



## **Wisconsin natural resources. Vol. 16, No. 4 August 1992**

Madison, Wisconsin: Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources,  
August 1992

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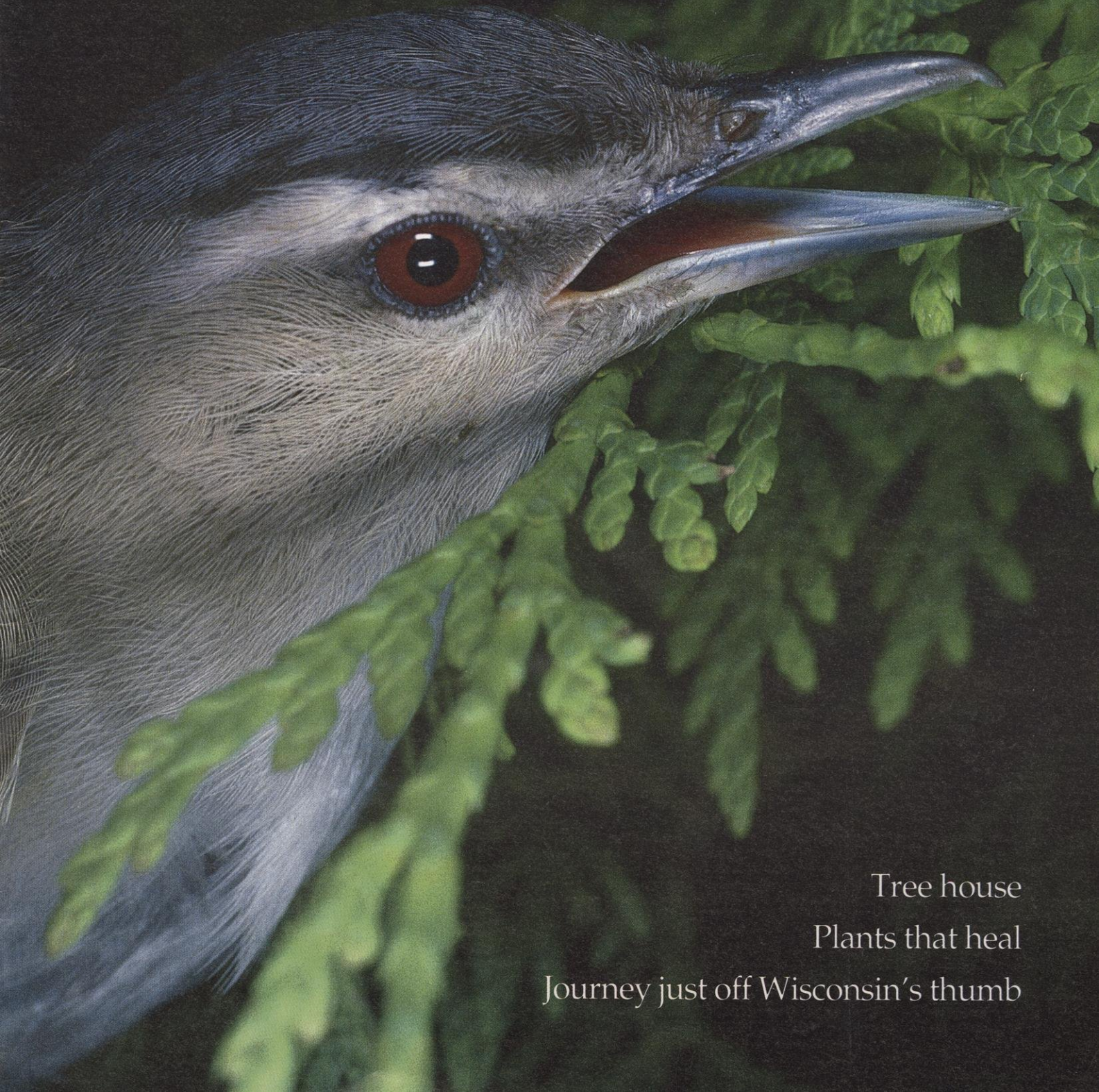
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# WISCONSIN

## NATURAL RESOURCES

August 1992 \$3.00 Volume 16, Number 4



Tree house  
Plants that heal  
Journey just off Wisconsin's thumb





# That's a wrap

How garden spiders keep prey caught up in their work.

Anita Carpenter

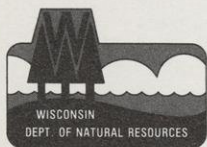
Colorful August fields of white asters, yellow goldenrods and lavender milkweed beckon us to explore and discover. Here, bright orange monarch butterflies glide lazily from blossom to blossom, drinking sweet nectar. High-jumping bush katydids sail awkwardly to their next loafing spot. Well-camouflaged ambush bugs hide in the dense blossoms waiting for an unsuspecting victim to happen by. Large orb-weaving spiders suspend two-foot square webs between the taller plants, making a walk through the fields challenging. When your path is blocked, pause and take a closer look at the fascinating spiders and their intricate webs.

The most common spider you are likely to encounter is poised upside down in the center of its web. As a sedentary predator, the black and yellow garden spider (*Argiope aurantia*) patiently waits hours at a time for a meal to jump or fly into its sticky snare.

Its orb web is an intricate engineering feat of dense spirals attached to many supporting rays radiating from the center. Woven into the web's center is a zigzag swath of silk called a stabilimentum. Its function is unknown,

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*Wisconsin Natural Resources* magazine (USPS #34625000) is published bimonthly in February, April, June, August, October and December by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, 101 S. Webster St., Madison, WI 53702. The magazine is sustained through paid subscriptions. No tax money or license fees are used. **Subscription rates** are: \$6.97 for one year, \$11.97 for two years, \$15.97 for three years. Second class 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. Toll-free subscription inquiries will be answered at 1-800-678-9472.

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# WISCONSIN NATURAL RESOURCES

August 1992

Volume 16, Number 4



PAUL VANDERBILT, COURTESY OF THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF WISCONSIN

## 4

### JOURNEY JUST OFF WISCONSIN'S THUMB

*Timothy Sweet*

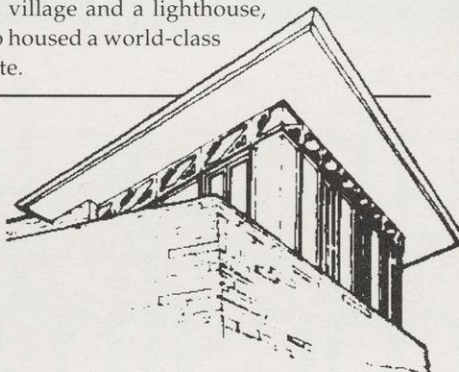
Once home to a fishing village and a lighthouse, isolated Rock Island also housed a world-class library and a grand estate.

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DON BLEGEN, SPRING VALLEY, WIS.

BACK COVER: Lake Superior agates DON BLEGEN, SPRING VALLEY, WIS.





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ROCK ISLAND'S SOUTH END. DNR BUREAU OF PARKS AND RECREATION

# Journey just off Wisconsin's thumb



Rock Island State Park offers rustic camping, quiet nature walks, a historic landmark and no cars. This isolated dot off the Door Peninsula housed a grand estate and a grander library of its inventive Icelandic owner.

*Timothy Sweet*



he ferry docks after a 10 minute ride from the northeast tip of Washington Island to the southwest corner of the island.

Visitors to Rock Island State Park are greeted by a magnificent sight — a striking limestone boathouse and great hall firmly anchored to the bedrock of Lake Michigan seven feet below. It's the grandest building on a grand es-

tate built in the late 1920s by Chester Hjortur Thordarson, an Icelander who came to America as a young boy and became a wealthy inventor in the budding field of electricity.

Thordarson's fame as an innovative thinker came in 1904 at the World's Fair in St. Louis. Electricity was still largely regarded as a novelty of city life. Thordarson designed and displayed a huge million-volt transformer. That electrical marvel and

another he fashioned in 1915 paved the way for widespread transmission of electricity. The ingenious Chicago businessman prospered and became quite affluent, holding more than 100 patents for electrical inventions including long-distance radio equipment, automobile ignition coils and early electric precipitators to trap pollutants from smokestacks.

In 1910, Thordarson purchased most of the 905-acre Rock Island for



\$5,735. He likely learned of the property through his contacts with the strong Icelandic community on nearby Washington Island. Thus began his 35-year reign as developer and steward of this beautiful gem — a shining link in the Grand Traverse chain of islands connecting Wisconsin to the Upper Peninsula of Michigan.

He started building a home by restoring a frame house near a deserted fishing village on Rock Island's eastern edge. Soon plans for a grander estate brewed. Thordarson concentrated on 30 acres of cleared land along Rock Island's southwestern shore. There he planted fruit trees, dabbled with gardens of exotic plantings (which handsomely fed the resident deer and rabbits despite a 30-acre enclosure of stone and fencing), and built several rustic log and frame buildings.

By the mid-1920s, Thordarson's visions became more grandiose. He brought over masons to construct another series of buildings from the island's namesake — a seemingly inexhaustible supply of limestone. The buildings included a combined boat-

house-great hall (called Viking Hall), a water tower, a pagoda-style pavilion, a stone cottage, a pantry, a water reservoir and a greenhouse with attached caretaker's cabin.

The estate drew its share of famous guests and visitors including Chicago mayor "Big Bill" Thompson, Clarence Darrow and mystery writer Erle Stanley Gardner.

As you might imagine, work on the island far from supplies was labor-intensive. It's especially evident in the caretaker's cabin whose walls are built entirely of beach cobblestones.

Apparently, Thordarson had no shortage of time, money or advice when he hired Chicago architect Frederick Dinkelberg to help him design the \$250,000 boathouse-great hall. The massive structure was in keeping with the style of the parliament building in Iceland's capitol, Reykjavik.

