

INSIDE | WISCONSIN'S DEDICATION TO DEER RESEARCH

# WISCONSIN NATURAL RESOURCES

wnrmag.com

October 2013 \$3.50



**Saw-whet  
you looking at?**

Cherish Wisconsin Outdoors

Steering the Friends of Wisconsin State Parks

Meet hunter education's head honcho



# The Blanchardville buck

A boy recaps bagging the biggest buck of his life — so far.



The author, Jordan Senf, with his prize.

SHIELA SENF

*Jordan Senf*

**Most Wisconsinites are proud Badgers and Packers fans. But sometimes, especially in the fall, we forget that our state is so much more than football. I suspect that many people do not appreciate the diverse geography and wildlife that comprises Wisconsin. I, for example, live in a virtual ocean of cornfields. Not far to the north is a plethora of pine trees. But one of my favorite parts of the state is Blanchardville in Iowa County.**

One of the things that I like about going to Blanchardville is hunting there. I really enjoy the feeling of privacy that the woods there gives us. I love to sit in a tree stand at the bottom of the valley. I enjoy having trees surround us from the back and front. For about 20 yards then, it is wide open and there aren't any trees before the terrain rises steeply. On the top of the valley there is an alfalfa field where deer come and eat. After dining, they walk a path that they made straight down the valley and right in front of my stand.

Last deer season, we were getting ready to go to my grandparents' house in Blanchardville to hunt. I had just

sighted in my .243 bolt action the week before. I was psyched to go and to hopefully get a shot at a big deer. My dad and I arrived at my grandparents' house on the Friday before opening day at about 9 p.m. After unloading our gear we stayed up for just a half-hour before going to bed. Morning would come fast.

The next morning my dad came into the room I was sleeping in and turned the light on.

"Get up. We are going to go and try to get a big buck," he said.

It took me a little while to wake up, but when I did, I was ready to go and get settled in the tree stand. One of the


great things about hunting at my grandparents' house is that we can walk out the door and we are in our stand in 10 minutes. We left the house around 5:15 and had to get inside the pasture gate without letting the cows out. It took us about 10 minutes because a couple of them were standing in front of the gate.

But we were sitting in the stand at 5:30. We thought that it was going to be a long day without a big buck because that's how the previous years had been. We were sitting in the stand for about an hour. It was just getting light about 6:30. Then, the biggest deer I had ever seen on the property came walking down the valley straight towards my stand. It was a 12-pointer.

I hoped he would walk in the clear where I could get a shot at him. He did. I had my scope on him the entire time. Then, when he stopped and looked around, I shot him. He ran for 15 yards and then fell in the trees.

I really wanted to jump down out of the stand and go running towards the deer, but I knew that I should wait about a half-hour to make sure that he was down. That was the longest 30 minutes of my life. When I could finally go see my deer I found it was the biggest deer, I had ever shot.

When it was all over I found out that it scored 138 on the Boone and Crockett Club scale. It's just too bad that I wasn't in the local deer hunting contest.

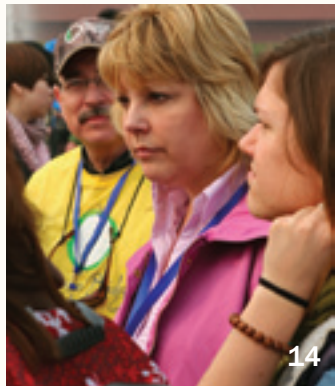
I hope that others take advantage of the great outdoors of Wisconsin. I hope they appreciate the state for more than its football teams. Hunting is not only about getting the big deer. It is about hanging out with family. It is also for making memories and keeping a family hunting tradition alive. 

*Jordan Senf is a high school freshman who lives with his brother and parents in Cambria. He enjoys sports, especially football. He also enjoys hunting. His favorite season is deer hunting season. This is a story of the biggest deer he ever shot at his grandparents' farm in Blanchardville.*



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**FRONT COVER** The northern saw-whet owl is Wisconsin's tiniest owl and one of its most secretive, too.

Ryan Brady  
(pbase.com/rbrady)

**BACK COVER:** Grasses and forbs glow in the early October sunlight at Hardscrabble Prairie State Natural Area in La Fayette County. **INSET:** Ottoe skipper (*Hesperia ottoe*). This butterfly is found in mixed and tallgrass prairie. Bluemest grasses are its host plant. For more information, or to order a guidebook to State Natural Areas for \$18 (postage paid), contact the State Natural Areas Program, Bureau of Natural Heritage Conservation, DNR, P.O. Box 7921, Madison, WI 53707 or visit [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov) and search "SNA."

Thomas Meyer, WDNR  
Inset: © Mike Reese



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**Art Direction** Thomas J. Senatori  
**Printing** Schumann Printers

Wisconsin Natural Resources magazine (USPS #34625000) is published bimonthly in February, April, June, August, October and December by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. The magazine is sustained through paid subscriptions. No tax money or license fees are used. Preferred Periodicals postage paid at Madison, WI. POSTMASTER and readers: subscription questions and address changes should be sent to Wisconsin Natural Resources magazine, P.O. Box 7191, Madison, WI 53707. Subscription rates are: \$8.97 for one year, \$15.97 for two years, \$21.97 for three years. Toll-free subscription inquiries will be answered at 1-800-678-9472.

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PUBL CE-013  
ISSN-0736-2277





Saw-whet owl adults are 6.7 to 8.7 inches long with a wingspan of 17 to 22.2 inches. They can weigh between 1.9 and 5.3 ounces and are close to the size of an American robin.

# Whooo's in my woods?

**MEET  
WISCONSIN'S  
TINIEST OWL,  
THE NORTHERN  
SAW-WHET.**

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*Dave Wilson*

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The first time I heard the sound I thought, "Who is out in the woods at this time of night, this time of year and this close to my cabin tooting on a whistle?"

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It was 10 p.m. and early spring. There was still snow on the ground. The sound was something like a short continuous toot on a whistle.

I had a hunch it was an owl, but figured that owls hoot; they don't toot. I finally contacted the area biologist at the DNR office in Park Falls who recommended that I contact Christian Cold, local raptor specialist, wildlife technician and educator at the DNR office in Ladysmith. After describing the sound to him, Cold knew the answer





© HERBERT LANGE

cavities. Some are permanent residents, while others may migrate south in winter or move down from higher elevations. Their range covers most of North America.

According to legend, John James Audubon named this bird the saw-whet owl because its “skiew” call resembled the sound of whetting (sharpening) a saw. The saw blade is put on a flat surface and a whetstone (sharpening stone) is drawn the length of the blade across the teeth of the saw to remove the burrs and to make the width of the teeth uniform after sharpening. The whetstone drawn across the teeth makes the “skiew” sound when done rapidly.

The saw-whet owl only vocalizes during its breeding season, which is March through April. I have tried several times to get close enough to the calling owl in the spring to get a look at one, but I have not had any luck.

During the summer, while the owl shares the woods with me, it is mostly silent as it watches and waits for prey — or to make sure it doesn’t become prey.

“Their favorite habitat is newer, mixed forests which contain evergreens,” Cold says. “They also seem to prefer water nearby. Saw-whets tend to avoid mature or open forests with larger trees, perhaps because larger owls like barred owls and great horned owls will eat them.”

The secretive saw-whet depends on its plumage for camouflage. If it is startled it will flatten itself along a branch so as to appear like part of the tree.

Females are slightly larger than males. The saw-whet is short-bodied with a short tail. Its head looks overly large and it has no ear tufts. Their bright yellow eyes appear large, centered in a



Saw-whet owl banding is a popular Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin field trip.

CHRISTINE TANZER



Learn more about the foundation at [www.wisconservation.org/](http://www.wisconservation.org/)

MARGE GIBSON

to my question.

“That’s a saw-whet owl,” Cold assured me. He noted that he had recently been taking people on tours at night to listen to the owl.

Cold’s answer, though, just raised so many more questions for me. What do they look like? Why haven’t I ever seen one?

The northern saw-whet owl (*Aegolius acadicus*) is Wisconsin’s tiniest owl. It is a nocturnal powerful ball of fluff packaged in a body the size of a robin. And while you may be lucky enough to hear one making a series of whistled toots in the spring, they are rarely seen.

These woodland wee-ones live in tree

To hear the saw-whet visit the Cornell Lab of Ornithology online at [allaboutbirds.org/guide/Northern\\_Saw-whet\\_Owl/sounds](http://allaboutbirds.org/guide/Northern_Saw-whet_Owl/sounds)

**Cool facts from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology:**

- The main prey of the northern saw-whet owl are mice, especially deer mice of the genus *Peromyscus*. Adult mice are usually eaten in pieces in two different meals. One owl was found dead after apparently trying to swallow a large mouse whole.
- The female northern saw-whet owl does the incubation and brooding. The male brings her all her food while she is incubating. She leaves the eggs for only one or two short trips each night to defecate and to cough up a pellet.
- While the female saw-whet broods her nestlings, she keeps the nest cavity very clean. When the young are about 18 days old, she starts spending the night in another hole, and then the dirt starts to accumulate. When the young owls leave the nest after another 10 days to two weeks, the nest cavity has a thick layer of feces, pellets and rotting prey parts.





BRIAN RUDINSKY/U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE



The northern saw-whet has a round, white face with brown and cream streaks, dark beak and yellow eyes. They lack ear tufts.

ANNA KEARNEY

According to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, the northern saw-whet owl can be found roosting in winter, in small, dense conifer trees, sometimes even in parks and gardens. Its defense upon discovery is to sit still and not fly, leading people to perceive them as “tame.”

facial disk that has white and brown radial streaks on the outer edge and white only in the center. The rest of the head is brown or grayish brown and their plumage is fluffy and streaked brown and white.

Saw-whets do not make nests like other birds. Instead, they have their young in holes in trees made by other birds.


Cold says saw-whet owls prefer to dine on mice, voles, shrews and large insects in the warmer months.

“A few may remain year-round in this area, but harsh winters like the last one took its toll on many birds,” Cold says. “Cold temperatures and deep snow are hard on them as they cannot plunge into deep snow to catch their prey.”

Most Wisconsin saw-whet owls mi-

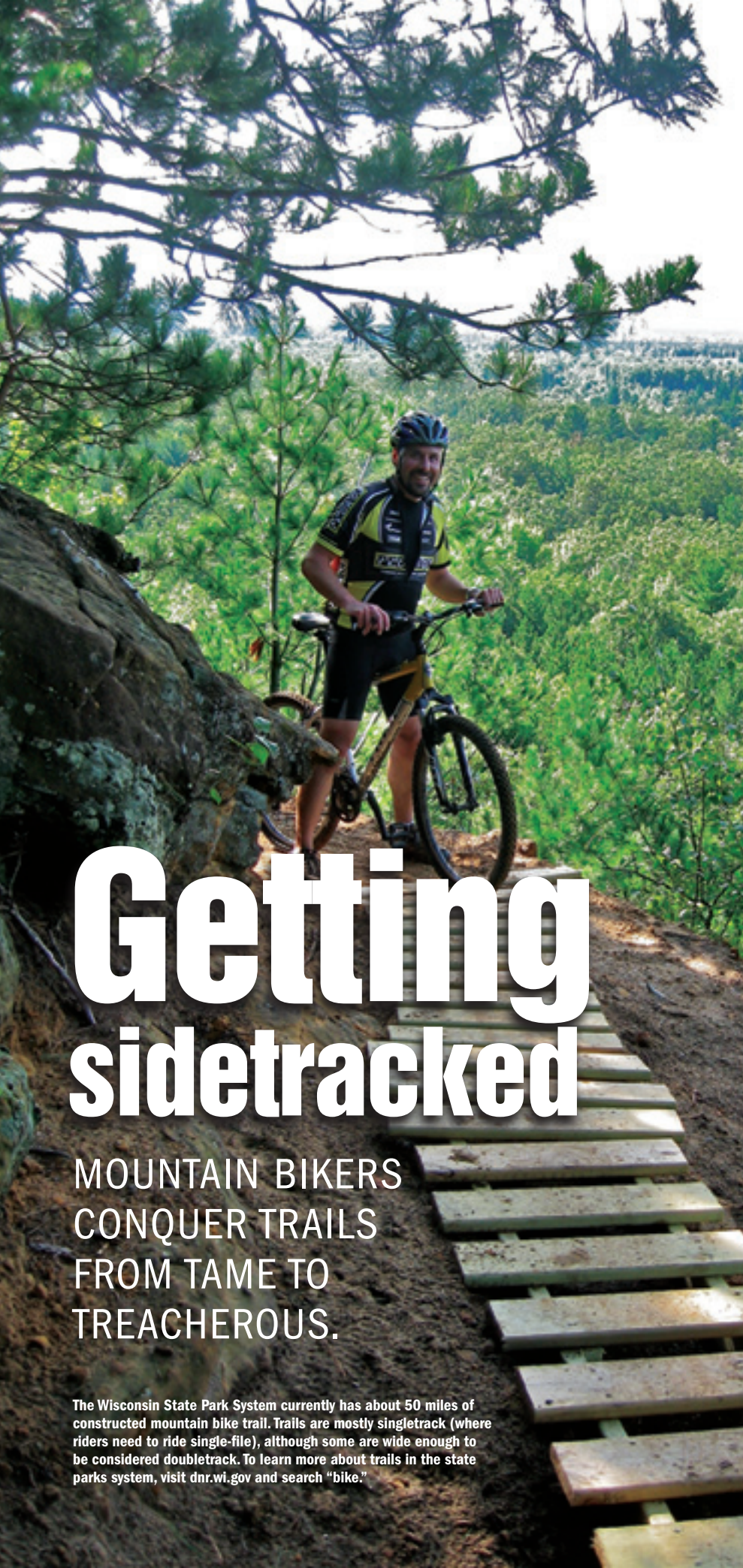
grate in the spring and the fall. Their seasonal “movements” occur on a broad-front, where scattered birds move through our lawns and neighborhoods at night mostly unnoticed.

