

WISCONSIN NATURAL RESOURCES

wnrmag.com
August 2012 \$3.50



Dog days for HUNTING

Learn to hunt pheasant

State parks get tech innovations

Reel Recovery

Trapping memories

Time on the river makes me reminisce.

Dale Klemme



The author's grandfather made boats with reverse oars that the family still uses today.

DALE KLEMMME

Sometimes it's hard to understand why we do some of the things we do. Perhaps, we just do them out of habit. But habits are not necessarily bad, except when they become obsessions, and then we may need to question their value.

I'm going to admit to something I do that will surprise many readers. I'm a trapper.

That's not really what this story is about, so those who are initially turned off by the idea of trapping, please read on. If you're inclined to write me in an attempt to convert me away from trapping, save the ink! I've been doing it too long to change.

I'm not exactly sure why every year at this time I take seven to 10 days to visit the Kiel Marsh and spend time doing hard work on the river. Clearly it is not for the money. Maybe it has something to do with the fact that my grandfather trapped on this same marsh starting in the mid-1920s.

As a matter of fact, Grandpa accumulated hundreds of acres of the marsh during The Great Depression and then sold that marsh land to the Department of Natural Resources in the 1960s. Grandpa was meticulous and kept detailed records of daily catches and prices paid for furs each year. Prices were better in 1940 than they are now. I'm sure I use up my annual revenue from furs in gas on my third trip "up to the river."

In our family, as soon as you were old enough to be out in a boat, you got a trapping license so that an additional 75 traps could be set. I believe at one point my grandmother even had a license, though in her 84 years or so she never had a driver's license.

Trapping may have been an obsession with my grandfather, but it paid off and he figured out how to make some decent money at it in his lifetime.

Trapping for Grandpa was a pretty serious activity and by being around him I learned the trade well.

In the 1930s, Grandpa even made five one-man boats with reverse oars so you could face the direction you were rowing. I still use these boats today.

I first went trapping when I was in sixth grade. It was one of those rite of passage things. The first year of trapping, I was to sit on a wood crate in one of those boats and watch Grandpa do his thing. Since I wasn't allowed to miss school, I had to be on the river by 6 a.m. holding a flashlight so Grandpa could check the traps.

My father also trapped but for him it was a habit and not an obsession. Dad trapped because he just enjoyed being on the river. My dad and I spent a good number of years on the river after my grandfather passed away. We made time to be together. Sometimes we were on the river, other times in the workshop on the farm processing the furs. Other times we played cards and drank beer.

As my father was dealing with cancer for the second time, his energy level declined, but he would still find the strength to go to the river with me when the weather was decent. I remember getting out of the boats and having lunch in the sun on a grassy spot my family called "Mupps Landing." My dad would then take a short nap before we continued on for the day.

I wouldn't say my dad



Trapping is more about family time than furs for Klemme.

was an outwardly emotional guy. But the last year he was able to go out on the river, I remember being in my truck preparing to return to Prairie du Chien. While I was still in the yard, my dad stood at the workshop door, waved and tears were streaming down his face. I got out of the truck; we held each other and cried, not saying a thing to each other except, "Thanks." He passed away soon after.

My two boys have since gone trapping with me. One of the first years the three of us went out on opening day. I backed the boat trailer to the water and they pushed the boat out onto the river holding onto the rope. Unfortunately, the other end of the rope was not tied to the boat. After we stopped laughing, we realized the boat was in the middle of the river. We went to a neighbor who was equally amused and allowed us to use his boat to retrieve ours.

We laughed but my grandfather would have had a fit.

I also recall the silliness of the three of us in different boats, clustered together in the middle of the marsh trying to listen to the end of a Badgers game on a small transistor radio, which was total static. Someone won by kicking a field goal with no time left, but we couldn't understand which team it was.

So, as I began this story, I admitted that I'm not at all sure as to why I go trapping. But one thing I do know for sure is that while I'm on the river, I do miss my dad and grandfather. Maybe that's reason enough. ❧



PHOTOS SUBMITTED BY DALE KLEMMME

Dale Klemme writes from Prairie du Chien.

WISCONSIN NATURAL RESOURCES

August 2012
Volume 36, Number 4



JERRY DAVIS



MISSY SPARROW-LIEN



MELODY WALSH

- 2 Trapping memories**
Dale Klemme
Time on the river makes me reminisce.
- 4 Dogs and ducks**
Timothy Sweet
Waterfowl hunting is best when you pay attention to detail and share the experience with a friend.
- 6 Sharing a passion for upland birds and bird dogs**
Bob Nack and Vic Connors
Friends of Wisconsin pheasant hunting find a home at the Poynette game farm.
- 9 My first waterfowl hunt**
JadeAnn Oliver
Marley makes waves and retrieves my prizes.
- 11 Finding hunting land is easier**
Melissa Keenan
Walk-in access in Wisconsin is a reality.
- 14 A chance for a Reel Recovery**
Amanda Laurenzi
Faced with cancer? Go fishing.
- 17 Hunt, climb, canoe and make crafts**
Amanda Laurenzi
Women in the Outdoors program makes strides in Wisconsin.
- 18 State parks get innovative accessibility upgrades**
Barbara Janesh
There's an app and more for that.
- 24 Volunteering to clean up? Who would do that?**
Andrew Savagian
Here's your answer.
- 28 Readers Write**
Readers' photos and feedback.
- 30 Creature Comforts**
Anita Carpenter
Cricket talk.
- 31 Wisconsin Traveler**
Amanda Laurenzi
Make a date with a river.

FRONT COVER: Hank is a skilled waterfowl retriever that learned to fetch and heel at an early age. Lots of repetition helped him develop greater retrieving proficiency.

Timothy Sweet

BACK COVER: Mud Lake Bog in Waupaca County. INSET: Grass pink (*Calopogon tuberosus*), a member of the orchid family. For more information, or to order a guidebook to State Natural Areas for \$18.00 (postage and tax included), contact the State Natural Areas Program, Bureau of Endangered Resources, DNR, P.O. Box 7921, Madison, WI 53707 or visit dnr.wi.gov and search "State Natural Areas."

Thomas A. Meyer, DNR



Follow us on Twitter @WDNR.
Visit twitter.com/#!/WDNR



Visit the Wisconsin
DNR's YouTube channel at
[YouTube.com/user/WIDNRVT](https://www.youtube.com/user/WIDNRVT)



Like us on
Facebook
[facebook.com/WIDNR](https://www.facebook.com/WIDNR)

Editor-in-chief Natasha Kassulke
Circulation Manager Vacant
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.**

© Copyright 2012, Wisconsin Natural Resources magazine, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, P.O. Box 7921, Madison, WI 53707. wnrmag.com

Contributions are welcome, but the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources assumes no responsibility for loss or damage to unsolicited manuscripts or illustrative material. Viewpoints of authors do not necessarily represent the opinion or policies of the State of Wisconsin, the Natural Resources Board or the Department of Natural Resources.

Printed in Wisconsin on recycled paper using soy-based inks in the interest of our readers and our philosophy to foster stronger recycling markets in Wisconsin.

Governor Scott Walker

NATURAL RESOURCES BOARD
David Clausen, Amery, Chair
William Bruins, Waupun
Preston D. Cole, Milwaukee
Terry Hilgenberg, Shawano
Gregory Kazmierski, Pewaukee
Christine L. Thomas, Plover
Jane Wiley, Wausau

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF
NATURAL RESOURCES
Cathy Stepp, Secretary
Matthew S. Moroney, Deputy Secretary
Scott Gunderson, Executive Assistant



PUBL CE-012
ISSN-0736-2277

**Waterfowl
hunting is best
when you pay
attention
to detail and
share the
experience
with a friend.**



Brian Lederhaus says the best part of the hunt is the camaraderie he shares with Hank, his canine companion.

Dogs and ducks

Story and photos by
Timothy Sweet

I've had the good fortune of accompanying my daughter's fiancé, Brian Lederhaus, and his silver Labrador retriever, Hank, on a waterfowl hunting foray to a scenic backwater slough in Waupaca County.

I came armed with my camera; Brian was loaded down with a couple of duffle bags full of decoys, several pieces of camouflage clothing, a matching shotgun, two ammo boxes, assorted duck and goose calls, and a pair of chest-high waders.

Even Hank slipped on a camouflage vest to help him blend in with the surrounding cattails and marsh grasses. All of the gear was put into a dark green Jon boat, and we headed for the duck blind strategically hidden on a hummock in the middle of a scenic Little Wolf River bayou.

From this vantage, I began to observe the attention to detail that goes into being a successful and ethical waterfowl hunter.

I noticed that Brian seemed to be putting a lot of thought into the decoy placement. At about the age of 13 or 14, his grandpa introduced him to duck hunting and his dad got him into grouse hunting. Both his dad and his grandpa taught him how to group duck and goose decoys that closely mimic the way real birds are seen in nature. These formative outings provided him with the experience and confidence to begin to hunt with his friends a few years later.

Becoming an expert bird caller is another necessary skill. Bringing waterfowl in close enough to give oneself a decent shot at them is a trait that takes some time to develop.

Brian honed his duck and goose calling talent over several years while commuting to school. He practiced quacking and honking as he drove down the highway. Now he continues to perfect the craft by making trips to a local game preserve where he tries to call in ducks from the shore.

Success is indicated when the birds "talk" back to him or if they fly in close to the blind when he's back on the river. Learning to identify duck species is one of the most challenging parts of being a proficient waterfowl hunter.



Lederhaus shoots and Hank retrieves four ducks on this backwater outing.

"I watch them flying around and look them up on the Internet and in books," Brian explained. "That's taken a long time."

Perhaps the most enjoyable part of the hunt is the camaraderie of being in a duck blind with a good companion — especially man's best friend. In Brian's case, that's his silver Lab, Hank.

"The dog does a lot of the work I don't want to do myself. He can get the birds," Brian said. "If I lose sight of one, he can find it."

Brian chose Hank because he wanted a dog that would be good at duck hunting. Brian talked to various breeders hoping to find a puppy that came from parents with strong hunting lines. Hank learned to fetch and heel at an early age. Lots of repetition helped to develop greater retrieving proficiency. Then Brian spent time working with a professional hunting dog trainer who had Hank fetching rubber

bumpers with duck wings tied to them.

Retrievers have a characteristic "soft mouth," meaning that they hold onto a bird gently without squeezing down too hard on it.

When asked about what he enjoys most about the sport, Brian replied, "Just being out there with friends and the dog — it's the camaraderie."

He also likes the attention to detail that is required to be successful.

"Ducks and geese will notice if a decoy is pointing the wrong way," Brian said. "They can spot one speck of bright-colored clothing. You've got to hone your eyes and ears to spot them before they see you."

My first visit to a duck blind certainly proved to be an enjoyable outing. Watching Brian set out his decoys, don camouflage clothing, call in birds and eventually shoot and retrieve four ducks with Hank's help was quite a thrill.

I can now see and understand why Brian is hooked on the adventure of the hunting experience, especially sharing the kinship of being with his well-trained dog.



Timothy Sweet writes from his home in Clintonville.



Dog trainer Craig Steinbach (of Fly-n-Gun Kennels), far right, describes equipment and techniques used to train various hunting dog breeds.

Friends of Wisconsin pheasant hunting find a home at the Poynette game farm.

JERRY DAVIS

Bob Nack and Vic Connors

In 2011, a group of dedicated conservationists with a passion for bird dogs, youth and novice hunting programs, and pheasant hunting came together to form the Friends of Poynette Game Farm (FPGF).

FPGF has an application pending for approval as a 501(c)(3) non-profit dedicated to providing upland bird hunting opportunities and promoting hunting as a family activity.