Dinkelberg and Thordarson successfully created an architectural wonder that combines beauty with strength. It immediately draws your attention — all of the fine stonework, the graceful arches above the French



PHOTOS OF FURNITURE CARVING DETAILS BY PAUL VANDERBILT, COURTESY OF THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF WISCONSIN

(above) Desk leg on ornate furniture Chester H. Thordarson commissioned. The original library desk and reading chairs were recently purchased by the Department of Natural Resources and returned to their historic setting at Rock Island State Park. Carvings on each piece depict Norse mythology from Thordarson's native Iceland. (below) The outdoor pavilion was built from local beach stones and topped with a sloping red-tiled roof.



TIMOTHY SWEET





doors, and marvelous use of light and space. Hundreds of swallows fly in and out of the boathouse entrances. The massive red tile roof glows set against the summer sky, and warm, orange reflections of the sun setting through 18-foot windows etch in the minds of island visitors.

Inside, the great hall is equally impressive. A large room with a beamed ceiling has a huge fireplace at the east end. Above the fireplace is a balcony. Magnificent views of Washington Island, Green Bay and other island scenery can be brought inside by opening the nine large French doors that surround three sides of the ex-

Wisconsin purchased the Thordarson library for \$300,000. Today the collection is worth more than a million dollars and was the foundation of the university's rare books collection.

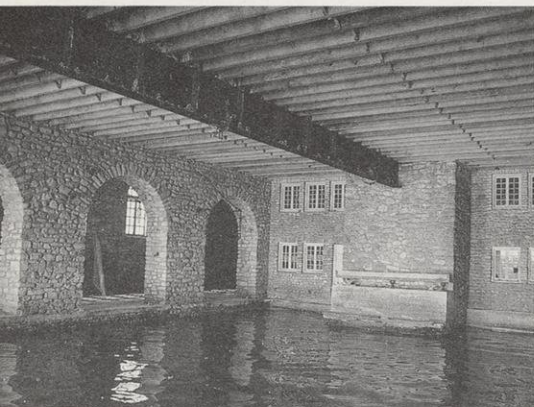
Halldor Einarsson, a woodcarver from Iceland, was commissioned to create furniture to complement the grand space and the impressive library. It took the craftsman several years to complete and carve 26 ornate pieces in oak — two huge tables with 20 chairs, a desk and chair set, a settee and a dictionary stand. The back panel of each chair is carved with distinct, elaborate murals depicting scenes from Norse mythology.

In addition to the history it depicts, the furniture has an interesting history of its own. After Thordarson died, it remained in Viking Hall for 16 years. As the State very slowly negotiated with the Thordarson family to purchase the island and maintain it as a park, the family sold the furniture to a Milwaukee businessman. He used

it in a rec room for several years and donated it to The Clearing, an adult education center/retreat, in Ellison Bay about six years ago. The Department of Natural Resources purchased the pieces last year to return them to this historical setting. Future plans include refinishing and restoring each piece of furniture with a grant from the National Park Service historic preservation program. State park managers will also look for an expert in Icelandic myths to interpret the scenes and stories captured in the intricate carvings.

Iceland is a long way from Wisconsin's Rock Island State Park. But people who make the effort to travel to this out-of-the-way oasis just a wet hop off the "thumb" of Wisconsin are sure to enjoy the island's secluded splendor, its isolation and its historic connection to the past. □

*Timothy Sweet writes, travels and teaches from his home base in Clintonville, Wis.*



TIMOTHY SWEET

Swallows sweep through the massive boat house.

pansive room. Small wonder the site was listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

This room was home to Thordarson's library that contained 11,000 volumes by 1941. Even as a young man earning four dollars a week, he set aside a fourth of his income to purchase books. His collection focused on science, nature and his Icelandic roots. Some volumes were considered valuable, rare books. Within a year of his death in 1945, the University of

Chester H. Thordarson (center with spectacles behind the white pitcher) entertains in his library in 1942. Guests posed inside the massive fireplace.



STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF WISCONSIN





(top) Outside the boat house/great hall.  
 (far left) The water tower.  
 (above) View from the balcony in the great hall.  
 (left) Another detail from the furniture carved by  
 craftsman Halldor Einarsson.

COLOR PHOTOS THIS PAGE BY TIMOTHY SWEET





## You can get there from here

*It's not that Rock Island State Park is an uncommon destination, rather, it's a very deliberate destination. Most visitors take either of two passenger ferries from Gills Rock or the car ferry from Northport. All three carry passengers from Door County to Detroit Harbor on Washington Island. Then travelers drive or bike across the island to Jackson Harbor for the 10-minute shuttle to Rock Island. The Karfi ferries passengers, bikes and camping equipment, but no cars. Part of the charm of Rock Island is that no cars or trucks except those used to maintain the park are permitted.*

*The ferry docks next to the Thordarson estate at the southwest corner of the 905-acre island. Private boats can also moor nearby.*

*One can walk around the island in about three hours, but it's worth spending the day or planning a camping trip. You can stroll to the Potawatomi Lighthouse on a high bluff at the north end of the island in about half an hour. It's the oldest lighthouse in Wisconsin. A stairway descends along limestone cliffs to the shore.*

*Slap on a little more bug dope and continue your tour. A stone water tower and remnants of the abandoned fishing village nestle near the southeast end of the isle. The small fishing village grew to 200 residents between 1840 and 1890 when the last families left for newer homes on Washington Island. At one time, the whitefish run was so thick off these waters that the silvery fish used to be scooped in with big dip nets!*

*Sand dunes, an old cemetery and rocky shores are fun to stroll and explore. Archaeological digs show that the Potawatomi, Huron, Petum, Ottawa and Chippewa Indians occupied the island dating back 2,500 years.*

*The park offers hiking trails, a nature trail, picnic and primitive campsites that are open from May 1 through December 1. If you want to stay overnight, plan your visit — family and group campsites can be reserved by mail for the period May 1- September 30. Call the ferry lines, too. The Washington Island Ferry Line, Inc. can only accommodate 18-22 cars on each trip from the Northport Pier to Washington Island. The Karfi only holds 49 passengers from Washington Island to Rock Island. Ferry schedules vary by season and the Rock Island ferry only runs between May 22 and October 12. Contacts: Rock Island State Park, (414) 847-2235; Washington Island Ferry Line, (414) 847-2546; Island Clipper Ferry (414) 854-2972; Rock Island Ferry, (414) 847-2252.*







# The Wright touch at Mirror Lake

Citizens have restored an architectural jewel beyond its original beauty. You can stay in this simple, elegant cottage that lay hidden in the woods of a state park for 25 years.

COURTESY OF SETH PETERSON COTTAGE CONSERVANCY

*Kristin Visser*

**M**irror Lake State Park is a natural gem not far off the beaten path of busy I-90/94 near Wisconsin Dells. For 25 years, the park harbored a hidden cultural treasure — a cottage that concerned citizens have polished up and brought back to life. The Seth Peterson Cottage is unique. It's the only Frank Lloyd Wright-designed home one can rent. It's also the only overnight cabin for non-disabled visitors in a state park.

One of the last buildings designed

by Frank Lloyd Wright, the 1958 Seth Peterson Cottage is an open, one-bedroom home designed around a central stone fireplace. Built of pine, glass and sandstone from a nearby quarry, this modest 880-square-foot cottage sits on a dramatic wooded hillside 60 feet above Mirror Lake.

Part of its elegance is a clean, modern-looking design that's based on a concept Wright developed in the 1930s. The cottage contains only a single, small bedroom and an equally small kitchen. Yet large windows on

the three exterior walls of the living-dining area give the home a feeling of spaciousness that belies its small size. The flagstone floor extends outside to form a terrace bounded by low sandstone walls, visually merging the indoor living area with the out-of-doors.

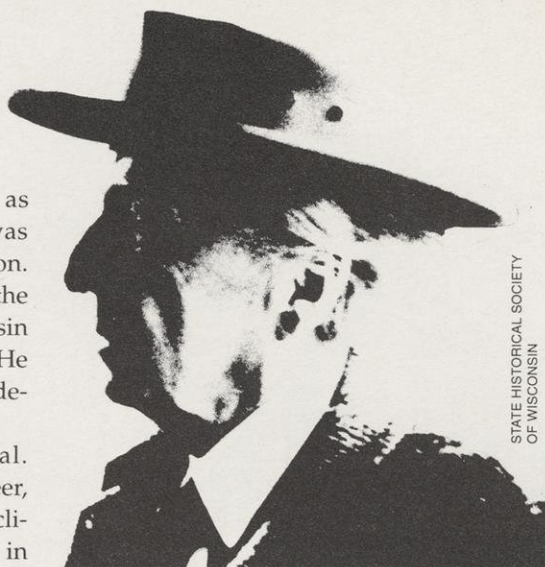
Seth Peterson was one of the first computer programmers for the State of Wisconsin. As a boy growing up in Black Earth, 20 miles from Wright's residence and studio in Spring Green, Peterson became fascinated with Wright's architecture. Peterson applied



## SETH PETERSON COTTAGE

to join the Taliesin Fellowship, as Wright's group of apprentices was known, but was denied admission. Several years later, after a stint in the Army, Peterson returned to Wisconsin and began working in Madison. He then asked the master architect to design him a home in the woods.

His request was not unusual. Wright had, in his 70-plus-year career, designed a number of homes for clients of modest means. However, in the late 1950s, Wright was busy with such major commissions as the Wauwatosa Greek Orthodox Church outside Milwaukee, the Marin County Civic Center near San Francisco and the Guggenheim Museum in New York. Consequently, he kept putting Peterson off. Eventually Peterson sent the architect a \$1,500 retainer. Wright was well-known for spending money as quickly as it appeared, and the \$1,500 was soon gone. Having accepted the retainer, Wright was forced to design the home.



STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
OF WISCONSIN

Frank Lloyd Wright never visited the woodland home he designed at Mirror Lake. Owner Peterson died tragically before the cottage was completed.

cide before the cottage was completed.

A second owner finished the cottage, fenced the area around it, and settled in to raising Afghan hounds. In 1966, the state bought the cottage as part of Mirror Lake State Park. The cottage's remote location in the park made it impractical to use for park operations. Eventually, park managers simply boarded up the deteriorating building.

In 1988, a group of local residents, led by members of the Mirror Lake Association, formed the Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy and obtained a 15-year lease from the Department of Natural Resources to restore and operate the cottage as a year-round vacation retreat.