Larger groups migrate in the fall because their young are with them. Smaller groups migrate in the spring because they are the winter survivors. Saw-whets migrate as far north as mid-Canada and as far south as the Gulf of Mexico.

Like the howling of the wolf, the call of the loon and the gurgling of a raven, the distinctive “toot” of the saw-whet owl makes Northern Wisconsin wild and intriguing. 

*Dave Wilson lives off the grid in a log cabin he built on the South Fork of the Flambeau River.*





# Getting sidetracked

MOUNTAIN BIKERS  
CONQUER TRAILS  
FROM TAME TO  
TREACHEROUS.

The Wisconsin State Park System currently has about 50 miles of constructed mountain bike trail. Trails are mostly singletrack (where riders need to ride single-file), although some are wide enough to be considered doubletrack. To learn more about trails in the state parks system, visit [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov) and search "bike."

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*Story and photos by Tim Sybrant*

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I remember when a bicycle was my only way to get around: to go to a friend's house, to get to school, to go to an arcade or to a park. Throughout my life, my bike has always gotten me where I needed to go and even afforded a bit of fun along the way.

---

Owning a mountain bike for me today is like owning a time machine that transports me back to the magical time of my youth. At 31 years old, biking still gets me out laughing with friends while hanging out in the woods with shovels and making trails and jumps.

The only difference is that over the last 20 years there have been so many improvements in bikes and trails that today just may be the best time ever to be a kid with a bike.

Merriam-Webster dryly defines a mountain bike as an all-terrain bicycle with wide-knobby tires, straight handlebars and typically 18 to 21 gears. But what the dictionary doesn't mention is that a mountain bike is an exciting way to travel. Worldwide the choices are endless, from a death-defying 18-mile race down a 6,500-foot glacier in the French Alps, to a nice, family ride through a grassy meadow in Wisconsin.

Wisconsin's unique natural beauty extends from the bluffs of the western Driftless Area, through central Wisconsin's rolling hills, and into unscathed woods "up north." This gives mountain bikers the opportunity to make and ride trails through stunning areas statewide.

Many mountain bike clubs have a unique relationship with those who manage the public lands they use. This happens because of the stewardship and respect for the land and its agents that many mountain bikers and trail builders display. Bikers are usually just happy and thankful for the opportunity to use the land.

Chuck Hutchens, trail steward with Capital Off-Road Pathfinders, explains a conversation he had with a local park ranger at Camrock Park in Rockdale.



The ranger said, “So let me get this straight. You guys want to build and maintain a bunch of trails in the park in your spare time for free, and then you want to pay us for a trail pass to ride them? That sounds good to me!”

Mountain bikers primarily build and maintain all the trails but encourage use by many others such as hikers, cross-country skiers, trail runners, dog walkers and bird watchers. The more people are out enjoying nature, the better.

Many people dedicate a lot of time to mountain bike trail building for no compensation other than the sheer satisfaction they get from riding, and the camaraderie shared among fellow riders. The people who labor to make the trails, the people who work with parks departments and land managers, the people who write grants, the people who advocate for the trails, and even the guy who is writing this article are doing it because they want to share their love of mountain biking.

### **Physically demanding and mentally freeing**

Mountain biking provides direct health benefits. In terms of physical fitness and health, biking is great exercise. Throw in some steep hills with rocks and roots and you have brought a basic cardiovascular and leg muscle workout to a full body workout that builds endurance, muscle strength, balance and coordination.

There are also mental benefits. Trails get people out in nature, sometimes with spectacular views of landscapes that can only be seen from the trail. This helps build a conscious connection with the outdoors that puts many minds at ease. An arena for clear thinking comes about as riders easily slip away from the thoughts of the daily grind and truly live in the moment of pushing their bodies physically, while connecting themselves to beautiful natural surroundings.

Mountain biking does present an element of danger. Crashes happen and riders get hurt. The more difficult trails and terrains they cross generally bring greater punishment. Riders normally incur minor scrapes, cuts or bruises. Broken bones and fractures are rare. But this danger puts in place another great emotional benefit as the sport continually challenges even the most experienced rider.

Most trail systems are constructed in sections with varying degrees of difficulty. This allows and encourages riders



**Local bike clubs throughout the state construct and maintain mountain bike trails in cooperation with land managers.**

to continually challenge and push themselves to improve: to ride a little faster and smoother, to get over an obstacle they haven't before, to get up a steep, rocky hill they've had to walk up before, or to make it down a steep, uneven hill without crashing. To overcome most of these challenges, riders must practice overcoming fear.

The fear of crashing into a pile of rocks or trees, or even just the soft dirt trail, is real and scary. Mental conditioning gained from practicing helps build confidence.

The mountain biking community is mostly a friendly and welcoming group. As a biker, I can go almost anywhere in the world and have friends I haven't met yet waiting for me. A good hard ride and a celebratory beer hold no barriers.

### **Don't skimp on protective gear**

The equipment needed to enter this sport safely is important. Modern technology offers bikers a variety of bikes and protective gear that vary in price and purpose. Generally, the price of a mountain bike depends on the quality of the components for basic and popular styles. The price can increase greatly when a very specific style of bike is needed, such as a heavy-duty “down-hill” bike designed only to ride down steep, rough terrain, or an extremely lightweight “cross-country race” bike

made to go as fast as possible.

Luckily for the beginner, most experienced riders will share information and advice on what style and quality of bike the trails in their area call for. The minor details of the geometry (angles of the frame tubes and other components) make a big difference in how the bike will handle, so it's a good idea to consult some experts on mountain biking and to do some research to find a bike that fits comfortably and will be capable of withstanding the use it will take on. An entry-level bike off the shelf is a good start and can always be upgraded or tweaked as a rider's skills progress. Lots of serious mountain bikers custom build their bikes to get the exact ride qualities they want.

Protective gear is important and will help prevent or lessen injuries in a crash. Helmets are the most important piece of protective equipment. A properly fitted and appropriate style of helmet can save a rider's life and should be worn at all times.

A good pair of shoes — either special biking shoes or just a sturdy gym shoe with a grippy bottom — are important as a rider's platform for riding. Gloves not only help in a crash but will absorb bumps and help keep a good grip on the handlebars. Glasses are a good idea to keep sun, tree branches and dirt and debris out of a rider's eyes.

In more dangerous types of riding,



such as doing jumps or downhill racing, protective equipment can get sophisticated with full-face motocross style helmets, ski goggles, shin guards, elbow and knee pads, shoulder/chest/back padding and neck supports. To get started, a good helmet, gloves and shoes are sufficient.

### A trail to fit your style

Most mountain bike trails in Wisconsin are volunteer-built and maintained on state, county or city property. Trails on private land exist, but are few and far between.

“Singletrack” is the name of a standard single-rider width mountain bike trail. A “doubletrack” is a double rider width or wider trail.

Local organizations often form from riders who want to take the initiative to not only ride but to make and improve trail systems. It’s more complicated than just picking up a shovel. Trail builders must work closely with those who manage the land the trails are built on to ensure the land is best used in everyone’s interest.

The International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) is the parent organization of 10 local chapters and is affiliated with 14 clubs in Wisconsin. IMBA is a non-profit educational association whose mission is to create, enhance and preserve great mountain biking experiences. IMBA works to encourage low-impact riding, volunteer trail work, cooperation among trail users, grassroots advocacy and innovative trail management within their network of 35,000 members worldwide. Most importantly, IMBA has defined and helped implement trail building techniques deemed “sustainable.”

The principle of a sustainable trail is simple. Anytime vegetation is removed to create a trail, the potential for erosion increases. This happens as rainwater transports exposed soil. Modern trail building practices have been developed to prevent erosion, to strategically maintain certain trail grades, to armor trails with rocks, to implement wooden bridges for crossings and to build barriers within the trail to keep the soil from escaping further downhill. This practice ensures mountain biking leaves as little an impact on the land as possible.

### Popular trails in Wisconsin

Northwest Wisconsin is home to the largest network of trails in the Midwest,

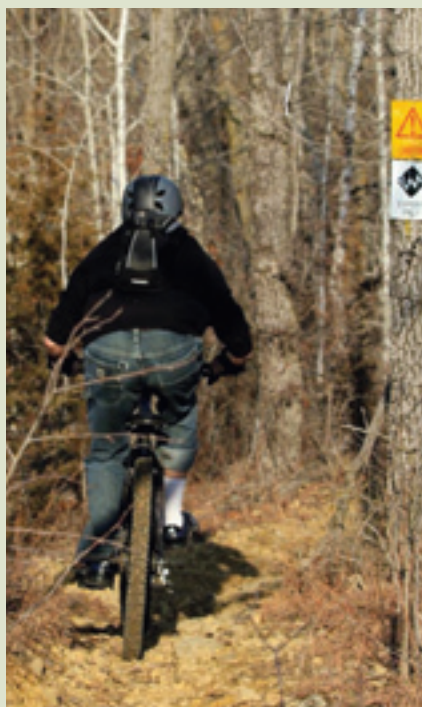
winding through a 1,600-square-mile section of the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest, Bayfield County Forest and Sawyer County Forest. Eighty miles of mapped and marked singletrack are found within an overall 300 miles of multi-purpose trail routes. Trails here are free to ride. More information is available on the local IMBA chapter Chequamegon Area Mountain Bike Association (CAMBA) website [cambatrails.org](http://cambatrails.org).

Centrally located in the state, Wausau’s Nine Mile County Forest Recreation Area consists of more than 10 miles of single-track mountain bike trail. Trail passes here cost \$4 for one day or \$25 for the May 15 through Oct. 15 season.

Big Eau Pleine County Park is a half-hour drive from Nine Mile and has eight miles of newly constructed single-track and offers camping near the Big Eau Pleine Reservoir. These trails are built and maintained by the local IMBA chapter, Central Wisconsin Off-Road Cycling Coalition. Visit [cwocc.org/](http://cwocc.org/).

More information and maps are available at [co.marathon.wi.us/Departments/ParksRecreationForestry/RecreationOpportunities/Biking.aspx](http://co.marathon.wi.us/Departments/ParksRecreationForestry/RecreationOpportunities/Biking.aspx).

The Eau Claire area has four trail systems comprising 32 miles of single-track. All are free except one system that requires a \$3 per day parking pass.



The best way to get into mountain biking is with a safe start. Wear a helmet, ride in control and follow trail rules.

The local Chippewa Off Road Bike Association is an IMBA-affiliated club with more information and maps at [chippewaoffroad.org/](http://chippewaoffroad.org/).

