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SPECIAL REPORT: Nonpoint Pollution

WISCONSIN NATURAL RESOURCES

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Volume 10, Number 1

Wisconsin Artists:

Virgil Beck

Sculpture

Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum

Mourning Doves,
wood carving by William J. Koelpin

Chief Evergreentree by the late Indian Artist Russ Monegar

Wisconsin wildlife artists

This issue is devoted to Wisconsin wildlife artists. Some of the best in the nation live here. There are upwards of 1,500 in the state, mostly hobbyists or part time professionals and about 100 who make a living at it. Included are both sculptors and painters. Many are self taught, but an increasing number have had advanced schooling while more and more are university graduates with degrees in fine arts. Wisconsin's most successful wildlife artist, 89-year old Owen Gromme who receives $25,000 or more for a painting, is self taught. Younger ones like Jonathan Wilde and Virgil Beck have fine arts degrees.

Usually wildlife art is specially commissioned by an individual, business or magazine that wants a painting or sculpture to show a specific subject or event. Often print houses like Wild Wings, Northwoods Craftsman and others make up limited editions of a particular work to market through catalogs and retail outlets. Sometimes artists donate paintings to wildlife organizations to help raise money for good causes. Other pieces hang in galleries, museums and private collections or are still owned by the artist. Work shown here comes from all these sources.

Wildlife art has an ancient tradition. Depictions of the hunt—wild boars, stags and especially falcons—have been a recurring theme in tapestries and paintings since ancient times. Despite this background, because of its subject matter and the customers who buy it, modern wildlife art is sometimes dismissed as merely photographic. But critics who know realize that it covers a whole range of expression from impressionistic to surreal. They know that the artist's way of seeing wildlife and its habitat is a valid and sensitive creative act. Today, wildlife art and fine art have merged, if indeed they were ever separate. These pages will let you judge for yourself.

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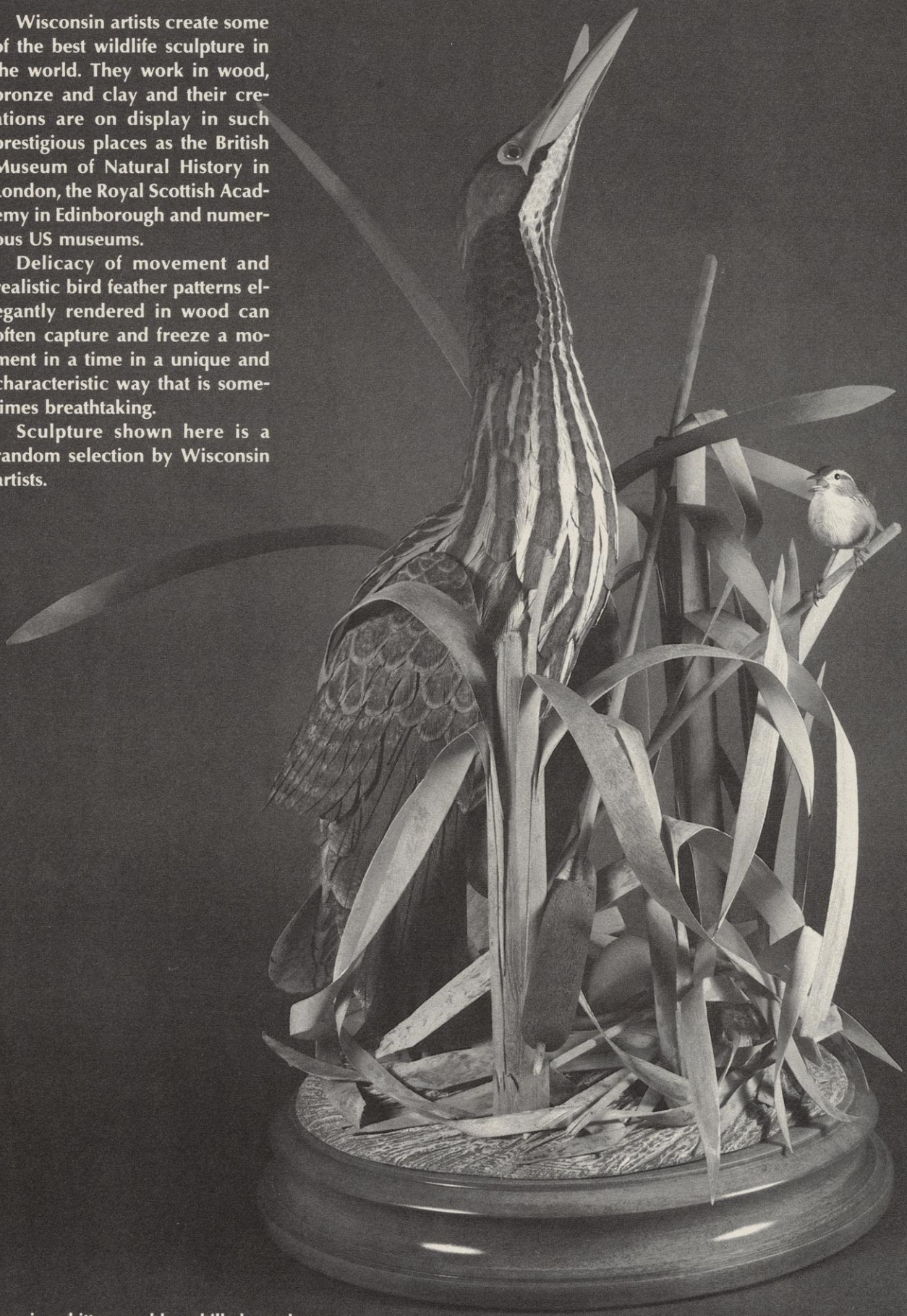
Sculpture

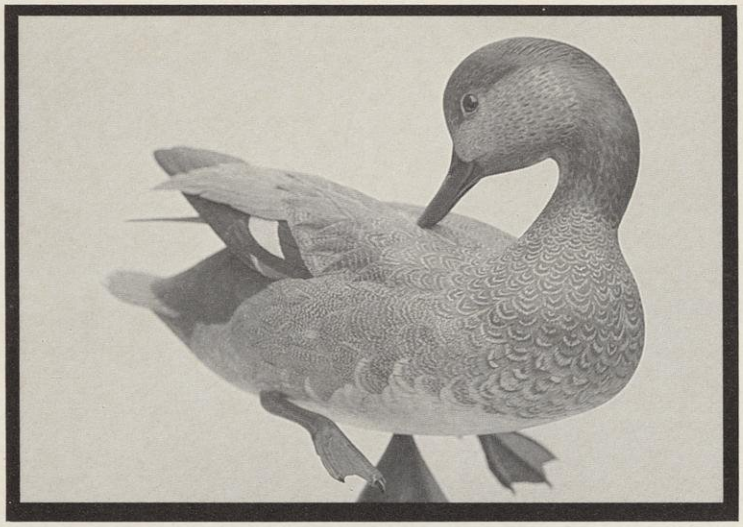
Wisconsin artists create some of the best wildlife sculpture in the world. They work in wood, bronze and clay and their creations are on display in such prestigious places as the British Museum of Natural History in London, the Royal Scottish Academy in Edinborough and numerous US museums.

Delicacy of movement and realistic bird feather patterns elegantly rendered in wood can often capture and freeze a moment in a time in a unique and characteristic way that is sometimes breathtaking.

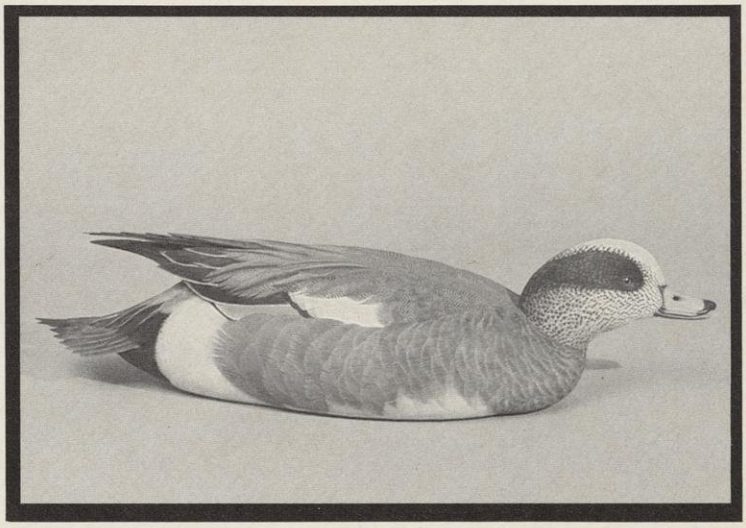
Sculpture shown here is a random selection by Wisconsin artists.



American bittern and long-billed marsh wren, wood sculpture by the late William Schultz

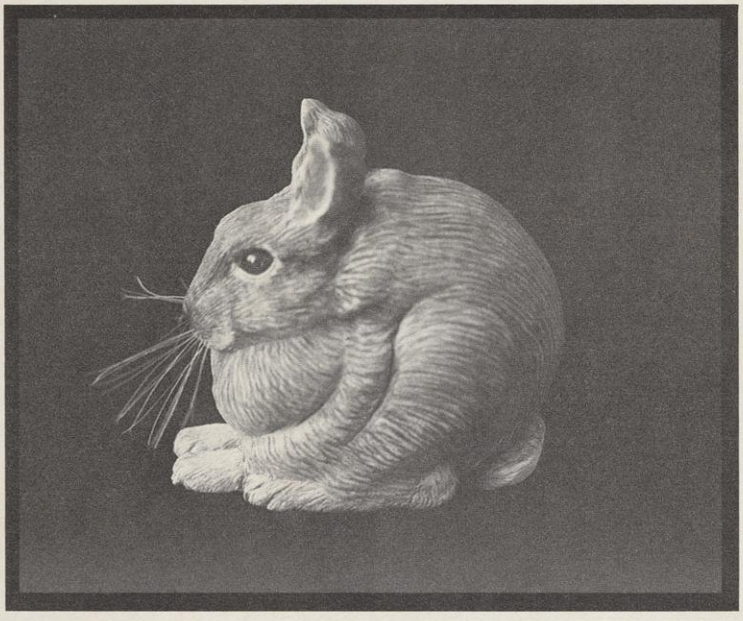


Gadwall, wood sculpture by John Beule



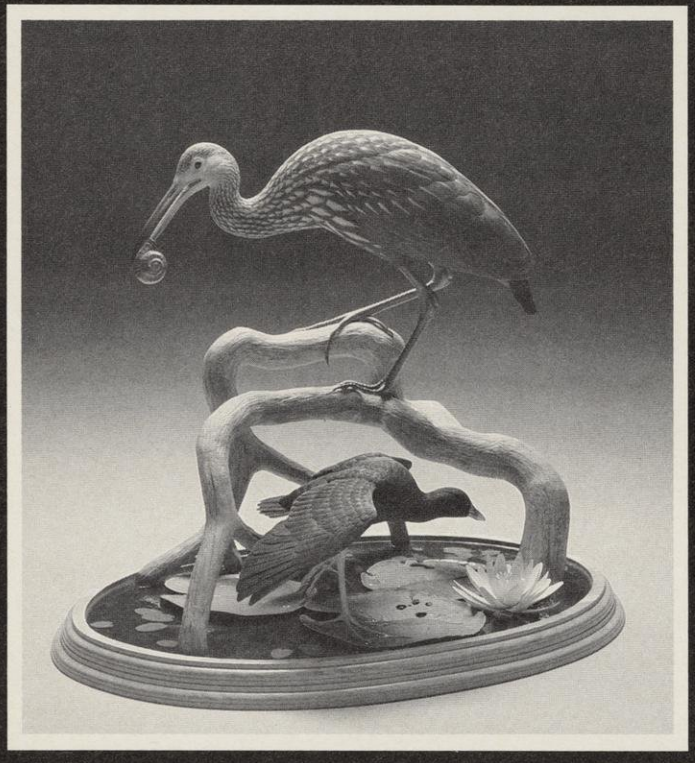
American widgeon drake, wood sculpture by Marc Schultz

