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DENNY MURAWSKA

## Tips For The Hardy Biker

### *Do's and Don'ts for the E-bike snow adventure*

So you finally got that e-bike and have been enjoying it through the seasons. What a powerful and stealthy beast for silently transporting you to your favorite hunting and fishing spots. Getting in and out of your honey holes is always half the battle, especially as we gain senior citizen status. I am one of those old guys with an artificial hip to boot. It pained me no end to sell my mountain bike this year, but the exhilaration of cruising on my electric innovation eased the pain.

Let me confess from the outset, I have not yet ridden my electric pony in the snow, although I did this regularly on my Yamaha 250 as a young man. What advice I give here has been gleaned from numerous sources online, and common sense. First of all, these vehicles are not snowmobiles. Although they can shred snow, there are limitations. Tire size is number one. Four-inch donuts with an aggressive tread are mandatory. Some claim reducing air pressure a bit will keep these more grippy. Bear in mind that overall range of travel you may be accustomed to in warmer months may be reduced by frigid temperatures. Like all batteries, function in the cold is reduced. Your range will not be what it was in warmer weather. If you can find an insulating cover for the battery, use it.

Eskimos have many names for different types of snow. It makes a difference if you are planning to take a quick jaunt to your blind in a few inches of powder,



CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



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TOM CARPENTER

# Hunting Memories

## Stew on it

With cold weather upon us, something about a savory stew warms the heart and soothes the soul.

Maybe it's the ingredients: meat tenderized by a few hours of simmering, hearty vegetables and thick broth. Maybe it's the warmth: A satisfying meal, all in one bowl, that just makes you feel good all over and warms your insides, too. Maybe it's the idea: Base your creation on venison, and stew becomes a celebration of a successful hunt. But any red meat will work.

Memorable stew is easy to make, but it does take some time. Fact: It is hard to ruin stew!

### Preparation Techniques

#### Prepare meat

Cut up meat into chunks that are about one-inch-square. If some are a little bigger or smaller, no big deal.

#### Coat meat

Roll meat chunks in seasoned flour, coating all sides well. Make seasoned flour with salt, pepper, garlic powder and other spices you like. One of my favorites is McCormick Garlic & Herb Seasoning or Montreal Steak Seasoning. Rosemary also makes a great addition to seasoned flour.

#### Brown meat

Use one pot start-to-finish. Cover pot bottom with vegetable oil, heat to sizzling, and brown the coated meat chunks. All the drippings and other materials from browning should stay. Sear meat on all sides, but don't cook it through. Brown meat in batches so that the meat chunks are always in contact with the bottom of the pot. Then sauté a sliced onion in the oil.

#### Add liquid

Dump all the browned meat back in, and add liquid:

- Wine. A merlot or sweet, deep red wine adds zing and flavor.
- Beef broth. Make a salty broth from beef bouillon, or use beef stock you buy.
- Diced or stewed tomatoes are added *after* braising. Along with one of the above liquids, diced tomatoes are essential for adding a tomato-based flavor for stew gravy. Have several cans on hand, or use canned from your garden.

#### Braise

Slowly heat up the liquid/meat mixture and simmer on that slow/low heat. This is called braising. Monitor the liquid as you go and add as needed. But if you're cooking "slow and low" enough (approximately 1/4 to 1/3 heat), and use a cover, you shouldn't lose much liquid. Gentle cooking is the watchword. Simmer meat a couple hours; more time is fine.

#### Add vegetables

Cut up your vegetables at some point as the meat simmers. But don't start adding vegetables until the last hour or so of cooking, after you have added more broth and the diced or stewed tomatoes. Add root vegetables (such as potatoes or parsnips) first. Wait awhile for carrots. Add green vegetables (green beans come to mind) for only the last half hour or so; mushrooms the last 15 minutes.

#### Serve

One of the culinary beauties of stew is its flexibility. A little early or an hour late, all is good! Stew will be ready when you are.

### Ingredient Notes

Traditional stew includes potatoes, carrots and green



beans. The colors are appetizing, and the potatoes add essential starch to thicken the broth. Keep the skin on the potato chunks for all the flavor. Pull, mash and return several of the potato chunks if your gravy needs thickening.

Garlic is a final suggestion: Crush individual cloves and put them in the sear, and the first simmer, to infuse the meat chunks with garlicky goodness.

### Conclusion

Stew is easy to make, fun to experiment with, and fills the house with wonderful aromas – and bellies with warm happiness – on a cold afternoon and evening. 🍲

### MURAWSKA, FROM PAGE 3

or plowing through wet slop in the spring. Snow can hide obstacles as well. Ever do a header on any bike? It happens even when we can see the terrain ahead. You certainly want to avoid unfamiliar paths that could hide stumps or old rusted wire fencing. When the need comes to stop, anticipate increasing your braking distance. It is not just the decreased friction, but hydraulic brakes contain fluid that

can thicken, reducing effectiveness. Keep your seat down low so you can use your feet as stabilizers at times.

Your body will of course require clothing to break the wind and keep you warmer. These bikes have no windshield to break the bite of low temperatures, and you can freeze body parts that you may wish to use again in the future. Make yourself visible with bright colors. Other vehicles may not be expecting to encounter silent bikers

gliding through the winter wonderland. There is a reason you don't see many folks riding motorcycles in extremely frigid weather. Cold is the buzz killer. If you do brave the elements, make certain to wash corrosive salt and sand grit off that bike at the end of your ride. 🍲

Denny Murawska is the owner and operator of Angler's Art Fish Taxidermy at [www.aa-taxidermy.com](http://www.aa-taxidermy.com) and author of The Elk Pool.

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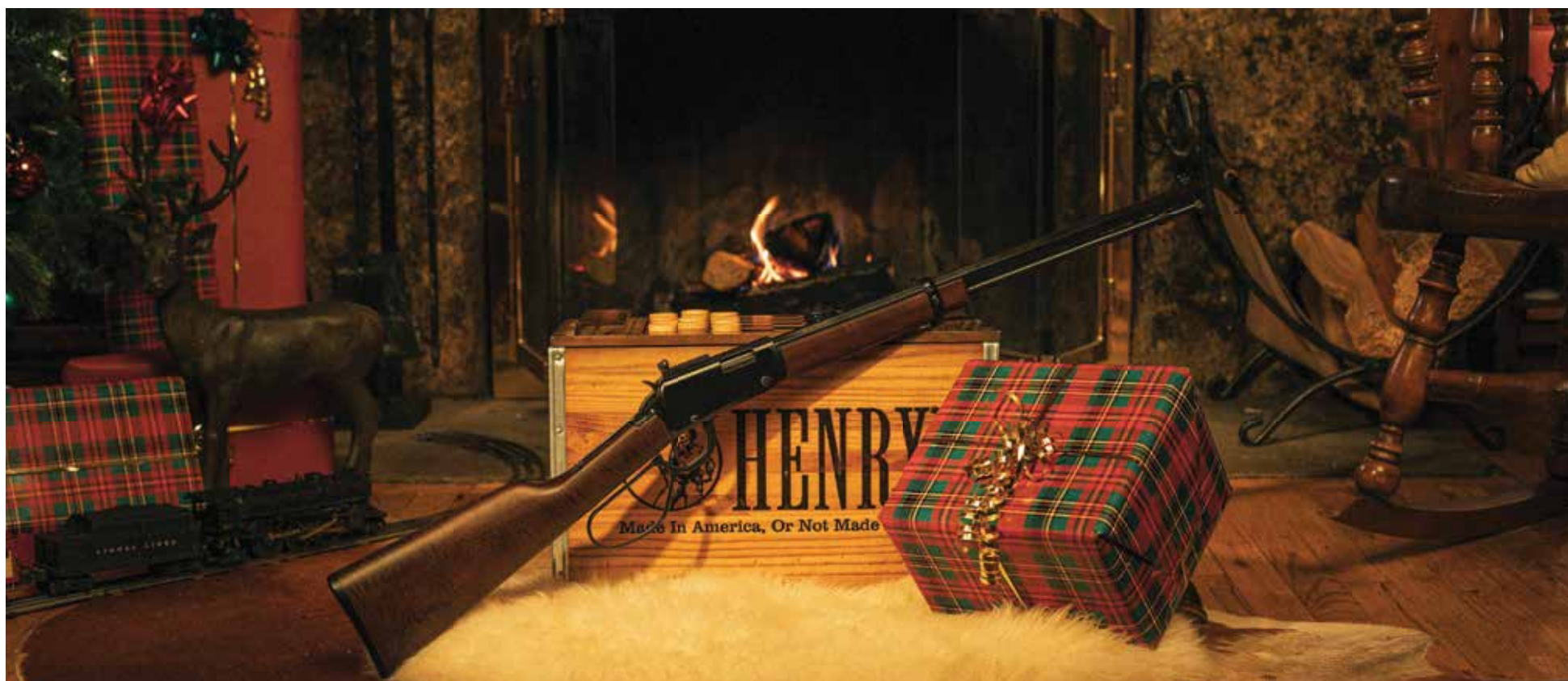
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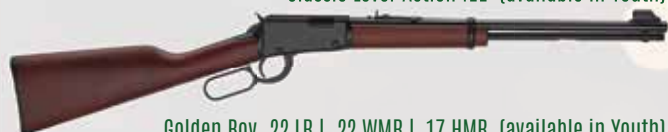
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**DAN MOERICKE**

## An 'Up Nort' Report Battle on the Bighorn

As much as I love living in the Northwoods, there are times when a guy needs to take a road trip and experience something different. So, when I was planning a trip to Colorado and my son-in-law Chris called me to suggest meeting in Montana for a couple days of trout fishing, I decided that a detour was in order.

Just a 17-hour drive later, I was pulling into Fort Smith which, if you look in the dictionary under 'middle of nowhere,' you'll find a picture. Actually, I'm kidding. While there isn't a grocery store, gas station, or bar in the immediate area, it is a beautiful and game-rich part of the country. We saw dozens of pheasants, turkeys, mule deer, antelope, and more prairie dogs than I knew existed.

Chris has become a first-class fly fisherman and brought his Flycraft raft for us to use in floating down the Bighorn

River. Prior to our arrival, the fishing reports on the Bighorn were fairly positive. However, once we arrived, the words that we heard from the fly shop and the guides that we talked to were "slow, tough, hit and miss." Not really the kind of fishing report that we'd hoped for, but hey, we were there and we'd give it our best shot.

We (Chris) elected to drift an eight-mile section of the river not far from the lodge where we were staying. The Bighorn is a world class trout stream and is home to some very big trout. We were convinced of that when the first three fish Chris hooked promptly broke his line. The section of river we fished was approximately 100 yards wide with a channel that was probably six to eight feet deep. Virtually every fisherman we saw was casting a worm pattern about seven feet below a strike indicator. (For non-fly fishermen, a strike indicator is a

fancy name for a bobber.)

Chris worked the raft while we drifted and I casted. Occasionally, we'd pull off to the side and wade when we saw a particularly good-looking run. With a strong wind that day, Chris did a lot of rowing to try and keep the raft on pace with the current.