The Conservancy retained Chicago architect John Eifler, who had directed restoration of a number of Wright buildings, to assess the condition of the cottage and develop a restoration plan. Rehabilitation eventually cost nearly \$250,000. The Department of Natural Resources contributed \$50,000, staff assistance and equipment. In a three-year funding campaign, the Conservancy raised the remainder of the money from individual contributors and organizations including the Andy Warhol Foundation, the State Historical Society of Wisconsin and the Jeffris Foundation of Janesville. Other Wisconsin businesses contributed items used in the restoration including windows, plumbing fixtures, part of the heating system, and much of the furniture and cabinetry.

Conservancy volunteers also worked on the project, sanding woodwork, clearing brush from the site, and removing the chain link fence installed by the second owner.

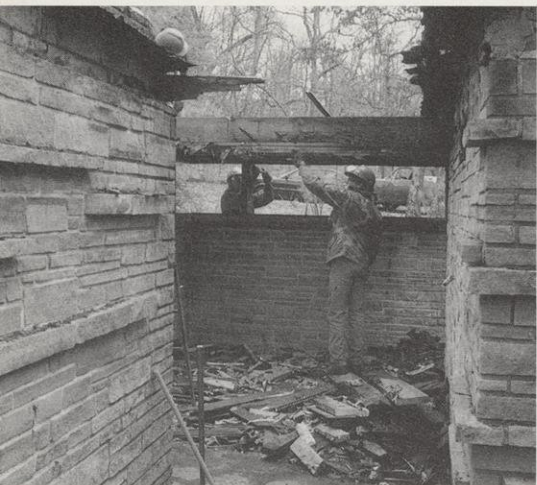
When work began in 1989, the cottage was in serious disrepair. Standing water had destroyed the flat roof over the bedroom and bathroom, damaged part of the slanting living room roof and seeped inside. Water and Wisconsin's changeable weather had joined forces to create freezing and thawing cycles, dripping and corrosion that destroyed the heating, electrical and plumbing systems. Kitchen, bedroom and bathroom cabinets, and other wood fixtures were either missing or too badly damaged to salvage. Much of the glass was broken or missing. Only the sandstone walls, fireplace and stone floor were salvageable.

Wisconsin Conservation Corps crews removed the roof, cleared brush and trees from the site, and constructed a path to Mirror Lake. This opened up views of the water and provided access to a small pier.

The crews also removed, numbered and stored each floor flagstone, following a detailed floor map. The cottage needed additional gutting. WCC crews removed the old hot air heating ductwork, the furnace and the concrete pad under the floor. Once stripped down, the site had to be protected with plastic sheeting and wood before reconstruction.

Serpentine ribbons of hot water pipes were imbedded in the new concrete pad. This floor heating system, more common in some parts of the Orient, uses hot water pumped through pipes to warm the floor and radiate gentle heat throughout the building. Wright frequently incorporated the system into his designs after 1936, and he had specified it in the cottage blueprints. The original contractors, believing the in-floor system wouldn't work, substituted a hot air system. (The restoration includes a supplementary hot-air system for extra warmth.)

Restoration continued. Wiring and plumbing systems were replaced. A



BILL MARTINELLI

The secluded cottage lay unused and weather-beaten for more than 22 years. Wisconsin Conservation Corps crews removed the rotted roof in preparation for restoration.

Peterson intended to live in the cottage and commute to his Madison workplace. He also planned to marry. However, partway through construction he began having financial problems, including continuing the financing for the \$26,000 home. In addition, rumor has it that his bride-to-be jilted him. Whatever the cause, the 24-year-old Peterson committed sui-



new well and septic tank were excavated. The roof was replaced. This time, the flat roof was surfaced with modern rubbery liners and sealants — a vast improvement over the flat roof techniques in Wright's day that were notorious for leaking. The magnificent picture windows were updated with energy-efficient thermopane glass. The stone floor was painstakingly re-laid. In addition, woodwork was refinished or replaced, and new cabinets for kitchen and bathroom were designed using the ruined units as models. Landscaping is continuing throughout the summer and fall.

Wright originally designed furniture for the cottage that was never constructed. Restoration included building the Wright-designed pieces as well as additional furniture fitting the character of the house.

Come and visit the Seth Peterson Cottage, a cozy, classy getaway that blends a master's designs, an owner's dreams and the enduring beauty of Mirror Lake State Park. □

*Kristin Visser is an assistant to the administrator of DNR's Division of Resource Management in Madison and a volunteer with the Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy.*

## Visiting or renting the cottage

Public tours are offered the second Sunday of each month from 2-5 p.m. There is a \$2.00 per person tour fee. Call (608) 254-6051 for more information.

The cottage is available for overnight rental throughout the year. Rates are \$175 per night, minimum two-night stay. A bedroom and a pull-out bed in the living room sleep four. It's completely furnished, including linens and kitchen equipment. Daily rental for conferences and meetings are also accommodated. For information and reservations, contact the Sand County Service Company, 11 West Munroe St., Lake Delton, WI 53940; phone (608) 254-6551.



KRISTIN VISSER



BILL MARTINELLI



BILL MARTINELLI

(top) Better than new. The restored cottage incorporates energy-efficient materials and elements of the original design not built in the original structure.

(left) Conservancy member Bill Martinelli, architect John Eifler and architectural designer Mark Solner review the original plans on-scene.

(right) Hot water pipes imbedded in the floor radiate gentle warmth under foot.

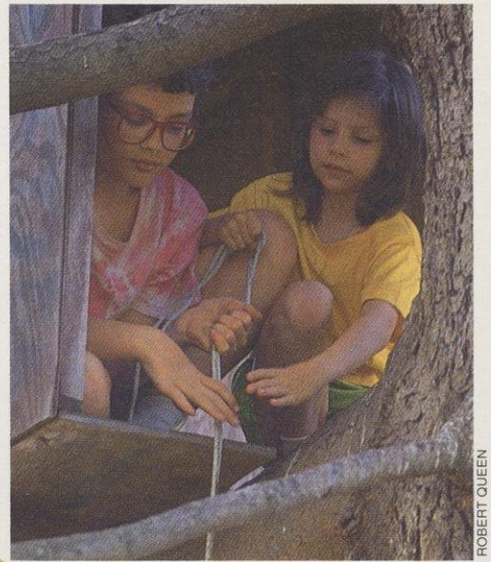


BILL MARTINELLI

(bottom left) Rich Wandschneider, architect and Conservancy board member, grids and marks floor stones that were removed and carefully replaced during renovation.



# TREE HOUSE



ROBERT QUEEN

*Justin Isherwood*

Last summer we built a tree house. It was not my first; it was theirs. It began as all tree houses must: with anger, a slammed door and a kid sitting in a tree an hour later.

We talked, he and I, getting past the anger and came then upon the subject of tree houses. "You think we could?" says he. At that point I was pleased to be included as a co-conspirator in the project.

For a week we scrounged and salvaged every vacant board and nail from the next three square miles of the township. Used boards are necessary to tree houses. So strict is the code, I'd offer, the habit cannot be properly exercised with new boards.

The local lumberyard sells tree house kits. At least that's what they are called in the monthly advertiser. Complete, they say. Nothing else to buy.

The problem with the lumberyard tree house is the tree — it ain't necessary. How can they call it a tree house when it obviously isn't?

What the lumberyard sells is pretty. It's architect-designed, says so on the box. The staircase has a rail, there's a balcony, a nice set of coordinated colors to choose from. The thing never would last in a real tree — too much architecture, which is why the lumberyard tree house is set on poles.

The basic format of a tree house is the bluejay nest. Ain't nothing architectural about it. The chief ingredient is arbitrary, and nothing is more arbitrary than that nest: not mud puddles, summer clouds or potato prices. It's just a bunch of unaligned sticks with no pattern, no precision, no blueprint, which is exactly the success of bluejay nests. Random is what holds them together.

What an honest tree house needs is a good deal of



ROBERT QUEEN



matter here. The school system can toy with computers and competency tests, the real test of a kid is a tree house and the manipulation of a pile of old boards into a perch on the sky. Like the bluejay nest, it obeys the tree more and the house less.

I built a tree house once — was meant to be a deer stand. Made it of true lumber, cut square and secured with lag bolts. The tree spit it out. The thing was too rigid, too inflexible. When the tree rolled with the wind, the perch didn't.

I think the terminology of sailing ships is appropriate to tree houses. They are both boarded and not entered. The joints and caulk lines on both creak and whine. In a tree house you can feel the wind come about. The tree staggers, the notes change and it leans another way. Both ships and tree houses leave coastlines behind, putting distance between what you know and what you don't. Like ships, tree houses come in different hull designs: schooners and sloops with attempts at brigantines and China clippers. Properly they are not tree houses but tree ships. Bluejays, I think, will concur. □

*Justin Isherwood crafts essays from the family farm in Plover, Wis.*



ROBERT QUEEN

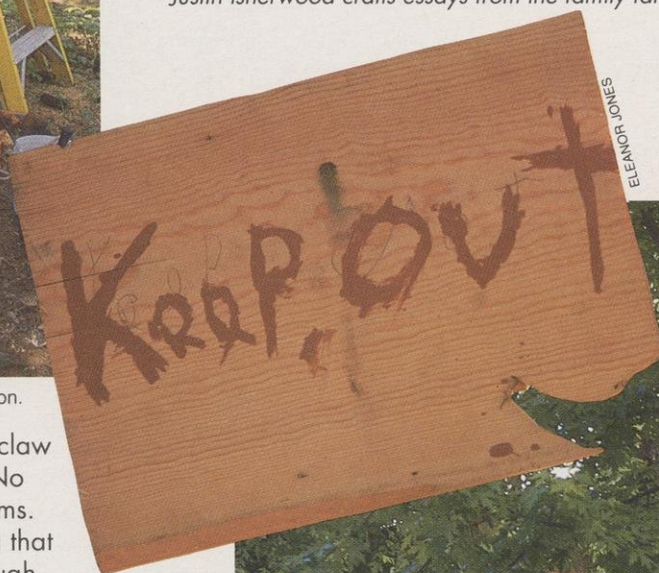
A good tree house is less architecture than arboreal inspiration.

chaos, which is what you get with a kid, a claw hammer, a beat-up tree and used lumber. No need for laws, theorems, postulates or axioms. The only arbiter is Newton's Third Law, and that can be somewhat negated if a kid has enough free will to follow his own unspoiled instincts.