Eagle, bronze by Judye Frankowiak

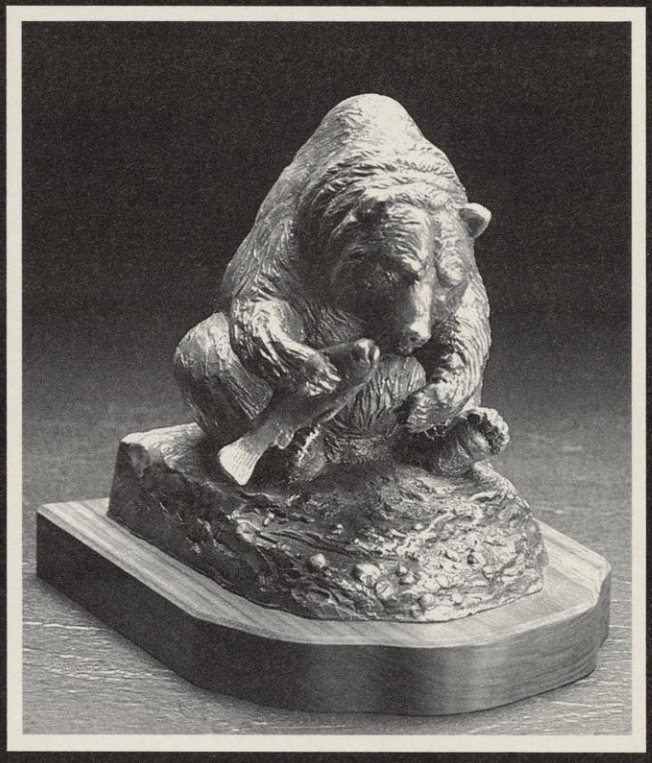


Bunny, wood sculpture by Tom Beardsley

Detail from Milwaukee Public Museum exhibit. Wood sculpture by the late William Schultz



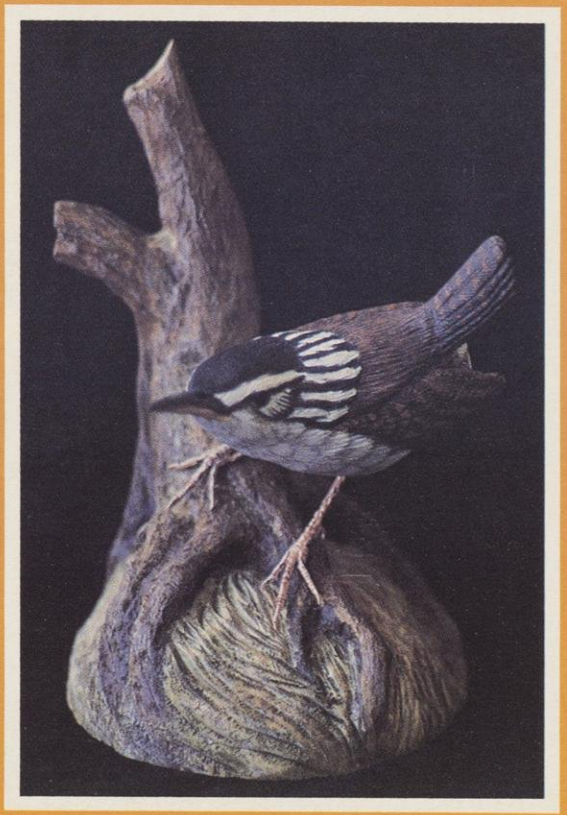
Limpkin and purple gallinule, wood sculpture by the late William Schultz



Grizzly bear, bronze by Judye Frankowiak

Road Runner, **wood sculpture by William J Koelpin**

Red-tailed hawk,
wood sculpture by Ronald R. Tepley



Wren, wood sculpture by Tom Beardsley

The Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum

The Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum in Wausau regularly displays an impressive array of wildlife art in both a permanent collection and at an annual international Birds in Art exhibition. Works shown here are from both sources.

The museum, situated on a wooded hillside at Franklin and 12th streets features a complete set of nearly 100 American and English porcelain song birds by the late artist Dorothy Doughty. These birds, collected by Mrs. Woodson, were crafted to achieve exact dimensions and lifelike coloring. Along with the Doughty porcelains, the museum has built a thorough bird art collection dating from the eighteenth century to the present, encompassing the works of both old and new masters.

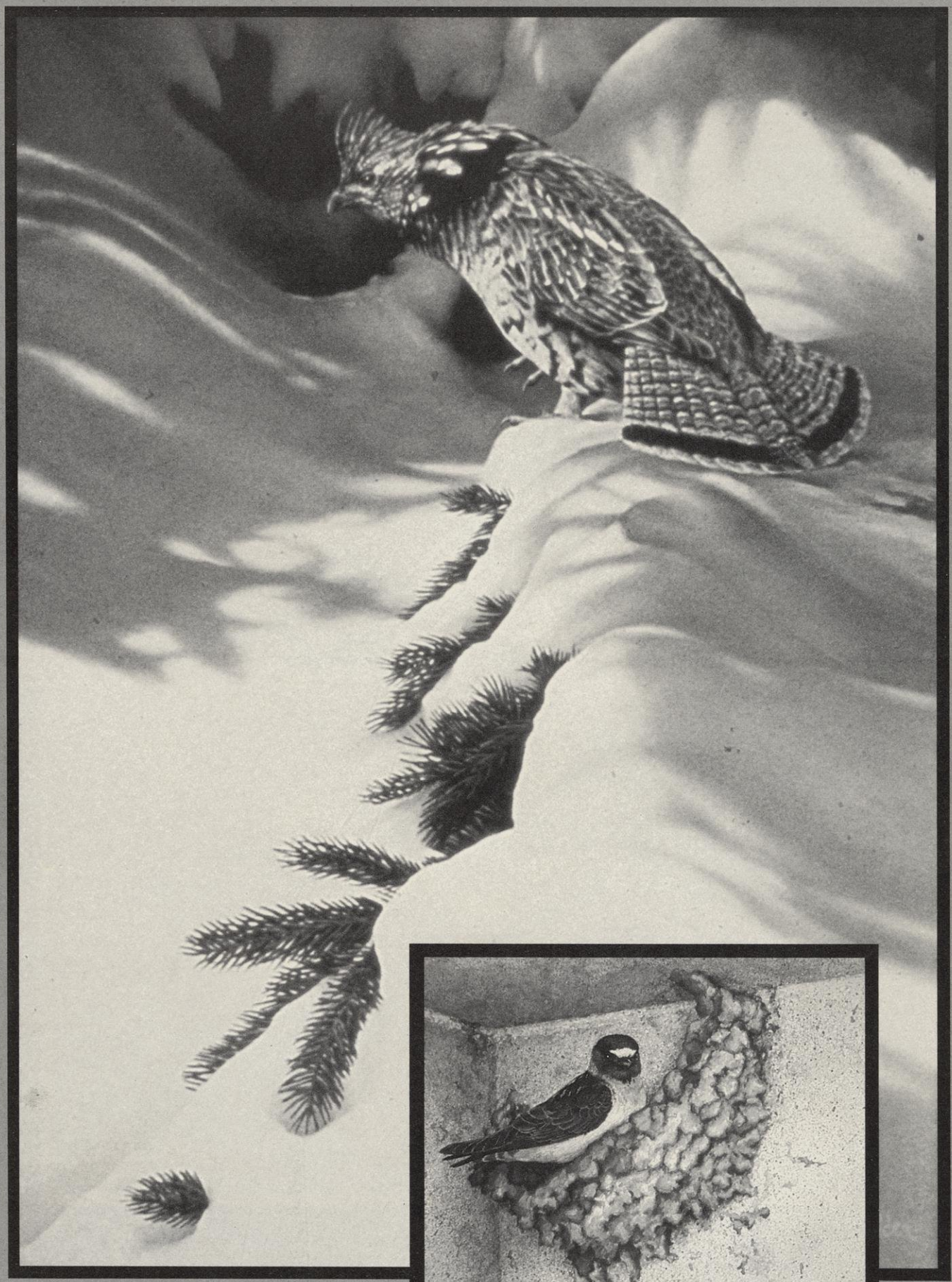
The museum's flagship exhibition, Birds in Art, now in its tenth year, has received critical acclaim on tours to other museums including the British Museum and the Smithsonian. The most recent exhibition featured the latest works of 111 artists from 30 states and nine foreign countries. In it the world's leading wildlife artists depict waterfowl, gamebirds, birds of prey and songbirds in their natural habitat in both painting and sculpture.

A selection of 50 paintings and ten sculptures from the museum's Birds in Art exhibition is now touring the United States. It will be shown at the Rochester Museum and Science Center in Rochester, New York, the Missouri Botanical Garden in St. Louis, Missouri, and the Springfield Science Museum in Massachusetts.

Misty Morning-hooded mergansers by Rod Lawrence.

January Thaw-wild turkey by James H. Killen

Paintings in this section courtesy of the Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum

