

HUNTERS

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF SCI CHAPTERS IN WISCONSIN AND ILLINOIS
MARCH/APRIL 2025

Jim Rupnow's Gemsbok



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HUNTERS

Official Magazine of SCI Chapters in Wisconsin and Illinois
March/April 2025

On the cover: Jim Rupnow's gemsbok was one of many species taken with his son Andrew on an African safari prompted by a medical issue.

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Charmaine Wargolet

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SCI Region 16 Report

by Charmaine Wargolet,
Regional Representative

January 4th was the date of the Region 16 Annual meeting of your chapter's leadership! And the attendance was great! I want to list those attendees because you should know how well your chapter is being represented!

From Badgerland, Randy Mayes, Steve Cripps, and Joe Koback. From Illinois/Chicago, Marla & Dale Rimkus, and Brett Hensley. From NE WI, Kathryn Thede, Mark Jablonic and Mark Snyder. From SE WI Bowhunters, Dan Trawicki (who also happens to be our WI state lobbyist). From WI, Dean LePoidevin, Monte Whiteaker, and Tim Novak. A huge thanks to all of these dedicated chapter leaders!

Our Chapter Services Specialist, Jordan Wisecup took time away from his well-earned family time to join us via Zoom to do about an hour and a half of chapter training. National's membership department continues to offer great membership deals and discounted products for our annual fundraisers. So, we really appreciate Jordan making us aware of all of these and answering all of our many questions!

Mark LaBarbera, editor of our very own HUNTERS magazine also joined us via Zoom as he had just gotten out of the hospital the evening before. He had just spent four days in the hospital with what they finally diagnosed as Q Fever. Mark is still recovering from this as he was very ill, and joining in our meeting was way beyond the call of duty. We are so grateful to him and hope he is fully

recovered before too long so he can enjoy the banquet season. As we talked, all of the chapters came up with a great idea to further promote advertising in HUNTERS so that each chapter's price for the magazine would be reduced. In this way the chapters can still afford to offer HUNTERS to all of their members in the quality format we now enjoy. When I go to different chapter fundraisers, I have people recognize me from the magazine and they tell me how much they enjoy it and read it from cover to cover. It has won awards at the National level a number of times!

Our lobbyist, Dan Trawicki brought us up to date on everything that is going on in Madison and what state initiatives might affect us as hunters. He also has worked with the State Issues liaison from our SCI National office, Bee Frederick. We are truly well represented in Wisconsin.

And as usual a lot of ideas and information were exchanged among the chapters, which is why everyone really looks forward to getting together. We learn from each other!

The Wisconsin chapters also voted to send a donation to the Hunter Education Instructors Association and a full-page ad copy for their annual conference, congratulating them on their convention and thanking them for their volunteered time in safety education for beginner hunters. At a cost of only \$275 per chapter, we are able to support their efforts and promote a sense of camaraderie between our organizations.

Great meeting! Great time!

As always, shoot straight, be well, and God Bless!

Wisconsin Chapter Report

by Dean LePoidevin, President

With spring on the horizon, I am certainly looking forward to warmer weather and the chance to bag a turkey. With all seven Wisconsin turkey hunting zones open this spring there should be plenty of available acreage to hunt. Best of luck to those of you who drew a spring turkey tag.



With another successful SCI WI Banquet & Fundraiser behind us (see event photos starting on page 34), it's time to turn our attention to spring membership meetings and two summer outings. Mark

your calendars for the March 20, April 17 and May 15 monthly membership meetings as we have entertaining speakers, savory food and plenty of informative conversations on tap for all attendees. And while you're at it, add Monday, June 2 and Saturday July 12 to your list of events to attend as we once again host our annual golf outing at the Legend of Brandybrook in Waukesha, and our 36th annual sporting clays event at the Wern Valley Sportsmen's Club, also located in



Waukesha county. Be sure to look for details in upcoming SCI WI newsletters and on our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/SCIWisconsin>.

If you were not able to attend this year's SCI WI Grand Banquet and Fundraiser you probably missed a chance to renew or purchase a new chapter membership at special prices. For questions on SCI membership, see <https://sciwi.org/membership> for information and pricing.

Lake Superior Chapter Report

by Scott Olson, President

Hello Safari Club members. I am writing this from Nashville before the first day of the national convention. While it is warmer than the Midwest, Nashville is cold too, but it isn't holding back the excitement of SCI. Planning for the Lake Superior Chapter's 25th anniversary event on April 4-5, 2025, is well underway.

To celebrate our anniversary, six of our Outfitter of the Year Award winners have generously donated hunts/trips to be given away to members attending the event. The list reads like a who's who list for the Lake Superior Chapter. We will be giving away trips from Africa Maximum, Western Cape Game, Nootka Island



Lodge, Leyo Outfitting, International Adventures Unlimited, and Mike Popp's Nature Adventures. We plan for the 25th Anniversary show to be the biggest ever.

I hope other region 16 members make the time to attend our fun filled event. I'll see many of you at your events in February and March! See you soon.



SCI Region 16 Representative Charmaine Wargolet met with leaders of most Wisconsin and Illinois Chapters at Weldall Mfg., Waukesha. Left to right are Wargolet, Monte Whiteaker, Mark Jablonic, Dean LePoidevin, Mark Snyder, Tim Novak, Dan Trawicki, Marla Rimkus, host Dave Bahl, Sr., Randy Mayes, Dale Rimkus, Kathryn Thede, Steve Cripps, Brett Hensley, and Joseph Koback.

Badgerland Chapter Report

by Randy Mayes, President

A big THANK YOU to everyone who supported our Badgerland Hunter's Expo! Our chapter would not exist if it were not for you. I hope that everyone went away with something. Maybe it was a gun, a hunting or vacation trip, artwork or maybe you were a big cash winner! I hope that even if you didn't walk away with any of these, that you came away knowing that you enjoyed your evening(s) and came away from the event knowing that you helped support our cause of protecting hunter's rights, conserving our resources, education our youth (and the general public) about the outdoors and our hunting heritage as well as humanitarian efforts.

Please let me share with you yet another way to support our organization. As you know, these events don't plan and

execute themselves. Though it does overall take a lot of effort, the term "many hands make light work" comes to mind. We have a very cohesive board. We get along well with each other and have a passion for what we're doing. That said, it is not healthy when the same people are "at the helm" year after year. It's only healthy when an organization such as ours has a regular change in leadership. The only way to have this "healthy" turnover, is having a steady flow of new board members. I would ask that you consider serving on our board. It is a very rewarding, worthwhile experience. You don't need to have any previous experience with this type of service. Many of the "mechanics" of how our chapter runs have already been established. Not that they can't be "tweaked" to function better...we always welcome new ideas! I



would just ask that you consider it and let me or one of our board members know if you'd like to be a part of "the team"!

As we get closer to a "spring thaw," my mind normally turns to food plots and turkey hunting. This year, it's a little different as my wife and I will head to Spain in April for an archery Gredos ibex hunt (only me hunting) and some vacationing. I hope to get some material for a future HUNTERS magazine article! (If you have photos or stories, send them to the editor at wiscimag@peoplepc.com.) I will still have to squeeze in the food plots and turkey hunting though!

Illinois and Chicago Chapter Report

by Brett Hensley, President

With warmer weather hopefully around the corner, comes the busiest time of the year for our chapter! While it is the busiest time of the year for the chapter, this means there is a lot for members to get involved with and keep an eye out for.

The chapter board has been busy securing donations, hunts, and raffle items for the upcoming banquet taking place on April 12th at Medinah Banquets in Addison, IL. This year's theme is "Fight"! As hunters and conservationists there is no time to rest on our morals, especially when a more hunting friendly administration is elected, we must always continue the fight for the North American Wildlife Management Model that we hold so dear. This banquet is our must attend event of the year as we are always trying to make it grander than the last! Returning this year is renowned auctioneer Adam Karrels who will bring excitement and energy that only the best auctioneers can bring! One new item for our live auction this year is a fully trained Springer Spaniel by Meier K9 out of Lena, IL, that will be ready to hunt any field you put him on. This puppy will only be available "in-house" so if you want a chance at this precision hunting and tracking machine trained by Nick Meier be sure to attend! More information about new raffles and

invites for this event will be coming out shortly so keep an eye out!

Also coming up this spring is our general membership meeting, that will take place on March 19th at GAT Guns in Dundee, IL. The tentative topic will be about Turkey Hunting so please keep an eye out for more information on this as well. Our chapter is bringing back these general membership meetings and is looking to do them quarterly each year, so if there is a topic you want to learn more about or a speaker you would like to hear, please reach out and let us know!

Coming up on May 17-18th, our chapter is teaming up with the Kishwaukee Archers to host a 3D archery shoot at their range in Sycamore, Illinois for the second year in a row! Archers will walk a predetermined course through the woods and shoot at 36 three-dimensional, foam Rinehart targets at various distances. The shoot is open to the public, all skill levels, and families.

