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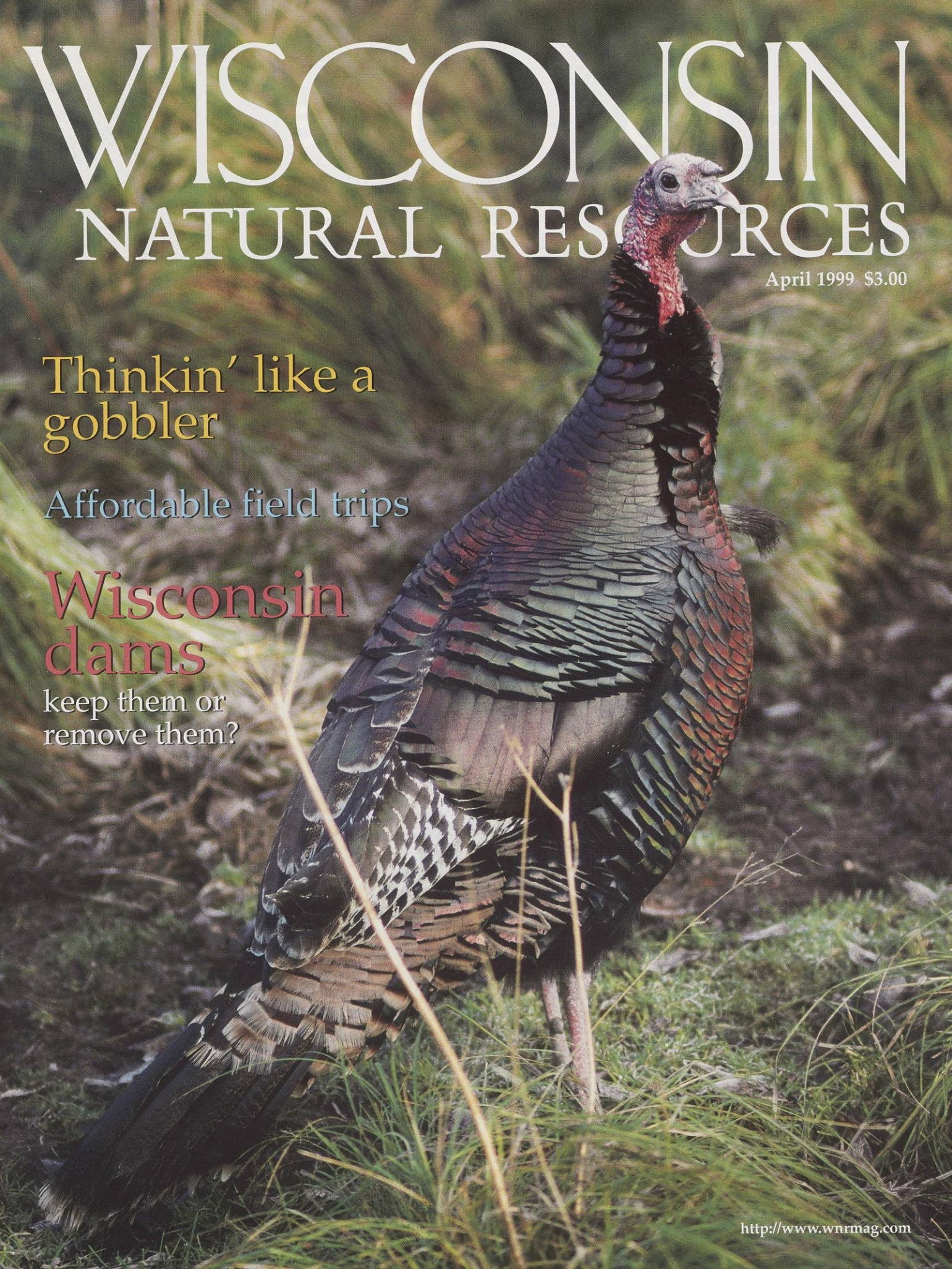
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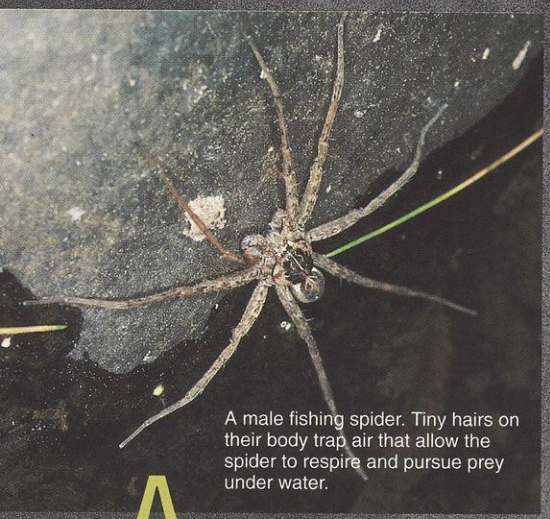
Dockside hunters

Fishing spiders stalk prey on land, on water and below the surface.

Story and Photos by Don Blegen



A male fishing spider. Tiny hairs on their body trap air that allow the spider to respire and pursue prey under water.

After a long afternoon pursuing the elusive walleye, we were headed back to the cabin and supper. Corey cut the outboard and coasted the boat into the dock. The dock supports were made of skinned pine logs faded white by weathering which were anchored by rock-filled cribs. Two huge, very dark spiders stood out against the white logs. Each was easily the size of a child's hand.

Corey, afflicted perhaps with a touch of arachnophobia, looked them over as the boat drifted in. "Disgusting!" he muttered under his breath. The spiders seemed out of place here in the North Country. Spiders that big should be in some tropical rain forest or maybe a desert. As the boat bumped the dock, one of the spiders scuttled out of sight around a log, like a squirrel around a tree. The other one leaped to the water and danced across the surface to a clump of reeds and disappeared. They were fishing spiders.

Fishing spiders (or raft spiders as they are called in Europe) should not be confused with water striders. Water striders are insects, and fishing spiders are arachnids. Both are predators, and both can skim across the water as if it were a solid surface. But fishing spiders are much, much bigger, and leave a much more lasting impression.

People who have had a good look at a fishing spider are impressed and tend to use superlatives when describing their encounters. Like any good tale of a missed buck or lost lunker, there is an inevitable temptation to exaggerate. Though fishing spiders reach tarantula proportions in many stories, in fact, a big female will barely exceed three inches in legspan — not as big as a tarantula, but plenty big enough to make a very hairy memory.

continued on page 29

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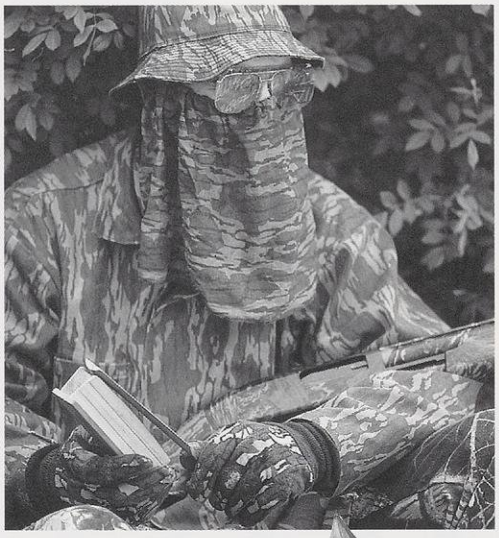
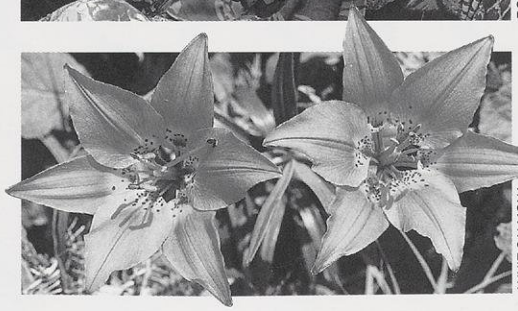


ROBERT QUEEN



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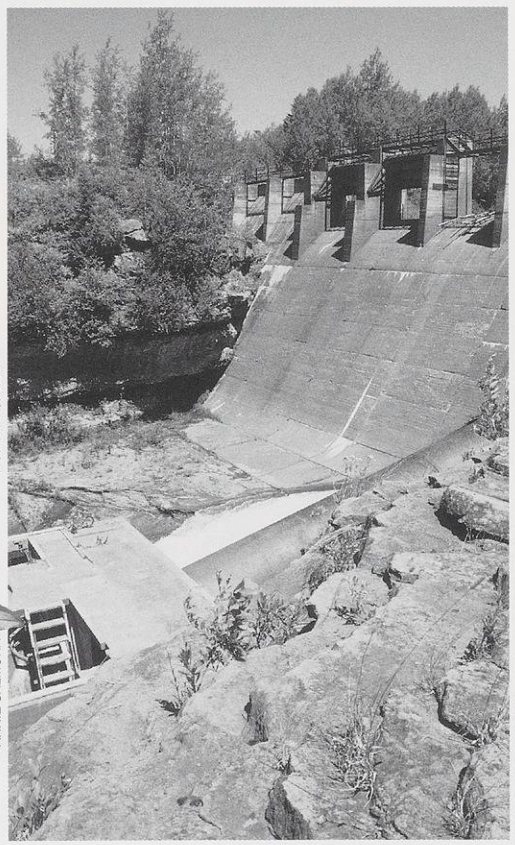
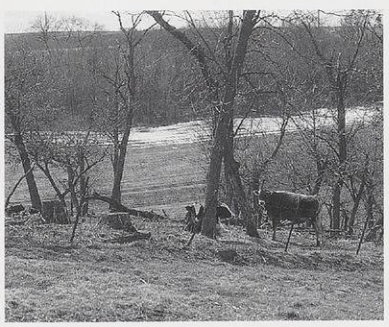


KATHERINE ESPOSITO



ROBERT QUEEN

FRONT COVER: A jake turkey struts his stuff in spring.
HERBERT LANGE, Hazel Green, Wis.

BACK COVER: Spring trilliums in bloom at Powers Bluff Maple Woods State Natural Area.
THOMAS A. MEYER, Mount Horeb, Wis.

Thinkin' like a gobbler

Tips and tactics to talk turkey and bring in toms in springtime.

Doug Hoskins

Gobble-obble-obble!

The sound made the hair stand up on the back of my neck. The snow-white head of a gobbler was plainly visible as he cautiously worked his way through the multiflora rose bushes on my hunting partner's Grant County farm. My arm muscles were starting to ache from holding my shotgun in the "ready" position for what seemed like a half-hour, though it was more like two or three minutes. The tip of the barrel was beginning to waver. My heart was thumping so loudly I was sure the bird would hear it. I was breathing in short little gasps and my glasses were fogging up in the humid morning air.

STEPHEN J. LANG

Wild turkeys now range throughout Wisconsin except along the extreme northern border.

The bird, in full display, was now about 40 yards away, still too far for my self-imposed 30-yard shooting limit. Another 10 yards and he would be both in the clear and in good range. My finger slowly started to put pressure on the trigger as the bird closed in…38 yards, 36, 34…

Before I complete this turkey hunting moment, let's go back to 1976. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources started a program with the Missouri Depart-

ment of Conservation to trade some of our ruffed grouse in exchange for wild turkeys. From those original 29 birds released in Vernon County, turkeys have returned to much of their former range. We now have a growing population of more than 200,000 birds. In 1983, during the first spring turkey hunting season, 1,200 permits were issued in four zones. Today 50 zones are open to hunting. It's one of the greatest success stories in Wisconsin wildlife management.

Perhaps you've thought about adding turkey hunting to your outdoor activities, or maybe you've hunted the wily bird but haven't been very successful. Or maybe you just like looking at birds and taking photographs. Whatever your interest, just remember these tips are written for the spring hunter or photographer. Turkey behavior in fall is markedly different and many of these suggestions would not be viable for the fall season.

The privilege of spending quality "woods-time" in the spring is the greatest appeal of this sport. The fragrance of wild plum blossoms, the rich, musical *O-ka LEEE* of the red-winged blackbird, afternoon quests for tasty morel mushrooms, and spectacular sunsets just over the next rise make every turkey hunt a success, even when those strutting 25-pound toms have once again eluded your shotgun or shutter. To find turkeys, you've got to go where they are, and it's usually a darn nice place to be.

Find a good spot

Wild turkeys are found throughout the state except in extreme northern Wisconsin. Some of the heaviest concentrations are in the hills and coulees of southwest Wisconsin as well as the sand country of west-central Wisconsin.

If you applied for a turkey hunting permit before the December 10th deadline and if you were successful in the draw, the first thing you need to do is secure permission to hunt on land that likely holds turkeys. Approximately 90 percent of the wild turkeys in Wisconsin are found on private land. Begin contacting landowners in late January or early February, as soon as you receive your permit. Often landowners, particularly farmers, plan to hunt their land with family and friends during the first of the six spring hunting periods. After that, many are willing to allow access by others.

Once you have secured permission

to hunt private land, don't take it for granted! Offer to help the landowner with making hay, chopping firewood, clearing brush, repairing fences and other chores. Bring the family a cooler of good Wisconsin cheese and sausage. Take the landowners out to dinner. Send them a card at Christmas time. Most importantly, respect the land and the owners' wishes.

Do not overlook public hunting areas. Many people incorrectly assume public land is always crowded and over-hunted. Not so! Many times, the person who is willing to walk in from the road or parking lot is amply rewarded.

Scout before the season

Walking the property where you will be hunting or taking photos is an absolute must prior to the spring season. I begin scouting with my hunting partners Jeff Engel and Dave Davis in late March. The birds are still in large flocks of sometimes 100 birds or more. Depending on snowmelt and available food, the flocks break up and the birds drift back to the areas where they will be found in April and May.

Scouting begins in earnest in early April and continues throughout the spring. Once the hunting periods begin, it's both inconsiderate and dangerous to tromp around the woods when others are hunting or seeking photo opportunities.

Studying topographic maps and aerial photos will help you start your search near wooded areas. Early-season scouting is best on the southern exposures of wooded hills — the first areas where snow melts and exposes acorns (a turkey favorite) and other seeds. As the spring progresses and all the snow melts, the northern sides of the hills will become the most active as "new" supplies of foods appear on the forest floor.

Walk the entire property, with the landowner if possible, so that you don't inadvertently stray on neighboring land where you don't have permission. Look for obstructions such as woven-wire fences, deep gullies, rivers, and the like. Even though turkeys are strong fliers for short distances and can easily fly across or over obstacles, they often times won't, and your hours of patient waiting and calling may be fruitless.

Also look for feathers, droppings, scratching and dusting areas, and roosts. Black-tipped breast feathers are from a tom turkey; brown or buff-tipped ones are from a hen. A tom's feces are elongated in the shape of a "j"; hen droppings are round, about the size of a nickel. Scratching and dusting areas are cleared of leaves and other debris. Turkeys generally roost in mature trees with open branches. Often you will see large amounts of droppings under these roosts.

