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WISCONSIN NATURAL RESOURCES

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April 2007 \$3.50

Come to the Outdoor Expo

73 field trips from April through October

On the hunt for a white turkey

Searching for rare snakes

The Boss

This would-be tough guy mainly belts out songs.

Mark Mamerow

Last summer I lived in a locale ruled by a pitiless tyrant. It was not a land of barren deserts, weapons caches or religious extremists, but of lush lawns, flowering shrubs and leafy green trees. The location? My back yard in a suburban Milwaukee subdivision. However pastoral the setting, under the watchful eye of *Turdus migratorius*, the American robin, it became the equivalent of a police state. Nothing happened here without the knowledge and approval of the chief – the bird in chief.

For the most part robins are indistinguishable from one another. Their black head, plump red-orange breast and no-nonsense attitude present identical icons of rectitude. Robins can be found at all daylight hours patrolling suburban lawns with a devotion to duty bordering on the obsessive. Sure, you'll occasionally see

them pause to nab a careless night crawler or insect, but their larger purpose seems to be keeping a close eye on the behavior of local children, pets and backyard grill chefs.

Last year's resident robin stood out visually from his brethren. The feathers on his upper left breast were missing or discolored, presumably from some encounter with another bird

or perhaps a plate glass window. The bird carried his white splotch like a badge of courage pinned directly upon his heart. And that "honor" appeared to have gone straight to his head.

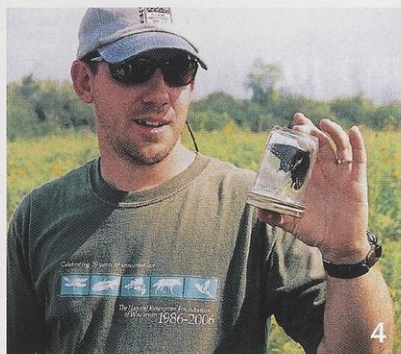
Battle scar on proud display, this robin took homeland security to a new level. He perched throughout the day on the highest point in the area — the furnace vent at

continued on page 28

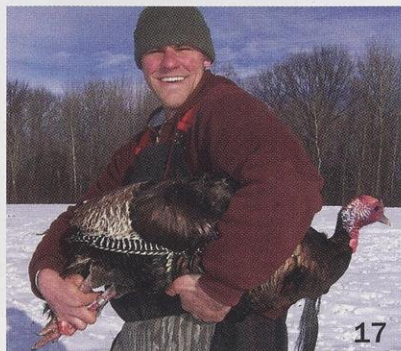
Robins, like other thrushes, croon many beautiful songs. Some warn of dangers, some entice mates during the breeding season, some note their territory and others just seem to add melodious grace notes as dusk turns to darkness.

WISCONSIN NATURAL RESOURCES

April 2007
Volume 31, Number 2



CHRISTINE TANZER



MATT LECHMAIER



JOSH KAPFER

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Mark Mamerow

His domain was a small suburban fence line, but this robin ruled the roost.

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Christine Tanzer

73 field trips to choose from. Join us!

11 Keeping connected

Jeff Pritzl

Set your sights for Beaver Dam on May 18-19 for an outdoor expo for your whole family.

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Forecasting hot spots and fishing opportunities throughout the year.

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Wisconsin Traveler taps into the maple syrup season.

FRONT COVER: Try out portable blinds, cast a line and take aim at the outdoor expo near Beaver Dam, May 18-19.

DAVID S. EDWARDS, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

BACK COVER: Avon Bottoms State Natural Area in Rock County. For more information, or to order a guidebook to State Natural Areas, contact the Bureau of Endangered Resources, DNR, P.O. Box 7921, Madison, WI 53707 or visit dnr.wi.gov/org/land/er/sna.

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Editor David L. Sperling
Contributing Editor Maureen Mecozzi
Circulation Manager Kathryn A. Kahler
Art Direction Thomas J. Senatori,
Waldbillig & Besteman
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Take me

Christine Tanzer

Before your calendar fills up, please consider joining us for a day hike, boat ride or paddle to explore the outdoors. Take a look at these 73 guided tours led by naturalists and DNR staff who enjoy talking about the plants, animals, landscapes and challenges in managing natural resources. These trips are coordinated each year by the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin for your enjoyment.

Note that 73 trips are arranged chronologically from April through October. Assume these are day trips that fall on Saturdays unless otherwise noted. The physical demands of each trip are noted by the color tint behind each trip number: yellow – accessible to people with walking disabilities; green – easy, short travel on level terrain; blue – average hike with a few hills; red – steeper terrain, more vigorous workout, or a longer trip.

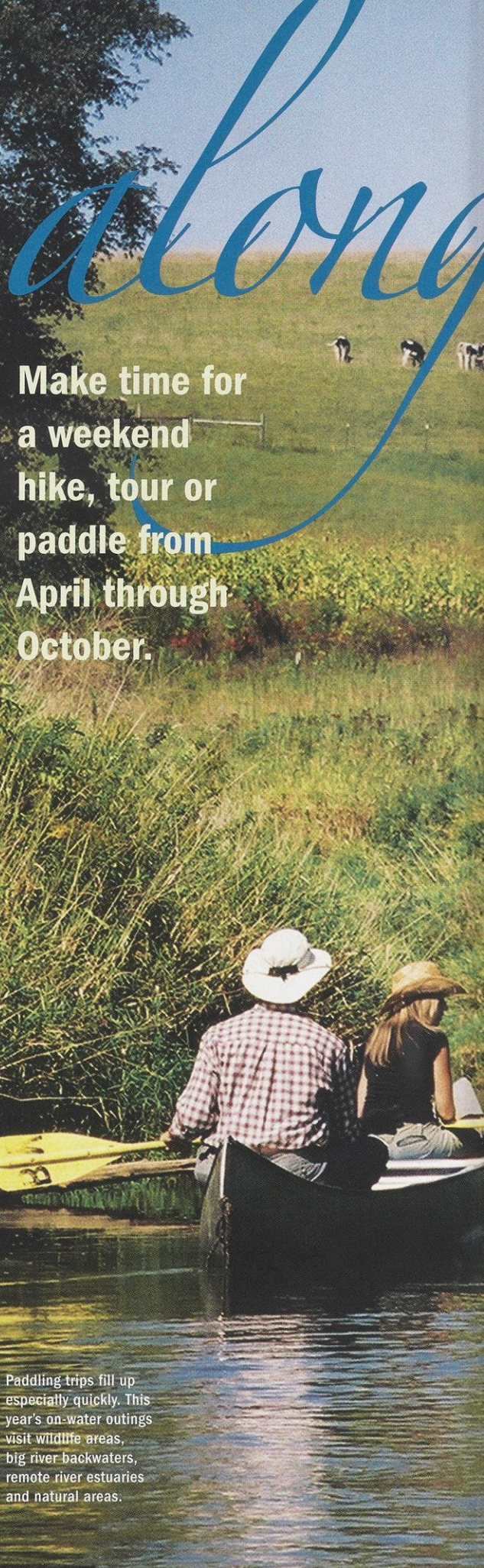
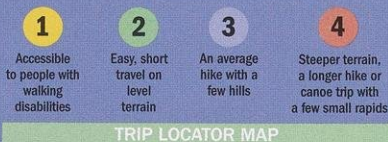
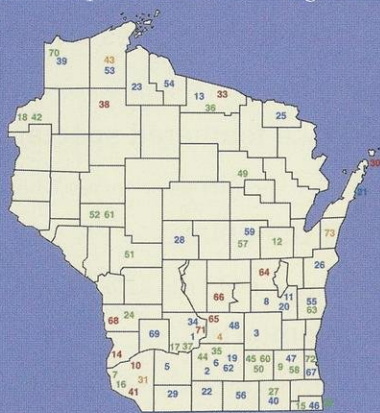
Space is limited and trips fill quickly on a first-come, first-served basis. Trips that can accommodate fewer than 20 people show these limits in the listing. Canoe and kayak trips are especially popular. Please request only one such trip per family or group.

Register on paper or online this year. For mailed reservations, clip out or photocopy the registration form on page 10. List the trip number and number of people in your party. Tally any fees (all fees are shown per person) for those few trips that are fundraisers or charge for providing lunch, bus, boat or canoe rentals. Calculate total costs, include an annual \$35 trip registration, and please mail one check payable to the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin to the address indicated. You can also register online using a VISA or MasterCard at the Foundation's website. www.wisconservation.org

Details and directions will be sent to registrants two weeks before each trip. Fees are nonrefundable if you cancel, but parties on waiting lists that can't be accommodated will receive refunds.

You can check if trips still have available space at the Natural Resources Foundation website, or call toll-free (866) 264-4096 after 5 p.m. A recording provides updates of trip availability. Further questions? Call me on Wednesdays at (608) 264-8548 or send e-mail to: christine.tanzer@wisconsin.gov.

Christine Tanzer is field trip coordinator for the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin.

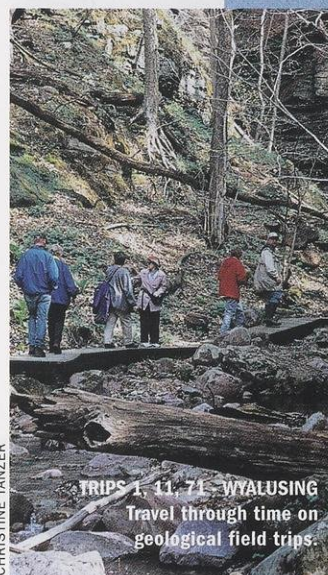


**Make time for
a weekend
hike, tour or
paddle from
April through
October.**

Paddling trips fill up especially quickly. This year's on-water outings visit wildlife areas, big river backwaters, remote river estuaries and natural areas.

TRIP/LIMITS	DATE	LOCATION	LEADER/COST
1. PARFREY'S GLEN SNA Explore this spectacular 100-foot gorge cut into the Baraboo Hills.	April 28, 9 a.m.-noon	Baraboo, Sauk Co.	David Bouche
2. GOURMET GARLIC MUSTARD Turn this nasty pest into a tasty treat. Presto, it's pesto!	April 28, 10 a.m.-3 p.m.	Madison, Dane Co.	Steve Drake/\$7
3. DIGITAL OUTDOOR PHOTOGRAPHY Start with an indoor lecture about digital equipment, image exposure and composition, then venture into the field.	May 5, 11:30 a.m.-6 p.m.	Beaver Dam, Dodge Co.	Dave Edwards
4. MAPLE SYRUP MAKING Savor the taste and enjoy hands-on syrup making at MacKenzie Environmental Center.	May 5, 9 a.m.-noon	Poynette, Columbia Co.	Derek Duane
5. SOUTHERN WISCONSIN NATURAL GEMS Enjoy an indoor presentation with photos and maps, then hike Snow Bottoms SNA.	May 5, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.	Dodgeville, Iowa Co.	Greg Delwiche
6. SUNSET AT PHEASANT BRANCH MARSH A sunset jaunt with an amazing hilltop view to see and hear returning birds and frogs.	Thursday, May 10, 6-8:30 p.m.	Middleton, Dane Co.	Pat Trochlell & Tom Bernthal
7. WARBLER MIGRATION AT WYALUSING See more than 80 species as we hike the bluffs and coulees of Wyalusing during peak bird migration.	Friday, May 11, 7 a.m.-2 p.m.	Bagley, Grant Co.	Andy Paulios
8. THE WONDERS OF EPHEMERAL PONDS Discover the amazing ecology of short-lived seasonal ponds. Hike several sites.	Friday, May 11, 4-7:30 p.m.	Cambellsport, Fond du Lac Co.	Brick Fevold, Kathi Kramasz & Tim Beyer
9. TWILIGHT FAMILY HIKE TO BRADY'S ROCK Explore the Ice Age Trail in the Southern Kettle Moraine at dusk. Bring the kids!	May 12, 6:45-8:30 p.m.	Eagle, Waukesha Co.	Lisa Schleichert
10. SPRING FLOWERS AT BLUE RIVER BLUFFS SNA Enjoy a backcountry hike through the steep sloping prairies and savannas. The hike is grueling, but the vistas are spectacular! Steep off-trail hike. Limit: 15	May 12, 10 a.m.-1 p.m.	Blue River, Grant Co.	Nate Fayram
11. GEOLOGY AND ECOLOGY OF OAKFIELD LEDGE SNA Visit prominent 40-foot rock cliffs along the Niagara Escarpment. Learn about geology and unique plant communities.	May 12, 9-11 a.m.	Oakfield, Fond du Lac Co.	Ryan Magana
12. CANOE NAVARINO WILDLIFE AREA View wildlife up-close as we paddle the beautiful Navarino Wildlife Area. Canoes provided. Indicate if you need one.	May 12, 9 a.m.-noon	Shiocton, Outagamie Co.	Tim Ewing/\$5
13. LOON NETWORK A workshop for volunteers to monitor loons in Northern Wisconsin. Learn about loon ecology and behavior.	Monday, May 14, 9 a.m.-noon	Eagle River, Vilas Co.	Mike Meyer, Rollie Alger, Sandy Gillum, & Kay Scharpf
14. BLUFFTOPS OF RUSH CREEK SNA Hike the steep off-trail back country of Rush Creek, savor hillside prairies, wildflowers and peak bird migration.	Friday, May 18, 9 a.m.-1 p.m.	Ferryville, Crawford Co.	Craig Thompson & Armand Bartz
15. GRASSLAND BIRDS OF BONG Glimpse many songbirds including bobolinks, upland sandpipers and several sparrows.	Friday, May 18, 7-9:30 a.m.	Kansasville, Kenosha Co.	Marty Johnson & Beth Goeppinger
16. HIKE AND CANOE OL' MAN RIVER Hike to see effigy mounds. Climb to Treasure Cave. Then canoe backwaters of the mighty Mississippi. Limit: 20. Canoe rentals available.	May 19, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.	Wyalusing State Park, Grant Co.	Heidi Conde

Note: The term SNA is used throughout to refer to State Natural Areas.