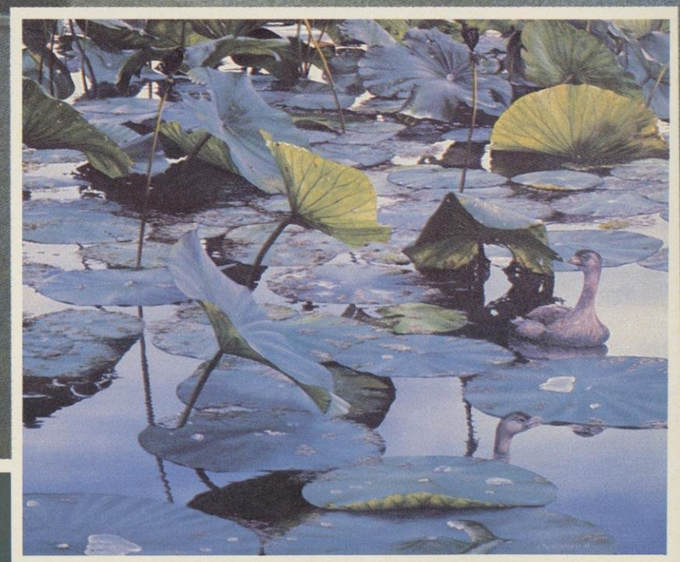


Silent shadows-ruffed grouse **by Ron Van Gilder**

***Under construction*-cliff swallow by Elizabeth Hollister**

Evening Grosbeaks **by Chuck Ripper**

***Summertime*—meadowlark by Ned Smith**



Family of Swans-Trumpeters by Gary W. Moss

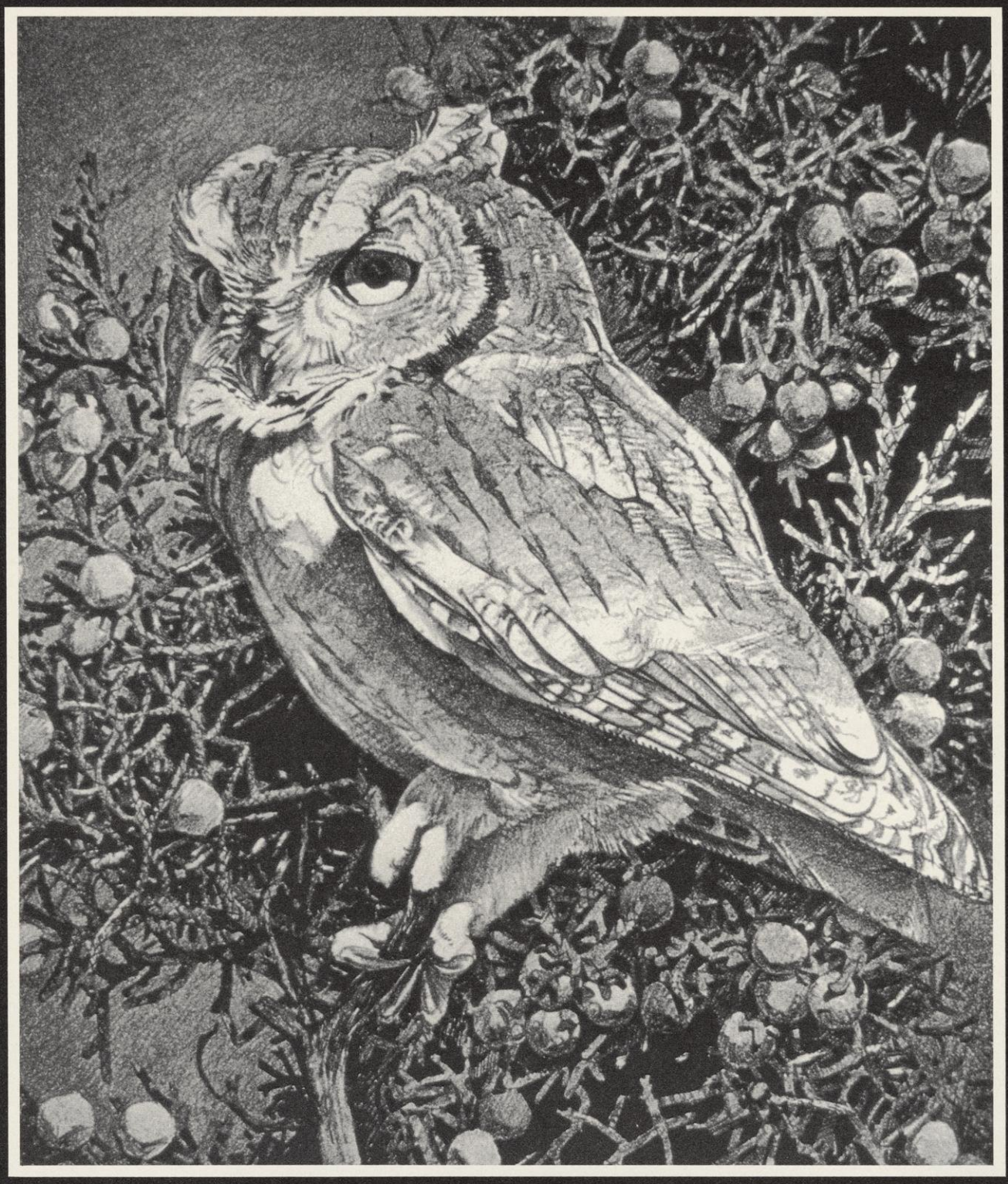
Grebe's World by Michael A. Klafke

Green Heron by Chuck Ripper

The Lowly Ones-house sparrows by Harry J. Moeller

Montana Harvest-Hungarian partridge by Terrill A. Knaack

Common Gallinule by Karl Badgley



Screech Owl **by Nick Wilson**

Research News

New approaches to trout habitat improvement

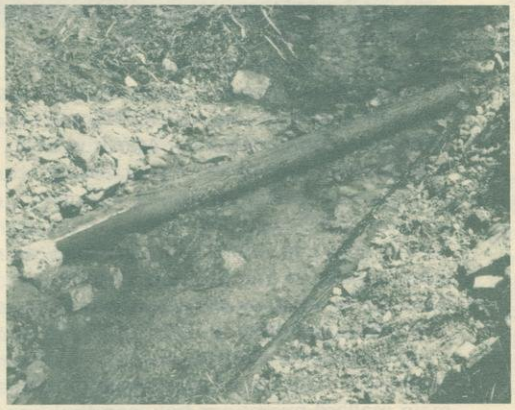
Waupaca — DNR has been an innovative pioneer in designing and implementing techniques to improve trout stream habitat. A long-standing hand and glove partnership between fish managers and fish researchers has also provided national leadership in documenting the effectiveness of techniques to increase the abundance of wild trout and improve the quality of sport fishing.

In a new study, research and management are cooperating to evaluate some trout habitat improvement techniques not tested to date in Wisconsin. Bob Hunt, research project leader for the study, brought back ideas for these experimental devices from a couple of professional workshops he attended in states where habitat improvement is done on mountain streams. He thought some of these techniques would be beneficial on higher gradient trout streams in Wisconsin where DNR's conventional techniques have not worked as consistently as they have on the state's low gradient streams.

Hunt has completed pretreatment studies of three study streams, and experimental structures were installed last summer.

Immediate physical changes have been dramatic. Altered stream channels look much more attractive as trout habitat and as fishing water. Preliminary changes in the numbers and sizes of trout present are also encouraging. But, Hunt points out, several more years of research will be needed before firm conclusions can be drawn about the value of the work on these three streams and the potential to use such techniques on other similar streams.

Key factors to evaluate will be durability of the structures to withstand occasional floods and winter ice conditions and, most importantly, the ability of study sites to hold more and larger trout than they did prior to adding experimental structures.



An upstream view of a "cross-log and revetment" device placed in Camp Creek. This structure creates a scour pool as water drops over the cross-log placed at an angle to the flow. Water is diverted in direction toward the bank where the revetment log has been placed. This log provides hiding cover for trout in the pool and also protects the bank from erosion.

This issue of ***Research News*** is the third in a series of reports to the public on Bureau of Research efforts to find out more about how to protect the environment and improve natural conditions for fish and wildlife.

Prepared by Ruth L. Hine

Research lays base for wolf recovery plan

Gordon — Timber wolves have moved back into Wisconsin over the past decade and at the moment are alive and well.

In the 1830s before pioneers settled in Wisconsin, an estimated 10,000 to 25,000 wolves were found throughout the state. Settlers transformed prairies and forest to farmland, hunted such animals as turkey, elk and bison into extirpation, ruined their habitat, and reduced deer populations — causing big predators, such as wolf, to prey on livestock. **A state bounty resulted, and by 1960 the wolf was gone from the state.**

Since 1979, DNR's endangered resources program has supported a research study on wolves. **Biologist Dick Thiel has documented that 20 to 25 wolves (three or four packs) now exist in two roadless areas of northern Wisconsin.**

Thiel, who has been interested in wolves since high school days, has trapped and radio-tagged wolves, followed them on foot and by plane, and has gathered much needed basic information on the wolf population in the state. This research is being used to develop a recovery plan for the timber wolf in Wisconsin, which will present strategies for improving its chances for long-term survival.

DNR recognizes the wolf as a predator that is a valuable component of a healthy northern environment. DNR also insists that the wolf has an intrinsic right to exist.

Here are a few highlights of Thiel's findings:

Wolves are highly social animals that live in family groups referred to as packs. The average pack contains six to 10 members in midwinter — a dominant male and female, pups from the previous year and the current year's pups. **Each family pack ranges over an area of 80 to 150 square miles — roughly twice the size of the city of Madison and its suburbs!**

Dispersers frequently leave their family territory during fall and sometimes travel great distances in short time periods. **One radio-tagged Wisconsin wolf traveled 70 miles in 26 days, and in one day's time moved 23 miles!**

Wolves mature in two years, but seldom breed until they are older. **The dominant pair produces an average of five or six pups about mid-April in dens dug into sandy hillsides, or in hollow logs or caverns.** The den is abandoned by the pack when the pups are six to eight weeks old, and the pups are carried in their mother's mouth to the first of a series of rendezvous sites, or nursery areas, which they will occupy during the summer months.

The white-tailed deer is the wolf's main fare in Wisconsin and comprises over half of its diet. Packs usually kill and consume the equivalent of one deer per wolf every 18 days. At this rate, Wisconsin's wolf population kills approximately 450 deer per year — a drop in the bucket compared to the annual harvest of over 200,000 deer by Wisconsin hunters in recent years! Beaver and snowshoe hare are also important and together comprise an additional 20% of the diet.

The mallard in Wisconsin

Horicon — The mallard is Wisconsin's most important duck — it is present year round, and the number produced and harvested in Wisconsin ranks us in the top 10 states.

Research in Wisconsin since the late 1940s has given considerable insight into mallard populations, their ecology and management, according to Dick Hunt, waterfowl biologist and wetland wildlife research leader. "But it also faces us with some hard choices if we are to realize the potential of this resource," Hunt says.

Mallards overwintering in the state have been increasing in numbers in recent years: 23,800 were censused in both 1984 and 1985, found mostly in southern counties where water in springs, creeks, rivers and urban sites remains unfrozen.

Fifteen duck species breed in Wisconsin; the mallard has accounted for one-third to one-half of all breeding ducks, with numbers ranging from a peak in 1970 of 168,000 to a low in 1977 of 59,000.

Most mallards are on wetlands in the agricultural range, but there has been an increasing shift of mallards to northern forested regions in the past few years. They prefer lakes, ponds and cattail marshes.

Several studies in Wisconsin have been undertaken to evaluate duck nest success in various cover types planted on state and federal waterfowl projects. **Nest success in our agricultural range, particularly on large state-owned wetlands, appears to average below 25% — the production level needed to maintain stable populations.** Nest losses are due primarily to predation by skunk, raccoon, opossum and fox. Predator abundance on Grand River Marsh was revealed when 64 acres of nest cover were live-trapped from April 1 through late June 1980, resulting in the capture of 34 raccoon, five skunk, four opossum, two badger and one squirrel. Despite predator removal, nest success was unaffected (only 8% in 1980).

From a continental viewpoint, Wisconsin is on the eastern fringe of the main mallard migrations between the prairies and the Mississippi Valley winter range. DNR estimates, though, that fall flights of mallards through Wisconsin often exceed one million birds. Many of these mallards use state and federal management areas during migration. Perhaps one-quarter of this total may be resident birds.

The annual harvest of mallards is about 170,000 — dropping to 77,500 in 1962 and peaking at 300,300 in 1974. Current harvest is about 140,000. Birds produced in Wisconsin contribute 27% of the adult kill and 23-37% of the juvenile bag; in some years of good production locally produced birds represent about half the harvest.

DNR research over the past 23 years has provided an understanding of the ecology of mallard problems in Wisconsin and the scope of major management problems: continuing habitat losses, high harvest rates and poor reproductive success from high predation.

How we solve these problems, through wetland preservation, harvest regulation and predator management, needs a great deal of fine tuning by continued research and management efforts, and public understanding and cooperation.

Who will speak for the sharptails?

