



## **Wisconsin natural resources. Vol. 30, No. 5 October 2006**

[Madison, Wisconsin]: Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, October 2006

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# WISCONSIN

## NATURAL RESOURCES

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# Protecting nature's middle class



Deer hunting weather

Wild Rose renovations

The speedy pace of outdoor relaxation



# Border patrol

Mourning doves scour the edges of roads, fields and woods for weed seeds and water.

Marcia Hafner

A melancholy *oo-ah, woo-woo-woo* gently brings me out of sleep. Not on any schedule, I stay snuggled deep in my sleeping bag while the early morning chorus continues. I refuse to budge till the first warming rays of sun entice me to get up. Startled by my presence, a dozen mourning doves take off in whistle-winged flight showing a flash of white on their pointed tail feathers. These high-speed birds — clocked at 30-45 mph — move on to a safe haven. I know they will be back for the few sunflower seeds that I sprinkle on the ground to get a closer look at the birds. It is illegal to spread seed or bait doves if you intend to hunt them, but we're just watching.

Mourning doves are ground feeders with a monstrous appetite for seeds, grains and berries. They provide a huge economic benefit as weed controllers eating seeds from pig-

weed, foxtail, ragweed and wild sunflower as well as crop seeds like corn, sorghum and millet. Any roadside straddled with seed-bearing plants is an attractant, and in late summer to early fall, a country drive will flush them out from the edge of any productive weed-lined highway.

Mourning doves favor open areas that offer high perches with an unrestricted view. Controlled burns, timber harvests and development help spread their range. The doves' preferred habitat includes farmyards, cultivated fields, prairies and open woodlands. The birds readily come to feeders for seeds in rural areas, homes and city parks throughout the U.S.

*continued on page 27*

Banding studies show that mourning doves can live up to 10 years in the wild, though as few as 30 percent of the juveniles may survive their first year. These doves are mainly seed eaters consuming both weed seeds and cereal grains.



# WISCONSIN NATURAL RESOURCES

October 2006  
Volume 30, Number 5



HERBERT LANGE



AL KAAS



ROBERT QUEEN

## 2 Border patrol

*Marcia Hafner*

Mourning doves work the roadsides and field edges for weed seeds, grain and water.

## 4 Weather the weather, whatever the weather

*Dick Kalnicky*

Hot, cold, wet or dry, take a look at weather conditions during the last 50 deer seasons.

## 8 Rejuvenating a reliable workhorse

*Lisa Gaumnitz*

An overhaul of Wild Rose Hatchery forecasts years of fine stocking and fishing.

## 13 Protecting nature's middle class

*Kathryn A. Kahler*

State Wildlife Grants help to keep less common species from becoming rare.

## 18 The speedy pace of outdoor relaxation

*Natasha Kassulke*

You've got to have friends to meet the growing demands for outdoor recreation.

## 24 The well-mannered hunter

*Bill Klein*

It's a privilege to hunt private lands, and a chance to build friendships.

## 28 Readers Write

## 31 City life

*Maureen Mecozzi*

Traveler takes a fall stroll past history, artsy nooks, good books, leafy looks and a high-tech punkin toss!

FRONT COVER: An Eastern chipmunk (*Tamias striatus*) caches an acorn. Chippies are plentiful, but projects to protect habitat and plenty of other animals "in the middle" between game animals and endangered species now qualify for State Wildlife Grants. See our p. 13 story.

GREGORY K. SCOTT, Withee, Wisconsin

BACK COVER: Eureka Maple Woods State Natural Area blazes with fall color in Monroe County. For more information, or to order a guidebook to State Natural Areas, contact the State Natural Areas Program, Bureau of Endangered Resources, DNR, P.O. Box 7921, Madison, WI 53707 or visit [dnr.wi.gov/org/land/er/sna](http://dnr.wi.gov/org/land/er/sna).

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Wisconsin Natural Resources magazine (USPS #34625000) is published bimonthly in February, April, June, August, October and December by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, 101 S. Webster St., Madison, WI 53702. The magazine is sustained through paid subscriptions. No tax money or license fees are used. Preferred Periodicals postage paid at Madison, WI. POSTMASTER and readers: subscription questions and address changes should be sent to Wisconsin Natural Resources magazine, P.O. Box 7191, Madison, WI 53707. Subscription rates are: \$8.97 for one year, \$15.97 for two years, \$21.97 for three years. Toll-free subscription inquiries will be answered at 1-800-678-9472.

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PUBL CE-012  
ISSN-0736-2277



A photograph of two hunters in bright orange clothing and hats, walking a large deer on a dirt trail. The hunter on the left is wearing sunglasses and holding a rifle. The hunter on the right is also holding a rifle. The deer is walking between them. The background is a wooded area.

The right weather keeps both hunters and deer moving. Dry, cool days with a bit of tracking snow are ideal. How often does that occur? Read on!

# Weather the weather whatever the

**HOT, COLD, WET OR DRY, TAKE A LOOK AT WEATHER**





STEPHEN J. LANG

# ther, weather

CONDITIONS DURING THE LAST 50 DEER SEASONS.

Dick Kalnicky

**T**emperature, precipitation and snowfall are all important to deer hunters and can be critical factors in successful deer harvests statewide.

The weather affects how the herd moves, how quickly hunters must process their deer, how readily hunters can reach their deer stands, and how easy it will be for hunters to see and track deer.

Weather also acts as a social barometer — too hot and hunters may not stay in the woods as long; too rainy, ditto and the deer stop moving; too cold or windy and hunters may spend more of their day playing cards than chasing deer. In fact, I'd submit that weather throughout the short gun deer season may be as important to the successful hunt as the number of deer and hunters.

Though special hunts and extended seasons vary the deer season each year, the heart of Wisconsin's statewide gun deer hunting since 1960 has been a nine-day season beginning the Saturday before Thanksgiving and ending the Sunday after Thanksgiving. Since Thanksgiving falls the fourth Thursday each November and deer hunting has been linked to that date for a while, deer hunting for the nine-day firearm season can begin as early as November 17 and end as late as December 1.

## The nine-day tradition

The "traditional" gun deer hunting season has varied through time and here are some stats on that: The first nine-day season running from the Saturday before Thanksgiving through the Sunday after the holiday took place Nov. 23-30, 1940 and continued through 1942. A split eight-day season followed in 1943, a six-day season in 1944 and a five-day season in 1945. The nine-day season returned in 1946 through 1948. From 1949 through 1954, deer hunting season lengths ranged from four to seven days. The nine-day season resumed from 1955-1957, followed by a 16-day season in 1958 and 1959, and finally the "traditional" nine-day season returned in 1960 running to the present. Special hunts, changes in particular management units and unique hunting regions, like the current zones aimed at eradicating chronic wasting disease, are also added most years.

LYLE E. DOBERSTEIN



While the weather norms give hunters the best idea of what to expect in a typical year, it is often weather extremes that are most memorable and influence the hunt in a particular hunting season.

What weather conditions can hunters expect when pursuing deer? I researched the question to describe typical Wisconsin deer hunting weather — temperature, precipitation and snowfall data — for each day during the gun deer hunting seasons from 1950 through 1999. The data was compiled for eight Wisconsin locations: Fond du Lac, Green Bay, La Crosse, Madison, Menomonie, Superior, Waukesha and Wausau.

## Temperature

Late November in Wisconsin can range from almost late summer-like to wintry conditions. In some years, the weather makes a noticeable switch from autumn to winter *during* the deer season.

If you want one temperature to associate with deer hunting, it is 30° F, that's the average temperature for the season with average daily highs of 38° and average daily lows of 22°. Locations near Superior in the northwest are about four degrees cooler than this average, and places nearer Waukesha in the southeast are about four degrees warmer.

Although some hunters like warmer hunting temperatures, once it climbs to 50° F or higher, deer carcasses have to be dressed, cooled and moved more quickly from hunting grounds to refrigerated lockers or meat processors to avoid spoilage. Fortunately, temperatures that warm occurred only four percent of the time. Likewise, really cold temperatures (colder than 10° F) also occur relatively infrequently — only about five percent of the time.

The highest temperature recorded at

the eight stations during the 1950-1999 deer hunting seasons was 72° F at La Crosse on November 21, 1990, the day before Thanksgiving. The lowest temperature was -16° F at Superior on November 28, 1976, the last day of the 1976 season.

The coldest overall deer season during this period occurred in 1985, with an average temperature of only 15.4° F. Other cold years were 21.2° F in 1951 and 21.5° F in 1977. The warmest season occurred in 1998, with an average temperature of 44.1° F at the eight recorded stations. Other warm seasons were 40.9° F in 1990 and 40.7° F in 1979.

## Rain

Rain puts a damper on both hunter and deer to keep moving during the nine-day season, and movement is often a key to hunting success. Measurable precipitation (0.01 inch or greater of rain or snow) fell on 30 percent of days during the gun deer seasons I examined. Precipitation is more frequent in southern and eastern Wisconsin (35 percent of the time in Green Bay, 34

percent in Madison and less frequent in western and northern Wisconsin (Menomonie, 24 percent and Superior, 26 percent).

The average daily precipitation in this late fall time period is really light, just over 0.059 inch, which is far less than the daily average for the entire year. Of

course, there are always exceptions and you may remember that the 1983 deer hunting season was a doozy — an average of 1.89 inches (rain and snow) fell at the eight stations during that year. Other years when more than an inch fell were 1952, 1965, 1973, 1985, 1991 and 1994.

At the other extreme, back in 1960, seven of the eight stations had no precipitation and the eighth had only 0.02 inch-

es during gun deer hunting time. Other dry deer hunting seasons with an average precipitation of 0.10 inch or less included 1957, 1969, 1972, 1984 and 1998.

## Snowfall

Small to moderate amounts of fresh snow on the ground — one to three inches — can help hunters track deer and see them better while hunting. More than this can be an obstacle. Snowstorms make deer hunting less pleasant and travel more difficult.

On the average, 16 percent of days during the season experience measurable snow — 0.1 inch or more. Southeast parts of the state (the Waukesha and Fond du Lac stations) had lower snowfall frequencies at 12 and 13 percent while more northerly locations (Green Bay and Wausau) had higher frequencies at 23 and 21 percent.



Stands take hunters out of a deer's direct line of sight and smell. They can also provide a little protection from wind, rain and snow to keep you hunting longer.

DAVID L. MISTEREK

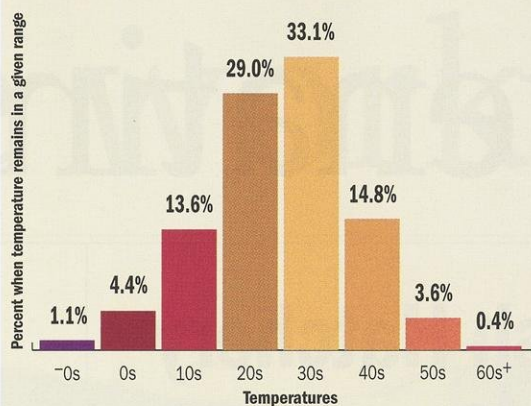




Statewide, there is a 26 percent chance of having one inch or more of snow on the ground while deer hunting during the nine-day season. The likelihood of this is much less (18 percent or less) in the southeast — Waukesha, Fond du Lac, Madison — and much higher than this (36 percent or more) in the northwest — Superior, Wausau, Menomonie.

On rare occasions, impressive snows have occurred during the season. Most stations experienced a snowfall of 10 inches or greater on a single day sometime during the deer hunting seasons of 1950 to 1999. The greatest amount was a whopping 18 inches at Superior on November 23, 1983, the day before Thanksgiving that year. Likewise, Superior had the greatest single day deer season snow depth, a hefty 25 inches on

**Temperatures During 1950-1999 Deer Hunting Seasons**



November 30 and December 1 of 1991, the last two days of the deer gun season. That 1991 season also ranked third in statewide snowfall — an average of 9.7 inches; 1985 had the most — 13.4 inches statewide; 1971 and 1977 each averaged more than six inches of snow statewide during the gun deer season.

Snow is often completely lacking during the deer season too. No snow

fell at any of the eight stations in 1960, 1984, 1990 and 1998. Minor snows fell in 1967, 1972, and 1999, but not enough to accumulate on the ground.

### A fine stretch of weather for hunting deer

From a weather perspective, a late November shotgun/rifle deer season that straddles Thanksgiving is an excellent time to enjoy a hunt. Most of the time, moderate temperatures in the 20s and 30s are comfortable for walking through forests and fields wearing a moderate amount of clothing. The weather usually stays cool minimizing meat spoilage and allowing time for field dressing and hanging deer before the meat has to be processed or taken to a meat locker. There is less precipitation at this time of year, certainly smaller amounts than during spring, summer, or early-to-mid-autumn. Snow falls in at least part of the state in more than 90 percent of deer hunting seasons, and stays on the ground long enough to be measurable in over 80 percent of seasons. However, on most days, any given location will not have snow on the ground.

These estimates show that deer hunting weather from 1950 through 1999 included relatively cold conditions from 1960 to 1985 as well as the relatively warm periods of the 1950s and 1986 to 1999. Climatic change in Wisconsin in future years might change those norms:

- warmer temperatures, including increased frequencies of 50° F or higher might make meat spoilage a greater concern.
- greater frequency of precipitation, particularly in northern Wisconsin could happen if southerly storm tracks move farther north.
- more precipitation might fall as rain rather than snow if the temperatures warm slightly.