I'm an average fly fisherman at best, but when I finally got a hit, it made the long drive to Montana immediately fade from my memory bank. When I set the hook, the line peeled off my reel and I started to wonder how much backing I had. We beached the raft and Chris slid the net under a rainbow that I will forever say measured 23 inches, even though we didn't measure it.

While the fishing was slow, the fish that we did catch made for some great memories. And the people that we met on



*Unlike Custer, I won my Bighorn Battle.*

the river were friendly and helpful. If you are looking for a place to catch a big trout, the Bighorn is definitely one of those places.

As much as I love the Northwoods, there are times when a good road trip is just what the doctor ordered. Just sayin'. 🎣

**TOM LUBA**

## A Fall Window of Opportunity Last chance at open water lunker largemouth

For many, Spring is the time to score that lunker largemouth bass. Yes, there are always some big ones that stay shallow after the spawn, but most will move deeper. That's where they winter and where you should look in November. It's your last open water chance this season.

Once the water temperature drops below 50, the bass are on the drop-offs, especially where there are still green weeds. Once the surface temp warms, fish activity picks up.

Determining the mood of the fish is the key. Starting later in the day gives the water time to warm. Even if it only moves the needle a degree or two, it can help.

Start with deep diving jerkbaits, which as



*Deep divers that suspend can get down to the fish and then pause, which gives the fish time to locate the bait.*

they reach greater depths give the fish the opportunity to locate the bait. For instance, the Rapala Husky Jerkbait gets down to 15 feet and slowly rises on the pause. Rapala

has other jerkbaits in its line with different motions that don't run as deep as the Husky Jerks. And there are other jerkbait manufacturers. Look at their running depths and features to find one that fits your needs. Keep your jigging rod close so you can slow down as the temperature slowly drops.

Jigs are productive for deep bass. I am partial to Berkley's PowerBait MaxScent soft baits in Fall, which actually release scent into the water, a key element of the bait. Because moving the lure slow is the basic Fall program, it allows the scent to slowly disperse. MaxScent has tubes, in both 3-½ inch and 2-½ inch sizes, which are always on the menu. If you want a

bigger offering, their Power Chunks and Creature Hawgs make good trailers on silicone skirted bass jigs.

If you have access to newer GPS trolling motor features, you can set it to hold on the best areas, like weed lines, wood or rock. If not, use your electronics, and based on conditions and wind, look for the best way to anchor to thoroughly fish the areas. Since you'll be fishing deeper, you'll be dealing with more open water without windbreaks. Dress accordingly.

The window on open water is starting to close. So give it your best shot. Then turn to deer season, a great Thanksgiving dinner, and the joys of the holiday season to come. Maybe even some early ice fishing. 🎣



A rider wearing a yellow and black helmet and gear is riding a grey and black Ski-Doo snowmobile through a snowy forest. The snowmobile has "Ski-Doo" and "ROTAX" branding. The background shows snow-covered trees.

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CAPT. DAVID DUWE

# Fall Into Fishing Success

## Cold water creates fantastic fishing opportunities

Day or night, fall offers anglers some of the best fishing opportunities of the year. I, however, find the first hour of light and dusk to be the most productive time for walleyes. Late fall means the fish are feeding and preparing for the long winter. Some of the best months for fishing are November and December due to the lack of fishing pressure and boat traffic. It can be very pleasant and relaxing.

I target walleyes, largemouth bass, crappies and northern pike during the fall. For northern pike and largemouth bass, I find fishing shallow weed flats the most productive. This can be as shallow as two to eight feet of water. The best lures for me are white spinner baits and jerk baits. For the white spinner baits, I stick to 1/4 ounce with one nickel blade. I like to slow roll them over the dying weeds. My jerk baits are Rapala Husky jerks with a long cast and a stop and go retrieve. My favorite colors are chrome and blue or chrome and black.

Walleye fishing in the fall is my favorite. I

especially enjoy trying for them after dusk, when there are very few anglers on the lakes. Without question, full moon periods offer the best results. Most of my success occurs just after the turnover period; as the warm surface water cools and sinks to the bottom, it will mix with the cooler deep water, making the whole lake the same temperature. The turnover causes the lake to become completely oxygenated again. This process can take a couple of days or a couple of weeks depending on wind and air temperatures.

For walleyes, I concentrate just off the main lake points in the main lake basin. My favorite bait for this time of year is a size seven jigging Rapala. I will fish either chrome and blue or pearl with black spots to match the abundance of crappie bait fish in my lake. I rig my jigging Rapalas on a six-foot, six-inch medium action spinning rod spooled with six-pound Fireline and a 36-inch leader of 10-pound fluorocarbon. Keep the boat slightly moving and the bait

in constant contact with the bottom.

As the days get shorter and the nights get cool, it signals the time that the black crappies start to school. Other than the spring spawn, this is the best time to catch a bunch of the fat crappies. Once schooled, the crappies are relatively easy to catch. They are feeding so one just needs to present the bait at the proper depth. This can be accomplished by slip bobber rigs or casting a 1/32-ounce Arkie lead head jig with a small twister tail. I find the best colors are purple or chartreuse. For the jig and twister combo, I make long casts with a count-down approach to achieve the desired depth. It will take some experimenting to determine where the active fish are. Of course, the longer the pause the deeper the jig will sink. I prefer a slow retrieve with numerous stops and starts. This will help to entice the bite.

For those of you who put your boats away after Labor Day, it may be time to reconsider. The fall bite is one of the best of



Author Dave Duwe with a nice Fall crappie

the year, the fish are schooled and plentiful and you have a great opportunity to find them and catch yourself a trophy. 🐟

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## Gaining The Late Season Edge

### Targeting larger fish with larger lures

**I**ce fishing season is right around the corner, or even underway in some areas. Anglers are looking for an edge to target and catch larger fish. One of the methods that I like to use is simply upsizing my presentation. I run lures and bait so that at first glimpse you would think that there is no way that is going to work. But believe me it does!

For example, when targeting bluegills or crappies, most often you're running tiny tungsten jigs or tiny teardrop spoons tipped with wax worms, minnows or some sort of plastic. The entire presentation is no larger than the size of a pea or maybe even smaller. A presentation like this does have its place, but when you're struggling to catch fish, there is a better way.

Generally speaking, when running small baits

like those previously mentioned, every tiny, undersized perch, bluegill and crappie will attack this presentation and get hooked long before any decent sized fish has a chance. These little fish will suck up your bait, and you will spend hours catching nothing but undersized fish.

Go overboard and run baits and lures that look absolutely obnoxious. I have no problem running a two-inch buckshot spoon for bluegills or a three-to-four-inch Moxie Minnow for perch. For crappies, I go even larger, and run #5 Rippin Raps and jigging Rapalas. The larger the better.

The key to getting these larger fish to strike with this type of presentation is to be very aggressive in how you work the bait. Don't just let your bait hang there while periodically jigging

it; they will not strike it. You need to work this type of presentation in a very aggressive jigging manner with constant sharp ripping motions and then letting the bait flutter down. Most of the time the fish will hit the bait as it is fluttering down. Typically, when you go to make that next snap to rip your bait the fish is on!

The nice thing about the larger presentation is that it keeps the smaller fish away from the bait. It is just too much meal for them, allowing time for the larger fish time to find it and eat it. And trust me, I think you will be surprised at how hard these fish strike with this type of presentation. Get ready to hang on! 🎣

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Very big crappie.



## An Autumn-Mobile Trip to the North!

### Fall is a fantastic season in the Northwoods.

The smell of autumn in the air whether you are on your ATV or Bike or hiking the trails, or if you have a fishing pole in your hand, the scenery is extreme on the lakes both Chequamegon Bay and inland. Copper Falls is exquisite with the regal waterfalls and adds the backdrop of Mother Nature's fall color palette to the mix; it is stunning. Fall fishing is quite exciting, and Chequamegon Bay offers an excellent bass fishery. These fish are ready for a fight!

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SPOTLIGHT | **ALGOMA****LEE HAASCH**

## Algoma Has it All in Late Fall

**N**ovember and December in Wisconsin bring some pretty neat experiences and the Algoma area is no exception. For me, the pre-winter wonderland is full of outdoor activities for everyone. You can catch a cooler of fish in the morning and spend time in the woods in the afternoon.

Algoma shops are abundant with Christmas shopping opportunities and shelves are stocked with all kinds of interesting gift ideas. Art galleries offer abundant displays of crafty, artistic gift ideas. A short distance to the west you can attend a Packer practice or take in a game and tour the Packer Hall of Fame.

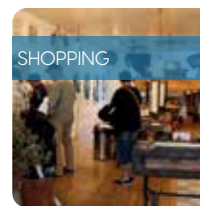
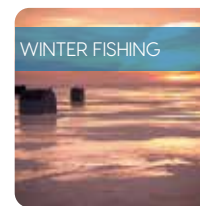
If the great outdoors is your game, Kewaunee County is rich in agriculture, and this farm country produces large numbers of whitetail deer and trophy bucks that are a common site feasting in the fields. The Lake Michigan shoreline and farm fields provide the ideal environment for flocks of geese and the annual migration of diving ducks give waterfowl hunters plenty of action.

Don't forget about the fishing in Algoma. The Ahnapee River running through Algoma will hold salmon, trout and northern pike right up until ice time. Many inland area lakes are abundant with pan fish that remain hungry right up until hard water time. But be ready, because first ice offers excellent angling opportunities.

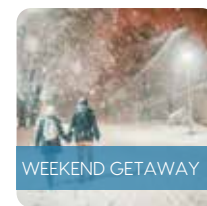
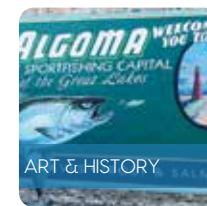
If you are looking for the perfect gift for the beverage connoisseur, then look no further than the Von Stiehl Winery, with many award winning wines and distillery products. If craft beer is your fancy, the Ahnapee Brewery features a wide variety of local craft beers. Both the winery and brewery also offer some nice gift ideas.

Fall is harvest time in Wisconsin and the Algoma area offers the beauty of fall colors, wonderful opportunities to get farm fresh products, award winning wines, local apple and cherry products, and is home to the "Sport Fishing Capital of the Great Lakes." Take in a season-ending walk on our beautiful beach or you can hike or bike the Ahnapee Trail and experience the Ice Age Trail before the snow flies. Visit Algoma, we've got it all! 🍷🍷

*Experience for yourself the great fishing Lake Michigan has to offer. And if you want BIG fish, check out Algoma! For charter information or fishing reports, visit our Facebook page at Algoma, Wisc. Fishing. For a calendar of events and activities, visit our website at VisitAlgomaWi.org.*



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# **Forgotten Wisconsin**

STUART WILKE



## **Nightmare on The Lady Elgin** *The Great Lakes deadliest maritime disaster*

For the lack of adequate lighting, 400 people met their fate and the center of political gravity shifted in Wisconsin's largest city. The sinking of the Lady Elgin in 1860 remains the Great Lakes' deadliest maritime disaster and it had far-ranging repercussions.