Park Falls — Sharp-tailed grouse numbers have undergone a progressive decline during the past five decades, and evidence indicates there may be fewer than 1,000 breeding sharptails remaining in northwestern Wisconsin, according to Forest Wildlife Biologist Larry Gregg. "Changes in natural vegetation and land use have caused sharptails to disappear from most of their former range," says Gregg. "Although extinction of the species in the state is unlikely, the strong possibility exists that the birds may eventually be found only in those sites which are being managed for their benefit."

Even if this worst case scenario does not come to pass and a few birds persist on private lands, the need will still exist to select and manage a sufficient amount of land to ensure a viable population of sharptails in northwestern Wisconsin.

Gregg's five years of research on the status of sharptails in the northwest has led to recommendations for maintaining the birds in Wisconsin.

1. **Expedite habitat development on existing management units** to ensure the continued presence of the species on those sites and expand habitat development goals where possible.

2. **Examine additional sites** for suitability as sharptail management areas. Public lands having sandy soils should receive the highest priority.

3. **Encourage development** of those management units that benefit the greatest number of wildlife species, e.g., creation of waterfowl/sharptail habitat.

4. **Change the attitude** that fire is evil. Under proper conditions fire does not destroy wildlife, but is the best natural way to control and maintain plant communities that benefit many wildlife species.

5. **Establish prescribed burning teams** and remove unnecessary restrictions on burning in order to expand the use of fire as a management tool.

6. **Enlighten people** about the importance of savanna habitats in Wisconsin's history and the need to maintain a portion of that heritage not just for sharptails, but for our children and grandchildren to experience and enjoy.

DNR wildlife specialists are reviewing the recommendations. **"Our history is filled with examples of advocates rising up to defend a wildlife species whose existence is threatened by habitat loss,"** Gregg concludes. "But who will speak for the sharptail?"

Barn owl movement

Madison — DNR's Bureau of Endangered Resources has initiated a radio telemetry study in southeastern Wisconsin to determine the movements, habitat use and dispersal of three to 10 barn owls produced in captivity, and if feasible, to also study members of a family group of wild barn owls.

Since 1982, DNR, in cooperation with the Milwaukee County Zoo, has released 43 barn owls in southeastern Wisconsin. All were produced in captivity. The fate of only three birds is known: all died within five miles of the release site due to starvation or great horned owl predation. The present study will enable DNR to begin to understand what happens to captive birds after release.

Very little is known regarding the movement of wild barn owls in Wisconsin. There have been only 11 recoveries of birds originally banded in the state; these indicate that juveniles, in particular, migrate considerable distances.

continued on pg.19 after special nonpoint report

Research News

Northern pike are active under the ice

Spooner — Have you ever wondered what northern pike do under the ice while you sit patiently for hours waiting for the tip-up flag to go up? Radio tracking of northern pike in a 200-acre northern Wisconsin lake during December is providing some of the answers.

Fishery Biologist Terry Margenau surgically implanted small radio transmitters (about the size of a dime) into the body cavity of 19- to 26-inch northern pike. Researchers then tracked the radioed pike at one-hour intervals for 24- to 36-hour periods to get an idea of the pike's daily routine.

"The pike generally remained within restricted areas ranging in size from less than one acre to 11 acres," Margenau said. "However, don't think that pike can't move when they want to — one pike demonstrated its mobility by traveling almost a mile in a 36-hour period within a 70-acre area!" The radioed pike also showed a preference for areas of weedy vegetation, and even during long-range movements pike seldom ventured far away from vegetation.

Activity decreased considerably after sunset (4:30 p.m.) and increased again after sunrise (7:00 a.m.).

Northern pike.

Northern pike are generally considered lurking predators who wait in one spot to ambush their prey. However, Margenau has found that pike move from area to area, frequently during December, probably in search of food. **"Rather than a lurking, sit and wait predator, northern pike in early winter may be more of a sit and wait, then move to a better spot type predator."** This behavior would certainly increase the pike's opportunities to capture prey and may partly be the reason why pike fishermen are so successful during early ice fishing season.

These findings evolved as an interesting sidelight to a larger study dealing with the growth of northern pike in relation to the availability of forage fish.

Lakes can naturally buffer against acid rain

Madison — DNR has been in the forefront of acid rain research. During the past year, attention has been focused on the natural ability of lakes to buffer against acid rain. Research is being done on this by a team from DNR's Bureau of Research, the Canadian government, the universities of Manitoba and Wisconsin, the US Geological Survey and Tetra Tech, Inc.

"We based this recent effort of ours on some pretty interesting information discovered by Canadian researchers," explained Doug Knauer, DNR's chief of water resources research. **They found that as acids in lake water diffuse into bottom sediments, they are broken down by bacteria. During this process, the bacteria consume hydrogen. Since hydrogen contributes to acidity, its removal helps to buffer the lake from further acid rain effects.**

"When our team examined data from Crystal Lake in Vilas County — which has very low alkalinity, or buffering capacity, and is not presently acidic," Knauer said, "the importance of the bacterial action became even more evident." Four years of information were applied to a mathematical acid rain model. Using the model, researchers hypothetically removed bacterial processes that consume hydrogen. The result? Without bacterial action in lake sediments, Crystal Lake would be acidic.

Although more research must be done, this study so far has helped researchers understand natural processes that are important in protecting many of Wisconsin's extremely sensitive lakes from becoming acidic.

Life history of a threatened plant

Vernon County — A rare and beautiful perennial plant, northern monkshood, lives only in the driftless areas of Wisconsin and Iowa and at several sites in Ohio and New York. Since little is known about this threatened species, DNR has enlisted the help of the plant ecology lab at UW-Milwaukee to uncover the mysteries of where it is found and why.

"The curious thing about this species," says researcher Margaret Kuchenreuther, "is its preference for cool sites at the base of sandstone cliffs and on limestone talus slopes. We're currently trying to shed some light on how this habitat may shape the plant's life cycle."

She and other researchers from the university are beginning their third year on the project, which is funded by the US Fish and Wildlife Service under the Endangered Species Act of 1973. This study is part of the first attempt at managing a threatened plant on a national level. Similar research is being initiated on monkshood in New York State.

Field research in Wisconsin is being conducted at several sites in Vernon County. There, plants are mapped and marked to provide information on numbers of plants, predation, mortality and regeneration. At the same time, laboratory studies are being conducted in Milwaukee to test how specific environmental factors influence growth and reproduction.

"We have begun to piece together a picture of how this unusual member of the monkshood genus reproduces and grows," says fellow researcher Robert Cervelli. "Although seeds germinate readily in the field, seedlings grow very slowly, if at all, their first year. Reproduction may occur primarily through vegetative means."

The team is investigating how the plant is able to reproduce itself through tuber multiplication and bulbil production. Bulbils are small bulbs which form along the stem and may produce new plants. In addition, the team has come up with a way to get up to 95% germination in planted seeds. Previously, most attempts resulted in poor germination — 10% or less. This has helped considerably in providing plants for laboratory and transplant experiments.

Northern monkshood

Findings such as these will provide a sound basis on which to plan seed plantings, transplant studies, site preservation and other management decisions. The ultimate goal of the project is to increase the numbers of northern monkshood so that its existence is no longer threatened.

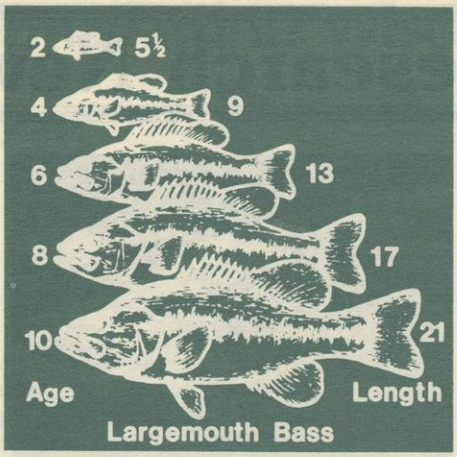
New approach to stunted panfish

Oshkosh — Stunted panfish are a common problem in many Wisconsin lakes. Managers have been trying to find a solution by increasing predator fish or thinning out overabundant panfish.

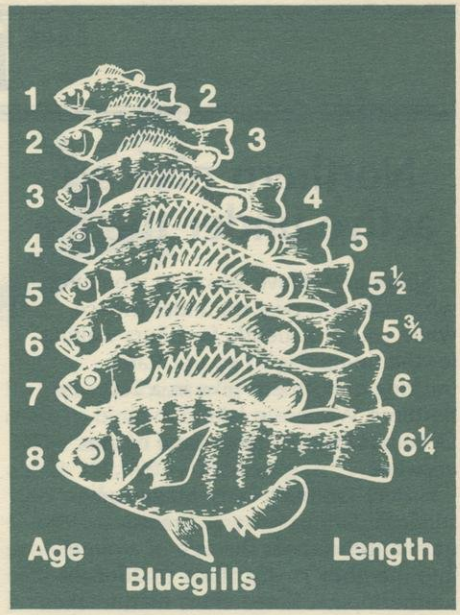
A method being researched by Fishery Biologist Keith Otis is aimed at increasing predators in a different way. The fishing season will be completely closed year-round on largemouth bass, northern pike and walleyes for three to six years in Round Lake, Waushara County.

If the closed season leads to an increase in the numbers and size of predator fish, primarily largemouth bass, then they in turn should feed on more of the small, slow growing panfish, primarily bluegills. If the panfish population of Round Lake is reduced, then remaining panfish will have more food and space available to them and should grow larger. Currently in Round Lake, only 4% of bluegills over three inches long are more than six inches in length. This means that you may have to catch 25 bluegills in order to find one "keeper" over six inches!

If this technique is successful, it could be a very natural way to restore the balance of fish populations in many Wisconsin lakes.



Largemouth bass growth is good but more larger bass are needed to test whether they can thin out the overabundant panfish in Round Lake.



Bluegill growth is very slow in Round Lake due to overcrowded populations competing for a limited food supply.

Paying for fish and wildlife research

Madison — Through the years, DNR has received national acclaim for its fisheries and wildlife programs. "It costs money and lots of time to develop the techniques used to manage deer, trout and all the other fish and wildlife species in Wisconsin," says Federal Aid Coordinator Tom Niebauer. "Fortunately, fish and wildlife research programs have been able to use monies paid by hunters and anglers to fund many of our individual studies."

Here's how this works. Back in 1937, the US Congress passed the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act, and in 1950 passed a similar act for fish restoration. These programs are frequently referred to as the Pittman-Robertson (P-R) and Dingell-Johnson (D-J) programs. The P-R and D-J acts placed an excise tax on sport hunting and fishing equipment. The federal government collects the tax and then gives out the funds to each state based on the number of people who buy hunting and fishing licenses. Unless you buy a fishing rod, reel, lures or other fishing related equipment, or a rifle, shotgun, pistol, shells, bow or other hunting related equipment, you pay no tax into this program.

In these two programs Wisconsin ranks among the top six or seven states in dollars received. That's because we have over 710,000 licensed hunters and 1.5 million licensed anglers.

Wisconsin has used these funds for a variety of projects, but historically fish and wildlife research projects have been high on the list. Trout stream habitat improvement techniques, deer population estimates by management unit, guidelines for wildlife management on both forest and farm lands and studies of fish distribution in Wisconsin are some examples of the 70 fish and wildlife research projects that are currently being funded with P-R and D-J funds.

Why surveys?