One exciting thing our chapter is doing this year and is proud to announce is our partnership with Meier K9 to train two anti-poaching dogs in South Africa, to help curb poaching efforts around the Greater Kruger Area in particular of rhino and the Big 5. The chapter has helped purchase two Belgian Malinois, that have been born in South Africa and have already started training for their work



through the program that Nick Meier and Meier K9 have set up over the course of a near decade. Nick, a former Marine, started his own training business in 2016 and has trained renowned hunting dogs, law enforcement K9 units, Special Forces units, US military units, and private security companies around the United States, Canada, and Africa! Nick has been going to South Africa for almost near a decade now, training K9 units and their handlers and views everyone he works with over there as his second family. Nick will be at our banquet if you want to learn more about poaching in Africa, the countries and forces behind it, and why K9 units are the best solutions to curb it. Naming rights for these two dogs will be auctioned off at the spring Banquet!

Keep an eye out on our website and in Hunters Magazine to see and learn more about our chapter's efforts and projects we are working on this year. We hope to see you at these events!

SE Wisconsin Bow Chapter Report

by Dan Trawicki, President

This marks my first report as the incoming President of the SE Wisconsin bow chapter of SCI.

First, I want to thank Monte Whiteaker and all the past presidents for the hard work and dedication that goes into this position. As many of you know, it's a labor or love for the sport we all love so much. The bow chapter will be marking its 25th anniversary this year. I was there at the first banquet at Buck Rub archery. Dave Bahl was the person that got everything started, and Kaz from Buck Rub was instrumental in our organization and growth. Kaz not only donated his time, but the use of his shop and employees to get us up and running.

From the very beginning, the bow chapter has been involved in the support of political figures in our state that

support our mission. As a 501(c)4 non-profit we are able to donate and support elected officials that support us. Recently, we took out multiple half page ads in Wisconsin outdoor news urging hunters to get out the vote. It came as a surprise, to find out that as a group hunters do a poor job of voting. We also know, that if 10% more hunters got out to vote we could literally change the outcome of most elections in the state. We will continue to move forward with this initiative.

As a chapter, we typically have two events a year. The wild game dinner and banquet have been our main chapter events. Looking forward to 2025 I would like to see more events and more participation. Im looking at partnering with local archery shops and clubs to hold meetings and events. Helping to sponsor a whitetail scoring event with Whale-Tales archery in Dousman, and 3D shoots are all in the works. Our banquet this year is Friday March 21, once again at the Golden mast in Okauchee. Information to follow.

Recently we were approached by Jeff Jensen of the Fort Atkinson archery club. For quite a few years they have been involved in the National archery in schools program. They were now looking to expand that program and shoot 3D animal targets in competition.



The program is currently open to grade school, middle school and high school students, with over 100 students participating. After some research, Whale-Tales offered to buy the targets at cost. This certainly was a project that fit perfectly in our chapter goals. Pete Jungbluth picked up the targets, and Pete and I were able to deliver them to Coach Jensen. To say he was overjoyed with the donation is an understatement! This is exactly the reason that all of our chapters are able to contribute to the community and further our mission.

Looking forward to seeing many of you in Nashville for the National convention.



Legislative Update:

Lobbying for you in Wisconsin

by Dan Trawicki, SCI Lobbyist

Last year, 2024, was a busy year in both the lobbying and elective process. While the legislature was out of session for a period of time, there were a number of bills that were introduced and supported. In addition, we continue to fight for old issues that still have not been resolved. The elective process was particularly important, as we obviously had a much-contested presidential race we were actively involved in.

On the Legislative front, Safari club supported several changes that included but not limited to:

- Allowing hunters to use air rifles in a "lessor weapon" type situation;
- Junior antlerless tags were now valid on both

- public and private ground;
- Redefine muzzleloaders to include modern versions;
- Working to allow bowhunters to harvest bucks during some gun antlerless seasons;
- Working to allow greater access to public land while crossing RR tracks;
- Legislative council study committee on sandhill cranes;
- Serve on the DNR wolf study committee;
- Serve on DNR Bear study committee;
- Attending all statewide SCI banquets, statewide sci meeting, and National meetings;
- Administer SCI statewide conduit fund which gives donations to elected officials; and

- Initiated the "get out the vote" advertisement. The ad appeared multiple times in Wisconsin Outdoor News. This advertising blitz was initiated to get our hunters to the voting booths and elect those individuals that support our mission. This was initiated initially for our presidential election but will continue with the spring Supreme Court election and others. We have had great success and will continue to support specific candidates.

I am always available as is my partner Joel Kleefisch to support those items that move our pro-hunting agenda forward. If you have any ideas, comments or suggestions, please contact either of us and lets keep our mission moving forward!

Northeast Wisconsin Chapter Report

by Kathryn Thede, President

The new year has already arrived. It is the season of hunting shows, banquets, and planning that next big hunt.

So much has happened since my last article. We went to the Texas Panhandle for a Sandhill Crane hunt and experienced some of the beauty Texas has to offer. We went to Palo Duro Canyon, saw the 2nd Amendment Cowboy, the Cadillac Ranch, Pippy the Penguin, The Big Texan Restaurant, and some sights along Route 66 (including some adventures that took us to New Mexico, where we saw the World's Largest Flip Flop-- IYKYK!) As with all adventures it was not without some hiccups. We blew a tire on the camper and drove through an ice storm but those just add to the memories.

Brythe woke up at 3:30 am on the hunting days and had about an hour drive. The first hunt day they set up for ducks and Brythe got a mallard and the only Sandhill crane that came in (they knew it was his because his shot was cubical--Winchester Blindside ammo.)

Day Two proved to be challenging as no birds came in. But as Brythe always says, "It is called hunting, not shooting." So, I guess he got to experience his own words of wisdom.

The third (and last hunting) day proved to be exciting. All five guys in the group were able to limit out on snow



geese and Canadian geese. Brythe even got a blue snow goose (we didn't understand the excitement, but the other guys were fired up by it)! We got to spend some time with my best friend, Rachel, her pup Gunner, and our trio which is always a great time!

Our chapter has some pretty amazing member meetings. The presenters always put on great presentations. The pictures, videos, and stories they share are outstanding, as is their willingness to answer questions about their topic. In December we had a different presentation, the first of its kind. Brett Hartman did a presentation on his time doing security in Iraq. It by far was not our usual presentation but it was very eye opening, engaging, informative, and humbling. As an American, I think you get so used to what you see in the movies and on the news but to see someone stand just feet from you and do a slide show of pictures that were his day to day, real life, for months on end, it just hits you differently. It definitely had you leaving with a deeper understanding, appreciation, and stronger love for your country, the men and



women behind the scenes trying to do the best they can so that others can hopefully get to experience the freedoms we often overlook or take for granted. Any way I heard nothing but rave reviews and wanted to share with you.

If you haven't joined us for these outings in the past, I hope that you consider joining us in the future. The location varies but the cost is only \$25 per person (plus cost of your beverage). Go to newisci.org for the latest updates. We would love to have you join us!

Expo and banquet season is upon us! Please take the time to join the fun and support your chapters. So much time and work go into these events, not to mention they are a great cause. Need I remind you, 70% of what we earn as a chapter stays right here in Wisconsin-making a difference in the future and local world around you!

This is also the perfect time of year to renew your membership (spoken as someone who is usually at the membership booth at expo) or treat a special someone in your life to a membership. You never know where it may take them!



Bow Chapter President Dan Trawicki shot this Manitoba wolf with Wekusko Falls Lodge.

Never Say Never

by Jim Rupnow

Hunting and fishing have always held a significant place in my life, particularly hunting. Like most hunters, I participate in the annual deer hunt here in Wisconsin, and I've also ventured into Minnesota to join their hunts. Each year, I make the trip to

sarcomas, which themselves represent around 1% of all cancers. The surgery went smoothly, and I was out of the hospital quickly. However, while on the surgical table, a doctor commented, "We'll take care of this now, and then we can take care of the heart later." That took me by surprise!

It turned out that I had a leaking heart valve and an enlarged aorta. Six months later, in June, I underwent open-heart surgery to replace the valve and repair the aorta. Recovery was challenging and took a few months before I felt anything resembling my old self, but I still managed to make it to the annual deer season opener here in Wisconsin.

How things can change quickly!

After going through those experiences in 2022, I began

to reflect more deeply and reprioritize my life. I had always considered myself in pretty good shape for my age, but clearly, I needed a reality check. Around that time, my feelings about hunting in Africa also transformed. My son, Andrew, was planning a trip there in March 2023 with his friend Tom and Tom's son Alex, and I couldn't pass up the invitation to join them. We decided to hunt with the same guide Andrew first met in 2016, Francois Roux of HUNT'S ON SAFARIS. They had formed a strong friendship over the years, and Francois would stay at Andrew's house whenever he visited the States for SCI conventions.