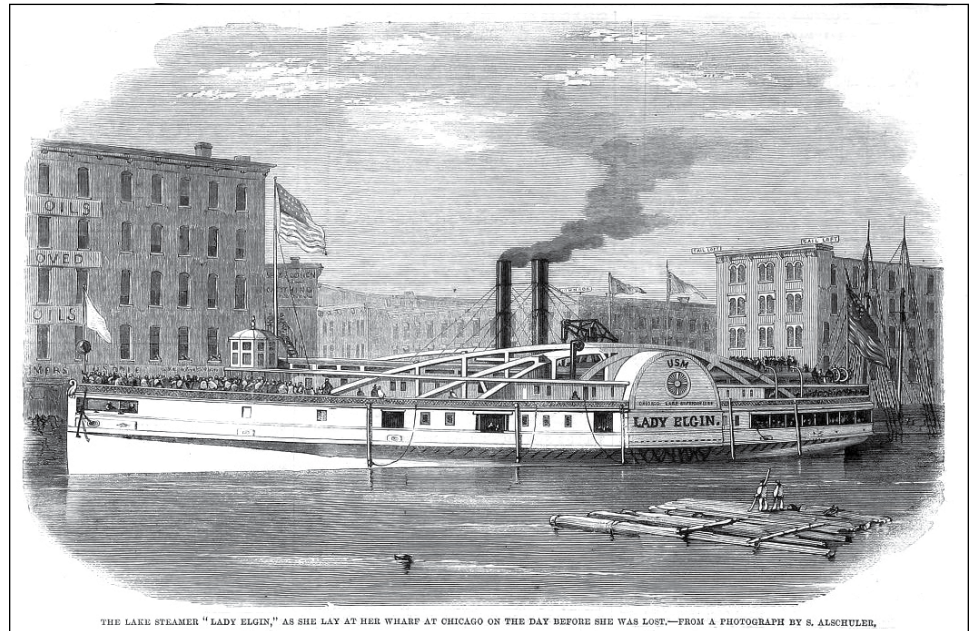
Wisconsin was vehemently anti-slavery. So much so that the state refused to enforce the Fugitive Slave Act, a federal law mandating that escaped slaves be returned to their southern owners. Gov. Alexander Randall was so fervent of an abolitionist that he declared that if Abraham Lincoln was not elected president, Wisconsin would secede from the Union. Randall was serious and he went so far as to demand that the state's various armed militias join his cause.

All of them did, except the Irish Union Guards, who dominated Milwaukee politics

and favored Lincoln's opponent, Stephen Douglas. The Guard declared that secession was unconstitutional and, like Douglas, held that the question of slavery should be left to the states. Randall had their weapons confiscated. The Guard refused to remain unarmed and answered the governor by scheduling a fundraiser for September 7, 1860, in Chicago, to purchase new weapons.

The Guard booked passage to Chicago on the "palace steamer," Lady Elgin, one of the most luxurious paddle boats plying Lake Michigan. On board were an estimated 600 passengers, including 500 Guardsmen and their supporters.

After a day of fundraising, eating and drinking, the Guard, with their new muskets and other passengers, boarded the Elgin for the return trip to Milwaukee.



THE LAKE STEAMER "LADY ELGIN," AS SHE LAY AT HER WHARF AT CHICAGO ON THE DAY BEFORE SHE WAS LOST.—FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY S. ALSCHULER.

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- ✓ Laundry & cleaning supplies, tarps, rope, flashlights, batteries, rakes, shovels, saws, extension cords, heavy trash bags, charcoal & grills and more

**Thank you for your support and generosity!**

### **Drop Off Locations:**

**Jeff's Fast Freight:** 5235 International Drive, Cudahy, WI 53110 **OR** 1448 Constitution Drive, Neenah, WI 54956

**Candlewood Suites:** 6440 S. 13th Street, Oak Creek, WI 53154

**Classic Lanes:** 5404 W. Layton Avenue, Greenfield, WI 53220

### **The Pine Cone Travel Plaza:**

685 W. Linmar Lane, Johnson Creek, WI 53038

### **INTERESTED IN BECOMING A DROP-OFF LOCATION?**

Contact Annmarie 414.315.7744  
annmariegigowski@yahoo.com



A light rain was falling when the ship set sail near midnight. The rain soon became a gale, waves smashed against the ship as lightening and rain filled the sky. Despite the storm, the Elgin remained visible to other ship traffic because of its many running lights; ships without them were virtually invisible.

Among those that sailed without sufficient running lights was the Augusta, a schooner bound for Chicago. For whatever reason, poor seamanship or a horrible mistake, the Augusta misjudged the distance between it and the Lady Elgin, which was lit up like a Christmas tree. The Elgin's crew could not have seen the Augusta which had but one, solitary, lamp. There was no chance to turn its path away from the Augusta as it blindly plowed toward the Elgin.

The bow of the Augusta speared the Elgin, tearing a huge gash in its port side, just forward of the paddle wheel. Unaware of the damage it had caused, the Augusta continued on to Chicago. Meanwhile, water poured into the Elgin. Captain Jack Wilson ordered all cargo, including 200 head of cattle, to be thrown overboard in a futile

effort to raise the boat above its holed port side. Within 20 minutes, the Elgin broke apart and sank about four miles from shore. Like the Titanic 50 years later, the Elgin had an insufficient number of lifeboats and flotation devices. Those that were able to escape the ship clung to debris, dead cows and, in one case, a bass drum.

Many survived the sinking, including Captain Wilson, only to meet their death when they were dashed upon the rocky shore of Port Clinton, Illinois, or sucked into the waves' undertow. Wilson died attempting to save passengers clinging to wreckage.

Irish immigrants were a major force in Milwaukee politics for years. That ended when much of its leadership and political operatives drowned with the sinking of the Elgin.

German immigrants quickly replaced the Irish and dominated Milwaukee politics for decades. The Irish were a spent political force, victims of the Augusta's unconscionable lack of visibility and, almost certainty, its crew's incompetence.

Contact Stuart Wilke at [submissions@onwisconsinoutdoors.com](mailto:submissions@onwisconsinoutdoors.com).





SPOTLIGHT | KENOSHA



## Winter is Wonderful in Kenosha

As the year comes to an end, winter fun just begins in Southeastern Wisconsin. From brisk hikes and snow-shoeing to skiing, sledding, and snowboarding, there are endless opportunities to enjoy the outdoors even when cooler temperatures arrive.

Spend a day near Lake Michigan for beautiful views and crisp air. The City of Kenosha hosts an ice-skating rink at Veterans Memorial Park which is free to utilize – bring your own skates or borrow a pair. Stroll along the Sculpture Walk at Harbor Park and enjoy more than a dozen works of art on display or miles of lakefront bike paths year-round.

Head west and explore wide-open spaces in Kenosha County. Downhill skiing is just one of the many activities to be enjoyed at Wilmot Mountain. Snowboarding is another option at this popular winter attraction and lessons are available for all ages. No lessons required, everyone in your crew can enjoy snow tubing. Plus, the motorized lift will transport you and

your tube back to the top of the hill to save all your energy for the fun parts.

Cross-country skiing and snow-shoeing are also great when snow flies. County parks, such as Petrifying Springs Park and Fox River Park, offer great trails for hiking and logging steps during the winter months. Disc golf courses are open year-round for frisbee fun, too.

While the golf season may have ended, Washington Park Municipal Golf Course is home to a lights display known as “Magic at Muni” on the weekends. Enjoy a stroll through the course in the evening from November 30 through December 22 to see light displays, locally created over-sized art, sip on cocoa, and more. In fact, there are holiday activities every day of the week from Thanksgiving through the New Year in the Kenosha Area – with many of them completely free.

Start planning your winter weekend getaway at [VisitKenosha.com](http://VisitKenosha.com).

## On The Cover

One inviting theme rings true in our November-December issue as our tourism partners cast their “Spotlights” on things to do and places to see in cities, towns, or counties across Wisconsin. Instate adventurers and visitors to our state all missed the lack of snow last year. So, what’s the remedy as we close out 2024 and move into 2025, besides most importantly Mother Nature giving up the white loot?

Trails! Thousands of miles of meticulously groomed Wisconsin trails to snowshoe, cross-county ski, ATV, snowmobile and UTV. How you create another trail tale this winter is simply up to you. But where to find those trails, you’ll find courtesy of Wisconsin’s tourism experts, right inside these pages.

Thanks to Donahue Super Sports ([DonahueSuperSports.com](http://DonahueSuperSports.com)) and Media Works WI ([mediaworks.com](http://mediaworks.com)) for this issue’s cover photo.

A picture is indeed worth a thousand words, and this one should make you want to gas up the sled, or maybe even check out a new ride. Prepare to play. And let it snow!



## YOU’LL NEVER HEAR “I’M BORED” AROUND HERE.

Embrace the crisp air this winter and find fun faster in Kenosha. Explore parks that stretch for miles along Lake Michigan or year-round disc golf courses for games that will thrill everyone in your group. Put on a pair of ice skates, skis, or snowshoes for a day outdoors. Explore a vibrant downtown filled with museums, historic sites, authentic streetcars, unique dining experiences, and much more. Wherever your interests lie, Kenosha offers adventure beyond the expected.

Scan to explore Winter  
Fun in Kenosha!



[VISITKENOSHA.COM](http://VISITKENOSHA.COM)







SPOTLIGHT | OCONTO COUNTY



## Rediscovering Oconto County

Oconto County, with its picturesque landscapes and friendly communities, offers a unique winter wonderland that's hard to beat. As the days get shorter and the temperatures drop, a magical transformation takes place, turning the county into a winter paradise. From snow-covered forests and frozen lakes to cozy towns adorned with twinkling lights, there's no better place to embrace the joy of winter.

Last year, the lack of snowfall posed a significant challenge for local businesses, particularly those reliant on snowmobiling tourism. The reduced snowpack led to decreased foot traffic and business, impacting our communities. By supporting local businesses, we can help them weather these challenges to continue providing the services and experiences we love.