The group formed to support the Department of Natural Resources' mission for the State Game Farm in Poynette. The Poynette game farm has raised and released ring-necked pheasants on public hunting grounds for nearly 80 years. Over the years, the pheasant stocking program has contributed significantly to the strong heritage of hunting game birds in the state. FPGF wants to see this hunting heritage continue by providing hunting opportunities and recruiting new hunters to the field.

FPGF organizers are passionate about all aspects of upland bird hunting and want future generations to experience everything upland bird hunting has to offer.

Harvesting a bird is only a small part of the overall hunting experience. Upland bird hunters enjoy time spent with family and friends; frosty fall mornings; companionship of a bird dog; the distinct



Sharing a passion for upland birds and bird dogs

smell of field clothes; preparing game for table fare; and safe, ethical and responsible behavior in the field. They love it all and want to share these experiences with others!

FPGF has identified three areas to support the future of pheasant hunting in Wisconsin:

- Hunting and outdoor skills programs, including mentored youth and novice hunter programs.
- Hunting opportunities on private and public lands through fundraising and developing support for game bird stocking.
- Educational programming for wildlife conservation and stewardship, including: habitat management, safe and ethical hunting practices, gun safety, use of well-trained hunting dogs, and preparing wild game for consumption.

In 2011, FPGF used donations from the Swanson Pheasant Farm, Cabela's, Pheasants Forever — Columbia County Chapter, and the Wisconsin Association of Field Trial Clubs to provide two Learn to Hunt (LTH) pheasant programs at the 250-acre MacKenzie Environmental Education Center (MEEC) in Poynette.

These two-day events with on-site, overnight lodging

were provided at no charge to participants.

Participants received classroom instruction on pheasant biology, firearm safety, hunting dog breeds and ethical behavior in the field. The outdoor field component consisted of a dog handling demonstration, tour of the State Game Farm and clay target shooting. The event culminated with a mentored pheasant hunt behind well-trained bird dogs. Harvested birds were treated with respect and properly prepared for consumption at a later date.

According to Conservation Warden Heather Gottschalk, "Participation in LTH events is an excellent way for novice hunters of all ages to get hands-on hunting experience and learn from experienced mentors."

The 2011 LTH participants included young and adult novice hunters, families and DNR employees. The FPGF LTH programs provide a non-intimidating, open learning environment. This flagship LTH program is a template for a Wisconsin outreach program, encouraging attendees, mentors or dog handlers to initiate a program in their respective Wisconsin communities. FPGF provides technical advice and financial support for these events.

FPGF plans to provide the following four free Learn to

Hunt programs at MacKenzie this year:

Sept. 8-9 Open to women with no pheasant hunting experience.

Sept. 15-16 Open to any individual with no pheasant hunting experience. Parents or legal guardians are encouraged to participate.

Sept. 22-23 Open to individuals 18 years or older with no pheasant hunting experience. Bring a friend.

Dec. 1-2 Open to any individual with no pheasant hunting experience. Parents or legal guardians are encouraged to participate.

Heather Peart, of Verona, and her two sons, Alex and Gabe, participated in one of the 2011 LTH programs. With the help of a good bird dog and a knowledgeable mentor, Peart harvested her first pheasant. The fact that she was hunting the field with one of her sons, who was a witness to the harvest, made this hunt even more special. After the hunt, it was difficult to tell who was more excited — mother or son. They took pictures and carefully prepared the pheasant for later serving at the dinner table.

Peart says, "We had a great time. This mentored hunting experience is something I will definitely recommend to others."

Since then, Peart has acquired a young springer spaniel and is seeking expertise on preparing the dog for hunting this fall.

Arick and Molloy Groth of Wauwatosa had no hunting experience prior to attending an FPGF LTH pheasant program last fall. They are now expecting their first child. In addition to shopping for a baby crib, they are shopping for their first shotgun and plan to raise their children on the wild game they harvest.

Stocking program provides essential opportunities

In 2011 the Department of Natural Resources released 51,000 pheasants from the Poynette game farm on 71 public hunting grounds across the state. Stocked pheasants provide the only pheasant hunting opportunities for most Wisconsin pheasant hunters, especially in years of poor wild pheasant reproduction.

FPGF recognizes the importance of the stocking program to the average pheasant



Heather Peart and her son show off pheasants harvested during an LTH event.

JERRY DAVIS



Warden Heather Gottschalk teaches LTH participants.

JERRY DAVIS

hunter, local economies and to recruiting and retaining pheasant hunters.

"We believe that increasing the number of pheasants released will increase interest in pheasant management, pheasant hunting, well-trained bird dogs and hunting as a family activity," says Vic Connors, President of FPGF. "This group represents the interests of the average pheasant hunter in Wisconsin."

Individual donations and corporate sponsorships will help to accomplish the following goals over the next five years:

- Provide four LTH programs at MacKenzie annually. These programs will serve as the model for others to follow.
- Develop and train LTH program leaders who will provide youth and novice hunting events in their local communities. Our goal is to support 25 events statewide by 2016.
- Ensure pheasant production stability at the Poynette game farm and then strive to increase stocked bird production from 54,000 to 75,000 over the next five years.
- Support capital improvements at the Poynette game farm to secure the long-term future of the facility and the pheasant stocking program.

FPGF financial and in-kind support has come from individual donations, Swanson Pheasant Farm, Cabela's, Wisconsin Association of Field Trial Clubs,

and the Dane County Conservation League.

FPGF achieved a historic milestone at a critical time in its development with the ground-breaking first \$1,000 life donor, Mark LaBarbera of Hazel Green, through the Outdoor Heritage Education Center organization he founded in 1988 (outdoorheritageeducationcenter.com).

LaBarbera, who has a history of supporting hunter education and mentored youth outings, learned about FPGF at a Future Hunter Search Conference in March 2012.

The nationally known conservationist and outdoor industry executive said, "When I saw what Bob Nack and the team put together in our home state, it was clear that they had the vision and infrastructure to create a steady stream of new hunters, but the critical missing link was sufficient cash. So we pulled the trigger on the first donation. We hope many others will follow."


LaBarbera said that the key to success is to go beyond the one-day events and to help prospective new hunters discover outdoor programs that provide on-going mentored hunt opportunities. Research and participation in national outdoor education summits, he said, has led to best practices for recruiting and retaining hunters, as well as creating the next generation of environmental stewards.

"The ultimate goal is to connect people to nature and identify themselves as hunters who care about the environment and understand the important role of hunters as conservationists," LaBarbera said. "I'm pleased to point out the people at Poynette are sharply perceptive. They understand what it takes to make a difference. It's up to all of us to pitch in now."

Bob Nack is director of the State Game Farm and Poynette Area Wildlife Supervisor. Vic Connors is president of the Friends of the Poynette Game Farm.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

More information on FPGF and donation or sponsor forms can be found at friendsofwhunting.org or by email: friendsofpoynette@gmail.com. Information on the State Game Farm can be found at <http://dnr.wi.gov/org/land/wildlife/gamefarm/> or visit dnr.wi.gov and search "Poynette game farm."

A photograph of a young girl and a man in hunting gear sitting on grass. The girl is on the left, wearing a camouflage hat and a yellow and black patterned vest. The man is on the right, wearing a camouflage hat, glasses, and a light-colored shirt. A black dog is sitting to the right of the man. A duck is lying on the grass in the foreground. The background is a grassy area with trees.

The author (left) gets some hunting help from mentor Garold Becker and his dog, Marley.

My first waterfowl hunt

Marley makes waves and retrieves my prizes.

JadeAnn Oliver

Last fall, my grandma and grandpa, JoEllen and Garry Oliver, enrolled me in the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources' Hunter Safety Program held at the Chaseberg Rod and Gun Club. After finishing the course, passing the test, and participating in a really fun program called Learn to Hunt, I was ready for my first hunt.

In the Learn to Hunt program, each youth duck hunter is paired with an adult mentor whose job is to take youth hunters on a safe and fun duck hunt. The special youth season opened on the last Saturday in September and I was excited because I had learned so much from the classes but had never been hunting.

PHOTO SUBMITTED BY JADEANN OLIVER



JadeAnn is the only youth hunter at the boat landing to bag a honker that day.

PHOTO SUBMITTED BY JADEANN OLIVER

I was lucky because my mentor was Garold Becker and I already knew him. He's a very nice man who raised four daughters of his own. He also is an experienced duck hunter.

Garold told me he was going to be at my house at 5:30 a.m. on Saturday so I tried to get everything ready the night before. I laid out my hip boots, hunting pants, hat, coat, gun and ammo, so that I'd be ready to go in the morning. I was thankful because my hunter safety instructor, Caron Malin, loaned me her 20-gauge double-barrel shotgun to use on the hunt.

On Saturday I got up early, dressed and shoveled breakfast into my mouth. Garold was early and my grandma said, "Don't forget your lunch." She packed it for me the night before.

When we got to the landing I helped put the boat in the water, and after we loaded all our gear into the boat, I looked up at the truck and asked, "What about Marley?"

Marley is Garold's best friend. He's a 14-year-old black Lab who likes to hunt ducks as much as Garold. Garold smiled and said, "We don't want to forget Marley," and he quickly ran up to the truck and got him.

Marley was really excited. He is a beautiful old dog with lots of gray hair on his face that looks like a goatee.

In a few minutes the boat engine was running and we were on our way through the darkness. When we got to

our hunting spot, the water was very shallow. Garold got out of the boat and set out about four goose decoys and a dozen duck decoys. Then he pulled the boat up next to shore and set up our boat blind so we'd be camouflaged.

Once settled in, we saw and heard some ducks and Garold started calling on his duck call. As the sun came up over the bluffs along the Mississippi, a flock of ducks flew in front of the sun and their silhouette was an awesome sight.

Garold stopped calling and it was completely quiet except for the sound of geese honking in the distance.

Then he started honking on his goose call and suddenly we saw two geese headed in our direction. We got down and hid, but unfortunately, they landed in a patch of lily pads off to our side and just out of range.

Garold began calling again. The geese swam closer, probably to within about 25 yards. I raised my gun, but Garold said not to shoot because the birds were on the water and that would be "unsportsman-like."

Suddenly the geese began flapping their wings and you could tell they were getting ready to take off. In a moment they were airborne in front of us.


I aimed, fired and one folded and fell dead. Marley jumped out of the boat and swam out for the retrieve. He was back in a minute with the huge bird in his mouth and he shook himself dry on the shore before getting back in the boat.

I thought to myself that, for those few minutes, Marley was a puppy again.

When I held the bird, it was soft and warm and I was amazed at how big and heavy it was. It was so cool and beautiful the way the water beads repelled from its feathers.

As I was admiring the goose, a pair of wood ducks flew past us and I shot and missed. Wow, were they fast! Just as I was feeling bad about missing, three other wood ducks came right in. I shot and one fell dead. I had killed my first duck and old Marley made another nice retrieve.

For the rest of the morning, we waited and waited for the next exciting event to happen, but it never did and I realized that the entire morning was one big exciting event that I'll never forget.

When we got to the boat landing, there were lots of youth hunters holding their birds, smiling, taking pictures and talking excitedly about their hunts. I was pretty proud, because I was the only one who bagged a honker. Later we enjoyed grilled duck and it was delicious. I had a lot of fun and I can't wait to go duck hunting again. 

This fall, JadeAnn Oliver will be a sixth grader at De Soto Middle School. She lives with her grandma and grandpa, JoEllen and Garry Oliver in the Village of Stoddard, a stone's throw from the Mississippi River and about seven miles south of La Crosse. In addition to hunting, JadeAnn enjoys fishing and playing softball and basketball. She also loves working with animals and someday hopes to train Seeing Eye dogs.

Finding hunting land is easier

Walk-in access in Wisconsin is a reality.