Southern Clark County has 23 miles of singletrack around the Levis and Trow Mound recreational trail with views from about 300 feet up. This network features a trail route that was the first IMBA Epic ride in Wisconsin. Also, this trail has camping directly at the trailhead. Trail passes to bike are \$5 per day, \$25 per season and \$50 for a family season. Camping is \$12 per day at the trailhead and \$7 per day in the county forest. More information and maps are available from the IMBA-affiliated club, Neillsville Area Trail Association [levismound.com](http://levismound.com).

La Crosse has a unique organization of outdoor enthusiasts called the Outdoor Recreation Alliance. This alliance includes mountain bikers in the Human Powered Trails (HPT) network. The HPT network consists of six miles of singletrack trail that is free to ride. More information and maps are available from the IMBA-affiliated club at [humanpoweredtrails.com/](http://humanpoweredtrails.com/).

Madison houses various trail types including 23 miles of singletrack. Blue Mound State Park has 15 miles of single-track, with separate bike/hike-in only campsites and a pool. Other trails in the Madison area feature specific, downhill free-ride trails and a dirt jump park. Some trails require a trail pass purchase. More information and maps are available from the local IMBA chapter, Capital Off-Road Pathfinders. Visit [madcitydirt.com/](http://madcitydirt.com/).

The Southern Kettle Moraine State Forest in Wisconsin holds 50 miles of singletrack within the 22,000-acre forest. The area is also a popular camping destination. More information and maps are available from IMBA’s Southern Kettle Moraine Chapter at [southernkettles.org/](http://southernkettles.org/).

Whether you’re someone who is looking to get started biking off the beaten path, an experienced rider already, or you are someone who just wants to go hiking, the mountain bike trails built and maintained by local clubs across Wisconsin offer an excellent way to improve your health, both mentally and physically, while connecting you with the great outdoors that make Wisconsin a special place.



*Tim Sybrant wrote this story while living in Madison and studying journalism at Madison Area Technical College.*





# Steering the Friends of Wisconsin State Parks

ON A COURSE  
FOR GROWTH  
AND GREAT  
OPPORTUNITIES.

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*Paul Holtan*

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Individual “Friends” groups for Wisconsin state parks, trails, forests and other properties have been “wildly successful” in the last year, notes Roger Putnam, president of Friends of Wisconsin State Parks.

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Friends of Wisconsin State Parks (FWSP) is a group of dedicated people from around the state who care about our beautiful Wisconsin state parks, forests, trails and recreation areas and are committed to their preservation.

FWSP represents the diverse interests of park and trail lovers of every description — hikers, those with special needs, campers, climbers, horse riders, canoers/kayakers, hunters, bikers, wildlife watchers and motorized vehicle users. Its members — more than 80 local Friends groups — are the critical component in keeping our state parks thriving, evolving, and in some cases, open.





(From left to right): Brenna Jones (FWSP board member), Jan Primus (FWSP Treasurer), Roger Putnam (FWSP President) and Waldo Peterson (FWSP board member).

PAUL HOLTAN

As FWSP membership grows, so does the strength and vitality of our parks. FWSP is committed to growing and supporting its membership as they work to protect and support Wisconsin state parks.

FWSP is the nonprofit, statewide group that supports the work of local state parks and trails member Friends groups across the state. These individual groups conduct local fundraising activities for park and trail improvement, and organize volunteer work activities that include trail clearing, campsite development, naturalist funding, park functions, shelter enhancements, cleanup efforts and family-oriented events and programs.

Last year, Friends groups contributed 142,565 volunteer hours and \$647,500 in

fundraising and donations to Wisconsin state parks and trails.

#### **A new era**

FWSP is entering an unprecedented period of growth and opportunity. Park and trail use are at historic highs. FWSP fundraising activities in 2013 set new high water marks. The interest in FWSP activities is reaching new heights as FWSP has coordinated outreach efforts and planned statewide events. Legislative and regulatory issues increasingly garner their attention.

"Interest in state parks Friends groups has never been greater," Putnam says. "But at the same time we're seeing a maturing in the membership of Friends groups and we know we need to reach out to younger and more diverse audiences."

The statewide organization started 17

years ago "as an effort to bring together the many motivated groups who cared deeply about their state parks," Putnam explains. "The Friends of Wisconsin State Parks has a lot of great board members with a lot of experience."

FWSP assists the individual Friends groups in fundraising efforts and in applying for grants, such as those available under the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program.

The Friends of Blue Mound State Park dedicated a new "Friends Shelter" at the park, which they donated after raising a half million dollars through their sponsoring of the annual "Horribly Hilly Hundreds" bicycle race.

The Lapham Peak Unit of the Kettle Moraine State Forest has the best early cross-country skiing in southeastern Wisconsin, thanks to the new snowmaking equipment put to use through the



DNR FILE/FICKR

**The Friends of Mirror Lake State Park, just one example of the many Friends groups in Wisconsin, began in the late 1990s with a small group of volunteers. Since then, the group has grown to more than 25 volunteers, and is making a big difference for the guests at this park outside Lake Delton. As a result of their commitment, hard work and dedication, the group was awarded the Hero Award from FWSP as the Outstanding Friends Group in 2011.**





**A candlelight hike event at Whitefish Dunes State Park in Door County. Friends groups are instrumental in the success of events in the state parks year-round.**

Friends group's donation of \$200,000 and counting.

The seating for a new amphitheater is in place at Mirror Lake State Park thanks to the more than \$80,000 the park's Friends group raised for the project.

The statewide organization is a member of Community Shares of Wisconsin, which allows people to donate to FWSP through workplace giving campaigns. FWSP is Community Shares of Wisconsin's third-largest recipient, receiving more than \$30,000 in 2012.

FWSP also runs a very popular annual photo contest, with the winning entries published in a calendar that is sold to raise additional funds to promote state parks, forests and trails. This year, for the first time, in addition to being available for purchase, the calendar will be included in the December issue of *Wisconsin Natural Resources* magazine.

FWSP conducts an annual "Gold Seal" award contest that allows people

to vote for their favorite park or trail property in 10 "Best of" categories. The categories change every year. This year, for instance, people can vote for the property with the most challenging hiking trail, best view from a tower and best place to walk a dog, among other categories. The awards are presented at FWSP's annual meeting and banquet in October.

Despite these successful fundraising and publicity efforts, Putnam says the current board is looking for more sustained investments so it is able to expand the affinity grants it makes to individual Friends groups. Putnam says the board has set a goal of establishing an endowment fund of \$1 million.

"We're hoping to attract more private and corporate funding," Putnam explains. "There is a tremendous interest in protecting areas and improving recreational opportunities in our park properties from the private sector that caters

to outdoor recreation. Many of those companies are looking for ways to give back and we need to explore that."

Exploring those types of partnerships, Putnam adds, would also be a way the organization can broaden its appeal to a younger and more diverse audience.

"We need to get more young people interested in our parks and we need to reach out to more urban areas and to people who maybe haven't had as much access to parks," he says. "There are great opportunities within our urban areas for people to enjoy state park properties. Lakeshore State Park, Havenwoods State Forest and the Hank Aaron State Trail in Milwaukee are all readily accessible."

One of the reasons FWSP has focused its affinity grants on educational programs is to ensure the parks are able to reach out to and attract young people.

FWSP recently revamped its website to make it more user-friendly and is using QR codes, Facebook and Twitter, and





FWSP FILE

“Our Friends groups have become vital resources for many of our state park properties,” says Dan Schuller, director of the Wisconsin State Park System. “We would not be able to provide many of the programs we offer without the groups, and they also provide important volunteer work in maintaining and protecting our park properties.”

For instance, each spring FWSP organizes Work\*Play\*Earth Day events, where Friends groups and volunteers spend the morning helping with park projects and spend the afternoon enjoying the fruits of their labor. Individual Friends groups often provide lunch or refreshments for volunteers.

### FRIENDS OF WISCONSIN STATE PARKS CORE COMMITMENTS

FWSP is increasingly being asked for its position on an ever-growing list of issues that impact state parks, trails and learning centers. As a nonprofit organization, here are some of FWSP's core commitments to protecting and enhancing state parks.

#### ACCESS

FWSP is committed to increasing access to and interest in the Wisconsin State Park System. FWSP stands fundamentally opposed to activities or proposals that would have a negative impact on the number of people who enjoy parks.

#### SAFETY

FWSP is committed to protecting all parks and trails users and opposes activities that may unduly threaten others' safety.

#### PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

FWSP is committed to protecting the natural resources in and around state parks and trails that attract millions of visitors each year and to providing visitors unparalleled outdoor learning and family experiences.

#### EDUCATION

FWSP is committed to maximizing the number of people introduced through educational efforts to the beauty, environmental value, recreational opportunities and role of Wisconsin state parks.

“This year we had 23 state parks, forests and trails participating — even with the cold, wet spring,” Schuller says. “Volunteers planted more than 500 trees, removed invasive species and planted native plants, built bird houses, repaired picnic tables and painted buildings.”

Putnam says another goal of FWSP board members is to improve communication between the organization and DNR staff “so our Friends groups are an even greater asset to the park properties and we can focus our volunteer efforts in areas where they will be most useful.”

The FWSP board is interested in looking for opportunities to expand and is discussing creating additional local Friends groups for more types of properties such as State Wildlife and Fisheries Areas and State Natural Areas where volunteer efforts are needed to remove invasive species or to improve or protect habitat. This could also help FWSP expand its membership and its representation.

“The Friends of Wisconsin State Parks is at a critical point of our evolution,” Putnam says. “We’ve done well raising money, but we can do a much better job. We need to explore more private partnerships so we can expand the resources available to our Friends groups. We need to be more efficient and more dynamic so our statewide organization is a greater resource to individual Friends groups. We are proud of the work and success our Friends groups have achieved, and we need to build on those efforts so more of our groups are successful in making our state park properties the best they can be.”

*Paul Holtan is a public affairs manager for the Department of Natural Resources.*

#### FWSP mission statement

Friends of Wisconsin State Parks is a public and private partnership organized to work in cooperation with local member Friends groups and other organizations to **enhance, preserve, protect, restore** and **promote** Wisconsin state parks, forests, trails and recreation areas.

- Follow us on Twitter and Facebook @FriendsWIParks
- Visit FWSP online FWSPorg

is also looking at mobile apps that might attract younger people to learn more about the recreational opportunities at parks.

“There is a tremendous focus right now on fitness, especially in youth, where we are seeing alarming levels of obesity,” Putnam notes. “Our parks and trails offer wonderful opportunities for young people to get active in the outdoors. We need to explore both public and private partnerships that will help attract young audiences to our parks and trails.”

The FWSP board has also set a goal of being an even greater resource for the individual Friends groups. They intend to organize an annual summit of Friends groups where members can learn from other groups about their successful fundraising efforts, and about events and activities to improve and enhance the recreational opportunities at the properties they support.



# DNR Secretary builds Wisconsin-China relationships through youth and education

## RIVERS AS BRIDGES TRIP FOSTERS ENVIRONMENTAL COOPERATION AND COMMERCE.

*Story by Xin Wang • Photos by Rick Otis*

**Back from her first trip to China, DNR Secretary Cathy Stepp carries lasting memories not only of a Beijing duck roast and visiting the Great Wall, but also of her interactions with the people there, especially youth.**

In March 2013, accompanied by nine high school and college students from Wisconsin and Iowa and other professionals, Stepp headed a new kind of trade mission — one based on long-term relationship building with a heavy emphasis on youth and schools. The nine-day visit included stops in four major Chinese cities, including Beijing and Shanghai.

“I met hundreds of people there,” recalls Stepp. “Government officials, experts, teachers and high school students. It was an extraordinary experience for me.”

This mission was organized by Rivers as Bridges (RAB), an Appleton-based nonprofit that seeks to strengthen the people-to-people connection between China and the United States through projects in culture, conservation and commerce in Wisconsin, Iowa and Illinois. Travel was supported by the Environment and Public Health Network for Chinese Students and Scholars (ENCSS), one of RAB’s China partners.

### **Sharing environmental issues**

One goal of this mission was for participants to better understand natural resources in both countries and to share experiences that can help China tackle



**Rivers as Bridges delegation including DNR Secretary Cathy Stepp (center standing). Visit [riversasbridges.org/](http://riversasbridges.org/) to learn more.**

its environmental puzzles, particularly freshwater issues. When Stepp set foot in China, she says that she was struck by the harsh reality of water challenges facing China.