Do not fret if you only find "hen sign." Where there are hens, there will be gobblers!

Do your homework

I firmly believe the more you know about your quarry, the more successful you'll be. When you receive a turkey hunting permit, the mailing includes a list of free seminars. These three- to four-hour sessions are taught by a dedicated core of volunteer instructors. DNR staff also answer questions and provide tips about safety, ethics, and understanding the hunting regulations. I strongly encourage you to attend these seminars and others offered at sporting goods stores and sports shows. Helpful books, magazines and how-to videos are also available at stores, by mail and at libraries.

DON BLEGEN *(INSET)* JEFF ENGEL

Spring turkey hunts start in the winter. Contact landowners. Search for winter flocks. Use topo maps to scout out hunting areas. Look for feathers, dusting areas and droppings that turkeys leave on their daily travels.

When toms have hang-ups

One of the most frustrating scenarios for the turkey hunter is "hung-up" gobblers. These birds come close to being within range, and then just stop. They might strut back and forth and gobble in the same spot for an hour or more, but they won't come any closer no matter how you plead your case of the "lovesick hen."

Some techniques for dealing with hung-up birds are:

- If you've been calling a lot, call less or stop calling altogether. He may get curious, think you've left and come over for a closer look.
- If you haven't been calling much, try using aggressive cutts and purrs.
- If you can get away with some movement, scratch in the leaves with your hand or a stick to imitate a feeding hen.
- If there are two of you, have the caller move away from the bird as if the hen is leaving, possibly bringing the gobbler closer to the shooter.
- If you're alone, cup your hand over your mouth and turn your head to "throw" your calls, again to imitate a disinterested, departing hen.
- Imitate a turkey fight by using aggravated purrs or hitting brush.
- If the tom wanders off, move to where he was and call again. He may come back to that spot. There was something about it he liked.

JEFF ENGEL

gobblegob

ROBERT QUEEN

AL CORNELL

(above) As you scout, note fences, gullies and obstructions that might keep a turkey from coming when you call.
(left) Examining a "beard." Hens usually don't have beards. Jakes have short ones and gobblers have longer beards unless the tips rub off or break off during feeding.

Since only male or bearded turkeys are legal targets during the spring seasons (either sex may be harvested during the fall hunt), you must be able to distinguish between gobblers and hens.

Adult toms and "jakes" (young male birds hatched the previous spring) have a "beard" that protrudes from the upper center of their breast. The length of the beard can range from only two to three inches up to over 12 inches. Even though beards can grow up to six inches a year, a four-year-old tom may only have a 10-inch beard, because the ends continually break off from dragging on the ground or being stepped on as the bird feeds.

Male turkey characteristics include shades of red, white or blue on the head and neck, and the practice of displaying or fanning out the tail. Do not rely solely on any of these other indicators unless you verify gender by seeing a beard. I have seen hens with reddish heads and I have also seen photos showing hens displaying feathers like males. About four percent of hens will develop beards, similar to the way some doe deer develop antlers. These bearded hens are legal targets and may be shot, but think twice because these birds reproduce and raise broods like other hens. Bearded hens will be about half the size of toms (10 pounds or so) and will generally be a lighter buff color compared to the darker, black-feathered toms.

Rein in the gadgets

Turkey hunting is truly a "gadget" sport. There's no end to the things that can be purchased to aid you in your quest for Mr. Longbeard. Shotguns,

turkey shells, chokes, bows and arrows, camouflage clothing in all the latest patterns and fashions, a myriad of calls, decoys, blinds, seat cushions, etc. In truth, if you are already a hunter, you probably have most of what you need.

Complete camouflage is critical because these birds see so well. Any type of green/brown mixture will do the job. Your archery clothing from deer season or your waterfowl hunting garb will suffice nicely.

Any exposed skin can spook a turkey at close range, so gloves, face mask, and hat are as important as jacket and pants. Make sure your gloves have a long enough wristband to cover your watch. Pants should be long enough to cover the shiny eyelets on your boots. Avoid boots with white or light-colored soles, as these will stick out like neon signs when you sit down and stretch out your legs.

An old adage says: "There are 10 rules for a successful turkey hunt and the first nine of these are *Don't move!*" You must be comfortable enough to sit still for extended periods (hours) at a time. Always carry a comfortable seat cushion (in camo) and take the time to remove sticks and stones that will cause you to fidget.

Now, on to the most important part of a turkey kit: the gun or bow. Hunting the wild turkey with archery equipment is one of the most challenging and frustrating experiences I have ever attempted. Archery gear for whitetails will work fine for turkeys. You may want to reduce the pull or poundage, because your hold-time at full draw may be considerably longer with turkeys than for deer.

A shotgun for turkey should have the following features: 1) a camouflage or dull non-reflective finish; 2) a full or extra-full choke; 3) a relatively short barrel to aid in swinging on the target when you are in a blind or natural cover — I prefer a 26" barrel or less; 4) a sling with quick detachable swivels. Also consider sights — add a second aiming bead halfway down the barrel, rifle sights, or a low-power scope. Shooting at a turkey's small head and neck area is more like rifle shooting than shotgun shooting. The basic marksmanship principles of lining up your sights, holding your breath and slowly squeezing the trigger apply.

Any of the common gauges from 20 ga. up through 10 ga. are effective turkey medicine.

The capability to shoot a 3" or 3½" magnum load is nice, but not a must. Some guns and loads are effective only out to 25 yards; others may be deadly out to 40 yards. The key is to know your particular gun's pattern and limitations.

Patterning your turkey gun is an absolute must. You owe it not only to yourself but to your quarry. Many "misses" are actually peripheral hits that didn't land enough pellets to kill the bird cleanly. Wounding your prey is neither acceptable nor humane.

Team up with a buddy, buy some #4, #5 and #6 turkey loads (buffered, lead shot) and see which one patterns best in your gun. Try shots at the head and neck of life-size turkey targets at 20, 30 and 40 yards. I also take a shot at 10 and 15 yards to make sure my pattern is not too tight at close range. I once shot a turkey in South Dakota that was coming at me at a dead run just nine yards away! You need to land at least six to nine pellets in the turkey's head and neck area for a clean kill.

To draw a turkey within range, you not only have to be where they are, but you have to fool them into thinking they are approaching a hen. I set up a turkey decoy about 75 percent of the time. Generally I put out a single hen at about 18–22 yards if I'm hunting with a shotgun or about 12–15 yards for bow and arrow or camera shots. The decoy draws a gobbler's attention and serves as a range finder. If I know exactly how far away my decoy is, it's easier to estimate the range of an approaching tom.

In the last few years hunters have been experimenting by using multiple hen decoys and even placing a jake decoy with the hens, to suggest a young sprout is messing with the harem. I have had mixed success with these variations. One word of caution: If you use a jake decoy, make sure you are sitting against a tree or rock that protects your back from a person who may think your decoy is the real thing. Be darn sure you have a clear view for at least 50 yards in front of you and can yell out if another hunter takes aim at your deke. *Never* walk through the woods carrying a turkey decoy unless it's completely enclosed in either a camouflage or blaze orange pouch!

Turkey hunters often carry a pocketful of sound effects to mimic natural turkey talk. *(left to right)* Wingbone yelper, slate call with two strikers that produce different tones, a mouth call and a box call. Pick one call that you can handle and still reach your camera, gun or bow as turkeys draw closer.

ROBERT QUEEN

Learning the language of love

For me, the use of turkey calls to bring a gobbler within 30 yards is the "romantic" and elegant part of the sport. Even though you may not harvest a particular bird, the fact that you lured him in close from a distance of a quarter mile

or more is enough to consider your day in the woods satisfying.

Turkeys make 50 or more different sounds, but their basic language consists of the cluck, the yelp and the gobble. The yelp is the "long-distance" communication call of the wild turkey: "I'm over here, where are you?" The cluck is a softer, short-range call turkeys use when in close proximity to other birds. If you can make a passable yelp and cluck, the birds will come. Once you've mastered these two sounds, you can work on purrs, cutts, putts, whines, keekees and cackles just for the fun of it.

What is the best turkey call to buy? It's a matter of personal preference. Push-button and box calls are the easiest to master, in my opinion, followed by the slate/glass calls, mouth calls and wing-bone yelpers.

Learn to call turkeys by listening to audio cassettes, watching videos, listening to other people — and best of all, listening to wild turkey hens in the spring. Develop your own calling style and personality. After you hear actual hens calling, you'll realize they all sound a little different, too.

HERBERT LANGE *(INSET)* MOSSY OAK CO.

Camouflage conceals you from turkeys, which is good, and from other hunters, which is dangerous. Protect your back and prepare yourself for a long wait as turkeys slowly move toward you. *(below left)* If you bag a bird or if you are carrying decoys, display blaze orange so you are seen by other hunters.

ROBERT QUEEN

Staying safe

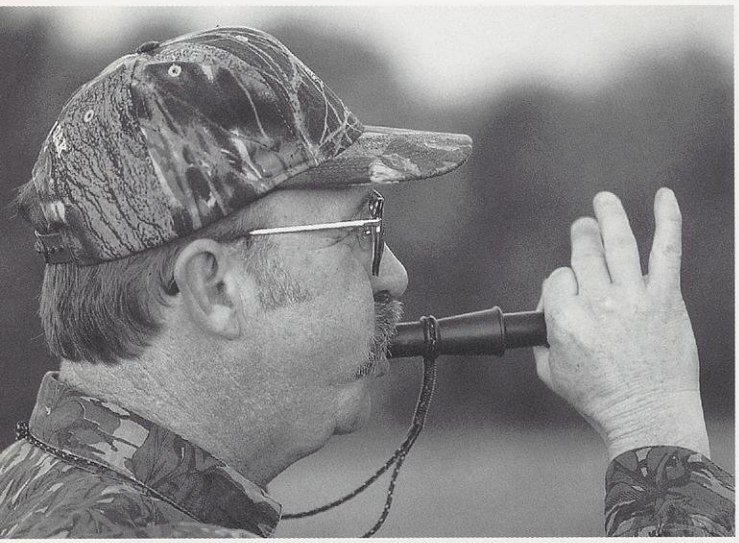
- Never wear clothing that is red, white or blue in the turkey woods. It can be mistaken for the colors of a male turkey's head and neck in the spring.
- Always have a hill, large tree or rock behind you for protection from other hunters who may be approaching your calls from behind your hunting position.
- Keep your wits and senses about you. Don't consume alcohol before or during your hunt.
- Be sure of your target and beyond. Be sure you see a beard before you pull the trigger.
- Wear or display blaze orange when carrying a dead bird out of the woods.
- Never assume sounds you hear in the woods are turkeys.
- Use a gobble call only to locate a tom, not to call one in.

Hunting tactics

There are two basic approaches to spring turkey hunting: Pick a spot and sit, or hear a gobble and go after it.

In my first few years as a turkey hunter, I relied on the first method. I knew from pre-season scouting that birds were using a particular area. I would go out in mid- to late afternoon, fashion a blind of sorts, pace off and place a marker for my decoy, clear a shooting lane or two, then return about a half-hour before shooting hours opened the next day. I stayed in that spot until the noon closing, regardless of what I heard or saw elsewhere. Sooner or later, a gobbler would often come within range of my set-up. This proved very successful, but sometimes monotonous.

Lately I've been using more of a "run



ROBERT QUEEN

ROBERT QUEEN

(top) The author puts turkeys "to bed" the evening before a hunt. An owl call may make a tom gobble after it has roosted so you can plan a starting point for the next morning.
(above) Dave Davis and author Doug Hoskins celebrate a spring hunt.

and gun" technique, as my friend Dave likes to call it. I still get out at least a half-hour before opening. From a good vantage point on high ground, I just listen for gobbles. Many mornings I hear more than one bird. I pick the one that sounds closest and most accessible, then work quietly to within 100–150 yards. I find a big tree or rock to sit against and go to work. In this type of hunting, I generally don't use a decoy because I don't want to make noise setting it out. I also want to be prepared to move quickly and quietly to a different bird if this one doesn't cooperate.

This second method is more exciting. You don't have the advantage of a blind, you may be less familiar with the terrain, and there is always the chance you may bump the bird off his roost as you approach. If you decide to use this technique, be prepared to goof-up many more times than you succeed!

Once I'm set up, my calling techniques are similar in both situations. I start with some soft tree yelps (imitating the hen just waking up). A very common mistake is to over-call the tom when he's still up in the roost. I've found that the more you make him gobble on the roost, the less likely he is to come to you. He's going to wait for you to come to him. Also, the more he gobbles, the more likely he will attract live hens and lose interest in you. He may also attract other hunters.

Do not make hen calls until legal shooting hours! The gobbler may pitch off his limb and glide down right to your decoy. By the time you can legally shoot, he may realize something is amiss and move on down the line.

Try different types of calls as the morning progresses. I have called on and off for two hours or more with one type of call with no response from Mr. Turkey. My very first series of yelps with a different type of call brought a booming gobble from a bird that probably heard me all morning. Or try using two calls at once: a mouth-yelper and a slate or box-call, to sound like more than one hen. If sitting with a partner, call at the same time using different types of calls.

Another sound tip: Use a pair of turkey wings from a previous hunt to imitate a hen flying down. Use those same wings to scratch the oak leaves to imitate feeding turkeys.

If the gobbler responds, put your call down and wait for him to fly down to the ground. You should hear wing beats, or note changes in the sound of his gobbling. If he continues in your direction, do nothing! If he needs a little coaxing, use soft yelps and clucks. A good rule of thumb is to never call louder than the first time he answered you. He knows where you are, no use shouting at him.

Unfortunately, even though toms are in the area and may have heard you call, they don't always gobble. Sometimes this can be attributed to weather conditions, sometimes their harem of hens is in the same tree or close by, sometimes the toms are subdominant birds and are intimidated by larger toms in the area. Sometimes they just don't feel like "talking." If you are sure there are birds in the area, stick it out. Sooner or later something will happen.

If I haven't had any action by midmorning, I go "prospecting" as my partner Jeff would say. Prospecting consists of walking the hills and ridges, and stopping to yelp or cutt in hopes of a response. A word of advice: take the time to set-up each and every time before you call. You may have a bird respond that's very close and he can be on you before you have time to unsling your shotgun.

Weather conditions can affect bird movement. Snow or pelting rain generally slows down gobbling and breeding activity, while light warm rain or drizzle doesn't seem to have much effect. Periods of nice sunny weather following a stint of bad weather frequently result in increased gobbling and turkey movement. After a heavy rain has subsided, the birds often move out into open fields or clearings to dry off and look for favorite delicacies like worms and night crawlers.