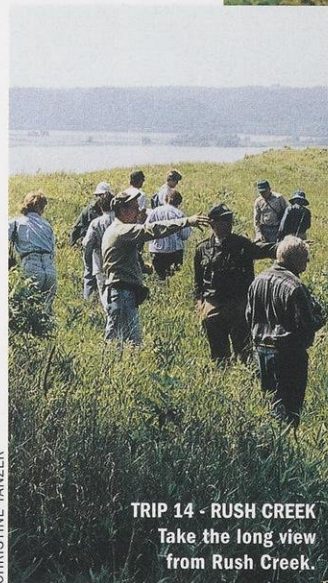
CHRISTINE TANZER

TRIPS 1, 11, 71 - WYALUSING
Travel through time on geological field trips



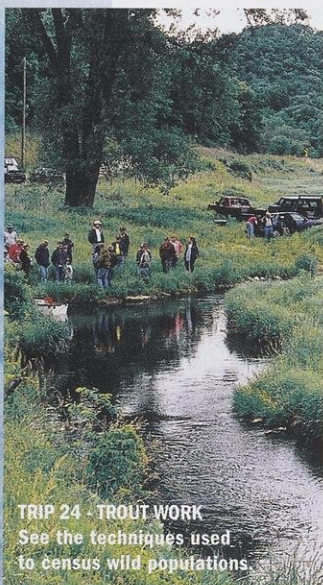
SCOTT NIELSEN

TRIP 10 - SPRING FLOWERS
Pose questions about spring posies.



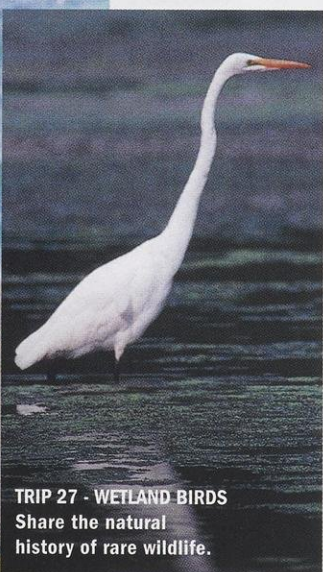
CHRISTINE TANZER

TRIP 14 - RUSH CREEK
Take the long view from Rush Creek.



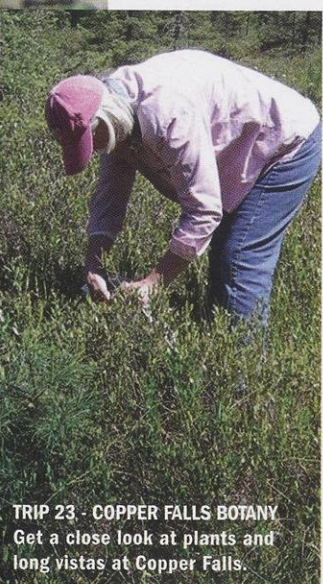
TRIP 24 - TROUT WORK
See the techniques used to census wild populations

BARB BAZEN



TRIP 27 - WETLAND BIRDS
Share the natural history of rare wildlife.

HERBERT LANGE



TRIP 23 - COPPER FALLS BOTANY
Get a close look at plants and long vistas at Copper Falls.

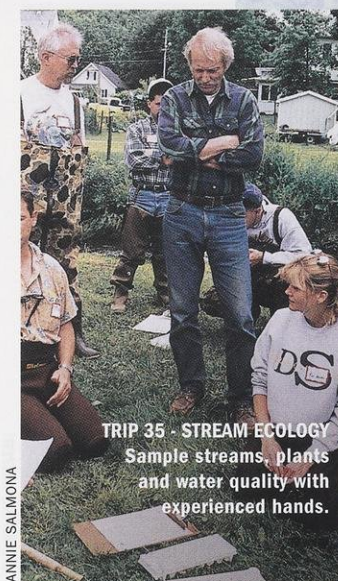
COLLEEN MATULA

TRIP/LIMITS	DATE	LOCATION	LEADER/COST
17. THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY ALONG THE WISCONSIN RIVER Hike prairies, wetlands, and floodplains. Learn to ID and control many common invasive plants.	May 19, 10 a.m.-1 p.m.	Sauk City, Sauk Co.	Jean Unmuth & Susan Kenney
18. CREX MEADOWS BIRDS AND FLOWERS Explore the prairies of Crex Meadows and enjoy the beauty of blooming lupine, phlox and spiderwort. See various sparrows, warblers and upland sandpipers fly about.	May 19, 10 a.m.-1 p.m.	Grantsburg, Burnett Co.	Jim Hoefler
19. BLUEBIRDS AND OTHER CAVITY-NESTING BIRDS View nesting bluebirds, tree swallows, chickadees and wrens at Governor Nelson State Park. Learn to attract these birds to nest in your yard!	Choose one of two single-day sessions, 10 a.m.-noon each day 19-A. Saturday, May 19 19-B. Sunday, May 20	Wausaukee, Dane Co.	Marianne Jensen & James Stick
20. EARTHWORMS: FOREST FRIENDS OR FOES? Wisconsin harbors no "native" earthworms. Hike the Northern Kettle Moraine Forest to see how worms are less desirable on the forest floor.	Sunday, May 20, 10 a.m.-2:30 p.m.	Campbellsport, Fond du Lac Co.	Kelly Kearns & Kathy Corio
21. ORCHIDS AND BOREAL FOREST OF MOONLIGHT BAY Fringed orchids await as we blaze a trail through boreal forest to Moonlight Bay Bedrock Beach.	May 26, 1:30-4:30 p.m.	Bailey's Harbor, Door Co.	Mark Martin & Joe Henry
22. BIKE TOUR OF GREEN COUNTY SNAs Pedal the Sugar River Trail with stops to look for birds and reptiles, then hike prairies of Muralt Bluff SNA and Abraham's Woods. Limit: 15. Bike 15 miles roundtrip.	June 2, 8-11 a.m.	Albany, Green Co.	Richard & Amy Staffen
23. COPPER FALLS BOTANY BONANZA Hike Copper Falls State Park to learn about native and invasive plants.	June 2, 10 a.m.-noon	Mellen, Ashland Co.	Colleen Matula
24. COON VALLEY TROUT Come to the "Montana of the Midwest" and electro-shock a stream to see brook trout.	June 2, 10 a.m.-noon	Coon Valley, Vernon Co.	David Vetrano
25. SPREAD EAGLE BARRENS SNA Enjoy vistas, rare plants and birds thriving in this bracken grassland.	June 2, 9 a.m.-1 p.m.	Eagle Barrens, Florence Co.	Jeremy Holtz/\$5
26. MARIBEL CAVES SNA Visit caves, springs, ancient trees and geology.	June 2, 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.	Maribel, Manitowoc Co.	Bob Bultman & Shelly Schaetz
27. BIRDS OF TURTLE VALLEY Wake up with the birds to see upland sandpipers, rails, egrets and cranes at newly restored marshes.	Friday, June 8, 5-11 a.m.	Delavan, Walworth Co.	Andy Paulios, Owen Boyle & Brian Glenzinski
28. SKUNK CREEK WOODS AND HILES WETLANDS Don your explorer's cap and venture to two newly designated SNAs. Discover the bird and plant life of the mature white pine-oak forest of Skunk Creek Woods SNA; and the fen, tamarack and wet prairie of Hiles Wetlands SNA.	Friday, June 8, 6-10 a.m.	Dexterville, Wood Co.	Randy Hoffman
29. OAK SAVANNA RESTORATION Learn the nuts and bolts of oak savanna restoration hiking through Yellowstone Wildlife Area.	June 9, 9:30 a.m.-noon	Blanchardville, Lafayette Co.	Bruce Folley & Matt Singer
30. BICYCLE TOUR OF WASHINGTON ISLAND SNAs Pedal to unique natural communities at Coffey Swamp, dunes and swales of Jackson Harbor Ridges. 15-mile roundtrip ride. Bring your own bike.	June 9, 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.	Washington Island, Door Co.	Darcy Kind

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TRIP/LIMITS	DATE	LOCATION	LEADER/COST
31. WILSON STATE NURSERY See how 25 species of forest seedlings and wildlife shrubs are raised.	June 9, 10 a.m.-noon	Boscobel, Grant Co.	Joe Vande Hey & Roger Bohringer
32. CHIWAUKEE PRAIRIE SNA Explore the richest prairie in Wisconsin with over 400 plant species!	June 9, 9 a.m.-noon	Carol Beach, Kenosha Co.	Marty Johnson, Doug Robinson, & Kristie Woods
33. CANOE AND HIKE THE WILD LAKES OF TENDERFOOT Paddle across Palmer and Tenderfoot lakes to the shores of the Tenderfoot Forest Reserve. Hike a mosaic of forests, from aspen to old-growth hemlock. Bring your own canoe/kayak.	June 9, 9 a.m.-1 p.m.	Boulder Junction, Vilas Co.	Matt Dallman
34. MIRROR LAKE PINE OAK FOREST SNA Discover birds, amphibians and plants in the ravines and sandstone cliffs of this new SNA.	June 9, 9 a.m.-noon	Baraboo, Sauk Co.	Matt Zine
35. TROUT STREAM ECOLOGY WORKSHOP Get your feet wet in two trout streams — Otter Creek in the Baraboo Hills and Black Earth Creek. Use stream sampling gear to test conditions.	June 9, 9 a.m.-2 p.m.	Baraboo, Sauk Co. & Black Earth, Dane Co.	Abby Popp & Mike Miller
36. LESSONS FROM LITTLE ROCK AND SPARKLING LAKES Boat about to learn about the acidification and mercury experiments conducted on these lakes.	Tuesday, June 12, 9 a.m.-noon	Boulder Junction, Vilas Co.	Dr. Susan Knight \$8 (includes lunch)
37. DRAGONFLIES OF THE LOWER WISCONSIN RIVERWAY Join us at Bakken's Pond SNA to explore the world of dragonfly and damselfly ecology. Capture and identify various species.	Friday, June 15, 10 a.m.-3 p.m.	Spring Green, Sauk Co.	Andy Paulios
38. FLAMBEAU RIVER — INTRO TO WHITEWATER CANOEING Learn basic whitewater canoeing on an easy-to-moderate rapids portion of the Flambeau River. Camp overnight. Previous canoeing experience required. (optional camping Sat. night)	Friday-Saturday, June 15, 1 p.m. - June 16, 5 p.m.	Winter, Sawyer Co.	Dave Birren & Tom Watkins
39. SEA KAYAK THROUGH A LAKE SUPERIOR ESTUARY Enjoy a six-mile paddle through wooded shores, wetlands and meandering bays of the St. Louis River. Sea kayaks and instruction provided by outfitter. Beginners welcome! Limit: 18	June 16, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.	Superior, Douglas Co.	Frank Koshere/ \$65 per person kayak rental; \$25 per person if bringing own kayak and gear
40. HIKE AND CANOE LULU LAKE SNA Paddle through beautiful Lulu Lake, then hike the surrounding SNA.	June 16, 9 a.m.-1 p.m.	Troy, Walworth Co.	Heidi Bunk & Brian Glenzinski
41. GASNER HOLLOW BLUFF PRAIRIE AND SAVANNA SNA View purple coneflowers, Indian mounds and search for prairie ringneck snakes on a bluff prairie overlooking the Mississippi River. Note: Off-trail, steep slopes and rough footing make this a challenging hike. Limit: 15	June 16, 10 a.m.-1 p.m.	Bagley, Grant Co.	Nate Fayram
42. OSPREY NESTING AT GREX Learn about osprey behavior and ecology viewing several osprey nest sites.	June 16, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.	Grantsburg, Burnett Co.	Pat Manthey
43. PONTOON CLASSROOM: LEARNING ABOUT LAKES Float to Lake Namekagon and learn about aquatic plants, fisheries, shoreline habitat, limnology and wildlife. Cost includes pontoon rental and lunch at Lakewoods Resort.	Thursday, June 21, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.	Cable, Bayfield Co.	Pamela Toshner, Earl Cook & John Haack / \$30

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TRIP 35 - STREAM ECOLOGY
Sample streams, plants and water quality with experienced hands.

ANNIE SALMONA



TRIP 39 - SEA KAYAKING
Water tours range from quiet estuaries to frothy whitewater rapids.

CHRISTINE TANZER



TRIP 37 - DRAGONFLIES
Take flight with dragonflies, butterflies and birds.

STEPHEN J. LANG



TRIP 46 - MONARCHS
Marvel at the long journeys of migrating monarchs.

CHRISTINE TANZER



TRIP 54 - RAPTOR BANDING
Take part in osprey banding and research.

BILL WEEGE



TRIP 57 - PADDLING ADVENTURE
Paddle through springs and rivers past wild landscapes.