Winter activities offer a fantastic opportunity for families to bond, create lasting memories, and enjoy the beauty

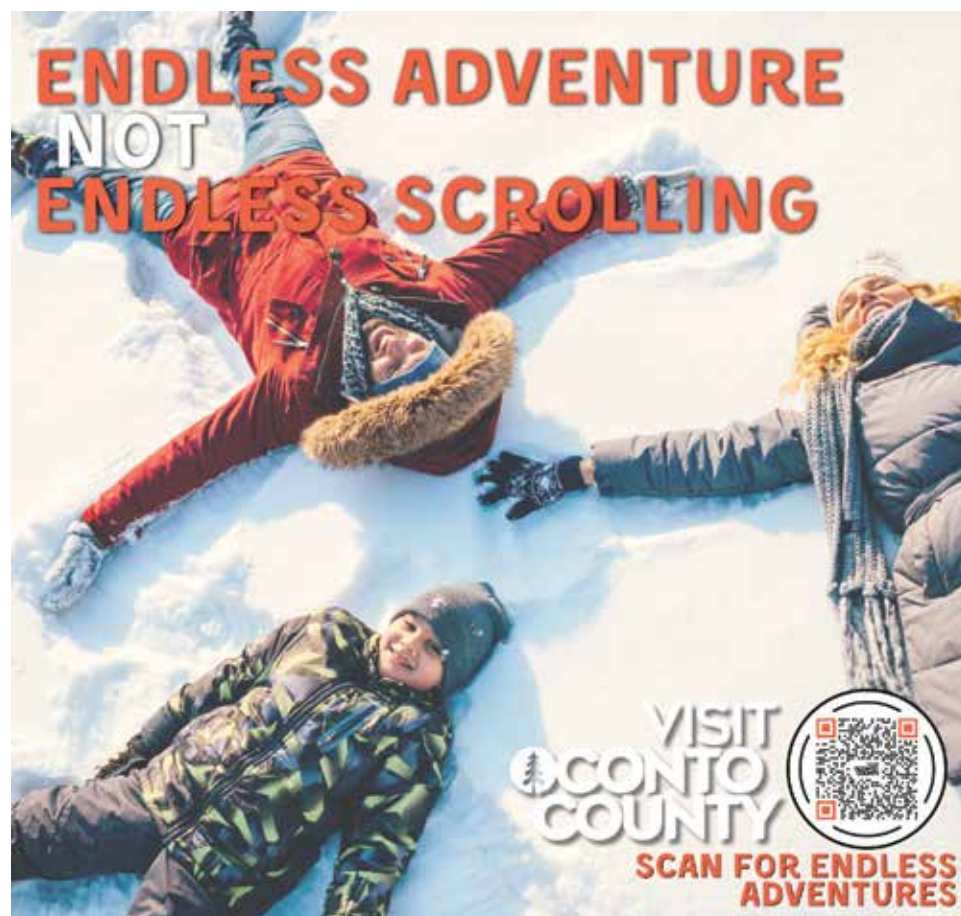
of nature. Whether you're a seasoned snowmobiler or a beginner cross-country skier, there's something for everyone to explore. Hit the trails, bundle up for a winter hike, or simply enjoy the peace and quiet of a snowy landscape.

Beyond snow-related activities, Oconto County offers a variety of indoor and outdoor experiences. Visit one of the many local museums, art galleries, or historical sites. Enjoy a delicious meal at a cozy restaurant or gather with friends and family for a board game night.

To make the most of your winter getaway, consider staying overnight in a local resort or vacation home rental. These accommodations offer comfortable lodging, convenient amenities, and a chance to relax and recharge after a day of outdoor adventures. By choosing to stay locally, you're also supporting the community and contributing to the local economy.

As we look forward to another winter season, let's rediscover the magic of Oconto County. By supporting local businesses and participating in winter activities, we can help create a vibrant and thriving community for

everyone to enjoy. So, put down your screens and step outside to experience the endless adventures that await you in this winter wonderland. 🌨️





DAVE FIDLIN

# Whitefish Dunes State Park

## *A history and nature lovers' marvel*

In the broader landscape of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources' state-run green spaces, White Dunes State Park might not have as many of the amenities found in other locales, but it still is worthy as a stop during a day-trip.

White Dunes is snugly situated within the collective quaint communities in Door County, located on the eastern peninsula of the tourist hotspot. Since its inception more than half a century ago, the 867-acre park has not changed much, only growing slightly from its original 821-acre footprint.

As its name suggests, one of the star attractions of this particular park site are the scenic sand dunes, which hug up against a vast forested area. White Dunes holds the distinction of having the largest sand dunes on the western shore of Lake Michigan.

Much of White Dunes' allure is its stripped-down natural beauty. Unlike many of Wisconsin's state-run parks, White

Dunes does not allow camping or overnight accommodations, meaning it only is suitable as a stop amid a broader trip of a day or weekend.

There are a few amenities sprinkled throughout the park, however. A nature center, for instance, operates throughout the year and provides visitors with a glimpse into displays and exhibits that pay homage to the land's history and its unique natural characteristics.

White Dunes also provides robust hiking through an extensive trail system that runs across much of the parkland. Additionally, White Dunes features a picnic shelter that overlooks Lake Michigan and provides more than a few scenic, picturesque opportunities - particularly on a clear, blue-skied day. In the warmer months, the beach is an ideal spot to meander along the lake or go for a swim.

While the natural beauty on display throughout White Dunes speaks for itself,



Whitefish Dunes State Park is situated on the eastern shore of the Door Peninsula.

the park's backstory also is notable.

Talks of creating a park at the site of Whitefish Dunes initially took place in 1937, according to historical records. Another three decades would pass before state authorities declared the land a part of Wisconsin's park system.

Jens Jensen, a landscape architect and conservationist, had recommended and

drawn up conceptual plans for the park site in 1937, and the proposal worked its way through a series of government channels at various levels.

Locally, there was opposition, as evidenced by a resolution the Sevastopol Town Board adopted in 1966, citing a loss of tax base by declaring the area a state

CONTINUED ON PAGE 17



SPOTLIGHT | SPARTA



## Experience The Magic

Come and "Experience the Magic" of Sparta this holiday season. Join in the fun as we celebrate the 10th year of our award-winning Kriskindlmarkt, which opens on Friday, November 29, and runs for four magical weekends. Located in historic downtown Sparta, the outdoor market is even bigger and better this year with over 40 huts and two stages in an idyllic setting sure to get visitors into the spirit of the season.

This authentic European market will host more than craft vendors over the four weekends leading up to the Christmas Holiday. Enjoy a wide variety of authentic German food and local favorites, including hot Bavarian pretzels, roasted nuts, cedar plank salmon, and crepes. Purchase a commemorative mug with warm gluhwien, or have a German beer, some hot chocolate or cider. Warm up by one of the several wood fires while making yourself a s'more.

The stages will host a variety of music and other entertainment and there will be live broadcasts on WCOW radio. There will also be horse drawn wagon rides and an appearance from Santa and other favorite personalities.

On Friday, December 6, at 5:28 pm, you can be a part of the Santa Scamper, a fun-run that benefits the local Boys and Girls Club of Sparta. At 6 pm, the annual Sparta Holiday Lighted Parade steps off with the theme "Winter Magic" in honor of the Kriskindlmarkt's 10th anniversary and in recognition of the many winter activities available in our area.

The holiday parade leads into another Sparta holiday tradition - Evans Bosshard Lights

CONTINUED ON PAGE 17



## Sparta, Wisconsin Winter Events



### 10TH ANNUAL SPARTA KRISKINDLMARKT

Features a wide variety of artisan vendors, entertainment, and German inspired food and drink. This award-winning, European-style holiday market has over 40 huts located in historic downtown Sparta. Open four weekends.

### SPARTA CITY HOLIDAY PARADE

Join us on Friday evening, December 6 for the annual Holiday Parade through historic downtown Sparta. Enjoy parade units decorated with lights celebrating the magic of winter.

### EVANS-BOSSHARD LIGHTS IN THE PARK

Beginning with the lighting ceremony on Friday, December 6, Evans-Bosshard Park is turned into a dazzling display of lights all through the rest of December. Visit with Santa, enjoy hot chocolate, check out some of Sparta's remarkable wooden bridges, and warm up by the bonfire.

### HOLIDAY TRAIN

The Canadian Pacific Holiday Train makes its annual stop in Sparta on Monday, December 9. Bringing top tier musical performers and Santa Claus, the beautifully decorated train opens up into a stage to entertain the large crowd that shows up every year.

### SNOWMOBILE MONROE COUNTY

Monroe County's many trails welcome thousands of snowmobilers. Check our website for trail conditions.

### WHITETAIL RIDGE SKI AREA

Fort McCoy hosts downhill skiers, tubers, and cross country skiers at the Whitetail Ridge Ski Area. There is something here for everyone.



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SPOTLIGHT | **FORT ATKINSON**

# Holiday Magic, Outdoor Adventure, Local Charm

Visiting Fort Atkinson during these festive months is a perfect mix of holiday magic, outdoor adventure, and local charm. Catch lively performances like Miracle on 34th Street at the Fireside Theatre, or embrace the season with events like the Frosty Rock Challenge and the Witches' Ball. In December, Fort Atkinson lights up with tons of activities, from the Fort Polar Path Holiday Lights and the Holiday Market to the Holiday Parade/Bike Ride all in the same weekend!

Families can enjoy Busy Barns Christmas on the Farm or ice skate at Haumerson's Pond. Don't miss out on meat raffles, pictures with Santa, and the town's chili cook-off, ending the holiday season with tons of warmth and excitement in Fort Atkinson.

For more information about upcoming events and activities, visit [EXPLOREFORT.COM](http://EXPLOREFORT.COM) and see our advertisement in this issue of On Wisconsin Outdoors.



THIS HOLIDAY SEASON IN  
**FORT atkinson**



- Frosty Rock Challenge - Nov 9th
- Witches Ball - Nov 23rd
- Holiday Lights - Dec 6th
- Holiday Market - Dec 7th
- Holiday Parade & Bike Ride - Dec 8th
- Busy Barns Christmas on the Farm
- Haumerson's Pond Ice Skating
- Meat Raffles
- Coyote & Rabbit Hunts
- North Country Icebreaker Ice Fishing Tournament



find more events & activities at **EXPLOREFORT.COM**







## SPOTLIGHT | HAYWARD LAKES



# A Mother's Legacy And Tradition Forged on The Hardwater

Hayward is more than just my home - it's where my love for the outdoors took root. Ice fishing holds a special place in my heart, and that passion was sparked by my mother. She would take our family out on the ice to chase flags when we were children, and those outings became some of my fondest memories. My mother passed away in 2017, but the tradition of ice fishing has stayed with me, carrying those childhood experiences into adulthood and fueling my love for the sport.

When it comes to ice fishing in Hayward, we're fortunate to have access to a variety of lakes teeming with different species. The early ice season offers exciting opportunities to target panfish, like bluegills and crappies, as well as the elusive walleye and plentiful northern pike. Walleye tend to be more active during the low-light hours, making dawn and dusk prime times to set up tip-ups. Northern pike are also a favorite target for tip-ups, often prowling weed lines

and shallow bays.

For panfish, I often focus on the smaller lakes and shallow bays that freeze first. These areas provide excellent opportunities for early ice action, especially with lighter gear and small jigs tipped with wax worms. Electronics, like a flasher, help locate fish holding near vegetation or structure, making it easier to drill your holes strategically.

Tip-ups, on the other hand, are a staple for targeting northern pike and walleye. There's nothing quite like watching a flag pop up on the ice, the excitement of running over, and the anticipation as you pull in a fish. My family spent countless hours chasing those flags, and it's one of the traditions I still hold dear.