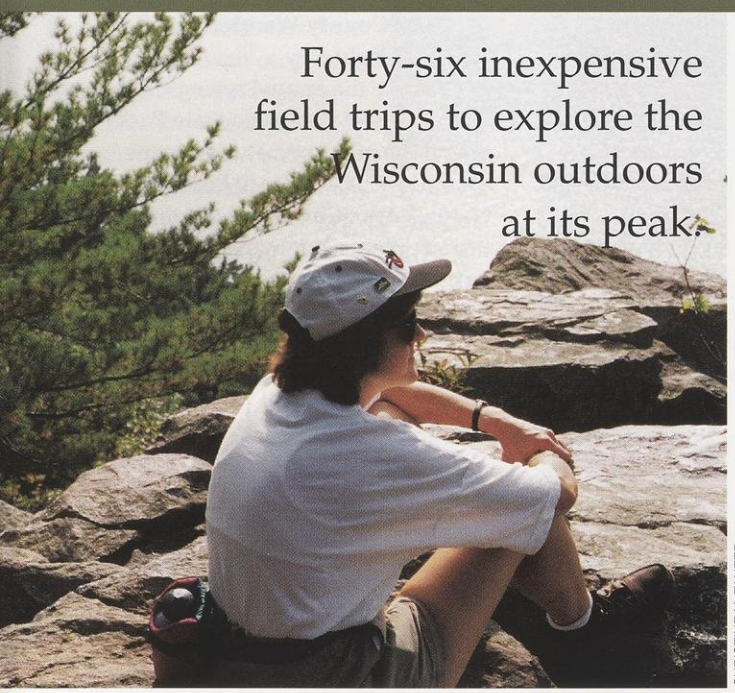
•

How did my own hunt end last spring? Just as the bird arrived at my 30-yard range marker, I ever-so-gently rested my gun barrel on a small shagbark hickory to steady my aim. Somehow I managed to knock off a loose chunk of bark. My quarry gave two sharp alarm putts and launched himself straight up like a 20-pound grouse! Boy, I sure find a lot of ways to extend my turkey season to Sunday! □

Doug Hoskins has been a conservation warden for 28 years and holds a degree in Natural Resources Management from UW-Stevens Point. He is truly addicted to turkey hunting and travels the country with his hunting partner Jeff Engel conducting seminars and hunting in as many states as possible each spring.

Affordable adventures

Forty-six inexpensive field trips to explore the Wisconsin outdoors at its peak.



CHRISTINE M. TANZER

Field trips provide an overview *(top)* and a closer look *(bottom)* at Wisconsin's natural resources in the company of DNR staff who protect them year-round.

Christine Tanzer

When the frog chorus tunes up and the prairie chickens "do the dance," you can reserve a front-row seat for the performance. As naturalists cruise the Apostle Islands, motor down the Mississippi, hit the white water or float the Wisconsin River, you can come along for the ride. When the pros watch migrating warblers, trumpeter swans and turkey vultures, you can look through a scope with them.

The Natural Resources Foundation arranges these tours each year to show you the creatures and outdoor issues most people just talk about. With an experienced DNR staffer as a guide, you'll see natural events as they peak between April and October each year. Here's a chance to hear and see the mating and migration rituals of frogs, fish and birds. If you fancy gardening and natural landscaping, take a spring wildflower hike or visit with professionals who restore native wetlands, prairies and grasslands. Maybe you'd like to paddle your canoe in the company of biologists and historians who tell stories of the plants and people who inhabited the shoreline. Budding scientists can try their hand sampling water quality, seining fish or searching plants for signs of air pollution damage.

It's simple to make a trip reservation:

1. Review the trips that are listed chronologically on the next few pages.

2. Fill out the details on the reservation card enclosed with this story. Indicate both the trip number and the number of people in your party for each trip. If a cost is listed with the trip description, assume that is a per-person fee.

3. Add a registration fee from the table below.

4. Total your costs, add a donation to the foundation if you like, and mail your registration card with a check payable to the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin. Trip fees and registration fees are nonrefundable. However, if your trip is overbooked, parties that cannot be accommodated will receive refund checks two weeks before the scheduled trip date.

5. Registration cards and checks should be sent to: NRF Field Trips, P.O. Box 129, Madison, WI 53701.

Sign up soon. Field trips fill up fast and reservations are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis. You will receive a mailed confirmation. Two weeks before the trip date, you will receive details and directions you will need to find the rendezvous location and time.

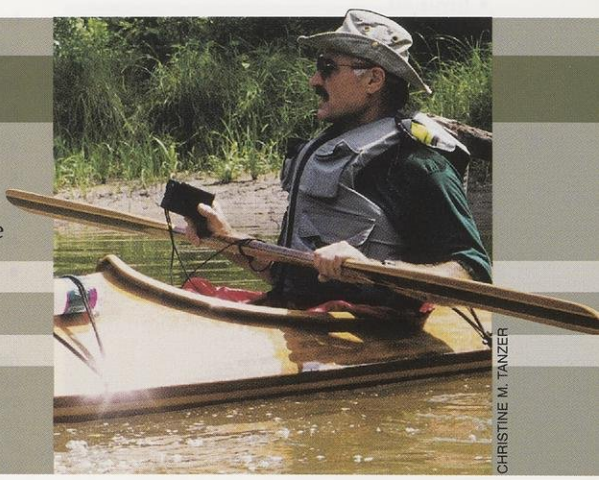
Questions about trips or reservations? Wondering if a field trip is too strenuous for young children or adults with physical limitations? Call me at (608) 264-8548. □

Christine Tanzer coordinates field trips for the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin in Madison.

Computing your trip registration fee

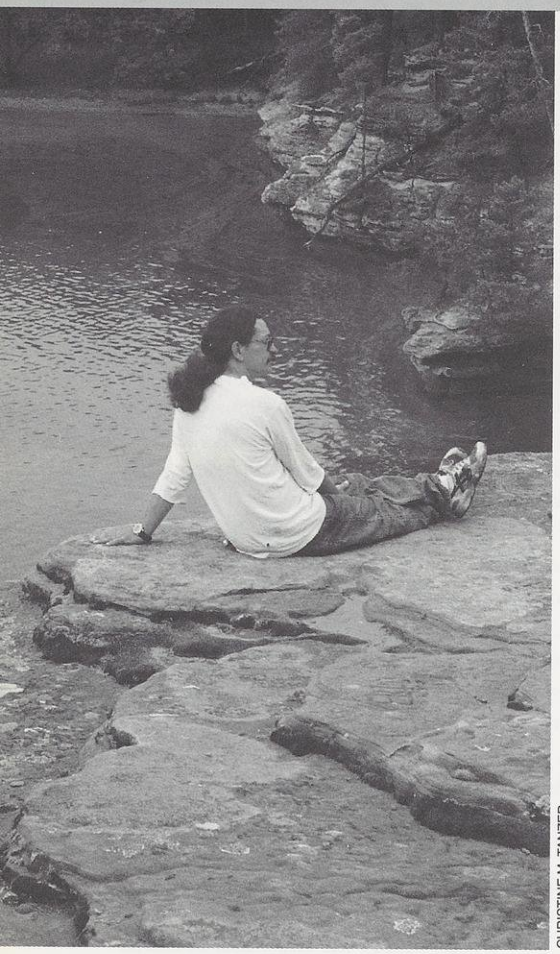
Number of Trips	Fees for NRF members*		Fees for nonmembers	
	one-person reservation	two or more	one-person reservation	two or more
one trip	$3	$5	$5	$10
two trips	$6	$10	$10	$20
three trips	$9	$20	$15	$30

*Annual membership is provided for a tax-deductible contribution of $15 or more to the Natural Resources Foundation.



CHRISTINE M. TANZER

Natural Resources Foundation 1999 Summer Field Trip Schedule



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1 Goin' Froggin'
Learn to identify frogs by their chirps, gulps, and songs while exploring the Mazomanie Wildlife Area.
- April 16, 6:45–8:30 p.m.
- Mazomanie, Dane Co.
- Bob Hay, leader
- limit 40

2 Prairie Chicken Booming at Buena Vista Marsh
Enjoy a Friday evening presentation on prairie chicken behavior/ecology. Saturday pre-dawn observation of "dancing" prairie chickens, followed by breakfast and discussion.
- April 23, 7 p.m.–April 24, 11 a.m.
- Central Wisconsin Environmental Station, Amherst Junction
- Todd Knepfel, leader
- limit 20
- cost $55

3 Pasqueflowers on the Prairie: Prairie and Savanna Restoration Techniques
Hike a segment of the Ice Age Trail, to view numerous pasqueflowers and spring wildflowers. Learn about restoring native remnants of oak savanna and prairie communities by visiting Kettle Moraine Oak Opening and Bald Bluff state natural areas.
- May 1, 9 a.m.–1 p.m.
- Southern Kettle Moraine, Waukesha Co.
- Mark Verhagen, leader
- limit 20

4 Wisconsin Waterfall Wonders: Amnicon & Pattison
Explore Wisconsin's northern waterfalls. Learn the geologic and human history of the area. Spectacular sights of the Big Manitou Falls and the quiet charm of Amnicon's trickling pools await you.
- May 8, 10 a.m.–3 p.m.
- Amnicon & Pattison state parks, Douglas Co.
- Carolyn Rock, leader
- limit 30
- cost state park admission

5 Paddle Where Rivers Meet
Paddle down the lower Wisconsin River from Bridgeport to the Mississippi at Wyalusing State Park in a replica of a 150-year-old, six-seat canoe and fancy yourself on an early explorer's journey back through time to the Black Hawk War years and the Military Trail. Learn about the current management of this important riverway. Cost includes canoe use.
- May 8, 10 a.m.–4 p.m.
- Bridgeport, Crawford Co.
- Dave Gjestson, leader
- limit 30
- cost $8

6 Door County Warbler Watch & Moonlight Bay
Experience the annual spring migration of warblers at Peninsula State Park. Spend the afternoon at the unique Moonlight Bay Bedrock Beach State Natural Area learning about the natural history, plants and management of this rich and rare ecosystem.
- May 14, 7 a.m.–3:30 p.m.
- Peninsula State Park, Door Co.
- Mark Martin & Kathleen Regnier, leaders
- limit 20
- cost state park admission

7 Wetlands & Water Quality
Celebrate Wetland Protection Month by exploring one of Bong's many wetlands.
- May 15, 1–3 p.m.
- Bong Recreation Area, Kenosha Co.
- Beth Goeppinger & Donna Mosca, leaders
- limit 40
- cost state park admission

8 Archaeology of Killsnake Wildlife Area
Tour four important archaeological sites ranging from a major Early Paleo-Indian campsite from 9000 B.C. to a Potawatomi village from the mid-1800s. Learn how people's adaptations to local natural resources changed throughout time.
- May 15, 9:30 a.m.–noon
- Calumet & Manitowoc Co.
- Victoria Dirst, leader
- limit 25

CHRISTINE M. TANZER

(above) Leave the hustle and bustle of the downtown Dells behind in Trip 42, a fall look at the region's natural gems.
(right) Trip 20 will take kayakers on a guided tour of wild, wooded shores, wetlands and bays of Lake Superior's Upper St. Louis River estuary.

9 Dells of the Wisconsin River Spring Hike

See the "real" dells! Towering hemlocks, mossy glens, and spectacular rock formations await on this 3.5 mile hike through the Dells of the Wisconsin River State Natural Area. The terrain on this off-trail hike is rugged and not appropriate for small children.

- May 21, 9 a.m.–1 p.m.
- Wisconsin Dells, Columbia Co.
- Thomas Meyer, leader
- limit 22
- cost $3

10 Private Woodlands Management

Visit a privately owned hardwood forest and meet DNR foresters to see and discuss practices such as tree planting, timber stand improvement, wildlife management and harvesting.

- May 22, 9 a.m.–noon
- Mt. Horeb, Dane Co.
- Steve Holaday, leader
- limit 25

11 Oak Woodland Restoration at Lake Kegonsa State Park

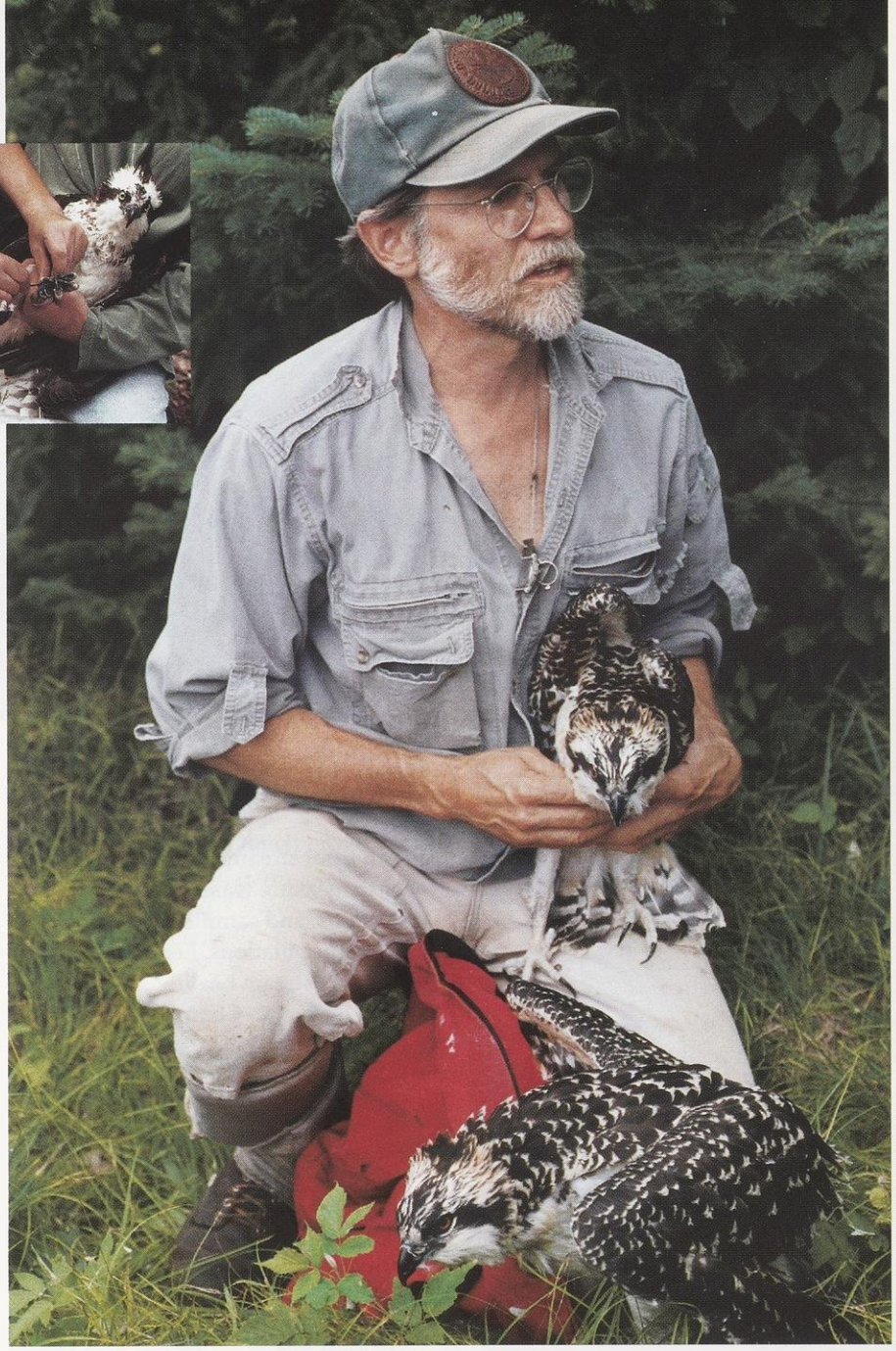
Visit an impressive restoration of a white oak woodland and oak savanna. Hear about the management techniques used for this project. Persons considering beginning a restoration project on their own will find this tour beneficial. Also, tour a nearby wetland and learn about wetland ecology.

