

WITH THIS ISSUE

2016 FRIENDS OF WISCONSIN STATE PARKS CALENDAR
CONSERVING WISCONSIN'S NATURAL HERITAGE

WISCONSIN NATURAL RESOURCES

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AN EXCEPTIONAL
EFFORT FOR

ELK

Deer done right

Owl irruptions

Pheasant stocking
success



Back in the day

Poynette native recalls his unusual part-time job at the State Game Farm 72 years ago.

Kathryn A. Kahler

If you're a teenager with a part-time job nowadays, you likely work in retail or a fast-food venue. Even rural teens who work on farms probably can't make the claim that 88-year-old magazine reader Bob Vosen, Fond du Lac, made in a letter to the editor last year.

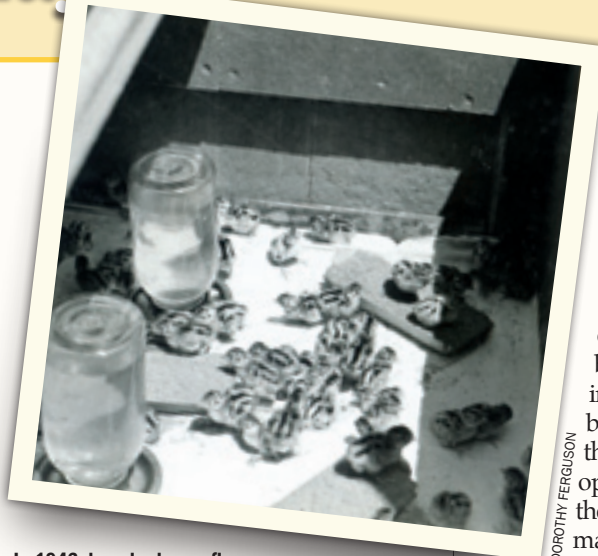
"During high school in 1943," Vosen wrote, "I was employed at the State Game Farm in Poynette. I washed pheasant diapers."

Say what? A lot has changed in 72 years, but diapers for pheasants?

"In the brooder houses where the chicks were," Vosen explained, "they had these flour sacks that they laid out on the floor where the chicks would feed. And of course, they defecated all over them and they had to be taken out and washed. That's what I did. We had an old wringer washing machine that stood out in the field hooked up to electricity. That was my job to throw those things in the washer."



Chicks are reared in environmentally controlled and bio-secure buildings.



In 1943, brooder house floors were spread with cottonseed hulls or pine shavings and then covered with white cloth.



KATHRYN A. KAHLER

Today, chopped straw has replaced cloth floor covering.

A search of the *Wisconsin Conservation Bulletin* from the era provided a step-by-step account of "Tips on Pheasant-Rearing" (May 1949), including these details on the diaper thing: "Preparing the brooder house for chicks is most important. Be sure to disinfect the house using a good commercial disinfectant, scrubbing thoroughly, and allow to dry out. This cleaning should be done five days before you put the birds in the brooder house. Spread litter on the floor about two inches deep, using treated cottonseed hulls or good pine shavings.

"Regardless of the type of brooder houses used and when the birds are confined to them, be sure to cover the litter with cloth (white if possible) or rough paper. Never use slick or smooth paper as this causes the birds to slip and spraddle their legs. Continue the use of cloth three or four days."

The word "disposable" was a foreign concept in the 1940s, so of course, the cloth "diapers" were washed and reused, probably for several years.

"We now use chopped straw in the

brooders, without cloth covers," according to Tom Gilles who has fed, watered and nurtured pheasant chicks at the Poynette Game Farm for the last 34 years. These days, pheasant chicks are reared in two environmentally controlled brood-rearing barns erected in the early 1980s to increase bio-security measures and the efficiency of chick rearing operations. From mid-April to the first week of July, approximately 92,000 chicks are started in the brooder buildings. In the fall, after selecting next season breeders, approximately 75,000 pheasants are released on public hunting grounds as mature adults.

And even though the modernized procedures no longer include washing diapers, the chopped straw is cleaned out with each new batch of chicks and spread on the fields or composted.



MEET BOB VOSEN



KATHRYN A. KAHLER

Bob Vosen wore many hats while living in Poynette. After his high school stint at the game farm and a few summers at the fish hatchery in Woodruff, in 1952 he was appointed Poynette village manager by Harley W. MacKenzie, former director of the Wisconsin Conservation Department. Vosen was also assessor, village commissioner, supervisor of the water and sewer departments, and did a little dog-catching, before moving to Fond du Lac where he worked 30 years for the Wisconsin Department of Revenue.

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



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FRONT COVER: A bull elk in the Clam Lake area located in the heart of the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest in northern Wisconsin.

JEFF MORDEN

BACK COVER: Striking cliffs of Baraboo quartzite, colored by iron oxide, are exposed at Ableman's Gorge State Natural Area in Sauk County. INSET: A block of Baraboo quartzite exhibiting ripple marks created by water moving over a sandy sea floor, which was subsequently metamorphosed. To order a guidebook to State Natural Areas for \$18.00 (postage paid), send a check or money order payable to "Endangered Resources Fund – Guidebook" to: DNR, Bureau of Natural Heritage Conservation, P.O. Box 7921, Madison, WI 53707. For more information about the SNA Program visit dnr.wi.gov and search "SNA."

BACK COVER AND INSET PHOTO BY THOMAS A. MEYER, DNR

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An overview of the Jackson County 7-acre acclimation pen where the Kentucky elk were held for health testing until they were approved for release in August.

DNR FILE

From coal mines to jack pines

THE REVITALIZATION OF WISCONSIN'S ELK REINTRODUCTION EFFORT.

Meredith Penthorn

“Here they come!” As the two trucks pulling livestock trailers emerged through the trees over a quarter mile away, the smile on Al Jacobson’s face said it all. After almost 20 years of unwavering advocacy for an elk herd in his home county, Jacobson’s dream was coming true.

“It’s hard to believe it’s really happening,” he said.

The guests of honor, standing up to five feet at the shoulder with sweeping headgear, coarse reddish-brown hair, and an eerie vocalization that will penetrate right down to your soul, would finally set foot in territory that their kind had not occupied for generations. This long-awaited event would mark the next chapter of the elk reintroduction effort in Wisconsin, a cooperative effort that started at the grassroots level by partners like Jacobson who are committed to restoring another member of Wisconsin’s historic wildlife roster to the landscape.

Rebirth of a conservation dream

Long before early European settlers staked claim to the wilderness that would be named Wisconsin, the open savannas and woodlands rang with the

hoof beats and resonant bugles of thousands of elk. Written records and archaeological finds suggest that elk historically occupied at least 50 of Wisconsin’s 72 counties.

Once early settlers began to occupy the Wisconsin Territory in the late 1700s and early 1800s, they took advantage of the diverse game species available as an important food source. Eventually, unregulated hunting and the conversion of native prairies and forests to arable land severely depleted many wildlife populations including elk, and by the late 1800s elk populations in Wisconsin had all but vanished. Despite conflicting reports, it is certain that the last of Wisconsin’s native elk had been killed by the 1880s.

Like many states, Wisconsin attempted an elk reintroduction with Yellowstone National Park elk in the early 1900s. A small herd of about 30 animals,

confined to a pen in Vilas County, was eventually released in the 1940s, but post-Depression hard times took their toll on the fledgling population. The last Vilas County elk was reportedly shot in 1948.

For 40 more years, the idea of restoring elk rarely garnered a second thought. But Wisconsin’s conservation ethic was undiminished, and it inspired species restoration efforts for wild turkeys, whooping cranes, peregrine falcons and much more. Eventually, the Wisconsin conservation ethic blossomed again when, at the request of the state legislature, the Department of Natural Resources began exploring the possibilities of reintroducing moose, caribou or elk to Wisconsin. Elk were ultimately selected as the species most likely to thrive if reintroduced, but the project hit a road block when the selected site of Bayfield County received little public support.

The turning point was the creation of the Wisconsin Elk Reintroduction Study Committee, a grassroots group formed to fund-raise and gain public support. Ultimately, a partnership between the Department of Natural Resources, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, Tribal Nations of Wisconsin, and a variety of governmental and nonprofit organizations launched a feasibility study which entailed releasing and monitoring a small herd of elk in northern Wisconsin. The original plan also outlined a

strategy for reintroducing elk to Jackson County, which was not enacted at that time.

With funding from the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and others, the state of Michigan donated 25 wild elk that were released in the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest, near the small town of Clam Lake in Ashland County in 1995. Subsequent population growth was slow but sufficient enough to firmly establish a small resident elk herd in the Clam Lake region. In 2000, UW-Stevens Point completed its feasibility study, and long-term management responsibilities were accepted by the Department of Natural Resources.

While there have been occasional setbacks over time, the Clam Lake herd has steadily increased to its present-day size of approximately 160 animals after calving in 2015, and ranges across portions of Sawyer, Ashland and Price counties. According to the Cable Area Chamber of Commerce, the presence of the herd provides benefits to local businesses from tourists hoping to catch a glimpse of one or hear a bugle from a rutting September bull.

As the herd continued to grow in the north, public enthusiasm for restoring elk to Jackson County remained strong. The Jackson County Board adopted a resolution to reintroduce elk to the county. A management plan was developed and eventually adopted by the Natural Resources Board in 2001. By that time, Jacobson and other members of a local conservation group were already raising money in hopes of one day helping start a local elk herd. Although the Department of Natural Resources and partners had pursued initiatives to help the Clam Lake herd expand through habitat improvements and assisted dispersal attempts, wildlife managers felt that additional animals would be needed to stimulate population growth and address concerns about low genetic diversity within the herd.

A call for new elk

Fueled by a need for additional elk and growing public interest, a rare opportunity to acquire more elk presented itself. In 2011, the department began amending the original management plan to augment the Clam Lake herd and finally establish the new herd in Jackson County. An association of passionate partners primarily backed by the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, the Ho-Chunk Nation and the Jackson County Wildlife

Fund, pledged financial support for the estimated \$600,000 reintroduction effort. A strategy for implementing the phases of the reintroduction was mapped. One important question remained: Where would Wisconsin get the elk?

"Our search for more elk began and ended with Kentucky," said Kevin Wallenfang, deer and elk ecologist with the Department of Natural Resources. "They were welcoming to our request and willing to help."

Other states in the eastern half of the country have achieved successful reintroductions thanks to Kentucky. Rightfully so, Kentucky is proud of having more than 10,000 elk that are free of serious diseases such as chronic wasting disease and bovine tuberculosis.

"There was no question in our minds as to where we needed to acquire elk," said Tami Ryan, chief of the department's Wildlife Health Section and elk health coordinator for the project. "Kentucky is the gold standard when it comes to finding a state that is certified as 'low risk' for CWD by the U.S.D.A. [United States Department of Agriculture]."