The thing about tree houses is they cannot be built. They do not respond to *a priori stimuli*. If you think you know how to build one, you know too much.

My neighbor has a lumberyard tree house. He built it two summers ago using the plans as came with it. When I go by, I look in the backyard, past the barbecue grill and the patio. The structure is pretty, and a failure. Not once have I seen a kid in it, whether Sunday or summer; not a kid in sight. Not once a pirate flag, "girls keep out" sign, "boys go home" note or a Raggedy Ann doll strung by its neck from the yardarm.

A tree house is an act of rebellion. What Better Homes and Gardens says or OSHA or Dad doesn't



ELEANOR JONES



JEAN B. MEYER





# YCC

## AT 30

CONSERVATION CAMPERS HAVE BRUSHED TRAILS, BUILT STREAMBANKS AND LEARNED ABOUT NATURE SINCE 1962. AS THE YOUTH CONSERVATION CAMP SALUTES ITS THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY, THE PROGRAM IS CHANGING WITH THE TIMES AND MELLOWING OUT.

*Rob Drieslein*

It's midday for a Wisconsin Youth Conservation Camp work crew. For hours, they've tried to riprap a trout stream with very little luck. The streambanks are muddy and slippery. It's impossible to wheel rocks close enough to the water's edge. Everyone is tired, covered with mud and ready to give up.

Then one worker suggests building a small raft to float rocks downstream to the riprap site. Young faces light up and set to work. Before nightfall, rocks are in place to keep the streambank from eroding. The crew heads back to camp feeling good about a job well done.

Time can tarnish or polish traditions. The Youth Conservation Camps operated by the Department of Natural Resources have their own colorful

history and heritage of tackling tough hands-on work. Yet, the high school students who participate have kept the camps vibrant and current since the program started in 1962.

This summer, staff and directors of the four camps will once again face high school teenagers exploding with energy and ready to build some callouses improving the outdoors. Peg Rasch, YCC Coordinator, is positive that the YCC experience has improved with age.

"The kids at our camps are just marvelous," Rasch says. "They're happy to be at the camps. Their interest in the outdoors and in what's going on around them is just overwhelming."

This year more than 1,500 Wisconsin adolescents applied for 800 work-learn summer positions. A few just



Foot by foot, YCC crews sandbag shallow streambanks to stem erosion, increase water flow and build better fishing habitat.

ALL STORY PHOTOS FROM DNR YCC PROGRAM,  
BUREAU OF COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE



wanted a summer job, some wanted to see if they liked working outdoors, many already had an interest in natural resource careers.

"The diversity of campers gets better every year," Rasch notes. "The program was traditionally popular with 15- to 16-year-old boys, but now girls, Asians, African Americans and students with disabilities are equally enjoying YCC as long as they are physically capable of participating in all activities."

Campers work 32 hours a week for four weeks on tasks like maintaining parks, brushing trails, improving streams and planting trees. Each week also includes 20 hours of environmental education and some free time for recreation.

Then-Governor Gaylord Nelson supported the Youth Conservation Camp idea more than 30 years ago to create a summer Civilian Conservation Corps for unemployed teenage boys. Nature appreciation was a part of the original picture, but right from



The youth camps aim to attract a mix of boys and girls from diverse cultures to learn about the environment while they work side-by-side learning about each other.

good work ethics," Brismaster said. "It was the first time away from home for most of those boys. In those days, the structured military component built camaraderie among the kids."

they're not expected to swallow gristle. The clean plate rule is dead!

"We're not trying to eliminate structure from the program," says Rasch, "but we are changing how we treat



A flag ceremony in the old days.

the beginning the camps adopted a no-nonsense attitude about hard work. For most of the camps' history, a military-like structure prevailed complete with Reveille and Taps. For many years, discipline followed the military theme — push-ups and stump-pulling were standard punishment for misbehavior.

Robert Brismaster, the first director of the Statehouse Lake Camp, stressed that the original intent was to get work done in an outdoor atmosphere. "We went out there to work on forest and stream improvements, and teach kids

YCC philosophy still values conservation and hard work, but an insistence on strict discipline has tempered in recent years. For instance, Jim Surdick, a 1987 camper, now a wildlife ecology major at UW-Madison, particularly loathed the clean-your-plate rule. "We had to eat everything, from the meat scraps to the juice in the fruit cocktail," Surdick said. "Even if we took a little too much ketchup, we had to eat it."

Camps still take a waste-not attitude and campers are discouraged from taking more than they can eat, but

people. Our campers learn self-discipline based on respect for themselves and their community, not based on power and control by YCC camp staff."

Rasch said increased state urbanization and other changes in society have influenced camp changes.

"Today's teenagers are more knowledgeable on a wider range of topics, and they want answers on why they're doing something wrong or right," she said. "We have to maintain some structure to avoid chaos, but we also want to encourage more self-discipline and participation."





YCC takes a hands-on approach to nature. Jobs and talks are designed to teach teens the techniques resource professionals use to improve streams, create habitat, bushwhack trails and manage forests.

Current campers have grown up with the environmental movement, and Rasch feels this interest in the outdoors inspires as many applications as the growing need for summer employment.

Mary Weddig, a Merrill school teacher who directed the Mekan River Camp last summer, noted improved problem-solving skills in her campers.

"I see more camaraderie among the kids now that they take part in deciding how to do a task," Weddig said.

One day last summer, a YCC work crew found a colony of endangered Karner blue butterflies near the Mekan River Camp. The Karner blue thrives

in prairie-like habitat, so crews had to cut down several trees to open the shady surroundings. According to Weddig, campers determined how to open up the most canopy while cutting down as few trees as possible.

"They realized how important the project was, and they decided how to go about their job," she said. "It was great because their group decision accomplished our goal."

Counselors also benefit from the more open atmosphere between leaders and campers. Before, when campers misbehaved they were often singled out in front of others. Now, counselors take campers aside to avoid tense and embarrassing situations in

front of the whole camp.

"Counselors need to think more about what they're doing and how they do it," said Melissa Wright, a past counselor. "You have to talk to the campers and explain why a job needs doing as well as explaining how to get it done," Wright said. "I went to the camp before they mellowed out," she added, "and I really feel such changes are positive."

"In a society where kids face drugs, violence and other added pressures, they don't need that kind of discipline and tension to command attention," Wright said. "Things aren't cut-and-dried. So why should the camps have a strict 'this way or no way' mentality?"

Times change, indeed. High school girls were first admitted in 1974 and work crews mix young men and women. Last year, according to Wright, campers were allowed to hold hands — something unheard of a few years ago. "It's part of being a teenager," Wright said. "They're away from home and full of hormones. We just make sure that it's nothing too blatant."

Camp life is still structured. Rev-eille sounds at 6:30 a.m. Campers eat breakfast early for the strenuous day ahead. The work day might include clearing state ski trails, thinning and

*continued on page 28*

Campers get equipment and training during their four-week stay. Crews generally work within 50 miles of the four base camps.





# Plants that heal



ROBERT QUEEN

Scientists are returning to their medicinal roots in search of new cures for persistent ailments.

Jack Ferreri

**I**n the earliest times, people didn't distinguish medicine from botany. The few treatments for illness or injury came from deep experience in the plant world. After all, what else *was* there to relieve sickness and injury?

We don't know much about how the first people looked at the world. But to survive, they had to make use of what



surrounded them. It took several thousand years to learn which plants could be cultivated as reliable food supplies. In a shorter time, cultures turned to plants as healers. Over time, this body of plant knowledge was "field tested." Societies, and later specialized tribal members, learned which plants killed, which had no effect, and which helped specific ailments. Our ancestors repeated this process all over the world, with different local plant inventories. Much was learned.

Nature had eons to evolve and transmute the chemical compounds that make up these plants. The floral world offers today's scientist a vast encyclopedia of complex chemical compounds. Our job is to observe and learn about them. The keys to many medical puzzles undoubtedly lie undetected in plants and in the experiences of native healers.

## Folk medicine

Even a casual review of common plant names reveals how our ancestors viewed their medical application ... self-heal (*Prunella*), fevertwig (*bittersweet*, *Solanum dulcamara*), agueweed, coughwort, King's cure-all, heartease, palsywort, scurvy grass, pleurisy root and soldier's woundwort. Herbals list thousands more. Both Eastern and Western societies developed and refined plant-based treatments and cures. Even today, traditional healers provide health care to nearly 80 percent of the world's population.

How reliable are these native medicines? In the West, especially after the Industrial Revolution, the growing scientific bias of medicine placed less trust in them. Scientists didn't know how these remedies worked, so they ignored many of them. Some cures were clearly bunkum and discredited the entire field of natural healing. We're all familiar with the stereotype of the snake-oil salesman and his bottles of colorful but ineffective elixirs.

Well into this century, most of our medicines came directly from the leaves, seeds, bark, flowers and roots

of plants. And about a quarter of our prescriptions still contain actual botanical material. The remainder we've learned to synthesize, largely by following the models plants provided.

The inventory of native plants and their varied uses was vast. Plants could ease the pain of bites and wounds, make childbirth easier and help heal internal disorders. They could clear up colds, clean out a thick throat, and restore the stomach and bowels to top working order. They could smooth a rash, save you from snakebite, and even protect you against other plant poisons. They provided birth control... and insured fertility. And ginseng (*Panax quinquefolium*) did just about everything. Some people think it still does. *Panax* provided us with the word panacea, or cure-all.

Looking through compilations of these traditional remedies, it's hard to find a plant that isn't mentioned. People tried almost everything that grew searching for medical comfort. Bittersweet root eased the symptoms of tuberculosis. Inhaling smoke from burning cones of the low birch relieved nasal inflammations. Leaves from the American alumroot (*Heuchera americana*) healed serious sores. Boiled roots of the compass plant (*Silphium laciniatum*) provided a soothing laxative. A well-stocked drugstore grew around every village. And if one cure didn't work, you could choose from plenty of others. Nature invented abundance.