As China’s population and urbanization expand, its thirst for water grows. Although it is the world’s largest water consumer, China’s freshwater resources are just a quarter of the world average

per capita. Beijing, like other northern cities where the lack of rainfall makes water even scarcer, has to satisfy its exploding population by transferring water from the relatively water-rich south through a gigantic national project.

A cost of its growing economy also comes in the form of severe water pollution. It is estimated that more than 70 percent of China’s rivers and lakes are contaminated and “20 percent were so polluted, their water quality was rated too toxic even to come into contact with,” according to a Chinese national newspaper.

To gain more insight into the local water treatment and management, Stepp visited colleges, environmental agencies, technology parks and local governments and shared ideas with professionals there.

“There is a difference between having the ability to build something and using knowledge to run it,” says Stepp. “I was impressed by how much the local officials and university folks know about the pollutants and nutrient loading of their water. They are able to build a wastewater treatment plant, but there are challenges to finance its operations and manage it like an operating system.”

The urge for China to develop new technology, educate the public and safe-

guard the environment is mounting. Tsinghua University, one of the most renowned Chinese universities, is located in Beijing. It has taken the lead in clean water technology and innovation, and is where Xiaojun Lu, the president of ENCSS-China, works.

Incorporated in the 1990s, Tsinghua University Science and Technology Research Park is one of the first national



university science parks in China that endeavors to serve high-tech research companies. It partners with the Tsinghua University School of Environment, conducting projects in water pollution control, wastewater treatment and other environmental areas.

In her visit to Tsinghua University, Stepp talked with some environmental professors about their programs.

"I felt they had such care for the environment and they want to change a lot of ways the government is addressing environmental issues," she says.

Stepp hopes Wisconsin's clean water technology and programs could provide some lessons for China.

Wisconsin has a concentration of companies addressing the full circle of water worldwide. Under the federal Clean Water Act, Wisconsin has seen a dramatic change in its water quality with advancing technology over the last 40 years.

"We had much expertise and experience here that we could share in a much more productive way with them," Stepp says.

She visited the Minhang District Water Management and Treatment Bureau in Shanghai. Minhang District government has long been a partner with the University of Wisconsin (UW-Madison) Law School's East Asian Legal Studies Center. Over the years, Minhang has sent interns to the Department of Natural Resources to learn about pollution control and policies.

### **People-to-people relationships**

Like many other westerners who land on this ancient oriental nation, Stepp's trip aroused curiosity and welcome from the local Chinese people.

"The people are warm, gracious and kind. I've never been treated like that anywhere before," Stepp recalls. "It's also interesting that there seemed to be very little interactions with westerners there and I was always stopped and asked to take a picture with people, hundreds of times."

Promoting people-to-people connection is key. Throughout the trip, Stepp and the American students had many talks with their Chinese peers and learned from each other.

"The high school students [in China] were the highlight of my trip," Stepp says. "The youth were very inspiring and their questions were so insightful, standing on a firm base of knowledge and understanding of what's going on in the world."



The Great Wall of China stretches about 3,915 miles in length. If you measure the length of all the different sections of wall, the distance is more like 13,670 miles. The Great Wall of China is the longest structure ever built by humans.





Stepp's trade mission to China emphasized building relationships as part of creating economic value.



Stepp visited colleges, environmental agencies, high schools, technology parks, chambers of commerce and more in Beijing, Xiamen, Wuxi and Shanghai.

Stepp recalled a moment she shared with a Chinese boy after she gave a speech in Xiamen, a coastal city in south-eastern China, which is across the sea from Taiwan.

"When I was done speaking, one student came to me and asked, 'What can young people like us do to make changes?' I answered, 'You are getting educated. You care about your people. Maybe one day I'll see you on the television and you will be the new leader in China and bring the new things.' He walked away for a minute and suddenly ran back to me. He grabbed my arm and asked, 'Did you really mean that I can do that?' I said, 'Absolutely you can do that.'

"I felt like the whole purpose of my trip could just be that one moment. You lit a light in someone's heart," Stepp says, clearly moved by the memory.

Rooted in a different culture, Stepp notes that it took some time for her to become accustomed to the Chinese way of socializing, such as recognizing the order of people to speak to and some hid-

den rules of making a remark among a group of people.

"The people-to-people relationship there is so important and it's very different from the United States," she says. "For example, in the United States you tend to express your ideas whenever you want to, while in China you tend to wait before you speak.

"Two or three days later I got the hang of their way," she adds. "It's really fascinating to be a part of their culture and see how I can fit in."

As part of the Rivers as Bridges program, Stepp's visit to China is linked to the 50th anniversary of the Shanghai Communiqué in 2022. The Communiqué was signed by the American and Chinese governments in 1972 to foster collaboration and prosperity between the two nations.

"The message from the trip is how we build more and more people-to-people relationships. If we do that, we will overcome the packaging of the governments. That is what I think the

Shanghai Communiqué talks about," Stepp says.

### Multi-dimensional partnerships

Along with environmental goals, Stepp also carried invitations for long-term partnerships in culture, education and businesses. The Wisconsin delegation met with Chinese business and government to consider the chances of developing commercial ties. More concrete plans or agreements are yet to be drawn out.


"We are still early in these stages," Stepp says. "There are many things being worked out outside the Department of Natural Resources for cooperative efforts. We are working on several of those through the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation. They have opened up some doors and signed some agreements and MOUs (Memorandum of Understanding)."

In conjunction with the economic theme, weeks later in April, Governor Scott Walker led another trade mission to China to explore business opportunities for improving China's water supply.

For the younger generation, the Department of Natural Resources is opening up internship opportunities for Chinese students and supports exchange programs between Chinese and U.S. students. During the summer of 2013, more than 100 Chinese students participated in a natural resources exploration trip in the Midwest.

"What we can bring to them are the hands-on projects that they lack in China," Stepp says. "It was important to see education combined with real life application sciences that get people out into the fields to do water quality studies. We could be very helpful in providing real world experience."

Stepp says her trip to China was life-altering.

"It even changed the way I view my job here," she says. "I wish more people could go there to see what China is like. It just totally changed the way you view China and U.S. relations from the newspapers." 

*Xin Wang is an editorial intern with Wisconsin Natural Resources magazine. She is a graduate student studying journalism at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She participated in the 2013 Rivers as Bridges trip.*





# Give now. Enjoy forever.

THE CHERISH WISCONSIN OUTDOORS FUND.

*Maria Sadowski*

Think of the places that mean Wisconsin to you. The lake where your grandfather taught you to fish. The forests you hiked with your family. The wetlands where you and your daughter saw nesting birds. The fields or woods where you harvested your first deer or turkey.

How much do these places mean to you? How much do these memories matter? And how much do you want them to thrive for the next generation, and the one after that?

The Cherish Wisconsin Outdoors Fund was created so that we can start now to ensure the future enjoyment of our state's remarkable natural wonders.

The emphasis is on "we" because this Fund is an endowment fortified by investments from citizens like you. When you invest and give to the Fund, you help make sure the 1.5 million acres of publicly owned forests, barrens, grasslands, wetlands, brush land, rivers, streams and lakes in Wisconsin will be cared for today and for generations to come.

"The Department is a proud supporter of the Cherish Wisconsin Outdoors Fund," says DNR Secretary Cathy Stepp. "If your family is like mine, you have fished, hunted, camped and hiked our gorgeous state and cherished every moment. The Fund is committed to enhancing our public lands and waters and

to sustaining and expanding their recreational, biological, aesthetic and economic value."

Conserving and managing our public lands is not an expense, but an investment that pays dividends — economic and social. State lands are acquired and managed for the benefit of all citizens, regardless of recreational pursuits or where they live.

In 2011, resident and non-resident hunters contributed \$2.5 billion to Wisconsin's economy. Tourism in Wisconsin is a \$16 billion dollar industry; forestry is a \$22 billion industry — all are tied to having access and the opportunity to enjoy our public lands.

"State land and water management can be thought of as akin to home ownership," says DNR Land Division Administrator Kurt Thiede. "In order to make sure a home retains its value and provides all the benefits hoped for, an investment must be made towards regular maintenance. Managing our state lands and waters is no different. But with our

lands and waters, the management timeline extends forever."

From improving forest health to restoring wetlands and fighting invasive species, this Fund was created to last lifetimes because our precious lands, waters and wildlife must last lifetimes. Please consider supporting the Cherish Wisconsin Outdoors Fund so that you can enjoy Wisconsin forever.



*Maria Sadowski is the director of communications for the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin.*

#### To learn more or to donate

**Visit:** [CherishWisconsin.org](http://CherishWisconsin.org)

**Call:** the Natural Resources Foundation at (866) 264-4096

#### Or mail your donation to:

Cherish Wisconsin Outdoors Fund  
P.O. Box 2317  
Madison, WI 53701-2317

Your donation is tax deductible to the extent allowable by law.

#### A laudable objective becomes law

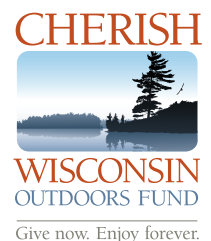
The purpose of the Cherish Wisconsin Outdoors Fund is to protect, restore and improve habitat for Wisconsin's plants and animals. Eligible areas include, but are not limited to, State Wildlife Areas, State Fishery Areas, State Parks and State Natural Areas.

Every \$1 million in the Cherish Wisconsin Outdoors Fund endowment will distribute approximately \$50,000 per year for habitat management.

The Cherish Wisconsin Outdoors Fund will be held and managed by the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin. The Natural Resources Foundation is an independent 501 (c)(3) organization established in 1986, which currently manages more than 60 endowment funds with a value of over \$3 million.

The Cherish Wisconsin Outdoors Fund was created through unanimous and bipartisan legislation signed into law by Governor Scott Walker in March 2012. The law enables the Department of Natural Resources to request over-the-counter voluntary contributions from the four million citizens who currently purchase annual "services," such as licenses.

The Foundation, in partnership with the Department, will promote the Fund to all citizens, as well as corporations, conservation partners and other donors.



DNR FILE



Tim Lawhern (left) was inducted into the International Hunter Education Association Professional Hall of Fame at an awards ceremony earlier this year. Lawhern is also the only person in the history of the association to serve twice as its president.

# Targeting a safer hunt

A WISCONSIN WARDEN IS RECOGNIZED INTERNATIONALLY FOR HIS WORK IN HUNTER EDUCATION.

*Karely Mendez*

When conservation warden Tim Lawhern was contemplating retiring from the Department of Natural Resources, he did so knowing that he would leave the state a safer place to hunt than when he began his career there nearly 25 years ago.

According to DNR records, in 1966 — the year before the state’s formal hunter education began — there were 44 shooting incidents per 100,000 hunters in Wisconsin.

By 2012 the rate had drastically dropped to 3.9 incidents per 100,000 hunters.

In fact, Wisconsin has one of the best records of hunter safety in the nation, earning that distinction largely on Lawhern’s watch.

From 1994 to 2011, Lawhern was DNR’s Hunter Education Administrator charged with leading the state’s hunter education program and overseeing volunteer instructors. In January 2011, Lawhern was promoted to administrator of the DNR’s Enforcement and Science Division.

### **Hunting is in his blood**

Throughout his life, Lawhern has worn many hats. From being named Mr. Macho during a recent vacation in Mexico, to a stint as a professional touring musician, to DNR administrator.

But the one hat that fits him best is blaze orange, and sometimes camouflage.

“People ask me, ‘Do you like to hunt?’” Lawhern says. “And I say, ‘No. I love to hunt.’”

Lawhern started hunting when he was just 7 years old in his native Tennessee after his parents gave him a .22 rifle. They knew he was ready for hunting (physically and men-

SUBMITTED BY TIM LAWHERN



tally). His favorite species to hunt while he was growing up was cottontail rabbit.

As an adult, Lawhern's hunting passion turned to bigger game.

"My favorite thing to hunt is elk, I love where they live...how they look," explains Lawhern.

Another big change from his childhood is that Lawhern now calls Wisconsin home, a move that he credits to "a girl."