Of course, “average” weather does not occur every year. We’ll continue to live with variable conditions. Whatever the weather, enjoy your hunt! ❧

*Climatologist Dick Kalnicky oversees grants and contracts to clean up contaminated lands for DNR’s Bureau of Remediation and Redevelopment.*



DEAN TVEDT



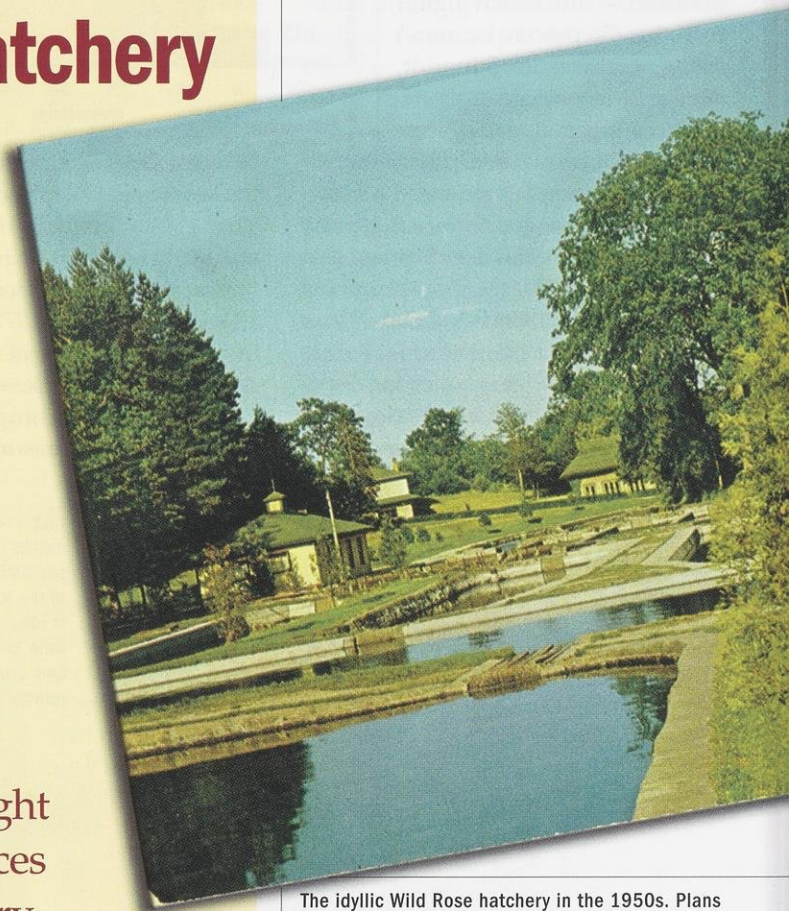
# Rejuvenating a re

## Wild Rose Fish Hatchery will continue to pump out great water and great fish.

*Lisa Gaumnitz*

**R**eeled in a big one lately? Odds are, if you're trolling Lake Michigan for trout or salmon, the fish came from Wild Rose State Fish Hatchery. A workhorse since the state bought it in 1908, Wild Rose now produces 2.2 million trout and salmon every year for stocking primarily in the "big pond," northern pike for stocking statewide, and all of the sturgeon being used to restore this ancient species to its native range in some of Wisconsin's major waters.

The hatchery also raises most of the spotted musky whose fast growth rates and fight delight anglers in Green Bay, as well as some of the walleye fueling the fantastic fishing in the Fox River and Green Bay.



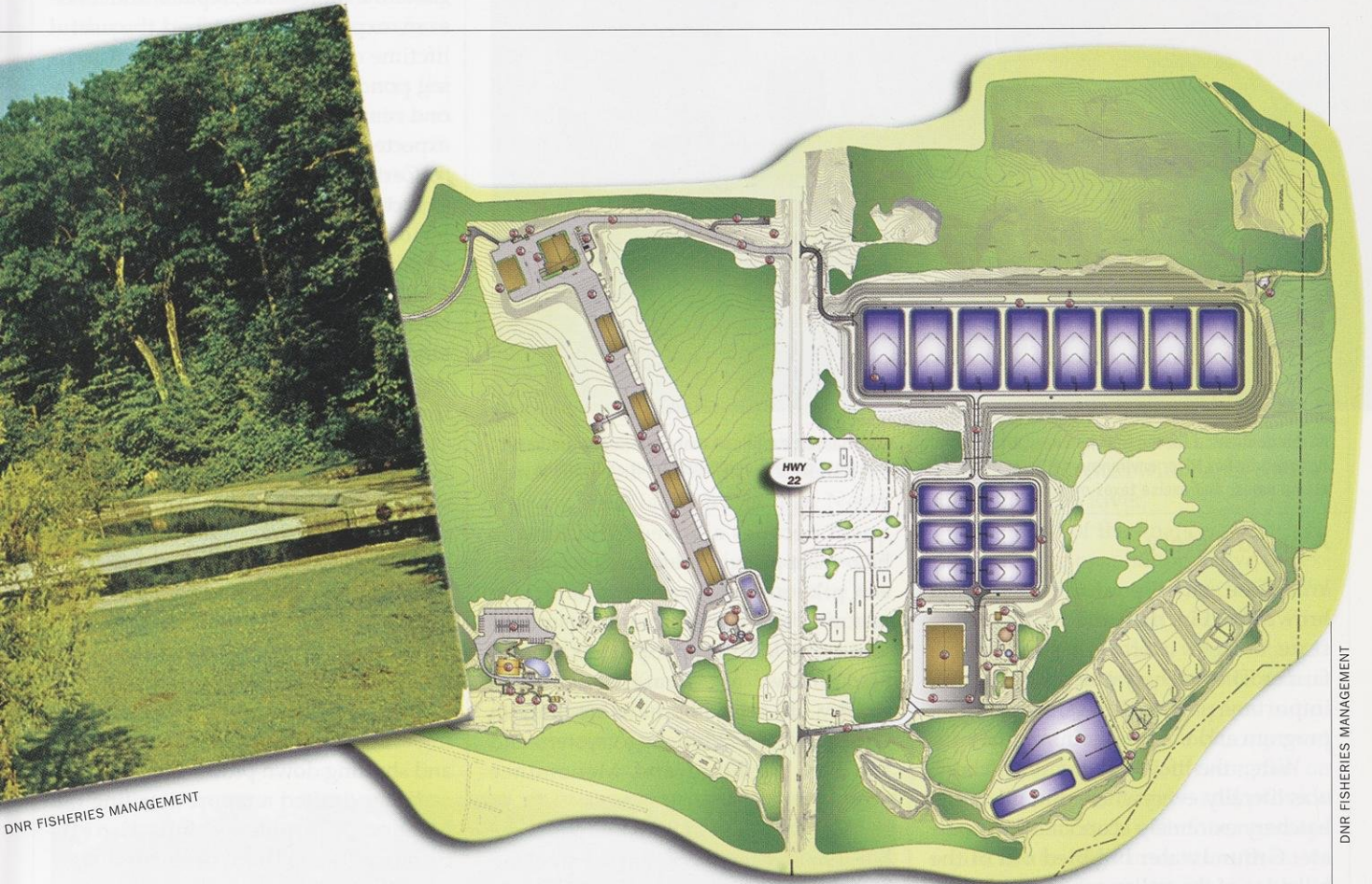
The idyllic Wild Rose hatchery in the 1950s. Plans include preserving some of the picturesque portions

That's 50 tons of fish a year. After carrying that load for 100 years, Wild Rose is showing its age. Its buildings are outdated. Its raceways are crumbling. Its water supply doesn't meet current environmental standards and the state is under orders to fix it. Correcting deficiencies will improve the health and survival of the robust fish raised here and it will also protect groundwater. So the Department of Natural Resources has launched an ambitious plan to renovate the century-old Wild Rose hatchery and bring this valued facility into the 21st century.

"The whole goal of raising fish in a



# liable workhorse



DNR FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

DNR FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

built by the CCC in the 1930s and restoring springs and wetlands while building new facilities.

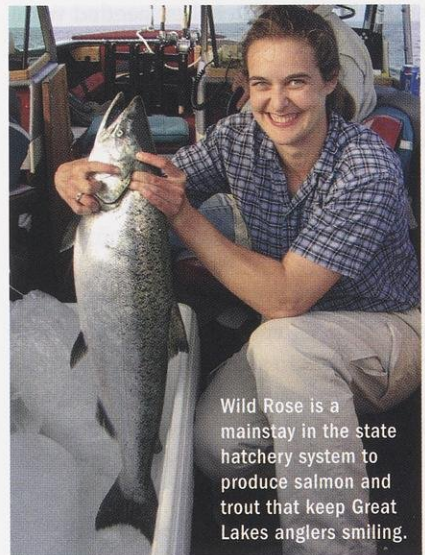
The new coldwater hatchery on the hilltop will bolster production of trout and salmon. Phase II construction will add a coolwater hatchery to raise northerns, muskies, walleyes and sturgeon.

hatchery is to get them to survive once they're stocked," says Steve Fajfer, Wild Rose superintendent. "The renovation will allow us to raise more robust fish that will survive better. It will allow us to increase coldwater production for trout and salmon by about 15 percent, and we should eventually be able to almost double production of coolwater fish like pike, musky, sturgeon and walleye."

The current renovation will build a new coldwater hatchery and build support for new coolwater rearing facilities on a hilltop looking over the existing runways and ponds. It will restore and incorporate parts of the historic hatch-

ery built by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) that local citizens and visitors have treasured for generations; it will go beyond current environmental protection standards for groundwater and wastewater, and it will restore wetlands, springs and streams damaged more than a century ago when the hatchery was built.

"We're really trying to do the best with every situation that we can," Fajfer says. "We're restoring wetlands, we're trying to preserve history, and our main goal all along is to raise fish in a facility that will continue to protect groundwater while allowing us to do an even better job."



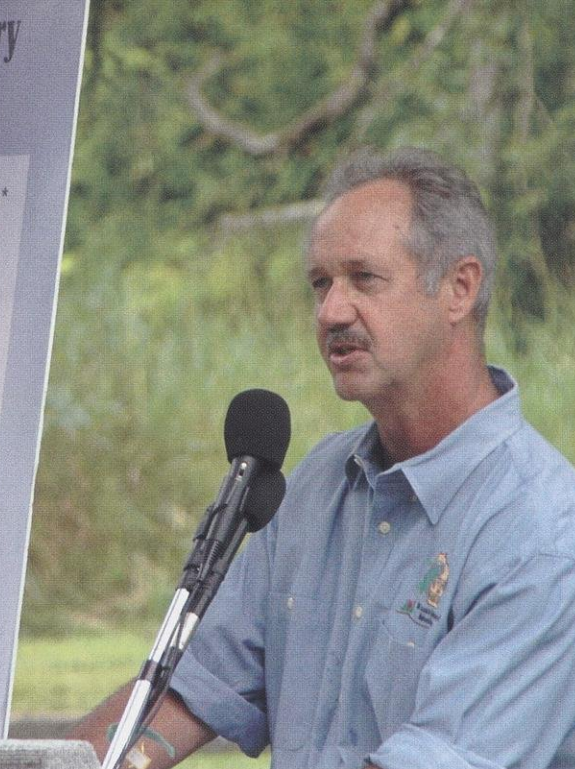
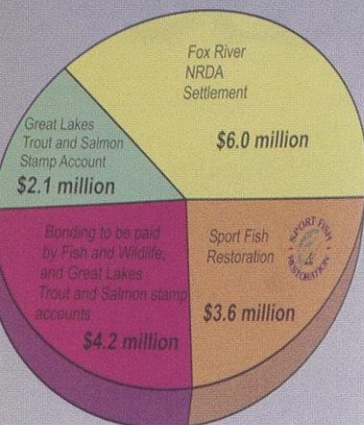
Wild Rose is a mainstay in the state hatchery system to produce salmon and trout that keep Great Lakes anglers smiling.

PAUL PEETERS



# Wild Rose State Fish Hatchery Renovation Project

PHASE 1 - Total Initial Cost = 15.9 million\*



ROBERT QUEEN

fishing is absolutely phenomenal. It starts here (at Wild Rose). With the new facilities, it's going to be even better."

## Showing its age

Careful maintenance, repairs, and a veteran, expert staff stretched the useful lifetime of Wild Rose's raceways, rearing ponds and buildings into their second century, well beyond what anyone expected.

Certainly beyond what Steve Fajfer expected. Some of the facilities were deteriorating and antiquated when he began his DNR career at Wild Rose as a fisheries technician in 1981. By the time he returned in 1987 as hatchery superintendent, the problems and shortcomings couldn't be ignored nor fixed with small repairs.

Most significantly, the amount of water flowing from the wells was decreasing and its quality declining, affecting the health of the fish produced and at times, causing large numbers of them to die. The hatchery had been under an order to fix the wells and to meet well construction codes set in the 1980s, but the way the old hatchery was built, the wells couldn't be fixed without disrupting water flow to the entire hatchery and shutting down production.

Fajfer drafted a report detailing the hatchery's problems but also its promise: the skilled, dedicated staff continue to produce millions of fish for stocking year in and year out despite the many challenges, Wild Rose was centrally located for stocking fish in Lake Michigan's far flung harbors, and the areas had ample groundwater.

His 1989 report got the attention of top fisheries brass, but tight state budgets and a laundry list of needs at other aging fish hatcheries were also concerns. In the mid-1990s, a legislative audit of DNR's stocking program directed fisheries officials to assess state stocking needs and capabilities over the long-term. The conclusion of that comprehensive examination was that Wisconsin's existing hatcheries, many of which were 50 to 100 years old, could not meet the demand for more hatchery fish.