On the other hand, you had to be careful. Where there's trial, there's error. Even the food stocks we cultivated have their dark side. Rhubarb stalks are edible, but consuming the leaves causes diarrhea and vomiting. Eating any part of the potato plant except the tuber will make you sick. Many kinds of wild mushrooms can poison the less-than-careful picker.

## Chemicals from plants

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, folkways yielded to hard science. Effective medicines, almost all

based on botanical materials, rolled off the assembly line.

Our most popular medication, aspirin, has the chemical name acetylsalicylic acid. The Greeks used several willows (*Salix species*) to reduce pain and cut fever. Salicylic acid was first isolated from the *Spirea* shrub, hence the name aspirin. The compound assumed worldwide popularity after the giant Bayer Company synthesized it in Germany.

People have long sought the secret of profound pain relief. The suffering of generations from wounds and illness can only be imagined by us here in the comfortable, anesthetized twentieth century. The poppy of pain-killing fame, *Papaver somniferum* (the sleep-bearing poppy), brought relief through its powerful effects on the central nervous system. With 25 different active chemicals, the poppy has given us such common drugs as morphine, codeine, opium and heroin.

Our battles with mosquitoes have special poignancy in Wisconsin, home of our own strain of mosquito-borne encephalitis. While we may complain about mosquito bites, we were spared the devastation malaria wrought in huge portions of the temperate and tropical world. *Malaria*, Italian for "bad air," was described by Hippocrates more than 2,400 years ago. Mosquitoes were not identified as the disease carriers until 1897, yet observers since the 1600s knew the bark of the South American cinchona tree (or fever tree) contained something which prevented malaria. The history of the search for the cinchona has filled many books with high drama and death-defying adventures. It includes stolen seeds, international drug monopolies, and devastating plant misidentifications. Quinine was finally isolated in 1820; other related anti-malarial agents were developed between the First and Second World Wars. And malaria's reign ended.

The common purple foxglove, *Digitalis purpurea*, is commercially raised to extract digitalis, a drug used to treat heart disease. The active chemical, digitoxin, remains too expensive for



chemical synthesis. As is often the case, researchers confirmed the positive effects of the foxglove relatively recently, in the eighteenth century, but common people knew its effects for centuries. Before the active ingredient was isolated and dosages standardized, doctors prescribed digitalis in cat units: a measurement of how much it took to kill a cat. *Digitalis lanata*, from southeastern Europe, contains even more active chemical and supplies the European pharmaceutical industry.

The coca plant has dominated the headlines over the last twenty years. It seems to favor bad company. But medically, the coca plant has proven extraordinarily bountiful. Coca's effects were known to native Colombians and Peruvians for 2,000 years. The isolation of its alkaloid, cocaine, in 1860 signaled a breakthrough in local anesthetics. Cocaine's too-brief anesthetic effect led to further research. Synthetic cocaine, called procaine and trademarked as Novocaine, has eased the terror of the dentist's chair for millions.

Similarly, extracts of *Rauwolfia*, used to treat high blood pressure and mental disorders for the last 40 years, are naturally found in a number of African and Asian shrubs. Healers in these continents use the drug in snakebite cures and insanity treatments. The synthesis of *Rauwolfia*'s major alkaloid, reserpine, moved the drug quickly into the marketplace.

The Madagascar periwinkle, *Vinca rosea*, has revealed several compounds useful in fighting Hodgkin's disease and leukemia.

Closer to home, our humble native wild ginger, *Asarum canadense*, contains an anti-tumor agent, aristolochic acid. *Veratrum viride*, (the American false hellebore), a native wetland plant, is widely used to treat hypertension. And the May apple, *Podophyllum peltatum*, provides a chemical used in a treatment for testicular cancer and small-cell lung cancer.

Pharmacology is filled with stories of dangerous poisons that have beneficial medical properties. In the proper dosage, nitroglycerin can stop a severe angina attack almost magi-

ROBERT READ



(inset) More than a quarter of modern medicines still contain stems, seeds, barks, flowers, roots and leaves of plants. Many other remedies are synthetic derivatives of natural cures. Some pharmacies still offer natural cures for common ailments and disease prevention. (background photo) Ginseng (*Panax quinquefolium*) is used in a panacea of health cures, preventatives and stimulants.

ROBERT QUINN, COURTESY OF WSA COMMUNITY PHARMACY



cally; in larger doses, it can shatter a mountainside. Once the drug is purified and the dosage standardized, researchers can gauge its effects safely.

Strychnine, for example, comes from an evergreen tree of southern Asia and has long been used to control rat populations. It kills people, too, by causing violent seizures and neural gridlock in the spinal cord. As a medicine, however, it can rouse patients from drug stupors. A related drug, curare, provides South American indigenous hunters a fast-acting poison for their dart tips. It, too, has proven useful in surgery as a muscle relaxant that slows down the heartbeat and general metabolism.

Fisheries managers use rotenone, derived from South American shore plants, to poison rough fish. The quick-acting, short-lived chemical blocks the transportation of oxygen across the gills and suffocates fish.

The powerful respiratory and circulatory stimulant, atropine, comes from the deadly nightshade, *Atropa belladonna*. This legendary poisonous plant bears an apt name: Atropa was the Greek muse who cuts the thread of life. Atropine and related drugs are used to treat a variety of ailments from Parkinson's disease to bronchitis to eye conditions.

Medical discoveries continue to be made in the plant world. In the last several months, press reports have focused on the chemical taxol found in the bark of a native Pacific Northwest yew. Its toxicity is well-known, but tests suggest taxol effectively combats ovarian cancer.

## The green future of botanical medicine

The frustrating, lengthy process of seeking cures for cancer, AIDS, and other persistent diseases has sent many researchers back to the dim origins of medicine, to the green pharmacopoeia of the natural world.

(background photo) Compass plant (*Silphium laciniatum*), a prairie plant whose boiled roots are a soothing laxative. (inset) Rotenone, a quick-acting, short-lived fish poison, is extracted from South American plants.



LARRY NIELSEN

ROBERT WALLEN



Ethnobotanists now file through damp jungles seeking native specialists with detailed knowledge of local flora. They work with local botanists. They sit with tribal elders and bring forth musty memories of plant cures. They return with samples and submit them to a rigorous chemical analysis. The search for the scientific confirmation of native cures is replacing close-minded skepticism. The National Cancer Institute has a Developmental Therapeutic Program screening thousands of plants and animals for AIDS treatments. Commercial firms send plant explorers into remote areas for new plants cures.

Scientists estimate several hundred thousand plant species may prove medicinally useful. And that doesn't count lichen, fungi, molds (Remember penicillin?) or underwater plants (an almost unexplored domain). Many plant remedies doubtless remain to be discovered. Disappearing shamans and so-called medicine men provide a last look at the benefits we could derive from local flora. Scientists now recognize the value of this precious and irreplaceable legacy, the body of knowledge a recent NOVA program called "botanical arks."

Late on a Saturday afternoon, imagine the sound of a small girl crying. She's scratched her knee playing in the backyard and runs sobbing to her mother. On the porch, the woman pulls a fat, jellied leaf from an *Aloe vera* plant and gently rubs the cool, torn end against the scratch. The child quiets on her mother's knee and reaches out for what soothed her pain. Watch her as she slowly turns and inspects with wonder the soothing leaf before her. This is the ageless marvel of a plant that heals. □

Jack Ferreri is a free-lance writer from Verona, Wis.



ANN B. SWENDEL  
ROBERT QUEEN, COURTESY OF WSA COMMUNITY PHARMACY

(background photo) Wild ginger (*Asarum canadense*) contains a natural anti-tumor agent. (inset) Tinctures of a wide variety of common plants are still used as alternatives to products sold by mainstream pharmaceutical companies.



Wyalusing's rich history is recounted in plaques and markers scattered throughout the park.  
(below) Trilside vistas overlook the confluence of the Wisconsin and Mississippi rivers.



JEAN B. MEYER



ELMINA PELTON BRIGGS, COURTESY OF THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF WISCONSIN

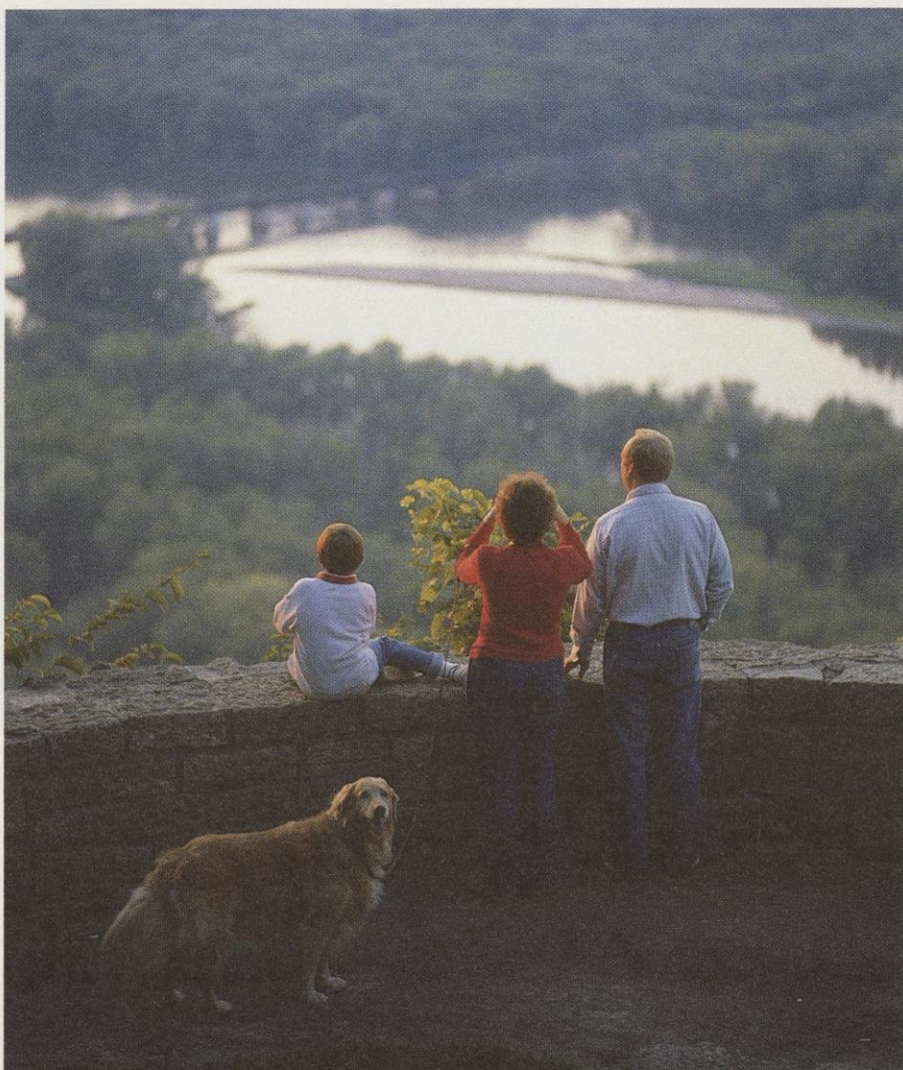
# The park at the crossroads of history

Wyalusing State Park celebrates its 75th anniversary this year. Its fabulous bluffs have seen a history of Indians, explorers, fur traders, miners, soldiers and farmers.