Have you ever dreamed of having thousands of acres of land open to walk-in access like they do in the Western United States? A similar program aimed at providing additional public access in Wisconsin is coming up on its one-year anniversary.

The national Voluntary Public Access-Habitat Incentives Program was approved as part of the 2008 Federal Farm Bill. The VPA-HIP compensates landowners who open their property to the public for wildlife-dependent recreation opportunities.

In Wisconsin, the Voluntary Public Access (VPA) program was implemented a year ago and provides public access in 49 counties for hunting, fishing, trapping and wildlife observation.

The program is funded through a grant administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Wisconsin received \$1.9 million to jump start this program and since becoming available last fall, the program has enrolled an impressive 32,000 acres.

Private lands leased for public hunting and fishing

Historically, a state-funded private lands leasing program for hunting and fishing called Public Hunting Grounds (PHG) was available throughout Wisconsin. Over the years, rates became less competitive and eventually the program died out in many counties. However, a few strongholds remained including areas near Footville, Evansville Wildlife Area in Rock County, and Adell Wildlife Area in Sheboygan County. As of 2010, there were 14,000 acres enrolled in the PHG program but the trend was moving downward at a rate of 5 to 10 percent annually.

The Department of Natural Resources was able to retain almost all of the old PHG program participants by offering increased rates through VPA and in August of 2011 the department started approaching new, willing landowners about leasing their land to the department.

Program staff relied heavily on word-of-mouth, direct mailings and local press releases to inform landowners about the opportunity to lease with the depart-

MIKE VERSLAND

Robbie Rowe, 14, harvested this 25-pound turkey on a Voluntary Public Access property in St. Croix County. It was Robbie's first Wisconsin turkey hunt and he was being mentored by Mike Versland of Hastings, Minn.

ment. The Department of Natural Resources also hired four field staff to help promote the program and provide additional wildlife habitat improvement recommendations. Partner groups inside and outside the Department of Natural Resources also helped promote VPA.

The importance of access

The decline in hunter numbers is expected to continue and lack of access is one of the many obstacles potential hunters face.

“Today people are overloaded with options for their leisure time and the amount of time spent in structured or planned activities takes up a greater proportion of the day,” says Keith Warnke, DNR hunting and shooting sports coordinator. “Add to that the increasing urbanization of our population (more people living in cities) and the fragmentation of the landscape into smaller and smaller parcels and it’s easy to see that having a place to go hunting can become an obstacle. Having a place to hunt that is close to home is even more important.”

The VPA program is focused around population centers such as the Twin Cities, Madison-Milwaukee metro areas and the Fox River Valley. Opportunities in the southern part of the state may also attract out-of-state visitors from the Rockford and Chicago areas.

“The VPA program has shown itself to be valuable in providing that close-to-home access for Wisconsin hunters,” Warnke says. “Expanding the program to enroll more land will further the partnership between private landowners, the Department of Natural Resources and hunters. Hopefully that can result in solid hunter recruitment and retention in the future.”

Economic impact

VPA is essential to the more than \$3.7 billion spent annually on wildlife-dependent recreation in Wisconsin. According to an assessment on the economic benefit of VPA in Wisconsin, for every dollar spent investing in the VPA program through lease agreements and administrative costs, users spent an additional \$4.25. Visitors to VPA lands are spending money at the local café, motel in town, or purchasing supplies at the convenience store and bait shop.

Enrolling is easy

Any landowner within an eligible coun-



Becky Davis harvested this 22-pound turkey on a Voluntary Public Access property in St. Croix County during the 2012 spring turkey season. Although Davis is an avid hunter, this was the first turkey she harvested.

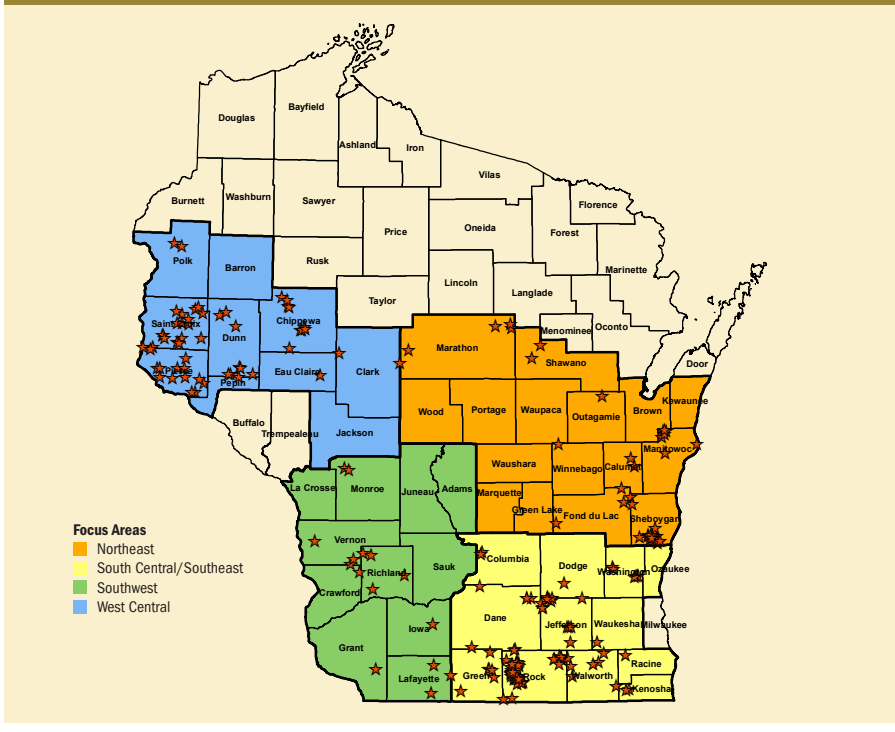
RYAN BRATHAL



Many Voluntary Public Access properties have exceptional wildlife habitat. This property is located in Fond du Lac County and will undoubtedly see a lot of use during the waterfowl season.

MISSY SPARROW-LIEN

VOLUNTARY PUBLIC ACCESS PROGRAM PROPERTY LOCATIONS



DNR FILE

ty (see map) may ask to be enrolled. Priority is given to parcels greater than 40 acres with at least 25 percent permanent habitat such as grassland, wetland or forest, and to parcels located near or adjacent to land already open to public access such as state wildlife and fishery areas and waterfowl production areas.

Land enrolled in other conservation programs such as the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Managed Forest Law (MFL) or Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) may also be eligible.

Lease payments are determined by the land type enrolled: \$3/acre for agriculture land, \$10/acre for grassland and wetland, and \$15/acre for forestland. Landowners will receive a lump sum, upfront payment within 60 days of signing their lease agreement.

Under sec. 895.52 of the Wisconsin Statutes, landowners are generally immune from liability for injuries received by individuals recreating on their lands. Under sec. 29.617, the department agrees to pay for damages arising from the operation of public hunting or fishing grounds. Claims may include damage to crops or property such as gates or fences.

Elsbeth Fuchs of Waterloo loves seeing the wildlife on her land that is enrolled in VPA. "We have a 91-acre marsh with a lot of open water that attracts Sandhill

cranes, turkeys and other wildlife. I want everyone who loves hunting to have access and enjoy my farm like my husband and I have."

Finding new places to recreate


Land enrolled in VPA is open for all hunting, fishing and trapping seasons. Additionally, lands are open year-round for wildlife observation. All property boundaries are posted with white signs with green writing stating "Private Lands Leased for Public Access." Visitors should reference individual property maps located at dnr.wi.gov, search keyword "VPA."

Visitors to VPA properties are not required to contact the landowner prior to accessing the land. Only foot traffic is permitted — some properties have designated parking while others rely on visitors parking on the road shoulders. Users are expected to respect landowner rights by following the VPA Code of Conduct.

VPA lands are treated like state wildlife areas and only portable tree stands or blinds are permitted.

Vic Meyers visited a VPA property in Manitowoc County and said he appreciated the access and the privacy.

"It felt like the land was not 'over used,'" Meyers said. "I spent four hours outdoors with my son with a firearm and it felt great to be alive. He enjoyed it. I

enjoyed it. It was a day that we will never forget. It was his first time hunting as we just purchased a small game license for my son the day before and we were also in a mentored hunter program." 

Melissa Keenan is the DNR's Voluntary Public Access program coordinator.

VPA ENROLLMENT

Funding for the VPA program is only available until September 2012 and future funding is uncertain. If you are interested in enrolling your land into VPA, contact the program coordinator at (608) 266-5560 by Aug. 31 to ensure enrollment. Outdoor enthusiasts looking for properties to access should visit the VPA Web page at dnr.wi.gov and search "VPA."

VPA CODE OF CONDUCT

- Follow all hunting, fishing and trapping regulations.
- Only access areas posted with VPA signs. Know the field boundaries and do not trespass on the surrounding private land.
- Access is limited to foot traffic only. No motorized vehicles allowed.
- Avoid damage to property and standing crops.
- Park wisely on the shoulder of a public road or in a designated parking area. Do not block access to farm fields or pastures.
- Leave gates as you found them.
- Do not hunt near farmsteads or buildings — maintain a distance of 300 feet.
- Do not contact landowners asking for permission to access VPA properties.
- Support ethical responsible hunting — Report violations CALL: 1-800-TIP-WDNR (1-800-847-9367).
- Be aware of invasive species and prevent the spread — clean all boots, equipment, dogs, etc., before entering and leaving a VPA property.
- Constructing or erecting blinds, stands or other structures is not allowed. Portable structures are acceptable — avoid damaging trees and take structures with you when you leave.
- Do not litter. Pack out spent shotgun shells or rifle casings.
- Be ethical, courteous and safe. Abuse it — lose it.

A chance for a Reel Recovery



Faced with cancer?
GO FISHING.

Fishing buddies give participants fly-fishing lessons and help guide them to be successful at the sport during a 2011 event in Kremmling, Colo.

REELRECOVERY.ORG

You've been diagnosed with cancer. Are you scared, lonely, full of unanswered questions, overwhelmed and unable to find a moment's peace? Chances are you feel all of those things at once, plus more. What can you do to get some relief?

Who can you turn to?

Amanda Laurenzi

Reel Recovery was created by men who understand the emotional toll cancer can take. The program is for men of all ages who are facing any type and stage of cancer. Co-founder Stan Golub realized a need for the program when he saw his friend, Stewart Brown, struggle with brain cancer.

Golub helped create the program in 2003, in time for Brown to see his healing process could bring comfort and life-changing experiences to other men.



Stan Golub

Brown had been fly-fishing for three years after his diagnosis and fishing helped him get through his sorrow and fears. Inspired by Brown's passion, Golub helped create Reel Recovery to share the healing power fly-fishing brought Brown.

"It has been, by far, the most fulfilling job I can ever imagine doing," Golub said.

Since its start, Reel Recovery has held 112 retreats nationwide and has helped more

than 1,200 men battling cancer. Wisconsin hosts its first retreat at the Stoney Creek Resort in Onalaska, Sept. 12-14. Anthony Larson, event coordinator for the Midwest, and Bob Bernard, Midwest coordinator, chose the location.

"Bob and I fished and checked out the area," Larson said. "We also obtained local support."

Larson says community support is critical to the program's success. The program is largely funded by private donations. Larson participates in local fundraising to keep the program

running. For information on how to make donations, visit reelrecovery.org/donate.php

Men with cancer are encouraged to attend the 2½-day retreat to meet other men with similar serious health concerns and also to find an outlet for their emotions.

"Most men will not go to support groups or therapy," says Debbie McKinney, program administrator for Reel Recovery. "But most of the time, these men are sharing stories and heartbreaking times."

The retreat involves a therapy session called "Courageous Conversations," that brings the men together to share their struggles and hardships brought on by their illnesses.

"The subjects are very heavy during these conversations, which make them so healing and so bonding," McKinney said. "Participants truly walk away changed."