Wallenfang, Ryan and Karen Sexton, wildlife biologist with the Ho-Chunk Nation, traveled south to initiate discussions with the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources to determine the terms of an agreement that

would allow for trapping and relocating Cumberland Plateau elk to the Badger State.

The grouse connection

Like Wisconsin, Kentucky had its own reintroduction effort in mind, but it involved a bird that many Wisconsin hunters hold sacred: the ruffed grouse. Wisconsin needed elk and has ample grouse. Kentucky needed grouse and has plenty of elk. It seemed that the stars had aligned perfectly to make this opportunity possible.

In December 2014, Wisconsin and Kentucky finalized their agreement. Instead of actual birds, Kentucky found itself more immediately in need of grouse habitat. Wisconsin offered to assist with technical advice and financial assistance to help create that habitat. In return, Kentucky would supply and assist Wisconsin in trapping elk over a period of three to five years. The agreement specified that Wisconsin could trap up to 50 elk each year until the desired goal of 150 animals was reached.

Gearing up

Even before the final negotiations were complete, DNR staff and their partners were working in overdrive through a detailed task list to set the project in motion. One monumental task involved the



Each elk has been microchipped and has a unique ear tag identifier.

DNR FILE



DNR FILE

Many DNR staff and partners worked side by side to make the reintroduction effort possible.

construction of a holding pen in Jackson County that would allow the elk to acclimate to Wisconsin conditions, as well as serve as a quarantine and health screening facility. Following all requirements of the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection to import elk into Wisconsin, the final details of the pen were completed just one day prior to the arrival of the elk.

Concurrently, project coordinators rapidly obtained the required equipment for trapping, testing and transporting the elk within a carefully allocated budget consisting of private funds donated by the partner groups. The partnership worked quickly to address hundreds of questions and execute dozens of tasks, large and small, to ensure that the reintroduction would progress as smoothly as possible.

"Even when we continued to say 'we can do that,' there was always the lingering question of 'can we really?'" Wallenfang recalls. "We joked that the invasion of Normandy was less complicated."

The Wisconsin capture team arrived in Kentucky shortly after New Year's Day in 2015. Wisconsin and Kentucky staff immediately began trapping activities at

sites frequented by elk.

Trapping was challenging due to a variety of factors, including limited access to areas of high elk concentrations, a heavy acorn crop that provided an abundant food source and warm conditions that diminished the elk's need to move for food.

Wisconsin team members lived and worked side by side with Kentucky biologists during the entire trapping period, working around the clock to bait sites, erect and check traps and care for captured elk. At the same time, the elk health team prepared to provide 24-hour animal monitoring and caretaking for the captured elk and conduct all required disease screening once trapping was complete.

When trapping had concluded in early February, all captured elk occupied the pen and the quarantine period began. The Wisconsin elk health team worked with Kentucky staff to collect blood and tissue samples to screen for disease, then microchipped and marked each elk with a unique ear tag identifier.

"I was certainly impressed by all the folks from Wisconsin," said Kentucky capture leader John Hast. "We've done

this work for the past few years, but the enthusiasm of the Wisconsin folks lifted our spirits when we were working all night and when things got tough."

Wisconsin staff found the experience equally fulfilling.

"I will take this experience with me for the rest of my career," said Mike Zeckmeister, Wisconsin's capture team leader. "It is the finest example of true cooperation between two different states and partner groups that I've ever seen."

After 45 days, the elk were cleared to leave Kentucky to begin the second phase of quarantine in Jackson County, where the first batch of elk would be released. At last, the elk were beginning the journey to their new home.

Welcome to Wisconsin!

On the crisp morning of March 26, 2015, following a 13-hour drive from the coal fields of Kentucky, the trailers rolled down the gravel road on state land just east of Black River Falls. A small group of partners critical to the effort were on hand to witness the herd's introduction to the jack pines of Wisconsin.

As the elk exploded through the gates of the holding pen and into the shelter of the woods, where they would remain until final release in August (with several calves in tow), the moment had special meaning to those assembled.

"All the time and energy is finally paying off," said Lee Swanson, outgoing chairman of the board for the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and also in attendance at this historic event. "This feels like Christmas morning. It's perfect."

A poster child for partnerships

The reintroduction of any species isn't something that can be accomplished alone, and elk are no exception.

"One of the neatest things about this entire project is that there were multiple partners involved, all working for a common goal," Wallenfang said. "Nobody was interested in taking credit or wanting to be the hero. They all just wanted to see it happen, regardless of who did what to make it work."

And this integral partnership has more work to do. In a few short months, trapping is expected to again resume in Kentucky, and a new class of elk will be recruited to further the mission of bringing the sound of fall bugling back to Wisconsin. ❧

Meredith Penthorn is a communications specialist with the Department of Natural Resources' big game program.

Muralt Bluff Prairie in Green County, a part of the State Natural Areas system, occupies a long, sweeping ridge top in an area of older drift situated midway between the glaciated lands to the east and Driftless Area to the west. This high quality dry prairie contains numerous rare plants and animals.

The forefather of the State Natural Areas System

CLIFF GERMAIN WALKS THE TALK OF PRESERVING UNIQUE AND PRISTINE PROPERTIES.

Lisa Gaumnitz

The car bumped along an old farm lane and stopped at the foot of a hill carpeted with prairie grasses and wildflowers. Out stepped 92-year-old Cliff Germain, the man who 35 years earlier had convinced the owner of the ecological gem he had underfoot.

Germain had not been back to the property for many years, perhaps not since the farmer agreed to preserve what are some of the last vestiges of the Empire Prairie that covered much of Columbia and Dane counties for thousands of years.

He made the trip this day with this reporter and Thomas Meyer, a conservation biologist he hired and who followed in his path at the Department of Natural Resources. The plan was to hike and talk about Germain's role growing the State Natural Areas system, a role that led to his induction in 2014 into the Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame in Stevens Point.

From that hill and other properties this modest, self-effacing man has saved the nation's largest and most successful statewide nature preserve system. It is a treasure trove of 673 sites across Wisconsin totaling more than 380,000 acres of unique archaeological sites, geological formations, pristine prairies, oak savannas, forests and wetlands.

The sites look more or less like they did when European settlers

first spied them, and increasingly, they are a safe haven for Wisconsin's native plant and animal species and 100-plus distinct assemblages of soils, geology, plants, animals and insects.

Often as not, these natural areas are pristine parts of larger properties such as wildlife management areas, state parks and federal forests. Two-thirds of them are owned by the state and the rest by more than 50 partners ranging from the U.S. Forest Service to The Nature Conservancy and other land trusts.

On today's exploration, Meyer led the way up the hill, cutting a path through tall prairie grasses wet from an early morning rainstorm. Germain followed slowly but steadily.

What unfolded next on that sunny day was a journey through time and the little circumstances that conspired to bind the two together, to the land and to their calling of seeking out and saving for future generations the remaining crown jewels on Wisconsin's landscape.

As the men picked their way through the waist-high plants, they stopped every now and then as Meyer identified the blooming wildflowers surrounding them.

"Naked stem sunflower. Lead plant. Flowering spurge, big blue stem. Prairie drop seed — this grass that turns a beautiful orange in the

Cliff Germain

THOMAS A. MEYER

THOMAS A. MEYER



Situated on the rolling glacial outwash sand plain that extends from Burnett to Bayfield counties, Solon Springs Sharptail Barrens features a large pine barrens with widely scattered clumps of jack pine, Hill's oaks, bur oak grubs and occasional red pine.

THOMAS A. MEYER

fall," Meyer said. "And here we see two of my favorites, purple prairie clover and dwarf blazing star."

Germain admired the flowers Meyer caught between his fingers and cradled to display, and candidly recalled that when he first started in the 1960s helping identify places that should be preserved, he wasn't a plant expert and his hearing wasn't the best, making it difficult for him to recognize bird calls.

But he hired two graduate students with those skills, and together they orchestrated the first systematic, county-by-county survey to inventory the native plant communities to assess and prioritize areas to be protected.

The information they collected later formed the nucleus of the Wisconsin Natural Heritage Inventory, Wisconsin's part of a nationwide system that houses information on the locations of rare plants, rare animals and natural communities.

"I knew what I didn't know and I depended very heavily on those people I worked with who did know. I depended a lot on them," Germain said.

What he brought to the table was a broad knowledge of what made things tick in government agencies and counties.

"Out in the field, county agents, foresters and the fish and wildlife managers — I got along fairly well with them" because he had been one of them.

Germain's first jobs with DNR's predecessor agency, the Wisconsin Conservation Department, were as a wildlife researcher and then game manager.

He had joined the Conservation Department in 1949 after serving in the U.S. Army in World War II and earning a zoology degree at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

There, he studied with conservation giants including Aldo Leopold, ecologist John Curtis and leading plant taxonomist Norman Fassett. They inspired him

and instilled in him the land ethic and the importance of Leopold's admonition that "to keep every cog and wheel is the first precaution of intelligent tinkering."

That thinking and skill set helped Germain land the job in 1966 as the first full-time staff member of the state natural areas program, then known as the scientific areas program. Before then, an advisory committee of scientists had been charged by the legislature to obtain, either by purchase or gift, botanical areas of special value, and the group had secured Cedar Grove, a hawk migration lay-over site, Parfrey's Glen on the backside of Devil's Lake State Park, and Cedarburg Bog near Milwaukee.

Germain had his work cut out for him.

Ecology, the science concerned with the interactions of living organisms with each other and with their environment, was a new area and there was not much awareness in the general public or within the department itself.

"One of the biggest challenges was working with DNR people and getting

them to think about their management and how it was affecting the whole system, not their narrow interest, whether that was managing for deer or pheasant," he said.

Germain and his staff, along with the advisory council, reviewed master plans for state wildlife properties.

"We told them (game managers) we thought that there were parts of their property that should be designated scientific areas. Frequently there was an objection to that. 'Cliff, mind your business. Let us do our own thing,'" Germain said.

He worked through those concerns, cultivated strong relationships with private organizations that could move more quickly to acquire properties at risk of development, and moved the program along.

"Without Cliff, the State Natural Areas system wouldn't be what it is today," Meyer said.

The two reached the top of the hill, which Meyer said was a drumlin, an oval or elongated hill formed when glacial ice sheets moved across rock debris.


"The glacier here was thin," Meyer said. "It was not thousands of feet thick like it was to the east where it was like a bulldozer and flattened everything in its way. So the ice here didn't have the super crushing weight of a glacier. It just covered over this bedrock ridge, which was already here, and streamlined it."

This drumlin had been part of the original acquisition of 14 acres in the 1970s.

"That's all that the farmer wanted to sell at that time and we were lucky to get this," Germain said, looking around.



Germain at the state natural area that was named in his honor in 2002.



An old-growth hemlock forest is one of Germain's favorite natural communities.

"This is pretty pure prairie."