- May 22, 9 a.m.–12:30 p.m.
- Stoughton, Dane Co.
- Gary Birch & Deb Weidert, leaders
- limit 20

12 Tour the Poynette Game Farm & MacKenzie Environmental Center

Learn the history of the game farm. Visit the pheasant hatchery and rearing pens, the Wisconsin wildlife exhibit, buffalo, and restored prairies.

- May 22, 9 a.m.–noon
- Poynette, Columbia Co.
- Don Bates & Derek Duane, leaders
- limit 30



PHOTOS THIS PAGE BY JERRY SCHOEN

Trip 23 is a triple-feature — a pontoon-boat tour of the scenic Turtle Flambeau Flowage, a chance to help band osprey and a scrumptious shore lunch.

13 Baraboo River Dam Removal

Explore the history of dams on the Baraboo River, and the facts and process leading to their removal, which will restore the free flowing river. Visit the restored site of the former Waterworks Dam and view future dam removal & river restoration projects on the river.

- June 5, 9 a.m.–12:30 p.m.
- Baraboo, Sauk Co.
- Meg Galloway & Rich Vogt, leaders
- limit 30

14 Tour of Chiwaukee Prairie State Natural Area

See the richest prairie in Wisconsin, with over 400 species identified. The shooting stars should be at their peak. Learn about prairie ecology and management techniques being used on the site.

- June 5, 9:30 a.m.–1 p.m.
- Kenosha, Kenosha Co.
- Mark Roycraft, leader
- limit 25

BARB BARZEN

(above) Be glad you're not in the water as fisheries crews shock coulee streams to show where trout are thriving. — Trip 15
(top) Field trips hone outdoor skills to identify plants and separate edible from poisonous mushrooms.

15 Trout Management and Stream Shocking Demo

Visit Wisconsin's coulee region trout streams and discuss programs to improve stream habitat. See the electroshocking truth of how trout populations are estimated.

- June 5, 10 a.m.–noon
- Coon Valley, Vernon Co.
- David Vetrano, leader
- limit 40

16 Canoeing the Historic Milwaukee River

Paddle through downtown Milwaukee as we learn about water quality and visit several historic sites "buried" in the bustle of a busy city. Canoe through a dam site and the harbor where the Milwaukee, Menomonee and Kinnickinnic rivers empty into Lake Michigan.

- June 12, 9 a.m.–2:30 p.m.
- Milwaukee
- Terrie Cooper, leader
- limit 20
- cost $8 per person canoe rental, free with own canoe

BARB BARZEN

17 Stream Ecology Workshop: Assessing the Health of a Trout Stream

Visit a trout stream and use sampling gear to measure water quality, habitat conditions, and sample aquatic insect and fish populations. Learn how land uses affect stream health.

- June 12, 9 a.m.–4 p.m.
- Cross Plains, Dane Co.
- Mike Miller, leader
- limit 25
- cost $4

18 Dragonfly Ecology & Identification

Learn about dragonfly ecology and life history, then go into the field to capture and identify various dragonfly species at Smith Lake.

- June 19, 10:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.
- Brule River State Forest, Douglas Co.
- Robert Du Bois, leader
- limit 25
- cost $6

19 Any Dam Questions?

Hike the Woolen Mills dam removal project and learn about the restoration efforts to enhance both the upland and aquatic habitats. See the positive results of dam "destruction."

- June 19, 10 a.m.–noon
- West Bend, Washington Co.
- John Nelson, leader
- limit 40

20 Sea Kayak Tours of the Upper St. Louis River Estuary of Lake Superior

Explore the St. Louis River Streambank Protection Area, a 5,000-acre project managed to deter erosion and sedimentation in high quality wetlands on this river/estuary. Through a six-mile/six-hour paddle, participants will explore steep wooded shores, unique wetlands, and meandering tributary bays in this remote wilderness area. Sea kayaks and instruction will be provided by an outfitter (beginners welcome).

- (Trip 20A) June 19, (Trip 20B) July 10, 9 a.m.–4 p.m.
- Duluth-Superior, Douglas Co.
- Frank Koshere, leader
- limit 17
- cost $50 per person includes kayak rental, $35 per person with own kayak and gear

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21 Tour the Griffith State Nursery
Tour over 60 acres of conifer and hardwood nursery beds and learn about reforestation, propagation techniques, and the history and role of the state nursery program. See over 20 species of native trees and shrubs.
- June 26, 10–11:30 a.m.
- Wisconsin Rapids, Wood Co.
- Jim Storandt, leader
- limit 35

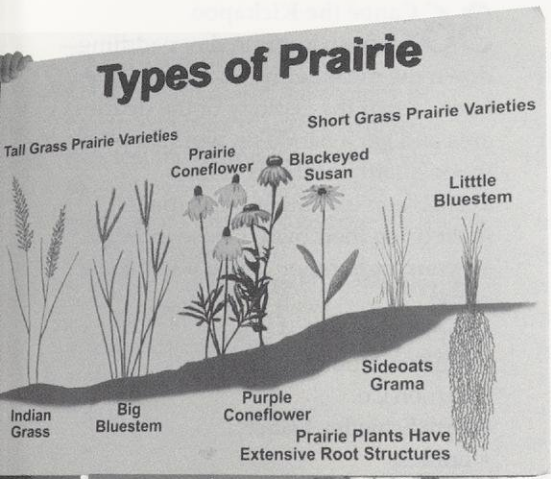
22 Canoe the Chippewa Flowage
Eagles, wood ducks, loons and herons await! Explore the endless maze of islands, points, bays and channels found in the Chippewa Flowage. Paddle your way through an adventure on the third largest lake in Wisconsin.
- (Trip 22A) June 26 or (Trip 22B) July 31, 9:30 a.m.–3:30 p.m.
- Hayward, Sawyer Co.
- Ray Larsen, leader
- limit 25

23 Turtle Flambeau Flowage Tour & Osprey Banding
Take a scenic boat ride through the flowage and enjoy wildlife watching and a management discussion. Visit osprey nests and help wildlife biologists band fledgling birds. See an osprey nose to beak!
- July 10, 8:30 a.m.–4 p.m.
- Mercer Ranger Station, Iron Co.
- Bruce Bacon & Roger Jasinski, leaders
- limit 24
- cost $20 (includes lunch)

24 Apostle Islands — The Big Hook
Visit the renowned Apostle Islands and take a boat ride to Manitou Island to visit a historic fish camp. Learn about commercial fishing past and present in Lake Superior.
- July 12, (Trip 24A) 8 a.m.–noon or (Trip 24B) noon–4 p.m.
- Bayfield, Bayfield Co.
- Mike Vogelsang & Steven Schramm, leaders
- limit 14 per session

25 Canoe Whitewater Rapids on the Flambeau River
See wilderness and wildlife while paddling a whitewater stretch of the Flambeau River. Learn about the history and management of this famed watershed. Medium to large rapids (class 2) will be encountered, so canoeing experience is required. Canoes and lunch provided.
- July 17, 9 a.m.–4:30 p.m.
- Oxbo, Sawyer Co.
- Dave Olson, leader
- limit 30
- cost $15

26 The Mississippi River: Lore, Mystique & Management
Explore the mystique of the Mississippi, mixing history with ecology on this fun two-part river trip. Hands-on sampling of fish, water quality, plants, mussels and invertebrates. Learn management techniques and visit habitat restoration areas along the Trempealeau shores. Optional camping in Perrot State Park, call early to reserve a campsite (608) 534-6409.
- July 22, 7–8:30 p.m.; July 23, 8:30 a.m.–3:30 p.m.
- Trempealeau, Trempealeau Co.
- Gretchen Benjamin, leader
- limit 20



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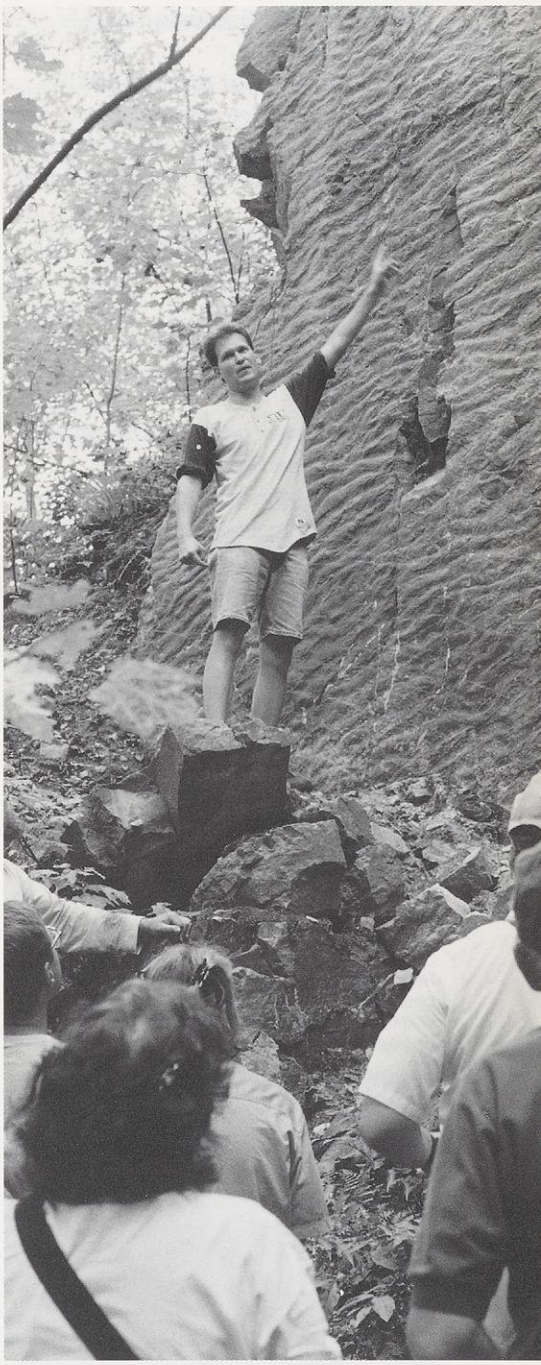

CHRISTINE M. TANZER

(left) Several trips visit natural areas at their blooming peak. Would you recognize these harebells?
(above right) Trek through time on geology trips like #38.

27 Old Growth Forest Ecology
Visit spectacular old growth forest stands. Learn about the variety of species and ecological processes connected to this increasingly rare ecosystem. Also visit a managed forest stand and compare the structure and dynamics of these two forest types.
- July 24, 10 a.m.–2 p.m.
- Price Co.
- Mitch Bergeson, leader
- limit 25

28 Tour of Wisconsin Heights Battle Site

Take a walking tour through this historic battle site. See oak savanna restoration, pre-historic mounds and site of the last battle of the Black Hawk War of 1832.

- July 24, (Trip 28 A) 9 a.m.–noon or (Trip 28 B) 1–4 p.m.
- Mazomanie, Dane Co.
- Wayne Schutte, leader
- limit 24

29 A Primer on Lake Limnology — Lake Mendota

Board a pontoon boat to learn about different types of lakes, monitoring equipment, use of data to evaluate lakes, aquatic vegetation management and progress on the Lake Mendota Priority Watershed Project.

- July 24, (Trip 29 A) 9 a.m.– noon or (Trip 29 B) 1–4 p.m.
- Madison, Dane Co.
- Jim Leverance, leader
- limit 12 per session
- cost $2.50

Many trips can take you face-to-face and cheek to beak with animals. Enjoy experiences like #12 to visit the Poynette Game Farm and MacKenzie Environmental Center.

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30 Prairie Ecology at Navarino Wildlife Area

Take a 10-mile wagon ride into Navarino's prairie communities to learn about prairie ecology and identify native plants. Pass through wetlands and forests along the way.

- August 14, 10:30 a.m.–2 p.m.
- Navarino Wildlife Area, Shawano Co.
- Mary O'Connor, leader
- limit 25
- cost $3

31 Tour of Muir Park and Observatory Hill State Natural Areas

Hike through two of John Muir's boyhood haunts. Begin at Muir Park with a walk around the lake to see wetland, prairie, and savanna communities and discuss natural areas management. Then it's off to Observatory Hill to have lunch atop a cedar glade with a spectacular view.

- August 14, 9:30 a.m.–1 p.m.
- Montello, Marquette Co.
- Mark Martin, leader
- limit 25

32 Why Clear-cut?

Learn about the ecology of clear-cut forests and managed aspen stands. Visit and compare a large blow-down area and several complex forests with small clear-cut patches, various tree age classes and considerable diversity.

- August 21, 9 a.m.–1 p.m.
- Kennan, Price Co.
- Chuck McCullough, leader
- limit 25

33 Canary in the Coal Mine

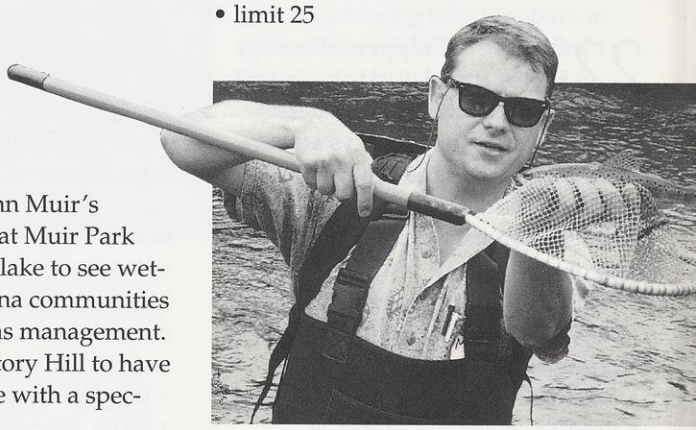
Hike through Wildcat Mountain State Park searching for signs of how air pollution injures native plants. Visit an air monitoring site and learn the correlation between two important topics: clean air and plant health. Could this be the canary in the coal mine?