The reports outlined strategies to remedy the situation: renovate existing

At the dedication for the new hatchery, DNR Secretary Scott Hassett explained that renovations are being financed by Fox River environmental restoration fees, bonds from current and future trout and salmon stamp sales, and excise taxes on sporting goods.

## A proud history

Wild Rose started producing brook and brown trout in 1909, the year after the state bought it from a private fish farmer. The hatchery quickly became an important part of the state's stocking program and the local community.

Water, the lifeblood of any hatchery, was literally everywhere and made the hatchery extremely economical to operate. Groundwater bubbled out of the hillsides of the valley where the hatchery was nestled. Artesian wells supplied hatchery tanks and raceways with the cold, clean water they needed without pumping.

The picturesque setting made the hatchery a favorite destination for local citizens and visitors alike; photos and post cards from its earliest years show ladies with parasols strolling the grounds and picnickers enjoying a lunch under towering pine trees.

During the 1930s, the Civilian Conservation Corps laid fieldstone and mortar walls to shape the rearing ponds that are still used today. In the 1960s, DNR developed shallow and high capacity wells to augment the natural flow and direct spring water into various buildings. Additions or improvements to coolwater facilities in subse-

quent decades allowed Wild Rose to help meet growing demands for northern pike and walleye, and later, for restoring lake sturgeon to river systems and Lake Michigan. Spotted musky, also known as Great Lakes strain musky, are raised here for stocking in Green Bay, the Winnebago system and the Fox, Peshtigo and Menominee rivers.

Wild Rose was in the forefront in the late 1960s when DNR started stocking Pacific strain salmon to help control populations of alewives. A member of the herring family native to the Atlantic coast, alewives started invading the Great Lakes in the 1950s, contributing to the demise of native fish populations. The oily alewives washed up on the shore in rotting, stinking masses.

The steady flow of salmon and trout helped control the alewives and create an exciting fishery that today lures 200,000 anglers to Lake Michigan annually.

"When I left Wisconsin in the early 50s, we looked at Lake Michigan and we called it the 'Dead Sea,' " says Chuck Weier, president of the Wisconsin Federation of Great Lakes Sport Fishing Clubs.

"Now it's part of Wisconsin's \$2.3 billion sport fishing industry and the



facilities, with Wild Rose the highest priority; fully staff and fund existing facilities; increase efficiency within the system; expand use of cooperative agreements with sports clubs and others to raise some of the fish hatched at state facilities, and consider contracting with private hatcheries to produce some fish.

The Wild Rose renovation was the first item on Al Kaas' plate when he was hired as statewide propagation coordinator in 2000. It has swallowed up much of his time since and caused a lifetime of stress, but he's not complaining.

He shares the conviction of Mike Staggs, fisheries director since 1995, that Wild Rose can't continue as it has without improvements. Closing the site would cripple the state's hatchery system, but substantial renovations would provide fishing opportunities, an economic boost and tax revenues that sportfishing brings in for local and state economies. Kaas credits Staggs with persevering through the funding dead-ends, design challenges, and bureaucratic hurdles involved in launching a project estimated to cost \$34 million.

"Mike had a steadfast commitment that this project had to happen for the good of anglers enjoying Wisconsin

waters," Kaas says. "We can't let our biggest hatchery dwindle away. Doing nothing was not an option."

Staggs also let the production goals for the hatchery guide its new design. Together, Staggs, Kaas, Fajfer and other fisheries officials embarked on a collaborative process to involve people who had worked at Wild Rose or would be affected by it in the renovation.

"All of the staff at the hatchery were involved with the design decisions. We went to them and said, 'What do you need to do the job most effectively?'" Kaas recalls.

They also visited recently renovated hatcheries in Michigan; collaborated with DNR regulatory staff for groundwater, wastewater and other environmental programs; and enlisted the services of Madison-based Liesch Environmental Services and FishPro, a national firm with 20 years experience designing fish facilities across North America.

Underlying the design team's work was a commitment to improve the hatchery's environmental performance and make it part of the design, not an afterthought, Kaas says. We are following international standards (ISO 14001) for assessing and addressing the poten-

tial environmental and social aspects associated with the hatchery's design, construction and operation.

At the same time, Staggs and other fisheries officials were working with administrators, lawmakers, sport fishing groups and others to find funding. Sport groups agreed to a \$2.50 increase in the Great Lakes trout and salmon stamps anglers must buy to fish Lake Michigan and Lake Superior, if that money were banked for the hatchery. Officials tapped other sources to help share the load, ultimately pulling together a funding package that uses no state tax dollars, pays cash upfront for most of the construction and floats bonds for the rest, a huge savings over time.

Significantly, nearly 40 percent of the \$15.9 million price tag for the coldwater hatchery will be covered by money from the environmental restoration agreements reached with paper companies on the Fox River.

The result of the finance and design work is rising on a hilltop above the existing raceways and facilities on the west side of Highway 22. This first phase of construction, which started this summer and is expected to be done in early 2008, will include a new building to house the broodstock, or parent fish of some species, start young fish on specially prepared diets, and provide four pavilions each with four raceways to incubate eggs and raise them to stocking size.

The old, failing artesian wells will be sealed, protecting the groundwater from contamination. New, deeper, larger wells will be drilled and groundwater pumped to supply the broodstock and incubation buildings with water that will be filtered and re-circulated through the pavilions, making more efficient use of groundwater.

A \$1.5 million visitors center will incorporate four historic buildings from the hatchery and use live aquariums, video and other displays to help tell the story of Wild Rose then and now.

With financial support, a second phase will get underway in 2007 on the hatchery property east of Highway 22. That phase will build new coolwater facilities for raising pike, sturgeon, walleye and musky. Water first used to



Visitors will still have the chance to visit some of the prettiest parts of the old Civilian Conservation Corps work at Wild Rose like the old visitors kiosk and a few raceways.





ROBERT QUEEN

Harsh summer light stresses young salmon and they are moving targets for mink, herons and other predators. The new enclosed hatchery with controlled lighting should cut those losses and help grow even stronger, healthier stock.

supply the coldwater hatchery operations will be filtered, disinfected with UV light and piped under Highway 22 to supply the coolwater facilities including 14 modern rearing ponds. A new wastewater system will clean water leaving the hatchery to the highest level before releasing it to the Pine River, a Class 1 trout stream.

A third phase will restore the wetlands, springs and headwaters of a stream that were harmed when the hatchery was originally built. Kaas hopes the work can eventually re-establish an important trout spawning area.

"Bringing this project to construction is a step toward improving our fish production capabilities in a very responsible, respectful way," Kaas says.

FishPro's Tom Johnson says Wild Rose's renovation will cement the hatchery's unique position in the Wisconsin hatchery system, and among hatcheries nationwide. "This facility, when it's complete, will be one of the most modern in the country and unique in providing both cool and coldwater rearing on one site," he says.

"It also will give the state fisheries program more flexibility. If someone wants to come in on the east side (cool-water side) and raise other fish species, they'll be able to do that."

### Better for fish, workers, anglers and the environment

At a time when some with 30 years of state service might be counting the days to retirement, Tom Van Effen is eager for the challenge of learning how to master new technologies and new techniques in a renovated Wild Rose.

"I love my job," says Van Effen, who started at Wild Rose when he was 19 years old and is now the lead worker for trout and salmon. "I work with great people, I get to work outside, and most importantly, I get to help provide great fishing opportunities to the anglers of Wisconsin."

The renovation will mean significant changes in not only what he does, but where he does it. He will spend most of his days inside; the coldwater facilities will be fully enclosed. But he's happy to make the adjustment if that will improve the fish and fishing opportunities for anglers.

Right now, the open-air raceways that are so picturesque leave the fish vulnerable to predation, and subject them to bright light and other stressful environmental conditions. He estimates that the hatchery can lose as many as 15 percent of fish a year to predators such as great blue herons and mink.

Salmon have no eyelids, and their favored habitats are darker; the harsh summer light is a stressor, as are the curious, well-intentioned human visitors who walk along the raceways and accidentally kick in rocks that the fish can swallow and suffocate on.

The enclosed pavilions and controlled lighting will make a big difference on both counts.

So will the increased control over the water flow, Van Effen says. Right now, water in some of the raceways is flowing out at a rate of 100 to 150 gallons per minute. That means the entire volume of water in raceways is replaced only once every six to eight hours instead of four times per hour, as the new water supply system will allow.

The decreased water flow at the existing raceways doesn't give the fish the current they like. Van Effen and his crew must keep the number of fish in each raceway low enough so the fish can get the oxygen they need. Staff have to clean out the raceways frequently to remove the excess food, fish wastes, and other materials that build up in the bottom.

He'll also be able to control water quality. Now, the old wells are sending out water with high levels of nitrogen that must be treated to reduce dissolved gas. As nitrogen gets forced into the fish gills, the tiny bubbles potentially rupture the delicate membranes, causing the fish to get sick, like a person suffering from the bends. Back in the early 1990s, water supersaturated with nitrogen gas decimated the hatchery's crop of Chinook salmon one year.

After renovation, variable water flow and dissolved nitrogen shouldn't be an issue, Van Effen said. "I expect we'll spend less time on cleaning the raceways and fixing problems, and more time fine-tuning our product to produce more fish that will be healthier and survive better once we stock them in the wild."

And that, as Van Effen says, is what it's all about. 

*Lisa Gaumnitz directs and carries out communications programs for DNR's water division in Madison.*



# Protecting nature's middle class

Federal wildlife grants are helping restore habitat and species on public and private properties.

Kathryn A. Kahler

A century and a half after Smith penned this description, Matt Zine and his children can gaze at similar oak savannas atop hills in several state natural areas in southern Wisconsin. If Zine gets his wish, his grandchildren will enjoy that view too.

Zine is a conservation biologist with the State Natural Areas (SNA) program and project manager for a State Wildlife Grant to control invasive herbaceous plants on 100 of the finest remnants of prairie and savanna communities on 14,000 acres in south central and southwestern Wisconsin. He and a crew of four to seven part-time help have been removing woody species and conducting prescribed burns on SNA properties for 15 years. Zine says the State

Wildlife Grants fill a critical gap to sustain habitat improvements formerly managed with piecemeal funding from a mix of grants, turkey stamp and pheasant stamp money.

"A large part of these grants will be funneled to our partners, who in turn will match the grants with their own funds and volunteer time. I'm hopeful we can make great strides in protecting what's left of some decimated plant communities and the wildlife species that depend on them," Zine said.



Wisconsin Heights Battlefield by S.M. BROOKES, WISCONSIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY IMAGE WHI-2286

*The view from this mound...beggars all description. An ocean of prairie surrounds the spectator whose vision is not limited to less than thirty or forty miles. This great sea of verdure is interspersed with delightfully varying undulations, like the vast waves of the ocean, and every here and there, sinking in the hollows or cresting the swells, appears spots of trees, as if planted by the hand of art for the purpose of ornamenting this naturally splendid scene.*

— W. R. Smith, 1837, from the top of Belmont Mound



waterfowl (paid for through license fees, excise taxes on sporting goods and Wildlife Restoration funds) and funding to preserve endangered species. Endangered resources, largely protected by donations, focus on species that are already on the path to extirpation or extinction. A huge number of birds, fish, insects, mammals, herptiles, mollusks and crustaceans fall in the middle and are overlooked unless their numbers drop so low that they become endangered. The SWG program called a

It's a group effort. Project partners include The Nature Conservancy, Prairie Enthusiasts, Friends of Devils Lake State Park, Green County Conservation League, Natural Resources Foundation, the Paul E. Stry Foundation, West Wisconsin Land Trust, and the UW-Eau Claire Conservation Club.

Congress created the State Wildlife Grant (SWG) program in 2001. Through it, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has since distributed about \$360 million to states and territories that identify where habitat needs protection and make plans to protect the "species of greatest conservation need." The funds fill a huge gap between money traditionally used to manage game and





State Wildlife Grants provide the backing, but people provide the backbone to reclaim wild habitat one square foot at a time. On this winter workday volunteers clear shrubs and red cedar on the Webb Tract in Spring Green.



After invasive plants are removed, then volunteers like this work crew from Wisconsin Power and Light and RMT help collect prairie seeds that are hand harvested and processed to restore prairie and savanna habitat.

halt to this piecemeal approach. It allows states to conserve nongame wildlife species and their habitat before they become endangered.

Over the past five years, Wisconsin's share of the national money averaged about \$1.1 million a year. For the current grant period, Wisconsin selected 29 projects: Some focus on one species in one location, while others look at as many as 85 species statewide.

Zine's project is one of the larger ones that expects to benefit 47 bird species, nine herptile species, two mammal species and at least 24 insect species on 47 state-owned SNAs and more than 25 sites managed by non-governmental organizations. The project aims to stop the invasion of exotic plants and restore the oak savanna and prairie communities that existed 170 years ago.

### Fighting an invasion by hand and fire

An essential part of savanna restoration is controlling invasive trees and shrubs such as red cedar and dogwood. In the mid-1800s, half the southern Wisconsin landscape was savanna and prairie — open plant communities with few or no

trees that were maintained by wildfires or fires set by Native Americans, presumably to maintain grazing lands. Savanna trees — primarily bur, black and white oak — were specially adapted to survive the fires due to their thick bark, or the ability to resprout quickly after a hot burn. Fire-sensitive species like cedar and dogwood, on the other hand, were kept in check and forced to persist in relatively low numbers in areas protected from fire. Now, decades later, biologists, landscape ecologists and landowners practice prescribed burning to restore prairie and savanna communities. Such controlled burns are an important tool in the mix of techniques funded by the SWG projects.

