current zones or season splits,” Bergquist said. “Every five years we have a chance to change the regulation established by the Fish & Wildlife Service. That’s this year. Last time we had this opportunity we helped change the north-south boundary. Sometimes hunters are dissatisfied with current regulations. The conference has sessions addressing just those issues.”

Specifically, this year’s Conference program includes updates from Wisconsin DNR’s Bureau of Wildlife Management and Law Enforcement on waterfowl issue and direction; Wisconsin legislative update; the ring-necked duck in Wisconsin; waterfowl habitat/production in Wisconsin; Wisconsin hunters restoring waterfowl habitat in Manitoba; waterfowling traditions and the unique wetland resource, the Mississippi River Flyway Council update, and the status of the National Wildlife Refuge System.


“As one example, Chief Warden Randy Stark gives an excellent presentation on waterfowl hunting in the future,” Bergquist said. “Randy kind of thinks out loud and makes all of us think. What is our future when there are wetlands being drained and big developments are everywhere? Will there be hunting? What about the kids in this computer age? Are we going to be able to invite more kids into our sport as we lose more hunters as we get older?”

In addition, this year’s agenda features presentations and opportunities for one on one discussions with Mark Rongers of Mighty Layout Boys on layout boat hunting, and Tom Dokken of Oak Ridge Kennels on dog training. For additional information on attending the 2010 Wisconsin Waterfowl Hunters’ Conference please visit the website at www.wisducks.org/wwhc.htm or contact one of the following steering committee members:

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Pre-registration deadline is February 20. Pre-registration is encouraged. A block of rooms has been put on hold for those attending the workshop Friday and Saturday. The planning committee has obtained a special rate from the Ramada Inn. Bergquist said. Contact the Ramada Inn at 1-800-998-2311. Prior to February 15, ask for the “Wisconsin Waterfowl Hunters’ Conference” rate.

Wisconsin hunters and other attendees pre-registering by February 20 will be entered into a special drawing. Those pre-registering with a friend who did not attend the Conference in 2009 will both be entered in a second special raffle.

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2010 Wisconsin Waterfowl Hunters’ Conference

Topics and Speakers

- Dog Training with Tom Dokken
- Mark Rongers of Mighty Layout Boys
- Ringneck Duck in WI & MN, Dr Mike Zicus
- John Devney of Delta Waterfowl on Prairie Pothole Management
- WI Legislative update from WI Wildlife Federation George Meyer
- Waterfowl habitat & production in NW WI US Fish and Wildlife Staff of the Saint Croix Wetland management District
- WI hunters help restore Manitoba habitat, Gido Tori of Ducks Unlimited
- WI hunting tradition plus past & present resource of the Mississippi River in WI
- WI DNR Bureaus of Wildlife Management (Van Horn and Hauge) & Law Enforcement updates, Randy Stark WDNR Chief Warden
- USFWS Region 3 Refuge Chief on status of NWR system
- Mississippi Flyway Council meeting updates: Kent Van Horn-Wis DNR Migratory Game Bird Ecologist, WI representative to the Mississippi Flyway Council Technical Section; Tom Hauge-Director, Bureau of Wildlife Management, WI representative to the Mississippi Flyway Council and the Mississippi Flyway Council Representative to the national Flyway Council.