- August 21, 9–11 a.m.
- Wildcat Mountain State Park, Vernon Co.
- Ed Jepsen, leader
- limit 20

34 Spread Eagle Barrens State Natural Area

Visit the largest barrens in northeast Wisconsin to learn about barrens geology, ecology, management, and restoration. Hear about this successful partnership among government, advisory groups and private industry.

- August 28, 10 a.m.–2 p.m.
- Florence, Florence Co.
- Stu Boren, leader
- limit 25



How do we gauge if trout streams measure up? Take trip #17.

35 WaterFalling into History

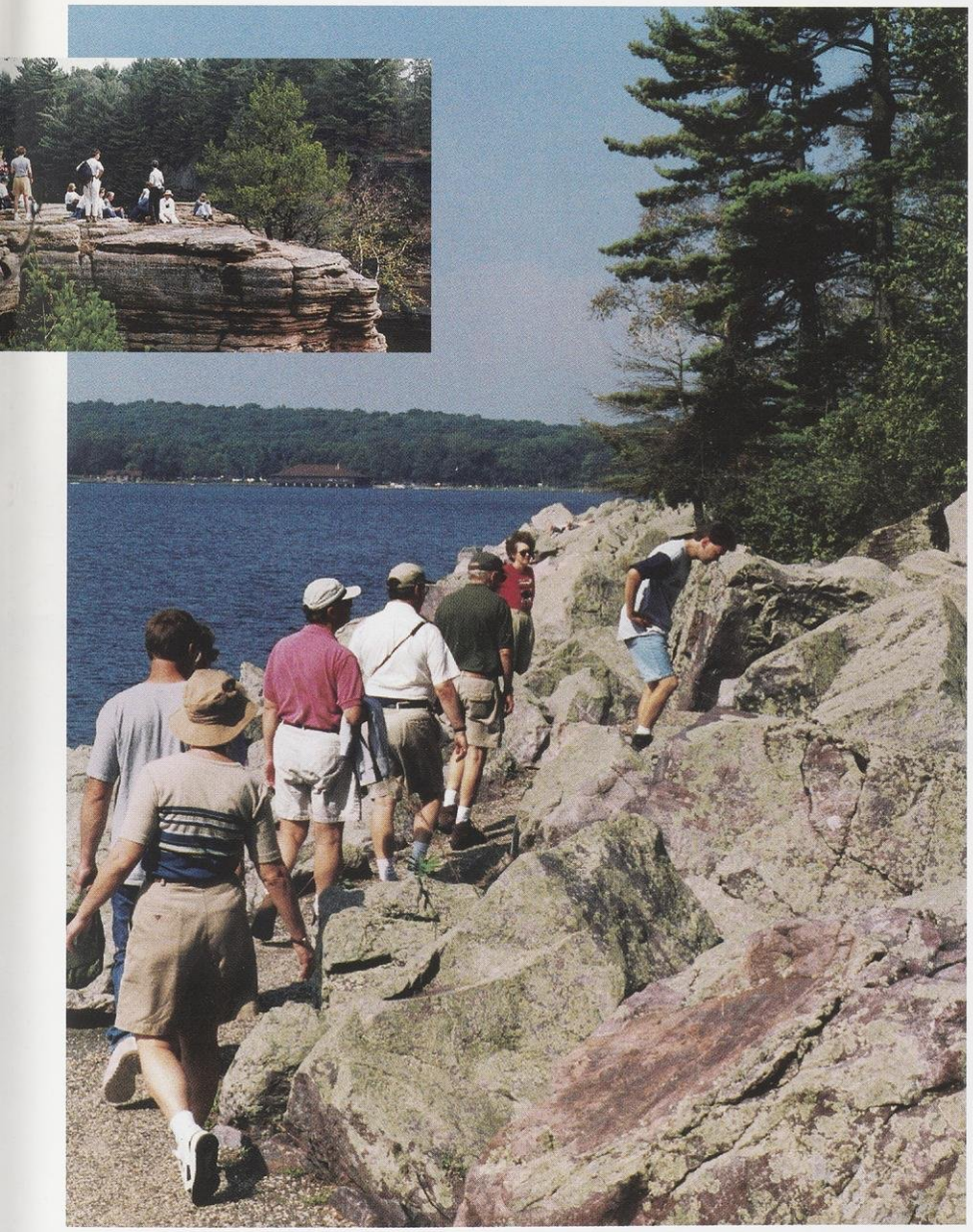
Explore the steep basalt gorge of the highest waterfall in the state. Enjoy the fall colors while learning the history and geology of Pattison State Park. Travel back through time to discover lumbering, mines and more.

- September 11, 1–4 p.m.
- Pattison State Park, Douglas Co.
- Carolyn Rock, leader
- limit 30
- cost state park admission

36 Canoe the Kickapoo

Enjoy an autumn day paddling down the meandering Kickapoo River. Learn about the geology of the driftless area and get a hands-on workshop on water quality. Only six canoes available to use, other participants must bring their own. Please indicate on your registration if you will need a canoe.

- September 11, 1–4 p.m.
- Wildcat Mountain State Park, Vernon Co.
- Barb Schieffer, leader
- limit 24
- cost state park admission



CHRISTINE TANZER

Hikers can see the familiar through a naturalist's eyes on guided trips to Devil's Lake and the Dells of the Wisconsin River.
(below right) Canoeists can explore the Waupaca chain of lakes and several other waters.

37 Trumpeter Swans

Learn about the ecology of North America's largest waterfowl species, the trumpeter swan. View these magnificent birds in the wild and learn about efforts to restore trumpeter swans to Wisconsin.

- September 11, (Trip 37A) 9–noon or (Trip 37B) 1–4 p.m.
- Sandhill Wildlife Area, Wood Co.
- Pat Manthey, leader
- limit 25

38 Geologic History of the Baraboo Region

After a brief lecture on the geologic history of the Baraboo Hills, hike the south bluff of Devil's Lake, then venture off to Parfey's Glen. Explore the lower narrows of the Baraboo River, a rock quarry and the seldom-visited North Range of the Baraboo Hills.

- September 18, 9 a.m.–4:30 p.m.
- Baraboo, Sauk Co.
- Philip Fauble, leader
- limit 40

39 Willow Flowage Hike & Boat Tour

View nesting eagles and ospreys. Enjoy the fall colors while visiting this scenic flowage newly acquired for public use. Cruise the 6,400-acre flowage by luxury tour boat and hike through part of the 8,400 acres of land to behold waterfalls and forests.

- September 25, 10 a.m.–4 p.m.
- Willow Flowage, Oneida Co.
- Kermit Traska, leader
- limit 40
- cost $9

40 Devil's Lake Days Gone By

History buffs unite as we explore the hotels that used to cater to visitors in the late 1800s using artifacts, photos and descriptions. Learn the human history of this geologic gem.

- September 25, 9 a.m.–noon
- Devil's Lake State Park, Sauk Co.
- David Bouche, leader
- limit 25
- cost state park admission

41 Archaeology of Whitefish Dunes

Make an autumn visit to Door County and learn about the ancient human history of this unique peninsula during four waves of previous pre-European human occupation. View an exposure of prehistoric artifacts along an eroded beach.

- September 25, 9:30–11:30 a.m.
- Whitefish Dunes State Park, Door Co.
- Victoria Dirst, leader
- limit 40
- cost state park admission

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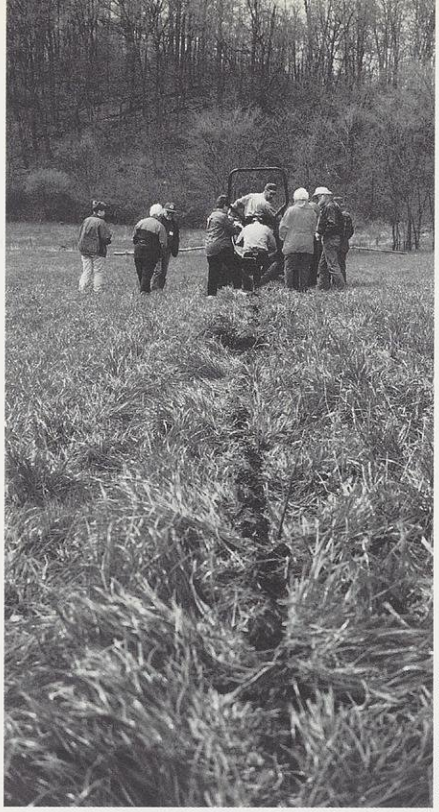

CHRISTINE M. TANZER

(above) Hands-on trips can demonstrate skills you can use on your own property like learning to plant hardwoods.

42 Dells of the Wisconsin River State Natural Area

Spectacular scenery & fall color, unique geological formations, gorges, glens, and rare plants await! Trek through this gem of the Wisconsin landscape in areas not normally accessible to the public. The terrain of this three-mile hike is rugged and not appropriate for children less than 12 years old.

- October 3, 9 a.m.–12:30 p.m.
- Wisconsin Dells, Columbia Co.
- Thomas Meyer, leader
- limit 20

43 A Closer Look at Turkey Vultures

Visit Devil's Lake State Park during fall migration where over 300 turkey vultures come to roost in the evenings. Observe this spectacular event, look for marked individuals, and learn the natural history and results of long-term research on vultures in Wisconsin.

- October 8, 2:30–6 p.m.
- Devil's Lake State Park, Sauk Co.
- Lisa Hartman, leader
- limit 30
- cost state park admission

44 Canoe the Lower Wisconsin River

Paddle an eight-mile stretch of one of Wisconsin's most beautiful and cherished waterways. Enjoy a day of fall color, waterfowl and wildlife. Learn river history and find out about efforts to preserve its natural beauty.

- October 9, 10 a.m.–2 p.m.
- From Arena to Spring Green, Iowa Co.
- Wayne Schutte, leader
- limit 30
- cost $10.50 for canoe rental and shuttle, $5.00 for shuttle only (costs are per person)

46 Ice Age Landforms of the Southern Kettle Moraine

Explore (by bus) a variety of geologic features in the Southern Kettle Moraine area — impressive moraines, kettle depressions, large outwash plains, gigantic eskers and vast adjoining drumlin fields to the west.

- October 16, 9 a.m.–noon
- Eagle, Waukesha Co.
- Ron Kurowski, leader
- limit 40
- cost $4

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Children get to simulate the geologic forces when glaciers, gravel, water and ice pushed around the landscape.

45 Glacial History of the Cross Plains Ice Age Reserve

Learn the story of glacial geology that surrounds us! The Cross Plains Reserve is one of nine units of the Ice Age National Scientific Reserve in Wisconsin. View this terminal moraine and see impressive meltwater basins.

- October 9, 9–11:30 a.m.
- Shovelers Sink, Dane Co.
- Danielle Valvassori, leader
- limit 25

CHRISTINE M. TANZER

A liking for March

Editor's Note: *The winter has been pretty easy this year, but we've often noted that the true Wisconsin test is not winter's depth, but its length. Here are two essays taking decidedly different views of those last cold days when the cold weather just won't give up.*

Justin Isherwood; Story photos by Robert Queen

I like a March that stays late.

I like March that dallies and balks at spring. A March that asks the fire be kindled though the day felt warm. A March whose sun was on a merry puddle and whose moon has turned it to a hoary pane.

I like a March to insist I take my sledge and wedge to the wood yard and assail the oak too long to fit the stove. And hammer away till we reach a breathless truce, it knocking off as much of me as I of it.

Some impugn March as a messy month, a headstrong, impolite and oh-so-tardy month. One day companionable, the next a resentful menace throwing around its weight and tipping the furniture. March, some say, is indecent. How the thaw was followed tight after by an openly indignant blizzard flanking every road and forcing surrender, taking hostages of the rest of the township. The farmer who yesterday took the tractor from its mooring in the shed is today lost at sea.

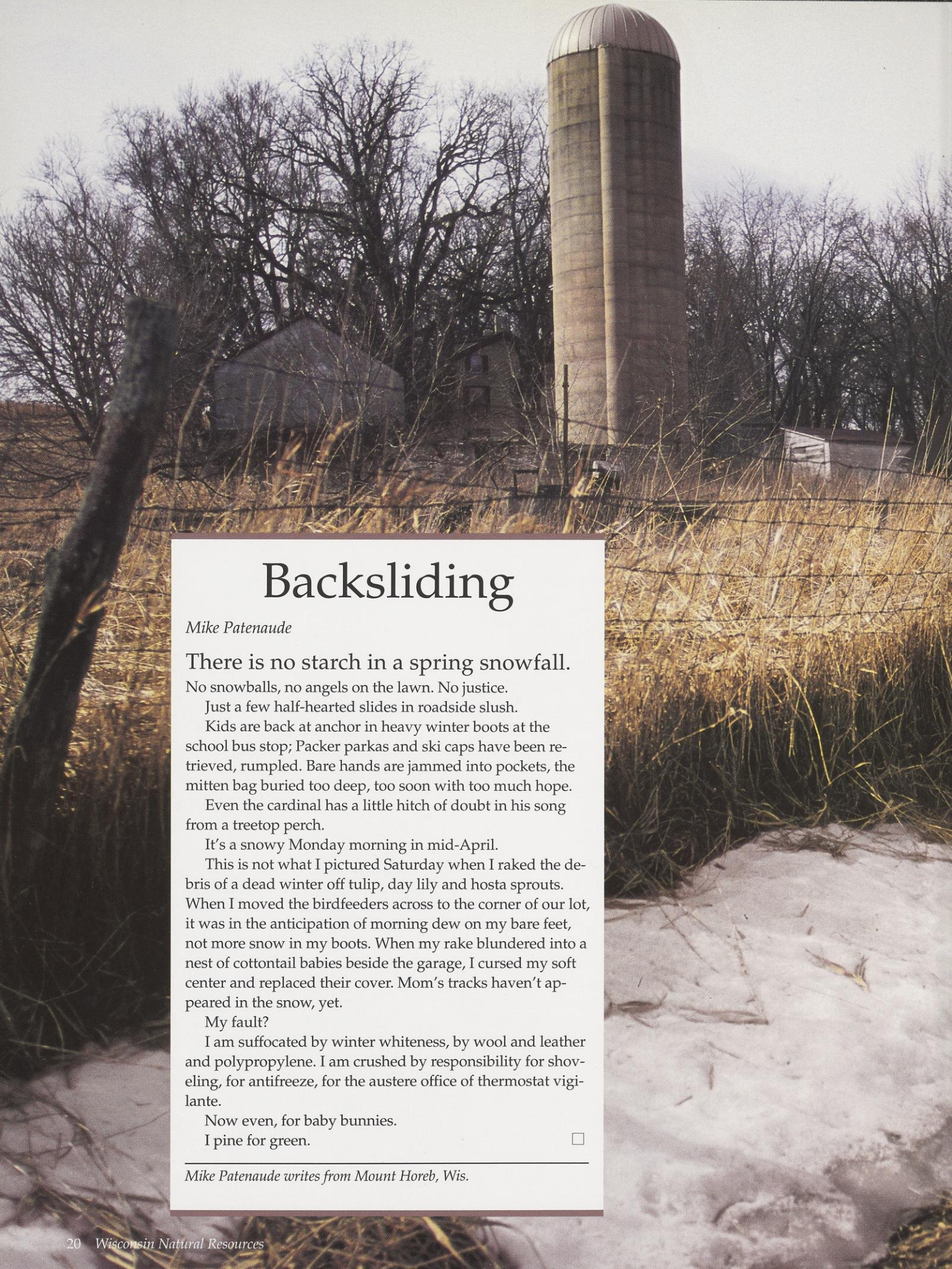
I like March when the moon ascends the cherished twilight like the apple my grandmother wrapped in newsprint in October, awful and wizened 'till the paring made a fragrant sliver of new appled moon.