Madison — If you have ever received a DNR questionnaire on your hunting activities, you may have wondered who sent it to you and why. The Technical Services Section in the Bureau of Research sends out about nine questionnaires to hunters and trappers in Wisconsin each year. Topics include the goose harvest at Horicon, turkey harvest, small game harvest and the distribution of deer hunters.

Only about 45,000 individuals, out of approximately one-million people who hunt and/or trap, receive one or more of these surveys. Each person is scientifically chosen to represent a number of other hunters or trappers. Thus, it is important for each person to fill out the survey so that the experiences of all hunters and trappers are represented and the results are meaningful.

Each survey is designed to gather information on the amount of hunting pressure and harvest for a particular species. This information is used by DNR's wildlife managers to maintain an adequate supply of game. We have added a sociologist to our staff of statisticians to investigate questions associated with the quality of your hunting experience. This is necessary if we are to maintain the quality hunting experience that we have in Wisconsin.

So the next time you receive a questionnaire from DNR about your hunting, trapping or fishing, please remember to complete it and mail it back. Your response is needed and used to assure an adequate supply of game animals and a quality outdoor experience.

The art of Virgil Beck

J. Wolfred Taylor, Editor

The talent of a young Wisconsin Wildlife Artist from Wausau is beginning to be recognized nationwide.*

Virgil Beck is one of a young, new breed of wildlife artists who is restoring prestige to an art form that goes back to the middle ages. He paints in an unorthodox manner without an easel, holding the work on his lap as he makes each careful brush stroke. In a style described as neo classic, Beck's acrylic paintings reflect an extraordinary talent that has been shaped by extensive university training. He holds UW degrees in both fine arts and natural resources. His careful rendition of a principal subject in each painting is reinforced by detailed background that in his best work borders on the surreal. It is an effect Beck strives for and one that has made his work both popular and memorable.

In a painting called *Misty Blue* that appeared on the cover of this magazine, Beck's main subject was a record chinook salmon hooked by a charter boat angler. The big fish dominates. But it is surrounded by an endless school of alewives and the water it swims in, refracted by sunlight, is almost tangible. The anglers above are unaware of the striking scene below.

"*Misty Blue*'s water is clearer, far beyond what you would actually see in reality. I tried to make it look like an infinite distance—you could just keep going for miles and miles in that water. The idea for the alewives came to me once when I was out diving and a school came right at me. I thought when they hit it would be like a solid object, but they just flowed right around me. And they looked scared, like I was a predator. It was really weird!"

Misty Blue won first place in 1984 for acrylic painting in the Outdoor Writers Association of America angling art competition at Phoenix.

Another painting with an even more pronounced surrealistic feel appeared in *Fishing Facts* magazine. It is a perch as seen through the mouth of the muskie about to devour it. Before Beck painted the predatory tunnel of teeth that makes this work so menacing, he studied objects through a real muskie mouth from an old trophy. A few bubbles rise as the big fish swirls and at the edge of the painting there is a hint of surface water with sunshine streaming through to backlight the perch.

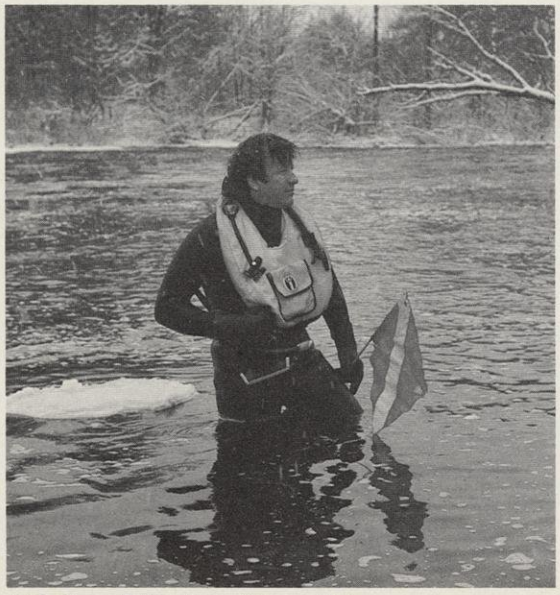
"Anything you can imagine," says Beck, "should be considered art if it's good. A painting needs a certain amount of suspense, but what makes it great is the emotional response you arouse."

Beck gets his superlative depiction of water and fish from years spent snorkeling and observing with an artist's eye. "I like diving a lot. I'd do it all the time if I could. I always snorkel. If I use SCUBA gear, the sound of the bubbles scares the fish, but snorkeling I've been as close as from here to the door to 25 or 30 pound muskies. Bass are aggressive. They've come right up and looked in my face mask."

His intimate way with water is not exclusively submarine. It also shows on the surface. In a painting of a pair of Barrow's goldeneye exhibited at the Leigh Yawkey Woodsen Art Museum at Wausau in 1981 Beck's water is slightly riffled by wind. Its texture of grey shadow and blue distorts the birds' abstract reflections. It is water we all have seen.

Beck's work has been shown nationwide from Anchorage, Alaska to San Antonio, Texas and has won numerous first place awards in various competitions. He has designed 11 stamps in the series issued by the National Wildlife Federation and helped illustrate the important scientific reference work *Fishes of Wisconsin* by Dr. George Becker.

Beck's reputation for doing excellent fish stems from a brochure he illustrated for DNR in 1977 when he was only 22 years old. It included all Wisconsin gamefish and required 38 different paintings. Since then his fish have been on the cover of many national magazines and numerous catalogs.



"I'd dive all the time if I could."

***Virgil Beck's address is Box 66, Stevens Point WI 54481**

Artist Virgil Beck at work.

While the fish reputation is richly deserved, Beck is frankly concerned that in Wisconsin it overshadows his work on other wildlife which is equally expert and sensitive.

He points out that he has sold paintings since the age of 13 and 80% were whitetailed deer or ruffed grouse. His work has included African game, sheep, bear, moose and species from every continent.

Beck believes hunters are more sensitive than non-hunters think they are.

"They commission more artwork than anglers and they have an eye for beauty. Hunters are critical about detail. The entire setting has to be just right. They never want themselves in the painting. In almost 100% of the commissions I do, they want the animal alive, magnificent, a treasured memory. If it's a deer they are pretty specific about the antlers."

Before he does a painting, Beck makes sketches of its basic elements using live animals as models. Then he starts drawing on the canvas and puts down the basic colors.

"As I paint, changes always come up. Things that looked good in the sketch don't always turn out well in the painting. When I finish, I always make final revisions in the field."

Beck's favorite medium is acrylic on masonite. "Working with canvas is like painting on a trampoline," he says.

"I prefer acrylic because you can use it like oil or dilute it and use it like watercolor. Acrylic is good for blending and dries quickly so that you can make corrections right away. With oil there's a long wait. And acrylic is translucent when it dries so that the color underneath shows through."

He says many artists who don't have a fast, accurate eye for color find acrylic difficult because it dries before they can mix the exact shade they want.

Beck is also a gifted cartoonist and has done several for this magazine. He has a wild sense of the ridiculous which makes his cartoons a little outrageous. Just about every letter we receive from him here in the editorial office is decorated with one that makes fun of something.

A few years ago Beck took a job in Los Angeles doing color design and other work for the Walt Disney EPCOT Center in Florida. "I thought I'd landed on Venus," he said. "It was alien—hot and dry with little vegetation and a brown sky. The thing that seemed most odd to me was that in town there was no bird life, no insects and no butterflies."

Whitetail deer

Beck's finishing touch is field work.

He came back to Wisconsin after a bad bout with smog, happy to be close to wildlife again.

For years Beck has sketched at game farms and zoos on a regular basis and thinks such practice is essential. He quotes Wisconsin's dean of wildlife artists, Owen Gromme, who calls it "doing your homework" and says, "You should know your subject well enough so that you can pretty well sketch from memory before you start to paint. I make as many sketches as I can from different angles to get a three dimensional sense of the animal. They have body language just like people do and I think if you do a lot of sketching from life, you put that into your painting."

Like Gromme, Beck has also done some taxidermy and mounted many animals and fish, a knowledge that gives his art an extra dimension.

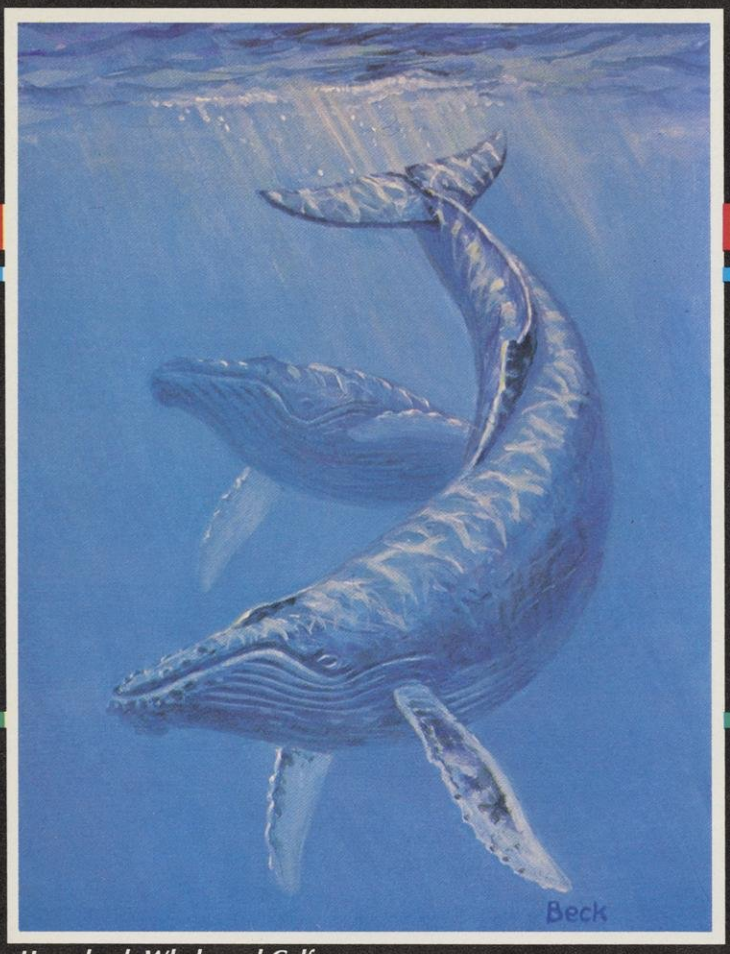
Beck is critical of wildlife artists who "literally copy from photographs." He thinks photos can be an aid but that "painting a duck from a snapshot just doesn't have the same flavor it would if you were actually out there hunting ducks."

His interest in wildlife art began as a young boy when his father took him hunting or fishing nearly every weekend. By the time he was 10 his aunt was selling his sketches of deer at her tavern.