Of course, ice safety is the first priority before heading out. Early ice can be unpredictable, so I always check the thickness before venturing onto the lake. Four inches of solid, clear ice is generally

safe for walking, but carrying ice picks and a spud bar for added caution is key.

As an adult, ice fishing continues to provide me with peace and a sense of connection - not just to the fish and the natural world but also to those childhood memories and my mother's legacy. In Hayward, the lakes freeze over, but the spirit of the Northwoods remains as warm and inviting as ever, welcoming anglers of all ages to experience the joy of winter fishing. 🎣

By Sarah Kozlowski.

*Sarah Kozlowski is a social media personality, photographer, and avid outdoorswoman who's a lifelong resident of Hayward. You can find her on all social media platforms @skozlowskiii, where she shares her passions for fishing, outdoor adventures, and love for the Northwoods as well as her business, Kozlowski Co.*



## FIDLIN, FROM PAGE 15

park. But a referendum question put to Door County voters the following year ended the debate.

White Dunes' history stretches much further back than the 1930s. The area also encompasses the remains of eight

prehistoric Native American villages, which are included on the National Register of Historic Places.

History and nature lovers can marvel at Whitefish Dunes' dedicated 14.5 miles of hiking and 1.5 miles of sandy beach throughout the year. The park is open daily from 6 am to 8 pm. 🌲

## SPARTA, FROM PAGE 15

in the Park - a fantastic holiday light display spread throughout the beautiful park. Lights in the Park continues throughout December.

Sparta is fortunate to be a stop on the famous Canadian Pacific Holiday Train. The train makes its annual stop in Sparta on Monday evening, December 9. Bringing top tier musical performers and Santa Claus, the beautifully decorated train opens up into a stage to entertain the large crowd that shows up every year.

Plan to spend more time in Sparta when the snow flies! Our historic trails host snowmobilers and fat tire bikers in the winter. Fort McCoy's family-friendly ski area has downhill and cross country skiing and a great tubing hill.

Of course Sparta's many shops and restaurants are open year 'round - as is the Deke Slayton Space and Bike Museum, which honors Sparta biking heritage and our connection to the early space program. The Monroe County History Room also has interesting and rotating exhibits. 🌲

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SPOTLIGHT | PLATTEVILLE



## A Peek of What's Waiting in Platteville

Platteville offers many outdoor recreation opportunities throughout the fall and winter and you'll find the autumn colors to be phenomenal! Travel our roadways and explore the countryside by ATV or UTV. Along the routes, you'll see many varieties of wildlife and interesting attractions to explore. For detailed information on local and county routes and maps, stop at the Wisconsin Welcome Center in Platteville.

As fall turns into winter and the snow begins to fall, check out our trail system with your fat tire bikes, cross country skis, or snowshoes. We have many miles of challenging trails and great scenic views.

### Katie's Garden Offers Holiday Excitement for Southwest Wisconsin

Katie's Garden, located adjacent to the Platteville Regional Chamber and Wisconsin Welcome Center, just celebrated its 20th Anniversary this summer. The Garden is a memorial dedicated to a young volunteer who had amassed over 800 hours of volunteer time working at the Chamber over her high school and college career. The young lady passed away at age 23 from a heart condition in 2004. Approximately a dozen master gardeners and volunteers put in long hours of work to make the garden a picture-perfect place for photos, such as family sittings, engagements, baby announcements and more. The Garden's gazebo is a beautiful focal point for weddings and a great venue for birthday and anniversary parties.

Each fall and winter, a local non-profit, Building Platteville, turns the garden into one of lights, and delights, with inflatables and animated light decorations. At Halloween, the garden is filled with spiders and bats, ghosts and goblins, and many other creatures that can trigger humor and fright! On the Friday and Saturday nights prior to Halloween, volunteers dress up to make the grounds the perfect place to Trick or Treat, with many opportunities to receive candy, hot chocolate, cookies, and a bag of popcorn. The garden is typically dressed for the scariest season for about 10 days prior to Halloween for all to enjoy.

On the first weekend of December, everything is converted to Christmas, with Santa and Mrs. Claus arriving by Fire Truck on the first Friday of the month. On December 6 and 7, Santa and Mrs. Claus will be found in the Santa Shed, which will be lit with animated lights and inflatables. Hundreds of children attend each year to visit with the jolly couple and receive an ornament to rekindle those memories at home. 📺

To learn more, visit [www.platteville.com](http://www.platteville.com) or call the Platteville Regional Chamber and Wisconsin Welcome Center at 608-348-8888.



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SPOTLIGHT | PRAIRIE DU CHIEN



## Buzzing With Holiday Festivities

Prairie du Chien is buzzing with holiday festivities as the year wraps up. It all begins with the Holiday Craft & Gift Fair on November 16, featuring over 50 vendors, food, and music. On Thanksgiving Day, join the Turkey Trot, a three-mile run/walk starting at 8 am at Hoffman Hall.

Explore local boutiques during Small Business Saturday on November 30 for unique gifts and seasonal treats. Enjoy the scenic holiday excitement of St. Feriolo Island and admire enchanting light displays.



The annual Christmas Parade on December 6 at 5:30 pm lights up Prairie du Chien with beautifully decorated floats and a special visit from Santa. Following the parade, the holiday festivities continue with the Villa Louis Christmas Tea on December 5 and 12, and the Victorian Home for the Holidays on December 7 - 8 and 14 - 15.

Food lovers can feast on special holiday menus, while winter sports enthusiasts find opportunities for ice fishing, snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing. History buffs can visit the Fort Crawford Museum during Christmas at the Fort on December 14.

As the year wraps up, Prairie du Chien anticipates vibrant New Year's Eve celebrations with Carp Fest from December 27 - 31. This week-long event offers a variety of family-friendly activities, including arts and crafts,

bowling, and swimming at Hoffman Hall. 🎉

For details on more activities in Prairie du Chien, visit our website at [prairieduchien.org](http://prairieduchien.org) or follow us on Facebook.



SPOTLIGHT | HURLEY



## On The Trails or Off, Your Perfect Destinations Await

Come to Hurley and enjoy a snowmobiler's paradise! With over 200 inches of snow annually and miles of snowmobile trails to explore, there's more than enough to keep you busy.

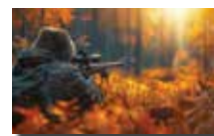
Not a fan of snow? Take advantage of the slowed down times and check out our local restaurants both on and off the trail. You're guaranteed to find a favorite you'll keep coming back to.

If you have any questions or would like for us to help you plan your next trip, be sure to give us a call or send us an e-mail. 715-561-4334, or [hurley@hurleywi.com](mailto:hurley@hurleywi.com). We hope to see you soon! 🎿



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Nov. 16..... Holiday Craft & Gift Fair, Hoffman Hall  
Nov. 28..... Thanksgiving Day Turkey Trot  
Dec. 6..... Holiday Parade, Downtown PdC along Blackhawk Ave. @ 5:30pm  
Dec. 6-8 & Dec. 13-15..... Villa Louis Christmas Tea, 1850 Brisbois Fur Trade Building, 1-3pm & 3-5pm  
Dec. 7..... Holiday Market, Super Christmas Shopping & Food, Ferryville Village Hall, 9am-3pm  
Dec. 7-8 & Dec. 13-15..... Victorian Home for the Holidays  
Dec. 12..... Soup and Salad Supper, Ferryville Village Hall Freewill Donations, 5-7pm  
Dec. 14..... Christmas at the Fort, Candy & Cookie Sale in the Museum, 717 S. Beaumont Rd. PdC  
Dec. 27-31..... Carp Fest, Week-long family related activities, Hoffman Hall PdC, WI



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# Hurley, WI

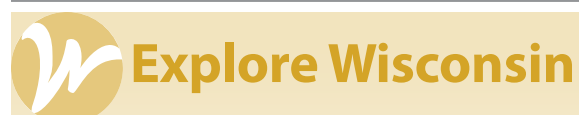




## “Snow Capital of Wisconsin”







SPOTLIGHT | CITY OF MARINETTE



## A Visitor's Dream

As autumn transitions into winter, the City of Marinette bursts with a plethora of indoor and outdoor adventures waiting to be explored. Known as the Waterfall Capitol of Wisconsin, Marinette County offers an astounding 15 waterfalls

for you to discover. Swing by the Marinette Welcome Center to grab your waterfall guide, pay a visit to Joe's Cheese House (one of Wisconsin's oldest cheese houses), and set off on an unforgettable adventure that will leave an indelible mark on your

memory. As you journey, take the time to explore the numerous shops and uncover hidden treasures that will truly elevate your experience.

For those seeking an aquatic thrill, imagine kayaking down the Menominee River or venturing out to the Bay of Green Bay. Commence your expedition at the historic Menekaunee Harbor, where you can delve into the rich history of the Menominee Indian Nation. Utilize Marinette's cutting-edge ADA kayak launch site, navigate the channel, and take your pick between the Menominee River and the Bay of Green Bay. On the bay, prepare to be mesmerized by breathtaking sunrises, the majestic Menominee Lighthouse, and the pristine beauty of nature. Meanwhile, on the river, be prepared to encounter deer along the shoreline, observe bald eagles soaring overhead, and even paddle alongside US Naval Combat ships while exploring the Stephenson Island Logging Museum.

For avid anglers, Marinette's fisheries are a dream come true, offering unparalleled fishing opportunities, be it from a boat, in waders, from the shore, or atop the Hattie Street Bridge. Hook-up to walleye, pike,

salmon, trout, muskies, bass, sturgeon, perch, and MORE!

If you're searching for the perfect way to kick off the holiday season, mark your calendar for "Christmas in Marinette" on December 7. This festive celebration promises a host of activities throughout the city. The event kicks off at the Community REC Center, where you'll find a captivating Christmas Craft Show that is second to none. Featuring a stunning array of hand-crafted Christmas and holiday home décor, live Christmas and holiday music, meet-and-greet sessions with Santa and Mrs. Claus, and cookie decorating with Mrs. Claus.

Following the craft show, head down to Main Street Marinette for the Christmas in Marinette Christmas Parade, featuring Christmas tunes from the Marinette Marching Band, a captivating live laser Christmas Show, delightful food trucks, and the enchanting Lighting of Merchants Park. It's a full day of creating cherished holiday memories in Marinette. 🎅

For more information, contact Shawn Katzbeck, Director of Marketing and Tourism, at 715-732-5162 or via email at [skatzbeck@marinette.wi.us](mailto:skatzbeck@marinette.wi.us).



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SPOTLIGHT | ST GERMAIN



## Serious About The Snow Sports And Here's The Cold Hard Proof

St. Germain is a snowmobiler's destination location and home to the state's largest snowmobile club, the Bo-Boens. Just west of the community is the Snowmobile Hall of Fame Museum where you can view machines from throughout the history of snowmobiling and view the Hall of Fame Wall commemorating some of snowmobiling's landmark events and personalities. St. Germain is serious about snowmobiling. Need more proof? We also maintain more than one hundred miles of groomed trails.