The last week of March arrived quickly, and we were filled with excitement as we flew from Madison to Atlanta, then made the long journey to Johannesburg, South Africa. It was a great flight, allowing ample time to

sleep, watch movies, read, socialize, and simply relax. Francois picked us up from the airport, and we made the hour-and-a-half drive to his stunning lodge, which featured a large pool, dining areas, lounges, open fire pits, and bar spaces. Each of us was given our own quarters, providing personal space. The accommodations were luxurious, and the food was incredible. Even before stepping into the field, I felt confident I had made the right choice.

The next morning, Francois asked us what we considered a comfortable shooting distance. We opted not to bring our own firearms to avoid hassles with transporting gear and decided to use what he had available. We thought shooting at 300-400 yards would be reasonable since shots in the U.S. typically ranged from 100-200 yards. At the range, Francois offered a few different firearms, and after trying out some at 200-yard targets, Andrew and I selected

Jim and Andrew



Jim Rupnow's Kudu



South Dakota for pheasant hunting. I've been fortunate to hunt various game across the U.S., including whitetail deer, elk, mule deer, and black bear, and I have even hunted in Canada and Mexico. Interestingly, I've never had the desire to hunt in Africa. I'm not entirely sure why that is; perhaps it's the long travel time, lugging gear and firearms, or the perceived cost of a hunting trip there. My son visited Africa in 2016 with his family for a vacation and he met an excellent guide and lodge owner. He was able to harvest some impressive animals, but it still didn't change my perspective significantly, and Africa remained off my bucket list.

However, my viewpoint shifted in early 2023.

Near the end of 2021, during my annual physical, my doctor noticed a growth that shouldn't have been there and referred me to an oncologist. Before I knew it, I was starting January of 2022 with surgery to remove a cancerous growth known as leiomyosarcoma (LMS). This very rare type of sarcoma constitutes only about 1% of all

a .300 Win Mag with a Winchester 70 action, a custom-made suppressed heavy barrel, a walnut stock, and a Swarovski 5-25x52 scope. We were shooting hand-loaded 180 grain rounds and as we moved out to 300 yards and finally 400 yards the .300 Win Mag performed flawlessly and was a pleasure to shoot. We also chose a suppressed .243 Winchester rifle scoped with Swarovski 3-10x42 shooting 85-grain hand-loaded rounds for smaller game. Although we weren't sure when we would get to shoot that, Francois assured us we would.

Tom and his son had their own plans and would be guided by Francois's brother.

The days that followed blurred into a whirlwind of activity, and Francois and his trackers did an exceptional job as we began hunting in the lower, jungle-like terrain of the accessible ranches scouting for warthogs. As we continued on, we moved into areas with more hills and valleys, yet the vegetation remained thick, and

we successfully harvested multiple kudu. As we transitioned to more open terrain and plains, we started encountering blesbok and wildebeest. Andrew was the first to connect, harvesting a beautiful golden wildebeest at 420 yards followed by gemsbok and hartebeest as the landscape opened up into expansive grassland.

Midweek, we found ourselves back in thicker brush, searching for cape buffalo, which Andrew had on his list given the opportunity. After not spotting anything respectable enough to approach, Francois suggested that we go out at night, believing it would improve our chances of getting closer to a big one. I looked at him incredulously and said, "You want to hunt cape buffalo in the

dark? Who does that?" His honest reply was, "Probably nobody." At that moment, I re-evaluated my situation; knowing I couldn't run as fast as the others, I decided to stay behind and hoped to see everyone in the morning.

The guys set out that evening, and as the story goes, Andrew harvested a massive buffalo, but not without some excitement. Apparently, as they got closer, using only a spotlight for visibility, Francois whispered to Andrew that if he didn't drop the animal where it stood, they would be in trouble. Thankfully, Andrew made an incredible precision headshot with the .300 Win Mag that took care of the big bull. Loading the buffalo onto the truck proved to be another challenge and a story of its own.

As the week progressed, we moved to another magnificent ranch along the eastern coast of South Africa. The ocean view from our accommodations was breathtaking and was again, first-class. After settling in, we resumed hunting for impala and nyala. In the more mountainous areas, we harvested fallow deer and rhebok, and this is where the .243 Winchester really excelled.

Here's a list of the animals we harvested along with the distances they were taken from, providing better perspective: ****Jim's Animals:**** - Cape Kudu - 330 yards - Common Blesbok - 610 yards - Warthog - 410 yards

- Fallow Deer - 460 yards - Gemsbok - 525 yards - Black Wildebeest - 424 yards - Impala - 375 yards

****Andrew's Animals:**** - Golden Wildebeest - 420 yards - White Blesbok - 683 yards - Common Blesbok - 880 yards - Red Hartebeest - 220 yards - Blue Wildebeest - 100 yards - Gray Rhebuck - 225 yards - Cape Kudu - 460 yards - Cape Buffalo - 80 yards - Nyala Bull - 335 yards - Nyala Cow - 175 yards

When I made that 610-yard shot on the blesbok, I thought to myself, "The old man still has it in him." Nevertheless, Andrew opted for a shot at 683 yards and capped it off with a miraculous shot of 880 yards on yet another blesbok. It was truly remarkable, and with Francois spotting and providing windage while using his



excellent equipment, we became quite comfortable with the long-range shooting. A solid rest was always key for hitting those distances, and we typically shot off sticks, but we also used bags



Andrew - Cape Buffalo



Andrew - White Blesbok



Andrew - Nyala



Jim - Black Wildebeest



Andrew - Common Blesbok



Andrew - Golden Wildebeest



Andrew - Blue Wildebeest



Andrew - Red Hartebeest



Alex - Blesbok



Andrew - Cape Kudu



Andrew - Grey Rhebuck



Jim - Warthog

while lying prone on the ground occasionally. Being able to relax and control our breathing was essential as we gently squeezed the trigger.

I never imagined that I would have the opportunity or the drive to pursue this kind of hunt, and we are considering returning to Africa this coming year.

With the cost of hunting elk, mule deer, or even trophy whitetails in the United States, one can easily harvest several animals in Africa for about the same price. There are various packages offered by Francois and HUNTS' ON SAFARIS. Take some personal time to assess your own situation and seize

unique opportunities that rarely come along. Since pictures are worth a thousand words, we've included many so you can match up some of the animals with their respective distances. I've also attached a photo of Tom with his massive kudu and his son with his blesbok.



Jim - Blesbok



Jim - Fallow Deer



Jim - Impala



The Curmudgeon

by Len Harris

A typical life expectancy of a small stream trout varies. If a trout finds a good stream or "home" and it has the necessary cover and forage, a trout could live to an age of around 12 years.

Five years ago, I found such a "home". I walked around the bend in a stream, and it was before me. It was a *WOW* hole. A *WOW* hole is one that totally screams out "Large Trout Home."

The top of the hole has a current line for oxygen and feed source. The hole itself is an old farm field bridge that has caved in ages ago. The boulder at the base of the bridge causes a severe "step" drop in depth. A step drop is where the depth of a hole goes from two feet to eight feet deep in about two feet distance.

The rest of the hole has some cover on the left and a couple ambush points for The Curmudgeon to attack his prey. The hole is about eight feet deep in the center. This allows the trout to stay in this hole year round.

I scouted the hole from downstream in a crouched position for a short time. It was March and the vegetation was limited. I watched the water. I saw no obvious feeding action.

This hole was so far off the main roadway it screamed large trout. It was way too far of a walk for the casual angler.

I thought for a long time how to attack this hole. The water was cold in March, so any possible large fish would be in the slow moving deep water. I needed to make a cast way up into the current to hide the splash of my cast.

I was worried that a smaller fish might spook the hole first and I would not have a chance at The Curmudgeon. I figured if I was going to do it...It would be on the first five casts.



thrown the kitchen sink at this fish and had not even gotten a bump.

I visited this hole annually for five years. About ten times each year. I varied my casts. I varied the time of day and night. I even sat on the hole in the middle of the night. I caught NO trout.

Last fall I was talking to a friend about The Curmudgeon. He asked what I had tried so far. I told him all of the tricks I tried. He asked me if I had ever tried to anger the trout. Make it so angry it would hit out of anger. I had my friend tell me what he meant by that.

He said that an old trout that big would be territorial and if I cast in and ripped the presentation through the hole at 100 miles an hour, I might anger it enough into hitting. I had tried everything else, so what the heck.

Second cast was bringing it as fast as I possibly could. It slammed it. It went deep and hunkered down on the bottom. After a change of direction battling it, I got it to the top of the water. I was not disappointed. It was well worth five years of hunting this fish.

I dubbed him "The Curmudgeon" and sent him on his way.

I cast for an hour at the hole with not even a whisper of a fish in the hole. From my experience, I learned that old male trout are very territorial. When they are really old, they chase ALL other trout out of the hole. They are crusty and ill tempered.

After the hour I decided to walk out into the hole and carefully map the bottom for structure. The best way I knew was to actually wade the entire hole. I started at the edges and worked my way to the fast water funnel. The fast water funnel end was clearly over my waders, so I poked my pole into the depths. Something flew out of the depths and did a circle in the hole and then stopped on the other far side of the hole.