When the men are not attending "Courageous Conversations," they find some relief and relaxation in fly-fishing. Volunteers, whether local or dedicated to the program, work with the men to help teach them the proper techniques of the sport. These volunteers are called "fishing buddies."

"The relationships between the fishing buddies and participants are incredible bonds of friendship," Golub said. "They develop new friendships with people who care; people who can share fishing and life stories."

Anyone with fly-fishing experience and a desire to help can work with their state coordinator and apply at reelrecovery.org/volunteer.php

(Send questions about the program to Debbie McKinney at debbie@reelrecovery.org).

Reel Recovery's popularity has grown since its beginning in Colorado nine years ago. The first year it held two retreats. This year, 22 retreats are planned across the nation.

"Onalaska is proud to host the organization," Larson said. "They're looking forward to the benefits of meeting these guys."

Golub hopes to expand the program in Wisconsin. The more local support the program receives, the greater the chances it will return to the area. A maximum of 14 men participate per retreat to

ensure quality time for developing relationships. For every man participating in the retreat, there is one fishing buddy. The two men are more likely to become close friends and share different experiences that could help the man with cancer understand his own journey.

"It's hard to find other people who understand what you're going through when something like this happens," McKinney said. "[Reel Recovery] is a combination of getting them out to have fun fly-fishing and meeting other men who are going through the same thing."



Dick Wilson

REELRECOVERY.ORG

The experiences taken away by the men are described as life-changing. They tell others about the program with enthusiasm. Dr. Richard "Dick" Wilson, a practicing neurologist in Boise, Idaho, and a member of the Board of Directors for Reel Recovery, recalls his introduction to the program.

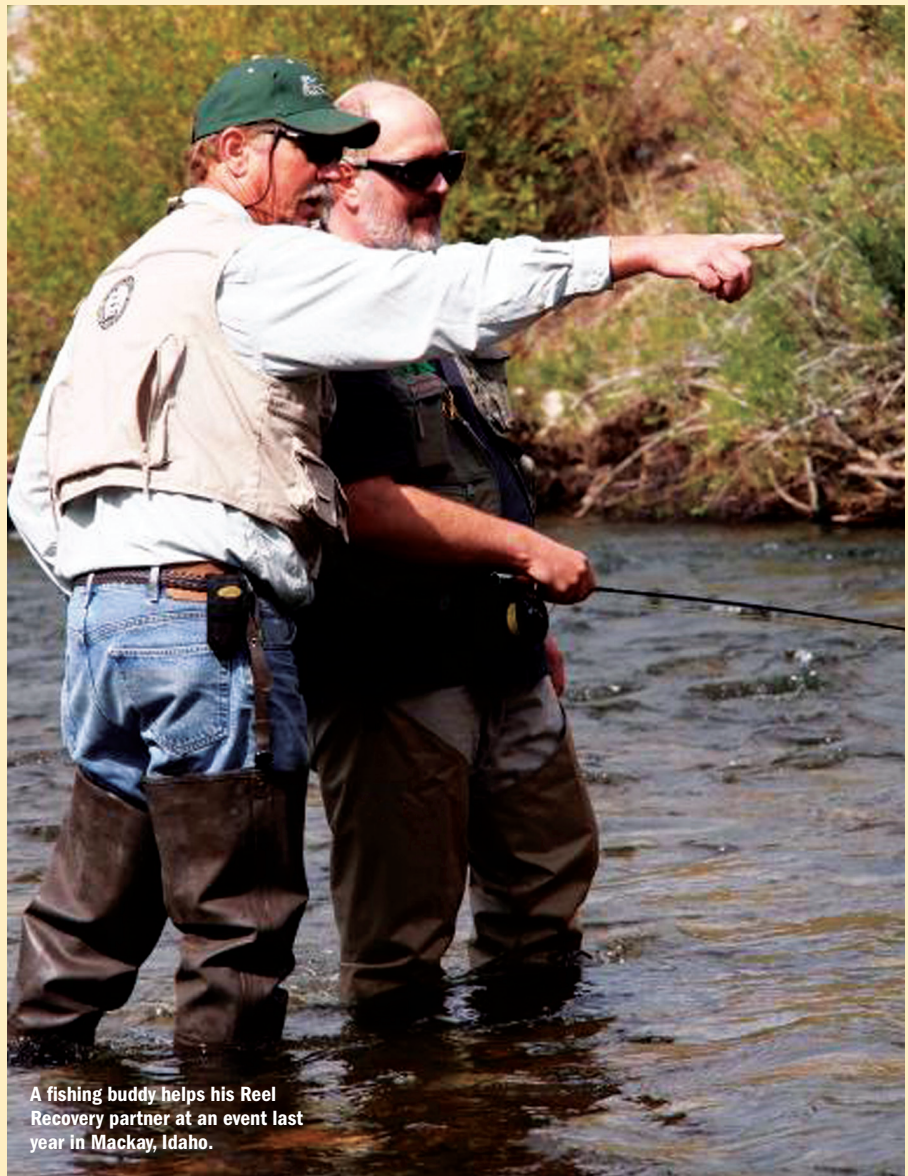
"Warren Wolf was a patient of mine," Wilson said. "He told me to go to one of the retreats and experience it for myself."

In 2009, Wilson traveled to Montana to join a retreat hosted there. After seeing the miraculous feats the men encountered and the relationships that developed between each member, Wilson de-



Debbie McKinney

REELRECOVERY.ORG



A fishing buddy helps his Reel Recovery partner at an event last year in Mackay, Idaho.

REELRECOVERY.ORG



Fishing draws smiles and nets some success during the spring 2011 retreat in Colorado.

REELRECOVERY.ORG

“We had our first retreat in Texas in 2008 and have continued to have two each year since then.”

Wolf had been diagnosed with stage-four melanoma before he attended the retreat. Through his pain, he stayed optimistic about Reel Recovery and continued to gather resources for the program to be introduced around America.

Only men with cancer are allowed to participate in the Reel Recovery retreats. Men with or without cancer can become volunteers, but must know how to fly-fish. The only expense for men participating (not volunteering) is to travel to the retreat and back. Applications are found online at reelrecovery.org/r_application.php and slots fill fast, so if interested apply soon.

Amanda Laurenzi is a staff writer for Wisconsin Natural Resources magazine.



Showing off a catch in 2011 at Loveland, Colo.

REELRECOVERY.ORG

CASTING FOR RECOVERY IS THE SISTER PROGRAM

Women who are diagnosed with breast cancer are encouraged to check out the sister program of Reel Recovery: Casting for Recovery (castingforrecovery.org/).

This program also features fly-fishing and therapy sessions for breast cancer victims. It brings together women who are recovering at any stage of breast cancer and helps them find emotional support. It features river helpers, much like the fishing buddies for Reel Recovery, who guide the women through fly-fishing. To apply to be a river helper, go to <https://secure.acceptiva.com/?cst=943ea3>

Melissa Bearth, the Minnesota/Wisconsin retreat coordinator, sets up retreats (location, activities, volunteers) and helps with fundraising. She heard about the program by working for The Hartford, an insurance company and Casting for Recovery's biggest sponsor.

“I worked with breast cancer survivors by providing them with insurance,” Bearth said. “The Hartford has a strong commitment to breast cancer survivors, and through this company I have learned a lot about it.”

For more information email info@castingforrecovery.org or call (802) 362-9181. Contact Bearth at melissa.bearth@thehartford.com or (651) 738-5559. To donate, visit castingforrecovery.org/donate

cided to become a part of the program.

“I wanted to bring the program to Idaho,” Wilson said. “We want to see the program fortified.”

In 2010, he was able to have a Reel Recovery retreat hosted in his state. Last year, Idaho hosted two retreats. Wilson anticipates two more retreats will be held this year.

“There’s really no other organization that has support for men with all types of cancer, and most groups can only offer an hour or two to work with these individuals as opposed to getting away for

a weekend with these guys and interacting on a personal level,” Wilson said. “A retreat fills a real area of need, a void, in our health care delivery.”

Wilson was not the only person to witness Wolf’s enthusiasm for the program.

“When Warren came back from the retreat he attended in Colorado, he was determined to bring the program to Texas,” McKinney said. She had been Wolf’s partner and after seeing the good the group had done for him, she supported him and became a part of the program.

Hunt, climb, canoe and make crafts



SUBMITTED BY AL ARNER/NATIONAL WILD TURKEY FEDERATION



LINDA HINZ

Women in the Outdoors program makes strides in Wisconsin.

Amanda Laurenzi

The Women in the Outdoors (WITO) program gives women and girls 14 years and older the opportunity to experience outdoor activities, such as hunting and trapshooting, in a stress-free environment.

The National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) started the program 15 years ago. While the nonprofit primarily conserves turkey habitat and maintains turkey hunting standards (it's spent more than \$372 million to conserve 17 million acres of wildlife habitat), WITO builds on the federation's values and helps expand its reach to new audiences — women. Funding for WITO is raised through raffles and auctions at WITO events.

"It's not your dad or brother telling you what not to do; it's a place where you are guided by experts who are friendly toward novice women," says Heidi Hayes, a wildlife technician for Dane County who also instructs pistol and rifle-shooting courses at the Wisconsin WITO event. "There are no preconceived notions of how things are supposed to be done."

"I wasn't a turkey hunter or a trap

TOP: Women participate in a woodworking workshop at a one-day event in Janesville.

BOTTOM: Women statewide come together at WITO events to enjoy activities ranging from hunting to fishing and more.

shooter, but I do those things successfully now," says Ronda Lehman, a WITO committee member.

The first WITO event was held in Junction City, Kan., in 1998. Since then, 18 states, including Wisconsin, have hosted WITO events. Nearly 4,000 events have been hosted in the United States and Canada, and have provided workshops for over 80,000 women.

"The experience of learning with a bunch of women who don't know how to do the activities is a much more fulfilling bonding experience," Lehman says. "For the first time, I climbed to the top of the rock wall with my daughter; I wouldn't have done it without other people there to encourage me."

The annual three-day Wisconsin WITO event attracts about 100 women. Many activities focus on areas other than hunting and shooting.

The 15th annual Wisconsin Women in the Outdoors three-day event runs Aug. 10-12 at the Living Waters Bible Camp in Westby.

"There's canoeing, rock climbing, hiking, chain sawing, woodworking, ATV

classes, dog training and so much more," Lehman says.

Classes in crafts and photography are aimed at those who prefer to examine the beauty of nature.

Linda Hinz, a WITO committee member and the event coordinator, says the program allows women to try something new. It also serves as a way for women to develop friendships based on their interests in the same outdoor activities.

Classes are hands-on and usually last about three hours. An instructor speaks for the first half hour and the remainder of the time is used for women to do the activity.

The three-day event comes once a year, but there also are several one-day events hosted throughout Wisconsin. The one-day events attract 20 to 50 people.

UPCOMING EVENTS INCLUDE:

- **Black Earth Creek Long Beards WITO at Bill Medding's property in Cross Plains on Sept. 8**
- **Mondovi Area Gobblers WITO at the Mondovi Conservation Club in Mondovi on Sept. 22**
- **Women in the Outdoors Day at the Rustling Meadows Hunt Club in Berlin on Dec. 3**

For more information visit womenintheoutdoors.org/in_your_state/wito.php? STATE=WI

Debra Donath became a member of the WITO committee after attending a three-day event in August 2011.

"Besides having fun, meeting many women with like interests and learning in each of the classes I attended, my life has been enriched," Donath says. "I am empowered in all areas of my life."

In October 2011, Donath hunted and harvested her first black bear. In March, she harvested her first turkey. "I know my experience with WITO is part of enhancing all of my hunts and finding who I am," Donath said.

Teresa Carroll, another committee member, shares Donath's enthusiasm.