MERL LANG

TRIP/LIMITS	DATE	LOCATION	LEADER/COST
44. BLACK EARTH CREEK TROUT FISHERY Learn about trout biology on a premier stream.	June 23, 9 a.m.-noon	Black Earth, Dane Co.	Scot Stewart
45. ROSE LAKE SNA AND LAKE MILLS WILDLIFE AREA Search for black terns, moorhens and other wetland birds exploring the shores, prairie and oak savannas of Rose Lake SNA. Then it's off to Lake Mills Wildlife Area to see extensive wetland and prairie restoration.	June 23, 9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.	Fort Atkinson, Jefferson Co.	Mark Martin
46. BUTTERFLY ECOLOGY AND COUNT Grab a net and join the annual butterfly count! Learn hands-on identification of various butterflies at Richard Bong Recreation Area.	June 30, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.	Kansasville, Kenosha Co.	Beth Goeppinger & Donna Mosca
47. CANOE OTTAWA LAKE FEN SNA Explore by canoe then hike a boardwalk through the wetland to view plants, animals and birds. Bring your own canoe. Limit: 16	June 30, 1-4:30 p.m.	Dousman, Waukesha Co.	Brock Woods
48. CANYONS AND SAVANNAS OF ROCKY RUN Explore the gently rolling slopes next to sheer-walled box canyons! Limit: 15	June 30, 9 a.m.-noon	Wyocena, Columbia Co.	Craig Anderson
49. AVIAN AND RAPTOR REHAB CENTER Take a behind-the-scenes look at research facility that specializes in raptor recovery.	June 30, 9 a.m.-noon	Antigo, Langlade Co.	Marge Gibson & Jeanette Kelly / \$5
50. AZTALAN SNA — ANCIENT ARCHAEOLOGY Learn about Native Americans on Wisconsin's prehistoric frontier. Explore numerous archaeological investigations at this famed historic landmark.	June 30, 10 a.m.-noon	Lake Mills, Jefferson Co.	Mark Dudzik & Bob Birmingham
51. ARE BARRENS BARE? Hike the Glenn Creek Barrens SNA in search of rare plants, tiger beetles and numerous butterfly species.	Friday, July 6, 9 a.m.-noon	Millston, Jackson Co.	Randy Hoffman
52. DRAGONFLIES AT BEAVER CREEK Join us at Beaver Creek Nature Center to explore dragonfly and damselfly ecology.	Friday, July 13, 10 a.m.-3 p.m.	Fall Creek, Eau Claire Co.	Andy Paulios
53. WOLF HOWL Join the pack on a bus and hiking tour of the Chequamegon National Forest — a nighttime drive to listen for wolves. Cost includes dinner and a donation to wolf tracking efforts.	July 14, 3 p.m.-midnight	Cable, Bayfield Co.	Adrian Wydeven, Sarah Boles & Tom Matthiae / \$40
54. OSPREY BANDING AND TURTLE FLAMBEAU FLOWAGE TOUR Visit osprey nests and help band nestlings. Take a scenic boat ride through the flowage. Lunch included. This trip is a fundraiser for the osprey monitoring program.	July 14, 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m.	Mercer, Iron Co.	Bruce Bacon & Roger Jasinski / \$65
55. ECOLOGY OF KOHLER PARK DUNES SNA Walk the 2.5 mile "cordwalk" along the Lake Michigan shore learning about dune ecology.	July 14, 9-11 a.m.	Sheboygan, Sheboygan Co.	Jim Buchholz & Owen Boyle
56. ORCHIDS AND WETLANDS AT FAIR MEADOWS SNA See prairie fringed orchids while learning about wetland ecology and enjoying the beauty of this privately-owned, restored SNA.	July 14, 9 a.m.-1 p.m.	Milton, Rock Co.	Penny & Gary Shackelford, Tom Boos & Pat Trochlell
57. CANOE THE UPPER WAUPACA CHAIN O' LAKES Paddle through boiling springs, spring-fed lakes and the pristine Pope Lake SNA. Bring your own canoe and gear.	July 14, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.	Waupaca, Waupaca Co.	Sue Eiler

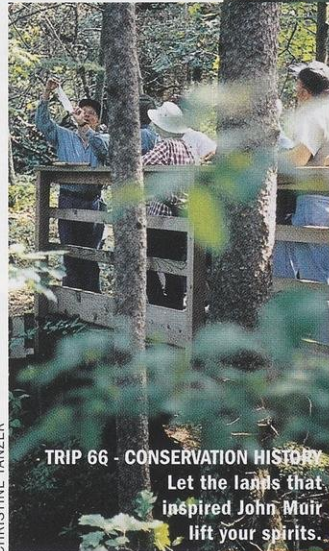
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TRIP/LIMITS	DATE	LOCATION	LEADER/COST
58. WILDFLOWERS OF SCUPPERNONG MARSH Enjoy blooming compass plant and prairie dock at a restored 3,500-acre low prairie.	July 21, 9 a.m. -noon	Eagle, Waukesha Co.	Ronald Kurowski
59. GRENIE AND SKUNK LAKES SNA – DAM REMOVAL View two kettle lakes where dams were very recently removed, connecting them to a cold water fishery stream. Learn about the ecological benefits of dam removal.	Wednesday, July 25, 9 a.m.-1 p.m.	Scandinavia, Waupaca Co.	Scott Koehnke, Steve Hoffman, Al Niebur & Scott Provost
60. FAVILLE AND SNAPPER PRAIRIES SNA Tiptoe through the blooming blazing stars. Walk under towering stalks of compass plant and prairie dock. Enjoy the colorful display at peak-bloom.	Friday, July 27, 9 a.m.-noon	Lake Mills, Jefferson Co.	Dawn Hinebaugh & Christina Isenring
61. THE “POWER” IN LANDFILLS Superior Seven Mile Creek Landfill is now powering 2,600 local homes! Come see this clean state-of-the-art power plant fueled by refuse.	July 28, 10 a.m.-noon	Eau Claire, Eau Claire Co.	Dave Lundberg & Mark Vinall
62. CHEROKEE MARSH SNA Explore the off-trail wonders of this beloved wetland, identify many plants, birds and amphibians. Note: some wet tussock terrain.	August 4, 9-11 a.m.	Madison, Dane Co.	Matt Zine
63. SHEBOYGAN RIVER SUPERFUND SITE Enjoy a rare behind-the-scenes visit to see clean-up efforts to eliminate PCBs in the Sheboygan River sediment.	August 4, 1-4:30 p.m.	Sheboygan Falls, Sheboygan Co.	Thomas Wentland
64. SNOWSHOEING RUSH LAKE IN SUMMER! Strap on your snowshoes to traverse dried mudflats of Rush Lake. See how this shallow lake is responding to water drawdown. Bring your own snowshoes.	August 11, 9 a.m.-12:30 p.m.	Rush Lake, Winnebago Co.	Tim Lizotte
65. SUMMER DELLS HIKE “Power-hike” through areas of the Dells of the Wisconsin River SNA not normally accessible to the public. Spectacular gorges, mossy glens and rare plants await on a strenuous, fast-paced hike on steep off-trail terrain.	Friday, August 24, 9 a.m. -1 p.m.	Wisconsin Dells, Columbia Co.	Thomas Meyer
66. JOHN MUIR’S BOYHOOD HAUNTS Traverse the lake, wetlands, prairie/savanna where John Muir grew up. Lunch on Observatory Hill atop a cedar glade with a spectacular view.	August 25, 9:30 a.m.-1 p.m.	Montello, Marquette Co.	Mark Martin
67. STREAM BIOLOGY 101 Learn the basics of stream biology in this hands-on exploration of the Tess Corners Creek in Whitnall Park. Kids welcome!	September 8, 1-3:30 p.m.	Hales Corners, Milwaukee Co.	Shelley Warwick & Craig Helker
68. CANOE THE KICKAPOO Paddle this winding waterway in Wildcat Mountain State Park. Hike through the hemlock forest of Mt. Pisgah SNA. Limited canoes available for free use. Indicate if you need one. Intermediate canoe skills required. Limit: 18	Friday, September 14, 11 a.m.-4:30 p.m.	Ontario, Vernon Co.	Hank Kuehling, Dave Siebert & Ron Campbell
69. GRASSHOPPERS AT GOTHAM JACK PINE BARRENS SNA Hop along the sand prairie and jack pine barrens near the Wisconsin River as we chase, survey and learn about grasshoppers. Limit: 15	September 15, 10 a.m.-1 p.m.	Gotham, Richland Co.	Kathryn Kirk



DONNA KRISCHAN

TRIP 58 - PRAIRIE PLANTS
Meet native Wisconsin species like prairie dock.



CHRISTINE TANZER

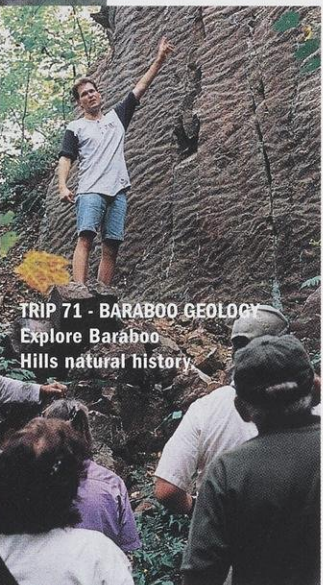
TRIP 66 - CONSERVATION HISTORY
Let the lands that inspired John Muir lift your spirits.



JACK BARTHOLMAI

TRIP 69 - GRASSHOPPERS
Identify a grasshopper before it hops away!

Note: The term SNA is used throughout to refer to State Natural Areas.



TRIP 71 - BARABOO GEOLOGY
Explore Baraboo Hills natural history

CHRISTINE TANZER



TRIP 73 - EGG STRIPPING
Learn how migrating salmon spawn new generations that feed anglers' hopes.

ROBERT QUEEN

TRIP/LIMITS	DATE	LOCATION	LEADER/COST
70. HAWK MIGRATION AT HAWK RIDGE OBSERVATORY See several thousand raptors a day with the right winds! Learn about raptor identification. Visit Wisconsin Point barrier beach to see shorebirds, gulls and rare waterbirds if the winds aren't good for hawk watching. Choose one session: Limit: 15 per session	Friday, 70-A. September 21, 8:30-11:30 a.m. 70-B. September 21, 1:30-4:30 p.m. 70-C. September 22, 8:30-11:30 a.m. 70-D. September 22, 1:30-4:30 p.m.	Superior, Douglas Co. & Duluth, MN	William Smith
71. BARABOO HILLS GEOLOGIC HISTORY Hike the picturesque bluffs at Devil's Lake to examine quartzite, enjoy the beauty of Parfrey's Glen and a rock-hunting expedition into the Pink Lady Quarry.	September 22, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.	Devil's Lake, Sauk Co.	Phil Fauble
72. URBAN MIGRATORY BIRDS Join avian researchers in Riverside Park to study urban natural areas for tropical migratory songbirds. Observe a bird banding station and see songbirds in hand!	October 6, 9-11 a.m.	Milwaukee, Milwaukee Co.	Owen Boyle, Bill Mueller & Tim Vargo
73. CHINOOK SALMON Watch chinook salmon on their last journey in life. Learn about salmon life cycles and egg collection at the Besadny Fisheries Facility.	October 6, 9:30-11 a.m.	Kewaunee, Kewaunee Co.	Kathy Dax
LUNCH AT OBSERVATORY HILL Relax as the vistas and your guides give you a long view of the landscape.			

TOM UNDERWOOD

Sign up for a field trip

Name _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone (daytime) _____ (evening) _____

E-mail _____

I would like to attend the following trip(s):

Trip# _____ # of people _____ x trip fee _____ = \$ _____

Trip# _____ # of people _____ x trip fee _____ = \$ _____

Trip# _____ # of people _____ x trip fee _____ = \$ _____

Trip registration fee \$ 35

NRF renewal or donation (\$15, \$25, \$50, \$100) \$ _____

Total enclosed \$ _____

Make checks payable to Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin. Mail completed form and check to: NRF Field Trips, P.O. Box 2317, Madison, WI 53701 or sign up online at www.wisconservation.org using a major credit card.

CHRIS WEST

A big exposition aims to spark kids' interest in a lifetime of outdoor recreation and exploration.

The outdoor expo provides a hands-on chance to explore outdoor fun.



Keeping connected

Jeff Pritzl

Aldo Leopold once wrote about the spiritual dangers of not staying connected to the rural landscape. "One is the danger of supposing that breakfast comes from the grocery, and the other that heat comes from the furnace." It was an observation in the 1930s that may be truer than ever today. As our society urbanizes, our daily connection with the natural world becomes thinner. You could argue that this is a good thing; that the best way to protect nature is to leave it alone. But you would be wrong.

Under the big top tents, each "camp" gives visitors the chance to see, touch, hear and try activities. Here they get to poke around buckets with pond water and plants to take a close look at the freshwater groceries fish like to eat.

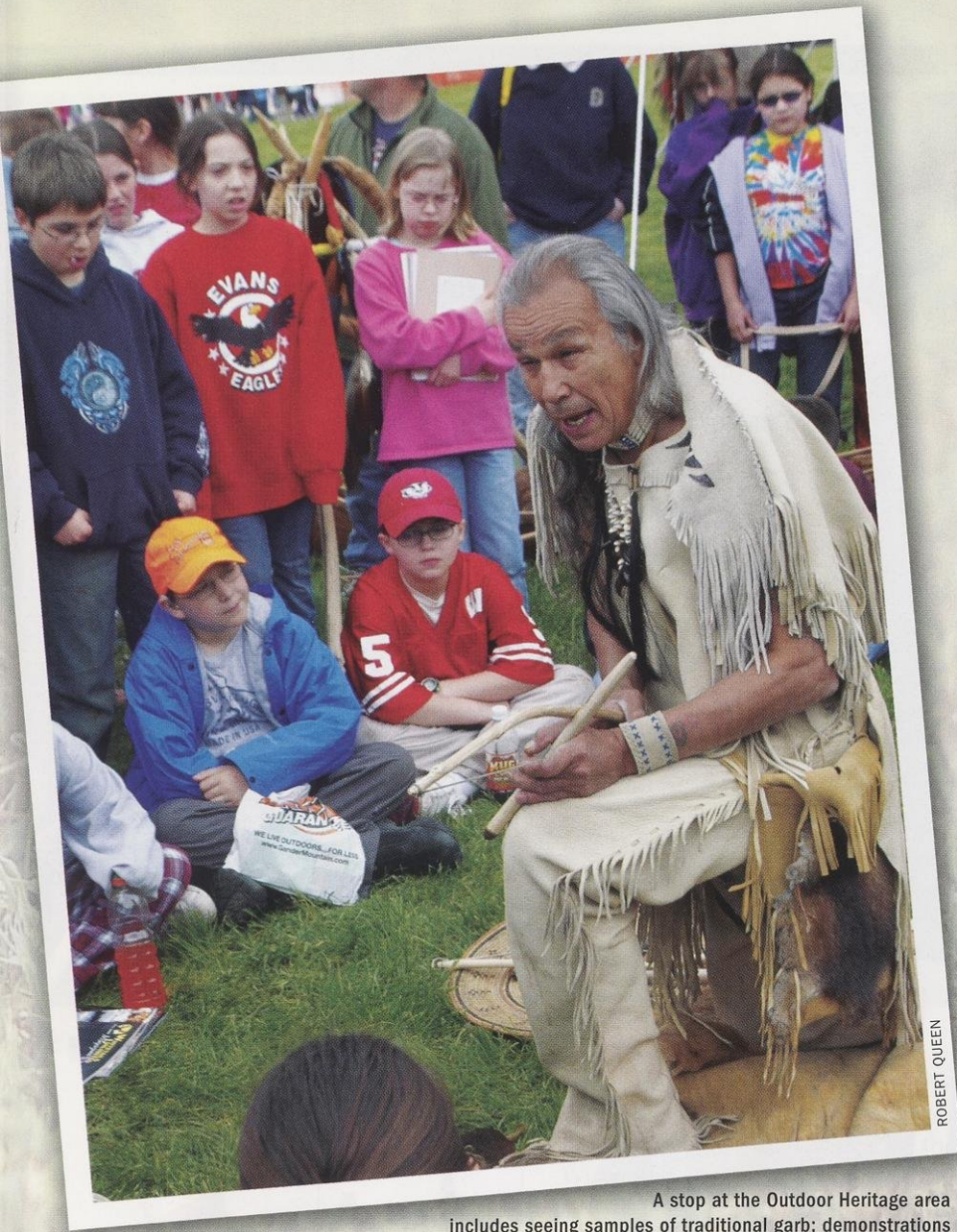
ROBERT QUEEN



The outdoor expo provides a great outing for school groups. The event is cost-free, there are a wide variety of fun things to explore in a safe setting, and teachers' guides suggest how the day's events can be incorporated into the science, math and social studies curriculum.