Greg Matthews and Neal Kephart

*"Here we leave the waters which flow toward Quebec, to follow those which lead us into strange lands... After 100 miles on this river, we reached the mouth of the Great River. We safely entered the Mississippi on the 17th of June, with a joy I cannot express."*

Father Jacques Marquette, 1673



ROBERT QUEEN



(top) Fort Crawford as painted on the door panel of the fort's hospital. (left) Wyalusing overlook in 1957.

ART TOWELL, INC. DNR FILE PHOTO

Wyalusing State Park's 500-foot cliffs, overlooking the confluence of the Wisconsin and Mississippi rivers have witnessed the passing human history in southwest Wisconsin for more than 11,000 years.

Formed over 600 million years ago, the 5 1/2 miles of river bluffs were first inhabited about 9000 B.C. by mound-building Woodland Indians. About 1000 B.C., the Red Ochre Culture appeared here, followed by the Hopewell Indians and Effigy Mound Builders.

Later, at least 14 different tribes lived in the area or visited to trade. They considered the region near the mouth of the Wisconsin River neutral land. The last band of Indians to camp in the park were the Winnebagos.

Coming from Green Bay via the Fox and Wisconsin rivers, Father Jacques Marquette and Louis Joliet were the first white men to enter the area. Their exact vantage point on that June day is unknown, although it is certain they saw the confluence from one of the bluffs in the present-day park.

Within a few years of their arrival, French voyageurs came here to trade with Indians. Pelts worth millions of dollars passed this region as the French, then British, and finally Americans engaged in trapping and trading.

North of the park, on plains the French called *les Chiens* (the dogs) various tribes built villages over the years — some harboring up to 300 families.

Prairie du Chien was the western limit of territory known to the French. Given its ideal location as a meeting place, it soon evolved into a natural residence for early traders. For administrator and cleric, European and Indian alike, the trade in fur permeated every feature of existence in New France.

Some historians believe French explorer Nicolas Perrot located his fort at Prairie du Chien rather than some point south of the Mississippi-Wisconsin confluence. Fort St. Nicolas was built sometime between 1685 and 1687. It was likely abandoned in 1692 when Perrot was ordered to withdraw from the Mississippi River country.

During the Fox Indian Wars of the early 18th century, a band of refugee



Fox fled to the Mississippi and built a village at the Prairie du Chien site. It was probably at this time or soon after that the area was named for Le Chien, a Fox chief.

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*"This town is the great mart, where all adjacent tribes, and even those who inhabit the most remote branches of the Mississippi, annually assemble about the later end of May, bringing with them their furs to dispose of to the traders."*

English explorer Jonathan Carver, 1766

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Peter Bond, a trader from Connecticut, spent the winters of 1773-74 and 1774-75 trapping on the St. Peter's River in Minnesota. His journals carry interesting accounts of Prairie du Chien as a trade and social center for both Indian and European.

In 1805, the area was visited by Lieut. Zebulon M. Pike, who later gave his name to one of the Rockies' highest peaks. Yet, from the end of the Revolutionary War in 1783 to the War of 1812, the region, while nominally American territory, was almost entirely under the influence of British sympathizers. The area proved fertile recruiting ground for the British from both Indian and white populations.

In June 1814, Governor William Clark of Missouri Territory accompanied Lieut. Joseph Perkins (with a force of 150 men) to Prairie du Chien to build a blockhouse surrounded by a stockade at the mouth of the Mississippi River. The small Fort Shelby mounted six cannon and was reinforced by a river gunboat armed with 14 cannon.

The British viewed Fort Shelby as a direct challenge to their control of Indian tribes along the Upper Mississippi Valley. Plans were immediately made to capture the fort. The British assembled forces of 120 soldiers and

150 Indian allies at Mackinac and Green Bay. They moved up the Fox River, where more Indians joined them near present-day Portage, then floated down the Wisconsin River, appearing before Fort Shelby on July 17, 1814.

The British commander, Col. William McKay, demanded unconditional surrender, whereupon Lieut. Perkins replied he would defend the fort to the last man. The ensuing engagement was more noisy than deadly. The only effective shooting was done by the British, who concentrated fire of their one artillery piece, a three-pound cannon, on the gunboat named for Governor Clark.

After two hours of shelling, the gunboat cut its cable and limped downstream, leaking badly from several direct hits. The Americans inside the fort became desperate when they saw the boat leaving. They *"called out to them not to go off; but this being unheeded, they fired their cannon at the boat, to stop it."* wrote Augustin Grignon, a Green Bay fur trader in the British service.

*"In fact, the only impact of the gunboat's artillery before it headed out of danger was a ball, before noon, striking a fence post, some of the splinters of which inflicted a fleshwound in the thigh of one of the Menomonees,"* reported Grignon.

Col. McKay then turned his single artillery piece against the fort. The battle lasted two full days. The British had only a few rounds of ammunition left when the Americans raised the white flag and surrendered. It seems incredulous, but the garrison's 20 cannon could not silence one small artillery piece.

This brief American effort to control the Upper Mississippi River ended with five Americans and three Indians wounded, some damage to the town, and British possession of the new American-built fort. Thus ended the only battle ever fought by the armies of non-Indian nations on Wisconsin soil.

After the Treaty of Ghent ended the war in 1814, the federal War Department ordered military occupation of the Wisconsin region. Fort Crawford was built at Prairie du Chien in 1816.

Three persons who would later make their marks on American history were stationed at Fort Crawford: Major Stephen W. Kearny, later General Kearny who conquered New Mexico and became governor of California during the Mexican War; Colonel Zachary Taylor, future military leader and President of the United States; and the future President of the Confederacy, then a young lieutenant, Jefferson Davis.

It was at Fort Crawford that 18-year-old Sarah Knox Taylor, the colonel's daughter, met and fell in love with Jefferson Davis. Colonel Taylor opposed the lieutenant's attention to his daughter. The pair were later married after the young lieutenant resigned his commission and "Knox," as she was known in garrison circles, rendezvoused with Davis in Beechwood, Kentucky where she was ostensibly visiting her aunt. Knox was dead within a year from malarial fever.

The Army manned Fort Crawford until 1845 when the garrison was withdrawn for service in the Mexican War. The post was subsequently abandoned in 1850.

Lead mining attracted Wisconsin's first large scale, permanent white settlement. But first, there was a matter of the Fox, Sauk and Winnebago Indians. The Sauk and Fox tribes jealously guarded their lead mines and quickly drove out any unwary miner who ventured into the region. Reluctantly, and under substantial pressure from the Federal government, the Sauk and Fox Indians authorized mining leases in 1823. The Winnebago were a different story!

Pressured by the army, fueled by a rumor that some of their tribes were ill-treated at Fort Snelling, and restless over white encroachment upon their lands, the Winnebago sought revenge on the settlers. Hostilities didn't amount to much. The tribe yielded to an overwhelming show of force.

The surrender of Chief Red Bird in 1827 featured an eloquent speech by the proud Winnebago leader to T.L. McKenney, Commissioner for Indian Affairs.





STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF WISCONSIN

*"I do not know what I have done wrong. I come now to sacrifice myself to the white man because it is my duty to save my people from the scourge of war.... The white men promised us that the lead mines would be ours, but they did nothing to put the men who came to take possession of them. If an Indian took possession of something belonging to a white man, the soldiers would come quickly enough. We have been patient. We have seen all this. We have seen the ancient burial grounds plowed over. We have seen our braves shot down like dogs for stealing corn. We have seen our women mocked and raped. We have seen the white men steal our lands, our quarries, our forests, our waterways, by lying to us and making us drunk enough to put marks on papers without knowing what we were doing. When first the Long Knives came, the prophets told us they would never be honest with us. We did not believe them. We do now.... I am not ashamed. I would not be ashamed. I have come because the white men are too strong, and I do not wish my people to suffer. Now I am ready. Take me."*

— Chief Red Bird, 1827



DEAN TVEDT



STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF WISCONSIN

(top) Painted Rocks Cave. One of many picturesque caves carved out of the park's river bluffs. (above) Geology shaped the region's beauty and its future. Small mines were scattered throughout the countryside in southwest Wisconsin.

## Lead mining

The close of "hostilities" fueled a great rush to southwest Wisconsin. A man could literally make a fortune overnight. The miners burrowed into hillsides for ore and used their mines for living quarters. There were other mining ventures in the park area, but none were known to be successful.

The lead mining region had a dis-

tinct and unique society. Unlike the rest of Wisconsin, southerners formed a major part of the population. The proportion of non-English speaking foreigners was much lower than other areas of the state. Among the immigrants, the best known group was Cornish miners who came after 1835.