The site, known as the Westport Drumlin Prairies Unit of Empire Prairies State Natural Area, has since grown to more than 200 acres through acquisition of adjacent lands by the Natural Heritage Land Trust.

"This was a good buy, Cliff," Meyer said. "You did a good job."

In more recent years, the Department of Natural Resources and the land trust have been able to have a work crew conduct prescribed burns on the prairie here, and volunteer groups from The Prairie Enthusiasts have been involved as well.

"If we didn't burn, these oaks would grow up and shade out the wildflowers. One of the reasons we apply fire to the prairie system is to stimulate native plants and knock back woody species," Meyer said.

"I'm impressed we have management crews," Germain said. "I am very impressed with the program since I left. It's become much better...I still worry about acceptance and funding for the program. It's still tenuous."

Half an hour into the hike, Germain said he needed to take a rest and settled on a small rock deposited by the glacier.

Meyer took some photographs and then reminded Germain he had hired him as a student intern in 1984, an action now seemingly guided by destiny.

Meyer, 57, grew up on Bohner's Lake near Burlington in Racine County where Germain had been a game manager decades earlier and had purchased 3,000 acres of land that became a state wildlife area open to public hunting.

He explored those lands and particularly was intrigued by nearby Karcher Springs State Natural Area contained within the Karcher Marsh Wildlife Area that Germain had purchased in the 1950s. That natural area featured a complex of springs, calcareous fen, and a stream, and it was here that Meyer would later conduct an inventory of plants for a college course while at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point.

Meyer was introduced to Germain through a family friend who was on the committee advising the Wisconsin Conservation Department on preserving natural areas. Meyer ended up getting an internship at the department. He didn't work directly under Germain, and in fact Germain retired within the year, but he has loomed large in Meyer's career.

"You gave me my start," Meyer told Germain.

"Little circumstances like that shape

our lives," Germain said in reply.

He has learned over his 92 years that it's the connections to people that matter the most, like his connection to his wife, Colleen, who was inseparable from him before she passed away in 2010.

"In terms of my work, I get a little satisfaction knowing I contributed a little bit toward the way you think things should be going," he said.

Germain contributed more than a little bit. Working with others, he succeeded in protecting more than 200 state natural areas totaling more than 50,000 acres. He's given people the right to gems like these across the state: Chiwaukee Prairie in Waukesha County, Moose Lake and its majestic stands of old-growth forest in Iron County, Port Wing Boreal Forest along the shore of Lake Superior, New Hope Pines in Portage County, the prairie bluffs of Rush Creek along the Mississippi River, and the pristine wetlands surrounding Lulu Lake in Walworth County.

In 2002, in recognition of the State Natural Area system's 50th anniversary and to honor Germain's contributions to its success, the department dedicated an 88-acre Oneida County nature preserve in his honor. An old-growth hemlock forest was named the Germain Hemlocks State Natural Area and today serves as a living testimony to his work and an apt analogy for the State Natural Areas system he nursed along. Such an old-growth hemlock forest is one of his favorite natural communities.

"Hemlocks live 300 to 400 years but they are very fussy where they regenerate. They often grow where an old tree fell," Germain said. "Knowing those requirements of the tree and how it regenerates, I was always impressed when I walked through the forest. You see all these little mounds where the old trees have fallen and young hemlock seedlings are growing out of the rich, organic material the dead trees provide. To me, that represented longevity. This goes on and on if you leave it. It is true climax vegetation. The hemlocks need life to regenerate. They tip over and life begins anew."

Meyer said it's time to get back and Germain agreed. He thinks he has just enough energy to make it back to the car.

The men walk back deliberately over the path they created on the way in. As they reach the downhill, Meyer asks Germain if he wants to hold onto his arm.

No, he'll be all right. 

Lisa Gaumnitz writes for the Natural Heritage Conservation program.



SUBMITTED BY HENRY J. SCHULTZ

The author's early hunting party.

We live about eight miles east of the Mississippi River in the heart of Buffalo County — today, the best deer hunting land around. The steep hillsides and long, deep valleys of agricultural land have fresh spring water running through them. It's a deer herd paradise. Our Buffalo County agricultural agent, Archie Brovold, even once called the agricultural land of Cream and Waumandee, some of the best land in the world — not just in Wisconsin, in the world.



Sixty-plus years of deer hunting

THE RESULTS ARE STORIES AND LOTS OF SAUSAGE FROM THE BEST DEER HUNTING LAND IN THE WORLD.

Henry J. Schultz

I said to my wife the other day that someone should write about the stories of deer hunting on our farm and that it should be soon since there are only three of the old hunting gang members left from our first deer hunting party, which started back in the late 1940s — Brother Russ, Sidney Moham and me. So, that's what I've done.

But it wasn't always such a deer herd paradise. In an old history book on Buffalo County given to me by Jane Noll, it's noted that in 1862, the snow stood 4-feet deep and we lost all of our deer. People also died because of the extreme snow and cold, but the Schultz family — my family — survived the winter. But then in the spring, the area got pelted again. This time, by flooding.

It took some time, but eventually the deer found their way back to Buffalo County, mostly coming from northern parts. I remember my brother, Stub, saying that the first deer he saw in the county was in 1938. He was working for William Balk who lived 4 miles south of Cream. My brother had four horses on a gang plow when he saw a deer run across the valley. He wasn't the only one who noticed. All four horses raised their heads to witness the sight as well.

With the return of deer, we decided to hunt. In the early 1940s when we started hunting, we didn't have automatic shotguns. We had

single shot 16-gauge guns and double-barrel guns.

The guys who hunted with me included Howard Loesel; Otto Bollinger; Chet Wiczorek; my brothers Christian (Suck), Russ, Gaylord (Stub) and Milan; and Richard Plank, a World War I veteran who was tall and slim and earned the name "Ridge Runner" because he had long legs and could really walk those steep hills. Our group also included Bill Smith, Buzz Grob and Wilmer Schmidtknecht, who told me dozens of times that the most fun he had in life was hunting with our gang, butchering deer and playing cards.

My nephews bought close to 400 acres next to our 500 acres so we had a good amount of land to hunt on.

The first years, each hunter would take his deer home and make his own sausage. Then we would have a deer party at the Ponderosa Bar in Cream,



ROBERT QUEEN

A lifetime of hunting stories and sausage making.

at the Burlington Hotel in Alma, or at someone's house so that we could recap our hunting tales and taste everyone's sausage.

In the 1950s, though, I offered to have the gang over to my garage and make the sausage together. Everyone took me up on my offer. The first years of butchering in the garage, we also butchered our own hogs so that we had pork to make cook sausage and summer sausage.

One time Wilmer Schmidtknecht; my brother, Stub;

Buzz Grob; Bill Smith and Richard Plank did the butchering. Plank bought himself a case of beer to take home before he came butchering, but we drank the whole case before he left the garage.

My brother, Stub, would sometimes bring his parish priest along to hunt with us and when he did, we kidded him that he was to bless the beer that we drank. When the priest went into the woods to hunt, he would never carry a knife. That way, if he shot a deer, he couldn't gut it out and someone else would have to do it instead. He did bring a knife, though, when we did the butchering and sausage making in the garage.

The cook sausage and summer sausage were made from old recipes that my mother and dad had on the farm. Eventually, I turned all the butchering duties over to my son, Chuck, and I'm proud to say that he's got the responsibility down pat. The guys also now own a lot of equipment for butchering — two sausage stuffers, a big meat grinder and stainless steel tables.

I gave up hunting a few years ago. I feel that at my age I shouldn't be in the woods anymore with a gun. It also made my wife real happy that I quit hunting.

But I still like to see the guys come and hunt and listen to their stories about what they saw and what they missed. At times we have four generations of hunters hunting together — Milan's son, Paul; Paul's daughter, Kati; and Kati's sons. My son, Chuck, took his son, Jason, hunting the first time and saw him shoot his first deer, an experience that Chuck says he will never forget. My son-in-law Bruce Auseth took his daughter, Taylor, hunting and saw her shoot her first deer and she even won the prize money at the Ponderosa Bar in Cream for registering the first deer there.

While I no longer join the hunt, I still take care of the smoke fire when there is no one else around and, best of all, I still get a share of the meat.

Recently, while we were butchering in the garage we were commenting

about how many deer have been shot by our hunting parties over the last 60 years. With an average of 14 deer harvested on the land each year for 60 years, that means 840 deer, which translates into about 36,000 cook and summer sausages.


One memorable year, outdoor TV legend Dave Carlson (who worked for WEAU-TV at the time) hunted with us. He followed us from the weekend before the regular gun deer season opened when the hunters came and cut the green hickory wood for smoking the sausage, to hauling the wood, to hunting. He made an hour-long tape of our hunting party adventures and aired it on TV.

That brings me to today. The land does not belong to me anymore. My wife and I have turned it over to the three kids and they all have built houses on the farm. My wife and I, though, can work the land and live here as long as we want to.



FRANK WOLFE

L.B. Johnson inspired the author.

I've gotten to see the best of both worlds and no one knows that better than me, and not any of this good life would be made possible without the love of my good wife. I got to live on the land where my heart belongs. I know very well that this good life could change overnight. But I'm reminded of a quote from President L.B. Johnson, "The best fertilizer for a piece of the land is the footprints of its owner." 

Henry J. Schultz is 92 years old and writes from Alma.

THINKSTOCKPHOTOS

ADVICE FOR NO-FAIL BURGERS, STEAKS AND ROASTS.

DEER DONE RIGHT

John Motoviloff

Everyone knows that the passion for deer hunting runs strong in Wisconsin. But, let's face it: some hunters and their families just aren't wild about venison. Why? "It's gamey," they say. "It tastes like liver," others complain. "It's tough," some claim. Fortunately, none of these things has to be true about Wisconsin venison. In fact, when cared for and cooked properly, it is every bit as tender and tasty as organic, grass-fed beef. But, venison is *not* beef and that's where cooks often take a wrong turn.

Ruminants gone wild

Just what kind of animal are deer, then? Like cattle and goats, deer belong to the hooved, four-footed group of animals known as ruminants, which have complex digestive tracts meant to break down the grasses and forbs they eat. But, unlike domestic ruminants with easy access to food and water, wild deer have to work hard to survive. Because food might be limited due to habitat quality or time of year, or due to the presence of large predators, deer must pursue a variety of foods. Fruits, nuts, grasses, woody browse, and waste grain are all staples of a Wisconsin whitetail's diet at various times of the year. Because of this varied diet, white-tailed deer have great natural flavor and very little fat compared to domestic livestock. This can be a winning combination for cooks — if they know how to handle it.

The culinary challenge lies in retaining venison's unique flavor while keeping it moist and tender. A shift from a "beef" mindset to a "venison" mindset is helpful. A handy way to think about the difference between the two meats is how they rate on what I call the Three Fs: fat, flame and flavor.