Besides the woody species, other invasives have more recently found their way into remaining pockets of savanna and prairie. Garlic mustard, wild parsnip, sweet clover, purple loosestrife, crown vetch, leafy spurge, dames rocket, celandine and spotted knapweed are all found in the sites covered by Zine's project. Control techniques are orchestrated to attack the plants at the most vulnerable time in their growing cycles. Starting in April and May, crews spray, torch or pull garlic mustard. In June, they spray, pull or mow

wild parsnip. Sweet clover is sprayed, pulled or mowed in June and July; purple loosestrife is pulled and herbicide applied in July and August; then garlic mustard is sprayed and torched again in November. The other species are attacked at various times before they spread or set seed.

Zine's crews depend on partners to fill in the gaps. For instance, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) uses SWG money to maintain the Spring Green Prairie. This 860-acre property known as the "Wisconsin Desert" is located just north of Spring Green in the Wisconsin River valley. It's a popular destination where visitors can see unusual species like prickly pear cactus blooming in late June, or grassland birds like dickcissels, meadowlarks, and Henslow's, grasshopper and lark sparrows.

Steve Richter, TNC's director of conservation and land management, says the grants will pay contractors to remove invasives, and cut red cedar and black locust trees that threaten the sand and bluff prairies. TNC will match these expenses with help from an expert band of volunteers who will hold work parties to cut cedars this winter.

"Spring Green Prairie is one of the first sites in Wisconsin where volunteers



organized to do land management work," says Richter. "Those work parties have continued each year since 1972 and some volunteers have been with us since the beginning!"

"The invasive species work will open up habitat for grassland birds, insects and reptiles. Trees are also fragmenting the sand prairie and bluff habitat, making it less attractive for many grassland species to nest. We don't want invasives like garlic mustard and hedge parsley to dominate white oak woodlands on north-facing slopes and ridgetops. Also keeping knapweed and parsnip out of the barren and prairies will maintain sandy habitat for the diversity of uncommon plants, birds and insects."

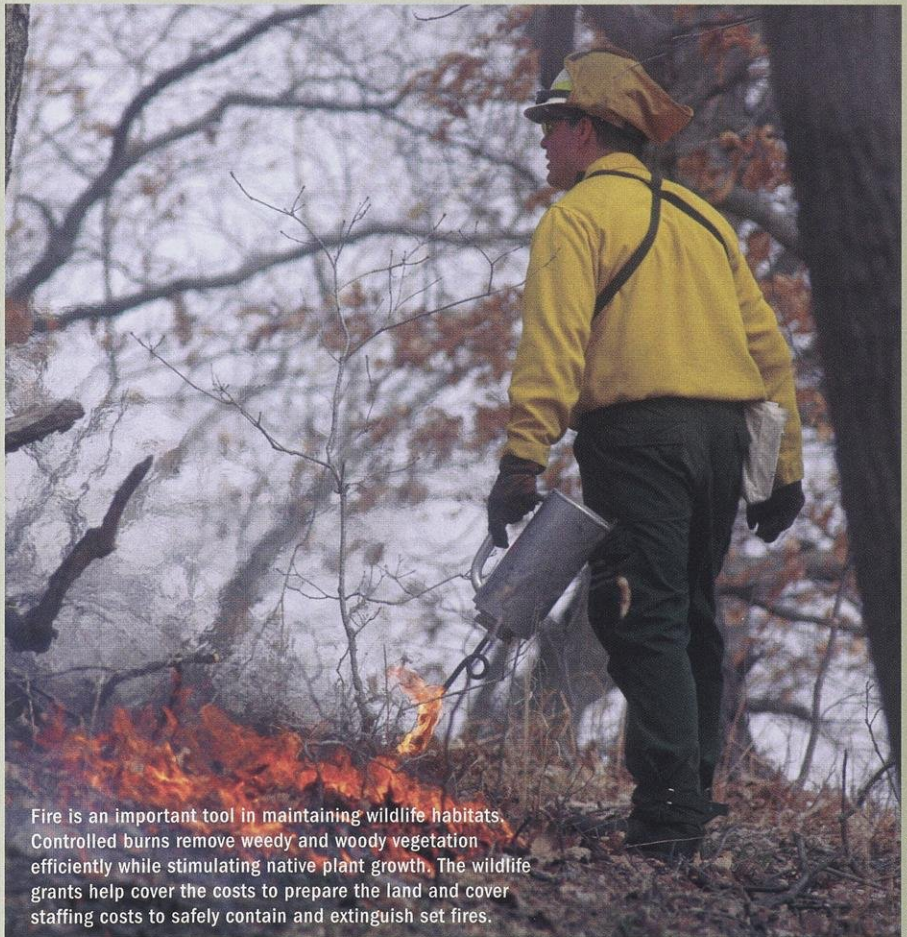
Another SWG project follows a similar approach further west on Mississippi and Lower Chippewa river bluff-land prairies and savannas. Tim Babros, DNR wildlife supervisor for the La Crosse/Black River Falls area, is project manager.

"A good portion of our project relies on prescribed burning and mowing to remove brush," said Babros. "We have typically done a lot of work by hand, but this grant allowed us to rent an ASV forestry mower that knocks down and chips brush up to eight inches in diameter. We've been able to mow significantly more this year than we could in the past."

Babros' project covers almost 700 acres on 24 SNAs that will benefit 85 species including several insects found nowhere else in the state. More than 45 bird species breed, stopover or winter in the area including American bittern, black-billed cuckoo, red-headed woodpecker, eastern meadowlark, great egret, black tern, whip-poor-will, least flycatcher, brown thrasher and about a dozen species of warblers and sparrows.

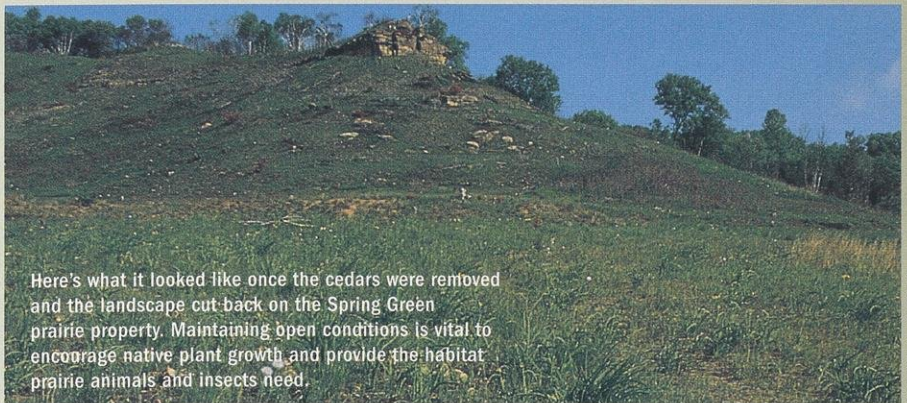
The SWG grant provides matching funds to several nonprofits, like the West Wisconsin Land Trust. Rick Remington, the trust's land program director, will hire staff and interns to restore remnant bluff prairie and oak savanna, as well as plant more acres with native prairie seed.

In addition to labor, grants under-



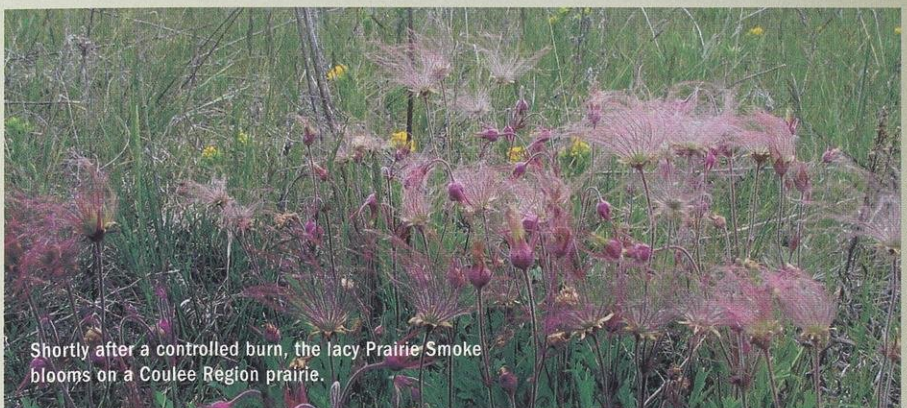
Fire is an important tool in maintaining wildlife habitats. Controlled burns remove weedy and woody vegetation efficiently while stimulating native plant growth. The wildlife grants help cover the costs to prepare the land and cover staffing costs to safely contain and extinguish set fires.

ROBERT QUEEN



Here's what it looked like once the cedars were removed and the landscape cut back on the Spring Green prairie property. Maintaining open conditions is vital to encourage native plant growth and provide the habitat prairie animals and insects need.

ROBERT A. KLEPPIN



Shortly after a controlled burn, the lacy Prairie Smoke blooms on a Coulee Region prairie.

MISSISSIPPI VALLEY CONSERVANCY





WEST WISCONSIN LAND TRUST



FRIENDS OF WISCONSIN STATE PARK

Rick Remington of the West Wisconsin Land Trust inspects a prairie recovery project at Maiden Rock State Natural Area that receives State Wildlife Grant support. Funding and donations cover costs like renting equipment to plant prairie seeds (LEFT) or a handy ASV Mower (RIGHT) that cuts and chips up brush.

write buying seed and herbicides, as well as mowing and preparing sites before prescribed burns, Remington said. "Removing trees such as buckthorn, red cedar and aspen lets sunlight reach the ground, and stimulates the growth of suppressed native grasses and forbs.

"The land trust also recruits volunteers from its members, from contacts with local landowners and communities, and through environmental education programs. Volunteers haul and burn brush, control herbaceous invasives and identify species found on the SNAs."

Grants also support smaller projects. Take the Holland Sand Prairie, for example, a 61-acre tract of very rare habitat just west of Holmen on the expansive Mississippi River terrace. It's the last piece of native sand prairie in the Coulee Region and was preserved last winter by a unique partnership among the Town of Holland, the Paul E. Stry Foundation, the Mississippi Valley Conservancy and the state Stewardship Fund.

"It was a last-minute rescue," as

George Howe, conservation director for the Mississippi Valley Conservancy, described it. "The land was commercially zoned and located in a prime spot at a major highway interchange. The landowner was going to sell to a developer. Local support and publicity raised awareness of the property value and the landowner and developer listened. With the financial help from partners, we were able to purchase and preserve it."

Native sand prairie and natural dunes once extended 30 miles from La Crosse to Trempealeau. Armund Bartz, DNR regional ecologist stationed in La Crosse, describes the terrain as "gently rolling, punctuated by rather large dunes, barren hollows and a few clusters of trees." The dunes and hollows were sculpted by strong winds. The sand prairie extends to the edge of the Mississippi River terrace, which rises 100 feet over the floodplain below.

"Standing on this edge, you get a commanding view to the west, three miles across the Mississippi River Val-

ley to the majestic Minnesota Bluffs nearly 600 feet high," Bartz says. The property is home to 36 "species of greatest conservation need" and roughly another 150 plant species. Large, mature patches of relatively rare plants like prairie smoke, sand dropseed, prairie dropseed and New Jersey tea are scattered throughout the prairie.

Once the area was protected, the difficult task of restoring habitat began, funded in part by a State Wildlife Grant. The landscape would naturally have been dominated by grasses like little bluestem, junegrass, panic grasses and poverty-oat grass, and plants such as flowering spurge, western sunflower and stiff goldenrod. To clean it up, managers divided the tract into four units based on the kinds of invasive plants found and the control methods needed.

One area was dominated by invasive black locust trees that needed to be removed, another by black and bur oaks that needed to be thinned. A hay field taken over by non-native grasses



like smooth brome had to be burned to induce native seeds dormant in the soil to germinate. The last segment of red and white pine planted 40 years ago was shading out native species and needed to be thinned.

"The restoration work has been truly astounding to behold," says Bartz. "The residents of the Town of Holland even voted themselves a tax increase to help pay for the property over the next 10 years!" Once it's restored, the land will be dedicated as a state natural area and given to the Town of Holland.

Bartz said State Wildlife Grants paid a contractor to remove brush with forestry mowers, apply herbicides and burn some parcels. Volunteers matched those expenses by cutting limbs and brush, burning brush piles and collecting prairie seed. Volunteers have put in more than 500 hours of hard work in Saturday work-parties on the property, according to Howe. "I've been doing conservation work for 20 years and I've never seen a project come together like this one," he said. "The property is a real gem and the way the people have stepped up to support it has been phenomenal. Scout groups, at least 24 classes from the Holmen School District, UW-La Crosse students and instructors and the Friends of the Holland Sand Prairie got involved. I think what makes it so special is this parcel is the very last of its kind, almost like a dinosaur. The people realized that and didn't want to lose it."

Matt Zine, Tim Babros, Armund Bartz and hundreds of partners and volunteers know their success depends on vigilance and continued funding to control invasive species. They are also confident their work, made possible by State Wildlife Grants, will provide a sound basis for managing vulnerable wildlife species so future generations can enjoy them just as much as we do today.