DAVID S. EDWARDS





ROBERT QUEEN

A stop at the Outdoor Heritage area includes seeing samples of traditional garb; demonstrations with traditional tools, like this fire-starting set; and explanations of conservation ethics that remain important components of Native American culture.

"People take care of what they care about," says DNR Chief Warden Randy Stark. The most active supporters of natural resources have always been the most active users of those resources. And here lies a concern: Fewer people are taking up traditional outdoor pursuits like hunting, fishing and trapping. In Wisconsin, for every 100 hunters that leave the field, mostly due to age, only 53 new recruits are signing on. Participation in traditional field sports has been America's bankroll for conservation work for almost 100 years. The 1.5 million folks who harvest fish and game have been joined by gardeners, hikers, campers, bicyclists, boaters, birdwatchers and other nature enthusiasts. While

that broader group of outdoor enthusiasts is refreshing, conservation leaders and lawmakers have not tapped into how to build support among this wider group of outdoor interests to fund outdoor recreation. And 75 percent of the nation's conservation funding still comes from hunting, trapping and fishing. To maintain the many programs that have provided professional resource management, funded public land management and preserved millions of acres of our natural world for our collective enjoyment, it is critical to sustain and grow the population of hunters and anglers. This, in turn, should be accompanied by a common partnership across all outdoor participants.

Forward thinking conservationists are concerned about the future they see coming if the decline in numbers of hunters, anglers and trappers continues, so a unique collection of them have organized to let more people see what these activities can offer. The Wisconsin Outdoor Alliance Foundation (WOAF) is a mixture of conservation, business and trade organizations. Their first strategy toward a brighter future for conservation is to expose more people to traditional outdoor activities through a Wisconsin Outdoor Education Expo. "The expo is a two-day event where students and families can experience 'hands-on' outdoor activities designed to encourage lifelong participation" explains Rebecca Smith, WOAF Chair.

Last May on a breezy Friday, 3,200 Wisconsin fourth and fifth graders descended on the Dodge County Fairgrounds near Beaver Dam with 600 teachers and chaperones in tow. They came from as far away as Taylor County, some sponsored by local conservation clubs that were eager to help their community youth get excited about the outdoors and test drive dozens of outdoor pursuits. Really big tents in part of the fairgrounds were focal points for seven different "camps" that offered hands-on experiences in archery, camping and trail recreation, fishing, firearm safety (with BB guns), sporting dogs, wildlife identification, wildlife calling and tracking, and outdoor heritage. School groups came on Friday and on Saturday, the same programs were offered so families and a wider public could take part in the expo. More than 1,100 parents, grandparents, friends and children attended on Saturday. And all of this was provided free of charge! "The expo was created to foster a relationship between Wisconsin families and the outdoors," Smith adds.

Making it happen behind the scenes

The program was free to participants, but the event certainly was not cost-free. More than 70 organizations and individuals provided financial support and staffing assistance to make the expo possible. Each camp was sponsored by

an organization that provided the expertise to explain and build enthusiasm for an outdoor skill. The groups hope to inspire participants to consider an outdoor hobby that would make outdoor recreation a more lasting part of their lives. Nearly 300 volunteers were recruited to make sure everything from parking to pointing dog demonstrations went smoothly.

Activities were designed to be fun, easy to try and close at hand. Young students and families stood within feet of live raptors. Participants shot BBs at targets under the watchful eye of certified hunter education instructors. Children and students dove into the latest in tent technologies provided by Gander Mountain. DNR biologists brought their famous traveling fish tank and throughout the expo grounds, kids were heard squealing "I got to hold a fish!"

Outdoor venues included:

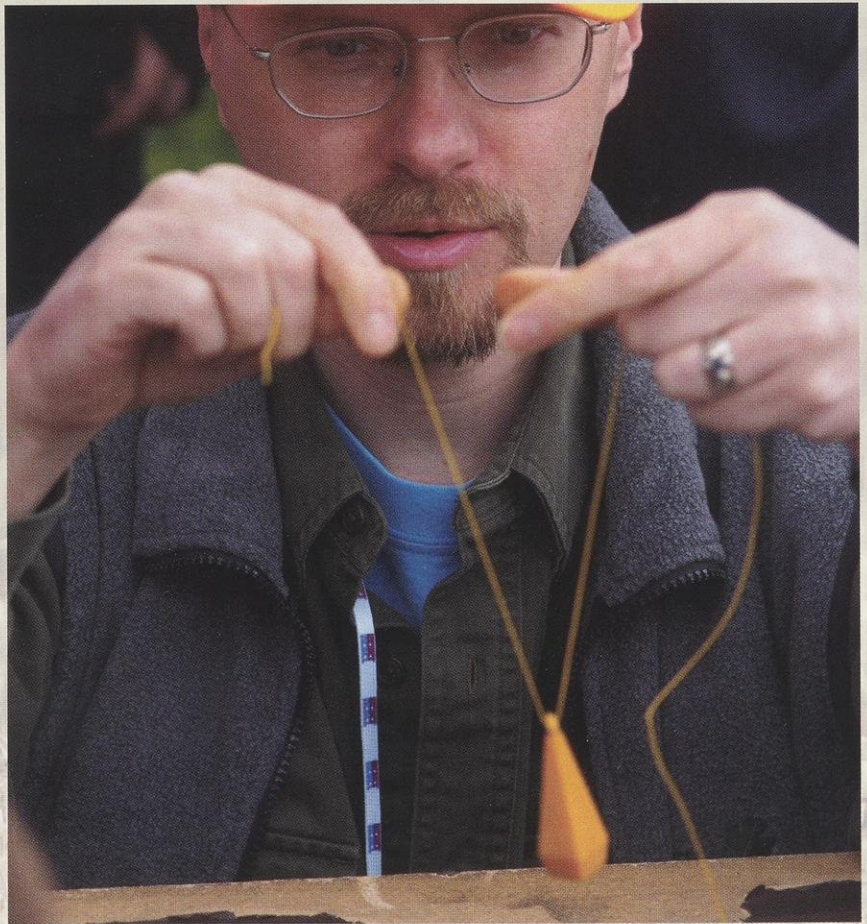
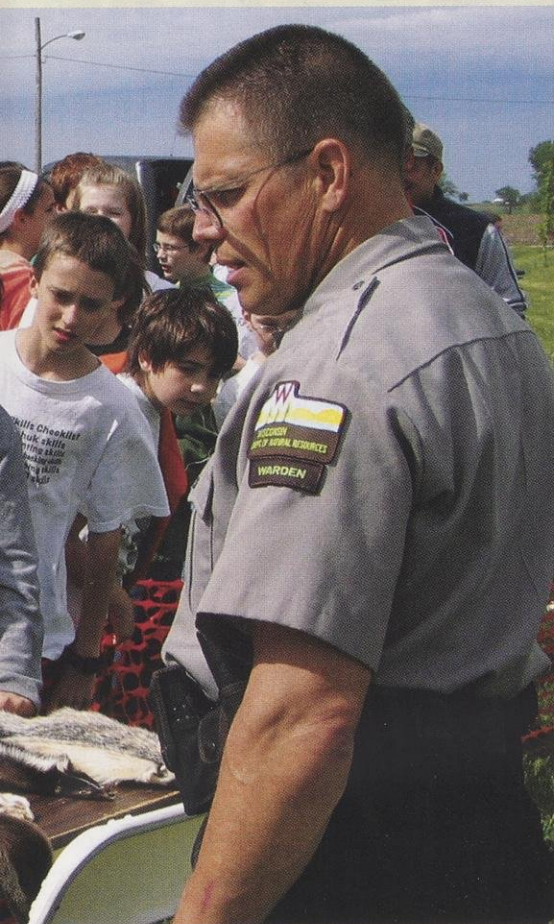
- **Archery** — sponsored by the Wisconsin Bowhunters Association. Participants were coached on safely handling and using archery equipment. They then moved to one of 40 target lanes to receive one-on-one guidance in shooting either a recurve or compound bow.
- **Outdoor Heritage** — sponsored by the Conservation Congress Outdoor Heritage Committee. Participants learned about fur trapping, Native American culture, historic campaigns to build support for conservation, and even were visited by an actor who recreated the look and words of one of America's greatest conservationists, President Teddy Roosevelt.
- **Wildlife Trail** — sponsored by the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation. Participants explored grasslands, wetlands and forests to learn which species live in each habitat and to look for tracks and signs of animals. Live birds of prey gave the budding birdwatchers a chance to gaze through binoculars to look for clues in identifying different species. Then students puckered up to try their skill at calling ducks, geese, turkeys and elk. They also got to duck in to

DAVID S. EDWARDS



ROBERT QUEEN

ABOVE: For many students the expo may offer their first chance to see and handle hides of Wisconsin furbearing mammals; LEFT: their first opportunity to try their hand target shooting with a bow or a BB gun; RIGHT: a chance to cast a line with spincast, spinning or fly-fishing rods; UPPER RIGHT: a chance to meet experienced, enthusiastic anglers who will guide them in tying flies or just tying on a plug to practice casting techniques.

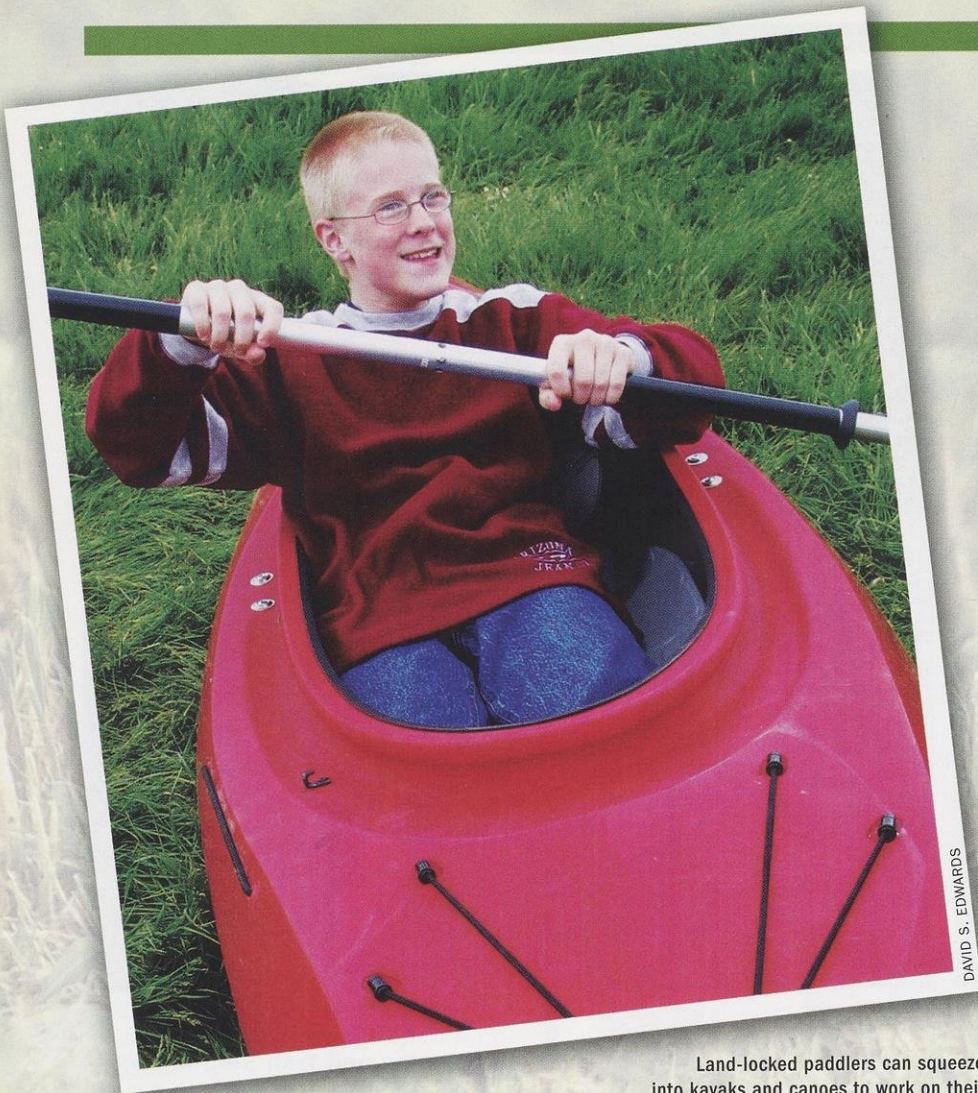


see what it looks like from inside a hunting blind.

- **Sporting Dogs** — sponsored by the Wisconsin Association of Field Trial Clubs. Pointing and retrieving dogs showed their stuff finding birds and following commands from their owners.
- **Fishing** — sponsored by Trout Unlimited and The Musky Clubs Alliance. Everyone got to try their hand tying panfish flies then learning to cast with a fly rod or spinning rod. It was fun identifying the fish swimming in an enormous fish tank.
- **Firearm Safety** — sponsored by Wisconsin DNR Law Enforcement. Certainly a popular stop at the expo. Students got instruction on safe firearm handling from certified hunter education instructors and conservation wardens, then the kids were escorted for one-on-one help target shooting at a BB-gun range. Each shooter got to keep his or her target as a memento of their experience.

- **Camping and Trail Recreation** — sponsored by Gander Mountain and the Wisconsin ATV Association. Everyone got to crawl into the latest and greatest in tents, canoes, kayaks and camping gear. They could also hop on board ATVs and then take a ringside seat as experienced, trained riders demonstrated how to safely and responsibly operate these popular machines.