From the wake the fish made in its circle. It was obviously a big fish. I had



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Outdoor Recreation Industry Adds Another Record-Breaking \$11.2 Billion to State Economy

SCI members contribute to the state's outdoor recreation economy. According to the latest release of data from the Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account from the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), outdoor recreation contributed \$11.2 billion to the state's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2023, growing 9.4 percent over the previous record set in 2022.

"From our vast and valuable forests and pristine lakes and rivers to Driftless bluffs, vibrant prairies, and urban green spaces, our outdoor recreation spaces are the gems of our state, and no matter where you go in Wisconsin, you're never very far from a park or trail," said Gov. Evers. "Not only is outdoor recreation good for our mental and physical health, it's also a powerful economic engine that supports thousands of jobs and families across Wisconsin, bolsters local economies, and attracts visitors, businesses, and new residents alike. As we prepare for the 2025-27 budget, my administration and I will continue our efforts to make targeted investments to ensure our outdoor recreation spaces are available to be enjoyed today, tomorrow, and for generations yet to come."

In June, Gov. Evers announced that Wisconsin's tourism industry saw its second consecutive record-breaking year in 2023. According to 2023 economic impact data, the tourism industry generated \$25 billion in total economic impact, surpassing the previous record year of \$23.7 billion set in 2022.

"The increase in outdoor recreation travel is a testament to Wisconsin's remarkable natural assets, our passionate guides and dedicated tourism professionals that leverage our beautiful state, and our outdoor recreation offerings to attract visitors from near and far to discover the unexpected," said Tourism Secretary Sayers. "With the Office of Outdoor Recreation supporting this important sector, we

can be confident the outdoors remain a top reason people choose to visit Wisconsin."

When using updated 2022 U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis data, all topline metrics for the outdoor recreation industry in Wisconsin were record-breaking:

- \$11.2 billion contributed to Wisconsin's GDP—up 9.4 percent
- 2.6 percent share of Wisconsin's GDP
- 96,867 jobs supported—up 3.4 percent
- 3.2 percent of state employment
- \$5.4 billion in employee compensation—up 8.9 percent

In 2019, Gov. Evers created the Office of Outdoor Recreation at the Wisconsin

Department of Tourism to serve as a central hub for Wisconsin's outdoor recreation industry, working with stakeholders and providing resources to bolster Wisconsin as a top outdoor recreation destination. The governor's 2023-25 biennial budget proposal would have made this Office permanent by providing \$1.1 million and three full-time positions to continue expanding the state's growing outdoor recreation market. However, these provisions were removed by the Wisconsin State Legislature, and instead, the final budget used one-time funding over the biennium for the Office.

"Outdoor recreation is a powerful tool to create vibrant and thriving

communities, to improve the health of our residents, and to drive economic impact statewide," said Office of Outdoor Recreation Director Mordini. "This growing sector has shown its resiliency in the face of challenges by continuing to grow, and our charge is to harness this potential for Wisconsin."

The report showed that Wisconsin's outdoor recreation industry grew across the board, with all but one category increasing year over year. Top contributing sectors by activity in Wisconsin's outdoor recreation industry included:

- Multi-use apparel and accessories: \$1.3 billion
- Motorcycling/ATVing: \$1.1 billion
- Boating/fishing: \$928 million

- RVing: \$464 million
- Games Areas: \$499 million
- Guided Tours/Outfitted Travel: \$450 million
- Hunting Shooting: \$320 million
- Bicycling: \$157 million

Additionally, travel and tourism spending associated with outdoor recreation trips of more than 50 miles from home also saw impressive growth of 11.7 percent over 2022, and local trips saw a notable increase of 5.8 percent.

Nationally, the outdoor recreation industry grew to \$1.2 trillion in gross output and, for the second year in a row, contributed more than \$1 trillion in gross output to the U.S. economy. The industry employed nearly 5 million people nationwide. When compared

with national statistics, Wisconsin's 9.4 percent growth in the outdoor recreation industry outpaced the national average, which is 9 percent, and outpaced the overall state economy, which grew by 6.9 percent in 2023.

"This marks another year of growth for the outdoor recreation economy, underscoring its resilience and importance across the nation," said Outdoor Recreation Roundtable President Jessica Turner. "The new BEA data highlights outdoor recreation as a cornerstone of our economy, generating jobs, supporting small businesses, and providing essential opportunities for Americans to engage with the outdoors for health, connection, and quality of life."



Hayward and the Chippewa Flowage area businesses benefit from caring for healthy natural resources.

Two New CWD Reports Available

by Bill Moritz

As Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) continues to increase in geographic distribution and prevalence in infected populations, so too does its potential to cause negative impacts on healthy ecosystems and generate large economic costs for agencies and tribes charged with wildlife management responsibilities as well as industries that depend on revenue from cervids or cervid products. All this is in addition to the damage CWD continues to cause on the culture and food security of communities with meaningful and long-standing traditions tied to cervid hunting and cervid population health. Two recently released reports provide insights into CWD research and management.

As part of numerous efforts to address the current and future challenges to wildlife management caused by CWD, Congress passed America's Conservation Enhancement (ACE) Act (P.L. 116-188) in 2020. The bill directed the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to lead a task force charged with developing an action plan to guide national efforts aimed at controlling CWD in the United States. The ACE Act proposed that the task force be guided by a report commissioned from the National Academies of Sciences (NAS) that would "identify the predominant pathways and mechanisms of the transmission of chronic wasting disease in free-ranging and captive populations of cervids in the United States." This report, entitled State of Knowledge Regarding Transmission, Spread, and Management of Chronic Wasting Disease in U.S. Captive and Free-ranging Cervid Populations was recently published by NAS. It describes what is currently known about how CWD is transmitted among cervids, the current distribution of disease outbreaks, and the effectiveness of current diagnostic, prevention, and control methods available to limit the spread of the disease. This report will assist the task force in prioritizing research and developing future CWD management strategies.

In addition to the NAS report formally documenting the state of science on many aspects of CWD and its management, it also presents a comprehensive set of future needs and considerations that "are intended to inform the design of

a strong action-oriented and integrated strategy to reduce the transmission and further geographic spread of the disease." These conclusions, generated by more than 20 of the leading experts on CWD research and management who drafted and reviewed this report, address factors such as the potential transmission of CWD to humans and other species, the future spread of the disease, CWD management and control challenges, social and economic considerations, as well as others. This report represents one of the most authoritative and defensible syntheses of CWD knowledge and experience gained through research and management experience in North America over the past half-century.

An unrelated recent effort was focused on the issue of preparedness of the U.S. community to respond to a potential spillover of CWD from cervids into production animal agriculture or in humans. The Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy (CIDRAP) took a multidisciplinary approach to assess the current state of CWD and

prion disease science, surveillance, and management to identify gaps in spillover preparedness and developing recommendations to improve public and animal health agencies' ability to respond. Using the results of numerous listening sessions conducted with a broad collective of North American CWD managers and researchers, CIDRAP identified thematic areas of concern related to CWD prevention and control: human health, cervid and production animal health, prion biology and disease diagnostics, carcass and contaminated item disposal and the environment, and wildlife health and management. Entitled Chronic Wasting Disease Spillover Preparedness and Response: Charting an Uncertain Future, it was published January 8, 2025, by CIDRAP.

This is article was provided courtesy of the Wildlife Management Institute. WMI's mission is to inform, facilitate, and promote conservation and professional management of wildlife throughout North America. WMI staff were invited to participate in the development of these reports on CWD. We will continue to communicate information about current wildlife conservation issues through our Outdoor News Bulletin and website.

SW WI CWD Study Findings

Primary findings were released for the major CWD study funded in part by SCI Chapters in Wisconsin. The DNR's Southwest Wisconsin Chronic Wasting Disease, Deer and Predator Study presentation in January to the Natural Resources Board is available on the DNR's YouTube channel.

The purpose of this study was to determine how CWD impacts deer populations. This involved estimating deer survival rates and how they were influenced by CWD. Fieldwork took place in northern Iowa, Dane and Grant counties. This area was selected as it is where CWD was first detected in Wisconsin in 2002 and has maintained a high CWD prevalence in the years since.

As part of this study, over 1,200 animals (adult deer, fawns, coyotes and bobcats) were captured, 766 GPS collars were deployed on adult deer and 323 radio tracking collars were placed on deer fawns.

Scientists analyzed data from the sample of collared adult white-tailed deer in order to estimate the differences in annual survival (the probability of surviving from one year to the next) between CWD-infected and uninfected deer.

Annual Survival Probability

	Uninfected	CWD-Infected
Females	83%	41%
Males	69%	17%

These figures indicate that CWD is substantially reducing the annual survival probability of both male and female deer. Reduced female survival lowers the growth rate of the population, and when sufficiently suppressed, may result in population decline. Results indicate when CWD prevalence rates of females surpasses about 29%, deer populations are expected to begin declining.

The key takeaways from these results are:

- CWD substantially reduces deer survival rates and suppresses population growth;
- Where CWD prevalence is high, deer populations are likely declining; and
- CWD will eventually impact deer populations elsewhere if it continues to spread and increase in prevalence.