*Kathryn A. Kahler is the circulation, production and promotions manager for Wisconsin Natural Resources magazine. She writes from Madison.*

For more information on Wisconsin's Wildlife Action Plan, go to: [dnr.wi.gov/org/land/er/wuap/](http://dnr.wi.gov/org/land/er/wuap/)



## Protecting what swims, flies and flutters

State Wildlife Grants are helping pay for similar habitat restoration projects on the Red Banks Alvar SNA in Brown County, state natural areas in the Upper Fox River basin, Lulu Lake SNA in Walworth and Waukesha counties, the Central Wisconsin Grassland Conservation Area, the East Branch of the Pecatonica River, and on the Spread Eagle Barrens SNA in Florence County. Other grants will help biologists prepare a bat conservation and management plan, update a wildlife health database, compile a web interface to map fish species of greatest concern and carry out the Important Bird Areas program. Here's a sampling of other SWG projects in progress around the state:

- **Grassland management on private lands** — Private landowners in north-west Wisconsin who agree to maintain their land in grassland/pine barrens for five years will get DNR assistance in conducting prescribed burns.
- **Wetland bird monitoring and management** — Feral populations of mute swans will be controlled on wetlands statewide; a volunteer network will monitor Wisconsin's restored flock of trumpeter swans; and in a northern 10-county area, volunteers and DNR staff will conduct breeding bird surveys on a range of wetland types.
- **Clark County natural community restoration** — Karner blue butterfly habitat will benefit as power line rights-of-way will be burned and seeded to restore pine barren communities on 20 acres of county land. Two small dams on county streams will be removed to improve the quality of sedge meadow habitat.
- **Management and surveys will help conserve raptors** (bald eagles, northern harriers, osprey, northern goshawks, red-shouldered hawks, peregrine falcons and short-eared owls). A raptor database will provide better information for environmental review and species management. Eagle and osprey populations in other states will be enhanced by moving some young Wisconsin birds to New York and Iowa. Osprey nesting platforms will be repaired and new ones erected.
- **Protecting stopover sites in the western Great Lakes** — Partners from Wisconsin and other Great Lakes states will cooperate to identify and protect areas that migratory birds use to rest and feed on their long flights between breeding and wintering grounds.
- **Survey for Henry's elfin butterfly** — Research and field surveys in northern and central Wisconsin will increase understanding of the habitat needs of this species.
- **Butler's garter snake research and surveys** — Populations and habitat will be assessed to determine which sites in the metropolitan Milwaukee area can help conserve this state threatened species.
- **Research how housing affects breeding success of forest birds and nest predators in the Baraboo Hills** — Researchers will measure nesting success of ground- and low-nesting forest birds as well as the abundance of nest predators in relation to human housing density. Results will help planners make better land use decisions in forested areas of the state.
- **Effects of removing wooded fencerows on the grassland bird community in the Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area** — Researchers will see if removing trees and shrubs bordering fields benefits grassland birds by eliminating habitat for predators like raccoons.



Meeting growing demand for campsites while enhancing outdoor experiences takes a lot of friends.



# The speedy pace of outdoor relaxation

Natasha Kassulke

**I**t's hard to think of someone who sets their Fourth of July plans in the fall as a procrastinator, but when it comes to reserving camping space at one of Wisconsin's premier state parks, it's a safer bet to pick up the phone now to secure a prime campsite for a festive family get-away next summer.

State Parks Director Bill Morrissey says it's a common refrain and a sign of changing times. State parks remain so popular that camping takes planning to get sites at the most popular parks; sites with electrical hookups and sites with the most scenic overviews, especially on holidays. At the most popular parks, campers are less spontaneous than they used to be in watching the weather, then planning weekend camping trips a few days ahead of time. Given 14 million visits to state parks annually, the popular campsites fill up quickly. That's why an automated reservation system now lets people book their trips 11 months in advance.



For some, camping still means a tent on the ground and a quiet getaway. For others, bikes, boats and pop-up camper spell relaxation. Providing amenities for simpler experiences like these is still pretty affordable for the campground system.

ROBERT QUEEN



Prior to 1999, would-be campers had to mail their reservation requests to each individual park after the first of the year and it took parks staff weeks to sort out all the requests. Many of the requests had to be turned away because campsites booked quickly for popular weekends. The automated system allows folks to book space up to 11 months ahead on a rolling schedule.

"Many families still love the state parks, but they now also consider camping experiences in public forests, county facilities and private campgrounds as well. It's supply and demand," Morrissey said. "We have beautiful state parks that are great fun to visit, but there are simply too few campsites to meet a growing demand for them, and too few campsites of the type people tell us they want."

Many people are still backpack and tent campers, but the fastest growing segment of the camping public is RV campers who are seeking a somewhat different camping experience. They want to be close to nature, but they also want larger pull-in campsites with water, electricity and sewer connections. There are tradeoffs in deciding how many of those amenities should be met in the future by Wisconsin's state parks system, what will be provided at county forest facilities, and what will be offered by private campgrounds. Naturally, there are economic and social consequences to each option.

The average state park visitor spends \$60 per day on recreation-related items in Wisconsin. Out-of-state visitors spent roughly \$225 million on parks-related trips into Wisconsin in 1999, the last time figures were tallied. About 8,000 jobs are supported by park users and about 200 jobs by trail users.

Wisconsin's state park system includes 53 state parks and recreation areas that provide 3,786 campsites on more than 78,000 acres. That's a lot of sites, but it hasn't kept pace with the public's enthusiasm for outdoor experiences. Compare that to Michigan's system of 97 parks providing 13,500 campsites on 284,000 acres.

In 2000, the Wisconsin nonprofit group 1000 Friends of Wisconsin issued a report outlining the need for more



Friends groups really enhance the outdoor experience at state parks by providing services like campground hosts who greet new arrivals, help them register and get oriented to fun opportunities at the park.

ROBERT QUEEN

public campsites in our state. The 1000 Friends educate about sound land use planning and advocate for protecting natural landscapes. Their report confirmed that supply hasn't kept up with growing demand for campsites in state parks and forests. From 1962 to 1996, campsites in the Wisconsin state park and southern recreational forest system increased 43 percent from 2,648 sites to 3,786 sites, but the number of camper days increased by 103.7 percent in the same period.

To address the growing need, 1000 Friends recommended adding about 1,000 new sites by 2005, providing \$15 million to develop recreational sites and increasing the rate of public land acquisition to allow greater opportunities for quiet and nature-based recreation.

"Our parks are a big part of our quality of life and are part of the reason many people choose to live here," says Steve Hiniker, executive director of the 1000 Friends of Wisconsin.

He recognizes some progress in acquiring new properties but notes development is encroaching on parks and it's difficult to make space for creating additional campsites.

Kohler-Andrae State Park in She-

boygan, for example, reached its camping capacity this past summer and Jim Buchholz, the property manager, says that is typical. The park is ideally situated by the Lake Michigan shore and has more of the modern hookups motorized campers are seeking, hence the park has the top demand of all state parks for camping spots. Due to a warm spring, campers came earlier in the season and are expected to stay later. The park houses two group campsites, 105 family sites, two camp host sites and a teepee site, but that is still not enough to meet demand.

One trend Buchholz notes is an increasing number of visitors who just come for the day.

"On a hot day the beach can be covered with up to 2,000 people. Finding a parking space becomes a problem when the beach fills with so many day visitors. "We've had to shut the park down when we've reached beach capacity a couple of times and we hate to do that. Back in 1980, Kohler-Andrae had 220,000 visitors for the year and 47,000 campers. By 2005, we had 418,000 visitors and nearly 60,000 campers for the season with the same number of campsites we had back in 1980," Buchholz noted.





Accommodating other visitors, like those who travel with bigger RVs, is more costly as they want longer, wider campsites, electrical hookups, water and sewer connections.

## Hooking up

One challenge is working with policy-makers to determine how much state campsites should update to meet the changes in camping technology and in the camping public. Twenty-five years ago, many of the park visitors were tent campers. As these campers matured, they sought a few conveniences. Many bought pop-up campers with bunks, a stove and a little sink. Now some use hard-topped pull-behind trailers and RV motor homes that are air-conditioned and have small kitchens and bathrooms.

In 2002, a two-year study by state parks and the University of Wisconsin-Madison showed although campers appreciate the rustic nature of state parks and trails, they expect amenities at campgrounds such as garbage collection, sewage hookup, telephones, restrooms, showers, drinking water and concessions such as canoe and kayak rentals.

By far, the most popular campsites today are those with electrical hookups, Morrissey says, and many camper com-

ment cards cite a need for more electric campsites. Campers pulling bigger RVs want to power everything and even bring their stereos and televisions to the campground. Some even ask for WiFi access for their mobile computing devices. Current Wisconsin law, however, only allows 25 percent of state park campsites to offer electrical hookups because of the cost in providing these amenities.

"People used to be happy just finding a picnic table and fire ring at their campsite; but times have changed," says Jeff Prey, DNR parks planning analyst.

The Department of Natural Resources released its draft Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) last August. The five-year plan analyzes data from the Department of Tourism to identify emerging recreational issues and propose solutions. One clear challenge that remains is increasing the number of campsites statewide. From 1984 to 1999, counties and other local municipalities added 4,476 campsites, private campgrounds added 4,232 sites, but the state parks system only got authority to add

421 campsites. Of those, 217 were in the Bong State Recreation Area (Kenosha County).

Private campgrounds typically provide electrical hookups at 75 percent of their sites. The SCORP will advise addressing the current cap on electrical sites at state parks.

## Balancing acts

Morrissey says public properties face a range of challenges in meeting the variety of outdoor activities that outdoor recreationists want. For instance, all-terrain vehicle (ATV) use is one of the fastest growing areas in outdoor recreation, yet it is impractical for ATVs to share trails with hikers, bikers, walkers and skiers seeking solitude. How and where should public properties accommodate climbing interest in motorized recreation and who pays for sturdy trails that can hold up to ATV traffic?

Hunting in state parks remains controversial but it's an important tool for containing overpopulated deer herds that browse the forest understory and



create openings for invasive species to move in.

At some parks invasive species over-run native plants and garlic mustard is replacing trilliums. Volunteers help with some control efforts. Signage and boot brushes can keep hikers from spreading invasives and parks staff are suppressing other species. Since April, 2006, the threat of emerald ash borer has led to firewood restrictions prohibiting visitors from bringing firewood from infested areas into state parks and forests.

About 90,000 people in Wisconsin currently engage in a form of treasure hunting on state lands called geocaching (visit [www.wi-geocaching.com](http://www.wi-geocaching.com) for information on the Wisconsin Geocaching Association or [www.geo-cache.com](http://www.geo-cache.com)). Geocaching is an adventure game where individuals and organizations hide boxes and share clues to their location on the Internet. GPS users then use the location coordinates to find the caches. Geocaching is part of the "No Kid Left Indoors" movement that is trying to get children outside.

"Geocaching is getting more and more families and younger people out to hike," says Peter Biermeier, chief of Operations in the DNR Bureau of Parks and Recreation. "It blends technology and recreation which appeals to some. As we become increasingly fascinated with technology as a society, this is a natural evolution and a way to keep kids using their active minds and busy feet."

Another way to get children outdoors is through interpretive programs in parks.

"We are seeing more interest in our interpretive programs and demand for a greater variety of programs in state parks such as guided and self-guided hikes and nature programs," says Sherry Klosiewski, DNR Chief Naturalist. "Given staff limitations, the parks will rely more heavily on volunteers to run these programs, but providing interpretive programs is one of the key purposes of our state parks."

## Stewardship

A bright spot in parks operations is the state's Knowles-Nelson Stewardship



Volunteers are part of the first line of defense in stemming the spread of invasive plants and smoothing out rocky portions along the trails that visitors enjoy.

BONNIE GRUBER

Fund, created by the Legislature in 1989 to protect sensitive lands, provide outdoor recreation and restore wildlife habitat.

The \$60 million per year fund provides financial support to hundreds of local government and nonprofit parks projects across the state. Since 1994, more than \$1.6 million has been awarded to Friends of Wisconsin State Parks groups who match Stewardship funds with volunteer hours and more than \$1.2 million in private donations. With Stewardship funding, the Friends of Wyalusing and the Starsplitters of Wyalusing completed an astronomy observatory at the park. Four buildings house two large telescopes and provide space for programs, library and computers. Friends of Whitefish Dunes State Park used Stewardship funds to build a park amphitheater. Friends of High Cliff State Park built a woodshed to support their firewood sales. Friends of Bong State Recreation Area used a Stewardship grant to construct a solarium.

In 2006, more than \$220,000 in grants has been awarded to 18 friends groups for improving recreation, visitor facilities, outdoor education opportunities and customer services at state parks and trails. Grants ranged from \$1,500 to

\$20,000 and must be matched dollar for dollar by the recipients. Among the projects were a \$2,500 grant to the Friends of Buckhorn for a beach rinse shower, \$20,000 for a nature interpretive center at Newport and \$20,000 for playground equipment at New Glarus Woods.

## Friends

One of the state parks' greatest challenges is taking care of the sites it already has.

"We are number one in the nation in rails-to-trails conversions, but nearly last in having sufficient funds to maintain recreational property," Morrissey says.

As operation and maintenance funds for parks and trails systems fall behind, the formal "friends" groups often step in to fulfill some of the work, help keep the parks in good shape, and keep customers happy. Friends of Wisconsin State Parks groups support more than 70 of the state parks, forests, trails and recreation areas.

"The power of a few folks is incredible," Morrissey says. "If it wasn't for the friends groups, we'd have a hard time making it."

Friends group programs started in Wisconsin in the early 1980s to bring





Parks friends of all sizes and ages tackle big tasks. Gibraltar School fourth grader Logan Thomas cut the "green giant" (*Phragmites australis*) down to size at Peninsula State Park on a field trip.