The partnerships and relationships formed to carry out the expo are still thriving beyond the event itself. The groups are forming the genesis of a coalition of conservation, education and economic interests that plan to keep working together to create positive changes in natural resource conservation. "Our first objective is to encourage participation," states Dan Gunderson, WOAF Executive Director. "Participation leads to appreciation and we hope that will inspire the actions necessary to protect habitat and wildlife in future



DAVID S. EDWARDS

Land-locked paddlers can squeeze into kayaks and canoes to work on their strokes and plan on-water adventure.

generations. We want to bring down barriers between groups and interests, building a 'bigger tent' that becomes the home for our conservation legacy."

Healthy minds, bodies and ecosystems

Other preparations with teachers aimed to make the expo more than just a day away from the books. With support of the Department of Public Instruction, teachers received lesson plans and support materials so they could continue to tie the events offered at each camp into their core curriculum. Retired elementary school principal and Wisconsin Conservation Congress delegate Dick Pladies was instrumental in shaping the camp activities and developing a teacher guide that included pre-tests and post-tests, if the teachers wanted to

use them.

In addition to providing connections that tied each event to math, science, language arts and social studies standards, outdoor expo activities also fit well with a national movement to keep children physically active, promote wellness and avoid childhood obesity. It's a disturbing trend that as participation in traditional field sports declines, young Americans are getting heavier. There's no direct correlation here, simply a reflection of the times and perhaps an explanation for declining participation in field sports. Young Americans are choosing more sedentary ways to spend their free time. A lifestyle including a heavy dose of field sports can provide many personal health benefits including strenuous exercise, better powers of observation, the knowledge to harvest nutritious natural foods and spiritual enrichment.

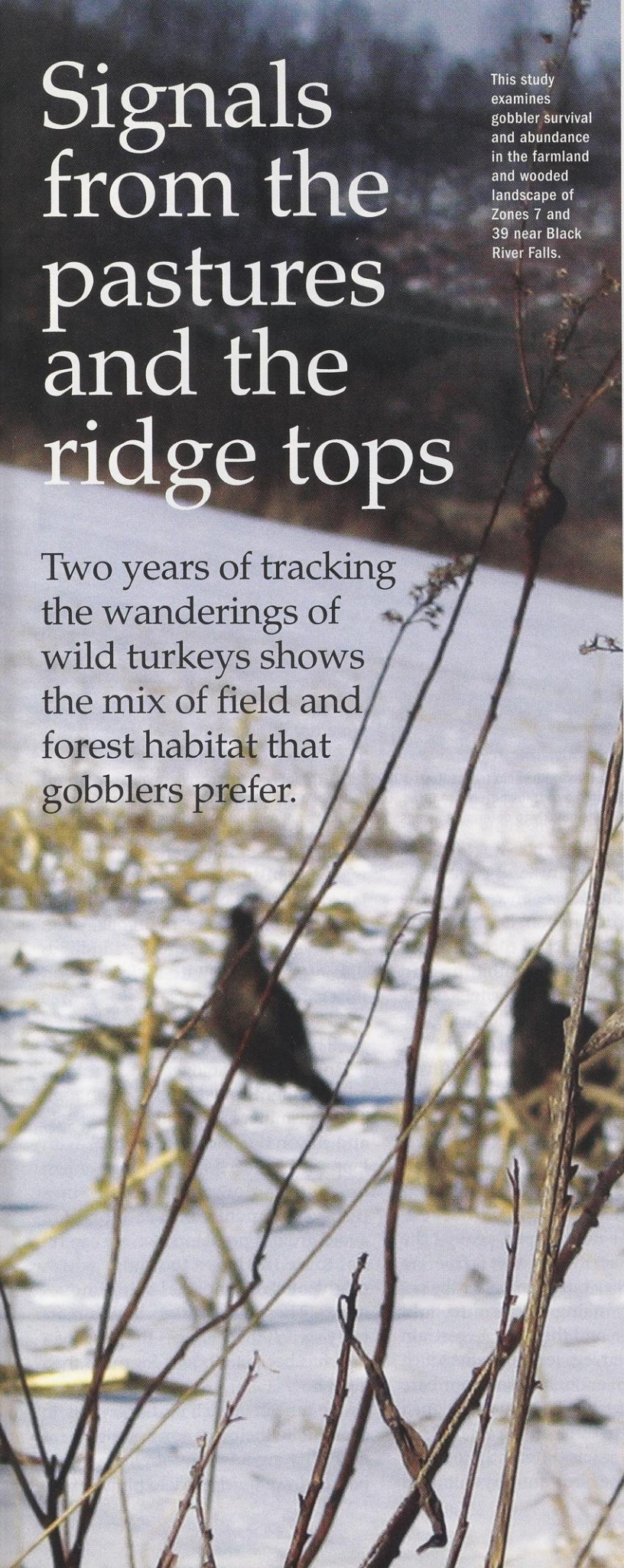
We suspect that studies of people who regularly get outdoors, away from the stresses of school and work would also show the benefits for their mental health of having noncompetitive experiences, breathing some fresh air, becoming aware of natural cycles and enjoying the solitude that can come from walking, hiking, hunting and fishing, Gunderson said. It's a win-win for participants and the environment as they develop a new appreciation and value for the experiences one can only have in natural settings.

Get involved in this year's expo

On May 18 and 19, 2007, the expo returns to the Dodge County Fairgrounds. Advance registration for the Friday school session already surpasses last year's attendance and a Saturday session will again be open to the public free of charge. What better way to start off the summer recreation season than to try out some new activities and consider what the outdoors offers? An important component of the planning is developing handouts and contacts for participants who want to find people and places near their homes to try their hand at a new hobby they got a taste of at the expo. If you are willing to work with children or belong to an outdoor club or organization that could help in that regard, by all means contact us.

Volunteers are also needed to help out on Outdoor Expo weekend in Beaver Dam in May. You can choose a particular camp based upon your interests; or can help out with a general duty such as security, parking or camp services. If your group can't come that day but wants to take part, financial sponsors are needed to rent 40'x100' tents, electrical generators and portable toilets, print programs and purchase materials for 5,000 or more participants. Almost \$200,000 is needed to make this event happen! If you would like to help, call toll-free 1-877-WISEXPO or go to www.wisexpo.com. Thanks for your enthusiasm and support.

Jeff Pritzl is DNR's wildlife biologist in Manitowoc, Kewaunee and Door counties.



Signals from the pastures and the ridge tops

This study examines gobbler survival and abundance in the farmland and wooded landscape of Zones 7 and 39 near Black River Falls.

Two years of tracking the wanderings of wild turkeys shows the mix of field and forest habitat that gobblers prefer.

Story and photos by Matt Lechmaier

By 2:30 on a January afternoon, we have been sitting in an unheated blind for eight hours scanning the same snowy hillside west of Black River Falls for signs of wild turkeys. Fresh tracks in the snow and personal observation from a nearby landowner confirmed that turkeys had roosted on the ridge above us during the previous night. Finally we hear a series of clucks and purrs from behind the hunting blind and a bachelor group of ten toms makes its way to feed in the harvested soybean field in plain view next to us.

Though nearly 200,000 turkey hunters won't take to the woods until April, we are enduring the winter weather to gather information about turkey behavior and ecology that may interest those hunters and other wildlife watchers. We are examining what factors help wild turkeys survive, thrive and extend their range here in western Wisconsin.

For this wildlife management project, we have spent from January until June during the past two years conducting fieldwork. The majority of our time during January and February is spent trying to catch turkeys using rocket nets. We begin by searching for signs of turkeys in harvested agricultural fields. During winter, they often feed on waste grain near their roosts in adjacent wooded areas. When we find an area where turkeys are feeding regularly, we set out our trapping equipment and wait in a hunting blind nearby until the turkeys return.

During the winter, the hens remain in family groups with last year's poults, while jakes and the toms we are targeting will flock together in bachelor groups. The amount of time it takes to catch any particular group varies and may range from a couple of hours to several days.

Occasionally we will watch as part of a flock feeds on or near our hunting blind while the rest of the turkeys are nearby preening, foraging, displaying, sleeping, chasing each other or exhibiting many



Researcher Matt Lechmaier and colleagues trap turkeys in winter then outfit them with radio transmitters (UPPER RIGHT) that hold in place like a backpack. Blindfolding the birds during handling keeps them calmer as they are measured and transmitters are fitted. LOWER RIGHT: The transmitters emit a faster signal if the turkeys stop moving for eight hours. Researchers try to locate dead birds quickly to determine a cause of death. It's not unusual to find that scavengers have already picked the turkey carcass pretty clean.

other entertaining behaviors. Sometimes a member of the flock detects movement across the field, lets out a high-pitched “putt” and the group disappears into the woods long before we see anything. Hunters will recognize this same distinctive “putt” call as the grace note that has marked the end of countless hunts. It’s a warning to all other birds in the area that the turkey has seen something out of the ordinary. Turkeys rely on keen eyesight to detect predators, and multiple sets of eyes continually scanning the landscape are an effective way of keeping the flock safe.

If we are quiet and lucky, the turkeys won’t detect us. When all or most of the flock is feeding on the corn pile, we detonate the charges in three small rockets and launch them over the turkeys’ heads. These rockets are mounted on top of a box containing a net that measures about 30 ft. by 40 ft. The leading edge of the net is attached to the rockets while the back edge is anchored by cinder blocks. The net

deploys in an instant, and covers the turkeys before they can react to the sound of the detonation. It is so fast, in fact, that we use cracked corn as bait to keep the turkeys from inhaling and choking on whole corn kernels as the rockets shoot by overhead. During the past two winters, we have caught 151 toms (adult males) and 25 jakes (juvenile males) without any mortality during capture.

Capturing and handling turkeys is the most exciting part of this fieldwork. At first I was concerned that the birds would become hypothermic while resting under the net trapped against the snow, but in fact the opposite is true. We take each turkey out from under the net individually, using one arm to hold their wings in and the other to restrain their legs. Their legs feel hot to the touch and are warm enough to keep our bare hands comfortable. Some turkeys open their mouths to dissipate excess heat.

Each bird reacts differently to being captured. Some birds are very calm and

wait patiently to be released. Others take advantage of any opportunity to fly away or leave a mark on our hands with their spurs. These restless individuals often end up with nicknames on their capture data sheets — “Rudy” was small, but feisty; “Chuck Norris” had a thick beard and liked to kick.

To follow their movement, we attach a lightweight transmitter to each tom. The transmitter is worn like a backpack, and sits on the middle of its back with loops around each wing and the antenna running down to the tail. Since turkeys fly up into trees each night to avoid ground predators, we are careful not to tie the loops too tight, which might obstruct normal wing movements. These transmitters have a mortality switch that changes the signal if a bird has been stationary for more than eight hours.

We tune in to each bird every day to triangulate their location and listen for mortality signals. If we believe a bird has died, we quickly try to pinpoint the

location and seek permission from the landowner to follow the signal and retrieve the dead turkey. We have to act quickly to have any chance of determining why the bird expired. Frequently, we track the signal to find a transmitter attached to a pile of bones and feathers. Many scavengers, including skunks, raccoons, opossums, other birds, coyotes and weasels, will make quick work of a turkey and can pick a fresh carcass clean over the course of a night. Without evidence, we have to classify these mortality events as "unknown" cause of death and they account for 30 percent of the dead turkeys that we have documented since fieldwork began.

The most common known cause of death is hunter harvest (55%); followed by coyotes (6%), poaching (3%), capture (4%), and car collisions (2%). Any turkeys that die within two weeks of the time we last handled them we attribute to "capture," even if the cause of death appears to be from other causes.

When birds equipped with transmitters are harvested by hunters, it can lead to some humorous encounters. Normally when a hunter harvests a turkey and finds the transmitter, he or she calls the phone number on the side of the device to report the harvest. Occasionally, the hunter just does not see the transmitter while cleaning the bird or finds it and isn't sure what to do with it. We have tracked transmitted signals to hunters' garages. Imagine what they think when a stranger wearing headphones, carrying a receiver and holding an antenna rings their doorbell to ask if they've had some luck turkey hunting recently!

During the spring, we use radio telemetry to locate each bird approximately four times each week. We triangulate their position by tracking their unique radio frequency using a radio receiver, compass and GPS unit. Since 2005, we have recorded more than 2,932 locations for birds we have released. This data allows us to determine the spring home ranges for each tom.

We are also studying whether habitat characteristics within these home ranges relate to harvest rates. For example, it seems logical that birds located in small woodlots might be targeted by

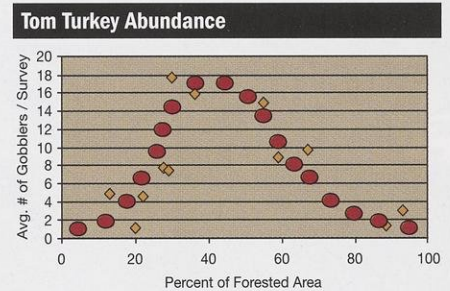
hunters more easily than turkeys that live in large forested blocks. If that were true, we would predict that turkey survival rates would be lower on farmlands than in heavily forested areas. And, in fact the data from our first two years bears that out. Tom turkey survival rates were lowest in the township containing the most agricultural area and least forestland. The township that is dominated by forests has the highest survival rate.

Township	Percent Forested Area	Survival Rate
Edson	22.12	0.400
Garden Valley	33.67	0.520
Albion	52.9	0.498
Mead	64.91	0.797

In addition to tracking the movements of each tagged bird during the spring, we conduct spring gobbling surveys as another measure of the relationship between the landscape and turkey abundance. This entails driving 10-mile routes in our study area at dawn, stopping each mile to stand on the side of the road and counting the number of gobblers we hear during a four-minute interval. Occasionally an early commuter will stop to ask if we are having car trouble, which I think reflects on the helpful nature of people in our study area. I explain that I am "bird-watching" and continue to listen for turkeys once the car drives away.

We conduct these early morning surveys during April and May in several townships. I've come to appreciate these predawn travels as a real benefit of my job. I enjoy witnessing the subtle daily changes as spring progresses and just listening to the world wake up each morning is very peaceful. Dawn has become my favorite time of day. From a scientist's perspective, these surveys have shown us that turkey abundance does indeed vary with landscape vegetation and you can expect to find the greatest concentration of turkeys with the right mix of forest to farmland cover. Turkeys are most abundant when forest comprises between 30-50 percent of the landscape, and the number of gobblers declines if forested area either exceeds or falls short of this range. On the following

chart, 0 represents open farmland and 100 represents dense forest cover.