The area also attracted wealthy and cultured families. Men like Henry





MICHAEL WEIMER

(inset) Shooting star (*Dodacatheon meadia*) a trailside wildflower of the Wyalusing woods. (background photo) The park's steep trails are fragile. They're easily eroded by the combined steep grades, weather and lots of foot traffic.

Dodge, Henry Gratiot and William Hamilton (the son of Alexander Hamilton) dominated the region and played a disproportionately large role in territorial politics and state government.

By 1860, the mining frontier had passed. Surface deposits were exhausted and many of the miners turned to agriculture. New villages that dotted the scarred face of the land bore colorful titles denoting their origin or distinctive features: Hard Scrabble, Fairplay, Nip-and-Tuck, Patch With Catholic, Whig, Democrat to Match, Shirt-Tail, Shake-Rag, Hoof Noggle Steep, Strawberry, Trespass and Trail-Hole Deep. Some flourished for a day and faded into oblivion. Others survived the mining era to become grain, dairy and railroad centers as digging gave way to farming and the lead frontier evolved into a rural economy.

The mining rush was accompanied by intense land speculation in southwest Wisconsin. Wealthy easterners, through their local agents, bought up sites they hoped would prove valuable. Every citizen of any standing was involved in speculation to some extent. "Paper cities" sprung up around the juncture of the Wisconsin and Mississippi rivers. Except for the tiny village of Wyalusing, an Indian word meaning "home of the warrior," none of these was ever built.

The village's first proprietors were Enos P. Finn, James A. Otis and L.A. Schrader. Finn was credited with naming the settlement, probably after the Susquehanna Valley town in Pennsylvania from which he emigrated.

A lot in the new village was given to Isaiah Cranston who built a hotel. He served as its proprietor until his death in 1868.

Around 1850, new proprietors, all from Lancaster, took up residence. These included Robert Glenn, Nathaniel W. Kendall and Charles Blandford.

They built a store the first year. Glenn, Kendall and the village soon prospered. The store supplied small merchants from Patch Grove and Millville and bought produce from area farmers.



Wyalusing was a popular place for tying up rafts and boats because of its good harbor. A Mr. Darby rented land along the slough for docking as late as 1885. Darby dug into many of the park's Indian mounds, found relics and stored them in a shop which burned down, destroying the historic artifacts.

A large number of steamboat captains, pilots and clerks called Wyalusing home during the heyday of steamboating from 1850-1860. It's likely most of them boarded at Isaiah Cranston's hotel. General Ulysses S. Grant was a guest at the hotel in 1860.

Southwest Wisconsin, like the rest of the state, gradually came under the plow. Farms were cleared on the park's tillable acres. The settlers raised hogs and let them run wild in winter to forage on acorns. This practice led to several years of hog rustling. Farmers finally caught the two men who butchered their animals, stored pig carcasses in the park's Sand Cave where ice kept the meat cool until late spring, and rafted the meat to Prairie du Chien markets when the rivers opened.

Early farmers supplemented their incomes by making syrup from the property's maples and cutting cordwood for the steamboats.

Indians still camped on park grounds near Wyalusing River as late as the 1880s and often visited the Glenns. One Glenn daughter told of the sudden appearance at their door of Eagle Eye, who terrified Mrs. Glenn because he wished to show his friendship by taking the child in his arms. Mr. Glenn, more experienced with Indians, understood the young chief's intentions, and soothed things over. The park bluff just south of Sentinel Ridge is named for Eagle Eye.

By 1905, Crawford and Grant counties were old settled areas. The census for Grant County that year shows that 30,809 of 35,138 residents were native-born; far fewer immigrants than in other areas of the state.

The idea to create a park south of the junction of the Mississippi and Wisconsin rivers was both a local

movement and statewide initiative. The Glenn family, who owned the land, promoted the concept around the turn of the century. Robert Glenn cherished the hope that one day others would see the magnificent scenery and feel the region's natural beauty.

Glenn was elected sheriff in 1904, moved to the county seat in Lancaster and continued his park crusade.

The State Legislature commissioned a report to consider establishing parks in 1909. The report recommended four sites including Wyalusing, for immediate consideration. On April 5, 1912, a three-year land contract was signed paying \$37,350 for 1,492 acres. The park was first named Nelson Dewey State Park and later changed to Wyalusing.

A Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camp was established at Wyalusing in 1935. Ten buildings housed 200 boys of the 2672nd Company, National Park Service personnel and U.S. Army officers. The CCC built the park's stone headquarters, laid telephone cables, installed a campground, built picnic tables and benches, repaired or built hiking trails, removed poison ivy and dead branches, and constructed two bathhouses, a reservoir and sewage filtration plant.

Many of Wyalusing's roads, trails, vistas, buildings and picnic shelters built by the CCC are still in use today — creating another historical crossroad for the park today.

"Many of our facilities are old," says Park Superintendent Neal Kephart. "They require intense maintenance, time and money. We're an old park trying to operate on a modern, tight budget.

"Fireplaces are cracking. Bricks are falling apart. Walkways are crumbling. Erosion, caused by the park's steep terrain and constant use, is compacting turf and producing runoff problems at picnic areas, playgrounds, trails, parking lots and campgrounds," Kephart added. Due to continuing erosion, park officials are even considering closing the popular Wisconsin Ridge Campground located on

bluffs adjacent to such famous overlooks as Council Point, Signal Point, Treasure Cave and Point Lookout.

"Drainage is bad," pointed out Kephart. "Water cuts through the soft sandstone, breaks the soil away, and carries it off to the valley below, producing deep gullies."

Yet, Wyalusing's spectacular location entices visitors to linger here. The park boasts the highest camper -to-visitor ratio in the state park system except for the island parks of Big Bay and Rock Island.

"We're a destination park, a vacation park," Kephart said. "Even though Wyalusing is tucked away in the state's southwest corner, off the traveled roads, people don't often swing by for a quick look. They stop and camp."

They always have. □

*Greg Matthews is the Southern District information officer in Fitchburg. Neal Kephart is park superintendent at Wyalusing State Park.*



Exposed roots can erode quickly on the park's steep slopes.

BUREAU OF PARKS AND RECREATION



pruning trees, building up stream banks or clearing savannahs of cedars or black locust saplings. Back at camp, there's time for a little relaxation and dinner. Evening programs may include a guest speaker or time for swimming, fishing, softball, volleyball and other sports. When darkness falls, campfires, sing-a-longs, night hikes or stargazing drain any energy remaining in the campers. By the time Taps sounds at 10 p.m. everyone's pretty tired.

On weekends, counselors and



Cleaning cabins at Statehouse Lake Camp.

mately 24,000 students have gathered in the DNR's youth camps, building a good work ethic, learning about the outdoors and making friendships to last a lifetime. Mary Weddig stressed



Campers learn that erosion control, streambank protection, riprap and channeling are all tools of the fish manager's trade.

campers visit state natural areas, businesses, such as paper mills along the Wisconsin River, or historic sites.

Typically weekend and work travel keeps campers within 50 miles of the base camp. As major tasks are completed near the base camps, crews travel more widely to find work. Last year, one of the Mekan River crews that was working at Devil's Lake State Park set up a "spike camp" and tent camped at the park for several days to cut down on commuting time between the camp and the job site.

"We thought a spike camp would save time and money," Rasch said, "but we also wanted to see if the crew enjoyed learning camping skills. It was a good test, but we don't expect we'll need to set up similar spike camps around the state."

During the last 30 years, approxi-

the value in her camping experiences.

"You learn such fantastic social skills as you eat, sleep and live with 100 other people," she said. "When I'm old and in a nursing home, those are the memories I'll remember." □

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*Rob Drieslein writes feature stories as part of an internship with DNR's Bureau of Information and Education.*

## About YCC

DNR runs four Youth Conservation Camps: Statehouse Lake Camp, Manitowish Waters, Vilas County; Ernie Swift Camp, west of Minong, Washburn County; Mekan River Camp, between Montello and Wautoma, Marquette County; and Kettle Moraine Camp, Campbellsport, Fond du Lac County. This last camp is a year-round facility with dorm-like buildings rather than cabins.

The other three camps have rustic cabins with bunks for campers and counselors — 10 campers per cabin with a counselor. At each facility, a main building houses a dining hall, cook's quarters, an infirmary, restrooms, showers and the camp office. Each site also has a recreation room with a library, games and a camp store.

This year, the program was shortened from five weeks to four: Campers chose either a June 21-July 18 or a July 19-August 15 session. Camp sessions were shortened to accommodate the longer school year, contain program costs and provide more counselor training. Staff will receive two weeks of camp orientation and leadership training.

Each camp accommodates 50 boys and 50 girls per session. Campers work 32 hours per week for \$4.25 per hour. To cover room and board, \$40 per week is deducted from each camper's pay. Take-home pay averages \$384 before taxes. Some high schools offer credit for the experience.

Applications are available at each high school. Campers are randomly selected from the pool of applications on file by March 1. Information and applications regarding the 1993 camping season will be available next January. Phone Peg Rasch at (608) 266-8226, or Marilyn Howell, assistant coordinator, at (608) 266-5324. Write them in care of the Youth Conservation Program CA/G1, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Box 7921, Madison, WI 53707.

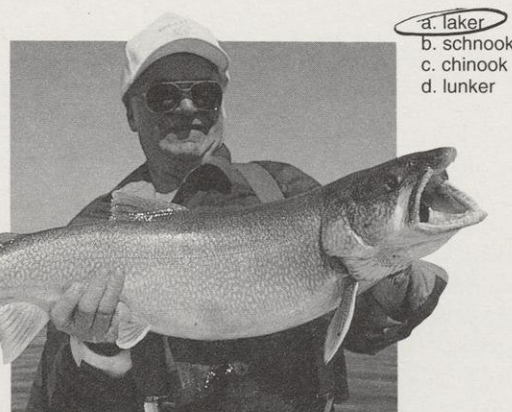


# Readers Write

## PHOTO FAUX PAS

I read your article "Casting Ahead" in the April issue with great interest. The caption on the page 7 photo in the upper right states this is a chinook salmon. After 20+ years of fishing Lake Michigan, a close look at the color, tail markings, mouth markings and fin shape, I'd say this is a lake trout.

Mark S. Sloma  
Brillion, Wis.