KATHLEEN HARRIS



Friends of Devil's Lake State Park paved the way for a smoother walking path along the Tumbled Rocks Trail one wheel barrowful at a time. Friends groups help with park renovations, fund-raising, and enhancing outdoor programs for visitors.

ROBERT QUEEN

nature center addition, a meeting room, a paved bicycle route, a teepee campsite, and is building an accessible camp for people with physical limitations. The group also sells firewood, and operates the camp laundry and concession stands.

Kohler-Andrae volunteers also serve as nature center hosts and campground hosts. Campground hosts receive free camping in exchange for greeting arriving campers and helping with campground maintenance, including cleaning out campfire rings and campsites, cleaning the beaches and staining picnic tables. Many campground hosts are retired couples. Hosts also have operated the Sanderling Nature Center since the park lost its fulltime outdoor educator during a statewide reduction in permanent positions.

Another parks group, Neighbors for Trails, rounded up equestrians who are dedicated to preserving the Black River Trails at the northwest tract of the property that is also used by bikers and hikers.

"If you want to get a friends group or other volunteers motivated, it is important to have interesting projects for them to work on," Buchholz says. "They have to have goals to find personal satisfaction."

The Friends of Capital Springs Centennial State Park is a new group enthusiastic about the new park developing south of Madison on Lake Waubesa adjoining an existing county park. Staff and volunteers created a plan with the property manager. They held a kick-off event that attracted about 80 people, had a silent auction and offered tours. They've already put together bylaws

## State parks reservations

For information on Wisconsin state parks visit [www.wiparks.net](http://www.wiparks.net) and for camping reservations, call (888) 947-2757. Nine dollars of a \$10 reservation fee goes to the company that manages the reservation system. In addition, they collect camping fees that range from \$10 to \$17 per night depending on the park, the day of the week, the season of the year, and residency status.

concerned community members together to help preserve and promote state parks through education and interpretive work, community events, fund-raisers, and property maintenance and improvement activities.

In 1996, the Friends of Wisconsin State Parks formed a nonprofit public foundation to serve as an umbrella organization for local friends groups that could offer liability insurance, help develop parks websites, conduct training, advertise upcoming parks events, con-

duct workshops on recruiting members, start an electronic newsletter and provide low-interest loans.

Kohler-Andrae State Park relies on its friends group to better meet customers' needs. The friends' 100 members assist at the nature center, and set up special events such as candlelight dune hikes and a Halloween hike. They also raise money to support the park's interpretive and recreational programs. The friends group applies for Stewardship grants and has helped finance a



and articles of incorporation.

The DNR offers \$500 loans to help friends groups with start-up fees and facilitates conference calls if members are not from the area. For some groups, building membership is its greatest hurdle.

Juliana Zolondek has been a member of the Friends of Buckhorn and Roche-a-Cri state parks for more than two years. She is heading to UW-Stevens Point this fall to study wildlife management and says she got involved in the parks because she grew up in the area and loved the parks.

"My experience growing up around state parks helped me choose a career path," she says. Zolondek contends that friends groups should emphasize their strengths — providing social opportunities for people who are already park enthusiasts, a way to learn new skills, a chance to get the whole family involved in community service, a way to meet families and link single parents, and an opportunity to learn leadership skills.

"To increase membership, people needed to know who we are," suggests Dunnell Kendrick-Parker, President of Friends of New Glarus Woods State Park.

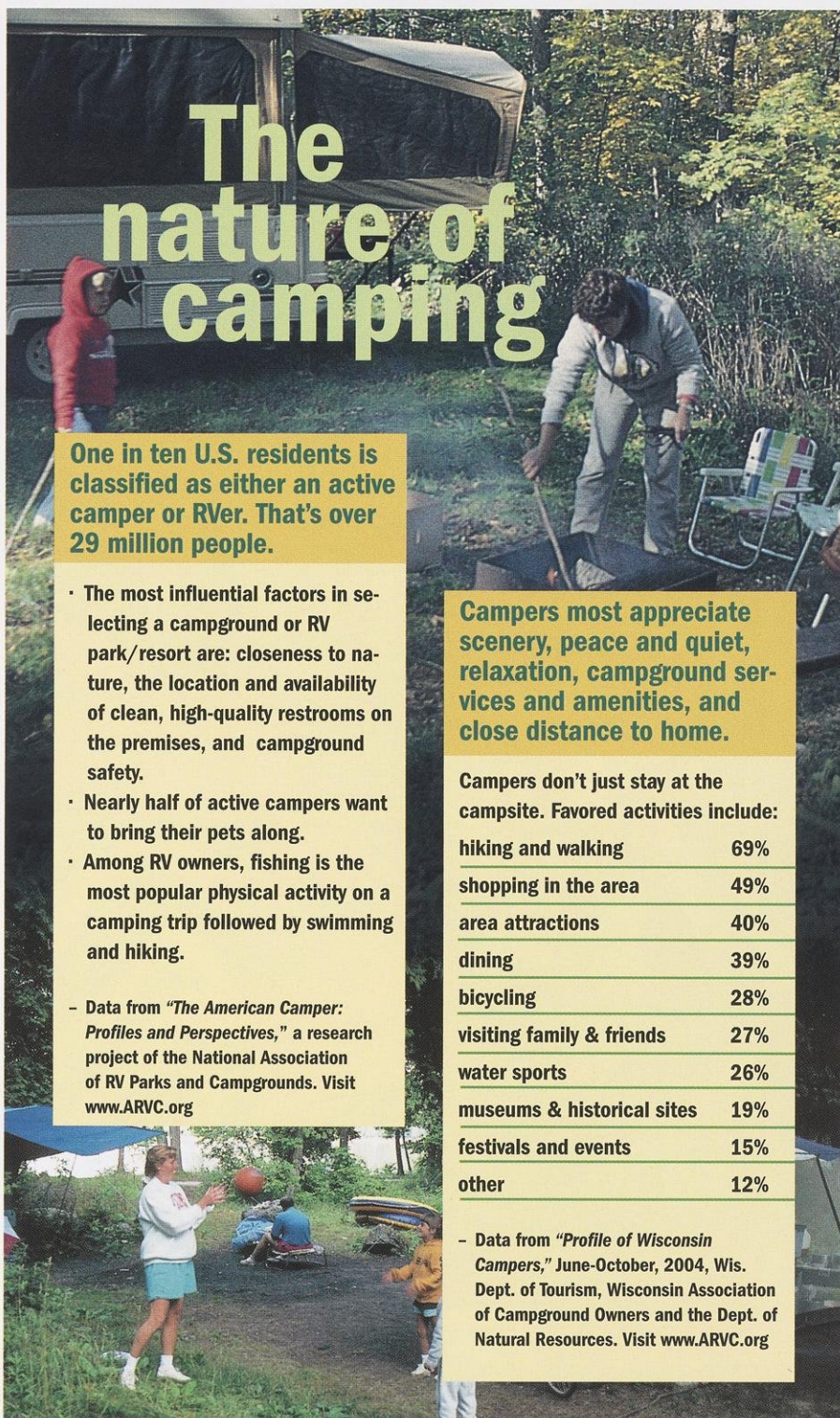
Kendrick-Parker got pictures of the friends group in action into the local newspaper. The group has a logo, mission, and website (members donated design time and webspace so the group only needed to pay for a domain name and e-mail address). The friends act as the park's naturalists. Its 12-member team pulls together three big events a year.

Kent Goeckermann, the park superintendent at Copper Falls State Park, says people travel hundreds of miles to help. "There can be a strong local support group, but some park features may attract people from outside the area who provide hands-on help or contribute money," he says.

Volunteering is an American tradition, says Jean Rygiel, DNR West Central regional park and trail manager.

"And our friends are continuing this tradition," Rygiel says. ■

Natasha Kassulke is associate editor of Wisconsin Natural Resources.



# The nature of camping

**One in ten U.S. residents is classified as either an active camper or RVer. That's over 29 million people.**

- The most influential factors in selecting a campground or RV park/resort are: closeness to nature, the location and availability of clean, high-quality restrooms on the premises, and campground safety.
- Nearly half of active campers want to bring their pets along.
- Among RV owners, fishing is the most popular physical activity on a camping trip followed by swimming and hiking.

— Data from "The American Camper: Profiles and Perspectives," a research project of the National Association of RV Parks and Campgrounds. Visit [www.ARV.org](http://www.ARV.org)

**Campers most appreciate scenery, peace and quiet, relaxation, campground services and amenities, and close distance to home.**

**Campers don't just stay at the campsite. Favored activities include:**

hiking and walking	69%
shopping in the area	49%
area attractions	40%
dining	39%
bicycling	28%
visiting family & friends	27%
water sports	26%
museums & historical sites	19%
festivals and events	15%
other	12%

— Data from "Profile of Wisconsin Campers," June-October, 2004, Wis. Dept. of Tourism, Wisconsin Association of Campground Owners and the Dept. of Natural Resources. Visit [www.ARV.org](http://www.ARV.org)

## Supporting parks friends

Annual group membership for Friends of Wisconsin State Parks is \$25. For more information, visit [www.fwsp.org](http://www.fwsp.org) or call (608) 266-7617. A guidebook, "Friends Handbook: A Best Practice Guide for Wisconsin Friends Groups," provides details on running a friends group and tips to make any nonprofit conservation group more successful and efficient. The handbook may be purchased for \$15 or is free to individual Friends of Wisconsin State Park members or organizations. Call David Machotka at (608) 266-7301 to purchase a copy.

ROBERT QUEEN

ROBERT QUEEN







**Most hunters know to ask permission  
before hunting on private land,  
but etiquette extends far beyond that.**

# The well-mannered hunter

Bill Klein

**S**traddling the peak of the roof on my 100-year-old farmhouse, the roofer had a good view of deer habitat. "I'd consider it a privilege if I could try my luck bowhunting on your place," he said.

When I said maybe he could, he scrambled down the ladder to show me his expensive bow, tucked in a hard case under the roofing tools in his truck. Also in the case was a quiver full of carbon-shaft broadheads and some field points for practice.

From underneath a bow-and-arrow target so riddled with holes that it looked like a giant round of Swiss cheese, he fished out a dog-eared photo album.

"And this is my son Jason," he said as he led me through several pages of deer hunting snapshots.

"But where are the deer?" I asked.

"Oh Jason passed on lots of smaller does and button bucks. He's waiting for the right one."

After telling me he scouts year-round, he asked, "Do you mind if I take a break from the roofing to look around for deer sign now?"

"Chuck," I said, "I'm paying you by the job, not the hour. Have at it."

Unknowingly, perhaps, Chuck had hit all my "yes" buttons for granting permission to hunt. He had obviously made an investment of time, energy and resources in his sport. He knew the critical importance of scouting early. And most important to me, he had made a commitment to teach the next generation of hunters reverence for the resource.

For nearly 20 years I have been granting or denying hunters access to my small farm. And for many more years, I've been asking for permission to hunt all across the state. I've made

some mistakes, especially early in my hunting career. And I've learned from them. I've seen hunters who do and don't get the direct connection between their behavior and their access to private land.

Here are the highlights of the lore I have tried to pass along to my own children:

**Scout for land** — One of my axioms of hunting: Go where the game is. To check wildlife populations in your desired area, start by contacting a DNR Service Center and talking with a local wildlife manager or technician. Then plan one or more scouting trips at least a month in advance of the season opener.

Take along a gazetteer and a plat map book of the county you are scouting. If you see game while you are driving around, mark the location on the map. The plat map provides the landowner's name. You can use a phone book or the Internet to look up a

phone number or a mailing address to contact the owner later. Plat maps showing each individual township (six square miles) or a book showing land ownership in all townships in the county can be purchased at county offices.

**Talk to the landowner** — Whenever possible, ask for hunting permission face-to-face well ahead of the time you'd like to scout and hunt. It's much easier for a landowner to say no over the phone, and when you are asking someone a favor, nothing beats that face-to-face meeting.

When you meet the landowner, light up your face with a warm smile and state who you are. Begin the discussion by referring to the plat map. The map helps identify you as a serious hunter who does not intend to trespass and it enables you to show the owner where you would like to hunt. Be candid about how many hunters would be with you. Try to keep your group small.

Property owners like to know who is hunting on their land. When I approach landowners, I always hand them one of my hunter's cards. One side has my name, address, phone number and picture of my dog and me. The flip side has my hunter's honor code. I invested about \$35 in my cards at a local print shop.

**Introduce young hunters** — If you plan to have youngsters hunt with you, have them tag along when you ask permission. This experience serves as a good example for young hunters and their presence enhances your chances for success in securing permission. Young people bring the right kind of emotions to the moment — anticipation, excitement, joy — and adults find it harder to disappoint children.

If the answer is no, always say "Thank you just the same." I've been stopped in my retreat to my car several times by people who changed their



mind because of my courteous behavior.

If the answer is yes, ask the landowner to tell you where to park and where not to hunt. Mark the location of livestock, standing crops, and other off-limits sections in pencil on your plat map.

**Plan to walk** — On the day of the hunt, park where the landowner directed you, let him or her know you have arrived and then walk — don't drive — to the hunting ground. Walking is one of the joys of hunting and it assures that you won't be mashing crops with a 5,000-pound pickup truck.

If you are hunting with a dog, make sure your host has agreed to that. Use a leash until you are well away from cats and other temptations. Remember, how you and other members of your hunting party conduct yourselves will dictate whether you will be welcome back or not.

**Stick to your stated time and quarry** — A yes from a landowner doesn't mean carte blanche privileges to hunt anything anytime. Agree on what quarry you will hunt and when you will hunt. Never assume permission to hunt for any other day than the one you asked to hunt.