March has Jurassic heart and shall be pierced by extinction. The snow in dirt-crusted drift almost asks to die, but then will not go when the means is found. The heat of a spring day warms the brown fields, the dying drifts slink and hide in the last preserves like a car-hit dog, wounded and gone to die where it is cold and shadowed, where the pain of the last melt is less.

I cheer a wolf-toothed March that taunts those already in summer shorts and laden with char-grill and hammock pillow. People who cannot stand in line for ice cream at solstice and wear galoshes at the same time.

March as loves mud is my ally. It is openly venomous of the Easter bonnet. Some hold snow which falls on the other side of Ash Wednesday is unconstitutional and a violation. For them, there is not salt enough to wound March with; to teach it manners and how to behave according to the fashion.

I like a March that blows perpendicular to everything else, crosswise of all



Backsliding

Mike Patenaude

There is no starch in a spring snowfall.

No snowballs, no angels on the lawn. No justice.

Just a few half-hearted slides in roadside slush.

Kids are back at anchor in heavy winter boots at the school bus stop; Packer parkas and ski caps have been retrieved, rumpled. Bare hands are jammed into pockets, the mitten bag buried too deep, too soon with too much hope.

Even the cardinal has a little hitch of doubt in his song from a treetop perch.

It's a snowy Monday morning in mid-April.

This is not what I pictured Saturday when I raked the debris of a dead winter off tulip, day lily and hosta sprouts. When I moved the birdfeeders across to the corner of our lot, it was in the anticipation of morning dew on my bare feet, not more snow in my boots. When my rake blundered into a nest of cottontail babies beside the garage, I cursed my soft center and replaced their cover. Mom's tracks haven't appeared in the snow, yet.

My fault?

I am suffocated by winter whiteness, by wool and leather and polypropylene. I am crushed by responsibility for shoveling, for antifreeze, for the austere office of thermostat vigilante.

Now even, for baby bunnies.

I pine for green. □

Mike Patenaude writes from Mount Horeb, Wis.

Campers, phone for reservations!

Your outdoor adventures just got easier. Starting April 15th at 9 a.m., you can call 1-888-WI-PARKS toll-free to reserve campsites at Wisconsin State Parks. The campsite reservation system will be staffed Monday–Friday, 9 a.m.–10 p.m. and Saturday–Sunday, 9 a.m.–6 p.m.

Reservations can be made as long as 11 months in advance or as short as two days in advance, if campsites are still available. You can reserve up to six different dates or sites at any State Park statewide in one call! Reserve a specific campsite or let us find a space at available campsites in the parks of your choosing.

Reservations will cost $9.50 in addition to the nightly camping fees and park admission fees. Once your reservation is booked and charged to your credit card, you will receive an immediate confirmation number over the phone.

Call 1-888-947-2757
to book a Wisconsin State Park adventure.

Wisconsin
State Park System

Think SPRING!

Think STATE PARKS!

Now is a good time to order your Wisconsin State Park vehicle admission sticker. A visit to a state park, forest, recreation area or trail is a great prescription to cure Spring fever.

To make your Spring get-away even easier, you can order your park sticker by phone. Simply have your MasterCard or Visa handy and call 608-266-2181 today.

Only $18 for the entire year!

Wisconsin
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that is alive except barbwire. And a night the wind won't quit and the town plow can't defend the road and resigns till morning knowing they'd rather not see the day. The week after devoted to digging out and pushing back what a warm spell might do.

A March wind can chew a chimney top and suck at the damper 20 feet down, banging it in the middle of the night like a prowler working the lock.

I like March in empty barns out on the muck, the door slapping at snow flies, always too slow, too rusty to hit the tormenter. The timbers chafe and groan, the barn whimpers and the nails lose another fraction. In the mow I heard the door and thought to tie it down. I had it closed but the wind recoiled. Insulted, I hauled the line to have it, grabbed for twine to hobble the wind by using one hand and half hitches. I knew it futile. As my back turned, the door came undone with March running off with the string in its mouth.

In March cows lean on the farmer's hands for warmth and cats born to prowl are home for the night instead of following the moon to the hedge. All winter these grim and stealthful cats were too proud to wind around the milkman's feet. March, they do not trust after dark.

Of all the months, March is the most untamed. March unhitched Caesar and by the same ice of intrigue, March disconnects the lights and furnace fan, every farm cut adrift as its own lifeboat. March makes the roads impassable and everything primitive again. The household marooned without microwave, no fridge, and, horror of horrors, no TV. How much worse can it be?

No other month will try with such regularity to strand us without plumbing and lights.

I have come to admire March that pours unabated across the field. Driving waves and sleet, farther out a phosphor line. My neighbor's barn riding the current bobs in the sea, its lights flash a distress signal, founder and then go down as if sunk by a U-boat somewhere in the March sea off the coast of winter. □

Essayist Justin Isherwood writes from Plover, Wis.

Dammed if you DO and damned if you DON'T

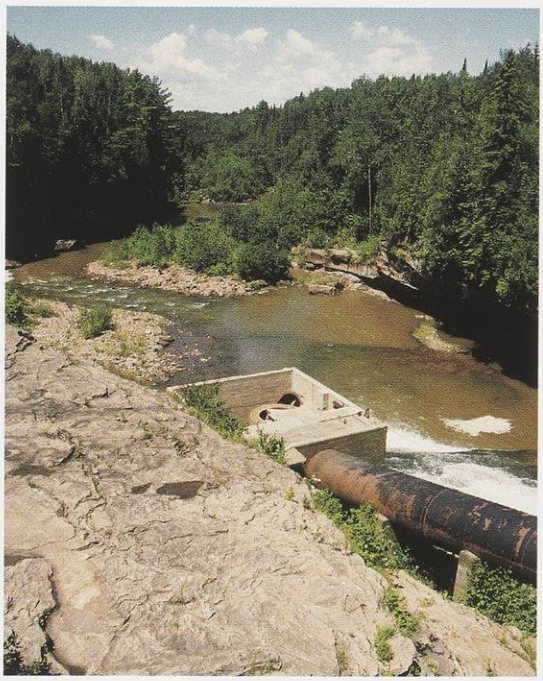
Deciding to maintain or remove aging dams has many owners weighing costs, public safety and the character of their communities.

Katherine Esposito

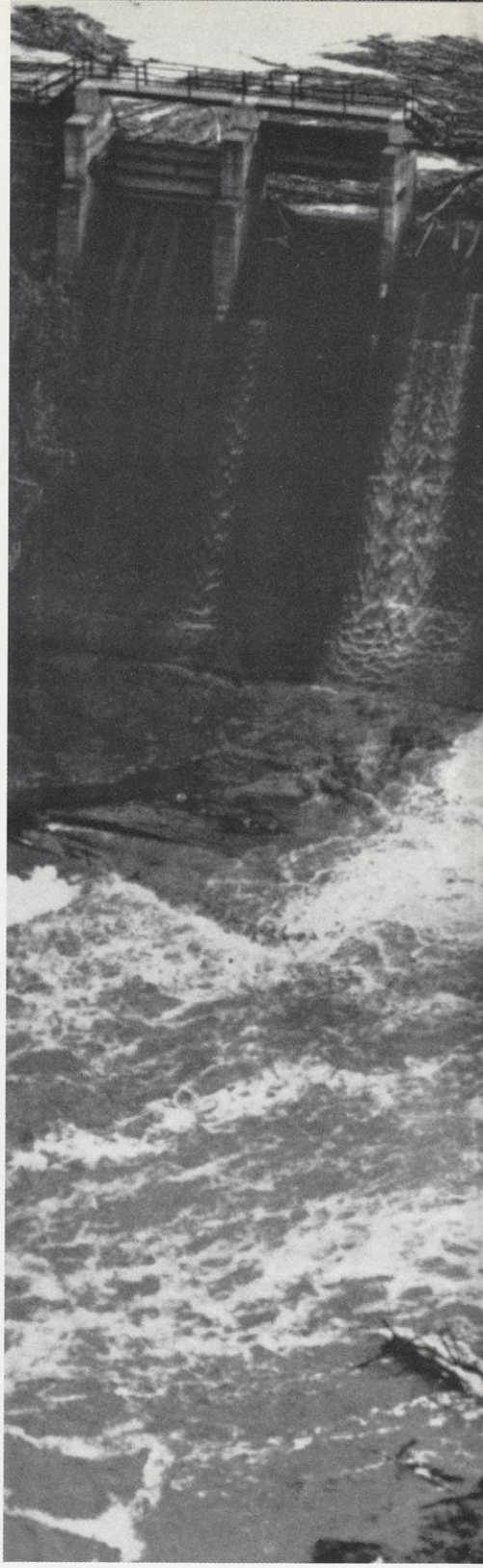
For much of this century, the striking red sandstone canyon of the Iron River in Bayfield County was invisible, blanketed by tons of packed earth that comprised the southern embankment of the 66-foot tall Orienta Falls dam.

The dam was once an assiduous producer of electricity, but its lake is now empty, a sea of lush grass. All that remains is a hulking concrete and iron behemoth with a slightly cast-off mien.

The river's fortune took a dramatic turn the night of September 1, 1985, when a vicious flood nearly toppled the dam. The deluge was chronicled the next morning in photographs taken by employees of Northern States Power (NSP), who circled helplessly in a helicopter, watching as the raging waters overwhelmed the earth embankment and bulldozed away the dam's powerhouse walls. Watching, as a floating island of downed trees converged on the dam's three open gates where a few gawky logs hung up on the iron catwalk 10 feet overhead.



KATHERINE ESPOSITO



NORTHERN STATES POWER COMPANY 1985

The power of rushing water makes the risks in dam failures very serious to the environment and downstream development. *(right)* When the Orienta Falls dam failed in 1985, flood waters bulldozed away an earthen wall and damaged the powerhouse. *(above)* Remnants of the powerhouse today.

It wasn't just the dam that was destroyed that night, according to The Evening Telegram, a local newspaper. At least three bridges came down as well, including the one at the mouth of the Iron River on Highway 13, where it joins Lake Superior. Telephone service was cut, many roads and culverts were washed away, and though no one died, two families downstream were evacuated for fear the whole dam would go. Mayor Dwight Johnson of Port Wing couldn't even leave his house to check on the calamity — the rain dug a five-

foot pond in his driveway and deposited a tree there too, for good measure.

A flood of contradictions

The flood brought down the Orienta dam, but changing times prevented its repair. NSP couldn't justify spending half a million dollars to rebuild a dam that generated only meager profits.

There were other compelling reasons, including rising community interest in restoring free-flowing water so fish could migrate upstream to spawn. As far back as 1939, before the dam was constructed, anglers hailed the Iron River as "one of the very best trout streams in the state." They petitioned the state Public Service Commission to require a "fishway" around the proposed dam. Wisconsin had been authorized since 1839 to require ladders to help fish negotiate dams, but had rarely done so. A ladder never was installed at Orienta, but if history holds any lessons, it may not have worked anyway.

The decision to abandon the dam was not universally praised. David Johnson, 46, a former fisherman now

studying to be a teacher, practically growls when he talks about the lake frontage behind the former dam.

"If you like stumbling through tall grass, it's great," he says. That's what now fills the flowage that once afforded Johnson and his family many fetching sunsets from their rustic log cabin on the eastern shore. The much narrower Iron River runs before his porch now, but getting to it requires walking through 100 feet of waist-high grass.

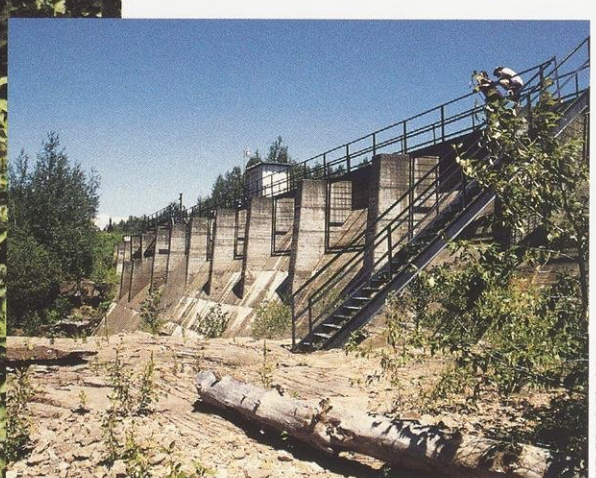
He and several others can think of a dozen reasons to keep the dam, though in the end Johnson's principal fear is that the value of 12 lake lots he bought in 1981 will plummet.

"It's not a matter of wanting to [sell lots]," he asserts, waving an arm toward an edge of thick woods just off the new river channel, not far from his house. "It's a matter of having to. This was my retirement."

Orienta's history may be more colorful than most Wisconsin dams, but its circumstances are hardly unique. There are an estimated 3,600 dams in the state, and each tells a story that often begins over a hundred years ago, when woodcutters and rivermen rafted a feast of raw timber to sawmills powered by the dams' cascading waters. Under the 1840 Milldam Act, almost anyone could plug a creek for almost any reason.

Years later, bigger owners retrofitted many dams to produce electricity for a

KATHERINE ESPOSITO



KATHERINE ESPOSITO

(above) Where the earth was scoured away at Orienta, only sandstone cliffs are now exposed. *(left)* Since the impoundment drained, the Iron River returned to its natural, narrower channel. "Shoreland" owners like Dave Johnson found that their lakeside lots are now separated from the water by more than 100 feet of grass and shrubs.

growing society. Two hundred dams produce power even today. But the economical dams are now in the minority. Most dams fulfill different human needs.