While beef *fat* can be tasty, what little fat there is on venison — and

this goes for venison sinew and silver-skin — tastes bad and should be trimmed away. This is why some people think they don't like venison: what they've eaten has a gamey taste because of fat left on it.

As far as *flame*, or heat level, venison should be cooked either quickly (in which case it should be marinated), or slow and low. Well-done venison is tough, dry and has a strong liver taste.

Finally, since venison has more natural *flavor* than beef, it needs less in the way of seasoning or side dishes.

No boeuf bourguignon or beef Wellington here. Stick to the basics

Venison on the grill is delicious. Remember to keep it moist by marinating and not overcooking.

and you'll be well on your way.

Burger, steaks and roasts – Oh my!

Let's begin with ground venison because it's what hunters are likely to have on hand. Like all ground meat, ground venison is "made" by the person grinding it — it's only as good or bad as the meat that goes into it.

Professional butcher shops and processors know what to put in and what to discard. If you are processing your own deer, trim away anything that's not meat. This lean meat that remains, however, will need something to help it stay moist. Mix one part ground beef or ground pork with three parts ground venison. For marinades, Greek or Italian salad dressing and teriyaki sauce are good. Meatloaves can be made according to your favorite recipe, with a suitable amount of ground pork or beef added to the venison. Ground pork

Nothing takes the sting out of a cold day — or livens up deer camp — like good venison chili.

sausage or chopped bacon added to venison patties makes a delicious camp breakfast. For those who want to limit fat, plain ground venison makes tasty tacos, chili and spaghetti sauce.

As with ground venison, what is used for steak is up to you. You can tell the processor what proportion of steaks you would like. If you're processing the deer yourself, you are in complete control of what gets labeled "steak."

Obvious steak cuts include the inside tenderloins, the backstraps and the inner muscle from the back haunch. However, I've used just about any cut of venison — with the exception of the shanks — that can be sliced an inch thick for steaks. And whether your deer is commercially processed or a DIY job, make one final pass over the meat before cooking. Trim away all sinew, fat and silverskin. Keep an eye out for hairs, which you can remove with a tweezers or damp cloth.

To keep your steaks moist, marinate them before cooking — an hour for young deer, two to four hours for older animals. Steak sauce, Italian or Greek salad dressing, and teriyaki sauce are good standbys. Make your own marinade with three parts high-acid liquid to one part oil. Red wine, Worcestershire sauce and soy sauce are good bases; flavor-neutral oils like peanut and canola work well. Avoid olive oil, which tends to be overpowering.

Green herbs, garlic, onion, crushed chili pepper and ginger are nice additions. A tablespoon of tart jam, like currant or raspberry, adds a nice counterpoint. As with burgers, cook or grill

steaks rare or medium. This keeps the flavor lively and the meat juicy.

Roasts are a different beast, which take to a slow-and-low treatment. It's important to remember that this is not marbled chuck roast or pork shoulder to be cooked at 350 degrees and forgotten about. Venison roasts — any chunk of meat from the front or back haunches that weighs more than 2 pounds — are best coated in flour, quickly browned in hot oil or bacon drippings and then slow cooked in an oven or crockpot. Customize the flavor by adding your liquid of choice: red wine, dark beer, broth, onion soup or apple cider. The fruits or vegetables I add depend on the flavor I am pursuing. Onions and mushrooms go well with wine or beef broth; sauerkraut compliments beer; dried fruit is a natural with wine or chicken broth. A typical 4-pound roast — seared and cooked in a 250-degree oven — will be ready in about three hours. Double the cooking time if using a crockpot.

Super sides

Whether you are serving burgers, steaks or roasts, you want something basic and hearty on the side. Fledgling cooks might be tempted to gild the lily here with fancy sides, but that's unnecessary. Mashed or oven-browned potatoes are crowd pleasers, as are egg noodles and spätzel. Wild rice and rice pilaf work equally well. Sop up the delicious drippings with crusty sourdough bread.

A crisp green salad or some kind of fruit — homemade applesauce or cranberry sauce — pro-

vides a nice counterpoint. Dry red wine or your beer of choice keeps things festive. And nothing crowns a game dinner like apple cobbler topped with vanilla ice cream.

Trim the fat, watch the heat, keep it moist — and enjoy! ❧

John Motoviloff edits hunting regulation booklets for the Department of Natural Resources. He is an avid hunter and the author of the cookbook, "Wild Rice Goose and Other Dishes of the Upper Midwest."



RECIPES TO GIVE A TRY

BEST VENISON

2 pounds venison steaks trimmed of fat, sinew and silverskin or 1 ½ pounds ground venison mixed well with ½ pound ground beef and formed into patties

Fresh-ground black pepper

Sea salt

½ cup Worcestershire sauce

3 tablespoons peanut oil

1. Season meat liberally with black pepper and salt.
2. Whisk together Worcestershire sauce and peanut oil.
3. Pour marinade over meat; cover and let stand one hour.
4. Grill or pan-fry so meat is still rosy in the middle.
5. Serve with garlic mashed potatoes and green salad.

VENISON ROAST WITH DRIED FRUIT

This is a good dish for a winter day, or to serve when company is coming over. It's deeply satisfying and comforting.

One 4-pound venison roast, trimmed of visible fat and sinew (don't dig into the roast to trim hidden layers)

Thyme, sea salt, and black pepper to taste

Flour

4 garlic cloves, sliced into spears (optional)

4 tablespoons melted bacon drippings

12 ounces beef broth or dry red wine

½ pound dried fruit such as prunes, cherries, cranberries alone or in combination

1. Preheat oven to 250 degrees.
2. Season roast liberally with salt, pepper and thyme.
3. Dredge with flour.
4. (Optional) Pierce roast in several places and insert garlic spears. Do this if you like garlic; skip if you don't.
5. In a large Dutch oven, heat bacon drippings and sear roast well on all sides; add wine or broth and dried fruit.
6. Cover and cook for three hours, or until roast falls apart when touched with a fork.
7. Serve with egg noodles and homemade cranberry sauce.





A bird in the hand

PHEASANTS
ABOUND ON
PUBLIC LANDS.

Gary Greene has hunted pheasant for more than 50 years. Here he is seen after a successful hunt with his hunting companions.

GARY GREENE

For Gary Greene, pheasant hunting has been a lifelong tradition with strong family ties.

“My dad introduced me to it when I was a small child,” says Greene. “He hunted with a Chesapeake Bay retriever. I remember being amazed by the beauty of the roosters.”



A pheasant rooster.

ROBERT MANWELL

Greene, a retired physical education instructor, has hunted pheasants every year since 1963 and hardly misses a day in the field with his dogs during pheasant season. He and wife Chris have bred Labrador retrievers into fine hunting dogs for many years, and being able to raise and work a dog from puppyhood adds a meaningful dimension to each hunt. Along with his own dogs (Hershey, Nyjer, Schmiddy, Elsie and Dookie), it's not unusual for Greene to hunt alongside multiple generations of his Labs.

“Several of my hunting buddies bought dogs from me, and at one time seven or eight of my dogs were in the field with us,” says Greene.

Such is his knowledge and engagement in the world of pheasant hunting that he also serves as a guide. He led 60 hunts last year alone, on both public and private lands, often ably assisted by his dogs.

While health concerns have compelled Greene to reduce his involvement in some of these activities, he eagerly anticipates getting into the field in the fall in pursuit of pheasants. He is well acquainted with the public lands in southern Wisconsin that offer quality pheasant hunting.

“I try to get to eight different public hunting grounds [during pheasant season],” says Greene. “Birds have a tendency to go to certain habitats, and if I'm not successful at one [hunting site] I'll try another.”

Adds Greene, “On public lands, you know the birds are probably going to be there.”

Private land pheasants spark public land hunts

Interestingly, pheasant hunting on public lands may owe its success in part to private landowners. Ring-necked pheasants, native to Asia, were originally introduced to Wisconsin by the early 1900s to provide another form of gamebird hunting. Multiple early releases on

private lands led to the establishment of Wisconsin's wild pheasant population. Agrarian habitats, combined with the native grasslands present across the southern two-thirds of Wisconsin, encouraged a thriving population and catalyzed the popularity of pheasant hunting across prime pheasant range.

However, the transition to modern agriculture and accompanying conversion of idle land to production caused a downturn in the pheasant population in the mid-1900s. Pheasants and other grassland wildlife faced reduced cover from predators, limited nesting habitat and increased exposure to pesticides. As a result, few wild birds were available on the landscape to view and hunt. The Wisconsin Conservation Department (now the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources), noting the importance of pheasants in Wisconsin's hunting heritage, soon attempted an experimental pheasant stocking initiative. These early efforts helped launch Wisconsin's successful pheasant stocking program.

Stocking on public lands

Pheasants respond well to captive breeding, and partnerships between the Wis-

consin Department of Natural Resources and local conservation clubs have helped bolster the wild population while sustaining pheasant hunting opportunities for thousands of hunters each year. Instrumental in this effort is the State Game Farm in Poynette, which has been rearing and releasing pheasants since 1934. About 330,000 pheasant eggs pass through the Game Farm's incubators annually, and chicks are reared onsite or delivered to conservation clubs to raise through the Day-old Chick Program. Ultimately, the majority of the adult roosters are released on both public and private lands.

Pheasant stocking increased from close to 54,000 birds in 2012 to roughly 75,000 birds in 2014, and this trend is expected to continue in 2015.

“If all goes according to plan, we will be stocking 75,000 pheasants on state wildlife areas in 31 Wisconsin counties,” says DNR Game Farm Supervisor Kelly Maguire.

DNR wildlife staff begins stocking birds the week before opening weekend in late October, and will stock through December in some areas. This strategy provides ample opportunity for hunters to see birds.

For Greene, the result of these efforts is a hunting experience approaching those of premier pheasant-hunting lands in South Dakota.

“I went to South Dakota with a buddy mid-December and we hunted from 10 until dark every day to get our six pheasants,” says Greene. “You can't shoot hens out there [which is allowed on certain lands in Wisconsin] and the birds are very smart. Here in Wisconsin, I've gotten birds on two days at the end of December. The birds are still there even three weeks after the end of stocking. It's



Prime pheasant hunting can be found at the Richard Bong State Recreation Area.

DNR FILE



DNR FILE

Arm band and pheasant stamp.

much more fun if you know there are birds out there and there's an opportunity to harvest a bird."

The abundance of pheasants means plentiful opportunities to harvest a pheasant, even on public hunting grounds that might see over 200 hunters per day during peak season. Richard Bong State Recreation Area, featuring 3,500 acres open to hunting, is one of the most popular public hunting destinations in Wisconsin.

Accordingly, the Department of Natural Resources stocks thousands of birds there annually.

"Usually over 11,000 hunters use Bong during pheasant season," says DNR wildlife biologist Marty Johnson. "Last year we stocked over 12,000 birds and we are looking for something similar this year."