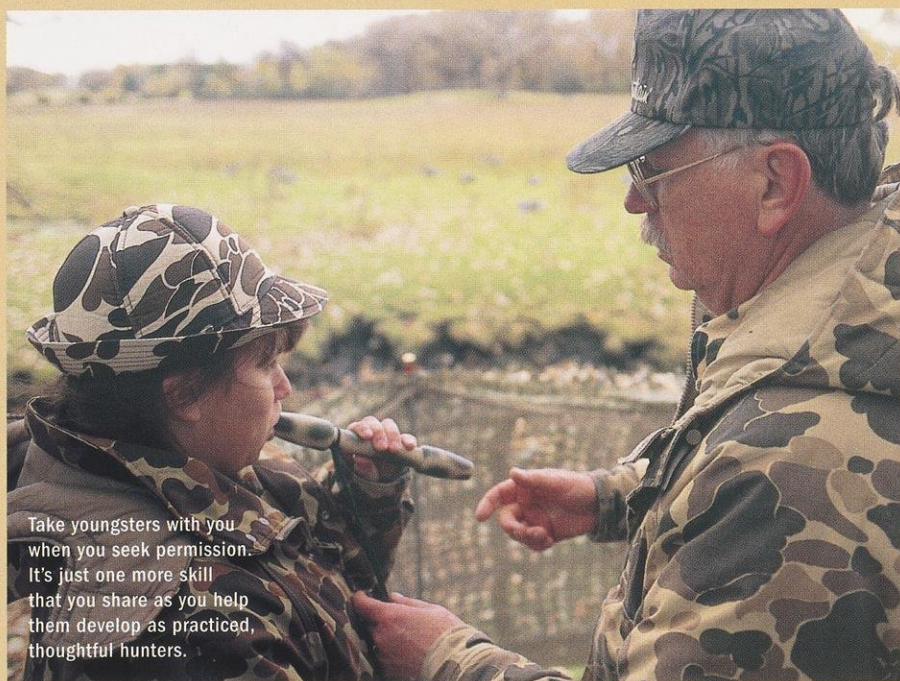
I gave a fellow permission to hunt deer on my property last fall. Hearing several reports from his shotgun before 9 a.m., I thought he was either hunting poorly or had multiple tags to fill. But when he came back to his truck, he was carrying two ducks and a pheasant. When I reminded him of the 9 a.m. daily opener on pheasants, he said, "I don't have my watch with me."

Obey the law. Wear your watch, and if you say you want to hunt deer, stick to deer.

**Alter the land only with permission** — If you want to put up a deer stand, first discuss its construction, placement and dismantling. If you need to trim branches to open up shooting lanes, get the landowner's approval before whacking away.

If you are camping overnight on the property, a campfire is nice, but ask first if you may build one, and heed any burning restrictions. Always judge dry conditions, humidity and wind before lighting a fire. When in doubt about

We like this tip to print up hunting cards and leave a copy with landowners after you seek permission to hunt. It gives the landowner a way to contact you if plans change, it helps remind them what you look like if you are invited to return, and it's a show of good faith that you will respect their property if given the privilege to hunt.



Take youngsters with you when you seek permission. It's just one more skill that you share as you help them develop as practiced, thoughtful hunters.

your ability to contain a fire, do without.

A good rule of thumb: Leave things as you found them. Assume you will be cleaning your game at your own home. In case circumstances such as warm weather dictate gutting immediately, get your host's permission before unsheathing your knife. Ask if you should bury the gut pile.

A compact shovel is a handy tool on all kinds of hunts. Besides using it to clean up after drawing game, you can use it to dig a latrine. The same deer hunter who shot birds on my property also left some toilet paper, flagging his open-air spot, which my black Lab found and rolled in.

**Say thanks in many ways** — After the hunt, take a moment to stop and



say thanks. If you've been successful, ask if the landowner would enjoy a share of the harvest. Deliver cleaned, wrapped and labeled game as soon as possible. Remember to give your host a game receipt with your name, address and hunting license number; the recipient's name and address; a description of the gift; and the date.

When you are hunting someone's property, you might notice a problem, such as a broken fence or a tree down across a tractor path. Tell your host what you have seen and offer to help fix it.

When you've hung up your boots for another season, write a follow-up letter to your hosts. I once sent a photograph of my daughter to a farm couple who hosted her first pheasant hunt. When I returned a year later, I was pleased to see the picture still posted on their refrigerator.

I have a list of landowners who get a poinsettia from me every Christmas, whether or not I hunted on their property the previous fall. A gift to thank the people who provided you a place to hunt is a small part of your overall investment in the sport.

**Keep your friends** — The friendships I forge with landowners are among the genuine joys of hunting. Many years ago I was building a duck blind on a farm when the farmer stopped baling hay for a few minutes to chat. I remarked that getting straw stored for the winter must be hard work. "Hard work?" he said. "If you want to see hard work, take a break from your blind building and come with me."

He took me to a threshing bee on a nearby farm. He taught me how the machinery worked and showed me how to do various threshing chores.

That was the beginning of a long and warm friendship between us. Such friendships transcend the taking of another buck or another duck, and they add a dimension to the sport that lasts well beyond the hunting season. ■

*Bill Klein is a lifelong hunter and freelance writer who recently retired from a career in marketing at AT&T. A version of this piece previously appeared in the Minnesota Conservation Volunteer.*

## Border patrol

*continued from page 2*

Mourning doves are widely hunted and have the largest distribution of all the North American game birds, yet their populations are still increasing in most regions of the country because they adapt to every environment. They are especially abundant in Wisconsin south of a line from Eau Claire east to Green Bay.

The genus name, *Zenaida*, was given by the French zoologist Charles L. Bonaparte in 1838 to honor his wife Princess Zenaide Charlotte Julie Bonaparte. The species name, *macroura*, is Greek meaning "long-tailed." Two subspecies, *carolinensis* and *marginella* inhabit Wisconsin.

Winters can be hard on mourning doves as they have a difficult time scratching through snow and ice to reach food, so about four to five million migrate through Wisconsin each year. Another group comes down from Canada and winters in southern Wisconsin.

In spring, the males arrive at the breeding grounds first and aggressively defend a territory, cooing from dawn to dusk. When the females arrive, males perform a gliding, spiraling flight display. Returning to the ground, males spread out their feathers before steadily nodding their heads up and down while strutting back and forth to impress the ladies.

After breakfast, I walk to a nearby pond that is the main source of water for miles around. I suspect that doves with their crops full of seeds will soon be flocking in for a drink. Like other doves, they suck up water instead of the more common method of lifting their heads to swallow. If left undisturbed, doves continue murmuring their coo-song from an open perch and I can get a closer look at their trim brown bodies, pinkish tinted breasts and small, rounded heads. The iridescent colors on their slender necks shimmer in the sunlight. Black spots on the upper wings shine bright like small pieces of flint.

After a brief respite, the doves take

off to attend to family matters. They raise two to five broods a year; down south they breed year-round and can have five to six broods.

I often find their nests by following their odd erratic flight pattern or watch when they pretend to have a broken wing. Once an enemy is a safe distance away, the dove's feigned injury, like the killdeer's, miraculously heals. Many a coyote, fox or person has been fooled by the act. I have wised up and seen a few nests with their pure white eggs.

The males gather the twigs and sticks for the nest, but the females are the chief engineers and nest builders. In three to seven days, the females put together a somewhat flimsy, crude nest three to 30 feet up a tree, shrub or ledge. The first egg is laid in the evening followed by a second one the next morning. Males incubate the eggs during the day and females take over the night shift for the 14-16 days until eggs hatch.

Rather than feeding their young directly on insects, as almost all other seed-eating birds do, mourning doves feed "pigeon's milk" — a nourishing partially digested liquid regurgitated from the lining of their crop. The only other birds producing similar milk are flamingoes and penguins. Pigeon's milk contains more protein and fat than cow's milk or human milk. Hatchlings fledge in about 12-14 days and are supervised by their parents for another two to three weeks.

After the breeding season, mourning doves gather to roost on branches, wires, barns or other sheltered groves. Many doves are preyed upon or hunted, but the species is still thriving.

As the last rays of sunlight leave my campsite, the sky cools from flaming orange to faded pink. The mourning doves come back for one more meal of sunflower seeds. The sun slides down behind a hill and the air temperature drops dramatically. The birds' cooing duets bring my day to a peaceful end. ■

*Marcia Hafner is an avid bird watcher and nature-based freelance writer in Moab, Utah.*



## 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@dnr.state.wi.us

## NO FANS OF TOURNAMENT FISHING

I was delighted to see Pat Schmalz's article in your June 2006 issue ("Contemplating competition"). It was very clear to me that detrimental results of competitive fishing far outweigh the minimal benefits. The biological effects, after numerous scientific studies, showed alarming survival rates. I quote, "Many species are homebodies. If they are moved even a few miles from their home habitat, they don't find their way back." The upside of tournament fishing is all economic — money!

Being a very competitive person, I have played tennis, golf, bowling, baseball, volleyball and chess, and enjoyed it when I won. But then I would go fishing to relax! No pressure — just me and the fish. I live on the water and have observed hundreds of tournament guys come by my property. They are all so "hyped" up, making 30 casts per minute, and they call that fun! I'd call it a job! None that I have seen take the time to appreciate their catch. They crank the bass as fast as possible, toss it in the live well and move on. Has the greed in these fishermen grown to where the real fun is lost?

Also, they only come to my lake when the bass are spawning and very vulnerable. Then they move north to the next "ripe" lake. How sporting is that? If the DNR refused permits for tournament fishing until they determined a post-spawn

date for bass, tournaments would fold. Amen!

Jim Cox  
Lodi

The article "Contemplating competition" about big money fishing tournaments in Wisconsin caused my blood pressure to skyrocket.

Big money tournaments involving full-time, professional participants simply ought to be completely and quickly terminated! They represent a bastardization of what should be a relaxing, contemplative personal enjoyment of one of nature's oldest and best human activities.

Our Mississippi and many other rivers and lakes in the U.S. are now crowded with full-time, professional contestants in \$100,000+ boats, trailers, etc. many of whom have no legitimate occupation. They are rude, thoughtless persons who ignore all common sense and thoughts of courtesy. If you don't believe me, ask any lock and dam operator (or truly recreational boater) on the Mississippi.

Back in the late 70s, I remember us discussing the relatively small problem while I was on the Natural Resources Board. Some of us were in fear that this practice might grow to become a serious problem. Now 30 years later, the gorilla is in the living room!

My friends in the local fisheries division of our DNR office tell me that the terrible mortality rate of released bass is being grossly underestimated. One of them tried to find out how the unsportsmanlike "culling" or "upgrading" exception for some bass tournaments got on the books. He found out there was not one record of whom, how or why that concept was slipped into the tournament rules. They felt it was done at the behest of wealthy persons upriver who

could make a fortune by buying up all the major boat and related equipment manufacturers.

The DNR "advisory committee" is said to be actively discussing limitations on tournaments on smaller Wisconsin lakes and rivers. That committee should save its time and simply work for the elimination of all big money tournaments on all Wisconsin waters.

Daniel T. Flaherty  
La Crosse

## UPDATE:

### INVESTIGATING LOSSES AFTER FISHING TOURNAMENT

*DNR fisheries biologists in La Crosse continue to investigate the death of 639 fish, mainly largemouth bass following the area's largest and most lucrative fishing tournament in mid-July. This year's die-off marks the second consecutive year of higher than normal mortality following the Wal-Mart FLW Stren Series Bass Fishing Tournament, held this year July 12-15.*

*Almost all of the dead fish recovered in the first few days after the tournament had been fin-clipped on their tails, indicating they were fish that had been caught and released during this tournament. Hot weather, disease, the stress of being caught and held in a live well before release may all be factors in the mortality. Tests following the post-tournament die-off last year confirmed that most of the dead fish tested positive for largemouth bass virus, a disease that can kill stressed fish. Results from testing this year are not yet available.*

*The Department of Natural Resources and the UW-Stevens Point Wisconsin Cooperative Fisheries Unit are studying fish mortality following big tournaments like this one that attracted more than 400 anglers who caught more than 2,800 bass.*

*When laws regulating fishing tournaments were revised in 2003, biologists were directed to study the biological, economic and sociological effects of catch-and-release bass tournaments. The study will investigate what role disease, weather and other factors may play in such die-offs in addition to the potential consequences of tournament angling. Research may also suggest handling methods to help minimize such losses.*

## HORSE SENSE ABOUT PRAIRIE CHICKENS

As a boy, I had experience with prairie chickens as they came in from the Great Plains during the dry years of the Great Depression ("The drummer of love," February 2006). I believe some of my experiences could be applied to preserving the surviving birds. First, farming involved raising some timothy hay for horses — often it was the last hay harvested and some was often left to stand if it wasn't needed. Prairie chickens would fly into the snow covering it, both to escape the wind and extremely cold night temperatures and to feed on the timothy hay seed. Also, farmers cleaned their barns and put the manure in little stacks every so often on the fields. This included horse manure which often had oats that had passed through the horse's system — but which was food for the prairie chickens. As it was above the snow, they could feed on it. Farmers were also adding to their farms by cutting down trees from the wood lot. Some went for logs, some to brush piles and most to firewood. The brush piles were burned and prairie chickens used the ashes to get rid of parasites under their feathers by flecking their bodies through the cold ashes. It was also a time when trapping was done



by farm boys to earn a little extra money. I trapped skunks for \$.75 to \$1.25 per pelt — depending on the width of the skunk's stripe, the narrower the better. Foxes, coyotes and other enemies of prairie chickens were few and far between.