The shallow lakes they create, shimmering on a sunny day aside grassy shoreside parks where crappies bite at fishing lines, defined the towns that developed around them. An outpost with a creek became a town with a heart; a place for family reunions, football tosses and quiet contemplation.

Over the decades, through countless picnics and evening strolls, one generation replaced another, and as memories of their former cool, swift stream grew dim, the dams began to slowly rot away. As long as the aging structures held water, many owners found more pressing problems to spend money on.

But anyone who assumes that a washout like the Orienta Dam is too fluky to worry about doesn't know dams, engineers say. "In a state, in a region, in a country, a 100-year flood occurs many times every year," says Martin McCann, the director of the National Performance of Dams Program at Stanford University. Even minor flood damage upsets the ecology of a stream, dumping sediment that destroys spawning grounds. Preventing that is part of the state's public trust responsibility, says Meg Galloway, the Wisconsin DNR's dam safety chief. "Any structure we allow to alter these waters should be built, operated, and maintained to minimize any consequences," she says.

Owners of decaying dams confront two choices — fix them up or take them out. In West Bend, Baraboo, and in St. Croix County's Willow River State Park, after years of hand-wringing, removal was finally chosen. The residents of Angelo, a tiny hamlet of 50 people already struggling to maintain their heritage, faced the same choices.

The unincorporated village used to house both a school and a shallow millpond, but in the summer of 1998, it boasted neither. Its 60-pupil elementary school had been absorbed years before by the much larger Sparta district; the remaining attribute, a little dam built at the time of Wisconsin's birth but owned since 1968 by Monroe County, was now seen as a danger.

In 1996, the county had hired divers, who swam under the dam and discovered deteriorated, stuck gates and cracked concrete, confirming what DNR dam safety inspectors had told them seven years earlier. By the next spring, Angelo Pond had been drained by state officials who feared a big flood would topple the dam and cause damage downstream.

The cost to fix the dam was estimated at well over a million dollars — to pull it down would cost half that amount. And it wouldn't be the first time money had flowed to the aging millpond — dredging had cost $200,000 in 1978 and other dam repairs were made in 1980.

KATHERINE ESPOSITO

Residents, like Doana Bailey, believed that Angelo Dam and the pond behind her define the character of this small Monroe County hamlet, and they raised funds to fix it. The costs to repair and maintain aging dams are often much higher than the costs to remove them.

Angelo residents, caught unawares, quickly formed a fund-raising group, Rehabilitation of the Angelo Pond, Inc., and began to lobby the county for more money. Older neighbors who'd grown up catching bluegills and crappies in the warm pond waters now started writing to their elected county officials, urging them to help pay for needed repairs. And they raised some themselves: Green Bay Packers tickets were raffled, a local liquor store gave money to the cause and a woodworker even fashioned birdhouses out of donated cedar, giving the profits to the group.

The onslaught worked. Despite some misgivings, county board supervisors finally voted in favor of the project, and repair bids came in lower than expected. By last July, lush grass was growing on Angelo's banks and a construction crane was poised to start work the next day.

But cases like Angelo's beg a question: How do places as small as Angelo and its big sibling Monroe County end up with such a troublesome mess?

When Wisconsin was young, it might have been sensible to allow almost anyone to build and own dams. Continuing the tradition has fostered some big problems and an interesting continuum. On the one end are decrepit dams whose owners can't be found and often don't care. At the other extreme are big businesses with money and firm expectations, like Northern States Power and International Paper in Merrill, who are ready to sell or remove their dams. In the middle are ordinary citizens and small, strapped governments, who feel their history with a passion where others see little more than a large watering hole.

"I can see why people would say why spend so much to save a lousy pond," said Angelo resident Gerry Neumann, whose second son had been among the last to attend Angelo's local school. "If you lived here, you would."

Maintenance is a must

Ironically, dam owners themselves have always held the reins. Fish or no fish, most dams are welcome to stay, providing owners act responsibly and fix them when needed. And the DNR hasn't ex-

actly breathed fire on recalcitrant owners. Agency files are full of decades-old correspondence with owners over dam problems. As DNR has experienced budget cuts, the agency has lost ground in staffing to oversee dam safety. If the screws are finally twisted, it's because authorities are trying to avoid unexpected disasters like the Orienta failure.

The big dam on the Iron River wasn't poorly maintained. Seepage from the embankment that washed out had been seen during more frequent inspections in years past and Northern States Power had attended to most problems. They'd replaced boards and cables in the mid-1970s, and fixed stop logs and piers in the early '80s.

And the flood that hit it lacked the sustained punch of the 1993 floods, when nine dams in Wisconsin came down or were damaged. The 1985 emergency at Orienta was entirely local, a tremendous storm that deluged the watershed but raised few eyebrows elsewhere.

Much pressure could have been relieved if the floodgates had been opened when the Iron River rose. But turning half-century old cranks while besieged by a swirling maelstrom of rapids and downed logs can be downright dangerous and sometimes impossible if the gates haven't been operated regularly. Merely getting to a dam can prove insurmountable.

Just ask former State Dam Safety Engineer Dick Knitter. In Tomah one night years ago during an eight-inch deluge, he found himself in a life jacket, braced against 1½ feet of water rushing over the top of the Tomah Lake dam, frantically trying to hoist rusted gates with a crane borrowed from a cranberry company. During the rain's early stages, local officials had said the dam was safe; two hours later Knitter learned that the gates were indeed stuck, and he raced from Madison to help. The dam didn't break, but a hospital delivery room downstream was swamped with three feet of water from the overtopping.

It was a ghastly experience, he said. "If I'd slipped, I would have been dead," said Knitter, now retired from the DNR. "I thought the water was going to take out the railroad bridge below."

The colossal press of water against the dam's walls was a stress that counted against its longevity, according to Martin McCann. So he included it on his list of significant problems that occur at United States dams. McCann is building an Internet library of dam conditions to help prevent future failures. He estimates that as many as 2,000 dams a year experience some sort of serious event that makes them weaker.

Dozens of Wisconsin dams are on the list, including Tomah, Briggsville, Linnie Lac and Hatfield, which failed in

KATHERINE ESPOSITO

KATHERINE ESPOSITO

The land does recover after dams are removed. *(above)* The summer after the Mounds Dam was removed from the Willow River, *(right)* the former lake bed filled in with wild oats and grasses.

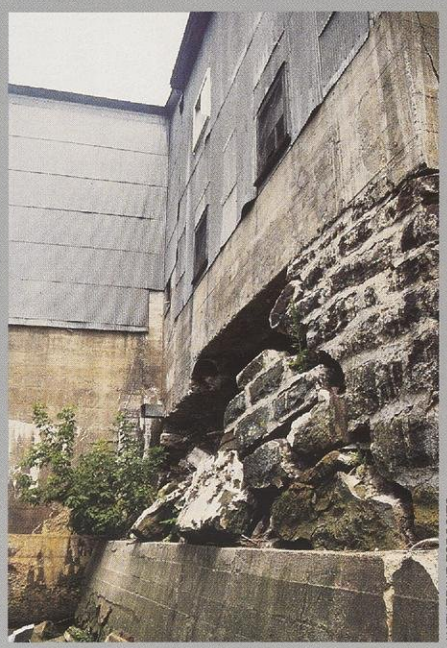
A way around dams

River ecologists call it a "window of opportunity:" a year or two when conservation-minded citizens can make a case for improving the environment around a given dam or, in some cases, pulling the dam out altogether. In either case, the usual goal is to restore fish habitat.

The "window" opens in two ways: when a community ponders rebuilding a deteriorated dam, or when a hydroelectric plant needs a new federal license.

The case for change has surfaced because fish biologists now know that it's more than just the famous Pacific and Atlantic salmon that have long had the doors closed in their faces when dams are built. Bass, walleye, even the bewhiskered channel catfish need more room to roam. And big fish such as the threatened Wisconsin River paddlefish, lake sturgeon and walleye in the Menominee River have been stymied for years from reaching the far-flung tributaries where their ancestors once spawned.

"Many people have felt our Midwestern river fish don't move," said Tom Thuemler, a DNR fish biologist in Rhinelander. "In the past 20 years, we've begun to do many more movement studies, and we've shown that that isn't the case. And [dams have] blocked their movement patterns."



KATHERINE ESPOSITO

Deteriorating masonry at a dam. Of Wisconsin's 3,600 dams, fewer than 200 generate electricity and only 30 percent must be inspected once a decade.

With Orienta, flood damage cracked open the window of opportunity a little. On intact hydro dams, the chance to help fish comes once every 30–50 years when dams are relicensed: federal law now requires that environmental issues be treated equally with economic ones. Additionally, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service may mandate in certain cases that a fish ladder be installed on a dam at some future date.

One big utility, Wisconsin Electric Power Company (WEPCo), with a total of 16 hydroelectric dams in the Menominee River Basin and several other rivers in the state's northeast corner, met with government staff and private citizens for two years before beginning dam relicensing attempts. In the end, WEPCo agreed to improve conditions at several dams, pay for research to build better passageways for big fish like sturgeon, and remove three dams. These came in exchange for reassurances that no one would later thwart their relicensing application.

But at a different hydroelectric plant, the Prairie du Sac dam on the Wisconsin River, owned by Alliant Energy, conservationists have not been so fortunate. The utility has refused to consider installing passage to help the paddlefish move over the dam, and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission has indicated it agrees with them.

At state-regulated dams, which are usually on smaller rivers than the bigger hydro dams, DNR dam safety staff in the last few years have suggested that some communities facing high dam repair bills either remove the dams or entertain the idea of installing fish passage, citing the statute of the early 1800s that gave the state the authority to require them.

Though the authority has been there, the precedent has not. Most vintage fish passage devices were poorly conceived and sometimes not even completed. Most never worked. Last fall, DNR Secretary George Meyer decided that the entire issue needed to be examined and updated, in order to present a consistent approach. And last month, the agency did decide to require a fishway at the Brodhead Dam on the Sugar River, citing both improved technology and a host of fish and mussel species that would benefit.

John Lyons, a DNR fish biologist with many years' experience studying the ecology of rivers around dams believes that more research could eventually lead to devices that will work on the larger hydro dams that will probably never come down. The WEPCo agreement to pay for research near the Michigan border is a case in point, he said.

Fish passage on smaller dams has met with some success, though not tried often in Wisconsin. At those, Lyons asks, "why not just bring back the river?"

"People don't know what our river systems used to be like," he said. "Wisconsin has [thousands of] natural lakes. Let's leave our rivers alone."

1993 and caused millions of dollars in damage.

Nationally, greater catastrophes occurred in other states, such as the Buffalo Creek dam in West Virginia in 1972, where 125 people downstream died. Or the failure of the Kelly Barnes dam in Georgia in 1977, where 39 died. "Those numbers are worth remembering," McCann said.

But few people actually do — even the federal government. Not until 1996 did Congress approve a multi-million dollar plan to encourage states to improve their dam safety operations. Back

in 1978, Washington's only response was to begin a massive national effort to inspect privately owned dams with the biggest potential for downstream disaster. Those dams comprised 9,000 of about 100,000 dams nationwide.

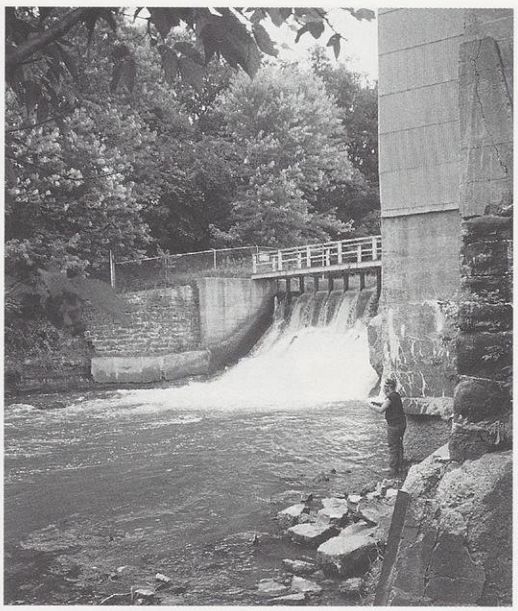
Those results, as well as several other surveys, showed that fully a third of the inspected dams had deteriorated severely. The existing strategy of allowing states to police their dam safety programs without any federal oversight was resulting in a frightening mishmash of approaches. Many states had inadequate dam safety programs — if any — and too few staff. Often there were no uniform guidelines for the design, construction, operation, and maintenance of dams.

Each state's governor was given a report on the inspections and encouraged, but not required, to upgrade those deteriorating dams. By 1982, only 1,000 dams had received any attention. By 1997, little had changed.

Ironically, following a spate of bridge failures and accompanying fatalities in the 1970s, Congress took a different tack. Officials were alarmed enough to push through a stringent mandatory inspection and repair program that continues to this day.

Edward Fitzgerald, a state Department of Transportation civil engineer, likens the needs of dams and bridges. "Once they're built, you don't want to forget about them," he said. "The biggest problems with bridges are the problems we can't see. And that's underwater." The same is true of dams, according to officials.

Compared with many other states, Wisconsin has been a leader in dam safety, having begun in 1986 to require inspections of large dams once a decade. But that's small consolation to state Dam Safety Engineer Meg Galloway. As workload increased, dam safety staff were given extra tasks, diluting their abilities to oversee dams. Many dams should be receiving their second inspection around now, she says; almost half haven't even been looked at once. Public dam safety workshops that used to be held every two years have been sidelined, and only a third of large dams have the required emergency action plans, which contain telephone numbers and addresses of people downstream.



KATHERINE ESPOSITO

A favorite pastime — fishing below a dam.The most likely problems with dams, like bridges, are in the underwater portions that we can't see. "Once they are built, you don't want to forget about them." — *Edward Fitzgerald, State Dept. of Transportation Engineer*

"Any dam has the potential to fail at any time," Galloway says. "Part of our job is to identify where the consequences are more significant."

An alternative to worry

The nice thing about removing a dam is that once it's done, neither state inspectors nor local owners have to worry about it anymore. Money more than ecology may be driving those decisions, but conservationists aren't arguing. Says Sara Johnson, the former director of Wisconsin's River Alliance: "It's really great to have a rare opportunity where the economics of it are so much in favor of the resource."

Last year, on a blisteringly hot July day, my son revived himself in the cool, rushing waters of the restored Willow River in St. Croix County. It came after a day mostly spent exploring the shores of tranquil, occasionally scummy dam impoundments with his mom and brother. Asked which kind of water he preferred, he never hesitated: "This kind."

The state-owned Mounds Dam was removed from the Willow River a year ago for $170,000, a fraction of the cost of repairing it. Another dam downstream was removed in 1992, restoring several miles of cold trout water.