The degree of population decline will depend on local harvest and recruitment rates. Researchers do not expect CWD-affected herds to be completely eliminated in a given area, as deer populations have a strong ability to increase reproduction when deer abundance is lower, due to less competition for food, space and other resources.

The Southwest Wisconsin CWD Deer And Predator Study provides a rich dataset about our deer herd and CWD's impact, and there will be more results to come as analysis continues. Additional findings will continue to be released to SCI and the public as completed.

Guest Commentary:

De-Extinction vs Un-Extinction; Keeping What We've Got

by Tony Wasley, President Wildlife Management Institute

It's 2025! Admittedly, for someone my age who very vividly recalls a time as a child doing the math to determine the likelihood of still being alive in the year 2000, 2025 sounds more like a year from a science fiction title than it does our current calendar year. Despite that, here we are in 2025, with numerous science fiction-like tools and technologies impacting our lives in ways many never imagined.

Conservation science and wildlife management are similarly being affected by increases in innovation and technology. A quick stroll around the poster sessions at a recent Wildlife Society meeting demonstrated uses of eDNA, acoustic data, GPS collar data, drone surveys, various satellite data, camera traps, and many other exciting innovations and technologies. It is truly exciting and inspiring for me to see just how much technology and innovation is being developed and being incorporated in the conservation and understanding of our fish and wildlife resources.

As a civilization, we have made tremendous progress in a relatively short period of time. It's mindboggling to think that since the structure of DNA was first discovered in 1953 by American biologist James Watson and English physicist Francis Crick it has only been 72 years and yet now, we can use the technology to essentially identify each and every unique organism on the planet and determine their presence or absence in a system. It has only been 68 years since the first artificial satellite to orbit Earth was launched by the Soviet Union and just 53 years since the first earth monitoring satellite was launched to collect earth-based data in 1972.

Despite our technological advances and the increased understanding they provide, many species and systems are still struggling. A quick look at the major ecosystems in North America demonstrates the challenge. Grasslands, sagebrush, forests, Great Lakes, wetlands, Mississippi River, and Florida Everglades, each iconic with their own



Photo Credit: H. M. Cotterill, Flickr

unique assemblages of species and all struggling with a myriad of issues as we try to maintain ecosystem functionality and the full assemblage of species.

It seems that one of the most common measures of our conservation success or failure is the concept of extinction. Preventing species from becoming extinct is a most basic and quintessential conservation goal and therefore also a frequent and simple measure of success. Clearly, losing a species forever to extinction is undoubtedly a conservation failure. I recently became aware of a billion-dollar startup company called Colossal Bioscience that has a stated goal of "de-extinction." That was not a term I was familiar with although it appears fairly self-explanatory. Sure enough, among other things, the billion-dollar startup has a stated goal to de-extinct and create a woolly mammoth hybrid by 2027. Other species of de-extinction focus include the Tasmania tiger declared extinct in 1936 and the Dodo bird, extinct in approximately 1662. Their webpage offers a glimpse at their vision and their motivations, and although not inherently nefarious by any stretch, it invites further consideration.

For obvious reasons, the awareness and discovery of this real-world Jurassic Park-like effort caused me a great deal of thought and contemplation. I ponder the large-scale climate change from the last ice-age of 15,000 years ago during which woolly mammoths roamed the tundra. I consider the habitat loss, invasive species, and disease that play a role in virtually all extinctions and wonder how

it would be any different if these species and others were successfully "de-extinct'd", if you will. The earth's population has never been greater, the coexistence with wildlife never more challenging. We struggle with ongoing coexistence challenges with extant large carnivores like wolves and bears, invasive species like horses and hogs, and both wild and domestic herbivores like elephants and cattle. I think about how and where "de-extinct'd" animals would fit. There are very significant reasons these species blinked out before, and is bringing them back into a more crowded and disrupted space the best thing for conservation?

I also wonder how we struggle to adequately fund conservation of currently imperiled species and degraded systems, yet a private billion-dollar company focused on de-extinction can be created. I wonder how we can foster a public that is broadly more concerned about avoiding extinctions than they are with the de-extinctions. What if we pooled our resources and technology toward effective long-term conservation and the "un-extinction" rather than the de-extinction?

Our ultimate challenge isn't how or which things we bring back from extinction. Our ultimate challenge is having an engaged and informed society that values conservation in a way that applies the technology and provides the resources to prevent extinctions in the first place. This scenario seems like a prime example of where an ounce of cure is worth a ton of woolly mammoth bacon.

In 2025, let's continue to integrate our collective skills, technologies, and knowledge to focus our efforts, work collaboratively and at meaningful scales, in a way that not only keeps species "un-extinct" but also elevates society's awareness and appreciation for conservation such that a new billion dollar shiny object promising to repopulate the frozen tundra with an animal now extinct for nearly 10,000 years doesn't garner as much excitement and fascination as does simply conserving the species we have now.

FWS Grizzly Listing News

by Marie Neumiller, CSF

On Wednesday January 8, 2025, the US Fish and Wildlife Service proposed an update to Grizzly Bear Listing and Management in the lower 48 states. This announcement comes as a response to a petition filed by Montana and Wyoming requesting the downlisting of grizzly bears along with a settlement agreement with the state of Idaho. The states were requesting delisting in both the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE) and the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystems (NCDE). FWS denied both petitions filed by Montana and Wyoming to delist grizzlies and return management authority to the respective state agencies. Prior to the decision, the NCDE and GYE population segments were considered recovered by nearly all accounts; however, the establishment of one large distinct population segment removes regional distinctions from the equation.

Once the rule is published with the Federal register, FWS will open a

60-day public comment period on the proposal that would merge all grizzly bear recovery zones. Currently there are six grizzly bear recovery zones throughout the northwestern states, which include the NDCE and GYE distinct population segments (DPS). Under the new proposal FWS would transition to one single DPS in the northwestern states. In addition to the DPS adjustment, FWS is proposing a 4(d) rule aimed at providing management flexibility as states and the federal government work to promote conservation with a goal of eventual delisting of grizzly bears in the lower 48 states.

The Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation recognizes the substantial inter-governmental collaboration that has existed between states and the federal government to recover grizzly bear populations in the northwestern region. As endangered populations reach recovery thresholds, it is important to have a swift and smooth transition from federal to state management in support of their localized

wildlife and habitat management plans. CSF will continue to support on the ground, science-based, management practices, including hunting, through the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation.

Why It Matters: *Success of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) is dependent on coordination amongst federal and state wildlife managers, landowners, and others that have a vested stake in the recovery of a listed species. One of the most pressing challenges with the ESA is failing to delist a species from federal management and return the management of the species to the states once population recovery goals have been met. Unfortunately, in the case of certain species, such as grizzly bears in this particular case, endless circles of lawsuits and other extraneous reasons unrelated to the overall population health of a species threaten to undermine the relationships between federal and state wildlife managers and further erode public trust.*



Suppressor Sales Surge

by Barry Snell, CSF

For many decades, it took several months, if not years, for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) to register and approve the transfer of a suppressor before the owner could take possession of it. The expectation for shooters through most of recent memory was to put your money down, submit your form and the \$200 tax, then do your best to forget all about it and be pleasantly surprised when you got your approval someday.

However, as the popularity of suppressors has grown over time, the ATF now receives exponentially more applications for suppressors than ever before. This pressure, combined with the joint efforts of SCI and many of our industry partners, such as the American Suppressor Association (ASA), the National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF), and the National Rifle Association (NRA), has resulted in the process being dramatically improved beyond anyone's expectations over the course of the last year or two.

Today, it's not uncommon to have your suppressor application approved by the ATF the same day you submit it. For everyone else not quite so fortunate, the process takes just a few days now, not months or years. Those massive wait times that discouraged so many from purchasing suppressors for so many years are gone, and with that barrier eliminated, hunters and shooters are buying suppressors in record numbers.

The now discontinued ATF Firearms Commerce in the United States report used to show the number of silencers that were registered in each state. The final edition in May 2021 reported 2,664,774 silencers in the U.S., more than doubling the 1.3 million silencers disclosed by the Department of Justice (DOJ) in 2017.

In a recent Freedom of Information Act request to the ATF, our friends at the NSSF received the additional number of suppressors registered from May 2021 to July 2024. That report reveals that an astounding 2,193,123 more suppressors were sold in that time, which now means a whopping

4.86 million silencers—and counting!—are in possession by law-abiding Americans as of the middle of 2024.

To put that in perspective, the NFA started requiring the registration of suppressors back in 1934, and again, up to May 2021 the NFA had 2.66 million suppressors on the books. Now, American gun owners are on track to exceed 87 years of registered silencers in just the last three years alone.

Those numbers are fantastic news, but we still have lots of work to do when it comes to legalizing suppressors and suppressor hunting in every one of the 50 states. In the Southwest, California stands as the last hold-out, though anti-gun legislators in New Mexico and Colorado are eager to join the Golden State, and that's where the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CSF) and industry partners come in: working together towards changing the laws in California and defending the existing ones elsewhere.