The places in western Wisconsin where we trap turkeys to outfit them with transmitters are all on private lands, which demonstrates the importance of landowner participation and support for building strong turkey populations throughout the state. These partnerships have resulted in a remarkable wildlife management success story. Turkeys were re-introduced to Wisconsin starting in 1974. National conservation groups like the National Turkey Federation, its local chapters and a host of state conservation clubs working with DNR wildlife managers have restored a population that now exceeds 200,000 turkeys that are enjoyed by wildlife watchers and hunters alike.

Last spring, more than 200,000 permits were issued to hunters to harvest turkeys, and more than 45,000 turkeys were taken during the six-week spring hunting season. This does not include those harvested during the popular fall season from mid-September through mid-November. Research designed to better understand turkey ecology and learn more about their population levels is an effective way to improve how we monitor the health of this valuable wildlife resource. Furthermore, a healthy turkey population is a real asset for outdoor recreation. As a bird watcher, hunter, ecologist, and outdoor enthusiast, I hope that these remarkable birds remain a vibrant part of Wisconsin's forest and field community. ■

Matt Lechmaier is a graduate student in the Department of Wildlife Ecology at UW-Madison. Initial funding for this turkey research, with the help of three research technicians, was provided by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Scott Hull, Andrea Mezera and the DNR Wild Turkey Management Committee have been an integral part of this project.

Spooked

by a feathered specter

When a hopeful hunter matched wits with a white turkey, he only had a ghost of a chance.

Story and photos by Lonnie Bernarde

My spring turkey season actually started during the T-zone deer hunt the previous fall. That's when I heard about a white turkey hanging out for an hour near my Uncle Jack's hunting area. My adrenaline rushed thinking about a trophy like that haunting my favorite hunting grounds. I couldn't help but dream about the spring hunt. Just seeing the bird would be an accomplishment; getting to hunt it would be a story right out of a TV outdoors show.

Not long after that first sighting I saw the bird for myself. On opening day of the gun deer season, I'd gone on a short walk to see my stepdad, Dan. As I crossed the hill just past my deer stand, there was the white ghost standing with eight or nine other toms. I quickly cut them off and tried to drive them toward Dan so he'd have the pleasure of seeing it as well. My improvised drive sent the

birds through the pines, and Dan spied him as well. The bird's black beard wasn't the biggest, but it stuck out in sharp contrast to its white feathered body.

The next year, my spring hunt started rough. That first hunting period in early April came and went and I hardly saw a tom. I never hunted so hard with such minimal success. My second season started on May 18th, the last hunting period that spring. The

A white wild turkey is a rare find and the author set plans to pursue it from fall until the next spring.



first four days were eerily similar to my first trip to the woods a month earlier. I had some success calling in hens, but the toms were nowhere to be found after fly-down. My time was limited. On Wednesday, Thursday and Friday I could only hunt until 10 each morning. On Saturday I had more time, but by the time afternoon rolled around, I was getting discouraged. A thunderstorm woke me up around 3 a.m. on Sunday and I took advantage of a peaceful house to come up with a strategy for that final day of the spring hunt. I was mentally prepared to get skunked, but I was not going to give up, even if I didn't see or hear a turkey all day.

I planned to hunt in my Uncle Jack's enclosed 4x4x6 elevated blind. I would take some things along to stay entertained if the day was quiet. Though I've tried reading in the woods in the past, I never get more than a page read while I'm concentrating on hunting. Still, in that enclosed blind I would take along a couple of turkey hunting magazines and my thermos of coffee. I planned to call the birds sparingly and quietly read an article, drink a cup, and maybe even take a nap here and there. I had plenty of time that day, and it just wouldn't matter if all I heard were blue jays squawking. My strategy included settling for a tom of any size; I wasn't going to be fussy if a jake walked in range.

I headed out.

To bring in any bearded bird, I only put out two hen decoys. I didn't want my jake dekes to intimidate a real jake. I was set up and drinking coffee by 4:45 a.m., just waiting for the outdoors to wake up. A storm had passed earlier and it was going to be a beautiful day. A full moon brightened the sky, and dawn was around the corner. At 5:30 a.m., I started to hear some distant gobbles, but nothing nearby. I started calling a little, but nothing answered. Shortly after I thought I heard a turkey fly-down, but I was still half asleep and kept my gun leaning in the corner. Not long after that I turned to my right and saw a nice tom sneaking past my stand at 20 yards. Of course I wasn't prepared, and by the time I got my long barreled shotgun and stuck it out the narrow window opening, he disappeared into the pines to the



north. The first longbeard I'd seen while hunting all spring and I blew it. I wasn't too upset because it was still early and I also figured that the tom was heading toward some hens. Once his hens nested, he might come back.

Shortly after 6 a.m., I got some activity from three different gobblers about 150 yards up the hill in the hardwoods. They not only answered me, but responded to the ravens every time they made a raucous call behind me. We conversed for almost an hour when I spotted three hens walking up the hill toward them. I knew what was going to happen in about two minutes. The woods would go quiet and another opportunity would go by without a shot taken. I just needed to be patient. Patience was my long suit that day thanks to my plan (call, read, coffee, nap).

Around 8 a.m. a gobbler at 75 yards got my attention and it was game time again. After a futile effort to create an ongoing conversation, all went quiet and life seemed to stand still. After my third or fourth 10-minute siesta, I woke up in

time to see a hen walking toward the swamp in front of me. Things were looking up. I got my 12-gauge, put the barrel out the window and waited for the tom to follow. Nothing showed.

After a few minutes I grabbed my box call and made some quiet noise. Whatever I did worked! I got a gobbler at 50 yards to my right from the pines. I slowly pulled my gun out of one window and put it into another. As soon as I did that I realized I needed to put the gun back out the other window because I spotted my blackbearded ghost walking through the trees. I started shaking. I needed to put the gun back but wondered how I would do so without hitting the plastic stand while I was shaking so much. Somehow I managed to reposition the Remington, then the real work began.

I needed to slow down my heart rate in order to make a quality shot. My red,

The blind with just a few decoys was set up at the edge of a woods. A chase ensued when the author discovered the ghostly tom was down, but not out.



white and blue trophy was walking at a good pace, which didn't give me much time to settle down. Somehow I relaxed and told myself to shoot true. I followed him and when he got in range, I squeezed the trigger and he went down in a heap.

I quickly got out of the stand and ran over to my trophy. He wasn't going anywhere and after a couple of minutes, I walked back to my blind to let the bird have his last moments in peace. I started packing up my gear, occasionally looking back as he gobbled under the red pine. After 15 minutes I walked back over to the tom with my gun in hand to see if nature had taken its course. Unfortunately there were still signs that the bird was alive. I walked away and unloaded my gun and grabbed my camera.

It had been over 20 minutes since the woods exploded with my pea shooter, so I walked back to take some pictures. It looked like his time finally came, so I focused my camera and pressed the shutter. Immediately after the shutter click, my turkey came alive and took off for the

next county!

I was flabbergasted! Running away from me was my trophy of a lifetime and he was heading toward the swamp. I looked at him, looked down at my camera, then looked at my unloaded gun 40 yards away. I'm not sure how many emotions a person has, but within the last half-hour I'd had most of them except one — anger. That changed immediately. I was suddenly mad at my "dead" turkey running away and mostly angry with myself for not making sure the turkey was dead after the shot. I couldn't believe that my once in a lifetime bird was going to end up as fox food!

In my knee high rubber boots I sprinted to my gun, slammed some shells into the chamber and took off hunting for my runaway prize. I headed toward the swamp and noticed he had stopped in some brush. Just as I was about to fling some number sixes in his direction, he took off again. I didn't want him to go any deeper into the swamp. I circled around to the east and tried to intercept him. It worked. As we looked at each

other, I once again attempted to get a shot off, but he took off at a gallop. I thought about taking a shot through the thick stuff, but since I only had three shells with me, I needed to be somewhat conservative.

I chased him to a clearing, but he apparently ducked under an evergreen and I lost him! I spent 15 minutes searching frantically. There was no turkey to be found. I was beginning to get sick to my stomach: part for losing a trophy and part for not recovering a wounded animal. While I was starting to feel sorry for myself, he suddenly took off running from under some trees. I felt relieved, but I still had a job to do. I ran into the wet swamp and cut him off from going back into the thicket. He detoured and ran toward nearby hardwoods. He stopped briefly under a big spruce. I got down on one knee and had to take a shot, even though I would have to mow down a bunch of trees to get him.

I took careful aim and when the smoke cleared he was belly-up with legs sticking high. I quickly ran over to him and stepped on his neck. Ten minutes later I was still in the same position, scared to take my foot off. Finally I got the courage, grabbed him and started carrying him to my truck about half a mile away. It wouldn't have mattered if he had come back to life again. I was not going to let go, even if his one-inch spurs were ripping at my arms. My gun also stayed loaded until we got to the truck. No more stupid chances.

I gave the turkey first class treatment and put him in the truck cab on the passenger side. I didn't want to take a chance that he would fly away while I was going down the highway. I could envision us duking it out inside my truck at 65 mph. Fortunately he was done. I tagged him, collected my gear and drove home.

Every time I look at that mount, I'm grateful that I saw him and had *two* chances to tag him. It was a hunt filled with laughter, panic, pride, a lot of surprise and a humbling amount of blessing in harvesting a spectacular creature. ■

Lonnie Bernarde writes from Eland. A version of this story previously appeared in Turkey & Turkey Hunting magazine.

More bluff

Bullsnakes are the largest snakes in the upper Midwest often reaching 70 inches or more. Dark brown or black saddle blotches along the back and dark rings on the back third of the tail help identify these nonvenomous snakes.



than bite

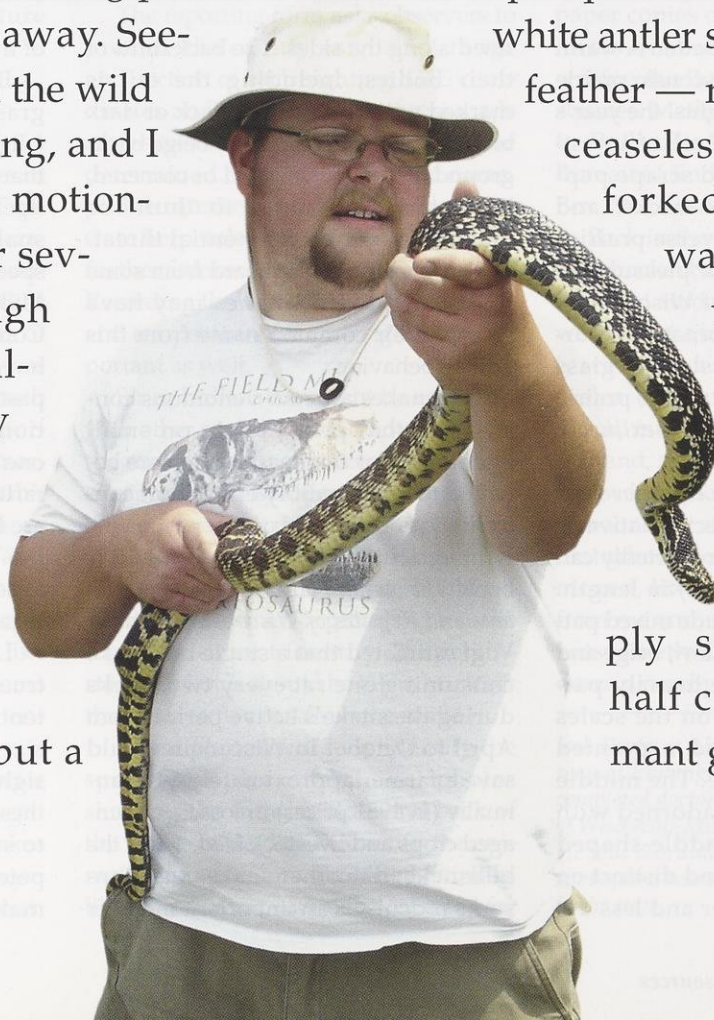
They huff and hiss, but these bullish snakes are harmless and a rare find. Help us locate where bullsnakes range and roam in Wisconsin.

Story and photos by Josh Kapfer

The grass blades bent and I saw it: a snake. Not a little one, either. Its body was coiled, but I could tell it had to be close to four or five feet long. I was stooped over collecting prairie seeds about two feet away. Seeing a snake that big in the wild gets your blood moving, and I stared wide-eyed and motionless at the serpent for several seconds. Although startling at first, I realized that given my current vulnerable position, it could have harmed me already had it wanted to do so.

My pulse slowed, but a

lingering uneasiness remained. What usually jolts me back to reality from the mindless cadence of stripping prairie seed and putting it in a bucket is the chance sighting of some pretty tame stuff — a pasqueflower, a gleaming white antler shed, or a turkey feather — not a BIG snake, ceaselessly flicking its forked tongue and watching me with unblinking eyes. Much to my surprise, it didn't seem startled by me at all and simply sat motionless, half covered by dormant grass.



Herpetologist Josh Kapfer leads the effort to document bullsnake ranges, locations and populations in Wisconsin.



Tim Muehlfeld first identified this bullsnake, then got a little closer to get a better photo. Please include photos with your reports to help positively identify snakes from field observations.

I should have known better. A warm spring afternoon on a Wisconsin prairie can bring numerous delights: the year's first bird's-foot violet, the call of a western meadowlark, a sand scrape peppered with fresh coyote tracks...and reptiles. Those who traverse prairies and savannas for work or pleasure occasionally see several of Wisconsin's rare reptile species like ornate box turtles (*Terrapene ornata*), slender glass lizards (*Ophisaurus attenuatus*), prairie racerunners (*Aspidoscelis sexlineata viridis*), or bullsnakes.