"I really like the whole experience," Carroll says. "Not coming from a hunting family I have never held a shotgun or handgun. It is something that boosts your confidence as a female because you know you can use it if you have to." ❧

Amanda Laurenzi is a staff writer for Wisconsin Natural Resources magazine.

A man and two children are in a forest, looking at an informational exhibit. The man, wearing a blue shirt and a black cap with sunglasses, is using a blue Discovery Pen. Two children, a boy and a girl, are also using blue Discovery Pens. The exhibit is a large, colorful panel with text and images of birds and eggs. The background is a dense forest with tall trees and sunlight filtering through the leaves.

State parks get innovative accessibility upgrades

Ron, Ethan and Landon Frank listen to the birds and habitat descriptions of Door County's landscapes through a Discovery Pen sound-enabled exhibit on Fern Trail at Newport State Park.



Welcome
 This self-guided nature trail weaves through 1.2 miles of mixed hardwood forest. Trail surfaces and exhibits are wheelchair accessible.

There's an app and more for that.

Barbara Janesh



Legend



An innovative audio pen, hand-cranked boxes and a digital trail map application are helping visitors to some Wisconsin state parks and the Northern Highland-American Legion State Forest better understand and enjoy the natural surroundings.

It's all part of finding innovative ways to reach out to visitors, increase their access to the parks and enhance their learning experience while there.

Heading to Newport State Park in Door County? Check out a Discovery Pen from the nature center and use it to experience the 1.2-mile Fern Trail. Touch the end of the pen to a green dot on an interpretive sign and a pileated woodpecker responds with its distinctive "kuk-kuk-kuk-kuk-kuk-kuk" call. Or learn just how tiny a hummingbird egg is by touching a life-size clay replica.



While on the Fern Trail at Newport State Park, Mary Hein activates a sound spot with her Discovery Pen to hear a message about the importance of dark skies.

JULIE HEIN-FRANK

JULIE HEIN-FRANK

JULIE HEIN-FRANK

These are just two examples of auditory and tactile interpretive messages that visitors can experience at Newport. That's where naturalist Julie Hein-Frank has taken accessibility to a new level by linking a hand-held audio-playing Discovery Pen to seven visual and tactile interpretive exhibits along the Fern Trail.

The 4- to 5-foot-wide trail at Wisconsin's only designated wilderness park starts through a woodland environment and ends at a gorgeous view of Lake Michigan and the beach, Hein-Frank says.

Through the years, park staff worked to make it accessible to people with mobility impairments, adding "a real nice firm stable surface of small aggregate crushed limestone. It's really easy to get around," says Andrew Janicki, accessibility coordinator for the Department of Natural Resources.

A little over three years ago, park staff asked Hein-Frank if she wanted to take on the task of adding interpretive displays to Fern Trail.

One of her initial thoughts: "Why does it have to be accessible with just crushed limestone?" Hein-Frank realized that people have other impairments, hearing and vision, for example. Plus, they differ in how they take in and process information. She also wanted to take age differences into account. Reading information on a sign just didn't seem to be enough.

"Our visitors run the gamut of people from kindergartners to 85-year-olds," Hein-Frank says. "The (interpretive) message needs to reach the broadest audience."

So Hein-Frank set out to make Fern Trail accessible in the broadest sense of the word.

She wrote the content and designed the trail's seven interpretive signs, each with a different theme. Hein-Frank then worked with local artists to create the panels. Portions of the messages are what Hein-Frank describes as "guided imagery." They are very descriptive and help people to see and understand the subtleties of the environment around them.

For example, a panel titled "It's different here" describes "the microhabitats in this little microclimate. A pocket along the trail a little lower is filled with ostrich ferns. It's the only place in the park where they grow. It's so subtle that you don't know that you've gone down a slope." So the words and artistry help visitors to realize and experience the changes.

Next up: tactile displays to add to the



The ribbon cutting ceremony for Fern Trail at Newport State Park. From left to right: Tony Anheuser (of the Sister Bay Lions Club), Michelle Hefty (park manager), Dotti Krieger (former DNR accessibility coordinator), Andy Janicki (current DNR accessibility coordinator) and Julie Hein-Frank (naturalist).

It's Different Here
 Dense colonies of Ostrich fern surround you, thriving only here, where conditions are just right. Sunlight penetrates the open canopy, the land is low and wet, soils are thin, and the air is full of moisture...
 —You have entered a microhabitat—
 Microhabitats abound within this mixed hardwood forest. Ferns are indicators of these localized areas.
 Look for subtle changes in topography, sunlight, moisture and soil.

OSTRICH FERN
 (relief tile—from left to right)
 FALL/WINTER - Rigid, dark brown fertile stalks hold open
 SUMMER - Lush plumes of deep green fronds grow to 5 feet
 SPRING - Bright green fiddleheads unfurl!

These and other microhabitats are essential to the health and diversity of the forest.

<p>FORESTED WETLAND Sun Filtered, Dry to Moist The ground layer of vegetation is dense. Soils are rich peats and mucks, wet in early spring and drier by midsummer.</p>	<p>HARDWOOD SWAMP Part Sun to Shade, Moist to Wet Understory plants change with the seasons as water levels fluctuate. Ferns are abundant here. Each species is an indicator of soil saturation.</p>	<p>STABILIZED SAND DUNES Dappled Sun, Dry to Moist Each dune was once a beach along the ancient shoreline of Lake Michigan. Today these inland forested ridges harbor numerous rare plants and animals.</p>	<p>INLAND CLIFFS Sun to Deep Shade, Dry to Moist Once the rocky shores of glacial Lake Nipissing, these low cliffs of dolomite support a diverse assemblage of plants. Many ferns are restricted to this rock type. The area is fragile. Please tread lightly.</p>
---	--	---	--



Each interpretive panel along Fern Trail features graphics, guided imagery, clay relief and interactive audio description to ensure the message reaches the broadest audience.



MELODY WALSH



JULIE HEIN-FRANK

Ethan Frank makes discoveries as he learns about the geologic history of the forests of Newport State Park.

experience. Five of the seven signs include sculptured clay elements that invite trail users to touch them.

Visitors to the panel that focuses on the ostrich fern, for example, can reach out and touch a clay fern, feeling the shape, size and texture.

Another panel on bird migration and the Door Peninsula includes five touchable clay bird eggs of different sizes. The largest is a raven; the smallest is a hummingbird. It's like a pea. They are all birds you'd find in the park.

Even with the addition of the tactile elements, Hein-Frank wasn't satisfied.

"I really felt strongly about adding audio. I wanted to provide audio for visitors with visual impairments and auditory learners who don't want to read the whole panel."

She knew that some people will only spend three seconds reading a sign, others only 30 seconds, while others will spend three minutes or more. She didn't want people with a shorter reading span — or those who are visually impaired — to miss out on the interpretive messages.

The problem with adding audio is that it can be expensive. It can also detract from the visual experience (push buttons with batteries that can't be hidden), or create maintenance problems (equipment that breaks down easily).

It took several months, but through some extensive research and late-night Internet searches, Hein-Frank discovered what she described as a "pen reader." Created by a company in the United Kingdom it's used for a variety of purposes including enabling sound on food labels for people with visual impairments. Hein-Frank thought, "Why can't we use this technology here too, to bring accessibility and auditory learning to parks and trails?"

So she did.

Simply put, the battery powered Discovery Pen includes a microchip and a speaker. It reads unique digital audio description codes and responds by playing a message that matches the code.

On each of the Fern Trail interpretive signs, the digital code appears as a green dot that's a little smaller than a quarter. Visitors can check out a Discovery Pen from the park's nature center. When they reach an interpretive sign along the trail, they touch the end of the pen to the green dot and the message that's keyed to that

particular dot plays through the pen's speaker.

Most of the signs have more than one green dot and more than one audio message, called Audio Description. The Audio Description dots provide a verbal description of the printed word, the illustrations and tactile elements. You can use the Discovery Pen to hear an animal sound, music, a fact or two, or to hear a quote from history. All of the panels at Newport on the Fern Trail provide professional audio descriptions, which were produced by a professional who works with the blind.

Audio Description is available at Newport for people with visual impairments and everyone who enjoys learning and listening.

To learn more about using the Discovery Pen audio technology to make a site accessible, contact Julie Hein-Frank at Julie@lakeledgenaturalist.com, call (920) 743-6465 or visit DiscoveryPen.com

The Fern Trail interpretive project was funded in part by a \$12,000 accessibility grant from the Department of Natural Resources. Several Door County organizations also contributed to the project, generating another \$25,000. The Discovery Pen devices made up \$2,000 of the total budget. The official dedication of the interpretive project took place in September 2011 and trail users continue to enjoy the messages.

If you'd rather listen to those messages while sitting on the beach, you can pick up a two-sided 4-inch by 9-inch card at the nature center that includes the Audio Description messages. You can use the Discovery Pen to read the green dots and hear the messages.



BARBARA JANESH

Fern Trail is likely something you won't want to miss. "This trail is pretty state of the art," Janicki says. "This is probably the most accessible trail for people of all kinds of disabilities in the entire state. Julie's vision has been amazing and is really a great opportunity for anyone with a disability in the state or anyone visiting from around the country. I really hope it spreads to other parts of the state."

Crank it up

At other Wisconsin state parks, Eco-Boxes are helping spread interpretive messages.

AT&T Pioneers, a non-profit consisting of current and retired AT&T employees and their families, purchased and helped install 10 of the hand-cranked TourMate Eco-Boxes last year. A friends group at Buckhorn State Park purchased an eleventh box.

The boxes produce sound — in this case, interpretive information — when a visitor turns the handle, creating the power needed to play the message.

“It’s just like those cranking flashlights you buy,” says Sherry Klosiewski, a DNR natural resources educator.

The Eco-Boxes are especially helpful in increasing the experience of visitors with visual impairments, who might not be able to read an interpretive sign. They also appeal to people with varying learning styles, Klosiewski says. “Some people are just kinesthetic learners and they like having to (turn the crank) — kids especially.”

Eco-Boxes also are especially useful for remote park locations, where naturalists are less frequently available to provide interpretive information. Those areas also don’t have electricity. So, park managers needed an audio device that was self-powering — and one that couldn’t be easily damaged by vandals.

TourMate, the maker of the Eco-Boxes, calls them “a sustainable interpretive solution for ‘uncontrolled’ outdoor environments.” They are designed, according to the company, “with a ‘set it and forget’ approach to design.”

“You basically install it and you don’t look at it for a long time,” Klosiewski says. Mounted on 4-inch by 4-inch posts, the boxes are made of heavy metal with no protruding parts. Even the crank is low-profile.

“All of the guts are inside the metal case,” Klosiewski says, making the boxes “kind of indestructible.”

“They kind of look like a bird house, but you see the crank,” says Daniel Schuller, director of the Bureau of Parks and Recreation.

Interpretive messages are recorded on



Visitors to several state parks can hear interpretive messages by turning the crank on an Eco-Box (shown here.)



Visitors enjoy the grand opening of Fern Trail at Newport State Park.



Andy Janicki uses the Discovery Pen to activate an interactive timeline that describes the early history of Newport State Park.



MELODY WALSH

a small FM card. Each box can play up to four different messages. Most are one to two minutes and each is tailored to the park property where it is installed. Some focus on cultural and natural history, others on human history, still others provide information about park flora and fauna (prairies, foxes, birds), or threats, such as invasive species.

High Cliff State Park has recordings that focus on "The Ledge" and Lake Winnebago. Aztalan State Park's recordings include the people of Aztalan and information on the area's archaeology.

At Devil's Lake, the Eco-Box is at a scenic overlook in a rocky location. Its recordings include interpretive messages about wilderness hotels and glacial impacts on the landscape.

The boxes have proven to be very popular with visitors.