Further, these astounding sales numbers, combined with the landmark Bruen decision in 2022 that put the "Common Use Doctrine" into effect regarding judging the constitutionality of gun prohibitions, means we could quite possibly see the end of suppressor restrictions nationwide within the next few years.

Why It Matters: Suppressors are a common tool used by SCI members, hunters and recreational shooters to protect their hearing, be respectful of others around them, and, in many cases, increase the accuracy of their firearms while simultaneously reducing recoil. This has the added benefit of making each shot safer, and helping to ensure a clean harvest while hunting. States that still restrict suppressor ownership or use while hunting are eliminating access by their citizens to the only hearing protection technology currently available that protects not only the shooter's hearing, but also the hearing of anyone in close proximity, including hunting dogs.



SCI Badgerland Chapter Hunter's Expo '25 Scored Big

by Mark LaBarbera

Chula Vista Resort's Mike Kaminski is also an SCI member dedicated to passing along our outdoor heritage to his grandchildren and others. His resort is home to Badgerland's annual event that again impressed all comers February 14-15. Great food and camaraderie among members, sponsors, volunteer leaders, donors, and world-wide exhibitors are just part of the fun. Every year, Badgerland leaders generate an

impressive amount of funding for the mission while making it fun and memorable for all the families and friends participating.

The photos here are not the same as being there, but they do capture some of the experiences at Badgerland events, like auctioneer Bruce Brock and emcee Steve Kaner.

It was clear again this year that the hard work of all involved paid big dividends in raising money that will continue to support the Badgerland's

great work on behalf of all hunters and conservationists. Plan now to spend the weekend at Chula Vista next year but start by attending the informative monthly social gatherings that the Badgerland Chapter hosts at various restaurants in south central Wisconsin. Newcomers are always welcomed with open arms. So are new volunteers willing to pitch in any amount of time and talent to keep this successful chapter going strong.

Photos by Bill Hilgers, Randy Mayes, and Steve Cripps

At the Badgerland event, Steve Cripps' nephew Parker Cripps, 9, won the 2024 youth award for this buck, his first deer. He shot it using grandpa's .243.





Once In A Lifetime

by Len Harris

I really need to give some history to this before I get to the actual story. Two springs ago we had a huge flood in the southwest part of Wisconsin. Most of the streams were dramatically affected by this flood. Many streams were widened and others had holes where there were never any.

The water finally receded, and I decided to go look at my streams to see if any of them were fishable. Most of the bigger streams were still chocolate milk. I decided to take a look at a couple of my brookie streams. I remembered one stream in particular that I had been fishing with a friend at a huge beaver dam. The beaver dam was still intact.

I remember this outing because my friend Frank had a decent sized brookie on and all of sudden the water erupted under the brookie and a huge almost flush of a toilet happened under the brookie. The brookie was sucked under and all of a sudden, the pole was bent in half.

Whatever had the brookie was big and dove towards the bottom. The action ended as quickly as it began. There was the brookie floating on the top of the water. The brookie was still hooked. We brought it in and took a photo of the 10-inch brookie close-up. It had teeth marks the entire length of the fish. We decided it had endured enough injury for the day and popped it back in the beaver dam hole. Frank and I did not see the would be brookie stealer but we both knew it was large.

That beaver dam grew in legend that year. Frank and I went back numerous times and never hooked up on any trout. Not a single trout. It was really odd. Prior to having that brookie almost stolen, we caught many brookies in that area. We finally gave up and decided the brookie stealer had moved on.

This spring we had even a bigger flood. I did my traditional look see after the water went down. Again, the bigger streams were dirty and no fishing. The memory of that big fish trying to steal the brookie from Frank came back to me. I knew where I was going. Hello

Big Beaver Dam Hole. The floods had completely knocked out the dam. The once 100 yard long and 8 feet deep beaver dam hole was about three feet deep. I was really disappointed because I figured the Monster Of The Beaver Dam has surely moved on.

I walked downstream first and all of the remnants of the beaver dam were down stream. I did a 180 and went up stream. Far in the distance I could see some action on the water. I dismissed it at first as the beavers trying to rebuild their dams. The closer I got, it looked like minnows scurrying into the shallows with a big wake behind them. It was still a good 80 yards ahead of me.

At 40 yards I could see that those weren't minnows in the shallows. They were good sized brook trout, and they were being chased into the shallows by an enormous trout. The trout's back was coming out of the water as it chased the brookies into the shallows and ate any of them that got too close. My camera was out and my point and shoot digital didn't have a good enough zoom to capture the carnage from this

fish. I needed to get closer. I took four more steps, and the action turned off. The big fish must have felt me walking trying to get closer.

I told this story to quite a few anglers and they just smiled and nodded their heads and said "Ya, right, an enormous trout chasing brookies in the shallows." To them it was just too much of a tale to swallow. I tried to talk a couple of them into stalking the trout. They all had better things to do. I tried for this fish a minimum of 50 times this year. I had not even a whisper of a bite.

About a month ago my buddy Joe Chadwick and I went back to the beaver dam to fish. The beavers had repaired their dam, and the massive beaver dam was back there in its full glory. Joe and I fished it hard for 3 hours. No bites. We moved on. We walked back downstream to my truck and took a look at the beaver dam one more time. No action. The beaver had made many runs to make entry into the beaver dam easier. They were hidden in tall weeds.

I was leading the way back to the truck. I told Joe to be careful of this one beaver run. Joe must not have heard me, and he stepped in it and tumbled down the bank into the beaver dam. I asked him if he was okay, and he just barked out, "Why didn't ya tell me there was a run here?" After I stopped laughing at Joe treading water in the huge eight feet deep beaver pond, I noticed a huge wake going up stream. Joe falling in the water had spooked the brookie stealer and now it had shown itself to us again.

Joe and I went back another 20 times to try for the big trout. I always let Joe have the hole first because he said he had discovered the trout by falling in and he should have first crack at it. We did not catch anything. Not even a tiny brookie. We decided we needed to try some different tactics. On the way home I told Joe that big trout turn into nocturnal feeders when they get really big. This one fell into the big category. We decided night fishing was in order.



We went back and pruned some of the willows and did some practice casting in the light of day to make sure we could cast properly during the nighttime hours.

The path to the beaver dam was manicured and any holes were noted so we would not fall into them during darkness. We looked for a good battle position on the water's edge and an easy place for netting. We went to Cabela's and got two headlamps.

So now, what were we going to use to catch this leviathan? We decided to be prepared for many ways to tempt this trout. We were going to time our assault on it during the time of the Hex hatch. The Hex was late this year because of the major flooding. A trip to a local fly shop was in order. We got a couple Hex patterns and a couple mouse patterns. We strung up the 5 weight fly rod with a 3x leader and the Hex emerger pattern. We had heard of hex hatches in the area.

We also got out a spinning rod and put 8 pound Fireline on it and a size 6 Eagle Claw with a small split shot part way up the line. We decided if one method failed, we would try the other. I stopped at the local Kwik Trip and got a dozen night crawlers and went fishing for chubs. I caught 6 chubs and cut off

their tails about one inch up from the tail. So now we were ready. Nightcrawlers and chub tails and a readied fly rod.

The alarm rang at 2am. I picked up Joe and off we went for our nighttime adventure. I parked the truck quite a way from the normal parking spot. I wanted to have every possible advantage. We walked slowly to the woods edge. I put on my headlamp. I told Joe to leave his off. The approach to the hole seemed like it took an eternity. I turned mine off also quite a way from the hole. Joe wanted to get right in there with a chub tail. I told him we needed to look and listen for a while. We actually took a seat for about 10 minutes.

We both looked at each other at the same time. Joe said what the heck was that sound? I told Joe it was a slurp sound. I had read about the sound in many fly fishing magazines. I had never heard the sound myself. We sat there a little longer as the sound got closer to our battle station. I handed Joe the fly rod and said have at it. There was a Hex hatch going on and we had stumbled on it.

It was actually quite intimidating casting in the pitch black. I told Joe to cast towards the slurping sounds. Joe





asked me how would he know when to set the hook. I told him to set after he heard the slurp. The first cast in the large beaver dam was off target. Joe put his second cast near the sounds. It seemed almost instant, there it was, The slurp sound. Joe set it hard.

The fish went directly to the bottom and hunkered down. It did a figure eight a couple times. I don't think it knew it was hooked. Then it realized it was hooked and went screaming upstream at Mach 8. There was another small, submerged beaver dam up there and I was worried the trout would get entangled in the beaver dam. I yelled at Joe "Turn it!" "Muscle it!" It can't get into the other dam. The reel on the rod was just

screaming and the rod was bent in half. Joe was kind of like a deer in the headlights. He froze. He yelled, "I can't control him."