*Dr. Allan J. Mortenson  
Ripon*

### BOBWHITE ENOUNTER

I enjoyed your article in the June 2006 issue on bobwhite quail in Wisconsin ("Silent whistle"). While spring turkey hunting this year in southern Portage County I got a look at a bobwhite which did just what you said in your article; it froze on the spot and did not move. This is the first bobwhite I have seen in that area and I am excited at the possibility of a flock taking

hold there. Unfortunately, according to your article I see the mortality rate is pretty high, which I'm sure is the case with many game birds. Is there any place online I can listen to the sound of the bobwhite? I have no idea what their whistle or call sounds like. Maybe I have heard it without realizing it.

*Rich Rawson  
Waupaca*

*Several websites offer free online access to bird songs including this one, [www.math.sunysb.edu/~tony/birds/grouse.html](http://www.math.sunysb.edu/~tony/birds/grouse.html). You can also buy CDs with recordings of birds commonly found here. One such recording that we admire has been previously reviewed in this magazine. We recommended John Feith's Bird Song Ear Train-*



### MELANISTIC MUTANT PHEASANT

Enclosed are pictures that my wife took last May. We were about one and a half miles south of Picket on County Highway M (northern Fond du Lac County) when we saw this odd looking pheasant in a field beside the road. We had the camera in the car so we quickly turned around to get these pictures.

*Howard Goeden  
Ripon*

*This bird is a melanistic mutant pheasant, a pure breed often called "black pheasant" by hunters. Upland Wildlife Ecologist Andrea Mezera says that, "like all pheasants, they are not native and any found in Wisconsin are the result of a release. A variety of pheasant strains raised on Wisconsin game farms are released on game preserves or by folks with dog training permits." We asked Andrea if they can be legally hunted. She said since Wisconsin small game regulations aren't specific for ring-necked pheasant, other varieties, including the melanistic mutant are fair game and can be considered part of the daily bag limit.*

ing Guide. *He made most if not all of his recordings here in Wisconsin. Use a search engine with the topic "bird songs" to explore further, and congratulations on seeing quail.*

### TWO BIRDS IN BUSH NOT WORTH HANDLING

Someone once wrote, "There's a little good in the worst of us and a little bad in the best of us." Of course, that refers to humans, but I can't help wondering if the animal kingdom is also included. As a bird watcher and nature observer, the abundant critter population near our home gave me plenty to watch and study. During a storm one day, I saw a blue jay nest fall from a pine tree. Two blue fuzzballs huddled in the grass. They were so cute that I thought maybe I could get a picture.

Armed with my camera, I hurried outside, set my lens on close-up and focused. Just as I was about to snap a really great picture there was a terrifying, raucous screech accompanied by a sharp poke to my head! I think I screeched back, covered my bruised cranium with my one free arm and ran! Mrs. Jay was a bit upset.

I tried to forget the babies when we left on an errand, but I couldn't. When we returned, they were still there cradled in the wet grass as rain continued to fall. I was sure they would be more comfortable and content if moved to a protected area. My smarting wound reminded me to be cautious. I continued my surveillance, scanning the trees and sky before finally deciding all was clear. I tried again, sans camera. As I stepped outside, I knew exactly where I'd move the downy duo and stooped to retrieve them. SHRIEK! She was back and I was running! That's it, I decided, my good deed would go undone.

The next time I looked out, I melted. The mother bird was sitting beside her tots, one wing extended over them for protection. She may not have spoken, but her message came through loud and clear: Mind your own business, I'm perfectly capable of taking care of my family. I guess there is good in the worst of us.

*Dolores Eggener  
Marinette*

### DO FISH FEEL PAIN?

Over the years I've met very few people who think about — or admit they think about — the torment that fish are subjected to before they're killed.

When I saw the cover of the latest issue of your magazine (June 2006), it was so repulsive, so graphic a depiction of the barbaric methods of "catching" fish, that I had to weigh in with this magazine on the issue of tormenting any creature in order to capture it. It's just wrong.

As far as I know, only some Native Americans and indigenous people of other countries practice a humane method of killing fish. I wonder why more Americans haven't learned how to do that.

I think it would be appropriate for this magazine to raise the consciousness of people who use unnecessarily cruel tactics to "catch" fish and to teach them that there are more civilized ways of catching fish. What is required to humanely catch/kill fish is true sportsmanship. I think that's a concept that your magazine might want to support.

*Marilyn Gardipee  
Washburn*

*We certainly do not consider catching fish with lures to be a cruel or barbaric harvest method, nor would we consider*



continued from page 29

spearing or netting, followed by dispatching and filleting to be more "humane." As omnivores, people choose to eat other animals, and that process should be handled humanely and efficiently.

Do fish feel pain? Perhaps, but we suspect in a different way than people feel pain. Fish have tough, bony mouths designed for consuming hard, often spiny prey like crayfish, other finned fish and mollusks. Many studies note that fish lack the higher brain functions associated with feeling "pain." Further, fish that strike at lures will often repeatedly strike after being released. Would they do that if they had an elaborate sense of pain? Would fish continue fighting once hooked if they sensed a lot of pain? We don't know definitively, and one can certainly find ample research supporting both sides of this debate.

Our fishing courses and educational materials advocate sportsmanship, fishing with barbless hooks, using circle hooks designed to hook fish in the mouth, handling fish carefully and respectfully to maintain their slime coat, and releasing fish promptly if anglers are not going to keep them for food. Repeated research shows that better than 90 to 95 percent of fish can survive if anglers follow established catch-and-release techniques.

The anglers we know have tremendous respect for fish and spend a lifetime learning more about the habitat that fosters strong fish populations. They care about the waters they fish. They care about shoreline development. They support protecting and conserving aquatic resources. They understand the importance of stemming runoff and pollution. They are willing to financially support pollution prevention and they take an active role as outdoor policies

are formed. Those attitudes and actions often develop as a consequence of staying involved in angling.

## NORTHERN PIKE TUMORS

I would like an explanation of the lesions and tumors on the northern pike population in Nelson Lake in Hayward. We were ice fishing this winter and caught a few northern and every one had tumors and lesions on them. The locals said to pitch them and not eat them. It looks like it has highly infected the northern population in that lake. Why and what can be done to remedy the problem?

Andy Gajewski  
Exeland

Sue Marcquenski, fish health specialist, and Frank Pratt, fisheries supervisor from Hayward, provided this explanation: The skin tumors and sores on Nelson Lake northern have been diagnosed as Lymphosarcoma, a fish disease that affects northern and muskies in several Wisconsin lakes, as well as in other states, Canada, Europe and the U.K.

The malignant tumors are thought to be caused by a virus. Most infected fish have large, red sores on the skin that are slightly raised. In some cases, larger lesions appear as ball-like tumors. The disease is likely transmitted by fish-to-fish contact during spawning.

The disease is specific to northern pike and muskies and does not affect other fish species. It is not a danger to human health but because it affects the muscle tissue, it makes fish unpalatable and they should not be eaten.

Pratt believes the disease may cause a major decline in Nelson Lake's northern population and the lake's northern pike trophy initiative will have to be delayed. He also warns that the

disease can be transmitted to other waters and asks anglers to be diligent in their efforts to prevent such a spread. Pratt advises anglers to keep all northern caught on Nelson Lake, discard infected fish in the garbage, not back into any waterbody, and that fish without external lesions may be eaten.

## GETTING TECHNICAL

I have to tell you that your story "Superior adventure" (June, 2006), was very good. The story and photos are very insightful but I think I found a mistake. On page 24 in the middle of the page you mention that Lake Superior is the "world's largest lake." I am sure it is America's largest lake but not the world's largest lake. That lake is in Siberia or Mongolia, I believe, or maybe eastern Russia. Will you please look into this and put a correction in the next issue of the magazine?

Steve Watron  
Kenosha

Technically, you're right, so let's call Lake Superior the world's largest freshwater lake. The Caspian Sea that lies between Russia, Azerbaijan, Iran, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan has a surface area of 143,200 square miles, but it is saltwater. By comparison, freshwater Lake

Superior is the world's second largest lake with a surface area of 31,700 square miles. And as long as we're talking facts, the world's deepest lake is Lake Baikal in Russia. Its 5,712-foot depth is more than four times Superior's maximum depth of 1,333 feet.

## KEEP WOLVES WILD

With regards to the wolf photograph in the Black River State Forest taken in February of 2006 in Readers Write, I would like to caution anyone from getting out of their vehicle to photograph a wolf or any wild animal. The photographer states "I decided to be bold and get out of my truck..." The only thing bold in that picture is the wolf. Any wild animal that becomes habituated to humans and loses its fear is a dangerous animal. All wild animals should have a natural fear of humans. Many wild animals can run faster than humans and are unpredictable. The best way to photograph wildlife is from your vehicle. Please do not think by looking at that photograph and visiting Black River State Forest that you can get out of your vehicle and take great pictures of wolves. We need to keep the "wild" in wild animals.

Alice Droske  
Elk Mound

## HOW LONG DOES YOUR SUBSCRIPTION RUN?

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# City life

**G**as prices being what they are, it behooves all and sundry to leave the SUVs parked in the garage and maybe stick around close to town one time, hey. The things you'll discover inside a city's limits very likely will surprise and delight you just as much as the great unknown calling from beyond the county line.

For instance: Several communities invite visitors to spend the evening exploring and enjoying original works of art crafted by painters, print-makers, potters, photographers, sculptors and jewellers during special gallery nights. The **Oshkosh Gallery Walk** on October 7, the **Waukesha Art Crawl** on October 7 and December 2, and **Gallery Night: Downtown Racine** on November 18 are three such events. Art galleries located in the cities' historic districts stay open late to showcase the works of area artists. Stroll at your leisure, admire the architecture and art, find a future Picasso to buy and take home (and don't worry if it doesn't match the sofa).

In southwest Wisconsin, we take you down under the corridors of history. Cemeteries in Wisconsin's second oldest community hold stories untold. During **Prairie du Chien's "Cemetery Walk: Visiting Our Ancestors"** on October 7, follow interpreters through four historic graveyards and meet the people who shaped our future state. 608/326-6960.

No squash is safe in **Nekoosa**, where the second annual **Cata-Pumpkin Launch** commences at 10 a.m. on October 8 as part of the Nekoosa GIANT Pumpkin Fest. In an

empty field across the street from the Rainbow Casi-

no, teams will hurl the hapless vegetables from homemade catapults, shoot them from air cannons, crush them with cars or daintily toss them by hand under the close watch of officials from the World Championship Punkin' Chunkin' Association. Can't wait until the 8th? Catch the test launch on October 1 at 1 p.m. See [www.rbcwin.com/events\\_page.htm](http://www.rbcwin.com/events_page.htm) for registration forms and ideas for

catapult designs. More respectful to cellulose-based life forms, **Janesville's ArborFest 2006** celebrates the city's urban forest with self-guided tree identification hikes, ex-



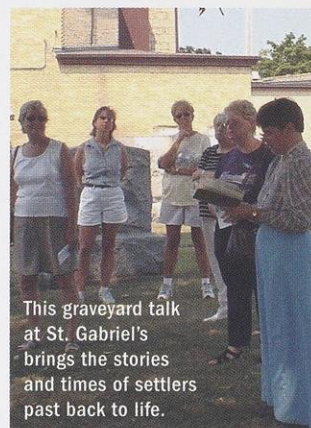
Period costumes add to the mood as you visit the historic Prairie du Chien cemetery.

PRAIRIE DU CHIEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

hibits, music and food on October 14 at Palmer Park. At [www.jstac.org](http://www.jstac.org) you can learn more about the events and the community's efforts to promote and enhance its trees, shrubs and greenery.

Our last stop on the city tour:

**Madison**, home to the **Wisconsin Book Festival**, October 18-22 — five days of readings, lectures, book discussions, writing workshops, live interviews, children's events and more devoted to the pleasures of the written word. It's one of the largest literary festivals in the nation; more



This graveyard talk at St. Gabriel's brings the stories and times of settlers past back to life.

PRAIRIE DU CHIEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

than 10,000 participants are expected to visit the city and join in events at different locations around town. See [www.wisconsinbookfestival.org](http://www.wisconsinbookfestival.org) for the details.

Enjoy a fling at the Nekoosa Cata-Pumpkin Launch.

TOM LOUCKS, WISCONSIN RAPIDS DAILY TRIBUNE



*Wisconsin, naturally*

EUREKA MAPLE WOODS  
STATE NATURAL AREA



**Notable:** Fall color? You've found it at Eureka Maple Woods when the leaves of red oak, yellow birch, basswood and sugar maple trees paint this bluffside with their autumn hues. The 36-acre natural area is equally spectacular in May when spring blooming wildflowers cover the slopes.

**How to get there:** From the intersection of Highways 27 and 33 west of Cashton, go south on Hwy. 27 0.2 mile, then west on Odessa Ave. 1.2 miles, then south on CTH PC 0.15 mile, then west on Oboe (Eureka) Ave. 2.7 miles to a pull-off east of the road at the bridge crossing. To avoid trespassing, walk west (along the northern boundary of the agriculture field) 250 yards to Rullands Coulee Creek, then due south and up the slope to the natural area, crossing Timber Coulee Creek along the way. Visit [dnr.wi.gov/org/land/er/sna/sna222.htm](http://dnr.wi.gov/org/land/er/sna/sna222.htm) for a map and more information.



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