"We would have people cranking on these things before we even got them on the post," says Kimberly Currie, DNR property services section chief.

The Wisconsin Chapter of the AT&T

Pioneers wanted to do something for the state parks as part of the Pioneers' centennial celebration in 2011.

"We went to the DNR and asked, 'What do you want?'" says Karen Schilling, president of the Wisconsin chapter.

The AT&T Foundation provided the chapter with a \$33,600 grant, which it used to purchase the Eco-Boxes and pay for construction, cleaning and repair projects undertaken by members at parks throughout the state. The chapter also held fundraisers to help pay for their efforts. It was all part of the centennial project called "Sparking a Change in Community Parks."

The boxes themselves are valued at approximately \$25,000.

"They're very popular with visitors. I think it's something that is different enough that people are attracted to them," Schuller says.

The state has plans to install four more, Schuller says. "This is part of our efforts to be green in the parks and to also provide accessibility."

In addition to Aztalan, Buckhorn, Devil's Lake and High Cliff State Parks, Eco-Boxes can also be found at Roche-a-Cri, Council Grounds, Kohler-Andrae, Lake Wissota, Lakeshore state parks, Kettle Moraine State Forest-Pike Lake and Richard Bong State Recreation Area.

Navigating the forest

Wisconsin teenagers are the inspiration behind an iPhone-iPad-iPod application that helps visitors find their way in the 225,000-acre Northern Highland-American Legion State Forest in northern Wisconsin. But people of all ages are benefitting.

"Thirty percent of kids between 14 and 18 have some sort of smart phone," says Teague Prichard, state forest specialist with the Division of Forestry. "We want to put the tools in their hands to engage them. We want to get media in their hands in a different way so they can get out and explore."

So, the Forestry Division partnered with the North Lakeland Discovery Center in Manitowish Waters and contracted with Code Mill Technologies to develop a trail map application for the Apple platform.

"It's really a basic app. It's self-contained. You don't need to be connected by cell phone," Prichard says. Users can find 13 Northern Highland trails with

the app. "These are the designated high profile trails. We call them the gems of the Northern Highland."

When you first launch the application, you'll see all the featured trails and where they are located. For more details, click on an individual trail. You'll get a description that includes unique features, and information about whether pets are allowed, if the trail has a special use (such as skiing), and the degree of difficulty it offers users (easy, moderate, difficult).

With another click, you can pull up a more detailed map of the trail.

The trail map app was launched around Memorial Day 2011. Within just a few months, 700 users had downloaded it — users from nearby Boulder Junction to France!

Prichard expects that number to continue to grow as more of the two million people who visit the state forest become aware of the application. The Discovery Center markets and advertises the app which also includes the center's Statehouse Lake Trail.

The app is available for free at discoverycenter.net/nh-al-trail-iphone-app.html on the Discovery Center's Website.

In addition to making information on the forest's trails more readily available electronically, the trail map app also has the potential to save the state money in printing costs.

The app cost about \$2,000 to develop, Prichard says. Creating content for an application is normally the biggest cost. In this case, the content was readily available through existing Northern Highland-American Legion maps.

"We gave them our trail map booklet and said 'map it.'"

Now, for every person who accesses a map electronically, the need for printed hard copy trail brochures decreases by one. Prichard estimates that 3,000 downloads is the break-even point and "anything after that figure saves the citizens and the department money when compared to hard copy printing costs."

But don't worry: Trail maps are still available at no cost at DNR Service Centers, on the DNR Website or at Northern Highland-American Legion ranger stations.

The future could bring even more applications to help visitors to the forest. Visitors have asked about the possibility of having an app for campgrounds, or an app to help them navigate rivers in the forest. ❧

Barbara Janesh works in DNR's Northeast Region.

A man in a grey shirt and blue pants is working in a factory. He is standing next to large rolls of metal. In the background, there are various pieces of machinery and equipment. The scene is brightly lit, likely from large windows.

Volunteering to clean up?

Who would do that?

**Here's
your
answer.**

Andrew Savagian

When most people think about the Department of Natural Resources and volunteers, their thoughts gravitate to citizens helping natural resource staff in the field — pulling garlic mustard in state parks, banding waterfowl in state natural areas or maybe volunteering with agency staff in the Northwoods on wolf howling surveys.

Rarely, if ever, do they think of volunteers when it comes to cleaning up contaminated properties.



Skana Aluminum continues a long history of aluminum manufacturing in North America and the Wisconsin Lakeshore. This history extends back to the 1900s with Aluminum Goods Manufacturing Company, which established the "MIRRO" cookware product line in 1918. In 1983 the company was sold to Newell/Rubbermaid and today, lives on as Skana Aluminum.

TRISH OSSMANN



The revitalized company places an emphasis on producing aluminum coil and blanks. Incorporated in 2009, Skana's objective was to "purchase, rehabilitate and operate the shuttered rolling mill" bringing it back to life.

TRISH OSSMANN

Tom Testwuide would agree. Born and raised in Sheboygan, Testwuide ran a malting business for 30 years before being approached about revitalizing the old Mirro aluminum facility in Manitowoc. The facility had closed down and the company had gone bankrupt, leaving a big hole in the community.

Like most people, Testwuide wasn't thinking about the Department of Natural Resources and volunteering when he pieced together his business plan to turn the Mirro plant around. One meeting with Annette Weissbach, however, helped change that.

Weissbach works as a hydrogeologist for the DNR's Remediation and Redevelopment Program. The RR Program encourages communities and businesses to voluntarily clean up contaminated properties, called "brownfields," as a way to not only protect the environment but to also reinvigorate local economies.

Testwuide says Weissbach gave him a vision beyond a simple environmental assessment of the land.



On March 15, 2012 Skana Aluminum became the 104th recipient of the DNR's Voluntary Party Certificate of Completion for environmental work done at its Manitowoc property.

TRISH OSSMANN



Skana CEO Tom Testwuide receives the VPLE Certificate of Completion from DNR Secretary Cathy Stepp.

TRISH OSSMANN

VPLE provides an exemption from future environmental liability so long as an individual, business or government conducts a proper cleanup under state law.

Once the party completes the cleanup with DNR oversight, they receive a Certificate of Completion, which not only helps the current owner but can also be used by any future owners of the land.

"It's an excellent tool for private parties looking for that DNR stamp-of-approval," said Weissbach. "In many cases, the certificate can make the deal for developers or businesses."

Bruce Keyes echoes that sentiment. A brownfields attorney with Foley and Lardner law offices in Milwaukee, Keyes has worked on numerous transactions involving contaminated properties, and currently serves on the DNR's Brownfields Study Group, a statewide advisory task force.

"The VPLE provides a level of certainty, and clearly resolves the question of 'What is clean enough?'" Keyes says. "The environmental contamination world is inherently gray, but VPLE makes it black and white. It's not a good fit for every deal,

but when it's a good fit, it's a great fit."

He adds that, in bigger real estate transactions with conservative, risk averse clients, sometimes the VPLE provides the perfect answer.

"If we're the buyer — we want VPLE," adds Keyes.


Apparently so do a lot of other individuals. Since 1995, when the Department of Natural Resources issued the first Certificate of Completion, 117 other public or private parties have received the certificate. Even better, another 116 have applied for one and are in the cleanup pipeline.

Testwuide thankfully counts himself among the former group. In 2010, he bought and reopened the former Mirro manufacturing facility as Skana Aluminum. With cleanup approval from the Department of Natural Resources and the Certificate of Completion in hand, Testwuide today employs 120 people, with about half of those workers coming from the previous defunct facility. A big reason for that success, he says, is due to his partnership with the Department of Natural Resources.

"I gained a lot of confidence in what the Department of Natural Resources had to offer," said Testwuide. "We trusted [Weissbach's] judgment —and this is before I put any money into the operation. It helped me know how much the cost of the investigation and cleanup would be, so I could budget for it, and [in the end] it helped to know we had a clean piece of property."

So what would he say to anyone interested in purchasing a contaminated property? Testwuide says he'd be happy to volunteer again — to talk, to encourage. Business owner to business owner.

"You should consider the Department of Natural Resources as a consulting organization," Testwuide contends. "Remediation is often not cheap, but if you play it right, if you work with them versus being adversarial, they'll give you a reasonable timetable and you can get things done."

"This is the way business and government work together, not the way they talk about it on TV." 

Andrew Savagian is the DNR's public affairs manager for the South Central Region and the Air, Waste and RR Division.

Editor's Note: To view a video of Skana Aluminum and the North Barstow successes, visit the DNR's Website at dnr.wi.gov/topic/Brownfields/

SAMPLES OF VOLUNTARY CLEANUP SUCCESSSES

Tom Testwuide and Skana Aluminum are far from alone in singing the praises of the DNR's voluntary cleanup efforts — to date 117 parties have received a VPLE Certificate of Completion, with another 116 in line. A few of the brightest and best are listed below.



Stadium Business Park, West Milwaukee

A history of foundry production pre-dating World War II casts a long shadow on this southeast Wisconsin brownfield. After the owner, Ampco Metals, declared bankruptcy in 2003, the site became an unwanted eyesore for the neighborhood. Thanks to the VPLE and state and federal funding assistance, private developers took on the property, cleaned it up, and today the site is home to 10 light industrial businesses employing more than 450 people.



Plexus World Headquarters, Neenah

Working with the Plexus Corporation and the city of Neenah, Department of Natural Resources provided VPLE and funding assistance to help redevelop an old downtown paper mill into the corporation's new world headquarters, creating and retaining more than 370 jobs.



AxleTech International, Oshkosh

This axle and suspension manufacturing firm purchased a 600,000-square-foot facility located along the Fox River in Oshkosh, utilized the VPLE and became the 100th voluntary cleanup success story for the state in 2011.



We Energies, Glendale

Thanks to the VPLE, We Energies partnered with the Department of Natural Resources to pull 10 leaking underground storage tanks, remove contaminated soil and demolish a hazardous waste storage facility. Today, the site houses one of We Energies' service centers.



North Barstow (Phoenix Park) Redevelopment, Eau Claire

Once an old gas plant, this 100-year-old brownfield is now buzzing with activity, including the Royal Credit Union and other businesses employing more than 250 people, a portion of the Chippewa Valley Bike Trail and an 11,000-square-foot park pavilion that hosts the Eau Claire farmers' market.



Charter Films, Superior

The VPLE was key in the cleanup of this older industrial site in Superior, proving that the VPLE works in both rural and urban communities. Old PCB-containing transformers and leaking underground storage tanks were removed, which allowed Charter Films to add new jobs and complete several expansions.



Trolley Square, Appleton

Yes, even local governments can use the voluntary party exemption, as the city of Appleton did in dealing with this contaminated site, which required significant cleanup after a century of industrial activity. Today, Trolley Square exists where dilapidated Quonset huts once stood, along with a river walk, restaurant, wine store, catering business and a refurbished Birney Streetcar trolley.



Harbor Park, Kenosha

One of the more famous cleanups in Wisconsin, this old American Motors Corporation site covered nearly 70 acres of prime Lake Michigan shoreline, blocking public access and limiting the city's urban renewal. Along with other state and federal assistance, the VPLE helped clear the way for a lakeshore rejuvenation, with museums, trails, housing and a trolley that links to train service for Chicago and Milwaukee.



ASIAN INVASIONS

I read with interest the article about the Asian lady beetles ("Beware beetle juice," August 2011). The author noted that the beetles can be a nuisance. That is an understatement! They are a plague! They stink, they bite, and they can drive one crazy. How could USDA import them to kill aphids when they have no natural enemies here in the United States? Now we are faced with the Japanese beetle. They are defoliating our trees, shrubs, and gardens and they too have no natural enemies. It is really upsetting that we allow the importation of a species into the United States that we cannot control. Both the Asian and Japanese beetles are out of control.