### **From country music to conservation warden**

As a young man, Lawhern attended Tennessee Technical University on a full scholarship for music with the intentions of becoming a teacher. He had been recruited by world-class musician Winston Morris. Later, as an accomplished jazz and country music bassist, Lawhern joined a big-name band (he prefers to keep the name of the band a secret so as to not detract from his other accomplishments) and toured.

One of those tours found Lawhern playing in Madison at the Veteran's Memorial Coliseum. While staying at a hotel in Madison, Lawhern saw the girl who would change his life.

"This girl walked right in front of me, I dropped my luggage and I told my boys, 'If I could have that, I'd never want anything else.'"

Lawhern reveals that he struck up a conversation with that mystery girl that night at the hotel bar and then went back to Tennessee the next day. Almost a year later, he returned to Madison and learned that the mystery girl had been asking his friends about him.

"She remembered me," he says.

They started dating and Lawhern gave up touring with the band to move to Wisconsin and marry that girl.

"She's my finest catch," he beams.

Living in Wisconsin and with his touring days behind him, Lawhern needed to find a job.

As a boy, he thought being a warden would be "a neat job" because wardens get to go around and check people's hunting, fishing and other licenses.

So he applied for a position as a conservation warden. He recalls making it to the last stage of hiring but not getting the job because he didn't have a law enforcement or a natural resources-related degree.

Lawhern, not one to back down from a challenge, whether it be hunting elk or wooing a Wisconsin girl, went back



SUBMITTED BY TIM LAWHERN

**A Wisconsin transplant from his native Tennessee, Lawhern grew up hunting. "I don't like to hunt. I love to hunt," he says.**





Lawhern's favorite place to hunt is the mountains. He says he loves the scenery, and chasing the game there.

to school, earned a degree in wildlife management from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and two years later reapplied and got the job of his boyhood dreams.

### **Taking Wisconsin to the next level in hunter safety**

As a warden Lawhern can cite many accomplishments. Establishing and promoting the four safety rules of TAB-K is one.

TAB-K stands for:

Treat every firearm as if it were loaded.

Always point the muzzle in a safe direction.

Be certain of your target and what's beyond.

Keep your finger out of the trigger guard until ready to shoot.

TAB-K grew from an analysis of how people were hurting others and them-

selves when hunting. Lawhern says that since the TAB-K safety rules were put to use, the hunting accident rate in Wisconsin dropped from 44/100,000 to 4/100,000.

In addition to TAB-K, Lawhern implemented the use of hunter safety web crawl messages during local weather forecasts since most hunters will check the weather report before leaving to hunt. Lawhern also reached hunters through TV commercials that were aired at critical viewing times for the audience. His messages included hunter safety and how to get licensed and involved.

"We have always been on the cutting edge here in Wisconsin," Lawhern says.

And to continue to improve on the state's stellar safety record, Lawhern was behind seeing that Wisconsin learned from the successful hunting education strategies used by others around



In retirement, Lawhern's new challenge may be to ride his horse across the country.





SUBMITTED BY TIM LAWHERN



SUBMITTED BY TIM LAWHERN

the world.

Two of those strategies adopted were creating a hunting incident database and using the International Hunter Education Association's forms for incident report gathering.

**A discipline he holds dear**

Today, many years after Lawhern was handed his first rifle, he still holds that hunting, like music, is one of life's great disciplines. Lawhern believes that he is a better wild game cook (you can call him Chef Tim), photographer, gunsmith and that he learned many valuable skills, like reading a map and animal biology, because of hunting. He truly holds hunting dear to his life.

While Wisconsin hunting has been the focus of most of Lawhern's law enforcement career, he has garnered international respect for his efforts to make hunting safer.

Lawhern has devoted countless hours to the International Hunter Education Association (IHEA), an organization comprised of 67 international voting jurisdictions with a mission to "educate hunters worldwide to be safe, knowledgeable and responsible."

"The IHEA mission and the work that they do are directly related to hunting, which is one of my great passions," Lawhern says.

Lawhern can cite many accomplishments with IHEA.

One of those accomplishments is being inducted into the IHEA Hall of Fame. Dr. Charles Bruckerhoff of Connecticut wrote in his Hall of Fame nomination, "I know of no other person that is active in IHEA today that has done so much to help promote its mission and has served in so many capacities in that effort."

Lawhern is the only person to have served as president of IHEA twice.

"I served a second term, the only person to do that, a very high honor," he expresses.

He has also received every award that can be given by the association, including an award that had never been given to anyone before — the Instructor's Award, which was presented to him in front of his peers and volunteer instructors.

**To learn more about hunter safety courses, visit**

[dnr.wi.gov/topic/hunt/](http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/hunt/)

**Creating a future for hunting**

Lawhern says recruiting volunteers for the organization is essential.

"We need people with an aptitude toward hunting, safety and wanting to give back to a sport that they love," Lawhern says.

There are 65,000 to 70,000 IHEA volunteers in the United States, with hunters making up the majority. Volunteer instructors teach with the principle known as EDOC.

E is for Educate. "Tell them what they are to know; no more, no less."

D is for Demonstrate. "Show them exactly how it looks when it's done correctly."

O is for Observation. "Once you tell them and then show them, you want to see them do it hands-on."

C is for Congratulate. "Use positive reinforcement as opposed to negative. Teach instructors to build self-esteem in the students," explains Lawhern.

Lawhern affirms that the EDOC method helps every student, no matter what their learning style.

Among Lawhern's other IHEA accomplishments is the creation of the first Junior Instructor Program and the Hunter Education Instructor Academy.

The Junior Instructor Program aims to retain younger members.

"There were a lot of young people who showed great aptitude and interest when they were going through the class, but we knew we'd probably never see them again," Lawhern says.

The goal of the program is to let young members do things that instructors do, and at 18 years old, they can then become instructors themselves, explains Lawhern.

Lawhern also helped develop and implement the Alternative Delivery Certification Courses, including IHEA's Internet student certification course.

"It is not a dumbing-down of the course," he says. In fact, Internet certification students have shown to score higher on the test and retain information longer.

Teaching tools such as Internet-based courses are reaching hunters where they live. It makes the experience more convenient and accessible, something educators like Lawhern hope will help address the continuing decline in the number of people getting a hunting license nationwide.

Lawhern suggests hunter numbers are down because there is so much com-



petition for people's free time today. Often, people are choosing activities that are far more expensive than getting a hunting license and going hunting, explains Lawhern.

Lawhern also suggests people are losing the motivation to hunt because they are losing a connection to the land.

"We no longer have to hunt to get our meat," he notes.

He does, however, find some good news in a boost in the locavore movement. A locavore is a person interested in eating food that is locally produced, not transported long distances to market.

Lawhern says the future of hunting, including recruiting new hunters and keeping the ones who are already hunting engaged, just might hinge on five factors with an acronym of STEEP:

**S** is for Social acceptance. The social acceptance of hunting will be critical for its survival.

**T** is for Technological changes.

**E** is for Environmental changes. The more we develop the land, the less land there is to hunt.

The second **E** is for Economic changes. Can we afford to hunt because of the cost of equipment and finding land?


Lastly, **P** is for Political changes. Hunting laws are complicated. "We need to find a way to make things more simple for people," Lawhern says.

### Retiring but not retreating from a challenge

"In order for me to accomplish all the things that I want to do, I would probably need seven lifetimes," Lawhern says. "But we only have one life so you have to prioritize those things that you want to accomplish."

One goal on his bucket list is riding his 10-year-old horse across the nation. In retirement, Lawhern also plans to do consulting work, training and volunteering. He would especially like to volunteer in natural disaster stricken places because as he explains, "It satisfies your inner soul."

The most important job any person can have "is to be a person of integrity and to be a good citizen," but most importantly, an active citizen, Lawhern notes.

"Being a citizen who doesn't vote," he says, "is like being a hunter but never going hunting." 

*Karely Mendez is an editorial intern with Wisconsin Natural Resources magazine. She attends the University of Wisconsin-Madison.*

## Ka-Boom then Kabob!

There are many ways to prepare the results of venison taken from the field. No doubt each of you has your favorite method. But, I have found the one that has found favor with most everyone is the kabob way.

First and foremost, of course, is how you've prepared the meat before you even cook it.

Marinades are an excellent way to add flavor and tenderize the meat. Two marinades that work well are vinegar or your favorite soda pop. Yes, I said soda.

Both vinegar and soda will tenderize the meat. The acid in the soda breaks down the fibers in the meat and the sugar in the soda adds a bit of sweetness. A hint of the flavor of the soda transfers to the meat, hence, use whatever flavor you prefer. Just remember that you need to use the "leaded" version (full strength) and not the diet version of the soda pop.

To prepare the meat, you need to cut it into sizable chunks about an inch thick — slightly larger or smaller won't matter. Be sure to cut the meat across the grain of the muscle fibers and not with them.

Marinate the meat between four and 24 hours. The longer you marinate, the more flavor the meat picks up from the marinade. Next, start your grill and set to medium to medium-high heat. For a charcoal grill, just get the coals to a heat where you can only hold your hand above the coals for about three seconds.

The meat is ready. Now is the time you may add your favorite veggies or fruit. Some people like the traditional bell pepper and onion slices (or wedges) while others will add tomato, apple or pineapple slices.

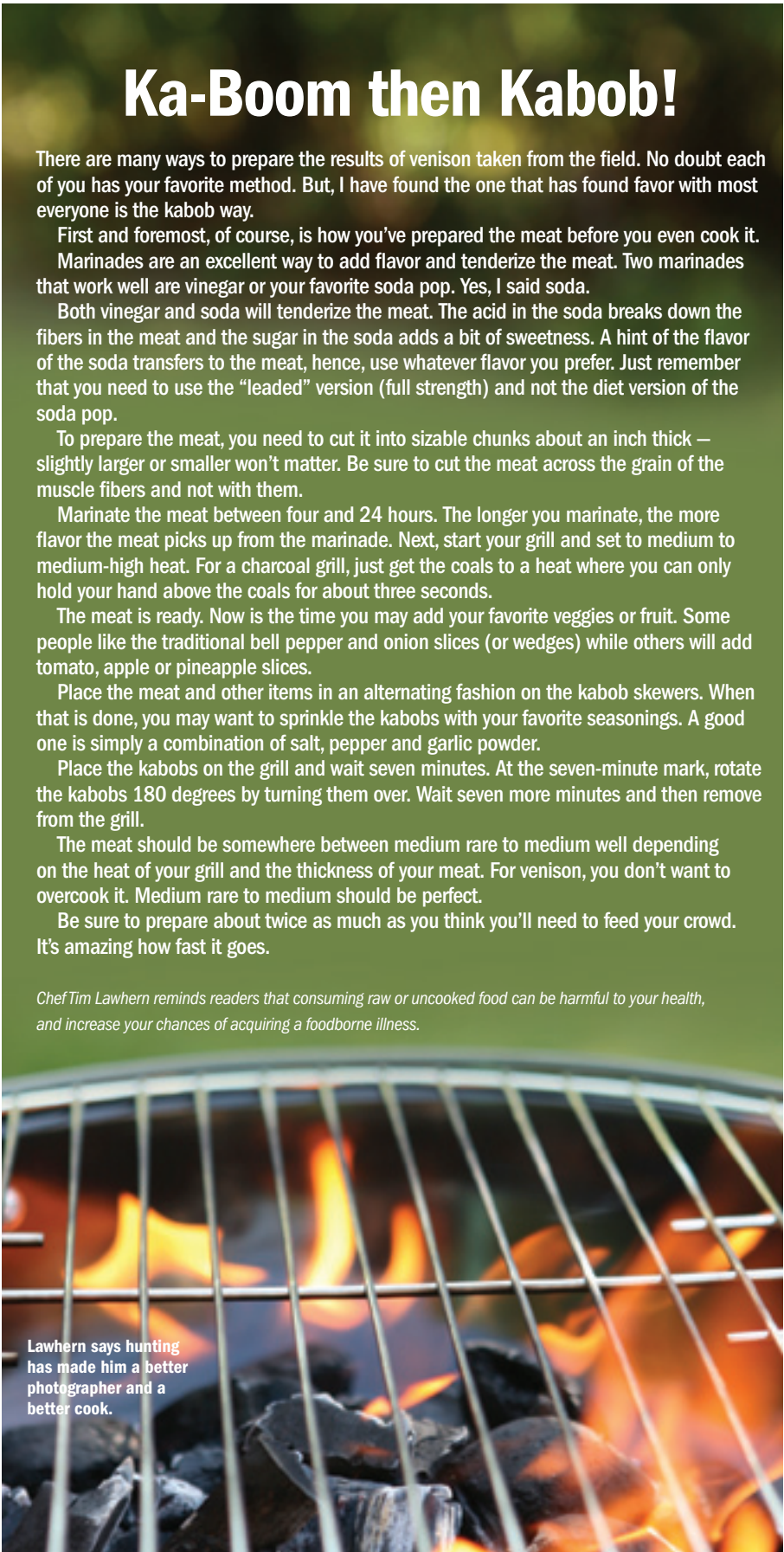
Place the meat and other items in an alternating fashion on the kabob skewers. When that is done, you may want to sprinkle the kabobs with your favorite seasonings. A good one is simply a combination of salt, pepper and garlic powder.