I told him to take one step into the water and invert the fly rod and stick it directly into the water. I told him to keep the rod bent over. He didn't understand me. He wanted more explanation. I just yelled "Just do it!" He followed my directions to the letter and the trout turned and came back down stream. Joe was reeling for all his worth. He had it in the main beaver dam again. It was showing no signs of getting tired. It was Joe's turn yelling, "Get in the %*#% water and net that fish!" I told him it wasn't ready to be netted. Joe said, "I don't care. Get in there."

I took three steps out and was at the top of my chest waders. I told Joe to get it closer to me so I could net it. The trout swam by me, and I made a halfhearted netting attempt. I had not even seen the fish yet. I thought I better get a try while it was near me. I tried and I missed. Joe was yelling, "If you cause me to lose this fish, I will never talk to you again!" I took one more half step out and the water was even with the top of my waders. I told him he had

to get the head up so I could see it to net it. He kind of brought it to the surface.

I went deep under the fish and brought it to the surface with the netting action. The trout would not fit in the net from the side and the net got tangled up in the line. I was certain I was going to lose this fish. I dropped the net on purpose and the line came free from the net. I recovered the net. I decided I was going to go in up to my neck and net this thing.

I took one big step forward and went deep, almost to my neck and made a lunging deep netting attempt at the fish. I got it in the net by sheer luck. I lifted the net over my head and walked out of the hole. I did not know how big the trout was. I thought I had scooped up some mud too in the net because it was so dang heavy.

When I got to shore, I turned on my headlamp. Joe met me at the shore. We just stared in disbelief at what was in the net.

A small stream trout in these parts is considered big at 20 inches. This thing was way beyond that. I snapped a couple photos, and we measured the male small stream brown trout with a tape measurer and a digital scale Joe had brought with. It measured an eye lash over 30 inches and it weighed 10.2 pounds.



SCI Chapters Sponsor Deer Hunt Wisconsin TV

Viewers in Wisconsin and four neighboring states saw and heard Dan Small promote the positive image of hunters on "Deer Hunt Wisconsin" with help from the SCI Badgerland Chapter, Northeast Wisconsin Chapter, Southeastern WI Bowhunters Chapter, and Wisconsin Chapter. The award-winning annual television special aired multiple times on FanDuel (formerly Bally) Sports North in five states, plus FanDuel Sports Wisconsin. SCI ads ran twice in each airing.

SCI leaders and fellow members recognize the value of having a trusted third-party endorsement and outdoor celebrity like Small telling others, including the general public, about the value of hunters as America's leading conservationists.

As usual, Dan Small over-delivered for SCI and other sponsors with bonus publicity on Outdoors Radio, plus extra audiences via community TV stations

across Wisconsin. It helps that Dan is an SCI member who has seen the continued growth and good work of SCI chapters in Illinois and Wisconsin.

The SCI name and logo also appeared free as part of Deer Hunt Wisconsin's "Tune In" ad in multiple issues of Wisconsin Outdoor News.

Small also included SCI in the show credits when it aired on PBS Milwaukee, PBS Wisconsin statewide, and community media stations across Wisconsin. The public TV version cannot include commercials, he explained. The show is also on YouTube without commercials.

The production relies on support from many sponsors and underwriters who each contribute to getting Deer Hunt Wisconsin's positive hunting and conservation message to the public. In alphabetical order, they include:

- Izaak Walton League of America, WI Div.
- MEC Outdoors



- Milwaukee Journal Sentinel Sports Show
- Outdoor Heritage Education Center
- Outdoor News
- SCI Badgerland Chapter
- SCI Northeast Wisconsin Chapter
- SCI SE WI Bowhunters Chapter
- SCI Wisconsin Chapter
- Serpent Arms
- Stormy Kromer
- Vortex Optics
- Whitetail Sanctuary Solutions
- Wildlife Research Center
- Wisconsin Wildlife Federation
- Wild Eagle Lodge is the Official Host Location of Deer Hunt Wisconsin. To see the commercial-free version online, go to YouTube.com and search Deer Hunt Wisconsin 2024 Full Director's Cut.

Guest Editorial:

CRANE HUNT UPDATE

by Bruce Ross, E.D., WWA

Three weeks ago, some of SCI members who are also Wisconsin Waterfowl Association members got an email from us, asking that you reach out to the bi-partisan legislators sitting on the Sandhill Crane study committee that are considering whether a hunt is appropriate here in Wisconsin. More than 2,000 of you responded!

"The people have the right to fish, hunt, trap, and take game subject only to reasonable restrictions as prescribed by law"

Wisconsin Constitution Article, Section 26

An additional 1,000 or more emails came in from other SCI members and our partners like Delta Waterfowl, Back Country Hunters and Anglers, and Wisconsin Wildlife Federation. (By the way, this volume of emails would not have been possible without technical support from our friends at Delta Waterfowl.)

Emails flooded the inboxes of those legislators to let them know that we're counting on them to follow the science, apply common sense, and uphold the state's constitutional right to hunt by concluding that a sustainable and ethical sandhill crane hunt is justified. This number of emails far, far, far surpasses the number of communications these offices routinely receive, on any topic. Well done! Your voice is heard.

Even if you never intend to hunt sandhill cranes, this is a hunting rights issue. Hunters make up less than 10% of the Wisconsin population – a small minority – but carry a lion's share of the conservation work and funding that have led to the recovery of migratory species like the crane.

Today's hunting heritage includes the expectation that hunters "leave it better than they found it." And we do.

This obligation of shouldering a significant conservation burden is ours for life because we harvest a public resource. And with that obligation comes another: to protect this hunting heritage for the

next generation. With our small numbers, we must continue to earn our conservation credibility every day with those who simply don't understand today's hunter conservationists... or our voice will be weakened and eventually stilled.

It is this hunting ethic that allowed Wisconsin's right to hunt constitutional amendment to pass overwhelmingly in 2003 – over 82% of voters approved it. While this certainly does not give hunters a free pass to shoot anything in sight, it's a pretty high threshold for anti-hunters to overcome. Especially for a game bird like the crane that is hunted in 18 other states, stands at twice its maximum population target, and whose numbers create significant agricultural damage. But that constitutional right doesn't mean a thing if we are not defending it when it is challenged.

So when an organization trots out a poll (that they sponsored, designed, tabulated, and reported on) that says less than a majority of state residents support a crane hunt, we need to provide a context to those who don't share our hunting ethic. That's what I hoped to do when I presented to the crane legislative study group.

I am personally sick that some non-hunting conservation groups are lined up against us on this crane hunting issue. I reached out to their leaders several years ago to try to avoid this circular firing squad that only hurts our cooperation on bone fide conservation issues.

Especially since this is NOT a bird conservation issue. Those groups stood by for over a decade while 10,000+ cranes were killed and left to rot in agricultural fields – none stepped forward to help fund a seed treatment that could have

saved many of those birds. And despite these wasted birds and those that are hunted elsewhere, the population continued its historic rebound.

But now, let a sandhill crane hunt even be considered – with an annual harvest that would fall below the level of these depredation kills – and birding groups trip over themselves to protest. While no man can know another's motivations, it's not reasonable to believe bird conservation is at the heart of that protest.

I'm proud to be a hunter conservationist and helping to lead a coalition of like-minded organizations such as the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation, Delta Waterfowl, Safari Club International, and Backcountry Hunters and Anglers on this issue. It will be a long road, but with your support, we will stay with it... respecting the science, following the data, and trusting the federal migratory bird managers who have allowed the crane to make its remarkable comeback. And defending the constitutional respect your hunting heritage and conservation efforts have earned.

Thanks to you for your support, and special thanks to those who followed through on our invitation to reach out to the legislators. As a mentor once told me, "If you don't use your voice, you might as well not have one."

Photo by Bob Haase



BROUGHT TO YOU BY:

Watch Deer Hunt Wisconsin TV Special!

Catch the rebroadcasts of Dan Small's award-winning show on these stations:

- BALLY SPORTS WISCONSIN
- BALLY SPORTS NORTH
- PBS WISCONSIN (Wisconsin Channel)
- MILWAUKEE PBS (Flagship Channel)
- Wisconsin Community Media Stations

Throughout November & December!
Check local listings for dates & times.

DEER HUNT WISCONSIN
YouTube Channel View Segments and the Entire Show!

Find us on Facebook. See Deer Hunt Wisconsin Facebook Page for additional air times and stations

Dan Small & Mark LaBarbera

BROUGHT TO YOU BY:

Official Host Location of DHW TV

Mobile Closet Update

SCI chapters have added to the Mobile Closet Program's success that started with a grant from the Wisconsin Division of the Izaak Walton League of America Richard W. Hallstrom Trust. Outdoor Heritage Education Center Executive Director Ruth Ann Lee and her team of volunteers and partners launched a Mobile Closet Program to fill a need discovered in recent years during R3 events aimed at recruiting, retaining, and reactivating shooting sports enthusiasts.

DNR Learn to Hunt leaders pointed out that some youth and adult participants continue to show up with inadequate footwear, clothing, and other gear. The lack of proper gear makes the experience less than ideal. Participants who are cold, wet, uncomfortable, or ill-equipped are less likely to stay, return, or speak favorably about

proper equipment also makes it unsafe, like lack of blaze orange vests, caps, and outerwear.