Initially slated to be an air force base in the 1950s, Bong was instead transformed into a recreation area under the authority of the Wisconsin Conservation Commission (now the Natural Resources Board) during the 1970s. Today, most

of its 4,515 acres are dedicated to conservation and the activities that support it.

According to Greene, the rules for hunting Bong have varied over the years. At first, hunters could only shoot roosters. Then, hens could also be taken, and during one season some pheasants were banded to help wildlife managers monitor numbers. Bong also experimented with hunting hours (opening before sunrise) and stocking patterns (such as stocking every other day). And starting in 2014, the mandatory arm bands were replaced with hunter information cards.

At one point, hunters could reserve days on which to hunt pheasants.

"If you didn't get there early, the cars would be parked all down the road," recalls Greene. "Normally my buddies and I would get our tags and go get a donut and a cup of coffee while waiting."

In 2014, the hunting permit fee on Bong during pheasant-stocking days increased from \$3 to \$12 to make the pheasant program more sustainable. Johnson notes that this likely contributed to a drop in the number of permits sold.

Other hunters recognize that the fee increase is just part of ensuring a positive and productive hunt.

"It doesn't bother me at all," states Greene. "The arm bands themselves cost more to make than \$3 each and the fee hasn't been raised since the 1970s."

Says Johnson, "Pheasant hunters in Wisconsin seem pleased with the opportunities they have on public land. The birds give them a good hunt and allow them to work their dogs during the winter."

Family traditions


Bong and other public lands are a gate-

way to pheasant hunting for young and novice hunters. The Department of Natural Resources and Friends of Poynette Game Farm team up to offer Learn to Hunt Pheasant events at Bong and elsewhere. According to Maguire, four Learn to Hunt events were offered on public lands this fall, with pheasants supplied from the game farm. Those interested in participating next year can learn more about the Learn to Hunt program at dnr.wi.gov, keywords "Learn to Hunt."

Pheasant hunting, especially on public lands, is also a bonding opportunity for many hunters with friends and family. Greene and his hunting partner had the pleasure of hunting public lands for 40 years, and Greene and his son Nate frequently take to the field after pheasants and ducks. Each day holds the promise of spotting the iridescent flash of a rooster's feathers amid the grasses or hearing it cackle as it takes to the air. Each hunt realizes the profound connection between hunters, dogs and nature that makes time in the field worthwhile even if the birds evade the shots.

It's moments like these that keep hunters coming back for more and passing the tradition down to the next generation of hunters. Pheasant hunting for Gary Greene and the many others who flock to public lands in the fall is far more than a hobby — it's a way of life.

Greene remembers receiving a call from Nate, at the time deployed in Afghanistan thousands of miles away.

His son told Greene that he woke one day and it smelled like the pheasant fields of Wisconsin. 

Meredith Penthorn is a DNR communications specialist for the wildlife program.



About 75,000 pheasants will be released in Wisconsin this year on public and private lands.

DNR FILE

Northern invasion

A WINTER WONDERLAND OF HAWKS AND OWLS.

Erin Parker

Winter in Wisconsin is not for the faint of heart. The landscape seems quiet, tucked beneath snow or ice cover. Darkness comes early and stays late, adding a further challenge to outdoor adventures.

However, Wisconsin winters are also an opportunity to engage with some unique wildlife that sees our frosty fields and icy lakefronts as the perfect winter habitat. Snowy owls, great gray owls, northern hawk owls, and other raptors more closely associated with the tundra and boreal forests, occasionally make their way south during the winter months where they hunt for prey as diverse as rodents, rabbits and ducks. A “northern invasion” of predatory birds seems unlikely given that

most of our summer avian inhabitants have flown for much warmer, insect-rich climes months ago.

An irruption year, when many of these northern species are observed, is most likely related to prey like lemmings in their northern tundra habitats. The southward movements of these birds may happen either in years when their prey populations dip, or because they successfully raised many young in prey-species-rich summers and those fledglings need to roam fur-



It is important to take great care in viewing snowy owls and help make sure the bird's safety is not placed in jeopardy.

GREGORY K. SCOTT

The rough-legged hawk breeds in Arctic tundra and taiga regions around the northern hemisphere and may be seen in Wisconsin during irruption years. The name “rough-legged” refers to the feathering that extends down the legs to the base of the toes — a helpful adaptation for staying warm in frigid weather.



ther to find food for the winter.

These striking birds from the north attract attention from wildlife viewers, photographers and other outdoor enthusiasts. This can cause problems for these birds when admiring watchers get too close.

How do you know if you’re stressing out a bird you’re observing?

According to Diane Visty, the Raptor Program manager at Schlitz Audubon Center in Milwaukee, “Birds telegraph their comfort level by behavior changes. Are they sitting comfortably fluffed on a branch? Watch for them to change their stance. They will get taller, narrower and slick down their feathers. Their heads will be darting back and forth quickly identifying best routes for escape, and finally, a downward crouch with wings slightly open getting ready to launch, are all signs that you have pushed this bird who is hungry and in a strange location to expend its depleted reserves on escaping from you. Each time this happens the bird, that is so beautiful you want to take its picture, has a reduced chance of survival.”

Ryan Brady, a research scientist with the Department of Natural Resources agrees.

“When flushed, birds directly utilize energy they otherwise wouldn’t, which can be important during difficult winter weather or when a bird has migrated into unfamiliar territory,” Brady says. “Flushing them also forces them to move from a place they wanted to be. This may expose them to predators — yes, some things eat owls — and /or force them to hunt from a less productive perch.”

While owl irruption years can be unpredictable, several of the previous winters have brought high numbers of snowy owls, in particular, into Wisconsin. These birds, in turn, brought birders and photographers out in large numbers in some areas.

The cumulative effects of flushing the same bird over and over again are the most troubling. Each flight expends energy that the bird would be using to keep warm, attracts the unwelcome attention of predators, and can reduce a bird’s chances of successfully capturing prey by scaring away the smaller animals they depend on for calories.

Visty explains: “Consequences for the birds if they are repeatedly flushed is death. It is just that plain and simple. It is a hard life for these birds. They are in unfamiliar habitat looking for food. The winter weather is unusually harsh,

ERIC PRESTON

snow is deep and temperatures are well below freezing. Flying is the most energy demanding exercise on the planet and then add to that they are warm-blooded and have to keep their bodies stoked and warm and you can understand that they are living on the edge. Every time they take to the air it is a calculation on whether it is necessary or not. Will the outcome of the flight bring them a meal with much-needed calories or a warmer roost? It would be best if the birds made the decision to fly on their own, without being forced into flight just because we want to get closer to them.”

The use of social media, Listservs and apps in the birding community makes sharing the specific locations of these birds faster and easier, and means that larger numbers of people can come out to see them. There were enough perceived disturbances to the owls over the last few winters that the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology felt that more education needed to be done — that people wanted to enjoy and appreciate these fascinating northern visitors, and were harassing them accidentally in the process.

Kim Kreitinger, the president of the society, said: “Recent debates over posting rare bird locations, baiting and the general question of harassment, caused WSO to update its guidelines and address those concerns. Our hope is that this revised Code of Ethics (wsobirds.org/about-wso/code-of-ethics) helps the Wisconsin birding community make better-informed decisions while in the field and promotes stewardship of Wisconsin birds.”

The revised Code of Ethics now includes the following updates:

- Information to help one recognize the signs of stress and suggestions on how to minimize stress while observing a bird;
- A list of special considerations when observing or photographing raptors, owls or rare birds;
- Proper procedures for dealing with illegal activities involving wild birds;
- Suggestions for increasing goodwill amongst the birding community.

Visty adds, “Every photographer’s goal is to get the best shot possible. If you disturb the bird your opportunity is gone forever. My first rule when taking photographs is to keep your distance. This is true always with birds, but especially in the winter with these ‘northern invasion’ species of hawks and owls that do not see humans every day. Secondly, if at all possible, stay in



The short-eared owl hunts day and night, mainly at dawn and dusk in winter. It flies low over open ground, locating prey by ear.

DENNIS MALLEG



ERIC PRESTON

The great gray owl is listed as a species of Special of Concern in Wisconsin and prefers lowland coniferous forest dominated by black spruce, white birch and green ash.

hiding [such as in] your car to further reduce stress on these migrants. Doing this provides for the ability to capture a greater amount of natural actions made by the subject and more interesting photos. Finally, if you have to get out of your car, be quiet and move as little as possible.”

Irruptions are not predictable events, and this winter is no exception. If you go searching for owls among the snowy cornfields, remember to keep their well-being in mind. Drones, used to take aerial photos, can scare birds into flight.

Baiting birds, by using mice or other rodents to draw the raptors in close for photographs, can cause them to land on roads and lose some of their fear of people. Admiring the birds from a distance through binoculars or scope, where the bird is not reacting to your presence, is the best option.

Interested in seeing these beautiful winter birds from a safe distance?

Milwaukee’s lakefront and snowy fields, like those found at the Buena Vista Grasslands, provide good owl-spotting locations. Owls and other raptors can

hunt ducks and mammals while watching out for threats in open areas that mimic their natural tundra habitat. They are often more active at dawn and dusk. Many birding clubs and organizations such as Audubon and the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology offer field trips to places likely to host winter owls.

Visty says, “Having the opportunity to actually see one of these rarely-spotted raptors always takes my breath away.”

Erin Parker is the communications chair for the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology.

In the spring, Canada geese build large nests of grasses and downy feathers. Female geese then lay clutches of four to six eggs. The eggs are incubated for about 26 days. Soon after, the goslings hatch and the family searches for tender stems of marsh grass.



Taking time to look around

A CAMERA TRIGGERS
AN APPRECIATION FOR
WISCONSIN WILDLIFE.

Story and photos by Larry Venus

As a young child who spent his first 18 years in Wisconsin, I never really paid attention to the natural beauty of America's Dairyland.

As a child growing up in Milwaukee County, I don't ever recall seeing a bald eagle, hawk, or for that matter, a cardinal in the skies. I took for granted the beauty that was around me on a daily basis.

Even though I haven't called Wisconsin home since the mid-1970s, I travel



At one time, eagles in Wisconsin were in danger of becoming extinct. Due to the hard work of many citizens, professionals and agencies, including Wisconsin's Natural Heritage Conservation Program, eagles are making a comeback.

back to visit my parents who split their time between West Bend in Washington County and Townsend in Oconto County.


It wasn't until I took up photography several years ago that I came to discover that my home state has some of the most beautiful scenery anywhere in this great country. I've done some traveling over the last several years and call California home today, but I would put Wisconsin's beauty up against any other state — particularly with regard to the wildlife.

I was once told to “just look around”

and you will be surprised at what you might see. So that's what I've started to do with my camera in hand. What I've found is nothing short of spectacular — especially when it comes to photographing Wisconsin.