Join us for the museum's annual Ride with The Champs in February, which includes the Vintage Challenge. On February 5 - 6, the annual Groomer Show will be held at Arrowhead Groomers. There you can view the equipment necessary to keep the snowmobile trails in perfect shape for riding.

Want to slow things down? Take a hike, cross country ski, snowshoe, or even ride your fat tire bike on our local trails. Awassa Trails, located on Hwy 70, has a 1.4-mile and a 2.4-mile loop from which to choose. The Fern Ridge Recreation Area has four-mile trails for fat tire biking and shorter trails to hike and snowshoe. Both trail systems are in beautifully wooded areas with easy access and offer fun for all ages.

Try your hand at ice fishing. St. Germain is home to dozens of lakes, rivers, and streams. Talk with a local guide or visit a bait and tackle shop to learn what you need to safely fish during the winter season.

After a day in the beautiful winter landscape of St. Germain, visit a local restaurant or bar and cozy up by the fire with a hot drink.

There's always something to do in St Germain. Come and visit us soon! 🐾



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SPOTLIGHT | LA CROSSE



# Frost, Fun And Festivities: A Guide to Winter in The La Crosse Region

The La Crosse Region offers visitors a plethora of winter activities and entertainment, including festivals, exciting outdoor adventures, and cozy escapes.

Immerse yourself in the local culture and winter festivities like the Rotary Lights and Frothbite Beer & Bites Festival. Located in downtown La Crosse's Riverside Park, Rotary Lights celebrates its 30th annual celebration from Thanksgiving until the New Year. This fantastic light display features over three million lights, together with visits from Santa, ice skating, reindeer, carriage rides, and a host of other activities.

Another fun winter festival is the Between the Bluffs Frothbite, Beer and Bites Festival, held at the La Crosse Center. Here you can indulge in delicious foods, unique winter elixirs, and craft beverages from over 30 regional and national craft beverage distributors. Beyond Beers and Bites, guests can take part in a variety of activities such as giant Jenga, cornhole, Hammer-Schlagen®, music, and more!

Slip into the La Crosse Region's stunning scenery for all kinds of

thrilling, outdoor adventures.

There are plenty of opportunities to ice skate, go sledding, ski, ice fish, or hike. Mount La Crosse is a well-known skiing destination and perfect for those wanting to enjoy a winter ambiance among the bluffs. The beautiful Mississippi River and serene Lake Onalaska offer great opportunities for seasonal ice fishing.

Looking to relax and escape from the winter weather? The region has something fun for everyone, both indoors and out. Challenge your friends to a round of axe throwing, test your knowledge in escape rooms, or enjoy a lively game of pickleball. Grab your entourage and venture to downtown La Crosse and discover charming boutiques, local art galleries, and delicious dining havens. The La Crosse Region has many great cafe and restaurant options that are sure to satisfy and warm you up.

Embrace the winter season the Wisconsin way and celebrate the season where fun knows no bounds . . . the La Crosse Region is just a road trip away! 🍷



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## A Delightful Blend of Fall Beauty, Holiday Cheer

Nestled in the heart of Walworth County, Elkhorn transforms into a picturesque wonderland during the fall season. As the leaves turn vibrant shades of red, orange, and gold, the town offers visitors a blend of scenic beauty, festive events, and local businesses that make it an ideal destination for a late autumn getaway.

Elkhorn's charming downtown comes alive with holiday spirit. One of the key attractions during this time is the Elkhorn Christmas Parade, a beloved tradition that takes place in early December. Families and visitors from all over gather to watch the festive floats, enjoy live music, and see Santa Claus himself. The downtown area is decked out with twinkling lights and holiday decorations, creating a magical

ambiance perfect for holiday shopping and dining.

For those who appreciate outdoor activities, Lake Geneva is just a short drive away, offering opportunities for hiking, biking, or simply enjoying the stunning fall foliage that peaks in November. As the colder weather sets in, visitors can explore the area's Christmas tree farms, where families cut their own tree and enjoy a quintessential winter experience.

When it comes to local businesses, Elkhorn boasts a variety of exciting places to visit in the fall months. The Apple Barn Orchard & Winery, located just outside of town, is a must-visit. In November, visitors can pick apples, sample fresh cider, and explore the winery's selection of local wines. The cozy atmosphere and delicious offerings make it a perfect stop for anyone looking to savor local flavors.

For those interested in unique holiday gifts, Home Décor & Vintage offers a wide range of vintage and handmade items. This eclectic shop is perfect for finding one-of-a-kind treasures. Similarly, Friends on the Square, a quaint gift shop in downtown Elkhorn, is a great place to discover locally crafted goods, home decor, and seasonal items that reflect the charm of the town.

Food lovers will enjoy stopping by The Elk Restaurant, a staple in Elkhorn since 1945, serving classic American dishes. For a more festive experience, Moy's Restaurant, renowned for its Asian cuisine, offers hearty meals to warm up after a day of exploring.

Whether you're looking to experience the warmth of small-town charm or indulge in seasonal attractions, Elkhorn provides a delightful mix of fall beauty and holiday cheer, making it a destination worth visiting. 🌟



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**BILL THORNLEY**

# A Walk Back in Time

## Keeping the old deer stand standing

This is the time of year when many of us find our thoughts heading back out to that old deer stand in the woods. Deer stands hold a lot of memories, not only of days spent shivering against a brisk November wind, but of time spent building it and the people who helped.

In my case, the person who helped was Dad, a man gone now for nearly a decade. The old tree stand has pretty much been in the same location since we first put it up back around 1974. When I told him about my idea for an elevated stand, he looked at me as if I were insane. Hunting is done on the ground, he said. And then he helped me build it anyway. Dads are like that.

Heavy winter snows and violent summer storms can do a lot of damage to tree stands that are in many cases old and wobbly in the first place. Mine is the most basic of stands, just four walls, a base, and a roof to keep the snow and rain off. And it is more than 25 years old.

Repairs were called for again this year. Summer storms had roared through the area, blowing the roof right off and weakening the north wall. A John Deere with a bucket helped lift things back into place and nail things down for another season. I also rebuilt the ladder, just for safety. After hanging camo, things will be ready for another season.

I've been hunting the area since the days I first wandered out into the woods with my father and grandfather as a child. When not in the tree stand, I still walk some of the same trails we walked and sit on some of the same old logs and stumps we sat on.

Working on the stand is a great time to check out the surroundings. Fresh scrapes and new rubs on nearby pines are always cause for optimism. Well-used trails and large tracks cause excitement. A couple wolf-killed carcasses within sight of the stand bring frustration.

Once the nail pounding is finished, it is time to climb up into the stand and just sit for a while, looking and watching, recalling hunts of the past and wondering what might be coming over the hill on opening morning.

Time in the deer stand is not wasted time, even when it isn't hunting season. I enjoy watching the chattering little red squirrel scold me from a short distance away, his tail bobbing up and down excitedly.

Overhead, Mother Nature usually puts on a wonderful show as flock after flock of Canada geese glide just above the treetops. Their honking is musical.

Warm memories come back when you're sitting in a stand Dad originally helped you build. I recalled the old-



Repairing the old tree stand sometimes calls for a John Deere and a bucket, as winter snows, summer storms and time take a toll. Photo by Bill Thornley.

style red and black plaid hunting jackets my father and grandpa wore. Before blaze orange I had the same outfit.

There is something special about just being in the deer woods. I admit to getting softer as I age. I've let many bucks pass in the past few years, simply enjoying watching them rather than pulling the trigger.

But the old tree stand is ready one more time, and so am I. I look forward to the incredible feeling that washes over me when the first rays of warm orange sunlight filter through the pine needles on opening morning. We will see what magic and memories can be made this year. 🍷



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## TYLER FLORCZAK

# Barron County's Biggest Black Bear

## Bruin taken in Chetek has potential to be record-setter

Janesville resident Mackensy Hanson made the most of her first and only hunt of the 2024 black bear season when the 29-year-old harvested a 722-pound bruin on the evening of Wisconsin's 2024 black bear hunting opener.

The giant boar will certainly earn Boone & Crockett status, but may very well be the largest black bear ever taken in Barron County history. The bear could also vie for more records. Following a 60-day skull drying period, there is potential that the giant bear could challenge the Wisconsin state record determined by skull size.

"I didn't expect to shoot a bear of this caliber, but I remember praying to my great-grandmother to please send a bear on opening day; and, apparently, she made that happen!" Mackensy said. "She is the person who connects our family to the Chetek area, and it was truly a full circle moment."

The potential county record bear is the first big game animal Hanson has ever

harvested.

Chetek's Dawson Davis, who has baited and hunted bear his entire life, was Hanson's guide and bear baiter this season. Davis' grandfather, Gary Muermann, is widely renowned as "Bear Man" in the local hunting community. Bear hunting is in Muermann's and Davis' blood and that is why they take so much pride in family, friends or clients harvesting big black bears like the record-setter taken a few miles east of Chetek.

"This particular bear has been living in the area forever - we've been chasing him for five years," Davis said. "We put a lot of time into baiting, setting stands and running trail cameras each year. It's a dream come true for us. My grandpa said this is the biggest bear he's seen in person and has been a part of. It's pretty cool to share this experience with my grandpa and the Hansons."

Mackensy's father, Matt, noted that his first bear hunt in the area was 35 years ago

with none other than "Bear Man."

September 4 arrived and Mackensy and her dad were settled into their stand by 5:30 am on a quest for a giant black bear that was unmistakable as it donned a thick, white "V" on its chest.

The morning hunt was slow as zero bears showed.

At 2:30 pm, Mackensy and Matt wandered back to the bait station, re-baited the bear stump and hunkered back into their blind for a long evening hunt. Nearly five hours had passed when Matt suspected he heard a bear right outside of the blind.

"We were fixated on the trail coming out of the swamp right in front of us, knowing that's the route the big bear likes to take. Suddenly, I could hear the bear smacking its jaws, tasting the air/bear bait smell in the air. It felt like he was right next to me," Matt recalled.

Ironically enough, it was just feet away.

"When I saw the head of the bear, I panicked. I initially thought I could shoot him in the head since that's all I could see in my scope. However, dad told me to wait and shoot him where I've practiced which is right behind the shoulder," Mackensy explained.

Luckily, the first shot, taken at 12 yards, connected and was a lethal lung shot.

Matt stated the bear will certainly make Boone & Crockett record books, should be



a new Barron County record and could be one of the top bears ever taken in the state.

Mackensy reiterated that her prayer to her great-grandmother was critical but it also took family, friends and her dad to successfully harvest a once-in-a-lifetime animal.

The 60-day drying period ends on November 4. That will determine which record/records the 722.6-pound bear breaks. 🐾

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STEVE BETTS

# Wisconsin Youth Trapshooting

## *The future of shooting sports*

Trapshooting, skeet and sporting clays for school-age children is the fastest growing sport in Wisconsin. There are now thousands of middle and high school-aged children participating in competition and some continue on into college. Most can achieve a varsity letter at their high schools. Many adult coaches, parent volunteers and shooting clubs spend countless hours training, certifying and committing time to teach young men and women proper techniques, etiquette and sportsmanship in the shooting sports.