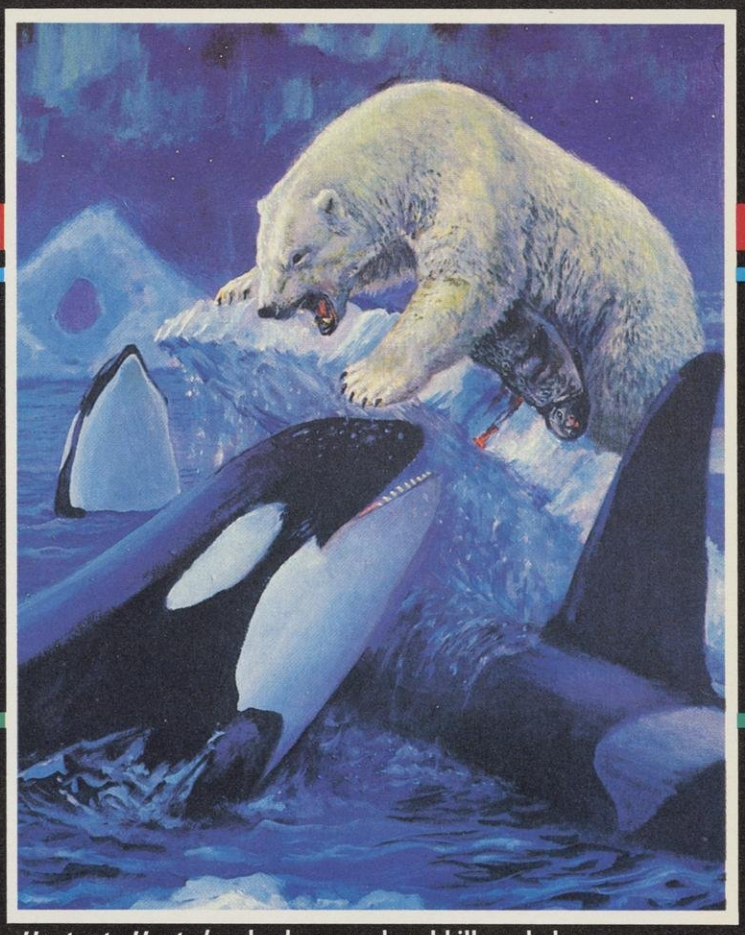
"If you don't do any hunting or fishing, you really get stale when it comes to painting. Your brain is like a computer," says Beck. "You have to supply it with outdoor experiences. The more hunting I do, the more enthusiastic I am about painting it."

Beck sums up the relationship between his art and the outdoors this way: "Actually, I'm an outdoor person first and then an artist. I had enthusiasm for the outdoors before I did for art. It's a means of expressing what I like to do."

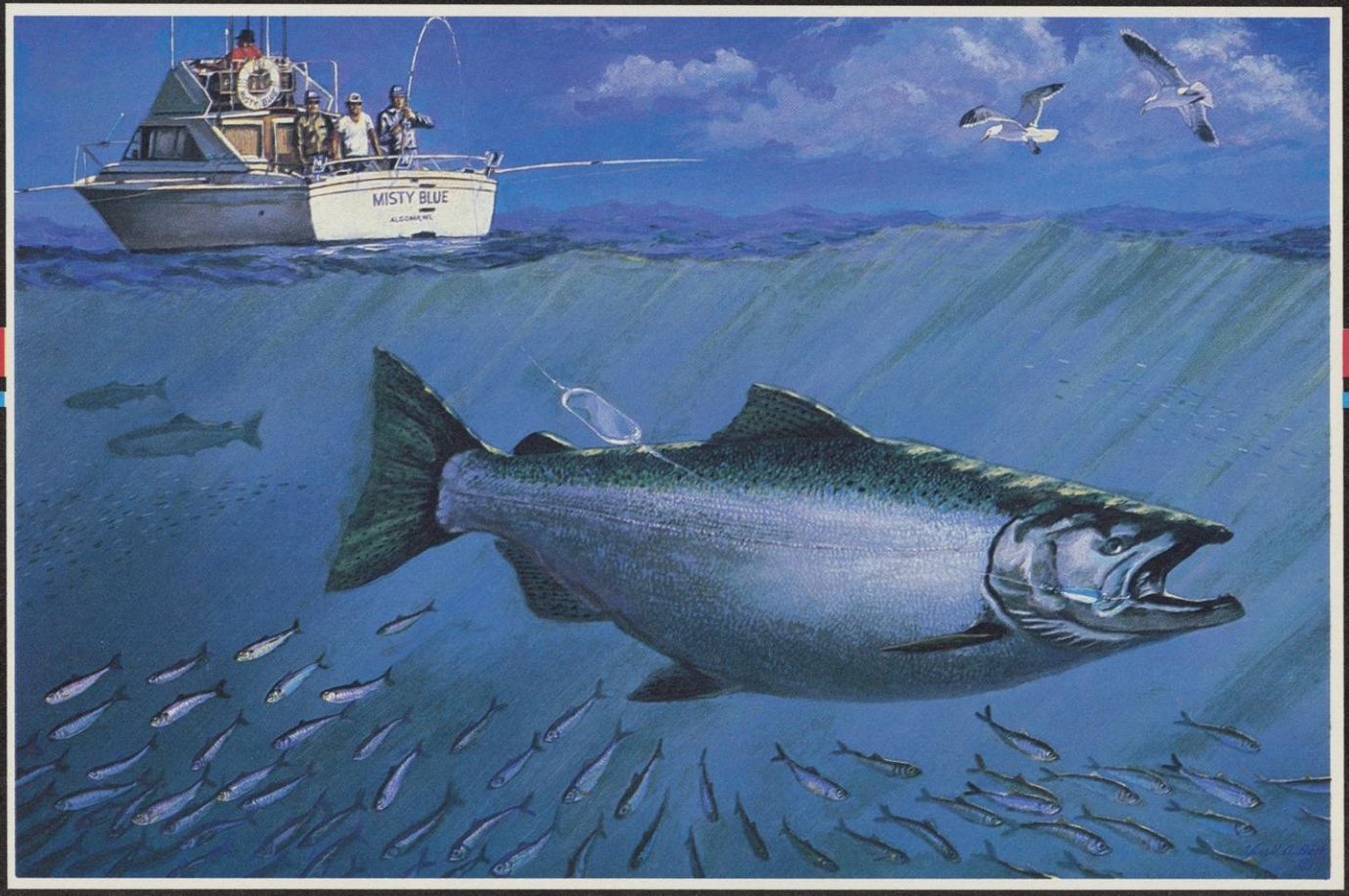
Most observers will agree that he expresses it very well indeed.



Humpback Whale and Calf.
This was a National Wildlife Federation stamp.



Hunter to Hunted, polar bear, seal and killer whales

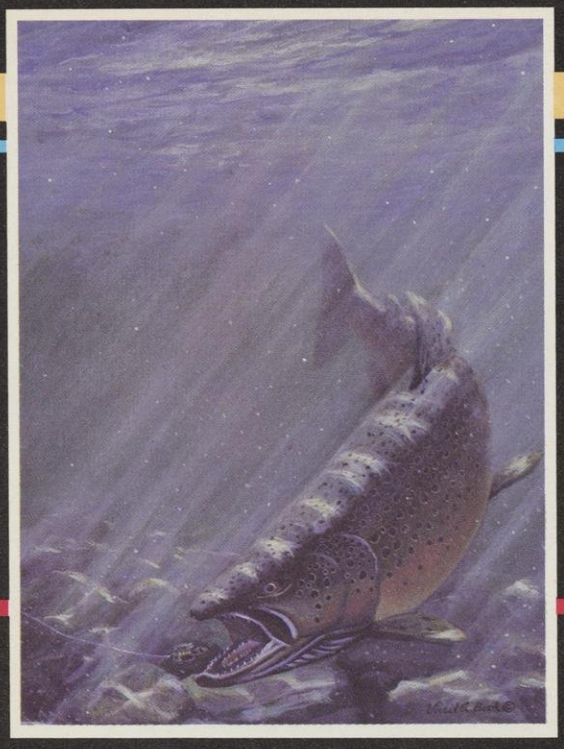


Misty Blue. A record chinook at Algoma.