I spent some time in Wisconsin in late May and early June and while visiting my family took some of the best wildlife shots I've ever taken. I photographed at least five eagles — two adults and three juveniles that visit the Townsend reservoir in Oconto County. In addition to eagles, I found that by just sitting on

the porch you can enjoy the beauty of one of the smallest birds around — the ruby-throated hummingbird. Since it was spring, many birds were either nesting — like the common loon I photographed — or they were busy raising their young like the Canada geese.

No matter what the season, I would encourage everyone who lives in this scenic and wildlife rich state to take some time and “just look around.” 


Larry Venus is a communications consultant for the California State Legislature.



Feeders and flower gardens are great ways to attract ruby-throated hummingbirds. Enjoy them when they're around; by early fall they're bound for Central America, with many crossing the Gulf of Mexico in a single flight.



The common loon is native to Wisconsin and resides in the northern third of the state during the summer. Hear the call of the loons by going to dnr.wi.gov and searching keyword “loon.”



Wisconsin is the birthplace of snowmobiling and continues to offer some of the best snowmobiling opportunities you are likely to find, especially in northern Wisconsin. More than 200,000 registered snowmobiles hit Wisconsin's 25,000 miles of groomed trails each winter.

What to know before you go

SNOWMOBILE TRAIL PASSES, FEES, PUBLIC-USE REGISTRATION AND COMMERCIAL CERTIFICATE CHANGES ARE IN EFFECT.

Linda Olver

Before heading out to snowmobile this season, it's important to know that changes to snowmobile trail pass requirements, trail pass fees and the period of validity for public-use registration and commercial snowmobile certificates (as written in 2014 Wisconsin Act 142) are now in effect.

Public-use registration and commercial certificates valid three years

Snowmobile public use registration certificates and commercial snowmobile certificates purchased after April 1, 2015 are now valid for three years rather than two years. Public use registration and commercial snowmobile certificate fees remain the same, \$30 and \$90, respectively.

Trail pass required

Formerly, only a snowmobile registered or in the process of being registered in another state, province or country was required to display a trail pass when operating on a Wisconsin snowmobile trail or corridor. Beginning with the 2015-16 snow season, all snowmobiles operating on a Wisconsin snowmobile trail or corridor must display a valid snowmobile trail pass.

The snowmobile trail pass is:

- An annual pass valid until June 30 each year

- Separate from snowmobile registration
- A 3-inch by 3-inch decal required to be permanently affixed to the bottom center portion of the snowmobile windshield
- Not required to operate on private property, on a snow route, or on frozen water if not on a marked corridor

Snowmobile trail pass fees

The trail pass fee is dependent upon whether the snowmobile is registered in Wisconsin and whether the owner is a current member of a snowmobile club and the Association of Wisconsin Snowmobile Clubs (AWSC). Trail pass sales are nonrefundable.

There are three types of trail passes and associated fees:

Nonresident trail pass – for a snowmobile registered in another state, province or country or in the process of being registered in another state, province or country - \$50 (formerly \$35).

Wisconsin trail pass – for a snowmobile registered in Wisconsin - \$30. A Wisconsin snowmobile registration number is required to purchase the Wisconsin trail pass.

Club member trail pass – for a snowmobile registered in Wisconsin and that is owned by a person who is a member of a snowmobile club affiliated with the Association of Wisconsin Snowmobile Clubs - \$10.

Where can I purchase my trail pass?

Nonresident trail passes are available

online and at many authorized sales locations. Wisconsin trail passes may be ordered online or at any DNR license sales agent (via ALIS terminals). All trail passes will be delivered by U.S. mail. To locate an agent near you who sells the nonresident or Wisconsin snowmobile trail pass, please visit dnr.wi.gov and search “Sales Locations.”

Club member trail passes are available through AWSC only and can be purchased online at awsc.org, by mail, phone, or in person at the AWSC office in DeForest. All club member trail passes will be delivered by U.S. mail.

Purpose of the new law

The revenue generated directly benefits snowmobiling in Wisconsin. The additional revenue will increase the snowmobile segregated fund, which is used to pay for maintenance and development of snowmobile trails. In addition, the new law provides incentive for membership in local snowmobile clubs, whose members provide the majority of the labor and equipment used to maintain the snowmobile trails. The new law provides for an evaluation of this initiative in four years.

Antique registration

Additional changes to law allow resident owners of snowmobiles 35 years or older to register as antiques. As of press time, pending legislation would exempt antique snowmobiles from displaying a trail pass. Please visit dnr.wi.gov and search keywords “Snowmobile Trail Pass.”

Linda Olver is an administrative policy advisor in DNR's customer and outreach services program.

>>> WHAT CAN BE REGISTERED AS A UTILITY TERRAIN VEHICLE (UTV)?

State law [§23.33 (1)(ng)] requires a vehicle to meet one of two definitions before it can be registered as a UTV. A vehicle must meet each and every legal specification in order to be eligible for registration with the Department of Natural Resources.

Definition 1: Utility Terrain Vehicle

A vehicle must meet **all** of the following specifications:

1. Commercially designed and manufactured;
2. Four or more low pressure or non-pneumatic tires;
3. Dry weight less than 2,000 pounds;
4. Steering wheel;
5. One or more tail lights;
6. One or more brake lights;
7. Two headlights;
8. Width of 65 inches or less;
9. Seat belts for every occupant; and
10. Roll bar or device that protects occupants during a rollover.



Definition 2: Other vehicles qualifying as UTVs



Vehicles that would not qualify as an ATV because of their weight can be registered as a UTV if they meet all of the following specifications:

1. Commercially designed and manufactured;
2. Three or more low pressure or non-pneumatic tires;
3. Dry weight more than 900 pounds but less than 2,000 pounds;
4. Width of 50 inches or less; and
5. Equipped with a seat designed to be straddled by the operator.

DNR FILE

>>> UTV LAW CHANGES DROP CARGO BOX REQUIREMENT

The 2015-17 Wisconsin State Budget, approved as 2015 Wisconsin Act 55, included a law change related to UTVs. The change was made to the legal specifications (definition) for a UTV. It removes the requirement that the machine has a cargo box. Some “buggy” type of machines may now be legal to register as a UTV if they meet ALL other legal specifications. Please note that many of these machines do not come equipped with a tail light and/or brake light. If the manufacturer of the machine does not offer a tail light/brake light kit, the machine is not eligible to apply for registration. Lights may not be homemade or purchased from an aftermarket equipment company.

A ruffed grouse settles in the snow beneath a balsam fir.



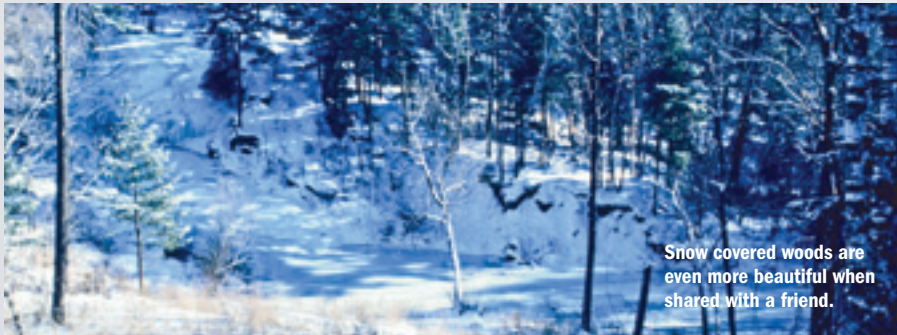
GREGORY K. SCOTT

A great walk in the unspoiled woods

A BOY AND HIS BEST FRIEND RUFFLE A RUFFED GROUSE ON A NEW SNOW MORNING.

Michael D. Louis

The day began like many other winter days in Stevens Point. It was soft, and motionless, as if waiting on something. Snow had fallen in the night creating a fresh thick white blanket.



Snow covered woods are even more beautiful when shared with a friend.

My old hound dog, Jack, was waiting on something too. He was looking forward to a nice breakfast, and if he was very lucky, a good romp in the woods with his best friend, me.

It has long been known that a dog is a man's best friend. In this case Jack was very happy to be a boy's best friend. And the boy returned the sentiment.

I had a unique whistle that only Jack could understand as spoken word, "Come on Jack! Let's go for a walk." On this crisp morning the whistled proposition didn't need to be carried on wind. It rang loud and clear on the still morning air.

And so it was off to the woods, with me, a boy, trailing my guide dog, trail-blazer and best friend. Ever with Jack's nose, his sensor unit, huffing fresh fallen dry snow while snuffling brush and trail. This was the start of a good walk —

DNR FILE



*The quiet was palpable.
With each step I heard nothing.
This was not a wet snow that
crunched underfoot. This was a dry
snow, silent as it lay peacefully
where it had fallen.*

DNR FILE

a walk that would be locked in memory for a lifetime.

Surprisingly, the air was calm. The overnight storm spent its fury before the calm dawn. Horizontally driven snow had made its transition to peaceful vertical descent. It sat on and highlighted each tree and branch. Cherished Scotch pine Christmas trees were now naturally flocked to perfection, as if the hand of God had touched them from above with snow from heaven.

The trees and the ground appeared to be sprinkled with diamonds as snow crystals reflected the sun's prism of colors. One may conceivably ask if this is what becomes of rainbows after falling from the sky, and then to reflect the sun's colors in this woods.

The quiet was palpable. With each step I heard nothing. This was not a wet snow that crunched underfoot. This was a dry snow, silent as it lay peacefully where it had fallen. The only thing I noticed were my footprints left behind. And, my thoughts intruding on the beauty, peace and silence.

Chickadees and blue jays appeared. They too were silent. There were no shrieks of "jay-jay" of the blue jays, nor the "chickadee-dee-dee" of the chickadees. They were captivated with the beauty of the woods on the snow covered morning. They were "speechless." It was quiet.

As all the beauty and silence was being appreciated one step took me fairly close to what seemed like a small pile of brush. The silence was broken and my heart leaped with fright while Jack leaped with delight! What was now so incongruent in the silence and beauty was a seeming explosion! A ruffed grouse had flushed with a noisy burst. It too had been enjoying silence until my boot almost fell on it.



Black-capped chickadee searching for food but "speechless."

LISA HODGE-RICHARDSON



Blue jay on a snow covered morning.

HERBERT LANGE

With the reverie broken with a burst of sound and a laugh, it was time to leave these Wisconsin woods for home. Jack, the excited guide dog, would find the way back home. It was a great walk

in unspoiled woods.



Michael D. Louis is a former resident of Stevens Point, who says he has Wisconsin running through his veins. He currently resides in Atlanta, Georgia.



KEEP IN TOUCH WITH WNR MAGAZINE

Wisconsin Natural Resources, a bimonthly magazine, stays in touch with its readers through a newsletter published online during the off-print months. The newsletter, "Previews and Reviews," features information on upcoming stories, events going on at state properties and suggestions for past stories worth revisiting. To sign up to receive this e-newsletter and other email updates through the WNR website, go to dnr.wi.gov, click the red envelope icon at the bottom of the home page, enter your email address, then under the "Publications" checkbox, select *Wisconsin Natural Resources* magazine. We'll see you in January!