No one lived alongside those dams, nobody next door worried about losing a scenic lake view or fretted whether their property values would drop. But in West Bend in the early 1980s, those were exactly the concerns laid in the lap of newly elected Mayor Michael Miller. A price tag of $3 million for an overhaul of the city's 110-year-old Woolen Mills dam prompted some in government to search for an alternative.

They found one. Today, an expansive municipal park known as the River Walk grows in place of the mucky impoundment. New bridges link the banks of the Milwaukee River, and smallmouth bass draw more anglers than the bottom-feeding carp ever did.

Gone is the silence of a shallow, still lake, Miller said. "You can see and hear the river," he said.

Woolen Mills was taken out for $500,000 in 1988, and Miller credits his park and recreation department for creating the River Walk idea, which is now drawing casual strollers and even visitors from afar, including some with sticky dam issues in their own communities.

"People are less likely to object to dam removal if you have a plan," said Miller recently. "I think it added enormous value to West Bend, in terms of recreation." And the River Walk didn't hurt property values either, according to the city assessor's office.

West Bend citizens who now support what was done tell the true story, Miller said. "A few years later, many people have contacted me, saying how pleased they were we took out the dam. It's a real [city] asset." he said. □

Staff Writer Katherine Esposito covers natural resource and environmental issues from our Madison offices.

continued from page 2

Several species are found around the northern hemisphere. At least three species (all belonging to genus Dolornedes) are commonly found in Wisconsin, along streams and on ponds and lakes. They may stray some distance from water, moving over shoreside and emergent vegetation. To a fishing spider, docks and bridges are just another kind of tree, suitable for hunting food and a quick escape route from enemies. The spiders can run down prey on land or solid surfaces like any hunting spider. They can also chase prey on the water's surface and even dive beneath the surface to capture prey or escape enemies.

Each of the spider's eight legs is tipped with a hydrophobic fluid that repels water. Touched on the water surface, the foot forms a tiny depression or dimple; but it does not penetrate the water. By kicking the eight dimples with powerful strokes, the spider skims across the surface.

By scuttling down the stem of a cattail or other water plant, the spider can even escape or hunt below the surface. The hairs of its abdomen trap a silvery bubble of air so the spider can breathe as if it were wearing an aqualung. This bubble even functions like a primitive gill, absorbing dissolved oxygen and dissipating carbon dioxide. The spider can stay beneath the surface for more than half an hour.

DON BLEGEN

A female fishing spider. These brawny but light arachnids are really equipped — water-repellent fluid on their legs allows them to scoot on top of the water. Their sharp eyes spy prey on land and under water.

Fishing spiders do not build webs to catch their prey, although they may use their silk to make egg cases for incubating their babies and protecting them for some time after hatching. Unlike some web-weaving spiders that are nearly blind, fishing spiders have excellent vision. Their eight eyes pick up the slightest movement, have good depth perception, and function well in both bright and dim light.

The fishing spider hunts the frontiers of two very different habitats: water and land. Its unusual adaptations for moving and breathing allow it to function efficiently in both environments, tapping into food sources and eluding enemies. The abundant insect life hatching from the water — mayflies, caddis flies, stoneflies, etc. — are vulnerable to a fishing spider skimming across the surface. It will occasionaly eat a small fish or tadpole. Yet scampering up a reed (or dock support) will take the spider out of reach of a hungry bass.

We admire the fishing spider's versatility with an undercurrent of fear and repulsion, given its huge size. In our hypocrisy, we deem it is OK for vertebrates like us to eat an invertebrate. But here is an invertebrate that occasionally eats vertebrates. That's a bit chilling. Or, as Corey muttered under his breath, "Disgusting!" □

Don Blegen photographs and writes about nature from Spring Valley, Wis.

Readers Write

GOOSE TRACKERS

Thank you for using a photo of Bay Beach Wildlife Sanctuary on the December cover and including the sanctuary in your story on urban geese. As the director of the sanctuary for the past 29 years, I know every inch of the grounds and the instant I saw the cover, I knew it was a photo of one of our ponds.

One of our programs that coincides with your story is our yearly goose banding program. It began in 1965, making it one of the lengthiest geese tracking programs in the country. It provides valuable knowledge regarding the health and overall condition of the geese, allows a long-term population study and tracks their migratory patterns.

Ty Baumann
Bay Beach Wildlife Sanctuary
Green Bay

SUSTAINING FORESTS

Katherine Esposito's story on Wisconsin woodlot owners who have been duped by unscrupulous loggers ("Stumped by a sale," October 1998) does a great service in educating the public on poor forest management practices by some timber harvesters and the destruction they can cause.

In my view, the same factors that drove timber companies to completely destroy the white pinery in northern Wisconsin during the 1800s, greed and ignorance, continue to operate today. National forests have been reduced to fragmented patches of monocultures interspersed by wide open spaces due to clearcutting.

A new forestry philosophy is taking root, sustainable forestry, where forests are managed for species diversity, watersheds, soils and wildlife, as well as timber. The forest is viewed more like an organism that is interrelated to water, wildlife, soils and climate. *Wisconsin Natural Resources* can take the next step by publishing future articles on this new forestry.

Jeff Haas
Reno, Nev.

Sustainable forestry techniques are actively incorporated in Wis-

consin management projects, forestry projects, master planning and our educational programs. We produced a poster/insert to discuss these concepts in October 1995 and a subsequent discussion of integrated ecosystem management techniques in December 1996.

AROUND, NOT ACROSS

About your December back cover, visitors to Squirrel River Pines State Natural Area will be disappointed if they are looking for red pines "up to seven feet in diameter." It is a peaceful spot, but those trees are seven feet in circumference, not diameter.

Fortunately the area wasn't hit by strong storms and blowdowns that have passed through the area.

Michael Vogt
Elm Grove

BULLHEAD MEMORIES

Your October article "No Bull" brought back memories of fishing in my favorite state. I've fished Lone Lake in Washburn County since 1930!

Back in the thirties we would obtain beef and chicken parts, the smellier the better, tie them on to a stout line without a hook and throw it to the bottom of a lake or river. We'd land the bullhead, pull the bait from its gullet and we were ready to go for the next one.

Thanks for the good time in that story.

Joseph P. Byrne
Carlsbad, Calif.

CITY GEESE

"Making peace with geese," (December 1998) seemed to view the Canada goose as overly protected like the "sacred cow" in far eastern countries. All cities have laws against raising livestock within the city limits. Protecting geese has given them free-ranging livestock status.

The birds live clean and can avoid their own contamination under normal conditions. Humans and other creatures might pick up diseases from their wastes.

Minnesota has gathered excess urban geese and processed them for food shelters. This meat is as pure or more so than any standard processed domestic animal.

The article didn't take into account the great wealth of information about urban geese from Minnesota and other areas. The problem is not unique to Wisconsin and should not be treated as such.

Alan Burchell
Ray, Minn.

Canada geese in the wild or the city are still viewed as wild waterfowl and are protected nationwide. You are absolutely right that the issue is not unique to Wisconsin, it's prevalent in many urban areas in the United States and Canada. We stated that hazing techniques, addling eggs, repellents, fencing and other control techniques had been effective in many other communities.

Processing geese for food shelters is plausible, but not uniformly accepted, and those animals must be tested as safe food sources. Social acceptance is more difficult. In the Midwest, where waterfowl hunting is more common, geese may be welcome at food shelters. In large Eastern cities, where urban dwellers are less accustomed to eating wild game, clients at food shelters have refused to eat this excellent source of lean, tasty protein. Clearly a mixture of techniques and approaches is warranted as each community decides how to manage its urban wildlife populations.

BUCK TALES

I thoroughly enjoyed "The Butternut buck." (December 1998) It refreshed a vivid memory of a similar experience I had 35–40 years ago. I was hunting with buddies in Langlade County between Lily and Pickerel. I didn't get hooked on deer hunting until my early 20's and this was my second season. My first year I had gotten a nice eight-pointer on opening day and I was surprised the second year to shoot a nice forkhorn buck.

Like "Gramps," my shot wasn't very long and the buck went down in a heap. I poked it a couple of times and rolled it over onto its back. The deer's eyes were closed and I figured it was dead. My buddy showed up, offered to do the gutting and started to poke the deer with his knife. The deer tried to get up, I had the hind legs and Jerry was somehow draped over its front shoulders. Neither of us dared to let go and grab a rifle as one of us could never have held that animal down. The deer continued to thrash around, but we finally won out.

When we examined the animal more closely, we found my shot had just grazed the antler at the base and caused a slight wound.

I ended up with a torn zipper in my jacket, some sore ribs, a few bruises and a nice buck…plus a lot more hunting knowledge.

Rodney J. Schmidt, Sr.
Bloomer

RAISE YOUR GLASS

Drinking Water Week is celebrated the first full week each May and this year marks the 25th anniversary of the Safe Drinking Water Act. From May 2–8 schools, libraries and community organizations will be encouraged to recognize drinking water as one of our most precious resources. Educational materials distributed worldwide as The Blue Thumb Project will recount the value of drinking water, recall our history to rid our water supplies of infectious diseases, and share simple tips to conserve water at home, in communities, and in businesses.

To learn more about how Drinking Water Week can be celebrated in Wisconsin schools and communities, call (608) 266-8172 or e-mail matthm@dnr.state.wi.us.

Get to the point

A pleasant spring day, when all is fresh and green and new, is the perfect time to go back to the beginning — Wisconsin's beginning, when "badgers" were digging mines around Dickeyville instead of smelling roses in California.

Just south of Hazel Green, where the fourth principal meridian crosses the Illinois/Wisconsin border, you'll find Wisconsin's **Point of Beginning** — the spot from which U.S. government surveyor Lucius Lyons began to mark out the sections of land that would later become the state of Wisconsin.

Lyons and his crew created the benchmark in 1831 by building a mound six feet tall by six feet square and driving a thick oak post through the center. Here the public land surveys began in 1832 and would continue until completion in northern Wisconsin in 1867.

The boundaries of each Wisconsin county, city, village, township, farm, lot, road, lake and stream were mapped from this point.

State surveyors dug up what remained of the old oak post in the 1970s and replaced it with a modern concrete marker. Travelers today will find a historical signpost along Highway 80 about a half-mile west of the actual point.

The Point of Beginning is a great place to start your own survey of Southwest Wisconsin. Take a spring weekend to drive, bike or hike through the region at your leisure, and be sure to bring along a copy of "Point of Beginnings: Heritage Trails of Southwest Wisconsin" a handy guide featuring maps and places of interest.

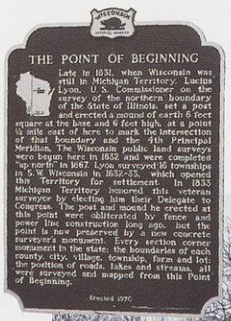
The many points at which "picks, politics, pulpits and plows" converged in the area offer a fascinating view of Wisconsin's earliest days. Feuding lead miners James Hardy and Moses Meeker prompted some wisecracking pals to name the area around the Point of Beginning "Hardy's Scrape" in the 1820s. Later, the place became known as "Hard Scrabble." And in 1838, when upstanding folk incorporated the town, they chose genteel "Hazel Green" as the name for their community. The town has several historic buildings, including a classic Opera House built in the 1890s.

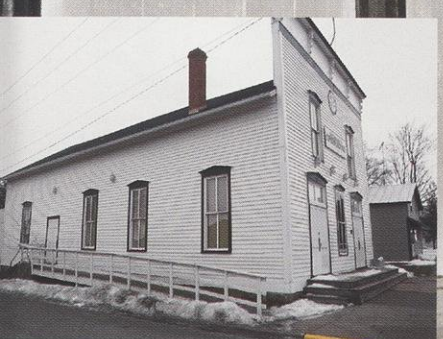
Near Blanchardville at the junction of Highway 78 North and County Highway F, you'll find Graceland Cemetery. In the 1840s it was known as "Zarahemba," a Mormon settlement built by followers of murdered prophet Joseph Smith. Some of Smith's descendants rest now in the cemetery's old section.

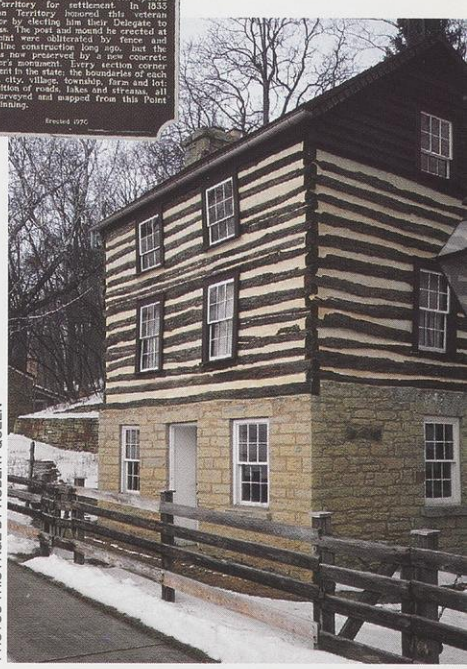
The region has historic churches from many denominations. East Wiota Lutheran, the oldest Norwegian Lutheran church still in use in America, stands as it has since 1847 on Highway 78 east of Wiota. Near New Diggings, once the heart of the "lead rush," Father Samuel Mazzuchelli used wood planks to build St. Augustine's Church in 1844.

Another point of interest is Mineral Point — the third oldest city in Wisconsin, where the restored log and stone homes of Cornish lead miners now house museums and shops. On the corner of Front and State streets stands the first Odd Fellows Hall built west of the Alleghenies, in 1838.

History, nature, worship, commerce — you'll enjoy hitting the high points around the Point of Beginning. For a copy of the guide, go to the source. Write to POB Heritage Area, Southwestern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, 1 University Plaza, 426 Karrmann Library, Platteville, WI 53818. Or call (608) 342-1214. □







PHOTOS THIS PAGE BY ROBERT QUEEN

(clockwise from bottom left) The Hazel Green Opera House, the doors of St. Augustine's, the plaque near the spot where state surveys began, and a bit of Mineral Point architecture.

Wisconsin, naturally

Powers Bluff Maple Woods State Natural Area

Notable: Towering 300 feet above the rolling landscape of north-central Wood County is Powers Bluff, a hill of very hard, erosion-resistant Precambrian quartzite rock. Seventy acres of Powers Bluff County Park is designated as a State Natural Area. Cloaking the north flank of the bluff is a southern mesic forest composed of sugar maple, yellow birch, basswood and red oak. Visitors in early May will find a colorful carpet of spring wildflowers including bloodroot, maidenhair fern, miterwort, wood phlox, and wild ginger. The display of large-flowered trillium, as seen here, is truly spectacular.

How to get there: From the junction of county trunk highways N and E just west of Arpin, go south on E one mile, then west on Bluff Drive one mile to the county park entrance. The natural area lies east of the park road. An interpretive trail winds through the site. Wisconsin Atlas and Gazetteer: page 63, grid 8D.