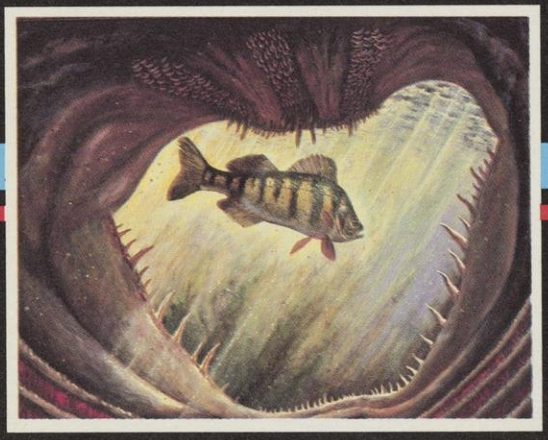
English Springer Spaniels

Grand Slam

A gallery of Wisconsin artists



Matuka Mauler-brown trout by Virgil Beck

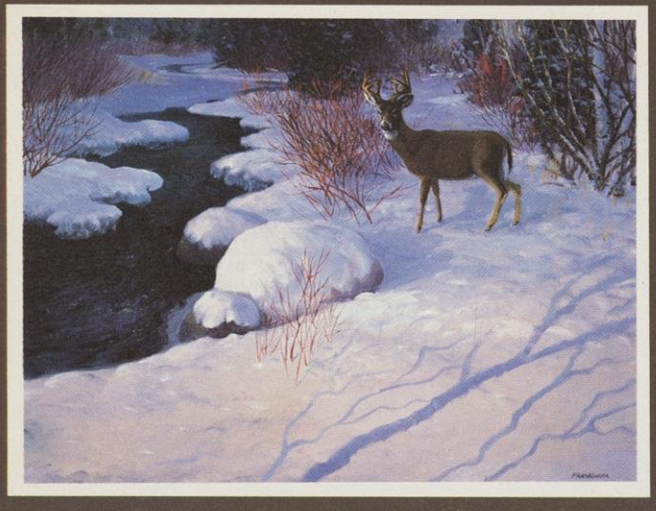


Perch in the Muskie's Maw
by Virgil Beck, courtesy of *Fishing Facts* magazine

Bluegills by Scott Zoellick

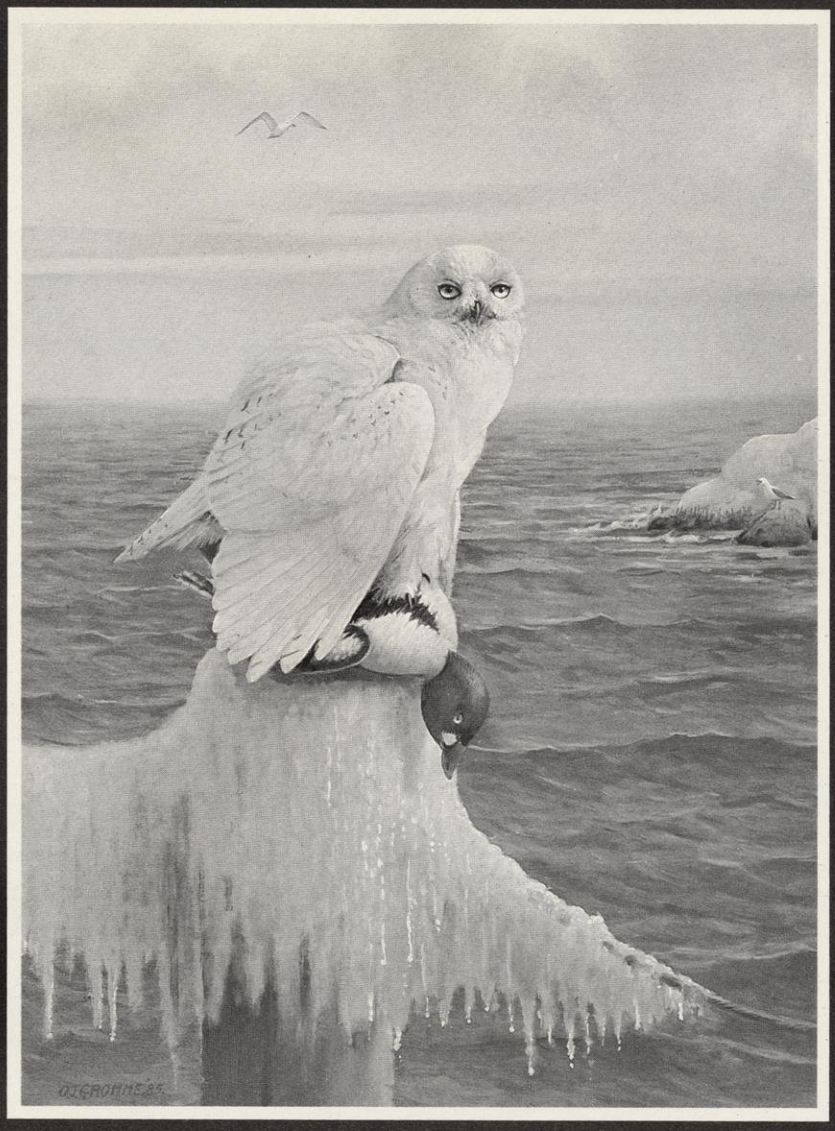
Brown Trout by Samuel Timm

December Twilite by Jerry Gadamus



Buck at Winter Creek by Bob Frankowiak

Clark County Buck by Robert A. Scott



Snowy Owl by Owen Gromme, courtesy of Wild Wings

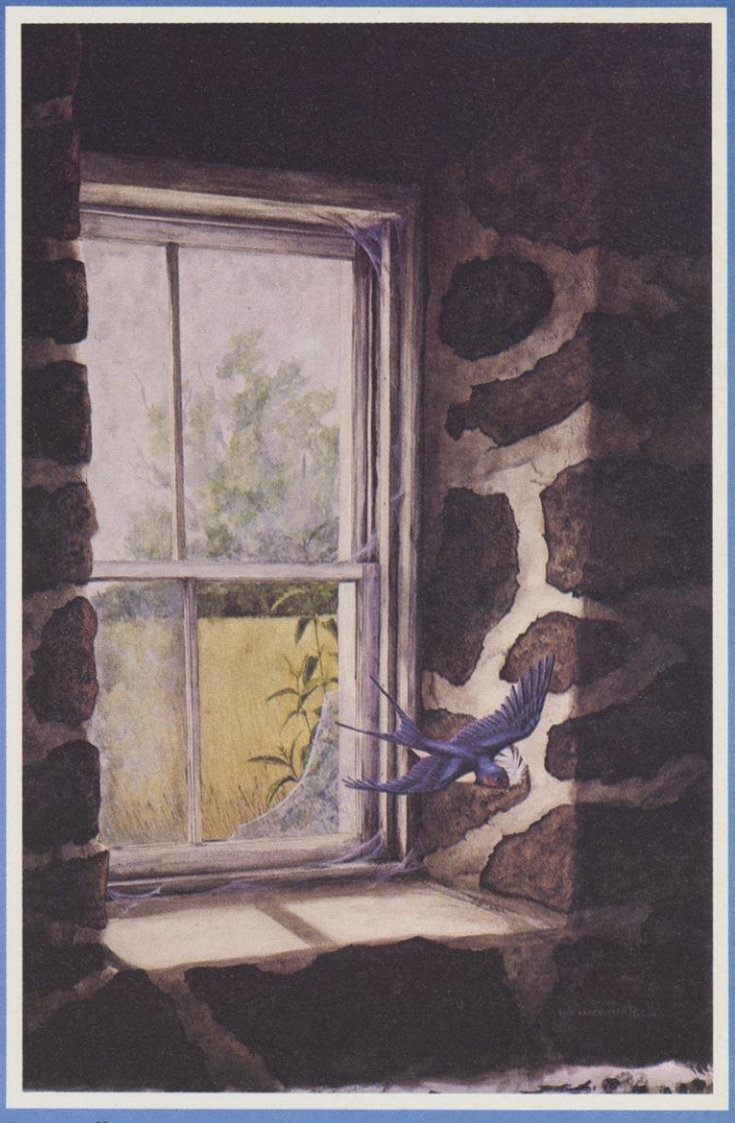
Goshawk and Squirrel by C. L. Peterson

Rocking Chair by Nick Pitl

Canadian Geese, scratchboard by Myra Nye

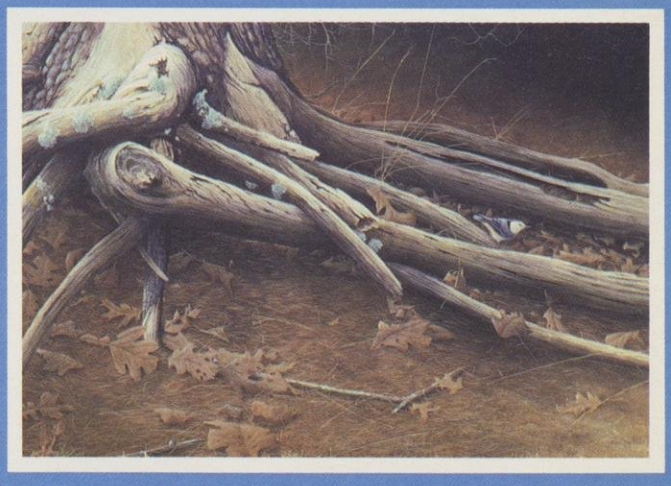
Four Flushed, fox and bobwhite quail, by Edward J. Bierly

Ruby-throated Hummingbird **by William Bloom**



Barnswallow **by Elva H. Paulson**

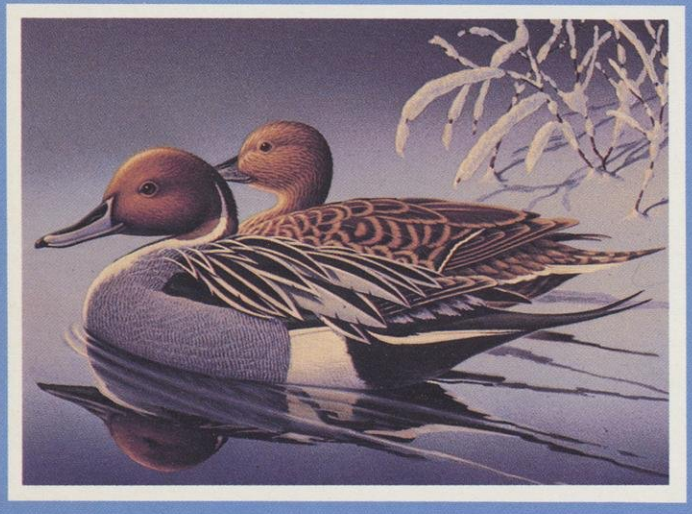
Ruby-throated Hummingbird **by Michael J. Riddet**



White-breasted Nuthatch **by Michael J. Riddet**

Kingfisher **by Bob Frankowiak**

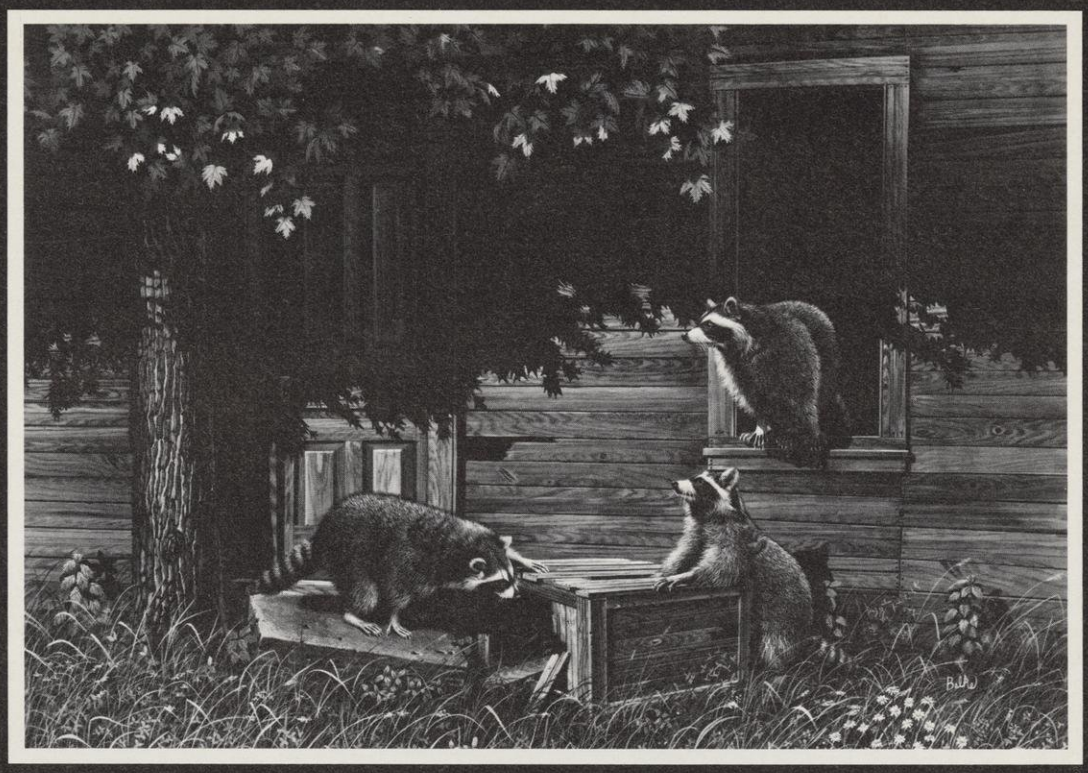
***Keeper of the Loft*–barn owl by Jerry Gadamus**