THE LEOPOLD CONSERVATION AWARD – A NOBEL PRIZE FOR PRIVATE LAND CONSERVATION

We were thrilled to see Dick and Kim Cates and their Cates Family Farm included in your recent article (October 2015 "Talon a great story") on the issuance of the bald eagle license plate. As the 2013 recipients of Sand County Foundation's Leopold Conservation Award® they are an inspiration to landowners around the state and across the country. The Leopold Conservation Award has grown to be known as the nation's "Nobel Prize for private land conservation," and the Cateses are richly deserving of that tribute. My organization, Sand County Foundation, believes it is essential to share the stories of these recognized conservation heroes, now nearing 100 in

number, and continue to celebrate the thousands more who are equally deserving of recognition. That is a large part of why we initiated the award program 14 years ago. In Wisconsin, our conservation tradition is part of our identity. Hunters, fishermen, lake property owners, businesses and citizens of all sorts can join together and celebrate annually another family's contribution to our natural resource heritage. On behalf of our presenting partners, the Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Association, Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation, Sand County Foundation is grateful for your showcasing the Cates' Family Farm.

*Kevin McAleese
President, Sand County Foundation*



JODY SCHNEIDER



EARNED A CERTIFICATE OF FIRST DEER

Attached you will find a picture of my son and his first deer. This was a very proud moment for Devin. This was Devin's first day bow hunting, not only the first day, but the first time ever bow hunting! He had completed his hunter safety program at the end of the last school year. He had been practicing for the last couple of months with his bow on some targets he had put together. He had also made a double-seated bench and bow holder, along with cup holders, for him and his dad to sit on in his blind. Early in the morning on that first day of hunting with his bow, Devin and his dad went to the hunting area. But within a matter of less than an hour, Devin began to chat about the squirrels, when were the deer going to come, etc. He didn't quite understand that even a whisper can be heard and spook any deer in the area. So after a couple hours they returned home. Later that afternoon, Devin said he was going to go and sit in his blind. Dan (his dad) and I assumed it wouldn't take long for him to return due to his restlessness within his little blind and his very active 12-year-old boy spirit. Roughly 40 minutes later, Devin came running down out of the woods to Dan who was working in the garage and said, "Dad, I got one!" Dan said, "Ya right," smiled and went back to working. Then Devin said, "Dad, I'm serious. We have to track it." Dan picked up that this wasn't Devin joking around and he came into the house to tell me. We all gathered our deer tracking gear and headed to the area where Devin said he shot at his deer. Not long after we arrived at the area, Dan spotted a couple droplets of blood on some leaves and from there Jenna, Devin's younger sister, was instrumental in helping find the little trail of blood droplets that took us roughly 120 yards from the blind to the doe that Devin had shot. It was a very proud moment for Devin, but also for Dan and I knowing that this was just the start of a life-long tradition that someday he will share with his children.

*Jody Schneider
Chippewa Falls*



BOB PFAFF

ALBINO FAWN A SPECIAL FIND

I was out last Saturday and came across an albino fawn in the field. I took some pictures with my phone. Here is one to share with your readers.

*Bob Pfaff
Dousman*

OWL WATCHING

We watched these babies grow up every day for a month. They were very curious to watch us also. We rarely saw the parent, but when we did she gave us the evil eye to say the least. I was prepared to "duck and cover." We watched her land a rabbit. Fascinating. Big bird.

*Steve and Dana Bremer
Brooklyn*



STEVE AND DANA BREMER

COMMENT ON A STORY?

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

NO ACCESS TO THE WEB?

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



RICK REMME

OWL IDENTIFICATION

This owl has been hanging around all summer. It has black eyes, yellow beak and is about 20 inches long. Can you tell me what kind it is?

Rick Remme
Fremont

Editor's note: It appears to be a barn owl. Here is a link to our owl page with a slide show that clearly shows one: dnr.wi.gov/news/features/feature.asp?id=16&article=1. Thanks for sharing your photo.

MEMORIES AND RENEWAL

I really enjoyed reading the article about becoming a ruffed grouse hunter by Eric Verbeten ("The start of the hunt, the start of a tradition") as well as the article about six decades of deer hunting by Frank Wywialowski ("Six decades of deer hunting") in the August 2015 issue of *Wisconsin Natural Resources*. I shot my first ruffed grouse on our family farm when I was about 14 and like Verbeten, that experience transformed me from a novice shotgunner to an avid grouse hunter. Similarly, like Wywialowski, I have also hunted deer for six decades and after a couple of years of drought in that regard, I took a deer in 2013 on our family farm. Ironically, it was about 200 yards from where I took that first grouse. It was a particularly long shot with my beloved .32 Winchester Special 94 carbine that confirmed that I had not lost my touch after six decades of deer hunting. Both of those two fine articles invoked several memories of many wonderful days in the woods with many special hunting partners pursuing the always challenging ruffed grouse as well as the wily whitetail.

Norm Hanson
Roseville, Minnesota

A GROUSE HUNTING TRADITION IS BORN

I enjoyed the story of grouse hunting by Eric Verbeten in the August 2015 issue ("The start of the hunt, the start of a tradition"). My best friend, Dan, and I have been hunting grouse in the Eagle River area since 1985. Sometimes we even get a few. We both had dogs — he a golden retriever and I, a Brittany. He would bring his golden one year and then I would bring my Brittany the next and so on. After my last passed I too got a golden. Five years ago, Dan passed away. But I still loved to grouse hunt. So my wife came the next year for companionship. The next year she and our son came. Then Dan's son came up with us the next year. So, I think we started a new tradition. Last year, each of us got one [grouse]. October is such a beautiful time of year you just never know what you'll have for weather.

George Petersen
Oshkosh

HISTORIC PHOTO CLARIFICATION

I enjoyed the article "Chock-full of grainy goodness" (August 2015). The warden pictured with the confiscated Packard was my father Stanley V. Swenson and the event did not take place in Poynette. It took place near Boulder Junction. If you want or need further information there was an article on the front page of the *Wisconsin State Journal* on Tues., Nov. 1, 1938 and also *Harding's Magazine* "Fur Fish and Game" wrote an article by Jack Newman around the same time. As you can see, my mother kept a good scrapbook. Thank you for the good work.

Galen S. Swenson
Whitefish Bay

Editors' note: When we are captioning the DNR's historic images we are relying on the details provided by the photographer at the time. Mistakes do happen, though, and we want to encourage readers to let us know if you spot an error so that we can correct the collection. Email any comments or corrections to natasha.kassulke@wisconsin.gov.



EUGENE SANBORN

WHAT WOULD ALDO LEOPOLD SAY?

The article, "Providing a helping hand to private woodland owners, in the August 2015 *Wisconsin Natural Resources*, leaned on the wisdom and philosophy of Aldo Leopold. It was a bit of a stretch for pundits and educators with roots in the timber industry. The typical "degraded" forest is most often "too old," or too mixed to be of value. As the article taught, "Many smaller private woodlands... were slowly degrading..." their land. Forestland, it argued, needed "management and development" to become part of a "well-rounded community." Bigger forest owners already "benefited" from such development. This is not Aldo Leopold. Leopold would ask, what about the pileated woodpecker, flying squirrels, dramatically lower bird diversity, owl holes in big trees, fishers and eagle nest locations? His list is almost endless. An older forest can boast 100 bird species in spring — a managed forest 30 species. Which forest is more "healthy?" Leopold often scolded modern man, becoming famous in the process. Let's read Leopold in his own words: "The last word in ignorance is the man who says of an animal or plant: 'What good is it?' Examine each question in terms of what is ethically and aesthetically right, as well as what is economically expedient. A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise." He adds, "A conservationist is one who is humbly aware that with each stroke [of the axe] he is writing his signature on the face of the land." And, "In our attempt to make conservation easy, we have made it trivial."

Jim and Sue Davidson
Minong

OUTRAGE OVER HISTORIC WHITE PINE LOSS

We received many letters from readers who were outraged over the decision to fell an old white pine to make way for an ATV trail (August 2015 "A white pine eulogy"). Here is a sample of the responses.

I just received my August issue of the magazine, which I always look forward to. This issue, however, had the story of the 150-year-old pine that was removed for what? An ATV trail project? ATVs can easily maneuver around trees and it seems a sad reason to end the life of such a tree (the story offered no more detailed reason for its demise). I see the photos of the counters made from it — in no way does that justify the means. That story sickened me, but the next story (August 2015 "Providing a helping hand to private woodland owners") motivates me to join the Wisconsin Private Woodland Owners program to learn how best to preserve the old-growth forest on our property during our tenure.

Judy Ogren
Maiden Rock

Your "A white pine eulogy" was a sad story about putting a trail for ATVs over a 150-year-old treasured historical tree. It is an example of our pathetic 2015 macho machine driven priorities. Thank you to our DNR staff for at least using the tree for the public rather than selling it for use at some wealthy private enclave. The article was well written. I continue to enjoy our *Wisconsin Natural Resources* magazine. You're doing a nice job.

Cheri Briscoe
Milwaukee

Having been a snowmobiler and ATV enthusiast for the past 40-plus years, I am always interested in trail development. I can't believe the ATV trail in the Oxbo area of the Flambeau River could not go around this champion of the past. Trails go around things all the time, and to destroy a 150-year-old white pine is indeed a crime. For what it has endured and to end up like this is a shame.

Robert Jasch
Crivitz

Your story about cutting down a nearly 150-year-old, healthy white pine because it stood in the path of a proposed ATV trail broke my heart. This magnificent tree had survived high winds, droughts and disease since the Civil War. It even had a name: "the Oxbo Pine." But it had to go so that so-called nature lovers could speed through the forest on motorized vehicles. "Though no one wanted to see the

tree cut, it was deemed necessary for project completion." Really? Planners could have routed the trail away from the tree, or abandoned the project. Instead, they decided that yet another ATV trail was more important than this glorious tree, which true nature lovers can no longer see in the vanishing woodlands. And your magazine, which by its very title is supposed to celebrate natural resources, ran a story sappier than this pine about how this huge, irreplaceable tree was turned into a countertop, of all things. The article ended by saying that maybe the countertop would remind people that "throughout history, when humans work thoughtfully with nature, they can accomplish beautiful things." Did I say the story broke my heart? Perhaps it was only indigestion, because line after line like that just reminded me how ignorant human beings can be and made me sick. Everyone associated with the decision to sacrifice this tree

for something so inferior should be ashamed.