Place the kabobs on the grill and wait seven minutes. At the seven-minute mark, rotate the kabobs 180 degrees by turning them over. Wait seven more minutes and then remove from the grill.

The meat should be somewhere between medium rare to medium well depending on the heat of your grill and the thickness of your meat. For venison, you don't want to overcook it. Medium rare to medium should be perfect.

Be sure to prepare about twice as much as you think you'll need to feed your crowd. It's amazing how fast it goes.

*Chef Tim Lawhern reminds readers that consuming raw or uncooked food can be harmful to your health, and increase your chances of acquiring a foodborne illness.*



Lawhern says hunting has made him a better photographer and a better cook.





# Nine days in November

NO DEER?  
NO MATTER.  
WHY I'M STILL THE  
LUCKIEST GUY.

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*Ron Weber*

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I heard the deer coming long before I saw them. The sound of ice cracking in the cedar swamp to the south of me took my attention away from watching two red squirrels that were chasing each other endlessly around the hemlocks and white pines on my little island oasis in the swamp.



DNR FILE

Author Rob Weber has been hunting for 35 years. For him, the hunt is so much more than bagging a deer.

GREGORY K. SCOTT

Weber enjoys having a front row seat to see woodland animals at play, even when the deer can't be found.





**Deer hunting offers a front row seat to a myriad of entertaining woodland dramas that play out even when the deer can't be found.**

DAVE STEFFENSEN

It was certainly deer moving and they were coming fast. There! Through a thick screen of hemlock boughs I caught a flash of one deer — no, two deer — coming in my direction. The first to appear in an opening 40 yards in front of me was a good-sized doe. She stopped to survey the woods in front of her and started moving again. It took 15 or 20 seconds for the second deer to materialize in the opening. In that time, my mind had painted a picture of a majestic 10-pointer stepping out from the cedars.

Of course that didn't happen. Instead, a fawn ambled into view and followed its mother down the edge of the hemlock island and into the cedar swamp to the north. I realized then that I was shaking.

I have been hunting for more years than I can sometimes believe. I have seen and experienced just about everything one can in the woods over the years. So why would the sight of a doe and a fawn cause me to shake like a boy seeing his first deer?

I pondered that question over the next couple of hours, interrupted only by the



**For this hunter, the excitement of the sudden appearance of a deer pales in comparison to the anticipation of the season, camaraderie of deer camp and the chance to enjoy the simple beauty of nature.**

DAVE STEFFENSEN



red squirrels occupying the neighboring hemlock. I concluded it was not the doe and fawn that had caused me to shake. It was that 15- or 20-second period in which my mind had painted the picture of the 10-pointer stepping out of the cedars. That brief moment at 8:45 on opening morning and the excitement that came with it had made my whole season worthwhile.

That excitement is what hunting is all about. Even if nothing else would happen the rest of the season, it was already a success. The license fee, all the early risings, the long hours on stand fighting the cold, it was all worth it.

But plenty more happened that season.

Fast forward to Thanksgiving morning. Several inches of fresh snow blanketed the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest where I was hunting. I had decided to take the fight to the deer, so to speak. My plan was to find some good looking fresh tracks and follow them until I caught up with whatever was making them.

I had walked for about 30 minutes without seeing any fresh tracks. As I moved along an area of open hardwoods bordering a spruce bog, the woods seemed to turn an exquisite peach color. I saw the veil of clouds was thinning and the sun was beginning to break through. My eyes shifted back to the forest, and I enjoyed the light show for another 30 seconds before the emerging sun put an end to the scene. It didn't add anything to the meat pole, but it was beautiful. I filed the memory away in the scrapbook of my mind. That moment, too, had made my season worthwhile.

With the sun fully out, the woods were brilliant. Every view was crisp and clear. Eventually I saw a pair of adult deer tracks milling about on the edge of the hardwoods. I began to follow them and they soon led into the spruce bog. About 150 yards in, the tracks took off. The deer were scared by me no doubt.

As I followed the tracks, I realized they were taking me right where I had come from. Soon the tracks left the bog and as I expected, turned down a little ridge and proceeded to run right through the boot tracks I had made 30 minutes earlier. Over the next three hours these two led me on a merry chase from one bog to another before heading out into the big hardwood ridges to the north of me with their feet to the floorboard.

I decided to call a truce and end the

chase. Turning south, I headed for some ridges that kept watch from high above a wilderness lake. Along the way I encountered a pair of wolf tracks. I followed them for a while just to see if I could discover what they were up to. Maybe they were just moving through, or maybe they too were enjoying this beautiful day for hunting. Who could blame them? After following them for 400 yards or so, I wished them well wherever they were headed, and I set a course for the lake.

I noticed very large tracks moving out of a spruce bog and up into the big ridges. The deer that made these tracks had to be a good size and my heartbeat picked up as I followed the tracks, scanning intently into the woods in front of me for what I am sure was that majestic 10-pointer I had chased in my mind for years.

At the crest of the first ridge I caught movement in the brush 80 yards to my left. I saw only flashes of it as it first followed the ridge, and then abruptly turned and ran down the ridge, disappearing into the spruce bog. Was that

my big buck that made the tracks I was following?

I found the tracks of the deer I had seen and confirmed that it was not the same deer I had been tracking. I continued following the large tracks to the last ridge above the lake. The sun was dipping below the trees in the western sky, so I decided to end the chase for the night.

Heading toward my vehicle, I thought back on what a great day it had been. Not only because of all I had seen and experienced, but also because of the one thing I hadn't seen all day. I hadn't seen a single human footprint, even an old one, in a whole day of tracking around a Wisconsin forest. In fact, I hadn't seen or heard anything human-related all day. The only sign of other hunters I had encountered was the pair of wolf tracks. This, too, had made my season worthwhile.

As it always seems to, the last Sunday morning of the season was upon me all too quickly. After sitting for a few hours and seeing nothing, I started back towards my vehicle with the melancholic realization that a whole year must pass before another deer season. On the way



**Wolf tracks signal another type of hunter is on the prowl.**

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE





DAVE STEFFENSEN

This story is dedicated to the memory of the author's brother, Jim, shown here with the fruits of another big woods drive. Jimbo helped teach his brother at an early age that good things await over the furthest ridge and through the nastiest swamps. He was truly a deer hunter.

out I came upon a fresh scrape etched in the snow under a low hanging balsam limb. That sight would keep me company over the long wait for next November.

My season ended with 11 deer sighted, eight does or fawns and three which could not be identified. That is a fairly typical season for me and much better than the one deer I saw during the season before.

My tag went unfilled again this year, but I'd like to paraphrase an Aldo Leopold line from his book *A Sand County Almanac*. What was big was not the rack, but the chance. What was full was not my tag, but my memory.

As I closed my mind's scrapbook on the season, it went down as a success, as have all my seasons. When I hear so many talk about horrible seasons, waste of time and such, all I can do is say, "What?" I really and honestly pity that point of view.

I am reminded of a line from the story, *Just Look at This Country* by the great Wisconsin outdoor writer Gordon MacQuarrie. In it he writes, "Hunting. The means are greater than the ends and ev-

ery deer hunter knows it." That line has been with me ever since I read it at the age of 19. Nowadays, it haunts me more than ever, though. Hunting for many is becoming a pursuit in which the ends are all too important and the means seem to mean less and less each year.

Killing is a part of hunting, but it doesn't have to be a necessary part of a successful season. We live in a time where many hunters want, and even demand, assurances that they will see lots of deer and have the opportunity to shoot one or more.


The number of people who feel that way is growing, and it is a disturbing trend, as in the end, it diminishes what hunting is all about. Hunting should not have to come with guarantees other than a communion with sunrises and sunsets, having a front row seat to the play that is nature and the chance of hearing a twig snap as a 10-pointer steps out of the spruce bog.

That may happen in the next five minutes, just as all seems hopeless. Maybe that happens five seasons down the road. Maybe that never happens. But

there is always the chance.

I believe that the interlude from one November to the next is what makes deer season so special. After a long, hot summer, as the days shorten and the leaves put on their spectacular color show, the anticipation begins to grow. When the bright October woods give way to the steely, cold November landscape, the excitement reaches a fever pitch.

For me, I feel a primal pull towards a small cabin on the crooked shores of Lake Namakagon in Bayfield County. There is no more special place on earth and this is a most special time. Our deer camp will gather again to write the next chapter in the story, not really knowing how it will begin or how it will end. That is how it should be.

At the end of the day, no matter what comes or doesn't come down the trail, for nine precious days each November, I am the luckiest guy alive. As hunters, aren't we all? 

Ron Weber has been hunting for 35 years. He has a degree in forestry and natural resources and calls Weyerhaeuser, Wis. home.



# Who says that you can't take it with you?

## In life and in death, a hunter's trophy tags along.

David P. Olson

Among deer hunters it is said that each is entitled to one really good buck in a lifetime. Dad's buck came late in life, when he was 65.

After retirement, Dad and my stepmother, Charlotte, often hunted together. They would get up early, bundle up with warm clothes and carry their lunch and thermos of hot coffee into the woods and sit quietly back-to-back and watch for deer for hours at a time. Dad always wore a red wool tie because he believed it was good luck to get dressed up for the deer.

One day, Charlotte and Dad were sitting on their favorite spot off the end of Walls' field when Dad got a shot at a running deer. Charlotte was surprised and said, "That shot was awfully close."

Dad said, "It was me and I got a deer!"

When they got to the deer, they found a magnificent 10-point buck with especially tall tines. Shortly after, a group of tired, red-faced hunters showed up. They had been chasing that buck all morning and were angry that Dad had bagged it. The huge buck was much too heavy for Dad and Charlotte to drag, but Dad didn't dare ask for their help lest they steal his deer. When they finally left, Dad had Charlotte sit right on the deer and hold his rifle in case they came back.

Dad got his old hunting car and drove it right through the woods, knocking down clumps of brush and small trees until he

got to the deer. The buck was too heavy for them to lift, so they scavenged around for pieces of rotten logs and clumps of sod and stuffed them under one end of the deer first, and then the other. They gradually built a mound under the deer until it was high enough to push the deer into the trunk. It didn't push easily, so Dad crawled into the truck and pulled while Charlotte pushed. The buck rolled in right on top of Dad, trapping him!

After considerable swearing and yelling, and more pushing and pulling, Dad managed to extract himself from below the buck. Triumphant, the two 65-year-old hunters drove off.

Dad showed the deer off to friends, relatives, sportsmen at the local bars, bowling alleys and the deer check station. Later, Dad mounted the antlers on a wooden plaque and hung them in a prominent spot in the living room. He showed the antlers to anyone and everyone who came by and regaled everyone with

the story of his big buck. Naturally, the story was somewhat embellished — but who would question the veracity of a senior citizen?

As he grew older, Dad's memory began to slip, but he remembered the story of his big buck. The trouble is, though, he didn't remember that he had told the story just 15 minutes before. And his love of

brandy didn't do anything but make the situation worse.

One day Dad and his brother, Lloyd, were playing golf and Dad was celebrating the completion of each hole with a drink of brandy. Between the brandy and the repeated accounts of his big buck, Dad was also "minimizing" the number of strokes he had taken. Lloyd was frustrated. Halfway through the sixth repetition of the big buck story, Lloyd had had enough and said, "That damn buck! I'm sick and tired of hearing about it. When you die I'm going to bury those antlers with you!"