Dennis Erstad
McFarland

EFFECTS OF HIGH DEER NUMBERS

In regards to "Respite for migratory birds" (August 2011), I was pleased to see the information about having areas for our birds. It was with interest I read that the "wood thrush, once a common but now declining forest species," was mentioned. Dr. T. Rooney of the University of Wisconsin-Madison has stated that the loss of wild sarsaparilla (which the deer eats) is needed for the thrush. Could it be with Wisconsin's burgeoning deer population that the deer is impacting the survival of the thrush? Dr. Don Waller of UW-Madison has voiced his concern over the loss of the forest understory because of the

deer population. He states that the blue beaded lily disappears when there are only 12 deer per square mile. Many areas of Wisconsin have many more deer than that, but historically the United States' deer herd was only eight to 10 deer per square mile. In our desire to often equate having a bigger deer herd as a healthy deer herd, are we inviting ecological disaster?

"People have heard of endangered species. They haven't thought that their local woodlot may have only half the species it had 50 years ago," remarks Dr. Waller. He and Dr. Rooney also discovered that in two state parks that did not allow deer hunting, 75 percent of the species had disappeared. Along with deer damaging or destroying plants, Dr. Kirby Stafford, III, an entomologist states, "Reducing deer densities to below 10-12 per square mile has been shown to substantially reduce tick numbers and human Lyme disease."

What the deer eats does indeed impact the health of our woodland understory and the health of many birds and insects and other creatures that need specific plants to survive. As Dr. Gary Alt, biologist, has stated, "This animal decides what will live and die in the forest."

Mary Lou Qualler
Delafield

LYME DISEASE IN DOGS

In your article "Tiny menace" (June 2012), you said "Humans are the only ones to contract the disease." As you know that really is not true at all. Our dogs can all get Lyme disease! I lost one of my dogs to it that was only 3 years old. The vet never found it in time. It spread to her kidneys, liver and brain. It was very hard to see her suffer with the disease. Just wanted to send

you a note. People should also be aware for their dogs!

Nancy Arndt
Tigerton



TIMOTHY SWEET

Thanks to you and other readers who contacted us about this issue. Our intent was to point out that Lyme disease causes little to no pathology in wild mammals which are reservoirs of the disease. You are absolutely right that dogs can become infected as well. Veterinarians commonly vaccinate against Lyme disease and frequently treat our canine companions with antibiotics due to infection. Lyme disease symptoms in dogs include lameness (oftentimes alternating limbs), swelling and pain in the joints, fever, weakness, lethargy, loss of appetite and weight loss. More rarely, kidney and cardiac problems can be fatal. Symptoms usually don't appear for two to five weeks after being bitten. As always, consult with your veterinarian on changes in behavior or noted symptoms for proper diagnosis and treatment as well as for proactive risk assessment consultations and prevention.



SWARM OF BEES

This swarm of honey bees spent several days in our yard a couple weeks ago. It was interesting to see how the shape of the swarm changed from morning to evening. We were amazed at how close we could get to them.

Joe Jablonski
Trempealeau

STRAIGHT LAKE - ONE READER FOUND IT, ANOTHER DIDN'T

Thank you for the story on Straight Lake State Park in your April 2012 issue. When friends from Amery suggested an Easter day outing, I thought the park sounded like the perfect destination. Because of the unusually warm spring, we found May flowers in profusion — at least four different kinds — and we spent a pleasant afternoon exploring a few of the trails and enjoying the peace and quiet of little Rainbow Lake. The park is indeed a "rare gem," just as your story promised. We'll be back!

Sheila Wistad Fugina
New Richmond

Your article in the April issue about Wisconsin's newest state park — Straight Lake State Park in Polk County — inspired us to travel there for a spring hike. Unfortunately, we were not able to find the park, despite having a park symbol on the Wisconsin map and the very small print map you provided in the article as guides. We looked for a sign, any sign, to let us know we were at least close to the park but found none — not even the large wooden sign you included

COMMENT ON A STORY?

Send your letters to: Readers Write, WNR magazine, P.O. Box 7921, Madison, WI 53707. Or email letters to dnrmagazine@wisconsin.gov. Limit letters to 250 words and include your name and the community from which you are writing.

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.

in a photo in your story. Where is that big sign? Almost always when we visit Wisconsin state parks, we feel welcomed and guided by the signs. We came away from this adventure feeling like this newest state park, known for its solitude, wanted to keep it that way. I guess I have to say this — it felt distinctly like local residents, familiar with the terrain, would feel fine about hiking in the park. Travelers from out-state? Not so much.

JoAnne Katzmarek
Washburn

Straight Lake State Park is still under limited development, including additional signage, but the park (located in northeastern Polk County near Luck) can be accessed from STH 35 (north or south). At the intersection of STH 35 and 48 just north of Luck, turn east and travel approximately four miles. Turn north on 120th Street and go one mile to the park's entrance.

KUDOS FOR APRIL ISSUE

Another great spring issue (April 2012)! Liked all the activities to go to, the information on burns and the "walleyes!" Also liked the fact that you still have stream habitat improvement on the Evergreen River in Langlade County that my White Lake conservation class started in 1956 with Mr. Ralph Jones of the Department of Natural Resources. The stream feeds cool water to the Wolf River below and helps the entire Wolf River system. Enjoyed all the great information on Wisconsin Fishing (special insert), it gets better each year!! Great magazine!

Edward C. Mueller
South Milwaukee

FEWER BIRD SIGHTINGS

Jon [Kircher], saw your note in [Readers Write, October 2011]. We too have way too many Coopers hawks. However, our jays have only been cut in half and robins have disappeared. I blame the chemicals people are putting on their lawn and West Nile virus. Too much poison and pesticides. We have very few insects and so there isn't any food for our feathered friends. This is the first year I can remember that we didn't have paper wasps

or yellow jackets. This year there wasn't a bird migration — a few swallows, zero night hawks where there used to be thousands, a few martins, no flocking birds like black birds, starlings and red-winged blackbirds. The big bad crow is so rare you are shocked to see one. Here in the Chicago area many birds are killed by towers, wires and tall buildings, but this year we just do not see anything. Most of my hunting days are behind me, but friends always remember to throw venison and ducks my way. I grew up loving nature and birds and I personally collect old wooden decoys. I miss the marshes and seeing the ducks and this year it is supposed to be the best in 20 years. They claim because of the extremely wet spring, predators couldn't find the nests. As for hawks here in our area, everything is protected, and between the hawks, the feral cats, towers and the poisons, our birds hardly have a chance any longer. Maybe Wisconsin Natural Resources can come up with a plan.

John M. Freimuth
Palos Heights, Ill.

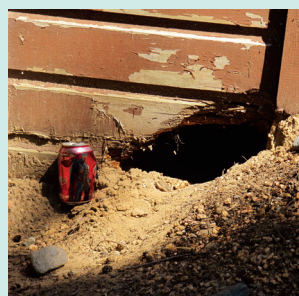
CREDIT FOR TINS GOES TO ROCKY CAFFARELLA

In your December 2011 (Readers Write) magazine there was a story about the intersection signs (TINS) in Vilas County, Wisconsin. It was a very good article and explained the TINS system. I would like to give credit where credit is due. Rocky Caffarella (vice-president of the Snowmobile Alliance and trail boss for the Cross Country Cruisers snowmobile club of Arbor Vitae) came up with the idea of doing this in our area. He initiated this system along with the Cross Country Cruiser snowmobile club and then presented it to the Vilas County Snowmobile Alliance. It took three years to get everyone on board. The Vilas County Alliance Safety Committee was formed after a fatal accident on our trails. They adopted and are promoting the TINS system. The system has worked very well for snowmobilers and others. I hope this clears up a few things and gives credit where credit is due.

Diane Shay
Arbor Vitae

WHAT DUG THIS HOLE?

We took this photo this past



JT MARTIN

summer at our property in Forest County. There was a large hole going under a small storage building/out-building. The soda can is for size reference. We are curious as to what animal might be burrowing there. Can you help us identify what animal digs a hole like this? We enjoy your magazine!

Paula Martin
Town of Lincoln

A hole that size could have been made by a variety of wildlife, including badger, coyote, fox, skunk or woodchuck. Since at least one of these animals could be a problem in close proximity to living quarters, it's a good idea to check with a DNR Service Center, or go to the DNR's Website (dnr.wi.gov, search "wildlife damage") where you'll find ways to reduce wildlife-human conflict and avoid wildlife damage.

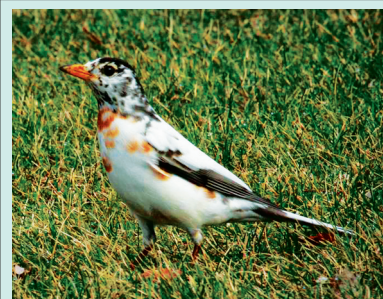


BLACK BEARS THRIVING

Last week I was up at our family's cabin in Lakewood, Wis., and recovered several great photos of a black bear and her three cubs. The image was taken from my trail camera on April 8. I had one other photo of a bear that decided it did not like the camera, resulting in several close-ups and the camera hanging from the tree. Our family members all appreciate the outdoors and our grandfather who purchased the land in 1955 was a steward of conservation. I remember

asking him as a young boy if he ever sees black bear up north. He said only once did he ever see a bear in the woods. He has since passed away and would be proud to know that the black bear and turkey are thriving on the land he purchased some 54 years ago.

Peter Valitchka
Stevens Point



LEUCISTIC ROBIN

Attached is a photo of a partial albino robin. The photo was taken in my yard on March 19. In my research I found that albinism in the American robin occurs one in 30,000, not real rare but the first I've seen in my 70 years.

David Andre
Brillion

The robin is actually partially leucistic or piebald rather than albino because the eyes and legs are the normal color. While still uncommon, leucism is more common than albinism and occurs throughout the animal kingdom.

DISCOURAGED BY CHEMTRAILS

Being a former Wisconsinite, I enjoy reading your bimonthly magazine. I particularly liked your picture from Mill Bluff ("Wisconsin, naturally," February 2012) because it reminded me of the days when I would fly-fish in the back parts of Wisconsin; however, even in the more remote areas of Wisconsin it seems you can't avoid the chemtrails! The light "fluffy white cloud" pattern shown at the top of the photo comes from chemicals put into the atmosphere and is not a natural cloud formation. We are deluged with chemtrails in northern Florida and it's discouraging to see that even more rural areas can't be spared.

Leroy Gebhart
Gainesville, Fla.

Comforts

Cricket talk.

Anita Carpenter

Cricket is omnivores and scavengers feeding on organic materials, as well as decaying plant material, fungi and seedling plants.



WILL COOK

Enjoy the cricket talk now. Love-lorn male field crickets began chirping on warm July nights. Theirs was just one of many voices in the insect chorus. But when the cool fall evenings arrive, only the slow deliberate chirps of field crickets will remain to fill the stillness.

Cricket are more often heard than seen. Each male selects a favorite secretive spot: in the lawn, along the sidewalk, in a stone wall crack, within a woodpile, under a porch or inside a garage. There, he defends his territory, passionately and incessantly, chirping night after night, waiting for a female cricket to arrive.

Cricket are relatives of grasshoppers, locusts and katydids — all belonging to the insect order Orthoptera. Taxonomically separated from the others, crickets belong to their own family, the Gryllidae, and field crickets have their own subfamily — the Gryllinae.

The familiar chirper is the northern field cricket, *Gryllus pennsylvanicus*. If one of these field crickets should jump into your path, the ½- to ¾-inch black insect with

the squarish head and thorax would be instantly recognized. Each cricket has two long tapering antennae, which are longer than its body. The many-segmented antennae are constantly in motion, touching and sensing. Two spine-like projections extend up at a 30-degree angle from the field cricket's abdomen. These enlarged cerci give the insect an armored appearance.