Sheryl Pethers
Bear Lake

I read your article, "A white pine eulogy," with great interest and appreciated the photo of the finished countertop that was masterfully crafted by Jennifer Peterson, a forestry technician. But your article did not include some important information. The opening paragraphs of the article detailed how impressive and majestic this 150-year-old pine tree was. And then ..."the end for the big pine came in August 2014 when an ATV trail project was being planned....Though no one wanted to see the tree cut, it was deemed necessary for the project completion." What criteria could possibly have been used to reach such a judgment? How do our forest service people make such decisions about cutting princely

trees to make room for an ATV trail? Why couldn't the trail have been redesigned? Shouldn't a natural resource magazine, in its integrity, fill in the blanks about how a precious natural resource should be eliminated to make way for ATVs?

JoAnne Katzmarek
Washburn

Let me get this right. You cut down a magnificent white pine for an ATV trail?? I thought ATVs were made to go around just about anything. I go north to see those magnificent pines, not ATV trails. You guys are starting to look like DOT.

G.A. Birch
Stoughton

STUMPED BY SONG LYRICS

I am trying to locate a recording, or at least the title and performers of a song that was played on some Wisconsin radio stations in (I believe) 1969. I know 98 percent of the words, but cannot find any reference to them on the Web and am reaching out to try to locate some information on the song. There are three verses, and the first one starts "From the coastline of Wisconsin where Lake Michigan meets the land, comes an eerie sounding warning as the fog rolls toward the sand." It is about fog horns along Lake Michigan and is a catchy tune. It has been 45 years since I have heard the recording! Thank you for any help you can give. I am hoping that you (or the readers of your magazine) might be able to help me obtain further information (as stated above).

Bruce Birr
Manistique, Michigan, but grew up in Oconto Falls

Editor's note: If you know the answer to Bruce Birr's question please email your answer to natasha.kassulke@wisconsin.gov. We'll share the answer with readers in an upcoming issue.



TOM LONG

AN ELK SURPRISE

I placed my deer camera out on a field edge to see what deer are feeding in this bean field. What a surprise to see a bull elk appear.

Tom Long
Marengo

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Traveler

Exploring Marinette County's winter waterfalls.

Story and photos by *Tim Sweet*

Most of November 2014 had the Badger State locked in a wintry deep freeze since chunks of the polar vortex had frequently broken loose from the far north and plowed into Wisconsin leaving lots of snow and ice behind (*I've been watching too many weather reports*). The conditions were perfect to head up to Marinette County to search for frozen waterfalls.

My son-in-law and his four-wheel drive truck made it through the slippery back roads and unplowed parking lots with no problem. He had been to many of these out-of-the-way locations during warmer months on trout fishing excursions.

I brought along a copy of Patrick Lisi's book "Wisconsin Waterfalls: a Touring Guide" from our local library. It contains directions and background information about many of the state's most treasured water features; I enjoyed sharing the book's valuable tidbits and factoids from the back seat.

Our first destination was Smalley Falls on the north branch of the Pemebonwon River. It's about five miles north of Pembine on U.S. Highway 8/141. Then follow the signs east on Morgan Park Road about a half-mile to a small parking lot. Once we started down the narrow woodland path, my anticipation built as I read warnings that said, "DANGEROUS OVERLOOK" and "STEEP TRAIL." The smile on my face grew wider when I began hearing the sound of water rushing through the narrow ravine that contained Smalley Falls.

Snow-laced cedars and rock walls coated in hoar frost created a perfect winter scene as the river ducked over and around icy boulders. We all squeezed together for a photo along a rocky ledge decorated with lacy ferns, pillows of moss and colorful lichen. Moments like these were meant to be preserved,

even when it's cold and one's fingers feel like bone-chilling temperatures are nipping them.

Back in the truck, we drove a little farther east on Morgan Park Road to Long Slide Falls. A short hike into the forest led to an incredibly scenic overlook of an enchanting, icing-laced gorge. The falls is about 50 feet high and "slides" through the ancient geologic cleft to where the Pemebonwon continues on its way to the Menominee River.

On the day we visited, no one else was around. The snow and icy crystals clinging to God's handiwork made me feel like we were smack dab in the middle of winter's splendor. I loved it! We carefully made our way down to the bottom of the falls where we admired the thundering water



The author's family at Long Slide Falls.

as the frigid temperatures transformed the liquid state of matter into frozen and frosty delights.

When my kids were little, my wife and I often took them on outings to beautiful places. A frequent comment was, "Gee whiz, Dad, all we do is

drive, walk and take pictures." It seemed like a déjà vu moment as we brushed off our snowy boots and followed the guidebook to Horseshoe Falls, located on the south branch of the Pike River, eight miles southeast of Dunbar.

This beauty spot was far off



Tackling the trail to Smalley Falls on the Pemebonwon River.

What's cooking?

BEER, BRAT AND BUTTERKÄSE MAC

(serves 8)

Stuffed with inventive macaroni and cheese recipes, tips and more, we have the Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board to thank for allthingsmacandcheese.com. It's the go-to site for macaroni and cheese aficionados and in this issue, we share a recipe featured on the site that offers comfort food for the cold Wisconsin months.

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 yellow onion
- 4 bratwursts
- 24 ounces beer, your favorite variety
- 1 pound elbow pasta
- 4 tablespoons butter
- 4 tablespoons flour
- 1 cup milk
- 1 teaspoon dry powdered mustard
- 1 teaspoon hot sauce, more to taste
- 1/8 teaspoon nutmeg, freshly grated preferred
- Salt and black pepper to taste
- 2 cups (8 ounces) Wisconsin butterkäse cheese, shredded
- 2 cups (8 ounces) Wisconsin Monterey jack cheese, shredded



SUSAN SENATORI

DIRECTIONS:

Slice onion thinly and place in medium saucepan. Place brats on top of onion. Pour beer over onions and brats and cook covered at low heat for 1 hour. Remove brats from mixture and thinly slice. Reserve 1 cup beer and set aside. (Note: You can also save about 1/4 cup of onions if desired; just chop into small pieces.)

Preheat oven to 350°F. Heat large pot of water for macaroni. Meanwhile, brown brat slices in skillet over medium-high heat. Once browned, remove from pan and set aside. Add macaroni to boiling water and cook until al dente. Drain.

While macaroni is cooking, add butter to saucepan and cook over medium heat. Once butter is melted, whisk in flour and cook 1 to 2 minutes. Add reserved beer, milk, mustard, hot sauce, nutmeg, salt and pepper. Whisk this mixture until flour is blended in, and then cook for roughly 5 to 6 minutes, until the mixture starts to thicken a bit.

Once the mixture starts to thicken, add in brats and onions (if using), then cheese. Reduce heat to low and continue to stir until cheese has melted.

Combine pasta with cheese mixture and pour into lightly buttered baking dish (2-quart round or 9×9-inch dish). Bake 20 minutes. Cool 3 to 5 minutes before serving.

Recipe by Brew Crew Ball and shared on allthingsmacandcheese.com.

the beaten track. See Lisi's book for directional details, and be sure to have a four-wheel drive vehicle if coming in winter. From the parking lot, the hike down to Horseshoe Falls takes you through a wonderfully secluded forest. The falls itself drops and makes a sharp turn in the Pike River, then tumbles on through the quiet northwoods.

From there we meandered along Trout Haven Road to Twelve Foot Falls Road until we arrived at Twelve Foot Falls County Park. Numerous falls are lined up and down this stretch of the south branch of the Pike River. A hike around a still pool, over a footbridge and around a rocky outcropping brought us to an up close and personal view of the very athletic waters roaring through Twelve Foot Falls.

Dave's Falls County Park was our last destination of the daylong journey. It is easily accessible from the west side of Highway 141 just south of Amberg. The lovely park has the Pike River coursing through it creating two cascades: one is upstream along a trail past a foot bridge, while

Dave's Falls crashes through a dark, rocky gorge further downstream. From above, we observed a fresh otter slide in the snow next to the falls. Snow- and ice-covered rocks create additional hazards to hikers. Please remember to use caution and good judgment when visiting these special places at any time of the year.

Darkness was beginning to descend when we made it back to the truck. It had been a wonderful day that flowed from one beautiful river to the next. Precious family memories were created and preserved, hopefully, for many years to come. I'm already looking forward to the next chance to explore more of Wisconsin's winter waterfalls.

And hey, how about you? If you are physically able, now might be your best chance to get out there, too.

Visit therealnorth.com/ and click on the "Waterfalls" link for more information. Also, stop at the nearest library and check out a copy of "Wisconsin Waterfalls: a Touring Guide" by Patrick Lisi.



Tim Sweet writes from his home in Clintonville.



Dave's Falls crashes through the rocky gorge to the Pike River.



The author and his family reach Smalley Falls thanks to some guidance from "Wisconsin Waterfalls: a Touring Guide."



Wisconsin, naturally

ABLEMAN'S GORGE STATE NATURAL AREA



Thomas A. Meyer
State Natural Areas Program

Notable: Geology enthusiasts are drawn to Ableman's Gorge for its scenic qualities, but perhaps more so as a small-scale model for interpreting the geologic history of the entire Baraboo Range. Also referred to as the "Upper Narrows," the gorge was cut by the Baraboo River through quartzite, sandstone and conglomerate, revealing a cross-section through the north range. The cliffs and rocky slopes rise 200 feet above the floodplain to form a long, L-shaped wall, the southern leg of which amounts to a mural depicting some of Wisconsin's most interesting geologic past. Erosional forces and a former quarrying operation have re-exposed the long buried layers of rock. Here, the younger, half-billion-year-old Cambrian sandstone is revealed on both the north and south sides of the much older Precambrian Baraboo quartzite. The quartzite originated as sandy layers of water-born sediment in an ancient sea that was subsequently metamorphosed from sandstone into an even harder layer and then folded by tectonic forces. The quartzite now lies vertically in the gorge and exhibits cliff faces with cross-bedding and ripple marks formed by moving water. During the later Cambrian Period, the ancient quartzite island was buried by sand — now sandstone — transported by wind and water and deposited in layers. Today, the cool, moist, north-facing slopes shelter plants more typical of northern Wisconsin, including hemlock, yellow birch, mountain maple and Canada yew. The area is widely used for geology research and a plaque at the adjacent Van Hise Rock wayside honors University of Wisconsin-Madison geologist Charles Van Hise, who formulated some of his principles of structural deformation and metamorphism here. A wonderful interpretation of the gorge's geology is found in Robert Dott's and John Attig's book, "Roadside Geology of Wisconsin." The Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program provided funding for the acquisition of this land.

How to get there: From the intersection of State Highways 136 and 154 in Rock Springs, go west on Highway 136 one mile to a parking area on the left just before the Baraboo River bridge. Direct access to the quarry's exposed rock is afforded by parking in the pull-off on the east side of Highway 136 across from the bottling plant and then crossing the highway to the DNR gate north of the plant. A trail begins there and leads to Van Hise Rock. Visit dnr.wi.gov and search "Ableman's Gorge" for a map and more information.