With all the negative press about young people and firearms, there is a new way to combat these fears by teaching young adults proper and safe gun handling before bad habits can ever start.

Safety is the top priority and proper gun handling skills are mandatory before the participants ever attempt to break a clay target. While hunter's safety certification is mandatory before they can join the team, I make sure those things learned in class are

only the beginning. By the time the youth have shot a few rounds of trap, they are already as safe or safer than many adults.

If you dare to imagine a competition with 150 young adults in a clubhouse with firearms and ammunition, it's easy to see why safety is always a top priority. In fact, it is absolutely the safest high school sport in the state, and injuries are non-existent. Competitors are taught to clean the trap line of empty shotgun hulls after shooting and to be respectful and thank the trap scorers. They leave the shooting club that hosts in the same or better condition than when they arrived.

I often classify the youth shooters into three categories. The first is the recreational shooter who just wants to do something fun on Monday nights and shoot at 50 clays (two rounds of trap) with some friends with 10 - 13 meets with competition. The second is the hunter who wants to learn better techniques to improve hunting skills. The third is the competitor. These

young adults put a huge amount of time and effort into becoming top performers in conference, state and national competitions. They often show up for open shooting and they practice shooting 10 rounds of trap or more per week during the season. These individuals are the ones who are most receptive to coaching at a high level and their skills progress to an extremely high level, often surpassing their coaches after a couple of years. They are taught a life skill and can come back to the sport in ten years and, if coached properly, can pick up just about where they left off.

The world of youth shooting sports is a fairly new way to introduce young adults into the world of firearms and safety. Many adults do not even realize that shooting sports are even available in their school district. The SCTP (Scholastic Clay Target Program) is a great resource to find out if there is a program in your area.

Youth shooters can progress very quickly from someone who cannot hold or walk with a firearm properly to one of the safest and most proficient shooters in the state. The two most common things I hear from parents are, "I wish there was a program like this when I was a kid!" and "I didn't



Hannah Densow of Saukville is shown at the 2024 Wisconsin State Shoot Youth Trap Competition in Rome, Wisconsin, with her SKB RS400. Hannah is the 2024 female Top Gun at the Ozaukee Scholastic Shooting Sport Competition, the fourth straight year she has earned the honor.

know this program existed."

If you are reading this and you are a trap or sporting clays shooter, see if you can sign up your child and have a shooting partner for life. 🦋

Steve is an ATA/AIM LEVEL 3 NRA and Advanced Olympic shotgun coach, NRA RSO, certified Shotgun and Rifle instructor. He is currently a shooting coach for Ozaukee Scholastic Shooting Sports at the home club of Ozaukee Fish and Game in Ozaukee County and coaches for all middle and high schools in Ozaukee County.



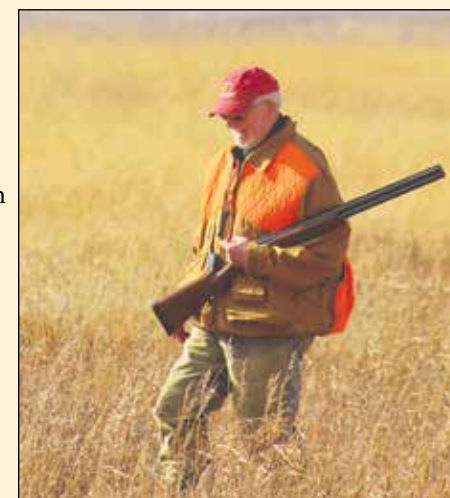
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## OWO's 2024 North Dakota Upland Game Bird Hunt the Best Yet

On Wisconsin Outdoors annual upland game bird hunt to Dickinson, North Dakota took place October 19 through October 21. After a great spring nesting season, we experienced the highest number of pheasants, sharptailed grouse and Hungarian partridge that we've seen in seven years of visiting the "Western Edge". There is ample time for your own hunt.

The drive time from Milwaukee to the city of Dickinson, our hub for the On Wisconsin Outdoors hunt, was 12 hours. The cost of a 7-day non-resident license is \$122, which also allows you to choose a return 7-day hunt later in the year. We stay at the hunter and dog-friendly LaQuinta Inn and Suites (See ad).

For more information connect with [www.visitdickinson.com](http://www.visitdickinson.com).



89-year-old Dick Henske of Manitowish Waters found great bird hunting in North Dakota in October.



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DICK ELLIS

# Seeking Wolf Photos

## OWO's informal population census continues

On Wisconsin Outdoor's informal wolf population census continues. Please send your trail cam photos, videos, or hand-held camera shots of wolves in Wisconsin to: [wolves@onwisconsinoutdoors.com](mailto:wolves@onwisconsinoutdoors.com). List the county where the photos were taken, the date, and verify the number of wolves visible in each photo. Your name will not be published without your permission.

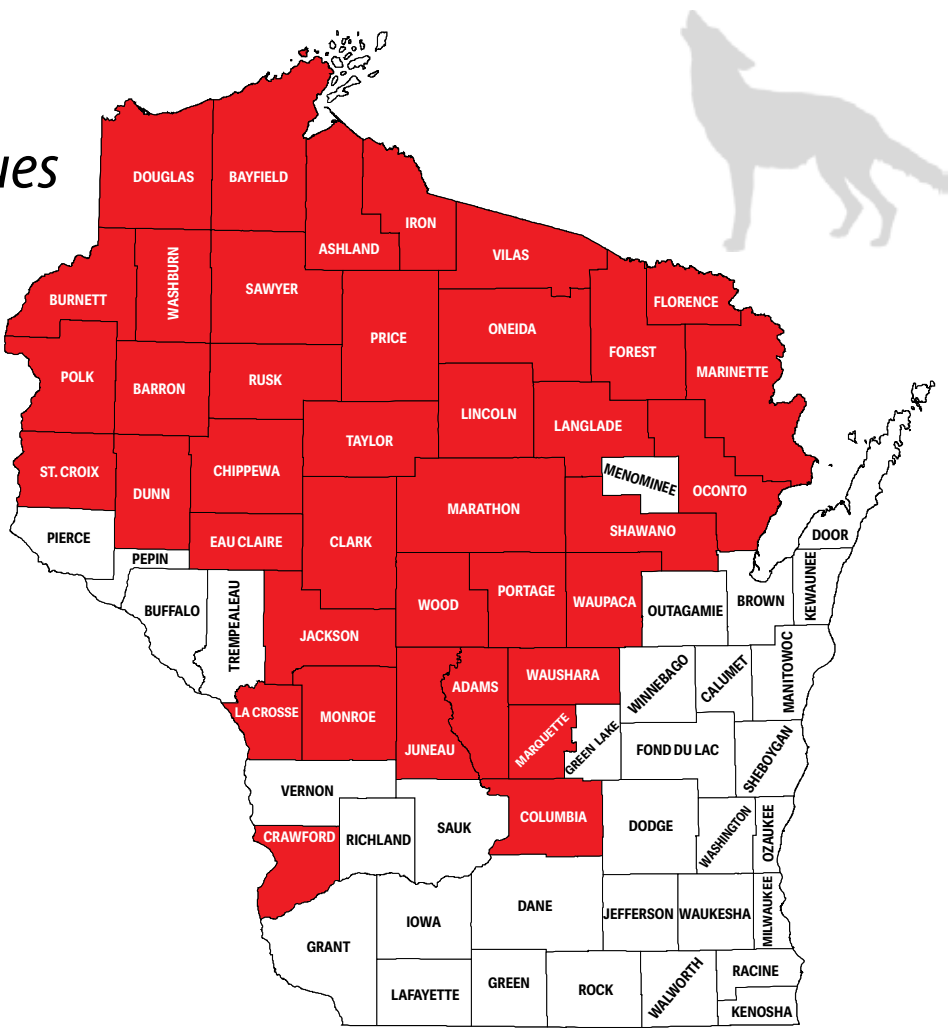
OWO publishers strongly disagree with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) population estimate that place wolf numbers in Wisconsin at 1007 animals during the winter of 2022/23. We believe that an unmanaged wolf population in the state directly correlates with a severely declining deer hunting experience and that we are among the large majority of Wisconsin deer hunters. We believe that the decline in our Wisconsin tradition will magnify further as individual wolves and wolf packs continue to expand to create an increasingly out-of-balance predator/prey ratio.

And, in correlation with increasing and expanding wolf numbers, we believe that attacks on domestic pets and livestock will

continue to increase. Of greatest concern, dangerous confrontations between wolves and humans will increase as a predator not being hunted loses its fear of man.

The wolf is welcome in Wisconsin in proper numbers and balance. He is also a vicious, robotic-like predator seeking only to survive that literally eats his prey alive. It's how he is made. By contrast, the large majority of Wisconsin hunters embrace logic in preparing for the hunt, including sighting in firearms to ensure a quick, humane kill and electing not to take the shot that does not offer that probability. By placing wolf over man, state wildlife managers and judicial radicals eliminate hunting traditions and heritage, take away the opportunity for venison in freezers across our state, and invite slaughter to deer and other prey that even anti-hunters would not tolerate if they witnessed just one such kill.

By the numbers, since OWO asked for your trail cam photos of wolves, we have now published approximately 120 photos from readers since January, 2024. This



CONTINUED ON PAGE 29



10-10-2024 Waupaca County 1 Wolf (Wolf Stalks Young Buck)



10-10-2024 Waupaca County 1 Wolf (Wolf Begins Attack at Groin)



10-10-2024 Waupaca County 1 Wolf (Wolf Continues Eating Buck Alive)



9-19-2023 Eau Claire County 3 Wolves



8-24-2024 Clark County 6 Wolves



8-30-2023 Eau Claire County 4 Wolves



9-06-2024 Marquette County 1 Wolf



8-12-2024 Marinette County 1 Wolf (With Fawn Head in Mouth)



ELLIS, *FROM PAGE 28*

includes with this issue an additional 10 photos or DNR confirmation of depredation reports of wolves from 12 additional counties not previously represented: Burnett, Washburn, Rusk, Taylor, Chippewa, Dunn, Eau Claire, Monroe, Crawford, Marquette, Waushara, and Waupaca. New photos submitted and published in this issue include photos from Eau Claire, Clark, Marquette, Waupaca, Marinette and Sawyer Counties.

To review depredation reports and maps on the DNR website as we did, connect with the website, and click on "Hunting" and the "Wolf" links. Visit "Confirmed and Probable Wolf Depredations" and "Verified Wolf Harassment and Threats" listed for the years 2019-2024.

OWO photos published or state verification of wolf depredation or threats now reflect activity in 39 of Wisconsin's 72 counties. In our ongoing project, red on the adjacent Wisconsin map will represent counties from which we have received wolf photos or state verification of wolf activity.