Dad stopped, smiled and said, "You know, I'd like that."

When Dad finally passed away at 79, Lloyd was first on the scene to console Charlotte, help with funeral arrangements and share her grief. Lloyd noticed the antlers on the wall and told Charlotte about that day on the golf course. She got Dad's red wool tie and said, "This belongs with the antlers."

Together, they took the antlers and tie to the undertaker. The undertaker, a deer hunter himself, admired the beautiful antlers and said, "Let's see if they fit."

They did, and Dad's body was buried with his tie and the buck's antlers at his feet. This was to be a special family secret, but a story like that in a small northern Wisconsin town full of deer hunters had to get out. The undertaker told the minister and he made the story part of the funeral service.

You can't take it with you. Or can you? ❧

*David P. Olson lives in Durham, N.H. but was born in Grantsburg, Wis. and spent much of his youth in Burnett County. This story recaps a true deer hunting tale about Olson's dad and stepmother who retired to Wisconsin and lived at Yellow Lake in Burnett County from 1958 to 1978. The hunt he relives here took place around 1968.*

### Share your hunting good luck charm

We'd like to hear if you have a good luck charm when you go hunting. Send us a brief (200 word) description. Include your name and hometown. Feel free to send along a photo if you have one. We'll print some of the stories in an upcoming issue.

Email to: [Natasha.Kassulke@wisconsin.gov](mailto:Natasha.Kassulke@wisconsin.gov) (use the email subject line "Good luck charm")

Or send your stories to: *Wisconsin Natural Resources* magazine, P.O. Box 7921, Madison, WI 53707.





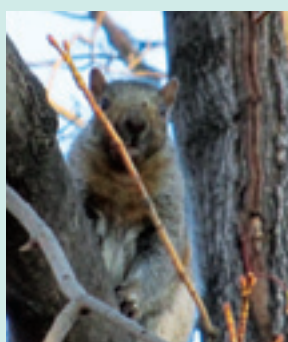
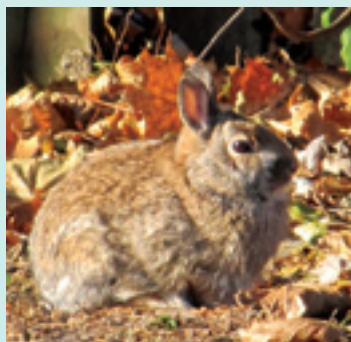


## WHAT GALL!

What is this? I found it on a small oak. Is it something that should be destroyed?

Phyllis Lorenzo  
Hayward

We checked with biologist Thomas A. Meyer who identified it as a wool-sower gall caused by a parasitic wasp. According to Henderson State University's "Fungi Look Alikes" webpage [hsu.edu/pictures2.aspx?id=16848](http://hsu.edu/pictures2.aspx?id=16848), "Wool-sower galls appear on twigs of oaks and may be 1.5 to 2 inches long, but, unlike the oak-apple galls, they have no hardened outer covering. The woolly mass is a shade of white, speckled with reddish seed-like grains. Similar in form but not in color, woolly oak leaf galls form a dense wad of light brown 'wool' attached usually to the midvein on the underside of an oak leaf (although occasionally they may be found on the lateral veins of the leaf). They are seen very commonly on oak leaves shed in the fall season, but usually are under an inch in length. Both wool-sower and woolly oak leaf galls are caused by parasitic gall wasps belonging to the genus Callirhytis."



## KIDS AND CAMERAS

A couple of times a year, Nick Apps and his family return to Wisconsin to vacation. Nick, who is 13 years old, captured these critters during one of those visits. He is a budding photographer and all around outdoors lover. During a recent visit to Rhinelander he could be found pulling in bluegill from the pier one minute and tubing on Lake George the next.

Nick Apps  
Vail, Colo.

## CLARIFICATION

Two photos in the August issue ("Creature Comforts: Meet your neighbors at WisconsinButterflies.org" article) were incorrectly credited. The photographer for the Karner blue and harvester butterfly photos was the story author, Rebecca Deatsman. We regret the error.

## NO ACCESS TO THE WEB?

Don't have access to a link we mention in a story? Let us know when you want to follow a link we list. We'll do what we can to get you a copy of the material if it is available free of charge and is relatively short in length.

## REALIZING THE PROMISE AT BADGER

The June 2013 issue of *Wisconsin Natural Resources* magazine features the article "Transformation on the Prairie." It describes the special opportunity that has come to Sauk County and to the people of Wisconsin with the decommissioning and deconstruction of the 7,350-acre Badger Army Ammunition Plant, and the transfer of the land to its future owners. As citizens of Sauk Prairie and Sauk County, and as long-time stakeholders in the Badger reuse process, we look forward to working with all the new landowners and others to make the most of the opportunity. This remarkable landscape holds many values that reflect its unique geology, ecology, and natural and cultural history. We are thrilled that restoration of the land's life, beauty, and health will be moving forward at Badger, and that we will soon be able to welcome the people of Wisconsin and the nation to our backyard. We are concerned, however that the article leaves out critical parts of the Badger story.

## How did the Wisconsin DNR acquire land at Badger?

The article fails to mention how the State of Wisconsin came to acquire land at Badger (and additional lands that it may yet gain). When the U.S. Department of Defense announced the decommissioning of the Badger Plant in 1997, it unleashed a free-for-all among those looking to reap short-term profits from its closing. Over the next several years, local citizens, businesses, organizations, and local, county, state, federal and tribal governments engaged in an intense conversation about Badger's long-term future. In 2001 that effort resulted in the formal adoption of the consensus *Badger Reuse Plan* (BRP). The reuse plan, in turn, made it possible for deconstruction, environmental clean-up and land transfers to proceed in a coordinated manner at Badger.

## What about the Badger Reuse Plan (BRP)?

The article fails to reference the Badger Reuse Plan. Overcoming decades of discord on the prairie, the plan provided a path forward for all. And it provided the basis for the State of Wisconsin to request in 2004 that the federal

government transfer to it a portion of the Badger lands. The land transfer was officially agreed to in 2010. Wisconsin now holds this land, and this opportunity, because of the Badger Reuse Plan. It is stated in the article that "Transfer of a property of this size to the public at no cost for the land is practically unheard of." It is certainly true that a land acquisition of this sort is extraordinarily rare. However, it did not happen by accident or without cost. The cost was paid for in the thousands of hours of hard volunteer work, over many years, by dozens of organizations and hundreds of citizens who shared a vision for this property, for our community, and for the future of Wisconsin.

## What about the other partners at Badger?

The BRP (available online at [co.sauk.wi.us/cpz/badger-reuse-plan](http://co.sauk.wi.us/cpz/badger-reuse-plan)) calls for the landowners and stakeholders at Badger to manage the entire property collaboratively. The BRP makes it clear this is the only way to realize the full opportunity at Badger and to maximize the benefits for all the partners. The DNR may eventually acquire up to 3,380 of the property's 7,350 acres. The USDA Dairy Forage Research Center has acquired about 2,100 acres, and the Ho-Chunk Nation may acquire 1,550 acres. (The small remainder is divided among three other entities.) The DNR is thus not planning and managing its lands just for itself. The other landowners are not just neighbors, as the article states. They are full partners in the management of Badger as a whole.

## How will recreational uses fit into Badger?

The article fails to address the need to integrate all the future uses at Badger in a coherent way. The BRP calls for combining four primary future uses at Badger: 1) ecological

## COMMENT ON A STORY?

Send your letters to: Readers Write, WNR magazine, P.O. Box 7191, Madison, WI 53707. Or email letters to [dnrmagazine@wisconsin.gov](mailto:dnrmagazine@wisconsin.gov). Limit letters to 250 words and include your name and the community from which you are writing.



restoration of the Sauk Prairie landscape; 2) agricultural activities that demonstrate how conservation and agriculture can work together; 3) education and research programs involving the land's natural and human history; and 4) compatible recreational activities. The designation of the DNR portion of Badger as the "Sauk Prairie Recreation Area" was a bureaucratic land classification choice that does not capture the full spirit of the BRP's vision. On the plus side, it does reflect that recreation is one of the important uses envisioned for the Badger lands. On the minus side, it implies that the area will be devoted exclusively to just one of those uses.

**What kinds of recreation are appropriate at Badger?** Badger has space for a wide array of recreational activities, but not all. Through extensive public meetings, the committee that produced the BRP (which included the DNR) reviewed and ranked dozens of proposals. Many of these involved recreational activities. The BRP is clear in its intent and language. Recreational activities are to be low-impact in nature, so as to minimize interference among the landowners and to maximize the potential for reuse of the property as a whole. When DNR applied to receive land from the National Park Service, its application stated that only low-impact recreational uses would be allowed on the property (consistent with the BRP). The National Park Service accepted the application and transferred the property to the DNR, but limited the allowed uses to those described in the DNR's application. As such, DNR cannot currently allow high-impact recreational uses at Badger without prior National Park Service approval. The magazine article does not mention these facts. Badger is unique. It is unlikely that we will ever have in southern Wisconsin so large a landscape in which to reclaim a vital piece of our natural and cultural history: the tallgrass prairie. We can demonstrate, at Badger, how prairie restoration can work together with other activities and land uses. We can provide important opportunities for citizens of all ages to participate actively in the re-creation of the Badger lands. We look for support of these common goals. As the DNR moves forward in its planning process, we respectfully ask that it provide the full story of the BRP in its public outreach

efforts. The BRP represents the shared commitment of and between local governments, the State of Wisconsin, the Ho-Chunk Nation, federal agencies and the public. The many partners at Badger have come a long way down a difficult and complicated trail. We have made progress together through the trust that we have built together. It takes hard work to keep those relationships strong. But as land stewards, we know that it is the most important work we do. The future of Badger depends on it.

*David Tremble, President  
The Sauk Prairie Conservation  
Alliance*

DNR Secretary Cathy Stepp responds: *Thank you for writing to me about the recent "Transformation on the Prairie" article in the June 2013 issue of Wisconsin Natural Resources magazine. I appreciate your interest in the future of the Sauk Prairie Recreation Area. Our magazine has a subscription base of 84,000 spread out across the length and breadth of Wisconsin. Articles are selected for this diverse audience with the goal of sharing things that make Wisconsin such a unique and wonderful place to live. Stories may be about people, places, things and events. Our magazine staff works with authors to create lively stories with wide audience appeal. The DNR is dedicated to developing and managing the former Badger grounds for public recreation, restoration, education and interpretation. The article stresses our ongoing commitment to listen and consider the comments of all prospective users of Badger as it is transformed into the Sauk Prairie Recreation Area. My staff has released for public comment several draft conceptual alternatives describing the property's future resource management and use. The alternatives incorporate details from supporting documents, including the Badger Reuse Plan, as well as the nearly 400 public comments*

*we've received from potential SPRA users. The public comment period will be one of several opportunities to comment as DNR staff develop a draft master plan. In addition, the Natural Resources Board will hear public comment before making a decision on the draft master plan, which I anticipate will be in 2014. Thank you again for your continued interest and support of Wisconsin's natural resources.*

**BOOMING OR DRUMMING?**

I am confused. In your article, "King of the forest," by Birney Dibble in the June issue of Wisconsin Natural Resources, it is stated that the grouse makes its drumming sounds by a flapping of the wings, somewhat similar to thunder in that it creates a vacuum which results in an air disturbance. But on a historical marker located on the Buena Vista Marsh in Central Wisconsin, it states that the

booming sounds are created by a stamping of the feet by the grouse. Which explanation is correct?