Pintails **by Nick Pitl**

Flight Song, Bobolinks **by Jonathan Wilde**

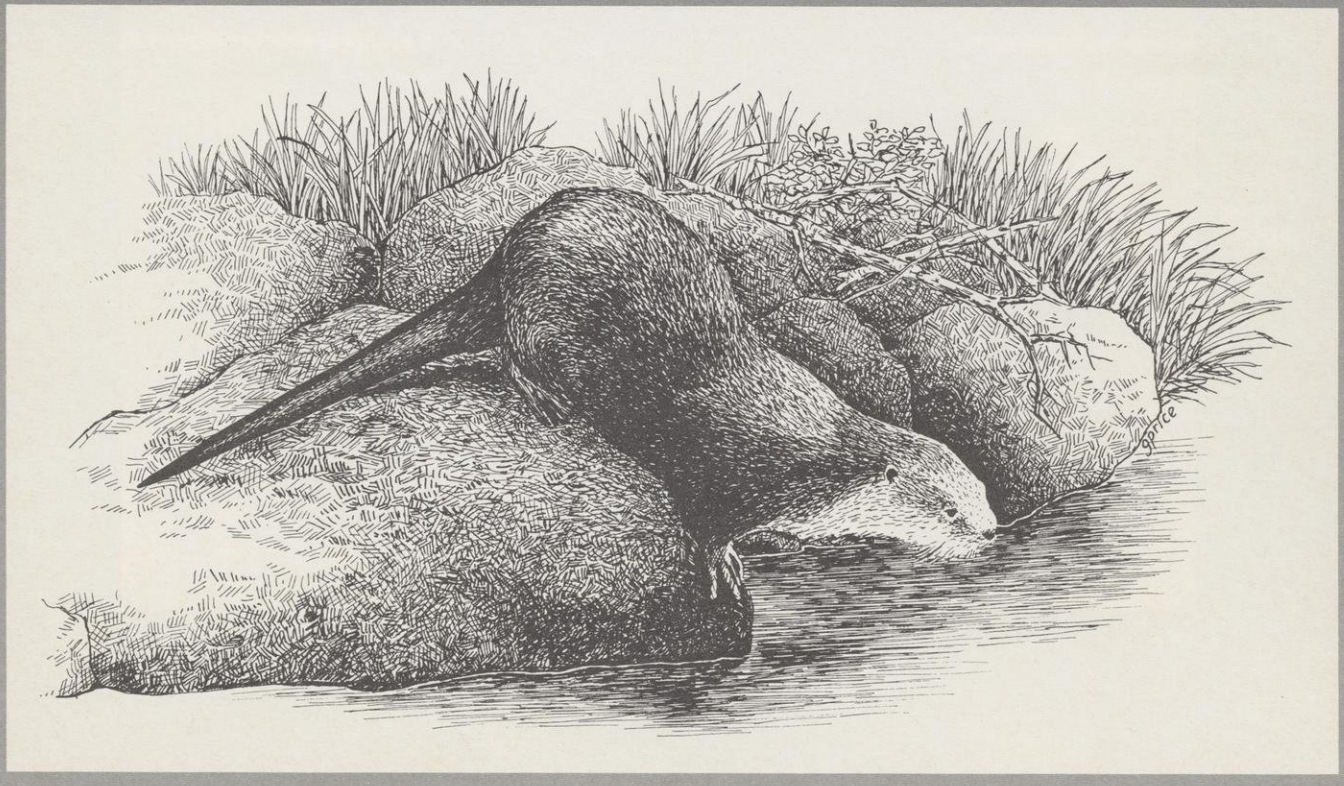
Barn Pigeons **by Robert A. Scott**



Homesteading by Don Balke

American Badger by Don Balke

Deep Woods **by John Boettcher**



Otter **by Georgine Price**

***Fox* by Jim McEvoy**

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John Boettcher
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*Does not include those from the Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum

Readers

Transportation Response

I must take issue with articles in the September/October issue of *Wisconsin Natural Resources* which dealt with the South Beltline construction and wetland restoration work.

Our native wetlands, with their subtle and complex interactions of soil, water, flora, fauna and microorganisms, are difficult and enigmatic ecosystems—to imply that such interactions can be duplicated is to mislead the public.

Relocation will directly destroy 20 acres of wetlands (DOT estimate). Construction and subsequent highway activity will impact or destroy many more acres, with salt and oil runoff, air and noise pollution, etc. The Mud Lake wetlands are a crucial part of the Yahara River system and act to hold up sediments and chemicals from getting into the river and into lakes Kegonsa and Waubesa.

Data relating to freshwater wetlands restoration is almost nonexistent. A recent study done by a private firm for New York state's DOT is an important first step in a procedure that is today not even an art, much less a science.

So the question is, why is DNR pushing Beltline restoration so hard? The answer, I believe, is that DNR and DOT found that providing a restoration plan served to defuse opposition to this wetlands destruction.

And it is obvious from discussion of wetland restoration along Highway 50, also mentioned in the transportation report, that DOT and DNR plan to use this restoration argument to destroy other wetlands. No amount of propaganda from public information officers is going to fool responsible conservationists. We want our wetlands preserved, and running highways through them is not preservation.
Thomas J. Murn, Belleville

The *Wisconsin Natural Resources* magazine special report, "Transportation and the Environment," is terrific—just saw it and couldn't be more pleased with the professional job done!
Lowell B. Jackson, Secretary
Wisconsin Department of Transportation

I am an immigrant to the United States. I am pleased to be able to purchase *Wisconsin Natural Resources* magazine to bring this state I live in closer to me.

But the little I have traveled so far here, I instantly noticed the Port Washington photo in reverse on page 28 of the September/October special report about transportation and the environment. Hope this is an isolated case, as it is surprising the misconception this can bring to some viewers. How the artist's rendition can be misconstrued I question.
Ed B. Richardson, Beloit

Sorry for any confusion our turnabout of Port Washington caused. Unfortunately, it was not an isolated case. We also reversed Bong Bridge on page 25.

Reverses are part of our production process, and this time we flopped when we should have flipped.

Thank you for the September/October special report on transportation and the environment. It was immensely heartening to learn of positive acts of cooperation to protect the environment in recent years.
Frances Hurst, Madison

Hunting, Fishing, Trapping

The DNR magazine's extolling trapping and the fur industry is duly acknowledged. In a way, I feel sorry for you and all trappers. You have lost forever the capacity to feel compassion and pity for helpless, exploited ones! Apparently though, you have the capability to feel great pleasure in inflicting long, agonizing death upon helpless wild ones. You are missing part of what most people have, namely compassion.
C. Leonhardt, Redgranite

Write...

I am 73 years old and have loved to fish and hunt all my life. Up to this year, I have run a short trapline, but high water from all the rain has decimated the local population and makes it hard to get around. I still go deer hunting, but my legs are not too good. So, I am content to sit on a stand in my own woods. I also do quite a bit of ice fishing.
Marshall Borofka, Birchwood

The November-December issue of *Wisconsin Natural Resources* was terrific. I enjoyed every story and look forward to more in 1986.

The magazine referred to devices known as the Sav-A-Life animal warning system. Are these available to the public? If so, where?
Mildred Zimmermann, Lake Mills

The last issue was fine and educational. "The road kill" and "Car-deer collisions" articles made for heavy reading. What's the address of Sav-A-Life Inc. animal warning devices?
Walter Mager, Havana

We have received many inquiries about Sav-A-Life deer alert devices. For more information, write Sav-A-Life, Inc., Box 1226, New York, NY 10025 or call (212) 316-0307.

I recently moved to Wisconsin. The fact that this state is not completely cultivated and tamed by man makes for much beauty. I enjoy reading your magazine.
Brad Bahler, Athens

A Unique Sighting

This photo was taken on a back road west of Eagle River. I've hunted all my life and live in the north, but this is the first deer of its kind I've ever seen.
Marvin L. Cain, Plymouth

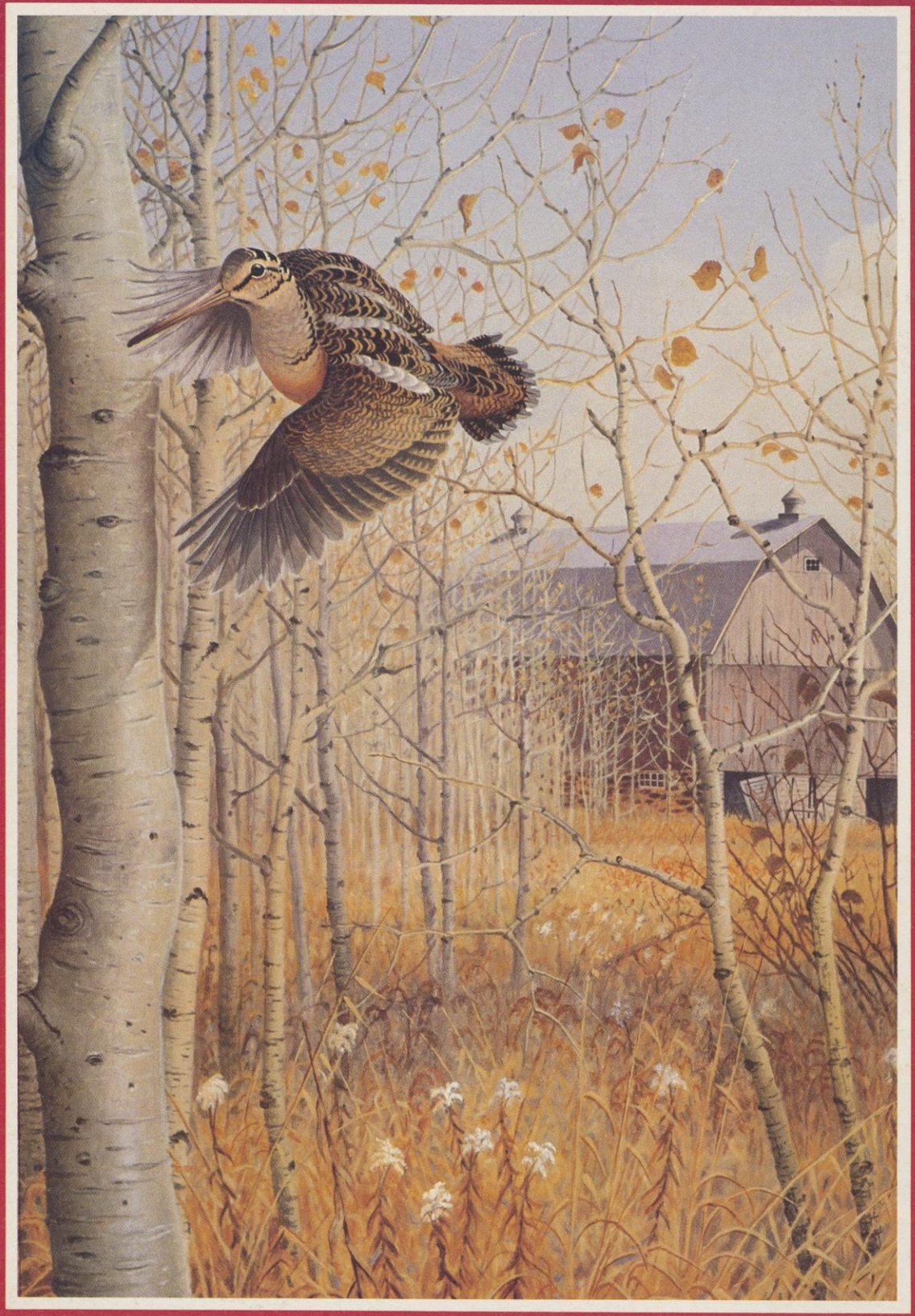
Thank you for sharing with us an uncommon sight. True albino deer with pink eyes are a rare occurence in nature. These unusual animals are protected in Wisconsin. It is illegal to hunt them.

I read with much interest DNR's magazine, *Wisconsin Natural Resources*, and have wondered if, when, why, you have or have not printed articles about schools and what they have done or are doing regarding the environment and outdoor education.
Merle W. Frommelt, Administrative Assistant
B.A. Kennedy School, Prairie du Chien

The January/February 1985 issue of DNR's magazine contained a directory of Wisconsin environmental education and nature centers, which discussed the programs and facilities of 61 centers and included articles about outdoor/environmental education in the state. A copy of the directory was sent to each Wisconsin school principal in April 1985 as part of a packet focusing on earth week.

Since August 1984, DNR's Bureau of Information and Education has distributed the quarterly newsletter "EE News: Environmental Education in Wisconsin" to all Wisconsin school principals. The newsletter provides timely information on environmental education events in Wisconsin.

For almost a year, DNR has been very involved in a new wildlife education program, Project WILD. Since last April, approximately 1,000 educators have taken part in Project WILD workshops. Schools were informed of the program through a variety of methods: newsletters, brochures, a news article in the July/August 1985 Wisconsin Natural Resources ***magazine and a feature story in the recent November/December issue.***



Woodcock by Jonathan Wilde

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