To date, using the state mark of approximately 1000 wolves, with 120 snapshots taken from more than 54 percent of Wisconsin's 72 counties, we



9-21-2024 Wolf Killed By Waterfowl Hunter Protecting Group in Oneida County

have in theory captured 12 percent of the DNR's estimated population. The photo contributions or state-evidence represent

only a literal snapshot of the vast territory within each of the 39 counties, with 33 of Wisconsin counties not yet contributing a single photo to our informal survey. We're confident they will, with the possible exception of counties in the far south.

Thank you for sending your trail cam photos of wolves, and for informing friends, local sports shop owners, shooting clubs or other possible sources that OWO is asking for photos that will help verify or challenge state population estimates. Healthy, science-based wildlife management is only possible with accurate numbers of predator and prey serving as the foundation for decisions.

Help us verify truth in numbers. Wherever it leads us.

### Wisconsin Waterfowl Hunter Cleared in Killing of Aggressive, Approaching Wolf

A 19-year old duck hunter accompanied by 13 and 14 year old friends was not charged with killing an aggressive wolf at approximately 10 yards distance opening day, September 21, while hunting the Wisconsin River north of the Sugar Camp Dam in Oneida County. An Open Records report requested by OWO from the DNR detailing the investigation conducted by Conservation Warden Tim Price was

received October 25.

According to the report, the hunter constructed a ground blind with use of a deadfall on the shoreline and after first-shooting hours, encountered two wolves on shore. The 19-year old attempted to scare off the wolves by stomping his feet and clapping his hands. The first wolf began to quickly walk toward the three as a third wolf appeared five yards from the blind.

"The first wolf kept coming toward us (within 10 yards) and I quickly lifted my gun to protect the three of us," the hunter states in the warden report. "As I shouldered my gun the wolf next to the blind took off and I simultaneously shot the first wolf which was about 10 yards from us." The young hunter in the report states that he initially did not know if the animal approaching was a coyote or wolf, and that he had no intention of shooting until his group felt threatened and fearful.

Other witnesses including a hunter close to the incident interviewed by OWO stated another seven to 10 different wolves were in the area and that up to four packs frequent the area.

Following the investigation, the Oneida County and Federal district attorney offices will not press charges. 🐾

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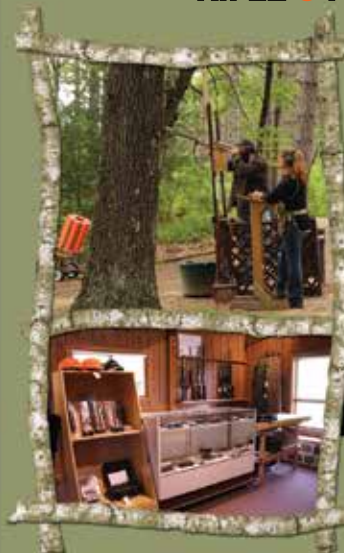
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**BILL RANDS**

# Understanding the Northern Wisconsin Deer Herd

We have a large tract of land located 20 miles north of Ladysmith. It is all in one block and over time we have added 120 acres of food plots. We planted every crop imaginable, but our staple crops are soybeans, corn, alfalfa, kale and clover.

We had a live camera system (32 cameras) installed where we could watch many of the fields and crossings that record video on motion. We also had 24 Reconyx Trail Cameras set throughout the property, monitoring game trails, fields, etc. and each camera on motion would capture more than 2000 pictures each week.

In 2010 we started annually doing helicopter surveys of the property, to better understand the deer herd, winter habits, total deer count and predator population. In 2020 we decided to do helicopter surveys two to three times per month whenever there was snow on the ground.

Our focus during 2002-2018 was to harvest five and six-year-old 150-to-160-inch class bucks and kids were allowed to shoot any buck of any size. Many bucks had poor genetics and we made a significant effort to remove all cull bucks from the population. Every four-year-old buck and older we're named and we generally harvested 10 to 12 bucks per year of which two were usually the five and six-year-old, 150 -160-inch trophies. In order to keep the buck to doe ratio close we would sometimes harvest up to 40 does per year.



9-21-2012 Sawyer County 9 Wolves

In September we knew which deer survived the rifle and bow season and winter from the previous year. We would usually lose one or maybe two from the four to six-year-old buck class and normally had six to eight bucks in that age class.

Our first wolf pictures were in 2012 with three photos the entire year. From there it exploded and we now have thousands of photos each year of wolves, at times with four to five wolves in one photo. Since 2018 we have not harvested any buck over 130. Five- and six-year-old bucks today do not exist on our property. Today our bucks never make it past four years old and the doe count is so low we only harvest three-to-five per year for our Hunt of a Lifetime and youth hunts only.

Now I find myself sitting in the cabin looking at the 24 trophy, five-to-eight-year-old mature bucks on our wall and realize our whitetail traditions are gone and will never return. I have a close friend in

Minocqua that owns 3000 acres and this year harvested one 125 inch, eight pointer. After a fresh snow he can't find a deer track on his property, but plenty of wolves. I have another close friend that owns 400 acres north of Loretta in the National Forest who over 30 years has harvested many trophy bucks but nothing in the last five years. He can no longer get his hunting partners to even come to his camp because there are no deer. There are many landowners and sportsmen in northern Wisconsin who are all experiencing this extreme change in the whitetail population.

Wolves have over time learned to adapt to varying conditions. They have refined their hunting skills and have become very efficient hunters, enjoying great success. They effectively have kills in the same locations night after night and year after year. They prefer bedding in swamps and very thick areas and will travel a great distance from their bedding area to their hunting area. When you first see wolves on your game cameras it will take them four-to-five years while they adapt and master how to effectively prey on deer in your area. At that point you will learn how clever and successful they become once they learn the whitetail habits.

Clearly no one understands our property like I do. Seeing what is on our property and around the northern part of the state, I believe we have more than 10,000 wolves in Wisconsin. The experts will tell you

each wolf eats 20 deer per year. That's 200,000 deer per year just for the wolves. Now they have convinced hunters to not harvest any does for the next four years because hunters harvested too many deer. I believe that will provide a greater food source for the wolves and increase the wolf populations which will further reduce the deer populations. Don't worry. They will hold hearings and offer public comment to again pacify the hunters who will continue accepting poor management plans. Wolves need to be controlled and every sportsman in the Northwoods understands that. The season needs to be reopened and realistic kill numbers need to be achieved. If the DNR believes there are a minimum of 1200 wolves in the state, open the season for one week statewide and I predict 1200 would be harvested. That would prove how unrealistic their current population estimates are.

Ultimately with a decreased deer population there will be less hunters. If I were a conspiracy theorist, I may say the less hunters in Wisconsin the less guns there are to control. It's just hard for me to believe the DNR is choosing to allow the wolves to decimate our deer herd which will ruin our Wisconsin deer hunting tradition. Can you imagine the economic loss to our state not to mention the camaraderie for all sportsman who enjoy the Whitetail Hunting Tradition? 🐾

**TODD WOIDA**

## Wolf Encounter in Marinette County

An email to On Wisconsin Outdoors in October briefly detailed an encounter between Marinette County grouse hunter Todd Woida, his dog Mocha, and wolves that had just killed a deer before venturing too close to the hunters for comfort.

"I appreciate you and your efforts in keeping pressure on this critical issue," Woida wrote. "On Sunday, October 6th, 2024, at about 8:15 am I took my dog, Mocha, on a brief grouse hunt out at my place in Amberg, Wisconsin. As we were about 80 yards out the back door, I heard what could only be described as a lamb going to slaughter. These bleats of agony were accompanied by steps I interpreted as steps coming up the trail towards the dog and me."

With Mocha held by the collar, Woida shouted at the approaching wolves and immediately returned to the cottage to put the dog away before setting back out to



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investigate further. Within 30 minutes, he discovered the point of the deer kill scene that almost all hunters will eventually relate to who hunt in wolf country. He also sent OWO photos of wolves at the same time and in the territory of the kill.

"I also have a game camera as part of the Wisconsin DNR 'Snapshot' program," Woida continued. "I enclosed a picture clearly indicating that two wolves were on camera at 8:03 am on October 6, 2024, heading in the direction of the kill I heard about 8:20 am. The additional pictures are zoomed in pictures of each wolf as they passed the camera."

"I feel like Mocha and I dodged a bullet on this one. There were also three other dogs up at my place and it was the busiest weekend of the year for me. They knew we were there-they simply didn't care." 🐾





*Presents Firearms Info from Ron Stresing*

**RON STRESING**

## On Target - Basic shotgun patterning

**K**nowing how your shotgun patterns will allow you to tailor it to the task at hand. You have selected the choke and shells to do the job. But do you really know how the shot will pattern at the distance you will be engaging your targets? A trip to the patterning board will answer a lot of questions. It will also improve your clay target scores and help harvest game.

When I started hunting in the mid-1960s, no one bothered patterning their shotgun. Folks bought light loads of 6 shot for small game, high brass 5 shot for pheasants, and 4s for ducks. Most guys shot full choke at everything. Only a few serious clays shooters might put up some cardboard and shoot at the middle to check the spread of the shot. With the advent of turkey hunting, hunters actually started checking on the point-of-aim vs point-of-impact and how

the shot patterned. Now hunters regularly check to see how their specialized hunting loads pattern from various chokes and ranges. If you are paying about \$1 every time you pull the trigger for premium hunting loads, why not?

The challenge of writing an article about patterning your shotgun is to give the reader enough basic information to do it. What you don't want to do is cause the reader's eyes to glaze over with excessive details. I suggest starting with a large piece of cardboard. Draw a dark, easily visible, four-inch circle in the center and mark a 30-inch circle around the four-inch bullseye. Some shooters actually count the pellet holes in the 30-inch circle. I prefer to simply estimate the percentage of the pattern.

For hunters, I suggest starting at 25 yards, then 35 yards. If you pass shoot waterfowl or hunt late season pheasants, you want to test out to 40 yards as well. Hunters want about 30 - 50 percent of their pattern above the point-of-aim. Pay attention to the outer edges of the pattern, as that's the part that ends up hitting most game. Large holes in the pattern or ragged edges lead to lost and wounded game. Most hunters tend to over choke. Ninety percent of hunting (with lead or steel) can be done with modified choke. Safety Reminder: If patterning large steel pellets like BB or BBB, be sure to use an open choke like IC.

Clays shooters are a more particular lot. Trap shooters want their patterns 90 - 100 percent of their shot patterning above the point-of-aim. This is because of the rising target in trap. Skeet or sporting clays



shooters want about 50 - 50 percent above the point-of-aim. Trap shooters should pattern at 35 and 40 yards. Skeet shooters should pattern at 25 yards, and sporting clays shooters at 25 and 35 yards. If you shoot sporting clays, I suggest trying a variety of clays loads and chokes. Less can be more; try lighter loads with one ounce of shot. Research my shooting partners and I have done found that some of the best patterning and performing sporting clays loads were loaded to 1150 fps. Lower velocity loads often gave the most even patterns with the best outer rings. 🦌



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