Bullsnakes (*Pituophis catenifer sayi*) are the largest snake species native to the upper Midwest, and reportedly can exceed 74 inches (190 cm) in length. Their variable colors include mixed patterns of brown, black, yellow, beige and white. Their heads are heavily patterned with dark bars on the scales around the mouth, and a pointed "snout" or rostral scale. The middle third of their bodies is adorned with dark brown or black saddle-shaped blotches that are large and distinct on the back, but are smaller and less de-

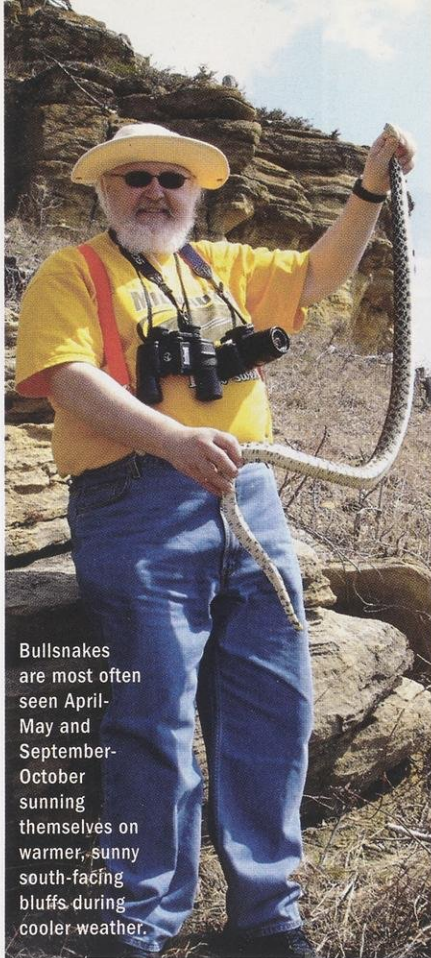
fined along the sides. The back third of their bodies, including the tail is marked with alternating black or dark brown rings on a yellow or beige background. When approached or cornered, bullsnakes are known to "huff" or "hiss" to ward off a potential threat. These sounds may be heard from some distance, and bullsnakes may have earned their common name from this bullish behavior.

Bullsnakes are non-venomous constrictors that prey mostly on small mammals. For this reason, they are believed to be incredibly efficient at controlling rodent populations, particularly in agricultural settings. In his 1981 book, *The Natural History of the Amphibians and Reptiles of Wisconsin*, Richard Vogt estimated that a single bullsnake consuming one rat every two weeks during the snake's active period from April to October in Wisconsin would save a farmer approximately \$400 annually (in 1981 prices) in losses to damaged crops and livestock feed. Thus, the bullsnake, like other snakes that consume rodents, is an important member

of the agricultural community.

Bullsnakes purportedly prefer short grass or sand prairies, and savannas (slightly wooded grasslands with fewer than 12 trees per acre). Such areas have declined so substantially that bullsnakes, and many other grassland species, have fewer places in the upper Midwest to forage, nest and overwinter. Consequently bullsnake populations have declined significantly over the past several decades and stable populations have been documented at only one or two sites in Wisconsin. Due to its rarity in the upper Midwest, bullsnakes are listed as a protected wild animal by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. The listing means it is illegal to take, possess or kill this snake.

Little is known about the bullsnake's true status throughout much of its potential range in Wisconsin. Despite its size, it is an elusive creature and few sightings are reported annually. Often these reports are anecdotal and difficult to substantiate. Therefore, state herpetologists have designed a more formal method for documenting where



Bullsnakes are most often seen April-May and September-October sunning themselves on warmer, sunny south-facing bluffs during cooler weather.

this species occurs in Wisconsin. Such information will be crucial to future conservation of this species.

Hints for sighting bullsnakes

You are more likely to see bullsnakes in April through May and again in September through October when temperatures are lower and the snakes are sunning themselves. Though bullsnakes have been reported in many regions of Wisconsin, experience suggests they are more common in the southern, south central, southwestern and western portions of the state. Bullsnakes are primarily found in open canopy upland habitats with dry, sandy soils such as prairies, oak savannas, pastures and meadows, particularly if those areas are next to open south-facing bluffs. People who spend a lot of time outdoors, like property managers, foresters, farmers and hunters, are more likely to encounter these snakes.

Bullsnakes can easily be mistaken for eastern milksnakes (*Lampropeltis triangulum triangulum*) or western fox snakes (*Elaphe vulpina*) to the untrained eye. Neither of these snakes is venomous,

but inexperienced observers will still want to exercise a little caution before getting too close to snakes that have not been positively identified. Bullsnakes, like several other snake species, are rattlesnake mimics that shake their tails when disturbed. When the moving tail tip contacts any dry object, it makes a sound that may be mistaken for a rattlesnake rattling. Should you encounter a snake exhibiting such behavior, don't panic. Keep a little distance between you and the snake. Get out your field guide, and get a look at the snake's coloration and markings from about five feet away.

Reporting your findings

Bullsnake observations can be reported electronically and sent directly to the DNR's endangered resources program. The data from these accounts will be used to estimate the bullsnake's status and distribution in Wisconsin. Reported sightings will also help wildlife biologists and property managers make sound conservation decisions about preserving the snake's preferred habitats.

The reporting form asks observers to provide the county, township, range and section of each sighting. GPS coordinates and the names of nearest roads are especially helpful, if they can be determined. Also include your name, phone number and e-mail address so state herpetologists can contact you for further information about the sighting. Recording the date, time of day, weather and temperature for each sighting is important as well.

Since bullsnakes might be confused with other snake species, photographs of the snake should also accompany each observation. It is important to note that bullsnakes are occasionally found in similar habitats as timber rattlesnakes (*Crotalus horridus*), and observers should exercise caution when approaching a snake that they cannot identify. In such instances, photos should be taken no closer than four to five feet from the snake.

These photos will help identify the species, so please try to get photos showing the front, middle and back of the snake in daylight to verify the animal's natural colors. Protected animals, like these snakes, cannot be collected for

future identification.

To help you distinguish snake species, consider taking along a copy of the booklet "Snakes of Wisconsin," by Rebecca Christoffel, Robert Hay and Lisa Ramirez (Publication PUB-ER-100-00) available for \$3.00 from the DNR's Bureau of Endangered Resources (dnr.wi.gov/org/land/er/herps/snakes/). It contains color pictures, descriptions, known ranges and a key to identifying Wisconsin's 21 types of snakes.

Sightings and digital photos of bullsnakes seen in Wisconsin can be submitted by mail or electronically to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resource's website. Follow this internet link to learn more about the bullsnake and how it differs from similar snake species in Wisconsin (dnr.wi.gov/org/land/er/herps/snakes/bullsnake1.htm). Details about the Bullsnake Sighting Initiative and the online observation form are available at (dnr.wi.gov/org/land/er/forms/bullsnakeobs.asp). Printable versions of bullsnake information pamphlets and posters can also be downloaded from this site. You can pick up paper copies of the bullsnake sighting forms from area nature centers or by writing the Bureau of Endangered Resources. Mailed reports should be sent to: Bullsnake Sighting Initiative, DNR Bureau of Endangered Resources, P.O. Box 7921, Madison, WI 53707.

Back in the field, I rested my prairie seed bucket between me and the snake. Slowly, I stood up and took a step forward to get a better look at him. He really was quite a stunning critter: all shiny scales of brown, yellow and black. Thick, muscular body pressed against the sand, soaking up all the heat that the sun would yield on this mild April afternoon. My step, however, must have disturbed him. For the first time, he moved, lifted his head, turned away from me and, with surprising gracefulness, quietly slithered off to disappear down a nearby gopher hole. ■

Josh Kapfer is a herpetologist with DNR's Bureau of Endangered Resources and recently completed doctoral research at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee on bullsnake ecology. He will coordinate fieldwork, reporting and subsequent research on bullsnake distribution in the state.

The Boss

continued from page 2

the peak of my roof. From there he surveyed his domain. When another robin inadvertently strayed into the yard, he was on it in a flash! Swooping in a straight line, right at the trespasser — no evasive or tricky maneuver was even considered — he would drive it, squawking and cheeping, to the shelter of the hedge across the street. Then, with a look of disdain for the dispatched rival, the white-splotched robin would return to his commanding perch to recite his victory song: “Cheed UP! Cheer-EE-o! Cheed-UP! Cheed UP! Cheer-EE-o! Cheed-UP!” It was a pleasant little phrase at first, winsome and almost musical. And there was no questioning the earnest determination of the singer, but exertions notwithstanding, there really was not enough there to call it a melody.

No matter. This robin wasn’t particularly sensitive to his critics, musical or otherwise. Nor did he limit the time or place of his singing. At any time of day, from any perch in the yard, he would stand and deliver, unshakable in his belief that through the alchemy of repetition, the base elements of this unpolished ditty were transmuted into pure operatic aria. Alas, he was mistaken. Despite his best efforts, I felt his singing never rose above the level of my fourth grade neighbor’s violin practice.

Last May, our serviceberry tree bloomed on schedule. So by mid-June the branches of this small ornamental hung with hundreds of small, juicy red berries. In years past, the serviceberry had always served as a magnet to all manner of feathered species, resident and transient alike. Finches, blackbirds, sparrows and robins all would eat their fill in peace at this place of plenty.

Last year, the truce was shattered by boss robin. He spent untold hours guarding the berries and his dedication to the task was as remarkable as it was misguided.

One sun-drenched afternoon in June, I watched as two cedar waxwings flitted into the low canopy of the serviceberry. Small and satiny, waxwings wear a jaunty crest and a stylish mask that wouldn’t look out of place at a Mardi Gras ball. Generally, they travel in small



Male robins return north to their home ranges before females to claim territories. The quality of nesting sites within the territory and the male's plumage and singing ability all influence her choice of a mate.

RICH PHALIN

groups, gorging themselves on berries, all the while conversing back and forth with a quiet buzzing call.

These visitors didn’t realize there’d been a change of management at the feeding spot. Security was quickly all over them. Soon they were dodging the fired-up robin and weaving with all the dexterity they could muster. Although the robin couldn’t match the nimbleness of the smaller waxwings, he made up for it in dogged energy, harassing them without rest. The waxwings put up with it for a while, but once they realized that they weren’t netting any berries during this song-and-dance routine, they abandoned the tree for greener pastures. For his part, the robin retired to his familiar high perch, preening and proclaiming his triumph to all within earshot.

Saved from perdition, the neighborhood birds soon found other yards to frequent. Ultimately, most of the berries

went uneaten. By early July, they hung shriveled on the branches, testament to the tenacity and dedication of their unwavering feathered protector.

I slept better last summer, knowing the benevolent dictator was keeping my yard’s affairs in order. Sometimes I would wake just before dawn as a freight train blew its whistle at a distant railroad crossing. Cars would rumble down the main road and lights across the neighborhood would begin to flicker to life. I’d pause between sleep and wakefulness in that drowsy state that’s just conscious enough to be enjoyed. Near at hand from the dark recesses of the shrubs beneath my bedroom window would come that unmistakable, self-assured call, reeling me in from the edge of sleep. *Cheed UP! Cheer-EE-o! Cheed-UP!*



Mark Mamerow, freelance writer and amateur naturalist, lives in Oak Creek.

Comforts

Enough peeping and leaping to go around

The deafening chorus of the northern spring peeper (*Pseudacris crucifer crucifer*) signals the end of winter. They are the ventriloquists of the amphibious world — sending forth a frog sound that seems to come from somewhere other than where the thumb-nail-sized peeper is perched. Peepers breed from late March into May and are known for the large vocal sacs under their chins. They pump these sacs full of air and when ready, let out a mighty “peep.”

Here we pay tribute to spring peepers, summer leapers and their slower cold-blooded cousins.



DON BLEGEN

Calling all frogs! Tagging all turtles!

Visitors to the Sandhill Outdoors Skills Center in central Wisconsin can learn more about the state’s marshland frogs and toads in a May 12 discussion of frog ecology and status. Join herpetologist Dan Nedrelo on a nighttime “frog-ging” adventure searching for and identifying frogs in their marshland boudoirs. Cost is \$20 and hip-boots are required. Register by May 2 (limit 25 people).

On June 9, slow the pace down and join Sandhill wildlife staff biologists in a survey of nesting female turtles. Help mark snapping turtles, painted turtles and Blanding’s turtles. Cost is \$15. Register by June 1 (limited to 10 people).



RICH PHALIN

The Sandhill Wildlife Area is located in southwestern Wood County, approximately 25 miles south of Marshfield and 17 miles west of Wisconsin Rapids. For more information call (715) 884-6333, write Sandhill DNR, Box 156, Babcock, WI 54413, or visit www.dnr.wi.gov/org/land/wildlife/reclands/sandhill/.

Cold-blooded contestants

Each summer Dousman Derby Days gets the village of Dousman, nestled by Highways 18 and 67 in Waukesha County, hopping. The featured event has grown by leaps and bounds over the past 51 years. It’s a frog jumping contest. Bring your own cold-blooded contestant or rent one on site for \$1. The community was formed in 1881 when the Northwestern Railroad first ran through the area and the train stop was nicknamed “Bullfrog Station” because of the many bogs and marshes in the area. Dousman Derby Days are July 27-29. www.dousmanchamber.com/derby.htm (262) 965-3043.

Keeping tabs on toads

It was an interesting year. In 1981, Ronald Reagan took oath as the 40th president. The top grossing U.S. film starred Harrison Ford (“Raiders of the Lost Ark”), and the Wisconsin Frog and Toad Survey (WFTS) took its first leap. Today, the WFTS is one of the longest running amphibian monitoring projects in North America.

The WFTS is a citizen-based monitoring program coordinated by the Wisconsin DNR’s Bureau of Endangered Resources and the Bureau of Science Services. The survey’s primary purpose is to determine the status, distribution and long-term population trends of Wisconsin’s 12 frog species and one noble toad species, the Eastern American toad. (You can look it up.)

The DNR and the Beaver Creek Reserve’s Citizen Science Center recently updated the existing Wisconsin Frog and Toad Survey website. Visit <http://inventory.wiatri.net/frogtoadsurvey/> and also take a look at the new 26-page survey manual at <http://inventory.wiatri.net/frogtoadsurvey/SurveyInfomanual.cfm>.

The new WFTS site is a resource for volunteers to identify Wisconsin frogs, hear their calls, note their ranges and learn the details for recording amphibian sightings that can become part of a scientific database.