*J. Marshall Buehler  
Port Edwards*

*That's a great observation! Actually, Mr. Dibble's article described the drumming of the ruffed grouse while the historical marker you saw described the "booming" of the greater prairie chicken, a relative from the same family also known as the pinneated grouse. Prairie chickens perform a breeding dance in the early spring which consists of a combination of foot-stomping, tail-clicking and the vocalized booming produced by air sacs in the throats of males. Watch a video of prairie chickens booming at [dnr.wi.gov/eek/critter/bird/prairiechicken.htm](http://dnr.wi.gov/eek/critter/bird/prairiechicken.htm), and read more about them in our February 2006 story, "The drummer of love" [dnr.wi.gov/wnrmaq/html/stories/2006/feb06/pchick.htm](http://dnr.wi.gov/wnrmaq/html/stories/2006/feb06/pchick.htm).*



**RARE PRAIRIE SIGHT**

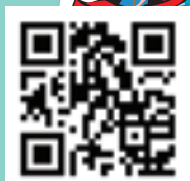
My daughter and I were taking a walk and found these two silk moths. With a little research, I found out we came across quite a rare sight. According to the website [aprairiehaven.com](http://aprairiehaven.com), "Polyphemus moths hatch from their cocoons in late May or June. They mate and lay eggs in the next day or two — adult moths don't eat, so they only live for a few days. The caterpillars hatch a week or two from when they were laid. The caterpillars eat and grow all summer, and make their cocoons in August or September. They over winter as cocoons, and the adults emerge the following June to start the cycle over again."

*Jamie Wenzel  
Tomahawk*

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# Comforts

## A nose for justice.

*Kathryn A. Kahler*

The job description might look a bit daunting, and you might assume potential applicants would need a degree and a lot of experience, but those who are part of this team are veritable youngsters, with boundless energy and the job just comes naturally to them. They are part of the six-dog K-9 warden program coordinated by the DNR's Bureau of Law Enforcement.

Some states have more formal canine programs where natural resource agencies purchase already trained dogs that are then the property of those states. In Wisconsin, conservation wardens can voluntarily enroll their personal dogs in the program by certifying them with the American Kennel Club, Canine Good Citizen program. Basically, the certification verifies that the dogs are sociable around all kinds of people and other dogs, show no aggression, are friendly and are obedient.

Once handlers and dogs have attended a DNR-sponsored training session, and with the approval of their supervisors, wardens are able

to use their dogs to help them with designated tasks.

Conservation Warden Heather Gottschalk and her black lab partner, Eider, have been working together for eight years. Gottschalk says Eider is invaluable at public relations, detecting game — taken legally and illegally — and helping teach new hunters how to hunt.

"The dogs break the ice," says Gottschalk. "A lot of times people see wardens in uniform and they kind of stand back a little. The dogs make us more approachable."

For Gottschalk and Eider, that might be at the Youth Expo held each year in Beaver Dam, where school-aged children are introduced to a

multitude of outdoor recreational experiences, or it might be at many of the talks she gives around her Dodge County base of operation. To kids who have attended her talks, she is usually known as "Eider's owner," rather than the game warden.

"It really opens doors up for them to feel comfortable to talk with me," says Gottschalk. "As they get older and as adults, if they see illegal activity, that earlier experience provides a connection and makes them willing to come forward and provide us with information we need to protect the resource."

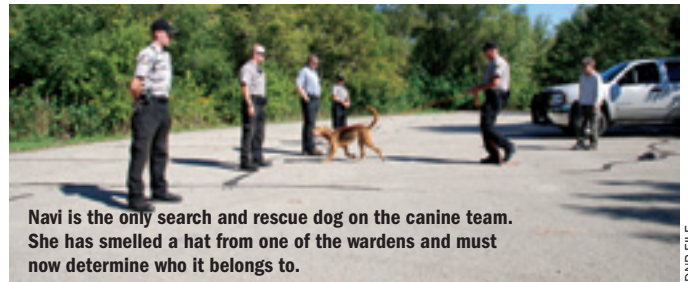
Dogs are used in Learn-to-Hunt events where they demonstrate their abilities to retrieve game that might otherwise not be found by hunters. That makes for a much higher success rate which is key to the hunter ethics such events

pair is injured and can't fly, the other will stay by its side, which risks the lives of both.

"In the Horicon Marsh area, Eider and I work with federal wildlife officials to remove those injured birds to see if they can be rehabilitated," says Gottschalk. "That breaks up the pair bond and the healthy bird will migrate south like it should and find a new mate."

When it comes to finding illegally taken game, Gottschalk points to Eider's very first experience as a K-9 warden.

"I was in a neighboring county when I received a call from the hotline," Gottschalk recalls. "The caller had been on state property during the early goose season and had seen some hunters shoot some ducks during the closed season. I caught the suspects coming out of the marsh where



Navi is the only search and rescue dog on the canine team. She has smelled a hat from one of the wardens and must now determine who it belongs to.

DNR FILE



Gottschalk and Eider demonstrate his retrieving abilities at the Youth Expo held each year in Beaver Dam.

DNR FILE



"Canine wardens" like Eider — Conservation Warden Heather Gottschalk's black lab — help break the ice and make wardens more approachable.

DNR FILE

try to instill in new hunters.

"We also use them for field detection of game taken both legally and illegally," Gottschalk explains. "For legal game, we might run across a duck hunter who has shot a bird and they can't get through the bogs or mud, or just can't find their bird. We'll ask them if they mind if we release our dog and nine times out of 10, they get their bird back. The dogs simply assist where we as humans can't."

Dogs can also help find injured wildlife. In the case of geese, which mate for life, if one of a migrating breeding

they had shot a legal goose.

They denied shooting any ducks, but as I continued to question them, they finally admitted they had shot some just to make their pictures look better. I had Eider with me and sent him on a blind retrieve. He ended up finding all the birds and as a result, we were able to get a good conviction."

Eider, motivated by nothing more than his senses, took it in stride and didn't much care about attention or compensation. It was all in a day's work for one of the DNR's unsung heroes.

*Kathryn A. Kahler is an editorial writer for Wisconsin Natural Resources magazine.*



## Traveler

### A season for scares in Wisconsin.

Karely Mendez

At this time of the year, it seems just about everyone has a hair-raising story to tell about their favorite haunt. While Wisconsin's parks offer many visual wonders, some also inspire supernatural enthusiasts.



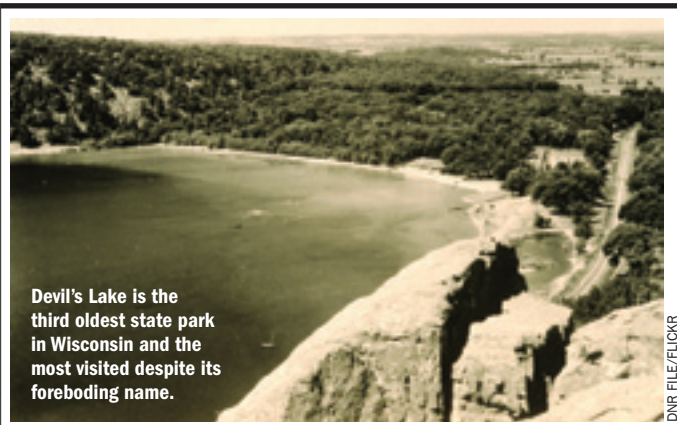
Cherney Maribel Caves County Park offers many caves and crevices that are open and accessible to the public by a series of trails.

MARIBELCAVES.COM

A "living" history museum accurately describes **Heritage Hill State Historical Park** in Green Bay. Heritage Hill is a 50-acre state park and museum splendidly placed on the banks of the Fox River. According to legend the spirit of a man named Henri roams the Heritage Hill grounds and the Fort Howard Hospital in the park. Some tourists have reported feeling that they are being watched when no one else was around. Others describe feeling uneasy or are struck by a strong need to leave. Some have also reported hearing disembodied footsteps at the Fort Howard Hospital, and one visitor said he witnessed a shaking hospital bed. You may come to learn about Wisconsin heritage here, but by the stories, it seems like one or more of our ancestors are still lingering around. To learn more about Heritage

Hill State Historical Park visit [heritagehillgb.org](http://heritagehillgb.org) **Cherney Maribel Caves County Park** in Manitowoc County, and the deteriorated hotel nearby, inspire many spine-chilling stories. Visitors have reported hearing moaning coming from the caves under the hotel, nicknamed "Hotel Hell." Some report having seen a little girl in a black dress wearing no shoes and standing on the stairs leading to the caves. It's also rumored that "Hotel Hell" was a hideout for mobster Al Capone and that he ran a moonshine business out of it. Among the other reported paranormal events are sightings of angry spirits and ghostly children, who appear on the roof or in the windows of the hotel. This park is a good place to seek a thrilling adventure, and with amenities for picnicking, biking, skiing,

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Devil's Lake is the third oldest state park in Wisconsin and the most visited despite its foreboding name.

DNR FILE/FLOCKR

hiking, restrooms and a playground, people of all ages can enjoy the adventure. For details on Cherney Maribel Caves County Park go to [maribelcaves.com](http://maribelcaves.com)

A treasure in gold worth millions and an angry ghost guarding it. This is the legend of the treasure of **Wildcat Mountain State Park**. The park overlooks the Kickapoo River in Ontario and offers camping, horseback riding, canoeing and much more. According to legend, in the late 1890's, a load of gold was being transported from Billings, Mont. to Chicago. But when word of the gold got out, every criminal in the vicinity set out looking for it. As the wagon with the gold passed Wildcat Mountain, the man in charge of the

try to find the treasure in this beautiful, adventurous park, be warned that the treasure is said to be guarded by a ferocious ghost called the "Sentinel." Legend has it that the "Sentinel" stands directly on the site of the treasure and is very aggressive about defending the gold. Some say the "Sentinel" takes a human form and attacks trespassers with a knife. Others say that the "Sentinel" transforms himself into an enormous lynx. Either way, this ferocious ghost will make finding this treasure a lot more difficult for all those interested. To plan your visit to Wildcat Mountain State Park visit [dnr.wi.gov/topic/parks/name/wildcat/](http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/parks/name/wildcat/).

**Devil's Lake State Park** offers sandy beaches, miles of hiking and biking trails, canoeing, kayaking and rock climbing. But it's also a popular place to investigate paranormal activity. The lake, named Devil's Lake by white settlers but originally called "M'de Wakan" by Native Americans, meaning "mystery," "bad Spirit" or "sacred" lake, lives up to its name. According to [Phantomsandmonsters.com](http://Phantomsandmonsters.com), there are countless stories of lake monsters who have taken many human lives, Bigfoot accounts, a phantom canoe seen in the mists of the cold, still nights and lovers leaping to their deaths. There are also accounts of a real Devil's Doorway existing there, and of a woman disappearing while showering in a campground shower. This lake is said to be the "place of many dead." To plan your trip to Devil's Lake State Park go to [dnr.wi.gov/topic/parks/name/devilslake/](http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/parks/name/devilslake/).



Wildcat Mountain State Park was established in 1948. Since then, the park has grown to 3,643 acres.

DNR FILE/FLOCKR

expedition decided to bury the gold in the mountain for safe keeping. The story then suggests that everyone in the expedition either died in WWI or was murdered and the treasure was never recovered. But before you





## Wisconsin, naturally

### HARDSCRABBLE PRAIRIE STATE NATURAL AREA

Thomas A. Meyer  
State Natural Areas Program



**Notable:** In autumn, the plants of summer lose their green pigment, revealing earthy hues of red, brown, orange, russet and gold. At Hardscrabble Prairie, a diversity of prairie grasses and “forbs” (flowering herbaceous plants) brighten the steep, rocky bluff come late September. The hillside faces north; an unusual exposure for the dry prairie community typically found on sunny, warmer southern and western slopes. Look for showy goldenrod, round-headed bush clover, and asters among the little bluestem and side-oats grama grasses. Especially attractive is prairie dropseed, appearing as a fountain of fine orange grass blades erupting from a central tuft. During the spring and summer, the 160-acre nature preserve provides refuge for many butterfly species, including the very rare ottoe skipper. Great-spangled fritillary, meadow fritillary, painted lady, and silver-spotted skipper are among the common butterflies that also live here. Birds using the site include yellow-billed cuckoo, white-eyed vireo, great-crested flycatcher, brown thrasher and field sparrow. Overgrown oak savanna surrounds the prairie openings at Hardscrabble, and the Scrabble Branch of the Galena River bisects the northern part of the natural area. Wetlands along the creek harbor a small population of the state-endangered Blanchard’s cricket frog.

**How to get there:** From the intersection of highways 80 and W in Hazel Green, go east on Highway W for 0.7 miles, then south on Crawford Lane. Park in the cul-du-sac at the municipal sewage treatment plant. Look for the SNA sign, and walk south and west into the natural area. There are no designated trails at the site.