So, OHEC launched a Mobile Closet Program with an easy-to-haul small, enclosed trailer filled with loaner gear that anyone can use free.

With good feedback from mentors and others who have used the Mobile Closet, OHEC is expanding the fleet with two additional trailers in collaboration with the Friends of Poynette Game Farm.

An example of the good feedback came from Quinn Erdman, former DNR R3 coordinator who now runs more than 100 people through Learn to Hunt events across Wisconsin through his new job at Pass It On—Outdoors Mentors in partnership with Outdoor Heritage Education Center and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Law Enforcement team. He

has used the Mobile Closet at multiple events and, like other mentors, plans to use it at even more events in the future. All of them provide good feedback that help identify where there are additional needs and gaps in the loaner gear.

Quinn shared the story from a Watertown duck hunt where the daughter needed proper clothing from



Richard Zach was one of the most recent donors to the OHEC Mobile Closet.

the Mobile Closet, but not as much as did the mother who showed up in colorful designer leotards! It's a good reminder that new hunters and their supporters should not be expected to know what they need unless someone tells them AND should be expected to purchase new gear before they have tried this outdoor activity.

Any chapter or member who wants to host the Mobile Closet for local recruitment efforts or other events has access to this unit.

OHEC's Ruth Ann Lee will handle publicity, scheduling, etc. for the three Mobile Closets still being modified and updated. Additional sponsors are needed. Contact ruthann@OHECyes.org.



Quinn Erdmann showed safe gun handling to two students.

their entry level hunting and shooting experiences. In some cases, the lack of

Governor Thanks MOHEE Supporters, Publicly Affirms Value of Conservation Education

by Mark LaBarbera

Hunters, shooting sports enthusiasts, DNR employees, conservation group leaders, and other supporters and sponsors of the Midwest Outdoor Heritage Education Expo were pleasantly surprised to see a new video message released this year by the Office of Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers. It was good to see what Teddy Roosevelt called the "bully pulpit," the chief executive position, being used to support outdoor initiatives like the SCI-sponsored MOHEE. Long-time partners of the Outdoor Heritage Education Center group that founded and runs MOHEE appreciated his thank

you message and support of this non-partisan R3 initiative.

Here's a transcript of the Governor's public video statement:

"Hey there, folks. Governor Tony Evers here. On behalf of all of us who care about education and the environment, I just wanted to take a moment to thank all of you for the good work you do to treat thousands of students to free MOHEE field trips each year.

"Your dedication to conservation, outdoor education, and making outdoors more inclusive and accessible continues to have a positive impact on connecting youth to the environment and nature-based activities all across Wisconsin.

"This commitment we share and your great work throughout the year and in every region of our state provides invaluable experiences for our kids and is so important for teachers and families too.

"Folks, outdoor recreation, our sporting heritage and proud history of conservation are part of who we are as Wisconsinites, and through this collaboration with OHEC you are helping to inspire the next generation of adventurers, explorers and scientists and continuing our state's proud sporting and outdoor recreation heritage for generations to come.

"So, with that, thank you, keep up the great work and take care, folks"

Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation Update: Hunting Tournaments Survive Illinois Veto Session

by Bob Matthews, CSF

Although legislative victories may be secured during regular sessions, Governors in some states may call veto sessions, in which the legislature has the opportunity to pass additional priorities. The Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CSF), a decades-long partner of Safari Club International, successfully advocated against the passage of a bill in Illinois that would have prohibited hunters from organizing contests to take furbearers, such as coyotes. Although legislators in the Prairie State showed interest in revisiting that bill during a veto session, science-based conservation ultimately prevailed.

CSF founded the National Assembly of Sportsmen's Caucuses (NASC) in 2004, and Illinois was one of the original twenty-one states to join. Today, the NASC network extends to all 50 states and includes more than 2,400 state legislators that are committed to securing policies that promote and protect the pastimes of hunters, anglers, recreational shooters, and trappers.

Although nearly all that read this magazine prefer the solitude that is offered by our favorite hunting spot or fishing hole and the escape from politics that the woods and waters provide, for the continued enjoyment of our time-honored outdoor traditions, it is imperative that sportsmen and women use their voice. On Capitol Hill and in State Houses across the nation, CSF is speaking up.

Illinois House Bill 2900 would have prohibited hunters from organizing hunting contests for furbearing species, which are a legitimate tool for managing localized populations. Although the bill initially missed a deadline to pass from the House, it received a special vote to revive it, where it subsequently passed out of the House by a margin of 68-45. The bill threatened movement once again during a veto session to close out 2024, yet science-based wildlife management prevailed.

The Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation advocated against its passage during each phase of the bill's progression. Although the language had

been introduced in previous years, HB 2900 gained traction this session, and even received a special vote in the Rules Committee to revive the bill after it had missed a deadline. Despite the bill being unsuccessful during the regular session, additional legislators lent their support as co-sponsors during the 2024 veto session. However, the bill ultimately failed to gain further support and did not survive.

Predator hunting contests are mischaracterized by anti-hunting organizations, which ignore the benefits that organized hunting can provide to hunters, local sporting stores, farmers, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and wildlife populations themselves. Coyotes, the species that these contests most commonly seek to manage, have infiltrated nearly every corner of the country with a booming population, depredating livestock and causing an increasing number of human-wildlife conflicts. Hunting contests create opportunities to concentrate hunting effort in a specific area to better address specific

localized concerns and conflicts, while still requiring participants to abide by the same laws that would apply otherwise. Equipment sales in preparation for hunting contests benefit local sporting stores, while license sales benefit the Illinois DNR through the American System of Conservation Funding.

Informing non-sporting legislators of the above considerations, CSF and members of the Illinois Legislative Sportsmen's Caucus advocated against the bill's passage throughout the 2024 session. Throughout the country, CSF will continue to protect the interests of sportsmen and women, as well as the wildlife that they pursue – including future attempts in Illinois to prohibit hunting contests, which will almost certainly gain traction once again in 2025.



Photo by Bob Haase

SCI Wisconsin Chapter Hosted a Grand Banquet

Just when you think it can't get any better, the SCI Wisconsin Chapter's 48th Annual Grand Banquet exceeded expectations.

SCI events like this are fun to share with others and they make us proud to be First for Hunters. Chapter President Dean LePoidevin, Vice President Monte Whitaker, and the event planning team can be proud of the Grand Banquet's success once again at the Brookfield Conference Center. All SCI members,

friends, and guests who pitched in to raise funds for SCI's mission can also be proud.

In this issue, we are sharing photos from the event, but they don't do justice to it. There's nothing like experiencing it firsthand.

If you are not a regular attendee at SCI chapter banquets and events, I recommend you register for future ones and see for yourself

how good they make you feel as a hunter, conservationist, and engaged U.S. citizen. Meanwhile, please enjoy the photos and join all of us in thanking the chapter leaders, volunteers, and donors behind SCI's success.





Photos provided by
Dean LePoidevin

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Whitetail Sanctuary Solutions Tip:

Now is the time to put together a plan for a Successful Fall Hunt

by Michael Murphy

Spring is now here, and it is time to put together your plan to ensure a successful hunt this fall. Study your trail camera photos and put together a list of the bucks to be harvested and the ones to remain in order to pass on their genetics. You need to have everyone hunting on your property on the same page!

Your property will never reach its goal if everyone does not stick to the goal set for the property. If your goal for the property is to consistently shoot 170 class bucks and above, you never will get there if you have one or more not following the property goal and shooting smaller bucks. This will affect everyone's future chances of harvesting trophy bucks.

Obviously, this should not be the case for young hunters shooting their first

buck, but the rest need to follow the goal of the property.

When evaluating the trail camera photos and videos also note the poor genetic bucks to be shot to get them out of the gene pool. These poor genetic smaller bucks are a great choice for shooting to put meat in your freezer.

You also need to evaluate the does on your property. You need to keep high quality-great genetic does on your property. Never shoot the large, great genetic does unless they are old and gray in the muzzle and producing less offspring (i.e. instead of dropping triplets they are only giving birth to a single fawn now).

To get trophy class bucks on your property consistently year after year, YOU MUST have trophy class does as well! Something that you should NEVER hear from anyone hunting a



"well-managed" hunting property is, "You should see the huge doe I shot." If you want meat shoot a small, poor genetic buck!

To get trophy class bucks you need to make improvements to your property as I have discussed with you in previous articles. Deer should NEVER have to leave your property because you are missing something - Food, Water, Thermal Protection, Good Bedding, Low Human Pressure, and Lack of Predators.

Do this and soon your property will be producing trophy class deer year after year!

I would be happy to provide an individualized plan of your property to attract and retain trophy bucks on your property! Happy and safe hunting from your SCI fellow member at whitetail-sanctuariesolutions.com

Whitetail Sanctuary Solutions customer Mark LaBarbera continues to improve his Lafayette County property which yielded this buck for his nephew Ryan Knight of Waunakee this past gun season.



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