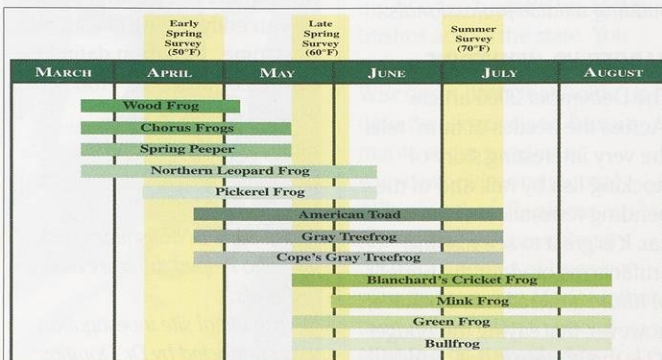


Figure 1. Breeding phenology of Wisconsin anurans with WFTS survey periods and required minimum water temperatures.*

* The western and boreal chorus frogs are now distinct species but are combined for the WFTS because their calls are nearly indistinguishable.



Gray treefrog.

RJ & LINDA MILLER



CHRIS WEST

Readers Write

COMMENT ON A STORY?

Send your letters to: Readers Write, WNR magazine, P.O. Box 7921, Madison, WI 53707 or e-mail letters to david.sperling@wisconsin.gov

IN SUPPORT OF RESPONSIBLE TRAPPING

Thanks for the recent article on trapping ("Furs, inside and out," December 2006). I took the trapping education course just so I could learn how to use traps for controlling nuisance animals around my house in the country. The course is well worth a person's time if they want to use traps responsibly. I believe trapping is a humane means of controlling animal populations in the absence of predators. Diseases like mange hardly seem humane.

Bruce Pankratz
Springbrook

I would like to thank you for publishing the informative story, "Furs, inside and out." All too often these days, trappers and trapping are portrayed by the press with a biased and uninformed spin. The truth is that trapping is alive and well in Wisconsin and all over the continent, and your article serves to remind us of the important role that trappers are playing in the management of furbearing animals all over the state. Kudos to your magazine, and to the Wisconsin Trappers Association, the trappers of Wisconsin and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources for their collaborative efforts to keep trapping traditions and furbearer populations alive and well in our state.

Keith Dewars
Hayward

CAN'T JUSTIFY TRAPPING

Just as a growing body of scientific

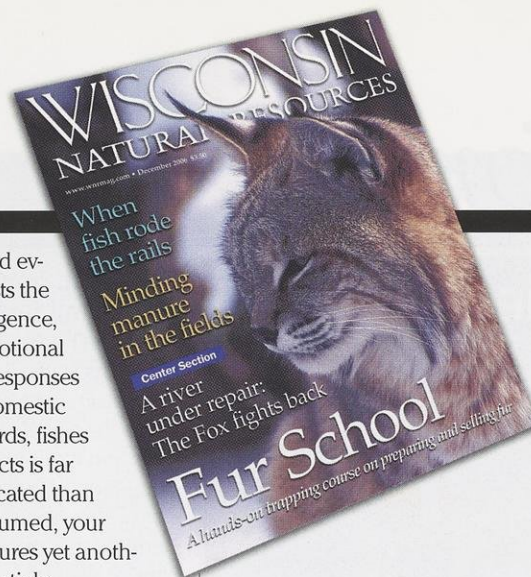
research and evidence suggests the general intelligence, sentience, emotional and sensory responses of wild and domestic Mammalia, birds, fishes and even insects is far more sophisticated than previously assumed, your magazine features yet another maligned article on the virtues of trapping. Given the many catastrophic pressures exerted on modern wildlife populations, promoting such pathological "sports" is socially and morally reprehensible. Wisconsin's vast wildness is forever gone and with it went many occupations once essential to subsistence; trapping sentient creatures tops that list.

Erik Brynildson
Montello

There are valid reasons to trap and many enjoy its challenges, whether one's primary interest is sport, supplementary income, research, wildlife management or nuisance animal control. Trapping skills are important tools for wildlife managers, and law enforcement staff who oversee this legitimate, regulated outdoor activity ought to understand each aspect of that activity. We certainly support the agency's position to offer this training to its managers and budding wildlife professionals.

BADGER VS. WOLVERINE

The December 2006 article "Across the trestles of time" tells the very interesting story of stocking fish by rail, and of the pending restoration of the rail car. It is great to see historic artifacts restored for the benefit of future generations. I believe, however, that saying the Badger #2 is the country's only surviving fish stocking car is in error. I recently visited the restored Michigan Department of Conserva-



tion car *Wolverine*, displayed at the Michigan hatchery in Oden, MI.

Thurlow M. Hausman
Brookfield

The Wolverine at the Oden State Fish Hatchery Visitor Center is a replica of the car used from 1914-35, including crew quarters and two touch-screen kiosks that relate Michigan fisheries history. The exhibit includes nature trails, renovated trout stream, a stream viewing chamber and daily tours throughout the summer. The site is located on US-31 about one-half mile west of Oden and approximately six miles east of Petoskey, on the northwest shore of the lower peninsula.

AGING STICKS

John Koch's article about the 1,800-year-old stick really caught my attention. I have whole trees emerging in a clay bed about five feet down in my Wisconsin River shore. I keep thinking this was an eddy during glacial outwash time. Is carbon dating the way to confirm this? And how would I go about that.

Allan Fields
Boscobel

John Sours, DNR fisheries biologist who helped the story author responds:

The initial site investigation was conducted by Dr. Douglas Faulkner of UW-Eau Claire as part of a fluvial geomorphology study of the North Branch of Gilbert

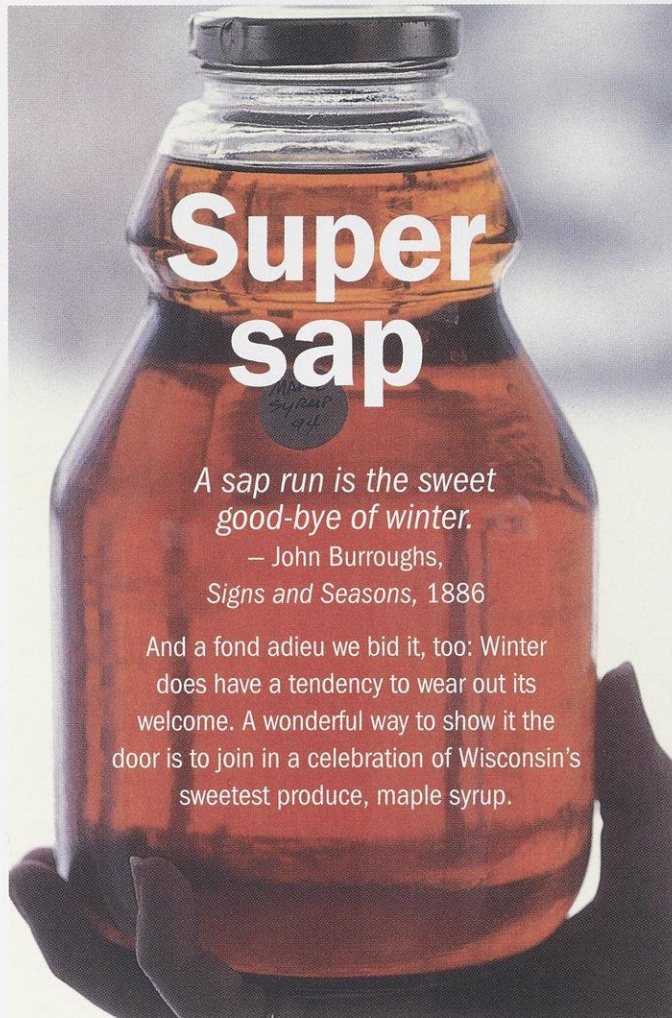
Creek in Dunn County and comprehensive waterway restoration and stabilization project. Essentially, an ancient re-emerging woodland here was buried by 12 to 14 feet of sediment. The tree species included very large spruce, tamarack, hemlock, white cedar and white pine that were not generally present in the area at the time of European settlement. These species dominated in the post-glacial era, so we presumed the trees must be quite old. Carbon-14 dating showed the trees were 1,700 years old, plus or minus 70 years. The samples were analyzed by a Miami, Florida firm.

HOW TREES GROW

In trimming a tree, do the bottom branches get higher or farther away from the ground as the tree grows or do they stay the same height? It seems to me that as a tree increases in girth, it likely also increases in height somewhat, even though it mainly grows from the top.

Bill Wilson

DNR Urban Forester Ian Brown explains tree growth as follows: The short answer is that stem tissue grows radially rather than vertically, so no, a low branch will not get higher in the crown as the tree grows. Trees grow in two ways, from the tips of the roots and branches, and radially outward within the trunk, giving the tree its characteristic rings. We must be very careful when dealing with branch tips and leaders, because damaging them can significantly alter the growth rate and form of the tree. Old pasture trees used as fence posts decades ago are good examples of how trees grow radially, not vertically. These trees are now girdled and have grown around the wire fences, but the fences remain three to four feet off the ground.



Super sap

A sap run is the sweet good-bye of winter.

— John Burroughs,
Signs and Seasons, 1886

And a fond adieu we bid it, too: Winter does have a tendency to wear out its welcome. A wonderful way to show it the door is to join in a celebration of Wisconsin's sweetest produce, maple syrup.

ROBERT QUEEN

Birch and elm can take a tap, but maples produce more and sweeter sap. *Acer saccharum* trees are tapped in early spring when temperatures freeze at night and thaw during the day, causing the sap to flow. You can watch trees being tapped from 9 a.m. - 2 p.m. on April 7 during **Maplefest** at the **MacKenzie Environmental Education Center** in Poynette. The process of boiling down sap — it takes 34-43 or more gallons of sap to produce one gallon of syrup — requires patience and a steady flame. To stoke up your energy for the task, feast on a stack of pancakes flipped by members of the Poynette Opticist Club. Those all-you-can-eat


ROBERT QUEEN

Many Wisconsin sugar bushes hold open houses and sell maple syrup and candies made onsite.

hotcakes will be served — of course! — with fresh syrup made by the MacKenzie Maple Mavens, a/k/a Friends of MacKenzie. A raffle and free horse-drawn wagon rides add to the festivities. While you're there, visit the live Native Wisconsin Wildlife Exhibit (deer, bison, wolf, eagle, mountain lion, lynx, turkey and more) and the arboretum with more than 100 kinds of trees and shrubs. (608) 635-8110. On the web: dnr.wi.gov/education/Mackenzie/index.htm

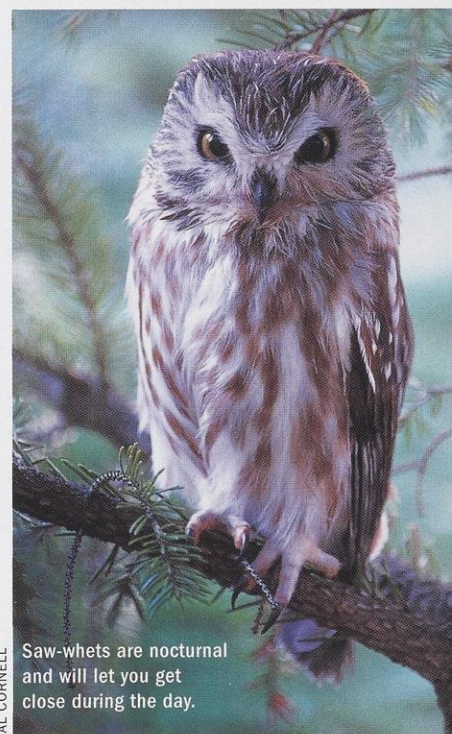
As of 2006, Wisconsin ranked as the fourth largest maple syrup producer in the nation.

At Ocooch Mountain Acres you can observe the commercial aspects of maple syrup production. The Ocooch factory, housed in a 1905 feed mill in downtown Westby (pop. 2,147), offers a three-hour tour that includes maple syrup sampling and views of the equipment used to make syrup, maple cream, maple sugar and maple candy. Visitors with serious sugar habits can purchase maple syrup in bulk. (608) 634-6228. On the web: www.occooch.net/factory.html

Where else can you go to see the sap flow? Visit the **Wisconsin Maple Sugar Producers** website, www.wismaple.org for a current listing of open house days at sugar bushes across the state. You can tap into a great listing of Wisconsin firms that bottle up their own syrups and box up maple sugar goodies at www.savorwisconsin.com/AllListings/prodbusiness.asp?recordid=51&type=category.

If you're fond of trees but your tastes run to Merlot rather than maple, plan to attend **Nibbles 'N Knowledge**, hosted by the **North Lakeland Discovery Center** (NLDC) in Manitowish Waters on April 12.

The evening begins with hors d'oeuvres and a cash bar at 5 p.m. Mingle for an hour or so, then enjoy a talk by nurseryman Chad McGrath. He'll offer tips and discuss plans for **building backyard habitat** to attract different kinds of wildlife. The event will be held at Camp Jern YMCA in Manitowish Waters. \$12 members; \$15 non-members.


AL CORNELL

Saw-whets are nocturnal and will let you get close during the day.

On April 10, NLDC naturalist Zach Wilson and master birder Bruce Bacon will head out for a late night in the woods, and you're welcome to join their party. They're particularly interested in finding **saw-whet owls** to band for tracking and research. If the weather and birds cooperate, you may be able to hold one of these tiny owls in the palm of your hand while it's being banded. The search party leaves the center at 9 p.m. \$15 members; \$18 non-members. (877) 543-2085. On the web: www.discoverycenter.net/community_programs.htm

AVON BOTTOMS
STATE NATURAL AREA

Wisconsin, naturally

AVON BOTTOMS STATE NATURAL AREA

Notable: A lowland hardwood forest in the floodplain of the meandering Sugar River contains a diverse mix of silver maple, swamp white oak, green ash, hackberry, American elm, cottonwood, black willow and basswood. This is one of few places in Wisconsin to see sycamore trees, here at the northern limit of their range. Other plants with southern affinities, such as wild chervil and obovate beak grain, are also present. Running sloughs, ephemeral ponds and old oxbows harbor many amphibians and add to the site's complexity.

How to get there: From the junction of Hwys. 81 and 11 south of Brodhead (Rock Co.), go east on 81 about 5.25 miles, then south on Nelson Rd. 2.7 miles to a parking area east of the road and south of the Sugar River. The natural area lies north of the river and west of Nelson Rd. Best time to visit is spring, but beware of poison ivy! See dnr.wi.gov/org/land/er/sna/sna36.htm for a map and more information.



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