Of the three pairs of black legs, field crickets' hind legs are the largest and give the insect the spring in its leap. Field crickets are not graceful leapers and often land clumsily and off balance, sometimes ending with a not-so-perfect summersault. Crickets prefer to scramble along the ground. Adapted to a terrestrial existence, their hind legs are covered with spines that enable them to crawl and squeeze around grass

stems. Crickets are not climbers and seldom, if ever, grasp grass blades as grasshoppers do.

Cricket wings are unique. The pair of blackish, hardened wings snugly covers the upper three-quarters of the abdomen much like a lid fits on an old-fashioned hat box. The base of the right wing overlays the left wing base. Insects typically have two pairs of wings. In field crickets, these stiff wings cover and conceal the vestiges of the second wing pair. In grasshoppers, locust and katydids, the second wing pair is well-developed and used for flight. Crickets can't fly.

Cricket wings give crickets their "voices." Crickets don't sing like birds do but produce a chirping sound by rubbing their wings together, a behavior known as stridulation. Only the wings of male field crickets are modified to produce sound. A thickened band covered with transverse ridges, called the file, runs horizontally across

the base of the right wing. The scraper is a sharp edge located on the upper inside edge of the left wing.

When "singing," the cricket raises its wings to a 45-degree angle. The wings resonate, moving back and forth. With each closing motion, the scraper slides across the file on the underside of the upper wing, generating a high-pitched pulse lasting about 1/100 of a second. Three pulses in quick succession make up one chirp. The repetition of chirps comprises the cricket song, which is musical and can be assigned a pitch. Chirp rate is dependent on temperature. A field cricket song influenced by August's heat is much faster than one produced in late September's coolness.

Each cricket species produces its own song, which may differ in pitch, pulse rate and/or varying intervals between chirps. Female crickets can differentiate from among the various songs and select the appropriate male.

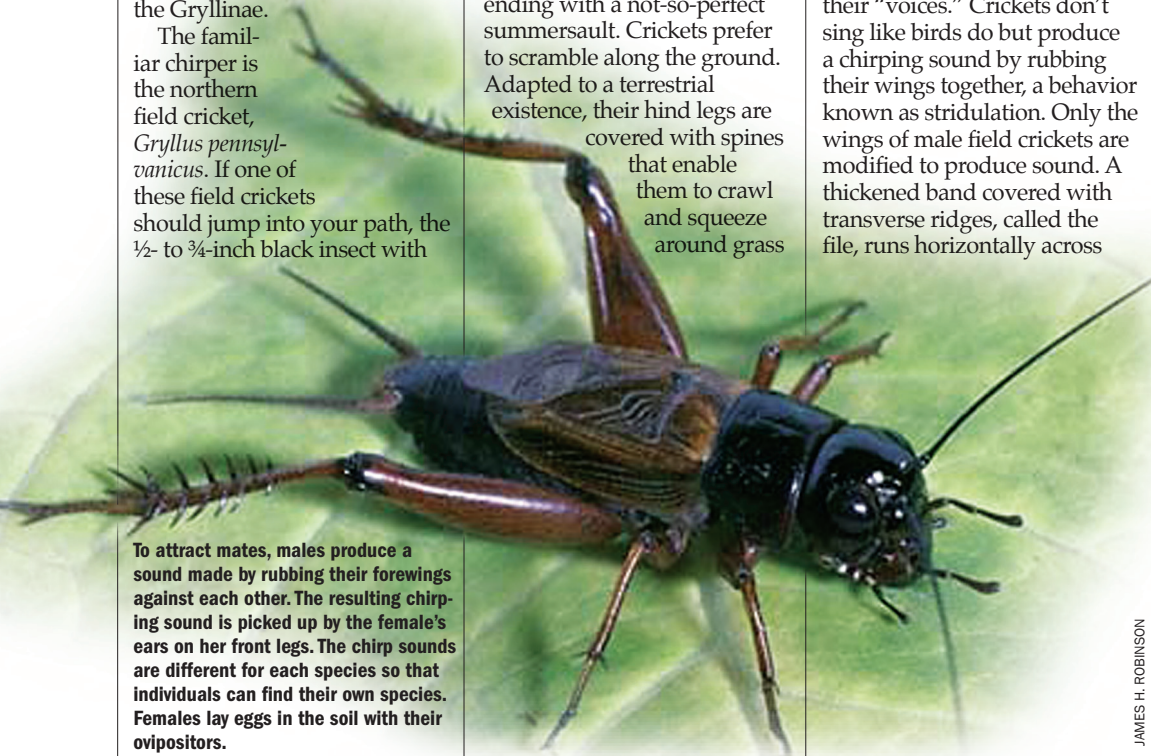
It would do little good for field crickets to spend so much time "singing" if other crickets couldn't hear it. Crickets can hear but not with ear drums located on their heads. Crickets hear with their legs. The tympanum is visible as a small white oval located on the tibia of each front leg.

Females respond to chirping and approach males. Tactile antennae touch. The amorous male softens his song, which stimulates courtship and mating.

Female field crickets can easily be identified from males by the presence of a long cylindrical ovipositor which extends 5/8 of an inch (almost equal to her full body length) beyond her abdomen. She uses her ovipositor to deposit eggs in soil. The eggs overwinter and hatch into nymphal crickets the following spring. Dining on plants, the nymphs grow and molt three to four times, reaching adulthood in late July. Then the cricket serenade begins.

As one of the few sounds of late summer and early autumn, cricket music surrounds us but it quickly fades from our consciousness. Tune into the cricket talk and enjoy the soon-to-be-silent autumn serenade.

To attract mates, males produce a sound made by rubbing their forewings against each other. The resulting chirping sound is picked up by the female's ears on her front legs. The chirp sounds are different for each species so that individuals can find their own species. Females lay eggs in the soil with their ovipositors.



JAMES H. ROBINSON

Anita Carpenter enjoys the cricket serenade around her home in Oshkosh.

Traveler

Make a date with a river.

Amanda Laurenzi

More than 3,000 individual, organizational and business members preserve and protect our rivers through the River Alliance of Wisconsin. Maintaining our rivers is good for the environment and fun. Take some time to head out on the water and enjoy the last hurrah of summer with the River Alliance's Make a Date With a River events.



See Milwaukee from an unusual perspective during the Milky Moonlight event.

PHOTO SUBMITTED BY RIVER ALLIANCE OF WISCONSIN

Paddling is a popular activity, but have you ever done it bathed in moonlit serenity? Milwaukee River Keeper co-hosts **Milky Moonlight in Milwaukee** on August 2 as an opportunity for night owls to venture out on Lake Michigan and back, under the stars. Registration is at 6:15 p.m. and paddling begins at 7 p.m. at the Milwaukee Rowing Club. Cost is \$25 per person. A picnic will take place prior to sunset. When the sky is dark, participants will head out with their boats to experience the city

of Milwaukee under moonlight.

If paddling isn't your forte but you still want to enjoy Wisconsin's beautiful rivers, have no fear — **Tubing into Tomorrow** is just right for those seeking a relaxing afternoon floating down the river on an inner tube. Jake and Kris Barnes, friends of the River Alliance of Wisconsin, are hosting the event on Friday, August 10, starting at 2 p.m. in Amherst. They plan on having others join them in tubing down the Tomorrow River and then heading to the

Amanda Laurenzi is a staff writer for Wisconsin Natural Resources magazine.

nearby Central Waters Brewery for a microbrew. Cost is \$25.

But if you are an extremist looking for more adventure, check out **Flex Your Mussels on the Chip** on Saturday, August 25. Starting at 9 a.m. at Carson Park in Eau Claire, participants will head out on a 12-mile bike ride to Caryville. When the ride is over, Lisie Kitchel, an aquatic ecologist and expert in mussels, will teach "pollywagging" — the sport and science of collecting mussel specimens for identification. Cost is \$25 per person, plus a state trail pass, which can be purchased on site. Information can be found at wisconsinrivers.org/details/16-mussels

Once summer has left and the smell of fresh autumn air and the feel of the crisp breeze wafts over you, remember the last featured event the River Alliance has to offer: **Autumn Hues of the Upper Wisconsin River**. Bring your canoe and paddles on Saturday, October 6, to the Wisconsin River just under the Rainbow Flowage to join the 10-mile journey along the forested shore. The Northwoods Land Trust, which works with private landowners to permanently protect special lands in the north, will join the group. The journey ends at the Eggleston property, one of the lands under Northwoods Land Trust's protection, for participants to learn about land conservation via easements.

For more information about any of these events, please visit wisconsinrivers.org and look



Try tubing on the Tomorrow River.

PHOTO SUBMITTED BY RIVER ALLIANCE OF WISCONSIN

under *Make a Date With a River* for the listed events.

Once you've got your paddling muscles in shape, the River Touring Section (RTS), affiliated with the Wisconsin chapter of the Sierra Club, hosts three eight-day trips for people who want to explore the **Boundary Waters** near the Quetico Provincial Park in Ontario, Canada. Experienced tour guides take crews of nine or fewer to learn the history of the



Autumn looks awesome on the Upper Wisconsin.

PHOTO SUBMITTED BY RIVER ALLIANCE OF WISCONSIN

land, experience wildlife native to those areas and camp in the wilderness with new friends.

Mike McQuilken (253-219-9208; sumcqu@comcast.net) and Scott McQuilken (253-988-4394; lo86blazer@aol.com) will be giving the tour of Quetico's world-class fishing for bass, walleye and northern pike. Campers will experience 20 lakes and take three layover days to photograph and enjoy the wonderful scenery (August 10-18). The cost is \$600.

Join Nancy McDermott (608-238-1421; njmcderm@gmail.com) to explore ancient Ojibwa pictographs, a waterfall, fishing, two base camps, and delicious homemade, lightweight meals (August 17-26). Cost is \$525.

Trip leaders Jane McMillan (815-543-2756; janelmcmillan@sbcglobal.net) and Bill Moore (262-785-9022; environ1@sbcglobal.net) will also be featuring ancient Ojibwa pictographs, waterfalls, fishing, layover camps and history on their trip, plus laser-lit stargazing and Moore's famous fire-baked bannock bread (August 25-September 3). Cost is \$495.

For more information and events, go to wisconsin.sierraclub.org/rts/triplist.htm



Wisconsin, naturally

MUD LAKE BOG STATE NATURAL AREA

Notable:

A soggy, floating mat of sedges, sphagnum moss, peat and specialized bog plants fringes an undisturbed lake fed by alkaline springs. Venturing out onto the trembling raft of vegetation rewards visitors with cranberries, grass pink orchids (in spring) and insectivorous plants such as round-leaved sundew, pitcher plant and bladderwort. Surrounding the mat is a more stable zone containing black spruce, tamarack, royal and cinnamon ferns and bog shrubs including leatherleaf, bog rosemary and Labrador tea. This zone grades into a second-growth northern mesic forest of sugar maple and oak. Imbedded in a larger landscape characterized by drumlins and wetlands, the 30-acre lake lies in a basin marked by a distinct 15-foot elevation drop. White and yellow water lilies and a diversity of submerged pondweeds are rooted in the mucky bottom. A small outlet stream leads to the Little Wolf River one mile to the south. Black terns nest here and waterfowl make extensive use of the natural area during migration.



How to get there:

From the intersection of County Highways C and G in Big Falls (Waupaca County), go west on C about 3 miles, then north on County J 1.2 miles, then west and north on Mud Lake Road 1.9 miles to a parking area east of the road. Walk southeast through the woods and down the slope into



the bog. The bog mat is best developed on the northwest side of the lake. Visit dnr.wi.gov and search "Mud Lake Bog" for information and a map of the site.