WISCONSIN DIVISION OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

*Comment from a reader to our subscription service: "Reader says page 7 photo in April issue is a laker not a schnook."*

I suggest "laker," not "chinook" would be a more appropriate caption for your page 7 photo in the April issue.

Orville Fortney  
Port Washington, Wis.

*You are all right. We mistakenly published a photo of a lake trout while describing chinook salmon. No excuses. It was clearly misidentified.*

## CASTING AHEAD

I found your April article, "Casting ahead" to be the most optimistic, factual and beautifully written article on the future of fishing in Wisconsin that I've ever seen. It was informative, educational and encouraging. The article ought to be included with every fishing license sold and be required reading for anyone who intends to wet a line, dip a net or throw a spear for fish. I believe anyone who took your article to heart wouldn't even need a rules and regulation manual!

Jerry Draws  
Omro, Wis.

I use this magazine in my conservation-environmental class at Northwood School. Lee Kernen's statement "Most anglers across Wisconsin are beginning to understand that we



ROBERT QUEEN

can accommodate both tribal and sport fishing on our lakes" is questioned by my students. "If that's true," they ask, "why are limits on walleyes reduced to two on some lakes?"

Fred Hennesay  
Minong, Wis.

*Mr. Kernen responds: Each lake or river can only support a certain number of fish based on fish populations, water fertility, available food, water quality and other environmental factors. An average lake in northern Wisconsin with walleye populations that reproduce naturally has about five adult fish per acre. Biologists agree that about 35 percent of these adult fish can be caught and kept each year. Taking additional fish reduces the reproductive capacity of the fish population.*

*From the fishes' perspective,*

*it doesn't matter who kills the walleyes — tribal spears or sport anglers. The DNR sets bag limits to sustain enough adult walleye to maintain natural reproduction. We can accommodate tribal spearing harvests only by reducing sport anglers' harvests to maintain this natural reproduction rate.*

## DRINKING WATER TIPS

After reading my April issue about water supplies, I'd be pleased to receive your brochures about drinking water contaminants. We're very pleased with this magazine and the information we get from it.

E.T. Benecke  
Saint Germain, Wis.

## THE SILENT MAJORITY OF ANIMALS

Thank you for Dr. Stanley Temple's sensitive and informative article on cold-blooded creatures with which we share space in Wisconsin. It is enjoyably readable, yet packed with precise information. I'm using it in my classroom to complement

our study of the animal kingdom and help this silent majority!

Louise Petering  
Fox Point, Wis.

## SONGBIRD AID

The April article *S.O.S. Saving our songbirds* was well written and extraordinarily alarming. How can a concerned individual help? I already give what I can to [environmental groups], but I'd be happy to volunteer time to restore our songbird populations. I imagine other readers were alarmed as well and would appreciate more information.

Beth Ross  
Hudson, Wis.

*Glad you asked. Readers can take several steps to learn more about migrating songbirds and improve their future:*

1. Ask to receive the free newsletter of the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Program. The newsletter shares updates on international bird conservation projects, current research findings and introduces readers to a host of individuals worldwide who are working to preserve songbirds. Write: Peter Stangel, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, 18th & C St., NW, Room 2556, Washington, D.C. 20240.
2. Write us for a short reading list on the topic and a listing of key contacts nationwide: WNR magazine, Box 7921, Madison, WI 53707.
3. Write for a copy of the Migratory Bird Information Kit produced by the National Audubon Society and the Smithsonian Institution. Send checks for \$6.50 payable to the Migratory Bird Program to Migratory Bird Program Coordinator, National Audubon Society, 666 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE, Washington, D.C. 20003.
4. Take part in local bird counts that tally songbird variety and populations near your home.



# Readers Write

5. Help survey migratory breeding birds each June during the annual count on the Nicolet National Forest. Contact Robert Howe, Research Chairman, Wisconsin Society for Ornithology, (414) 465-2272.
6. Volunteer time for local bird banding programs that contribute to songbird research.
7. Write your Senators and congressional representatives to express concern for neotropical migrants. Encourage support for the Partners in Flight program. Stress the importance of biodiversity to maintain wild habitat in national and international aid programs.
8. Provide better food and cover plots for songbirds in your backyard. Many fine books on backyard habitat improvements are available through your local library.

## COOKING FISH

I'm an avid collector of fish and wild game recipes and I just received Vern Hacker's *A Fine Kettle of Fish*. This is the best fish cookbook I have ever purchased. Does your magazine or the Department of Natural Resources publish cookbooks devoted to small game (squirrel and rabbit) cookery?

Pat Padgett  
Paris, Ill.

To answer your second question first, DNR authors have not published a wild game cookbook, though this magazine carried venison sausage recipes last October. Recipes for cooking wild game are available through pamphlets and bulletins prepared by the University of Wisconsin-Extension Service. Check with county Extension offices or contact the UW-Extension Publications Office at 30 N. Murray Street,

Madison, WI 53706, phone number (608) 262-3346.

We appreciate your note about the late Vern Hacker's cookbook, *A Fine Kettle of Fish*. It gives us a chance to reacquaint readers with this 1982 classic. Vern Hacker was the Department of Natural Resources Fish Control Specialist for many years. During a distinguished career, one of his assignments was supervising commercial contracts to remove so-called rough fish from lakes.

One of Hacker's life missions was convincing the general public that many of the rough fish viewed as undesirable were, in fact, fine eating fish. Over the years Vern converted a skeptical public by hosting banquets where he dished up delicious chowders, pickled fish, fake shrimp cocktail and tasty entrees all made from rough fish. Those who tried his dishes wanted Vern's recipes, which he generously shared in his book.

Recipes entice readers to enjoy rough fish, crayfish and turtles (that aren't endangered) in a variety of ways. You'll pick up tips on baking, broiling, boiling, frying, pickling, smoking and canning fish. You'll learn to concoct appetizers, dips, chowders and fish entrees.

The 66-page cookbook is still available from DNR's Bureau of Fisheries Management for \$1.95 including shipping and handling. What a bargain!

continued from page 2

although biologists speculate it may hide the spider poised in the web's center, strengthen the web or act as a warning signal to alert birds and us to its location: A web avoided is not destroyed. Weaving a zigzag warning flag to save the time and energy of respinning a web is time well spent!

Take a stick or blade of grass and gently touch the web, but don't mutilate it. Watch the spider's reaction. The spider may bounce on the web causing it to vibrate, which could ensnare a victim. The spider might run to the touch point sensing a potential meal. Or, sensing that you are too big to handle, the spider might do nothing or drop to the ground to escape.

Perhaps you will be lucky and see the spider capture a meal. If a fly strikes the web, the spider springs into a few moments of frenzied activity. Running out to the struggling insect, the spider plucks the fly from the web. While constantly turning the insect, the spider uses its fourth pair of legs to pull silk from its spinnerets like twine from a ball and wraps the insect. After the fly is completely wrapped and immobilized, which takes only seconds, the garden spider inflicts its fatal bite.

A small fly-sized insect is easy for a garden spider to handle, but a large grasshopper that's kicking violently has to be reined in and wrapped up with a different technique. Holding the grasshopper at leg's length, the spider wraps the easiest part first — the head. Then, instead of turning the grasshopper over and over and wrapping it up, the spider deftly circles the victim from a safe distance. By dragging a silk swath over the grasshopper, the spider can pull the silk ever tighter, cinching it up from a distance. Restraining a grasshopper takes more caution and effort, but the entire wrap job takes about a minute. Then the spider can safely put the fatal bite on its bucking victim. The spider may eat its meal or leave the wrapped bundle suspended in the web, returning to the web center to await the next unsuspecting insect.

Sidestep the garden spider's web and continue through the field. Look for a large orb web that lacks the stabilimentum. The silky snare may look deserted, but hidden in a retreat of folded leaves at the upper corner of the web hunches *Araneus trifolium*, the shamrock spider. This large orb weaver is not green, as the name implies, but a deep orange dotted with gold spots.

Although the shamrock spider hides, seemingly unattached to its web, it is well aware of what's happening. A lone signal thread is strung from the web's center hub to the hideaway. The spider keeps one foot on the thread to pick up the slightest vibration caused by struggling insects. Any change in thread tension sends the spider into quick action.

The shamrock spider is a creature of few words. Any fly entering its web is immediately grabbed and given a lethal bite. The fly succumbs after a few brief moments. The spider may ingest the liquified insides and discard the inedible exoskeleton, or may wrap its catch like carry-out food for future consumption.

If a grasshopper jumps into a shamrock spider's web, the





Banded garden spider (*Argiope trifasciata*).

spider wraps first, trying to hog-tie the insect and neutralize the powerful kicks of those big jumping legs. After a brief wrap, the spider bites the victim in its most vulnerable spot, its head. The grasshopper calms down and the spider completes its work.

Both the black and yellow spider and the shamrock spider are about the size of a green grape. Each subdues prey in a slightly different manner — the garden spider wraps first and bites later; the shamrock spider bites first, then wraps its victim. Why?

Subtle differences in anatomy offer an explanation. The shamrock spider's legs are comparatively short, especially the fourth pair used for wrapping. This spider can't hold its prey far away and is in real danger from the errant kicks of struggling victims. However, the shamrock spider has long, powerful, thick jaws that can clamp onto prey until it quiets down. The garden spider's jaws are weaker, but it's longer-legged. It has a harder time holding onto insects that are still



GREG VANDELEEST

Black and yellow garden spider. Note the thick zigzagging stabilimentum.

struggling, so it wraps first then bites the immobilized victim.

You may find a third large orb weaver in August fields, but it's not as common. The banded garden spider *Argiope trifasciata* has numerous thin silver, yellow and black bands crossing its abdomen. Its web has a stabilimentum, but it's not as pronounced as that of the black and yellow garden spider.

So tug on some long sleeves, roll down your pants legs, slip on some sneakers and wander a field in August searching for spiders. You will quickly appreciate why watching orb-weavers can be a captivating experience. □

*Anita Carpenter searches the fields, roadsides, lakeshores and forests near her Oshkosh home for signs of nature.*

Shamrock spider (*Araneus trifolium*).



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